

# SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

DAVID G. MYERS



11e

# Social Psychology

David G. Myers

Hope College  
Holland, Michigan

with

Jean M. Twenge  
San Diego State University





Social Psychology, Eleventh Edition

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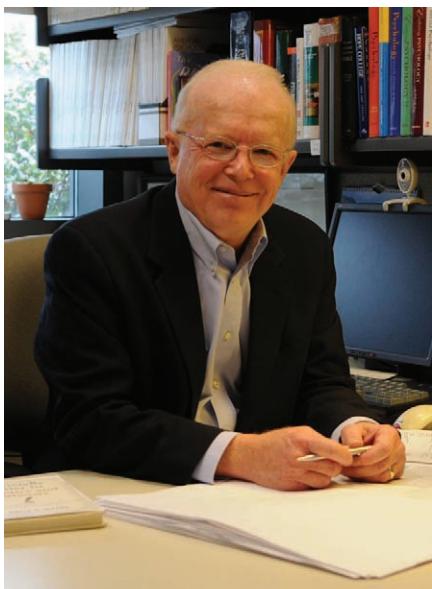
*To Jonathan Mueller and Scott Plous*

With admiration and gratitude for their enormous and enduring contributions to the teaching of social psychology through the Teaching of Psychology Newsletter and The Social Psychology Network, respectively.

# About the Author

**S**ince receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa, David G. Myers has spent his career at Michigan's Hope College, where he is Professor of Psychology and has taught dozens of social-psychology sections. Hope College students have invited him to be their commencement speaker and voted him "outstanding professor."

With support from National Science Foundation grants, Myers' scientific articles have appeared in some three dozen scientific books and periodicals, including *Science*, the *American Scientist*, *Psychological Science*, and the *American Psychologist*.



He also communicates psychological science to the general public. His writings have appeared in four dozen magazines, from *Today's Education* to *Scientific American*. His 17 books include *The Pursuit of Happiness* and *Intuition: Its Powers and Perils*.

Myers' research and writings have been recognized by the Gordon Allport Prize, by an "honored scientist" award from the Federation of Associations in the Brain and Behavioral Sciences, and by the Award for Distinguished Service on Behalf of Personality-Social Psychology.

He has chaired his city's Human Relations Commission, helped found a thriving assistance center for families in poverty, and spoken to hundreds of college and community groups. In recognition of his efforts to transform the way America provides assistive listening for people with hearing loss (see [hearingloop.org](http://hearingloop.org)), he received the 2011 American Academy of Audiology Presidential Award.

He bikes to work year-round and plays pickup basketball. David and Carol Myers are parents of two sons and a daughter, and have one granddaughter.

# Brief Contents

	Preface	xvi
<b>chapter 1</b>	Introducing Social Psychology	2

## **Part One**      **Social Thinking**

<b>chapter 2</b>	The Self in a Social World	32
<b>chapter 3</b>	Social Beliefs and Judgments	76
<b>chapter 4</b>	Behavior and Attitudes	118



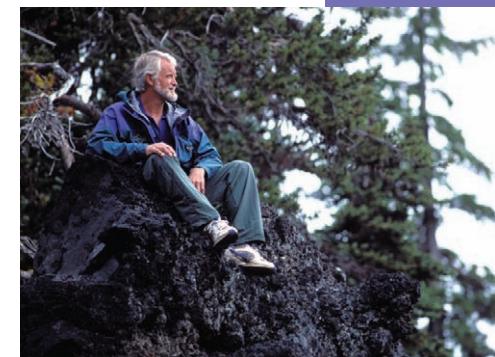
## **Part Two**      **Social Influence**

<b>chapter 5</b>	Genes, Culture, and Gender	150
<b>chapter 6</b>	Conformity and Obedience	186
<b>chapter 7</b>	Persuasion	224
<b>chapter 8</b>	Group Influence	264



## **Part Three**      **Social Relations**

<b>chapter 9</b>	Prejudice: Disliking Others	306
<b>chapter 10</b>	Aggression: Hurting Others	352
<b>chapter 11</b>	Attraction and Intimacy: Liking and Loving Others	392
<b>chapter 12</b>	Helping	438
<b>chapter 13</b>	Conflict and Peacemaking	480



## **Part Four**      **Applying Social Psychology**

<b>chapter 14</b>	Social Psychology in the Clinic	520
<b>chapter 15</b>	Social Psychology in Court	554
<b>chapter 16</b>	Social Psychology and the Sustainable Future	586
	Epilogue	611
	References	612
	Credits	714
	Name Index	717
	Subject Index/Glossary	732

# Contents

Preface xvi

## chapter 1

### Introducing Social Psychology 2

What Is Social Psychology? 4

What Are Social Psychology's Big Ideas? 5

*We Construct Our Social Reality* 5

*Our Social Institutions Are Often Powerful but Sometimes Perilous* 6

*Social Influences Shape Our Behavior* 7

*Personal Attitudes and Dispositions*

*Also Shape Behavior* 8

*Social Behavior Is Biologically Rooted* 8

*Social Psychology's Principles Are Applicable in Everyday Life* 9

How Do Human Values Influence Social Psychology? 10

*Obvious Ways Values Enter Psychology* 10

*Not-So-Obvious Ways Values Enter Psychology* 11

I knew It All Along: Is Social Psychology Simply Common Sense? 13

**Focus On: I Knew It All Along** 15



Research Methods: How Do We Do Social Psychology? 16

*Forming and Testing Hypotheses* 17

*Correlational Research: Detecting Natural Associations* 18

*Experimental Research: Searching for Cause and Effect* 24

*Generalizing from Laboratory to Life* 27

Postscript: Why I Wrote This Book 29

## Part One: Social Thinking

## chapter 2

### The Self in a Social World 32

Spotlights and Illusions: What Do They Teach Us About Ourselves? 34

**Research Close-Up: On Being Nervous About Looking Nervous** 34

Self-Concept: Who Am I? 37

*At the Center of Our Worlds: Our Sense of Self* 37

*Development of the Social Self* 38

*Self and Culture* 40

*Self-Knowledge* 44

**The Inside Story: Hazel Markus and Shinobu Kitayama on Cultural Psychology** 45

What Is the Nature and Motivating Power of Self-Esteem? 50

*Self-Esteem Motivation* 51

*The "Dark Side" of Self-Esteem* 52

What Does It Mean to Have "Perceived Self-Control"? 55

*The Self's Energy* 55

*Self-Efficacy* 56

*Locus of Control* 56

*Learned Helplessness Versus Self-Determination* 58

**The Inside Story: Daniel Gilbert on the Benefits of Irrevocable Commitments** 60

What Is Self-Serving Bias? 61

*Explaining Positive and Negative Events* 61

*Can We All Be Better Than Average?* 62

**Focus On: Self-Serving Bias—How Do I Love Me? Let Me Count the Ways** 63

*Unrealistic Optimism* 64



*False Consensus and Uniqueness* 66  
*Explaining Self-Serving Bias* 68  
*Reflections on Self-Esteem and Self-Serving Bias* 68

### How Do People Manage Their Self-Presentation? 71

*Self-Handicapping* 71  
*Impression Management* 71

### Postscript: Twin Truths—The Perils of Pride, the Powers of Positive Thinking 74

## chapter 3

### Social Beliefs and Judgments 76

#### How Do We Perceive Our Social Worlds? 78

*Priming* 78  
*Perceiving and Interpreting Events* 79  
*Belief Perseverance* 82  
*Constructing Memories of Ourselves and Our Worlds* 83

#### How Do We Judge Our Social Worlds? 86

*Intuitive Judgments* 86  
*Overconfidence* 88  
*Heuristics: Mental Shortcuts* 92  
*Counterfactual Thinking* 95  
*Illusory Thinking* 96  
*Moods and Judgments* 98

#### How Do We Explain Our Social Worlds? 100

*Attributing Causality: To the Person or the Situation* 100  
*The Fundamental Attribution Error* 103

#### How Do Our Expectations of Our Social Worlds Matter? 109

##### **Focus On: The Self-Fulfilling Psychology of the Stock Market** 110

*Teacher Expectations and Student Performance* 110  
*Getting from Others What We Expect* 112

#### What Can We Conclude About Social Beliefs and Judgments? 114

### Postscript: Reflecting on Illusory Thinking 116

## chapter 4

### Behavior and Attitudes 118

#### How Well Do Our Attitudes Predict Our Behavior? 120

#### *When Attitudes Predict Behavior* 121

##### **The Inside Story: Mahzarin R. Banaji on Discovering Experimental Social Psychology** 122

#### When Does Our Behavior Affect Our Attitudes? 126

*Role Playing* 127  
*Saying Becomes Believing* 128  
*The Foot-in-the-Door Phenomenon* 128

**Focus On: Saying Becomes Believing** 129

*Evil and Moral Acts* 131  
*Social Movements* 133

#### Why Does Our Behavior Affect Our Attitudes? 134

*Self-Presentation: Impression Management* 135  
*Self-Justification: Cognitive Dissonance* 135

**The Inside Story: Leon Festinger on Dissonance Reduction** 138

*Self-Perception* 140  
*Comparing the Theories* 145

### Postscript: Changing Ourselves Through Action 147

## Part Two: Social Influence

## chapter 5

### Genes, Culture, and Gender 150

#### How Are We Influenced by Human Nature and Cultural Diversity? 152

*Genes, Evolution, and Behavior* 152  
*Culture and Behavior* 154

##### **Focus On: The Cultural Animal** 155

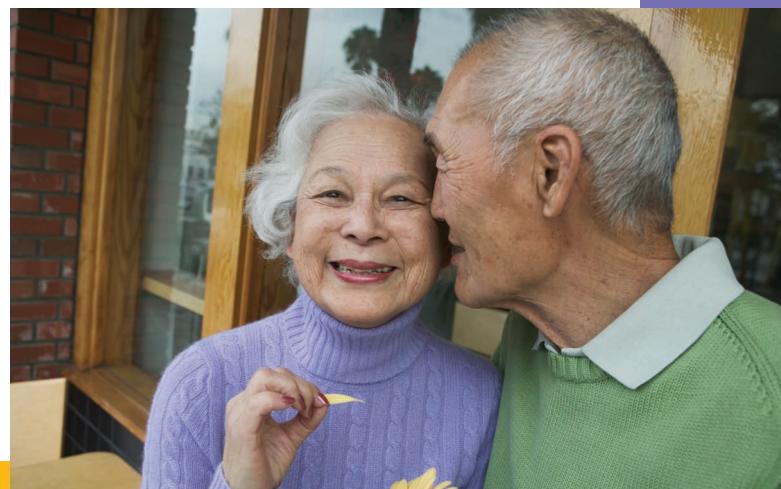
**Research Close-Up: Passing Encounters, East and West** 158

#### How Are Males and Females Alike and Different? 162

*Gender and Genes* 162  
*Independence Versus Connectedness* 163  
*Social Dominance* 166  
*Aggression* 168  
*Sexuality* 168

Evolution and Gender: Doing What Comes Naturally? 170	<i>Gender and Mating Preferences</i> 171	<i>Reflections on Evolutionary Psychology</i> 173
<b>Focus On: Evolutionary Science and Religion 174</b>		
<i>Gender and Hormones</i> 176		
Culture and Gender: Doing as the Culture Says? 177		
<i>Gender Roles Vary with Culture</i> 178		
<i>Gender Roles Vary over Time</i> 178		
<i>Peer-Transmitted Culture</i> 179		
What Can We Conclude About Genes, Culture, and Gender? 180		
<i>Biology and Culture</i> 180		
<b>The Inside Story: Alice Eagly on Gender Similarities and Differences 182</b>		
<i>The Power of the Situation and the Person</i> 182		
Postscript: Should We View Ourselves as Products or Architects of Our Social Worlds? 184		
<b>chapter 6</b>		
<b>Conformity and Obedience 186</b>		
What Is Conformity? 188		
What Are the Classic Conformity and Obedience Studies? 189		
<i>Sherif's Studies of Norm Formation</i> 189		
<b>Research Close-Up: Contagious Yawning 191</b>		
<b>Focus On: Mass Delusions 193</b>		
<i>Asch's Studies of Group Pressure</i> 194		
<i>Milgram's Obedience Experiments</i> 196		
<i>The Ethics of Milgram's Experiments</i> 197		
<i>What Breeds Obedience?</i> 198		
<b>Focus On: Personalizing the Victims 200</b>		
<b>The Inside Story: Stanley Milgram on Obedience 202</b>		
<i>Reflections on the Classic Studies</i> 202		
What Predicts Conformity? 208		
<i>Group Size</i> 208		
<i>Unanimity</i> 209		
<i>Cohesion</i> 210		
<i>Status</i> 211		
<i>Public Response</i> 211		
<i>Prior Commitment</i> 211		
Why Conform? 213		

Who Conforms? 215		
<i>Personality</i> 215		
<i>Culture</i> 217		
<i>Social Roles</i> 217		
Do We Ever Want to Be Different? 219		
<i>Reactance</i> 220		
<i>Asserting Uniqueness</i> 220		
Postscript: On Being an Individual Within Community 222		
<b>chapter 7</b>		
<b>Persuasion 224</b>		
What Paths Lead to Persuasion? 227		
<i>The Central Route</i> 228		
<i>The Peripheral Route</i> 228		
<i>Different Paths for Different Purposes</i> 229		
What Are the Elements of Persuasion? 231		
<i>Who Says? The Communicator</i> 231		
<b>Research Close-Up: Experimenting with a Virtual Social Reality 235</b>		
<i>What Is Said? The Message Content</i> 236		
<i>How Is It Said? The Channel of Communication</i> 244		
<i>To Whom Is It Said? The Audience</i> 248		
Extreme Persuasion: How Do Cults Indoctrinate? 251		
<i>Attitudes Follow Behavior</i> 253		
<i>Persuasive Elements</i> 254		
<i>Group Effects</i> 255		
How Can Persuasion Be Resisted? 257		
<i>Strengthening Personal Commitment</i> 257		
<b>The Inside Story: William McGuire on Attitude Inoculation 258</b>		
<i>Real-Life Applications: Inoculation Programs</i> 259		
<i>Implications of Attitude Inoculation</i> 262		
Postscript: Being Open but Not Naïve 262		



**chapter 8****Group Influence 264**

What Is a Group? 266

Social Facilitation: How Are We Affected by the Presence of Others? 267

*The Mere Presence of Others* 267*Crowding: The Presence of Many Others* 269*Why Are We Aroused in the Presence of Others?* 270

Social Loafing: Do Individuals Exert Less Effort in a Group? 271

*Many Hands Make Light Work* 272*Social Loafing in Everyday Life* 274

Deindividuation: When Do People Lose Their Sense of Self in Groups? 276

*Doing Together What We Would Not Do Alone* 277*Diminished Self-Awareness* 280

Group Polarization: Do Groups Intensify Our Opinions? 280

*The Case of the "Risky Shift"* 281*Do Groups Intensify Opinions?* 282**Focus On: Group Polarization 285***Explaining Polarization* 286

Groupthink: Do Groups Hinder or Assist Good Decisions? 289

*Symptoms of Groupthink* 290**The Inside Story: Irving Janis on Groupthink 290***Critiquing Groupthink* 293*Preventing Groupthink* 293*Group Problem Solving* 294**The Inside Story: Behind a Nobel Prize: Two Minds Are Better Than One 295**

The Influence of the Minority: How Do Individuals Influence the Group? 297

*Consistency* 298*Self-Confidence* 299*Defections from the Majority* 299*Is Leadership Minority Influence?* 299**Focus On: Transformational Community Leadership 301**

Postscript: Are Groups Bad for Us? 302

**Part Three: Social Relations****chapter 9****Prejudice: Disliking Others 306**

What Is the Nature and Power of Prejudice? 309

*Defining Prejudice* 309*Prejudice: Implicit and Explicit* 310*Racial Prejudice* 311*Gender Prejudice* 316

What Are the Social Sources of Prejudice? 319	How Can Aggression Be Reduced? 386
<i>Social Inequalities: Unequal Status and Prejudice</i> 319	<i>Catharsis?</i> 386
<i>Socialization</i> 320	<i>A Social Learning Approach</i> 388
<i>Institutional Supports</i> 323	<i>Culture Change and World Violence</i> 389
What Are the Motivational Sources of Prejudice? 325	Postscript: Reforming a Violent Culture 390
<i>Frustration and Aggression: The Scapegoat Theory</i> 325	
<i>Social Identity Theory: Feeling Superior to Others</i> 326	
<i>Motivation to Avoid Prejudice</i> 331	
What Are the Cognitive Sources of Prejudice? 332	chapter 11
<i>Categorization: Classifying People into Groups</i> 332	Attraction and Intimacy: Liking and Loving Others 392
<i>Distinctiveness: Perceiving People Who Stand Out</i> 335	
<i>Attribution: Is It a Just World?</i> 339	
What Are the Consequences of Prejudice? 343	What Leads to Friendship and Attraction? 397
<i>Self-Perpetuating Prejudgments</i> 343	<i>Proximity</i> 397
<i>Discrimination's Impact: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy</i> 345	<b>Focus On: Liking Things Associated with Oneself</b> 401
<i>Stereotype Threat</i> 346	<i>Physical Attractiveness</i> 403
<b>The Inside Story: Claude Steele on Stereotype Threat</b> 348	<b>The Inside Story: Ellen Berscheid on Attractiveness</b> 407
<i>Do Stereotypes Bias Judgments of Individuals?</i> 348	<i>Similarity Versus Complementarity</i> 411
Postscript: Can We Reduce Prejudice? 351	<b>The Inside Story: James Jones on Cultural Diversity</b> 414
	<i>Liking Those Who Like Us</i> 415
	<b>Focus On: Bad Is Stronger Than Good</b> 416
	<i>Relationship Rewards</i> 418
chapter 10	What Is Love? 420
Aggression: Hurting Others 352	<i>Passionate Love</i> 420
What Is Aggression? 354	<i>Companionate Love</i> 423
What Are Some Theories of Aggression? 355	What Enables Close Relationships? 425
<i>Aggression as a Biological Phenomenon</i> 355	<i>Attachment</i> 425
<i>Aggression as a Response to Frustration</i> 360	<i>Equity</i> 427
<i>Aggression as Learned Social Behavior</i> 362	<i>Self-Disclosure</i> 428
What Are Some Influences on Aggression? 365	<b>Focus On: Does the Internet Create Intimacy or Isolation?</b> 431
<i>Aversive Incidents</i> 366	How Do Relationships End? 433
<i>Arousal</i> 368	<i>Divorce</i> 433
<i>Aggression Cues</i> 368	<i>The Detachment Process</i> 434
<i>Media Influences: Pornography and Sexual Violence</i> 370	Postscript: Making Love 436
<i>Media Influences: Television and the Internet</i> 373	
<i>Media Influences: Video Games</i> 379	
<i>Effects of the Games Kids Play</i> 379	
<b>The Inside Story: Craig Anderson on Video-Game Violence</b> 383	chapter 12
<i>Group Influences</i> 383	Helping 438
<b>Research Close-Up: When Provoked, Are Groups More Aggressive Than Individuals?</b> 385	Why Do We Help? 441
	<i>Social Exchange and Social Norms</i> 441
	<b>The Inside Story: Dennis Krebs on Life Experience and the Study of Altruism</b> 443
	<i>Evolutionary Psychology</i> 450

<i>Comparing and Evaluating Theories of Helping</i>	452	<i>Communication</i>	510
<i>Genuine Altruism</i>	453	<i>Conciliation</i>	515
<b>Focus On: The Benefits—and the Costs—of Empathy-Induced Altruism</b> 456		Postscript: The Conflict Between Individual and Communal Rights 517	
When Will We Help? 458		<b>Part Four: Applying Social Psychology</b>	
<i>Number of Bystanders</i> 458		<b>chapter 14</b>	
<b>The Inside Story: John M. Darley on Bystander Reactions</b> 461		<b>Social Psychology in the Clinic</b> 520	
<i>Helping When Someone Else Does</i> 463		What Influences the Accuracy of Clinical Judgments? 522	
<i>Time Pressures</i> 464		<i>Illusory Correlations</i> 523	
<i>Similarity</i> 464		<i>Hindsight and Overconfidence</i> 524	
<b>Research Close-Up: Ingroup Similarity and Helping</b> 465		<i>Self-Confirming Diagnoses</i> 525	
<b>Who Will Help?</b> 467		<i>Clinical Versus Statistical Prediction</i> 525	
<i>Personality Traits</i> 467		<b>Focus On: A Physician's View: The Social Psychology of Medicine</b> 527	
<i>Gender</i> 468		<i>Implications for Better Clinical Practice</i> 528	
<i>Religious Faith</i> 469		What Cognitive Processes Accompany Behavior Problems? 528	
<b>How Can We Increase Helping?</b> 471		<i>Depression</i> 528	
<i>Reduce Ambiguity, Increase Responsibility</i> 471		<b>The Inside Story: Shelley Taylor on Positive Illusions</b> 530	
<i>Guilt and Concern for Self-Image</i> 473		<i>Loneliness</i> 532	
<i>Socializing Altruism</i> 474		<i>Anxiety and Shyness</i> 534	
<b>Focus On: Behavior and Attitudes Among Rescuers of Jews</b> 476		<i>Health, Illness, and Death</i> 536	
Postscript: Taking Social Psychology Into Life 478		What Are Some Social-Psychological Approaches to Treatment? 541	
<b>chapter 13</b>		<i>Inducing Internal Change Through External Behavior</i> 541	
<b>Conflict and Peacemaking</b> 480		<i>Breaking Vicious Circles</i> 542	
What Creates Conflict? 482		<i>Maintaining Change Through Internal Attributions for Success</i> 543	
<i>Social Dilemmas</i> 482		<i>Using Therapy as Social Influence</i> 544	
<i>Competition</i> 488		How Do Social Relationships Support Health and Well-Being? 545	
<i>Perceived Injustice</i> 490		<i>Close Relationships and Health</i> 545	
<i>Misperception</i> 490		<i>Close Relationships and Happiness</i> 549	
<b>Research Close-Up: Misperception and War</b> 494		Postscript: Enhancing Happiness 552	
How Can Peace Be Achieved? 496		<b>chapter 15</b>	
<i>Contact</i> 496		<b>Social Psychology in Court</b> 554	
<b>Research Close-Up: Relationships That Might Have Been</b> 499		How Reliable Is Eyewitness Testimony? 556	
<b>The Inside Story: Nicole Shelton and Jennifer Richeson on Cross-Racial Friendships</b> 500		<i>The Power of Persuasive Eyewitnesses</i> 557	
<i>Cooperation</i> 501		<i>When Eyes Deceive</i> 558	
<b>Focus On: Why Do We Care Who Wins?</b> 503		<i>The Misinformation Effect</i> 559	
<b>Focus On: Branch Rickey, Jackie Robinson, and the Integration of Baseball</b> 508			

<i>Retelling</i>	561	Psychology and Climate Change	590
<i>Reducing Error</i>	562	<i>Psychological Effects of Climate Change</i>	590
<b>Research Close-Up: Feedback to Witnesses</b>	<b>563</b>	<i>Public Opinion About Climate Change</i>	592
 What Other Factors Influence Juror Judgments? 567		 Enabling Sustainable Living 593	
<i>The Defendant's Characteristics</i>	567	<i>New Technologies</i>	593
<i>The Judge's Instructions</i>	570	<i>Reducing Consumption</i>	594
<i>Additional Factors</i>	572	 The Social Psychology of Materialism and Wealth 597	
 What Influences the Individual Juror? 572		<i>Increased Materialism</i>	598
<i>Juror Comprehension</i>	573	<i>Wealth and Well-Being</i>	598
<i>Jury Selection</i>	574	<i>Materialism Fails to Satisfy</i>	601
<i>"Death-Qualified" Jurors</i>	576	 <b>Focus on: Social Comparison, Belonging, and Happiness</b> 604	
 How Do Group Influences Affect Juries? 577		<i>Toward Sustainability and Survival</i>	605
<i>Minority Influence</i>	578	 <b>Research Close-Up: Measuring National Well-Being</b> 607	
<i>Group Polarization</i>	578	 Postscript: How Does One Live Responsibly in the Modern World? 609	
<b>Research Close-Up: Group Polarization in a Natural Court Setting</b>	<b>579</b>	<i>Epilogue</i>	611
<i>Leniency</i>	580	<i>References</i>	612
<i>Are Twelve Heads Better Than One?</i>	580	<i>Credits</i>	714
<i>Are Six Heads as Goods as Twelve?</i>	581	<i>Name Index</i>	717
<i>From Lab to Life: Simulated and Real Juries</i>	581	<i>Subject Index/Glossary</i>	732
 Postscript: Thinking Smart with Psychological Science 583			
 <b>chapter 16</b>			
<b>Social Psychology and the Sustainable Future</b> 586			

# GUIDE TO CULTURE

## Text coverage of culture focuses on the following topics:

- Asserting uniqueness: pp. 220–222  
Biology and culture: pp. 180–182  
Close relationships and happiness: p. 549  
Cognition and self-concept: pp. 40–44  
Collectivism: p. 40  
    Interdependent self: p. 40  
Conformity: pp. 188, 217–219, 223, 532  
Counterfactual thinking: p. 96  
“Cultural racism”: pp. 413–414  
Culture change and world violence: pp. 389–390  
Culture of peace: p. 609  
Definition of culture: pp. 11, 154  
Diversity: pp. 154–156  
Divorce: p. 424  
Evolutionary psychology: pp. 174–176  
Excess of freedom: p. 59  
Fundamental attribution error, role of in study of cultural differences: pp. 107–108  
Gender: pp. 162, 177–183  
Generalizing from laboratory to life: p. 28  
Group and superordinate identities: pp. 509–510  
Guilt: p. 444  
Immigration, children’s preference for new culture’s language and norms: p. 179  
Independence versus connectedness: p. 164  
Individualism: p. 40  
    Growing individualism within cultures: pp. 40–41  
    Independent self: p. 40  
Influence of human nature and cultural diversity: pp. 152–162  
Norms: pp. 156–159  
Observational learning of aggression: pp. 364–365  
Perceived injustice: p. 490  
Physical anonymity: p. 279  
Physical attractiveness: p. 408  
Reciprocity norm: p. 447  
Self: pp. 40–45  
    Self-esteem: pp. 43–44  
    Self-inflation: p. 39  
    Self-serving bias: p. 62  
Similarity: pp. 159–162  
Social influence: pp. 7–8  
Social loafing: pp. 274–275  
Social-responsibility norm: p. 448  
Stereotypes: pp. 309–310  
Striving for wealth = lower well-being: p. 601  
“System justification”: p. 343  
Tragedy of the Commons: p. 485  
Values in psychology: p. 10  
Variations in love: pp. 422–423

## Feature coverage of culture can be found in the following boxes:

- Focus On: The Cultural Animal:* p. 155  
*The Inside Story: Hazel Markus and Shinobu Kitayama on Cultural Psychology:* p. 45  
*The Inside Story: James Jones on Cultural Diversity:* p. 414  
*Research Close-Up: Passing Encounters, East and West:* p. 158

# GUIDE TO TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

## Text coverage of technology and social technology focuses on the following topics:

- Altruistic behavior in use of the Internet, chat rooms, e-mail: pp. 129, 459
- Anonymity helps create diversity of opinions while using classroom clickers: p. 211
- Computer-operated recorders help quantify social behaviors for researchers: p. 7
- "Cyber-ostracism": pp. 395–396
- Deindividuation and anonymity on the Internet: p. 278
- Depersonalization and abuse on discussion boards: p. 199
- Desegregation experiment with e-mails: p. 497
- Does increased time online create isolation?: pp. 431–432
- Does time online strengthen social relationships?: pp. 40, 431–432
- False consensus effect on Facebook: p. 66
- Group polarization on the Internet: pp. 284–285  
"Cyberbalkanization": p. 432
- Group problem solving:
- Electronic brainstorming: p. 296
  - Using Google: p. 296
- Happiness and materialism: p. 597
- Human progress and technology: p. 155
- Internet conspiracy groups can foster paranoia: p. 256
- Media influences on aggression: Television: pp. 373–379  
TV's effects on behavior: pp. 374–377  
TV's effects on thinking: pp. 377–379
- Media modeling of prosocial behavior: pp. 475–476
- Natural group size, Facebook friends: p. 487
- Need to belong shown in texting, cell phone subscriptions, social networking: p. 394
- Norm formation online: p. 190
- Normative influence in social networking sites: p. 288
- Online bullying: p. 354
- Online dating:  
Increased disclosure and liking: p. 431
- Personal advertisements on the Internet, asset matching: p. 405
- Self-presentation on Facebook: p. 407
- Similarity: p. 411
- Speed dating: p. 404
- Online gaming and social rejection: p. 213
- Online implicit attitude testing: p. 122  
Prejudice: pp. 310–311
- Online interaction of today's generation may cause lack of interpersonal skills: p. 54
- Online investing and the illusion of control: p. 97
- Persuasion:  
Comparing media: Which is more persuasive?: p. 247  
"Viral marketing": p. 245
- Pornography on the Internet: pp. 370–372  
Aggression against women: pp. 371–372  
Media awareness education: p. 373
- Recognizing correlational and experimental research: p. 25 Table 1.1
- Self-presentation on social networking sites: pp. 72, 406
- Sexual exploitation on the Internet: p. 432
- Texting: pp. 394, 431
- Video games:  
Increased violence and aggression: pp. 379–383  
Prosocial video games increase helping and cooperation: p. 382
- Women preferred as friends on social networking sites: p. 430
- Women spend more time on phone, texting, e-mailing, and social networking: p. 164
- Workplace/professional networks aid participation and self-disclosure: p. 431

## Feature coverage of technology and social media can be found in the following boxes:

*Research Close-Up: Experimenting with a Virtual Social Reality:* p. 235

*The Inside Story: Craig Anderson on Video Game Violence:* p. 383

*Focus On: Does the Internet Create Intimacy or Isolation?*: pp. 431–432

# A Letter from the Author

We humans have a very long history, but social psychology has a very short one—barely more than one century. Considering that we have just begun, the results are gratifying. What a feast of ideas social psychology offers! Using varied research methods, we have amassed significant insights into belief and illusion, love and hate, conformity and independence.

Much about human behavior remains a mystery, yet social psychology can now offer partial answers to many intriguing questions:

- How does our thinking—both conscious and unconscious—drive our behavior?
- What leads people sometimes to hurt and sometimes to help one another?
- What kindles social conflict, and how can we transform closed fists into helping hands?

Answering these and many other questions—my mission in the pages that lie ahead—expands our self-understanding and sensitizes us to the social forces that work upon us.

When first invited to write this book, I envisioned a text that would be at once solidly scientific and warmly human, factually rigorous and intellectually provocative. It would reveal important social phenomena, as well as how scientists discover and explain such phenomena. It would also *stimulate students' thinking*—their motivation to inquire, to analyze, to relate principles to everyday happenings.

I cast social psychology in the intellectual tradition of the liberal arts. By the teaching of great literature, philosophy, and science, liberal arts education seeks to expand our awareness and to liberate us from the confines of the present. Social psychology contributes to these goals. By focusing on humanly significant issues, I aim to offer the core content to pre-professional psychology students in ways that also are stimulating to all students. And with close-up looks at how the game is played—at the varied research tools that expose the secrets of our social nature—I hope to enable students to think smarter.

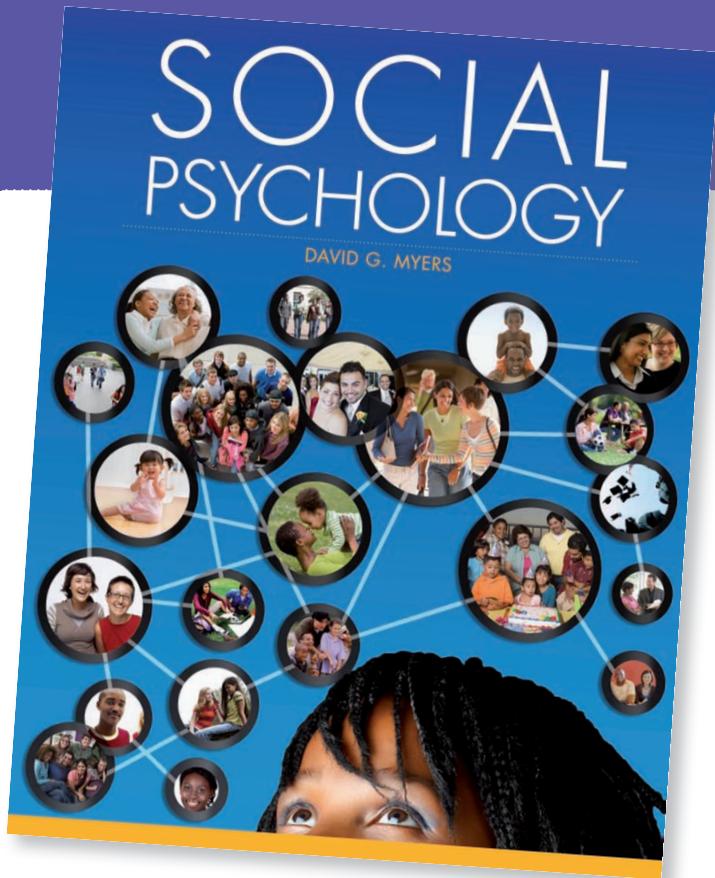
To assist the teaching and learning of social psychology is a great privilege, but also a responsibility. So please never hesitate to let me know how we are doing, and what we can do better.

David G. Myers  
Hope College  
[www.davidmyers.org](http://www.davidmyers.org)

# Preface

Social Psychology explores the human world around us. Written in the tradition of the liberal arts, Social Psychology's style allows any student to access the rich teachings of this young and exciting science. Whether students are interested in business, teaching, law, psychology, or other areas that invite exploring our social world, the text is accessible and easy to understand. In *Social Psychology*, students find scientific explorations of love and hate, conformity and independence, prejudice and helping, persuasion and self-determination.

Social psychology is about people. This text never loses sight of that idea, focusing on humanly significant issues and opening each chapter with a vignette that relates the theme of the chapter to the human experience. However, the cutting edge of social psychological research is at the forefront as well, with **726 new or updated citations** since the last edition. The "Research Close-Up" feature remains a mainstay in this edition as well, offering comprehensive looks at current research in the social psychology field around the world.





Much about human behavior remains a mystery, yet social psychology can offer insight into many questions we have about ourselves and the world we live in, such as:

- How does our thinking—both conscious and unconscious—drive our behavior?
- What is self-esteem? Is there such a thing as too much self-esteem?
- How do the people around us influence our behavior?
- What leads people sometimes to hurt and sometimes to help one another?
- What kindles social conflict, and how can we transform closed fists into helping hands?

Answering such questions is this book's mission—to investigate them, to expand self-understanding, and to reveal the social forces at work. After reading this book and thinking critically about everyday behaviors, students will better understand themselves and the world in which they work, play, and love.



63

The Self in a Social World Chapter 2

person. Compared with people in general, most people see themselves as more ethical, more competent, and even more intelligent, better-looking, and less prejudiced. (See "Focus On: Self-Serving Bias: How Do I Love Me? Let Me Count the Ways.")

Every community, it seems, is like Garrison Keillor's fictional Lake Wobegon, where "all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average." Many people believe that they will be even better soon. They never told his wife, "I wish we could afford to have five kids." (See "Focus On: Let Me Count the Ways," 2008.) Our friends' Facebook profiles are often more above average than our own. (See "Focus On: Facebook: How Do I Look? Let Me Count the Ways," 2010.) We also tend to feel that our cars are better than those of others, and that our husbands did not buy us enough. (See "Focus On: Let Me Count the Ways," 2009.)

The result is that most of us are quite self-centered. In one survey, 40 percent of wives said their husbands did not buy them enough. And 31 percent of men said that to most of their wives, "he doesn't care." But 75 percent of women said that to most of their husbands, "he does care." (See "Focus On: Let Me Count the Ways," 2009.) The general rule? Group members underestimate how much they contribute to a joint task (typically sum to more than 100 percent) (Savitsky & others, 2000).

**focus ON** **Self-Serving Bias—How Do I Love Me? Let Me Count the Ways**

"The once strong belief that unlike all human beings, regard-  
less of age, gender, education, occupation, status, or ethnicity,  
background, or culture, all columnists, Dave Barry (1998), believe that  
deep down inside, we all believe we are above aver-  
age drivers." We all believe we are above average.  
And any other objective statistic is available that, among the  
many kinds of self-serving bias, this is basic.

• **Focus** Most businesses see themselves as more  
ethical than the average business (Barber, 1990;  
Lemon, 1990; Mather & Mather, 1977). One man  
said, "I think I'm a lot better than the other guys."  
Also, 90 percent of people on a scale from 1 to 100 "feel  
as if we're doing a good job" (Gawronski, 2002).

• **Business** In one survey, 90 percent of busi-  
ness managers rated their performance as above  
average, and only 17 percent said "I feel below average."  
For the average person, 90 percent of people feel  
above average, and only 17 percent say "I feel below average."  
(Gawronski, 2002.)

• **Virtuous** In The Netherlands, most high school stu-  
dents see themselves as more honest, more per-  
sonable, and friendlier and more reliable than the average high  
school student (Hoornse, 1993, 1995).

• **Intelligence** Most people perceive themselves as  
more intelligent, better looking, and much more  
attractive than average (Public Religion, 1984;  
West & Lake, 2010; Wyer, 1974). When someone  
else rates them, people tend to think of the other  
as a genius (Leaper & Marshall, 2001).

• **Health** Most adults believe they support  
their aging parents more than do their children (Fauer-  
bach, 1993).

• **Healthcare** Los Angeles residents view themselves as  
healthier than most of their neighbors, and more col-  
leged students believe they will outlive their actually  
predicted date of death by approximately 10 years  
(University, 1978; Snyder, 2000).

• **Environment** Is it your experience, as it is mine,  
that most people who you seem to be a friend to  
are more aware of the environment than the average  
one? More and more people being more "green" though  
one's face, one's body, and more and more people  
enlarge their portion of the Earth.

• **Driving** Most drivers consider most drivers who have  
been involved in accidents to be drivers themselves  
to be safer and more skilled than the average driver  
(Cialdini, 1991; McDaniel & Myers, 1991; Sweeny,  
1991). Does Barry agree right?

**Social Psychology** is available to instructors and students in traditional print format as well as online within McGraw-Hill's Connect Social Psychology, an integrated assignment and assessment platform. Connect Social Psychology's online tools make managing assignments easier for instructors—and make learning and studying more motivating and efficient for students.



A screenshot of the Connect Social Psychology online platform. It shows a message box stating "You wrote the correct answer! The bystander effect makes it less (less/more) likely an individual will help someone in need when other people are around." Below the message are "Rate this item" stars and a green "YES!" button. At the bottom, there is a link to "Need assistance? Please visit the Digital Products Support Center".

**LearnSmart** This powerful learning system helps students assess their knowledge of course content through a series of adaptive questions, intelligently pinpointing concepts the student does not understand and mapping out a personalized study plan for success.

A screenshot of the e-book interface for Social Psychology. The page is titled "Social Loafing" and discusses the concept of social loafing in groups. A callout box says "Would make a great essay topic". The page also includes sections on "Risky Shift and Group Polarization" and "GROUP DECISION MAKING". A note at the bottom right says "In one investigation, participants were presented with fictitious dilemmas like this one and were asked how much risk the characters in the scenarios should take (Stoner, 1961). When the individuals discussed the".

**Integrated e-book** An e-book allows students to review *Social Psychology* anytime and anywhere. They can highlight, take notes, and quickly search for key terms and phrases.

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## reports

**section performance**  
There are no reportable assignment submissions yet.

**report types**

- assignment results**  
See student scores in high, medium and low ranges
- student performance**  
Quickly review an individual student's performance.
- assignment statistics**  
Mean, highest, lowest scores on each assignment.
- item analysis**  
How your students scored on each assignment item.
- category analysis**  
Performance based on item category criteria you choose.

Questions #19 - 22 (of 58)

19. value: 10 points  
If you were tasked with creating a program in order to improve teens' self-concept, where would you target your resources? What sort of program would you create?

Note: this question will not be automatically graded.  
It will be sent to your instructor for review.

contact MH Publishing  references

20. value: 10 points  
Which of the following was NOT listed in the video as an influence on the teens' self-concept?  
 media sources  
 peers  
 opposite sex  
 people on the street  
  
 contact MH Publishing  check my work  references

21. value: 10 points  
Compared to the influence of the family, friends were considered  
 an unknown influence on self-esteem.



**Real-time reports** These printable, exportable reports show how well each student (or section) is performing on each course segment. Instructors can use this feature to spot problem areas before they crop up on an exam.

**Assignable and assessable activities** Instructors can easily deliver assignments and tests online, and students can practice skills that fulfill learning objectives at their own pace and on their own schedule.

## What Else Is New in *Social Psychology*, Eleventh Edition?

Building on prior editions, this eleventh edition combines scientific rigor with an accessible voice.

The text is updated throughout, with more than 700 new citations. From cover to cover, Myers introduces social psychology's big ideas and applies them to everyday life by helping students think critically about their own and others' social behavior.

Esteemed San Diego State University psychologist Jean M. Twenge has provided a fresh perspective as she led the revision of Chapter 2 ("The Self in a Social World") and Chapter 10 ("Aggression: Hurting Others").

All major chapter topics are now introduced by a main heading framed as a question, such as "How Well Do Our Attitudes Predict Our Behavior?" New Learning Objectives paired with these questions, and with online assessment materials, identify at least one section take-away, such as "State the extent to which, and under what conditions, our inner attitudes drive our outward actions."

Coverage of culture and social media technology has been enhanced, with guides to this coverage on pages xiii–xiv.

## Chapter-by-Chapter Changes

### Chapter 1 Introducing Social Psychology

- New and updated coverage of how social behavior is biologically rooted
- New material on how values enter social psychology

### Chapter 2 The Self in a Social World

- New material on growing individualism within cultures
- New content on neuroscience
- New information on culture and cognition
- Enhanced coverage of people's ability to predict their own behavior and feelings
- Added research on motivation and self-esteem
- New material on narcissism and "collective narcissism"
- Enhanced coverage of self-serving bias in marriages
- Additional material on unrealistic optimism
- Fresh coverage of the false consensus effect on Facebook
- Added examples of the false uniqueness effect among college students

### Chapter 3 Social Beliefs and Judgments

- New introduction covering "motivated reasoning" in politics
- New key term: "embodied emotion," with research examples

### Chapter 4 Behavior and Attitudes

- Updated coverage of Implicit Association Test
- Revised material on self-justification and cognitive dissonance
- Updated information on minimization of dissonance through selective exposure
- New explanation of facial feedback effect

## **Chapter 5 Genes, Culture, and Gender**

- New material on “How We Are Influenced by Human Nature” and “Cultural Diversity”
- Report on new research on strengths of cultural norms
- New information on assigning gender
- New research on friendship and social dominance
- Added material on mating and the effects of monthly fertility
- New section on evolutionary psychologists predicting that gender generates jealousy
- Updated material on the “culture cycle”
- New material on the new field of “epigenetics”

## **Chapter 6 Conformity and Obedience**

- Added coverage on neuroscience of compliance and acceptance, including a discussion of how Asch’s procedure became the standard for hundreds of later experiments
- New material on Milgram and the power of the situation, on cohesion as a factor in predicting conformity, and on cultural conformity in relation to cultural differences
- Inclusion of new functional magnetic resonance imaging studies identifying neural activity associated with normative influence

## **Chapter 7 Persuasion**

- New chapter opener on the powers of persuasion
- Updated coverage of the effects of arousing fear and persuasion
- Introduction of terms “gain-framed” and “loss-framed” messages in persuasion
- New explanations and current examples for “Elements of Persuasion”

## **Chapter 8 Group Influence**

- Updated statistics for percentage of home games won in Table 8.1
- New examples of the phenomenon of deindividuation
- New discussion about polarization within the United States
- Added material on group polarization on the Internet

## **Chapter 9 Prejudice: Disliking Others**

- Added coverage on recent prejudice against Muslims and reciprocation toward Westerners
- New examples of stereotyping
- New discussion about how critics of the Implicit Association Test discourage using it to label individuals
- Updated and new coverage of gender discrimination in number of girl or boy babies born in some Asian countries
- Expanded discussion of how social inequalities breed prejudice and mistrust
- New figure illustrating how in-group biases influence perceptions

## **Chapter 10 Aggression: Hurting Others**

- New discussion on bullying
- Expanded coverage of “instinct theory” with new examples
- Newly treated and enhanced coverage of biochemical influences on aggression

- New section on poor diet as an influence on aggression
- Added “culture of violence” section
- Expanded section, “Media Influences: Pornography and Sexual Violence”
- New section on Stephen Pinker’s evidence for a decrease in world violence
- Enhanced coverage of Internet and aggression
- Discussion of desensitization and TV’s cognitive effects expanded
- First-time coverage—TV as a time drain
- Expanded discussion on whether playing video games causes aggression

## **Chapter 11 Attraction and Intimacy: Liking and Loving Others**

- Updated chapter opener with more discussion of ostracism
- Treatment of avoidant attachment for the first time in this text
- Many updated topics—for instance, ostracism as pain, implicit egotism phenomenon, attractiveness, likeness begetting liking, attachment styles, theory of love, evolution and attraction

## **Chapter 12 Helping**

- New chapter opener
- New material on evolutionary psychology with respect to helping behavior
- New coverage of “genuine altruism”
- Expanded coverage of “gender norms” related to helping behavior

## **Chapter 13 Conflict and Peacemaking**

- Coverage of the use of Facebook integrated throughout
- Newer studies that confirm the correlation between contact with and positive attitudes toward others
- New material on whether desegregation improves racial attitudes
- Updated studies that confirm the correlation between contact and positive attitudes
- New material on trust as a biological phenomenon
- New treatment in area of neuropsychology: “Schadenfreude”

## **Chapter 14 Social Psychology in the Clinic**

- Expanded discussion of clinicians’ clinical versus statistical prediction
- New coverage of loneliness
- New treatment of stress and illness

## **Chapter 15 Social Psychology in Court**

- Updated coverage of accuracy of eyewitnesses
- New discussion of what causes false confessions

## **Chapter 16 Social Psychology and the Sustainable Future**

- New chapter opener
- Coverage of “Psychology and Climate Change,” includes topical coverage of psychological effects of climate change and public opinion about climate change
- New coverage of “Enabling Sustainable Living” through new technologies, reducing consumption, incentives, feedback, and social identity
- Enhanced coverage of “The Social Psychology of Materialism and Wealth”



# Supplements

In addition to the many components of Connect described on pages xviii–xix for students and instructors, the following supplements are available:

## For the Student

### Online Learning Center for Students

The official website for the text ([www.mhhe.com/myers11e](http://www.mhhe.com/myers11e)) contains a practice midterm and final, and *Internet Connections* and *Internet Exercises* all updated for this new edition. Also available are *Scenarios* and *Interactivities* for each chapter.

### SocialSense Videos

Available at the Online Learning Center, the *SocialSense* videos are organized according to the text chapters. There is also a video library available containing all of the videos alphabetically. The video segments chosen illustrate core concepts of social psychology and contemporary applications. Each video includes a pretest, a post-test, and Web resources for further information.

## For the Instructor

### Online Learning Center for Instructors

The password-protected instructor side of the Online Learning Center ([www.mhhe.com/myers11e](http://www.mhhe.com/myers11e)) contains the Instructor's Manual, PowerPoint presentations, and image gallery. Ask your McGraw-Hill representative for your password.

### Instructor's Manual

**Diane Willard, Iowa Central Community College**

This manual provides many useful tools to enhance your teaching. For each chapter, you will find lecture ideas, assignment ideas, suggested class discussion topics, classroom demonstrations and demonstration materials, suggested films, and more.

**Test Bank****Alisha Janowsky, University of Central Florida**

The test bank includes more than 100 questions per chapter, including factual, conceptual, and applied questions. The test bank can be used with McGraw-Hill's *EZ Test*, a flexible and easy-to-use electronic testing program allowing instructors to create tests from the test bank as well as their own questions.

**PowerPoint Presentations****Diane Willard, Iowa Central Community College**

Available on the instructor side of the *Online Learning Center*, these presentations cover the key points of each chapter and include charts and graphs from the text. They can be used as is or modified to meet your needs.

**Image Gallery**

These files include all the figures from the Myers textbook for which McGraw-Hill holds copyright.

**Annual Editions: Social Psychology****Karen Duffy, State University of New York at Geneseo**

This annually updated reader is a compilation of current, carefully selected articles from respected journals, magazines, and newspapers. Additional support for the readings can be found on our student website, [www.mhcls.com/online](http://www.mhcls.com/online). An Instructor's Manual and the guide *Using Annual Editions in the Classroom* are available as support materials for instructors.

**Taking Sides: Clashing Views in Social Psychology****Jason A. Nier, Connecticut College**

This debate-style reader is designed to introduce students to controversial viewpoints on the field's most crucial issues. Each issue is carefully framed for the student, and the pro and cons essays represent the arguments of leading scholars and commentators in their fields.

# Acknowledgments

Although only one person's name appears on this book's cover, the truth is that a whole community of scholars has invested itself in it. Although none of these people should be held responsible for what I have written—nor do any of them fully agree with everything said—their suggestions made this a better book than it could otherwise have been.

This new edition still retains many of the improvements contributed by consultants and reviewers on the first ten editions. To the following esteemed colleagues I therefore remain indebted:

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Were it not for the inspiration of Nelson Black of McGraw-Hill, writing a textbook never would have occurred to me. Alison Meerschaert guided and encouraged the formative first edition. Brand manager Mark Georgiev and Director Mike Sugarman helped envision the execution of this eleventh edition and its teaching supplements. With sensitivity and care, developmental editor Phil Herbst collaborated with me every step of the way. Editorial Coordinator Kevin Fitzpatrick engaged the reviewers and managed the supplements, and Project Manager Holly Irish patiently guided the process of converting the manuscript into finished book, assisted by copy editors Barbara Hacha and Dan Hays' fine-tuning. Digital developmental editor Sarah Colwell enabled the creation of Connect and other digital support materials rolling out with this edition.

After hearing countless dozens of people say that this book's supplements have taken their teaching to a new level, I also pay tribute to the late Martin Bolt (Calvin College), for pioneering the extensive instructor's resources with their countless ready-to-use demonstration activities, and then to Jon Mueller (North Central College) as author of the instructor's resources for the eighth through tenth editions. Jon was able to draw on the accumulated resources in his acclaimed online resources for the teaching of social psychology and his monthly listserv offering resources to social psychology instructors (see [jfmueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow/](http://jfmueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow/)). Now I extend my thanks to Diane Willard (Iowa Central Community College) for updating and extending these resources, and to Alisha Janowsky (University of Central Florida) for authoring the important testing resources.

To all in this supporting cast, I am indebted. Working with all these people has made the creation of this book a stimulating, gratifying experience.

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# Social Psychology

CHAPTER

1

# Introducing Social Psychology



**What is social psychology?**

**What are social psychology's big ideas?**

**How do human values influence social psychology?**

**I knew it all along: Is social psychology simply common sense?**

**Research methods: How do we do social psychology?**

**Postscript: Why I wrote this book**

There once was a man whose second wife was a vain and selfish woman. This woman's two daughters were similarly vain and selfish. The man's own daughter, however, was meek and unselfish. This sweet, kind daughter, whom we all know as Cinderella, learned early on that she should do as she was told, accept ill treatment and insults, and avoid doing anything to upstage her stepsisters and their mother.

But then, thanks to her fairy godmother, Cinderella was able to escape her situation for an evening and attend a grand ball, where she attracted the attention of a handsome prince. When the love-struck prince later encountered Cinderella back in her degrading home, he failed to recognize her.

Implausible? The folktale demands that we accept the power of the situation. In the presence of her oppressive stepmother, Cinderella was humble and unattractive. At the ball, Cinderella felt more beautiful—and walked and talked and smiled as if she were. In one situation, she cowered. In the other, she charmed.

The French philosopher-novelist Jean-Paul Sartre (1946) would have had no problem accepting the Cinderella premise. We humans are “first of all beings in a situation,” he wrote. “We cannot be distinguished from our situations, for they form us and decide our possibilities” (pp. 59–60, paraphrased).

# WHAT IS SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY?

## Define social psychology and explain what it does.

### **social psychology**

The scientific study of how people think about, influence, and relate to one another.

Throughout this book, sources for information are cited parenthetically. The complete source is provided in the reference section that begins on page R-1.

**Social psychology** is a science that studies the influences of our situations, with special attention to how we view and affect one another. More precisely, it is the scientific study of how people think about, influence, and relate to one another (Figure 1.1).

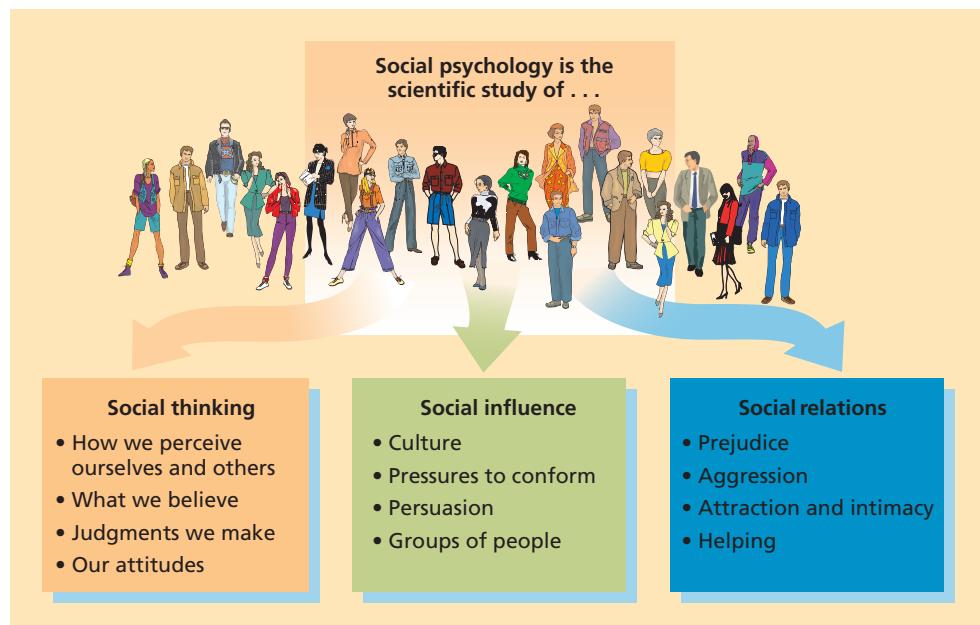
Social psychology lies at psychology's boundary with sociology. Compared with sociology (the study of people in groups and societies), social psychology focuses more on individuals and does more experimentation. Compared with personality psychology, social psychology focuses less on individuals' differences and more on how individuals, in general, view and affect one another.

Social psychology is still a young science. The first social psychology experiments were reported barely more than a century ago, and the first social psychology texts did not appear until approximately 1900 (Smith, 2005). Not until the 1930s did social psychology assume its current form. Not until World War II did it begin to emerge as the vibrant field it is today. And not until the 1970s and beyond did social psychology enjoy accelerating growth in Asia—first in India, then in Hong Kong and Japan, and, recently, in China and Taiwan (Haslam & Kashima, 2010).

Social psychology studies our thinking, influences, and relationships by asking questions that have intrigued us all. Here are some examples:

- *Does our social behavior depend more on the objective situations we face or how we construe them?* Social beliefs can be self-fulfilling. For example, happily married people will attribute their spouse's acid remark ("Can't you ever put that where it belongs?") to something external ("He must have had a frustrating day"). Unhappily married people will attribute the same remark to a mean disposition ("Is he ever hostile!") and may respond with a counterattack. Moreover, expecting hostility from their spouse, they may behave resentfully, thereby eliciting the hostility they expect.
- *Would people be cruel if ordered?* How did Nazi Germany conceive and implement the unconscionable slaughter of 6 million Jews? Those evil acts occurred partly because thousands of people followed orders. They put the prisoners on trains, herded them into crowded "showers," and poisoned

**FIGURE :: 1.1**  
Social Psychology Is . . .



them with gas. How could people engage in such horrific actions? Were those individuals normal human beings? Stanley Milgram (1974) wondered. So he set up a situation in which people were ordered to administer increasing levels of electric shock to someone who was having difficulty learning a series of words. As discussed in Chapter 6, nearly two-thirds of the participants fully complied.

- *To help? Or to help oneself?* As bags of cash tumbled from an armored truck one fall day, \$2 million was scattered along a Columbus, Ohio, street. Some motorists stopped to help, returning \$100,000. Judging from the \$1,900,000 that disappeared, many more stopped to help themselves. (What would you have done?) When similar incidents occurred several months later in San Francisco and Toronto, the results were the same: Passersby grabbed most of the money (Bowen, 1988). What situations trigger people to be helpful or greedy? Do some cultural contexts—perhaps villages and small towns—breed greater helpfulness?

These questions all deal with how people view and affect one another. And that is what social psychology is all about. Social psychologists study attitudes and beliefs, conformity and independence, love and hate.



Tired of looking at the stars,  
Professor Mueller takes up  
social psychology.

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## WHAT ARE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY'S BIG IDEAS?

Identify and describe the central concepts behind social psychology.

In many academic fields, the results of tens of thousands of studies, the conclusions of thousands of investigators, and the insights of hundreds of theorists can be boiled down to a few central ideas. Biology offers us natural selection and adaptation. Sociology builds on concepts such as social structure and organization. Music harnesses our ideas of rhythm, melody, and harmony.

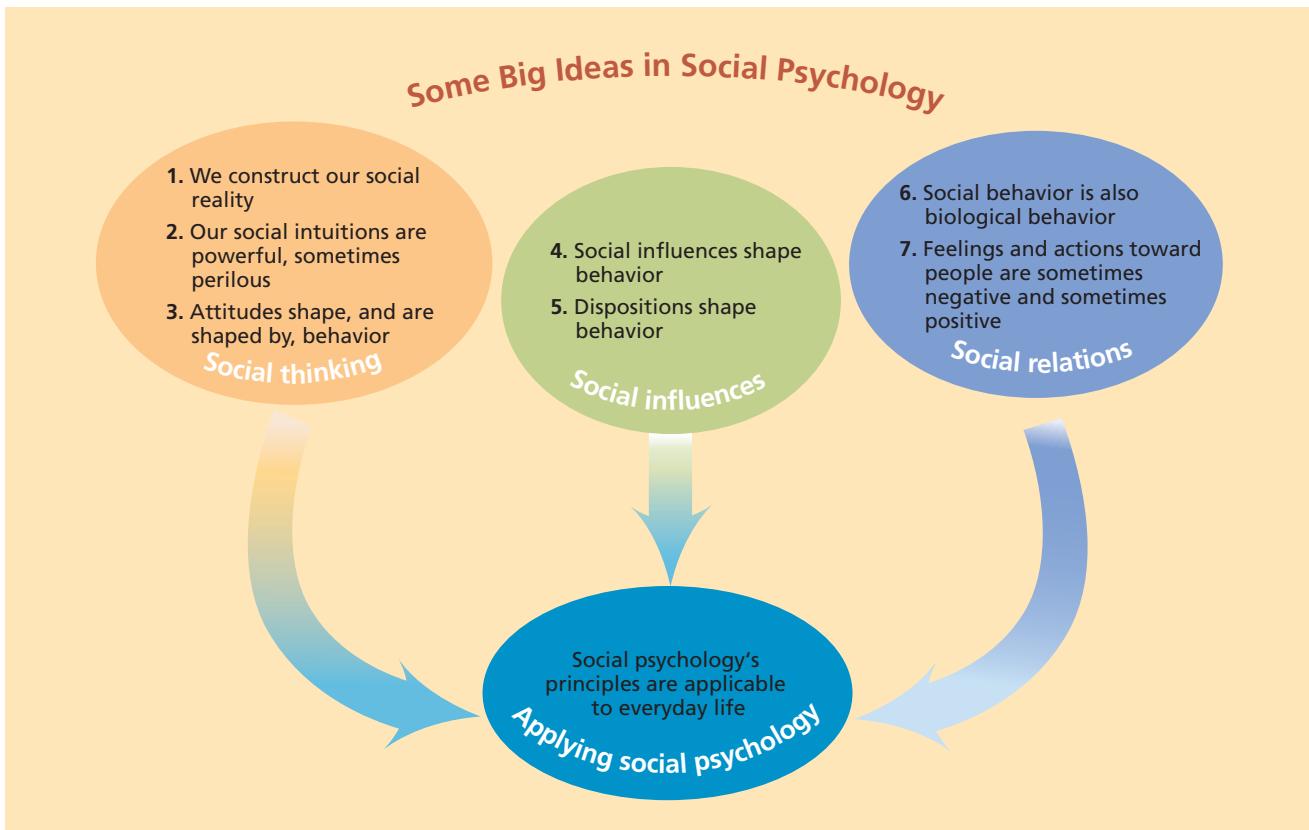
Similarly, social psychology builds on a short list of fundamental principles that will be worth remembering long after you have forgotten most of the details. My short list of “great ideas we ought never to forget” includes these (Figure 1.2), each of which we will explore further in chapters to come.

### We Construct Our Social Reality

We humans have an irresistible urge to explain behavior, to attribute it to some cause, and therefore to make it seem orderly, predictable, and controllable. You and I may *react* differently to a situation because we *think* differently. How we react to a friend’s insult depends on whether we attribute it to hostility or to a bad day.

A 1951 Princeton–Dartmouth football game provided a classic demonstration of how we construct reality (Hastorf & Cantril, 1954; see also Loy & Andrews, 1981). The game lived up to its billing as a grudge match; it was rough and dirty. A Princeton All-American was gang-tackled, piled on, and finally forced out of the game with a broken nose. Fistfights erupted, and there were further injuries on both sides. The whole performance hardly fit the Ivy League image of gentility.

Not long afterward, two psychologists, one from each school, showed films of the game to students on each campus. The students played the role of scientist-observer, noting each infraction as they watched and who was responsible for it.



**FIGURE :: 1.2**

### Some Big Ideas in Social Psychology

But they could not set aside their loyalties. The Princeton students, for example, saw twice as many Dartmouth violations as the Dartmouth students saw. The conclusion: There *is* an objective reality out there, but we always view it through the lens of our beliefs and values.

We are all intuitive scientists. We explain people's behavior, usually with enough speed and accuracy to suit our daily needs. When someone's behavior is consistent and distinctive, we attribute that behavior to his or her personality. For example, if you observe someone who makes repeated snide comments, you may infer that this person has a nasty disposition, and then you might try to avoid the person.

Our beliefs about ourselves also matter. Do we have an optimistic outlook? Do we see ourselves as in control of things? Do we view ourselves as relatively superior or inferior? Our answers influence our emotions and actions. *How we construe the world, and ourselves, matters.*

## Our Social Intuitions Are Often Powerful but Sometimes Perilous

Our instant intuitions shape our fears (Is flying dangerous?), impressions (Can I trust him?), and relationships (Does she like me?). Intuitions influence presidents in times of crisis, gamblers at the table, jurors assessing guilt, and personnel directors screening applicants. Such intuitions are commonplace.

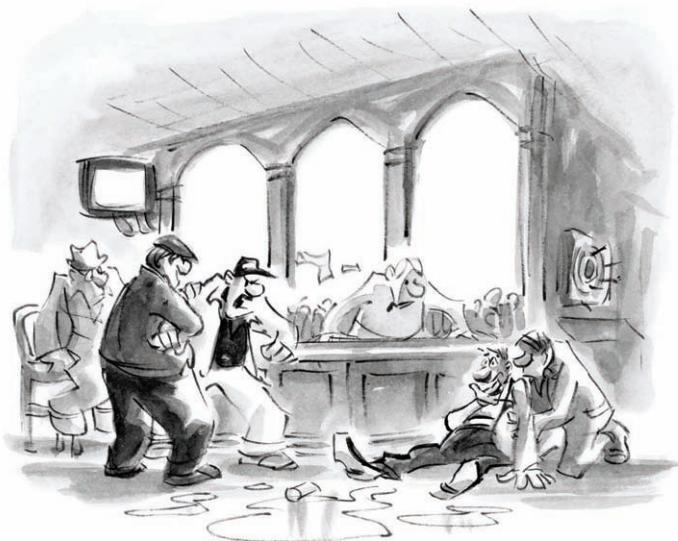
Indeed, psychological science reveals a fascinating unconscious mind—an intuitive backstage mind—that Freud never told us about. More than psychologists realized until recently, thinking occurs offstage, out of sight. Our intuitive capacities are revealed by studies of what later chapters will explain: “automatic processing,” “implicit memory,” “heuristics,” “spontaneous trait inference,” instant emotions, and nonverbal communication. Thinking, memory, and attitudes all operate on two levels—one

conscious and deliberate, the other unconscious and automatic. Today's researchers call it "dual processing." We know more than we know we know. We think on two levels—"intuitive" and "deliberate" (Kruglanski & Gigerenzer, 2011). A book title by Nobel laureate psychologist Daniel Kahneman (2011) captures the idea: We do *Thinking, Fast and Slow*.

Intuition is huge, but intuition is also perilous. For example, as we cruise through life, mostly on automatic pilot, we intuitively judge the likelihood of things by how easily various instances come to mind. We carry readily available mental images of plane crashes. Thus, most people fear flying more than driving, and many will drive great distances to avoid risking the skies. Actually, we are many times safer (per mile traveled) in a commercial plane than in a motor vehicle (in the United States, air travel was 170 times safer between 2005 and 2007, reports the National Safety Council [2010]).

Even our intuitions about ourselves often err. We intuitively trust our memories more than we should. We misread our own minds; in experiments, we deny being affected by things that do influence us. We mispredict our own feelings—how bad we'll feel a year from now if we lose our job or our romance breaks up, and how good we'll feel a year from now, or even a week from now, if we win our state's lottery. And we often mispredict our own future. When selecting clothes, people approaching middle age will still buy snug ("I anticipate shedding a few pounds"); rarely does anyone say, more realistically, "I'd better buy a relatively loose fit; people my age tend to put on pounds."

Our social intuitions, then, are noteworthy for both their powers and their perils. By reminding us of intuition's gifts and alerting us to its pitfalls, social psychologists aim to fortify our thinking. In most situations, "fast and frugal" snap judgments serve us well. But in others, in which accuracy matters—such as when needing to fear the right things and spend our resources accordingly—we had best restrain our impulsive intuitions with critical thinking. *Our intuitions and unconscious information processing are routinely powerful and sometimes perilous.*



*"He didn't actually threaten me, but I perceived him as a threat."*

Social cognition matters. Our behavior is influenced not just by the objective situation but also by how we construe it.

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## Social Influences Shape Our Behavior

We are, as Aristotle long ago observed, social animals. We speak and think in words we learned from others. We long to connect, to belong, and to be well thought of. Matthias Mehl and James Pennebaker (2003) quantified their University of Texas students' social behavior by inviting them to wear microcassette recorders and microphones. Once every 12 minutes during their waking hours, the computer-operated recorder would imperceptibly record for 30 seconds. Although the observation period covered only weekdays (including class time), almost 30 percent of the students' time was spent in conversation. Relationships are a big part of being human.

As social creatures, we respond to our immediate contexts. Sometimes the power of a social situation leads us to act contrary to our expressed attitudes. Indeed, powerfully evil situations sometimes overwhelm good intentions, inducing people to agree with falsehoods or comply with cruelty. Under Nazi influence, many decent people became instruments of the Holocaust. Other situations may elicit great generosity and compassion. After a major earthquake and tsunami in 2011, Japan was overwhelmed with offers of assistance.

The power of the situation is also dramatically evident in varying attitudes regarding same-sex relationships. Tell me whether you live in Africa or the Middle East (where most oppose such relationships) or in western Europe, Canada, or Australia/New Zealand, and I will make a reasonable guess as to what your attitude is about these relationships. I will become even more confident in my guess if I know your educational level, the age of your peer group, and the media you watch. Our situations matter.

Our cultures help define our situations. For example, our standards regarding promptness, frankness, and clothing vary with our culture.

- Whether you prefer a slim or a voluptuous body depends on when and where in the world you live.
- Whether you define social justice as equality (all receive the same) or as equity (those who earn more receive more) depends on whether your ideology has been shaped more by socialism or by capitalism.
- Whether you tend to be expressive or reserved, casual or formal, hinges partly on your culture and your ethnicity.
- Whether you focus primarily on yourself—your personal needs, desires, and morality—or on your family, clan, and communal groups depends on how much you are a product of modern Western individualism.

Social psychologist Hazel Markus (2005) sums it up: “People are, above all, malleable.” Said differently, we adapt to our social context. *Our attitudes and behavior are shaped by external social forces.*

## Personal Attitudes and Dispositions Also Shape Behavior

Internal forces also matter. We are not passive tumbleweeds, merely blown this way and that by the social winds. Our inner attitudes affect our behavior. Our political attitudes influence our voting behavior. Our smoking attitudes influence our susceptibility to peer pressure to smoke. Our attitudes toward the poor influence our willingness to help them. (As we will see, our attitudes also follow our behavior, which leads us to believe strongly in those things we have committed ourselves to or suffered for.)

Personality dispositions also affect behavior. Facing the same situation, different people may react differently. Emerging from years of political imprisonment, one person exudes bitterness and seeks revenge. Another, such as South Africa’s Nelson Mandela, seeks reconciliation and unity with his former enemies. *Attitudes and personality influence behavior.*

## Social Behavior Is Biologically Rooted

Twenty-first-century social psychology is providing us with ever-growing insights into our behavior’s biological foundations. Many of our social behaviors reflect a deep biological wisdom.

Everyone who has taken introductory psychology has learned that nature and nurture together form who we are. As the area of a rectangle is determined by both its length and its width, so do biology and experience together create us. As *evolutionary psychologists* remind us (see Chapter 5), our inherited human nature predisposes us to behave in ways that helped our ancestors survive and reproduce. We carry the genes of those whose traits enabled them and their children to survive and reproduce. Our behavior, too, aims to send our DNA into the future. Thus, evolutionary psychologists ask how natural selection might predispose our actions and reactions when dating and mating, hating and hurting, caring and sharing. Nature also endows us with an enormous capacity to learn and to adapt to varied environments. We are sensitive and responsive to our social context.

If every psychological event (every thought, every emotion, every behavior) is simultaneously a biological event, then we can also examine the neurobiology that underlies social behavior. What brain areas enable our experiences of love and contempt, helping and aggression, perception and belief? Do extraverts, as some research suggests, require more stimulation to keep their brain aroused? When shown a friendly face, do socially secure people, more than shy people, respond in a brain area concerned with reward? How do brain, mind, and behavior function together as one coordinated system? What does the timing of brain events reveal about how we process information? Such questions are asked by those in **social neuroscience** (Cacioppo & others, 2010; Klein & others, 2010).

Social neuroscientists do not reduce complex social behaviors, such as helping and hurting, to simple neural or molecular mechanisms. Their point is this: To understand social behavior, we must consider both under-the-skin (biological) and between-skins (social) influences. Mind and body are one grand system. Stress hormones affect how we feel and act: A testosterone dose decreases trust, oxytocin increases it (Bos & others, 2010). Social ostracism elevates blood pressure. Social support strengthens the disease-fighting immune system. *We are bio-psycho-social organisms.* We reflect the interplay of our biological, psychological, and social influences. And that is why today's psychologists study behavior from these different levels of analysis.

### **social neuroscience**

An interdisciplinary field that explores the neural bases of social and emotional processes and behaviors, and how these processes and behaviors affect our brain and biology.

## **Social Psychology's Principles Are Applicable in Everyday Life**

Social psychology has the potential to illuminate your life, to make visible the subtle influences that guide your thinking and acting. And, as we will see, it offers many ideas about how to know ourselves better, how to win friends and influence people, how to transform closed fists into open arms.

Scholars are also applying social psychological insights. Principles of social thinking, social influence, and social relations have implications for human health and well-being, for judicial procedures and juror decisions in courtrooms, and for influencing behaviors that will enable an environmentally sustainable human future.

As but one perspective on human existence, psychological science does not answer life's ultimate questions: What is the meaning of human life? What should be our purpose? What is our ultimate destiny? But social psychology does give us a method for asking and answering some exceedingly interesting and important questions. *Social psychology is all about life—your life: your beliefs, your attitudes, your relationships.*

The rest of this chapter takes us inside social psychology. Let's first consider how social psychologists' own values influence their work in obvious and subtle ways. And then let's focus on this chapter's biggest task: glimpsing how we *do* social psychology. How do social psychologists search for explanations of social thinking, social influence, and social relations? And how might you and I use these analytical tools to think smarter?

*Throughout this book, a brief summary will conclude each major section. I hope these summaries will help you assess how well you have learned the material in each section.*

## **SUMMING UP: What Are Social Psychology's Big Ideas?**

*Social psychology* is the scientific study of how people think about, influence, and relate to one another. Its central themes include the following:

- How we construe our social worlds
- How our social intuitions guide and sometimes deceive us

- How our social behavior is shaped by other people, by our attitudes and personalities, and by our biology
- How social psychology's principles apply to our everyday lives and to various other fields of study

# HOW DO HUMAN VALUES INFLUENCE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY?

**Identify the ways that values penetrate the work of social psychologists.**

Social psychology is less a collection of findings than a set of strategies for answering questions. In science, as in courts of law, personal opinions are inadmissible. When ideas are put on trial, evidence determines the verdict.

But are social psychologists really that objective? Because they are human beings, don't their *values*—their personal convictions about what is desirable and how people ought to behave—seep into their work? If so, can social psychology really be scientific?

There are two general ways that values enter psychology: the obvious and the subtle.

## Obvious Ways Values Enter Psychology

Values enter the picture when social psychologists *choose research topics*. These choices typically reflect social history (Kagan, 2009). It was no accident that the study of prejudice flourished during the 1940s as fascism raged in Europe; that the 1950s, a time of look-alike fashions and intolerance of differing views, gave us studies of conformity; that the 1960s saw interest in aggression increase with riots and rising crime rates; that the feminist movement of the 1970s helped stimulate a wave of research on gender and sexism; that the 1980s offered a resurgence of attention to psychological aspects of the arms race; and that the 1990s and the early twenty-first century were marked by heightened interest in how people respond to diversity in culture, race, and sexual orientation. Susan Fiske (2011a) suggests that we can expect future research to reflect today's and tomorrow's issues, including immigration, income inequality, and aging.

Values differ not only across time but also across cultures. In Europe, people take pride in their nationalities. The Scots are more self-consciously distinct from the English, and the Austrians from the Germans, than are similarly adjacent Michiganders from Ohioans. Consequently, Europe has given us a major theory of "social identity," whereas American social psychologists have focused more on individuals—how one person thinks about others, is influenced by them, and relates to them (Fiske, 2004; Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1984). Australian social psychologists have drawn theories and methods from both Europe and North America (Feather, 2005).

Values also influence the *types of people* who are attracted to various disciplines (Campbell, 1975a; Moynihan, 1979). At your school, do the students majoring in the humanities, the arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences differ noticeably from one another? Do social psychology and sociology attract people who are—for example—relatively eager to challenge tradition, people more inclined to shape the future than preserve the past? And does social science study enhance such inclinations (Dambrun & others, 2009)? Such factors explain why, when psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2011) asked approximately 1000 social psychologists at a national convention about their politics, 80 to 90 percent raised their hands to indicate they were "liberal." When he asked for those who were "conservative,"



Different sciences offer different perspectives.  
ScienceCartoonsPlus.com

three hands raised. (Be assured that most topics covered in this text—from “How do our attitudes influence our behavior?” to “Does TV violence influence aggressive behavior?”—are not partisan.)

Finally, values obviously enter the picture as the *object* of social psychological analysis. Social psychologists investigate how values form, why they change, and how they influence attitudes and actions. None of that, however, tells us which values are “right.”

## Not-So-Obvious Ways Values Enter Psychology

We less often recognize the subtle ways in which value commitments masquerade as objective truth. What are three not-so-obvious ways values enter psychology?

### THE SUBJECTIVE ASPECTS OF SCIENCE

Scientists and philosophers agree: Science is not purely objective. Scientists do not simply read the book of nature. Rather, they interpret nature, using their own mental categories. In our daily lives, too, we view the world through the lens of our preconceptions. Whether we see a moving light in the sky as a flying saucer or see a face in a pie crust depends on our perceptual set. While reading these words, you have been unaware that you are also looking at your nose. Your mind blocks from awareness something that is there, if only you were predisposed to perceive it. This tendency to prejudge reality based on our expectations is a basic fact about the human mind.

Because scholars at work in any given area often share a common viewpoint or come from the same **culture**, their assumptions may go unchallenged. What we take for granted—the shared beliefs that some European social psychologists call our **social representations** (Augoustinos & Innes, 1990; Moscovici, 1988, 2001)—are often our most important yet most unexamined convictions. Sometimes, however, someone from outside the camp will call attention to those assumptions. During the 1980s, feminists and Marxists exposed some of social psychology’s unexamined assumptions. Feminist critics called attention to subtle biases—for example, the political conservatism of some scientists who favored a biological interpretation of gender differences in social behavior (Unger, 1985). Marxist critics called attention to competitive, individualist biases—for example, the assumption that conformity is bad and that individual rewards are good. Marxists and feminists, of course, make their own assumptions, as critics of academic “political correctness” are fond of noting. Social psychologist Lee Jussim (2005), for example, argues that progressive social psychologists sometimes feel compelled to deny group differences and to assume that stereotypes of group difference are never rooted in reality but always in racism.

In Chapter 3, we will discuss more ways in which our preconceptions guide our interpretations. As those Princeton and Dartmouth football fans remind us, what guides our behavior is less the situation-as-it-is than the situation-as-we-construe-it.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPTS CONTAIN HIDDEN VALUES

Implicit in our understanding that psychology is not objective is the realization that psychologists’ own values may play an important part in the theories and judgments they support. Psychologists may refer to people as mature or immature, as well adjusted or poorly adjusted, as mentally healthy or mentally ill. They may talk as if they were stating facts, when they are really making *value judgments*. The following are examples:

**DEFINING THE GOOD LIFE** Values influence our idea of how best to live. The personality psychologist Abraham Maslow, for example, was known for his sensitive descriptions of “self-actualized” people—people who, with their needs for survival, safety, belonging, and self-esteem satisfied, go on to fulfill their human potential. He described, among other individuals, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Eleanor Roosevelt. Few readers noticed that Maslow, guided by his own values, selected his sample of self-actualized people himself. The resulting description of self-actualized

"SCIENCE DOES NOT SIMPLY DESCRIBE AND EXPLAIN NATURE; IT IS PART OF THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN NATURE AND OURSELVES; IT DESCRIBES NATURE AS EXPOSED TO OUR METHOD OF QUESTIONING."

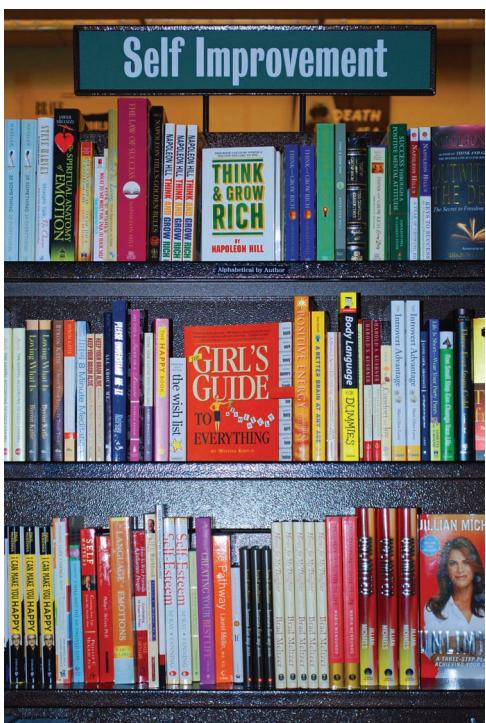
—WERNER HEISENBERG, PHYSICS AND PHILOSOPHY, 1958

### culture

The enduring behaviors, ideas, attitudes, and traditions shared by a large group of people and transmitted from one generation to the next.

### social representations

A society’s widely held ideas and values, including assumptions and cultural ideologies. Our social representations help us make sense of our world.



Hidden (and not-so-hidden) values seep into psycho-logical advice. They permeate popular psychology books that offer guidance on living and loving.

personalities—as spontaneous, autonomous, mystical, and so forth—reflected Maslow's personal values. Had he begun with someone else's heroes—say, Napoleon, Alexander the Great, and John D. Rockefeller—his resulting description of self-actualization would have differed (Smith, 1978).

**PROFESSIONAL ADVICE** Psychological advice also reflects the advice giver's personal values. When mental health professionals advise us how to get along with our spouse or our co-workers, when child-rearing experts tell us how to handle our children, and when some psychologists advocate living free of concern for others' expectations, they are expressing their personal values. (In Western cultures, those values usually will be individualistic—encouraging what feels best for "me." Non-Western cultures more often encourage what is best for "we.") Unaware of those hidden values, many people defer to the "professional." But professional psychologists cannot answer questions of ultimate moral obligation, of purpose and direction, and of life's meaning.

**FORMING CONCEPTS** Hidden values even seep into psychology's research-based *concepts*. Pretend you have taken a personality test and the psychologist, after scoring your answers, announces: "You scored high in self-esteem. You are low in anxiety. And you have exceptional ego-strength." "Ah," you think, "I suspected as much, but it feels good to know that." Now another psychologist gives you

a similar test, which asks some of the same questions. Afterward, the psychologist informs you that you seem defensive, for you scored high in "repressiveness." "How could this be?" you wonder. "The other psychologist said such nice things about me." It could be because all these labels describe the same set of responses (a tendency to say nice things about oneself and not to acknowledge problems). Shall we call it high self-esteem or defensiveness? The label reflects the judgment.

**LABELING** Value judgments, then, are often hidden within our social psychological language—but that is also true of everyday language:

- Whether we label a quiet child as “bashful” or “cautious,” as “holding back” or as “an observer,” conveys a judgment.
  - Whether we label someone engaged in guerrilla warfare a “terrorist” or a “freedom fighter” depends on our view of the cause.
  - Whether we view wartime civilian deaths as “the loss of innocent lives” or as “collateral damage” affects our acceptance of such.
  - Whether we call public assistance “welfare” or “aid to the needy” reflects our political views.
  - When “they” exalt their country and people, it is nationalism; when “we” do it, it is patriotism.
  - Whether someone involved in an extramarital affair is practicing “open marriage” or “adultery” depends on one’s personal values.
  - “Brainwashing” is social influence we do not approve of.
  - “Perversions” are sex acts we do not practice.

As these examples indicate, values lie hidden within our cultural definitions of mental health, our psychological advice for living, our concepts, and our psychological labels. Throughout this book, I will call your attention to additional examples of hidden values. The point is never that the implicit values are necessarily bad. The point is that scientific interpretation, even at the level of labeling phenomena, is a human activity. It is therefore inevitable that prior beliefs and values will influence what social psychologists think and write.

Should we dismiss science because it has its subjective side? Quite the contrary: The realization that human thinking always involves interpretation is precisely why we need researchers with varying biases to undertake scientific analysis. By constantly checking our beliefs against the facts, we restrain our biases. Systematic observation and experimentation help us clean the lens through which we see reality.

## SUMMING UP: How Do Human Values Influence Social Psychology?

- Social psychologists' values penetrate their work in obvious ways, such as their choice of research topics and the types of people who are attracted to various fields of study.
- They also do this in subtler ways, such as their hidden assumptions when forming concepts, choosing labels, and giving advice.
- This penetration of values into science is not a reason to fault social psychology or any other science. That human thinking is seldom dispassionate is precisely why we need systematic observation and experimentation if we are to check our cherished ideas against reality.

## I KNEW IT ALL ALONG: IS SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY SIMPLY COMMON SENSE?

Explore how social psychology's theories provide new insight into the human condition.

Many of the conclusions presented in this book may already have occurred to you, for social psychological phenomena are all around you. We constantly observe people thinking about, influencing, and relating to one another. It pays to discern what a facial expression predicts, how to get someone to do something, or whether to regard another as friend or foe. For centuries, philosophers, novelists, and poets have observed and commented on social behavior.

Does this mean that social psychology is just common sense in fancy words? Social psychology faces two contradictory criticisms: first, that it is trivial because it documents the obvious; second, that it is dangerous because its findings could be used to manipulate people.

Chapter 7 explores the second criticism. Here, let's examine the first objection.

Do social psychology and the other social sciences simply formalize what any amateur already knows intuitively? Writer Cullen Murphy (1990) took that view: "Day after day social scientists go out into the world. Day after day they discover that people's behavior is pretty much what you'd expect." Nearly a half-century earlier, historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (1949), reacted with similar scorn to social scientists' studies of American World War II soldiers. Sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld (1949) reviewed those studies and offered a sample with interpretive comments, a few of which I paraphrase:

1. Better-educated soldiers suffered more adjustment problems than did less-educated soldiers. (Intellectuals were less prepared for battle stresses than were street-smart people.)
2. Southern soldiers coped better with the hot South Sea Island climate than did Northern soldiers. (Southerners are more accustomed to hot weather.)

3. White privates were more eager for promotion than were Black privates.  
(Years of oppression take a toll on achievement motivation.)
4. Southern Blacks preferred Southern to Northern White officers. (Southern officers were more experienced and skilled in interacting with Blacks.)

As you read those findings, did you agree that they were basically common sense? If so, you may be surprised to learn that Lazarsfeld went on to say, "*Every one of these statements is the direct opposite of what was actually found.*" In reality, the studies found that less-educated soldiers adapted more poorly. Southerners were not more likely than northerners to adjust to a tropical climate. Blacks were more eager than Whites for promotion, and so forth. "If we had mentioned the actual results of the investigation first [as Schlesinger experienced], the reader would have labeled these 'obvious' also."

One problem with common sense is that we invoke it after we know the facts. Events are far more "obvious" and predictable in hindsight than beforehand. Experiments reveal that when people learn the outcome of an experiment, that outcome suddenly seems unsurprising—much less surprising than it is to people who are simply told about the experimental procedure and the possible outcomes (Slovic & Fischhoff, 1977).

Likewise, in everyday life we often do not expect something to happen until it does. Then we suddenly see clearly the forces that brought the event about and feel unsurprised. Moreover, we may also misremember our earlier view (Blank & others, 2008; Nestler & others, 2010). Errors in judging the future's foreseeability and in remembering our past combine to create **hindsight bias** (also called the *I-knew-it-all-along phenomenon*).

Thus, after elections or stock market shifts, most commentators find the turn of events unsurprising: "The market was due for a correction." After the 2010 Gulf oil disaster, it seemed obvious—in hindsight—that BP employees had taken some shortcuts and ignored warnings, and that government oversight was lax. As the Danish philosopher-theologian Søren Kierkegaard put it, "Life is lived forwards, but understood backwards."

If hindsight bias is pervasive, you may now be feeling that you already knew about this phenomenon. Indeed, almost any conceivable result of a psychological experiment can seem like common sense—*after* you know the result.

You can demonstrate the phenomenon yourself. Take a group of people and tell half of them one psychological finding and the other half the opposite result. For example, tell half as follows:

Social psychologists have found that, whether choosing friends or falling in love, we are most attracted to people whose traits are different from our own. There seems to be wisdom in the old saying "Opposites attract."

Tell the other half:

Social psychologists have found that, whether choosing friends or falling in love, we are most attracted to people whose traits are similar to our own. There seems to be wisdom in the old saying "Birds of a feather flock together."

Ask the people first to explain the result. Then ask them to say whether it is "surprising" or "not surprising." Virtually all will find a good explanation for whichever result they were given and will say it is "not surprising."

Indeed, we can draw on our stockpile of proverbs to make almost any result seem to make sense. If a social psychologist reports that separation intensifies romantic attraction, John Q. Public responds, "You get paid for this? Everybody knows that 'absence makes the heart grow fonder.'" Should it turn out that separation *weakens* attraction, John will say, "My grandmother could have told you, 'Out of sight, out of mind.'"

### **hindsight bias**

The tendency to exaggerate, after learning an outcome, one's ability to have foreseen how something turned out. Also known as the *I-knew-it-all-along phenomenon*.



In hindsight, events seem obvious and predictable.  
ScienceCartoonsPlus.com

Karl Teigen (1986) must have had a few chuckles when he asked University of Leicester (England) students to evaluate actual proverbs and their opposites. When given the proverb "Fear is stronger than love," most rated it as true. But so did students who were given its reversed form, "Love is stronger than fear." Likewise, the genuine proverb "He that is fallen cannot help him who is down" was rated highly; but so too was "He that is fallen can help him who is down." My favorites, however, were two highly rated proverbs: "Wise men make proverbs and fools repeat them" (authentic) and its made-up counterpart, "Fools make proverbs and wise men repeat them." For more dueling proverbs, see "Focus On: I Knew It All Along."

The hindsight bias creates a problem for many psychology students. Sometimes results are genuinely surprising (for example, that Olympic *bronze* medalists take more joy in their achievement than do silver medalists). More often, when you read the results of experiments in your textbooks, the material seems easy, even obvious. When you later take a multiple-choice test on which you must choose among several plausible conclusions, the task may become surprisingly difficult. "I don't know what happened," the befuddled student later moans. "I thought I knew the material."

The I-knew-it-all-along phenomenon can have unfortunate consequences. It is conducive to arrogance—an overestimation of our own intellectual powers. Moreover, because outcomes seem as if they should have been foreseeable, we are more likely to blame decision makers for what are in retrospect "obvious" bad choices than to praise them for good choices, which also seem "obvious."

Starting *after* the morning of 9/11 and working backward, signals pointing to the impending disaster seemed obvious. A U.S. Senate investigative report listed the missed or misinterpreted clues (Gladwell, 2003): The CIA knew that al Qaeda operatives had entered the country. An FBI agent sent a memo to headquarters that began by warning "the Bureau and New York of the possibility of a coordinated effort by Osama bin Laden to send students to the United States to attend civilian aviation universities and colleges." The FBI ignored that accurate warning and failed to relate it to other reports that terrorists were planning to use planes as weapons. The president received a daily briefing titled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike Inside the United States" and stayed on holiday. "The dumb fools!" it seemed to hindsight critics. "Why couldn't they connect the dots?"

But what seems clear in hindsight is seldom clear on the front side of history. The intelligence community is overwhelmed with "noise"—piles of useless information surrounding the rare shreds of useful information. Analysts must therefore be selective in deciding which to pursue, and only when a lead is pursued does it stand a chance of being connected to another lead. In the 6 years

# focus ON

## I Knew It All Along

Cullen Murphy (1990), managing editor of the *Atlantic*, faulted "sociology, psychology, and other social sciences for too often merely discerning the obvious or confirming the commonplace." His own casual survey of social science findings "turned up no ideas or conclusions that can't be found in *Bartlett's* or any other encyclopedia of quotations." Nevertheless, to sift through competing sayings, we need research. Consider some dueling proverbs:

### Is it more true that . . .

- We should keep our eye on the prize.
- Too many cooks spoil the broth.
- The pen is mightier than the sword.
- You can't teach an old dog new tricks.
- Blood is thicker than water.
- He who hesitates is lost.
- Forewarned is forearmed.

### Or that . . .

- We should keep our nose to the grindstone.
- Two heads are better than one.
- Actions speak louder than words.
- You're never too old to learn.
- Many kinfolk, few friends.
- Look before you leap.
- Don't cross the bridge until you come to it.

before 9/11, the FBI's counterterrorism unit could never have pursued all 68,000 uninvestigated leads. In hindsight, the few useful ones are now obvious.

In the aftermath of the 2008 world financial crisis, it seemed obvious that government regulators should have placed safeguards against the ill-fated bank lending practices. But what was obvious in hindsight was unforeseen by the chief American regulator, Alan Greenspan, who found himself "in a state of shocked disbelief" at the economic collapse.

"IT IS EASY TO BE WISE  
AFTER THE EVENT."

—SHERLOCK HOLMES, IN  
ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S  
STORY "THE PROBLEM OF  
THOR BRIDGE"

"EVERYTHING IMPORTANT  
HAS BEEN SAID BEFORE."

—PHILOSOPHER ALFRED  
NORTH WHITEHEAD  
(1861–1947)

We sometimes blame ourselves for "stupid mistakes"—perhaps for not having handled a person or a situation better. Looking back, we see how we should have handled it. "I should have known how busy I would be at the semester's end and started that paper earlier." But sometimes we are too hard on ourselves. We forget that what is obvious to us *now* was not nearly so obvious at the time.

Physicians who are told both a patient's symptoms and the cause of death (as determined by autopsy) sometimes wonder how an incorrect diagnosis could have been made. Other physicians, given only the symptoms, do not find the diagnosis nearly so obvious (Dawson & others, 1988). Would juries be slower to assume malpractice if they were forced to take a foresight rather than a hindsight perspective?

What do we conclude—that common sense is usually wrong? Sometimes it is. At other times, conventional wisdom is right—or it falls on both sides of an issue: Does happiness come from knowing the truth, or from preserving illusions? From being with others, or from living in peaceful solitude? Opinions are a dime a dozen. No matter what we find, there will be someone who foresaw it. (Mark Twain jestingly noted that Adam was the only person who, when saying a good thing, knew that nobody had said it before.) But which of the many competing ideas best fit reality? Research can specify the circumstances under which a commonsense truism is valid.

The point is not that common sense is predictably wrong. Rather, common sense usually is right—*after the fact*. We therefore easily deceive ourselves into thinking that we know and knew more than we do and did. And that is precisely why we need science to help us sift reality from illusion and genuine predictions from easy hindsight.

## SUMMING UP: I Knew It All Along: Is Social Psychology Simply Common Sense?

- Social psychology is criticized for being trivial because it documents things that seem obvious.
- Experiments, however, reveal that outcomes are more "obvious" *after* the facts are known.
- This *hindsight bias* (the *I-knew-it-all-along phenomenon*) often makes people overconfident about the validity of their judgments and predictions.

## RESEARCH METHODS: HOW DO WE DO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY?

Examine the methods that make social psychology a science.

We have considered some of the intriguing questions social psychology seeks to answer. We have also seen how subjective, often unconscious, processes influence social psychologists' work. Now let's consider how social psychologists go about doing research.

In their quest for insight, social psychologists propose *theories* that organize their observations and imply testable *hypotheses* and practical predictions. To test a hypothesis, social psychologists may do research that predicts behavior using *correlational* studies, often conducted in natural settings. Or they may seek to explain behavior by conducting *experiments* that manipulate one or more factors under controlled conditions. Then they may explore ways to apply their findings to improve people's everyday lives.

We are all amateur social psychologists. People-watching is a universal hobby. As we observe people, we form ideas about how human beings think about, influence, and relate to one another. Professional social psychologists do the same, only more systematically (by forming theories) and painstakingly (often with experiments that create miniature social dramas that pin down cause and effect).

## Forming and Testing Hypotheses

We social psychologists have a difficult time thinking of anything more fascinating than human existence. As we wrestle with human nature to pin down its secrets, we organize our ideas and findings into theories. A **theory** is an *integrated set of principles that explain and predict observed events*. Theories are a scientific shorthand.

In everyday conversation, "theory" often means "less than fact"—a middle rung on a confidence ladder from guess to theory to fact. Thus, people may dismiss Charles Darwin's theory of evolution as "just a theory." Indeed, notes Alan Leshner (2005), chief officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, "Evolution is only a theory, but so is gravity." People often respond that gravity is a fact—but the *fact* is that your keys fall to the ground when dropped. Gravity is the *theoretical explanation* that accounts for such observed facts.

To a scientist, facts and theories are apples and oranges. Facts are agreed-upon statements about what we observe. Theories are *ideas* that summarize and explain facts. "Science is built up with facts, as a house is with stones," wrote the French scientist Jules Henri Poincaré, "but a collection of facts is no more a science than a heap of stones is a house."

Theories not only summarize but also imply testable predictions, called **hypotheses**. Hypotheses serve several purposes. First, they allow us to *test* a theory by suggesting how we might try to falsify it. Second, predictions give *direction* to research and sometimes send investigators looking for things they might never have thought of. Third, the predictive feature of good theories can also make them *practical*. A complete theory of aggression, for example, would predict when to expect aggression and how to control it. As the pioneering social psychologist Kurt Lewin declared, "There is nothing so practical as a good theory."

Consider how this works. Say we observe that people who loot, taunt, or attack often do so in groups or crowds. We might therefore theorize that being part of a crowd, or group, makes individuals feel anonymous and lowers their inhibitions. How could we test this theory? Perhaps (I'm playing with this theory) we could devise a laboratory experiment that simulates aspects of execution by electric chair. What if we asked individuals in groups to administer punishing shocks to a hapless victim

"NOTHING HAS SUCH  
POWER TO BROADEN THE  
MIND AS THE ABILITY TO  
INVESTIGATE SYSTEM-  
ATICALLY AND TRULY ALL  
THAT COMES UNDER THY  
OBSERVATION IN LIFE."

—MARCUS AURELIUS,  
MEDITATIONS

### theory

An integrated set of principles that explain and predict observed events.

### hypothesis

A testable proposition that describes a relationship that may exist between events.



For humans, the most fascinating subject is people.  
© Warren Miller/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

without knowing which member of the group was actually shocking the victim? Would these individuals administer stronger shocks than individuals acting alone, as our theory predicts?

We might also manipulate anonymity: Would people deliver stronger shocks if they were wearing masks? If the results confirm our hypothesis, they might suggest some practical applications. Perhaps police brutality could be reduced by having officers wear large name tags and drive cars identified with large numbers, or by videotaping their arrests—all of which have, in fact, become common practice in many cities.

But how do we conclude that one theory is better than another? A good theory

- effectively summarizes many observations, and
- makes clear predictions that we can use to
  - confirm or modify the theory,
  - generate new exploration, and
  - suggest practical applications.

When we discard theories, usually it is not because they have been proved false. Rather, like old cars, they are replaced by newer, better models.

## Correlational Research: Detecting Natural Associations

Let's now go backstage and see how social psychology is done. This glimpse behind the scenes should be just enough for you to appreciate findings discussed later. Understanding the logic of research can also help us think critically about everyday social events.

### field research

Research done in natural, real-life settings outside the laboratory.

### correlational research

The study of the naturally occurring relationships among variables.

### experimental research

Studies that seek clues to cause–effect relationships by manipulating one or more factors (independent variables) while controlling others (holding them constant).

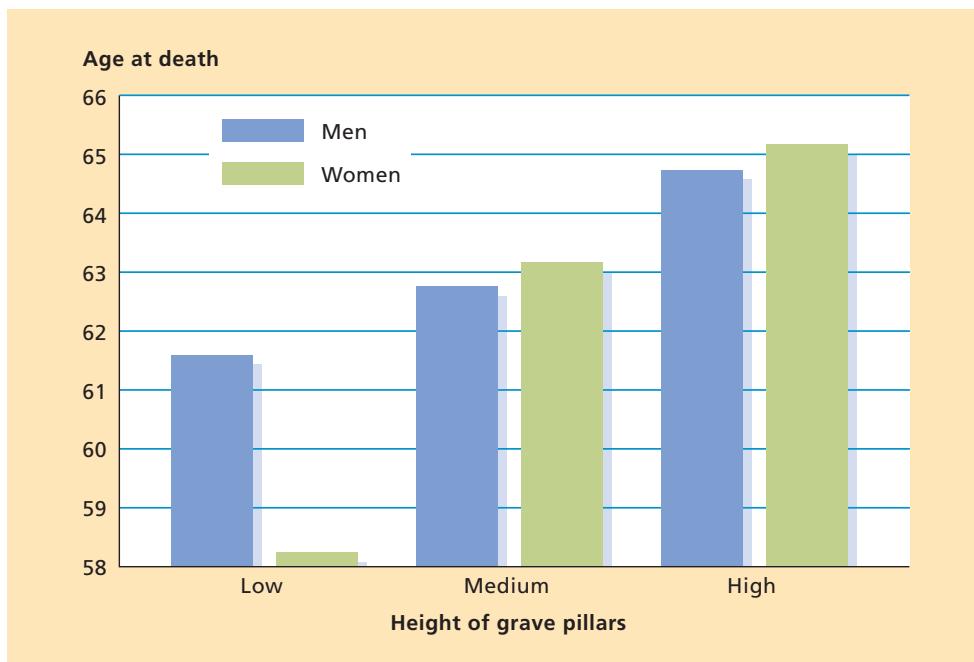
Social psychological research varies by location. It can take place as *laboratory research* (a controlled situation) or as **field research** (everyday situations). And it varies by method—whether **correlational** (asking whether two or more factors are naturally associated) or **experimental** (manipulating some factor to see its effect on another). If you want to be a critical reader of psychological research reported in the media, it will pay you to understand the difference between correlational and experimental research.

Let's first consider the advantages of correlational research (often involving important variables in natural settings) and its major disadvantage (ambiguous interpretation of cause and effect). As we will discuss in Chapter 14, today's psychologists relate personal and social factors to human health. In search of possible links between socioeconomic status and health, Douglas Carroll, George Davey Smith, and Paul Bennett (1994) ventured into Glasgow, Scotland's old graveyards. As a measure of health, they noted from grave markers the life spans of 843 individuals. As an indication of status, they measured the height of the grave pillars, reasoning that height reflected cost and therefore affluence. As Figure 1.3 shows, taller grave markers were related to longer lives, for both men and women.

Carroll and colleagues report that other researchers, using contemporary data, have confirmed the status-longevity correlation. Scottish postal-code regions having the least overcrowding and unemployment also have the greatest longevity. In the United States, income correlates with longevity (poor and lower-status people are more at risk for premature death). In today's Britain, occupational status correlates with longevity. One study followed 17,350 British civil service workers over 10 years. Compared with top-grade administrators, those at the professional-executive grade were 1.6 times more likely to have died. Clerical workers were 2.2 times and laborers 2.7 times more likely to have died (Adler & others, 1993, 1994). Across times and places, the status-health correlation seems reliable.

### CORRELATION AND CAUSATION

The status-longevity question illustrates the most irresistible thinking error made by both amateur and professional social psychologists: When two factors such as



**FIGURE :: 1.3**  
**Correlating Status and Longevity**

Tall grave pillars commemorated people who also tended to live longer.

status and health go together, it is tempting to conclude that one is causing the other. Status, we might presume, somehow protects a person from health risks. But might it be the other way around? Could it be that health promotes vigor and success? Perhaps people who live longer simply have more time to accumulate wealth (enabling them to have more expensive grave markers). Or might a third variable, such as diet, be involved (did wealthy and working-class people tend to eat differently)? Correlations indicate a relationship, but that relationship is not necessarily one of cause and effect. Correlational research allows us to *predict*, but it cannot tell us whether changing one variable (such as social status) will *cause* changes in another (such as health).

The correlation-causation confusion is behind much muddled thinking in popular psychology. Consider another very real correlation—between self-esteem and academic achievement. Children with high self-esteem tend also to have high academic achievement. (As with any correlation, we can also state this the other way around: High achievers tend to have high self-esteem.) Why do you suppose that is true (Figure 1.4)?

Some people believe a “healthy self-concept” contributes to achievement. Thus, boosting a child’s self-image may also boost school achievement. Believing so, 30 U.S. states have enacted more than 170 self-esteem-promoting statutes.

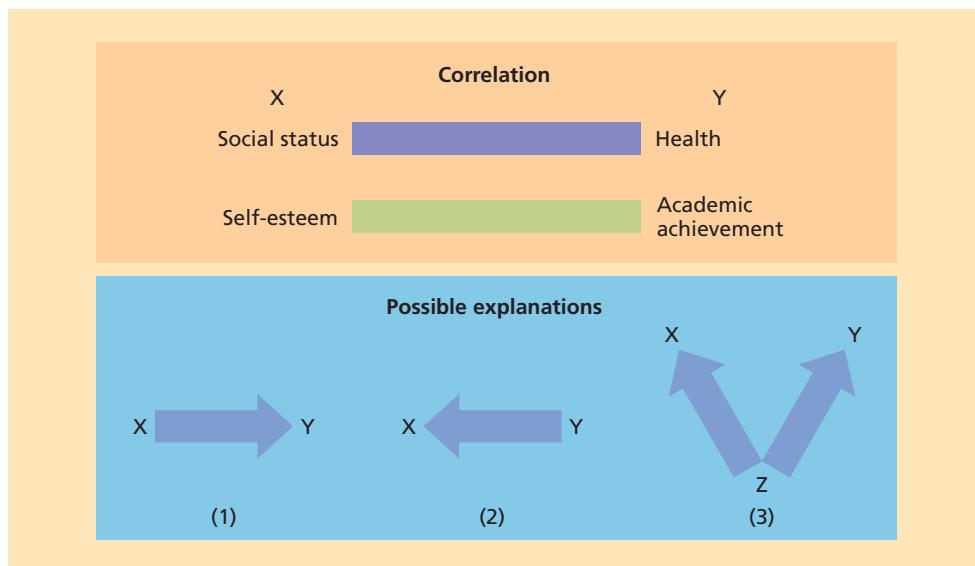
But other people, including psychologists William Damon (1995), Robyn Dawes (1994), Mark Leary (1999), Martin Seligman (1994, 2002), and Roy Baumeister with John Tierney (2011), doubt that self-esteem is really “the armor that protects kids” from underachievement (or drug abuse and delinquency). Perhaps it is the other way around: Perhaps problems and failures cause low self-esteem. Perhaps self-esteem often reflects the reality of how

Commemorative markers in Glasgow Cathedral graveyard.



**FIGURE :: 1.4****Correlation and Causations**

When two variables correlate, any combination of three explanations is possible. Either one may cause the other, or both may be affected by an underlying "third factor."



things are going for us. Perhaps self-esteem grows from hard-won achievements. Do well and you will feel good about yourself; goof off and fail and you will feel like a dolt. A study of 635 Norwegian schoolchildren showed that a (legitimately earned) string of gold stars by one's name on the spelling chart and accompanying praise from the admiring teacher can boost a child's self-esteem (Skaalvik & Hagtvet, 1990). Or perhaps, as in a study of nearly 6,000 German seventh-graders, the traffic between self-esteem and academic achievement runs both ways (Trautwein & Lüdtke, 2006).

It is also possible that self-esteem and achievement correlate because both are linked to underlying intelligence and family social status. That possibility was raised in two studies—one a nationwide sample of 1,600 young American men and the other of 715 Minnesota youngsters (Bachman & O'Malley, 1977; Maruyama & others, 1981). When the researchers mathematically removed the predictive power of intelligence and family status, the relationship between self-esteem and achievement evaporated.

Correlations quantify, with a coefficient known as  $r$ , the degree of relationship between two factors—from  $-1.0$  (as one factor score goes up, the other goes down) through  $0$  to  $+1.0$  (the two factors' scores rise and fall together). Scores on self-esteem and depression tests correlate negatively (about  $-0.6$ ). Identical twins' intelligence scores correlate positively (above  $0.8$ ). The great strength of correlational research is that it tends to occur in real-world settings where we can examine factors such as race, gender, and social status (factors that we cannot manipulate in the laboratory). Its great disadvantage lies in the ambiguity of the results. This point is so important that even if it fails to impress people the first 25 times they hear it, it is worth repeating a twenty-sixth time: *Knowing that two variables change together (correlate) enables us to predict one when we know the other, but correlation does not specify cause and effect.*

Advanced correlational techniques can, however, suggest cause–effect relationships. *Time-lagged* correlations reveal the sequence of events (for example, by indicating whether changed achievement more often precedes or follows changed self-esteem). Researchers can also use statistical techniques that extract the influence of "confounded" variables, as when the correlation between self-esteem and achievement evaporated after extracting intelligence and family status. Recall our earlier mention of a *third variable*, such as diet. Thus, the Scottish research team wondered whether the status-longevity relationship would survive their removing the effect of cigarette smoking, which is now much less common among those of higher status. It did, which suggested that some other factors, such as



Even exit polls require a random (and therefore representative) sample of voters.

increased stress and decreased feelings of control, may also account for poorer people's earlier mortality.

## SURVEY RESEARCH

How do we measure variables such as status and health? One way is by surveying representative samples of people. If survey researchers want to describe a whole population (which for many psychology surveys is not the aim), then they will obtain a *representative* group by taking a **random sample**—*one in which every person in the population being studied has an equal chance of inclusion*. With this procedure any subgroup of people—blondes, joggers, liberals—will tend to be represented in the survey to the extent that they are represented in the total population.

Whether we survey people in a city or in a whole country, 1,200 randomly selected participants will enable us to be 95 percent confident of describing the entire population with an error margin of 3 percentage points or less. Imagine a huge jar filled with beans, 50 percent red and 50 percent white. Randomly sample 1,200 of these, and you will be 95 percent certain to draw out between 47 percent and 53 percent red beans—regardless of whether the jar contains 10,000 beans or 100 million beans. If we think of the red beans as supporters of one presidential candidate and the white beans as supporters of the other candidate, we can understand why, since 1950, the Gallup polls taken just before U.S. national elections have diverged from election results by an average of less than 2 percent. As a few drops of blood can speak for the whole body, so can a random sample speak for a population.

Bear in mind that polls do not literally *predict* voting; they only *describe* public opinion at the moment they are taken. Public opinion can shift. To evaluate surveys, we must also bear in mind four potentially biasing influences: unrepresentative samples, question order, response options, and question wording.

**UNREPRESENTATIVE SAMPLES** How closely the sample represents the population under study matters greatly. In 1984, columnist Ann Landers accepted a letter writer's challenge to poll her readers on the question of whether women find affection more important than sex. Her question: "Would you be content to be held close and treated tenderly and forget about 'the act'?" Of the more than 100,000 women who replied, 72 percent said yes. An avalanche of worldwide publicity followed. In response to critics, Landers (1985, p. 45) granted that "the sampling may not be representative of all American women. But it does provide honest—valuable—insights from a cross section of the public. This is because my column is

### random sampling

Survey procedure in which every person in the population being studied has an equal chance of inclusion.

SRC's Survey Services Laboratory at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research has interviewing carrels with monitoring stations. Staff and visitors must sign a pledge to honor the strict confidentiality of all interviews.



read by people from every walk of life, approximately 70 million of them.” Still, one wonders, are the 70 million readers representative of the entire population? And are the 1 in 700 readers who took the trouble to reply to the survey representative of the 699 in 700 who did not?

The importance of representativeness was effectively demonstrated in 1936 when a weekly newsmagazine, *Literary Digest*, mailed a postcard presidential election poll to 10 million Americans. Among the more than 2 million returns, Alf Landon won by a landslide over Franklin D. Roosevelt. When the actual votes were counted a few days later, Landon carried only two states. The magazine had sent the poll only to people whose names it had obtained from telephone books and automobile registrations—thus ignoring the millions of voters who could afford neither a telephone nor a car (Cleghorn, 1980).

**ORDER OF QUESTIONS** Given a representative sample, we must also contend with other sources of bias, such as the order of questions in a survey. Americans’ support for civil unions of gays and lesbians rises if they are first asked their opinion of gay marriage, compared with which civil unions seem a more acceptable alternative (Moore, 2004a, 2004b).

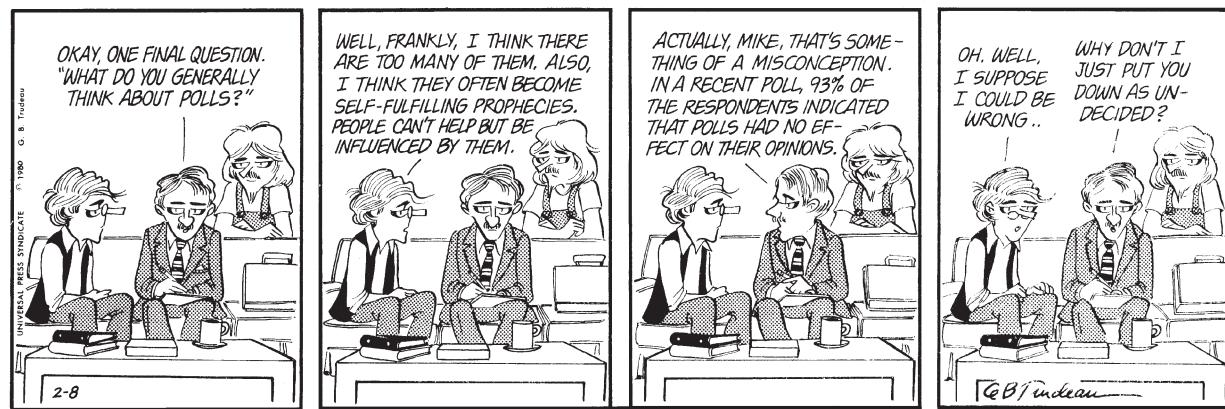
**RESPONSE OPTIONS** Consider, too, the dramatic effects of the response options. When Joop van der Pligt and co-workers (1987) asked English voters what percentage of Britain’s energy they wished came from nuclear power, the average preference was 41 percent. They asked other voters what percentage they wished came from (1) nuclear, (2) coal, and (3) other sources. The average preference for nuclear power among these respondents was 21 percent.

**WORDING OF QUESTIONS** The precise wording of questions may also influence answers. One poll found that only 23 percent of Americans thought their government was spending too much “on assistance to the poor.” Yet 53 percent thought the government was spending too much “on welfare” (*Time*, 1994). Likewise, most people favor cutting “foreign aid” and *increasing* spending “to help hungry people in other nations” (Simon, 1996).

Survey questioning is a very delicate matter. Even subtle changes in the tone of a question can have marked effects (Krosnick & Schuman, 1988; Schuman & Kalton, 1985). “Forbidding” something may be the same as “not allowing” it. But in 1940, 54 percent of Americans said the United States should “forbid” speeches against democracy, and 75 percent said the United States should “not allow” them. Even when people say they feel strongly about an issue, a question’s form and wording may affect their answer.

## DOONESBURY

by Garry Trudeau



Survey researchers must be sensitive to subtle and not-so-subtle biases.

DOONESBURY © G. B. Trudeau. Reprinted with permission of Universal Press Syndicate. All rights reserved.

Order, response, and wording effects enable political manipulators to use surveys to show public support for their views. Consultants, advertisers, and physicians can have similar disconcerting influences upon our decisions by how they **frame** our choices. No wonder the meat lobby in 1994 objected to a new U.S. food labeling law that required declaring ground beef, for example, as “30 percent fat,” rather than “70 percent lean, 30 percent fat.” To 9 in 10 college students, a condom seems effective if its protection against the AIDS virus has a “95 percent success rate.” Told that it has a “5 percent failure rate,” only 4 in 10 students say they find it effective (Linville & others, 1992).

Framing research also has applications in the definition of everyday default options:

- *Opting in or out of organ donation.* In many countries, people decide, when renewing their drivers’ license, whether they want to make their body available for organ donation. In countries where the default option is *yes* but one can “opt out,” nearly 100 percent of people choose to be donors. In the United States, Britain, and Germany, where the default option is *no* but one can “opt in,” approximately 1 in 4 choose to be donors (Johnson & Goldstein, 2003).
- *Opting in or out of retirement savings.* For many years, American employees who wanted to defer part of their compensation to a 401(k) retirement plan had to elect to lower their take-home pay. Most chose not to do so. A 2006 pension law, influenced by framing research, reframed the choice. Now companies are given an incentive to enroll their employees automatically in the plan and to allow them to opt out (and to raise their take-home pay). The choice was preserved. But one study found that with the “opt out” framing, enrollments soared from 49 to 86 percent (Madrian & Shea, 2001).

The lesson of framing research is told in the story of a sultan who dreamed he had lost all his teeth. Summoned to interpret the dream, the first interpreter said, “Alas! The lost teeth mean you will see your family members die.” Enraged, the sultan ordered 50 lashes for this bearer of bad news. When a second dream interpreter heard the dream, he explained the sultan’s good fortune: “You will outlive your whole clan!” Reassured, the sultan ordered his treasurer to go and fetch 50 pieces of gold for this bearer of good news. On the way, the bewildered treasurer observed to the second interpreter, “Your interpretation was no different from that of the first interpreter.” “Ah yes,” the wise interpreter replied, “but remember: What matters is not only what you say, but how you say it.”

**framing**

The way a question or an issue is posed; framing can influence people’s decisions and expressed opinions.

*A young monk was once rebuffed when asking if he could smoke while he prayed. Ask a different question, advised a friend: Ask if you can pray while you smoke (Crossen, 1993).*

## Experimental Research: Searching for Cause and Effect

The difficulty of discerning cause and effect among naturally correlated events prompts most social psychologists to create laboratory simulations of everyday processes whenever this is feasible and ethical. These simulations are akin to aeronautical wind tunnels. Aeronautical engineers do not begin by observing how flying objects perform in various natural environments. The variations in both atmospheric conditions and flying objects are too complex. Instead, they construct a simulated reality in which they can manipulate wind conditions and wing structures.

### CONTROL: MANIPULATING VARIABLES

Like aeronautical engineers, social psychologists experiment by constructing social situations that simulate important features of our daily lives. By varying just one or two factors at a time—called **independent variables**—the experimenter pinpoints their influence. As the wind tunnel helps the aeronautical engineer discover principles of aerodynamics, so the experiment enables the social psychologist to discover principles of social thinking, social influence, and social relations.

To illustrate the laboratory experiment, consider two experiments that typify research from upcoming chapters on prejudice and aggression. Each experiment suggests possible cause–effect explanations of correlational findings.

#### CORRELATIONAL AND EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES OF PREJUDICE AGAINST THE OBESE

People often perceive the obese as slow, lazy, and sloppy (Roehling & others, 2007; Ryckman & others, 1989). Do such attitudes spawn discrimination? In hopes of finding out, Steven Gortmaker and colleagues (1993) studied 370 obese 16- to 24-year-old women. When they restudied them 7 years later, two-thirds of the women were still obese and were less likely to be married and earning high salaries than a comparison group of approximately 5,000 other women. Even after correcting for any differences in aptitude test scores, race, and parental income, the obese women's incomes were \$7,000 a year below average.

Correcting for certain other factors makes it look as though discrimination might explain the correlation between obesity and lower status. But we cannot be sure. (Can you think of other possibilities?) Enter social psychologists Mark Snyder and Julie Haugen (1994, 1995). They asked 76 University of Minnesota male students to have a get-acquainted phone conversation with 1 of 76 female students. Unknown to the women, each man was shown a photo *said* to picture his conversational partner. Half were shown an obese woman (not the actual partner); the other half were shown a normal-weight woman. Later analysis of just the women's side of the conversation revealed that *they spoke less warmly and happily if they were presumed obese*. Clearly, something in the men's tone of voice and conversational content induced the supposedly obese women to speak in a way that confirmed the idea that obese women are undesirable. The men's prejudice and discrimination were having an effect. Recalling the effect of the stepmother's behavior, perhaps we should call this the "Cinderella effect."

#### CORRELATIONAL AND EXPERIMENTAL STUDIES OF TV VIOLENCE VIEWING

As a second example of how experiments clarify causation, consider the correlation between television viewing and children's behavior. *The more violent television children watch, the more aggressive they tend to be.* Are children learning and reenacting what they see on the screen? As I hope you now recognize, this is a correlational finding. Figure 1.4 reminds us that there are two other cause–effect interpretations. (What are they?)

Social psychologists have therefore brought television viewing into the laboratory, where they control the amount of violence the children see. By exposing children to violent and nonviolent programs, researchers can observe how the

### independent variable

The experimental factor that a researcher manipulates.

*Note: Obesity correlated with marital status and income.*

*Whom the men were shown—a normal or an overweight woman—was the independent variable.*

amount of violence affects behavior. Chris Boyatzis and colleagues (1995) showed some elementary schoolchildren, but not others, an episode of the most popular—and violent—children's television program of the 1990s, *Power Rangers*. Immediately after viewing the episode, the viewers committed seven times as many aggressive acts per 2-minute interval as the nonviewers. The observed aggressive acts we call the **dependent variable**. Such experiments indicate that television can be one cause of children's aggressive behavior.

So far we have seen that the logic of experimentation is simple: By creating and controlling a miniature reality, we can vary one factor and then another and discover how those factors, separately or in combination, affect people. Now let's go a little deeper and see how an experiment is done.

Every social psychological experiment has two essential ingredients. We have just considered one—*control*. We manipulate one or more independent variables while trying to hold everything else constant. The other ingredient is *random assignment*.



Does viewing violence on TV or in other media lead to imitation, especially among children? Experiments suggest that it does.

### **dependent variable**

The variable being measured, so called because it may depend on manipulations of the independent variable.

## RANDOM ASSIGNMENT: THE GREAT EQUALIZER

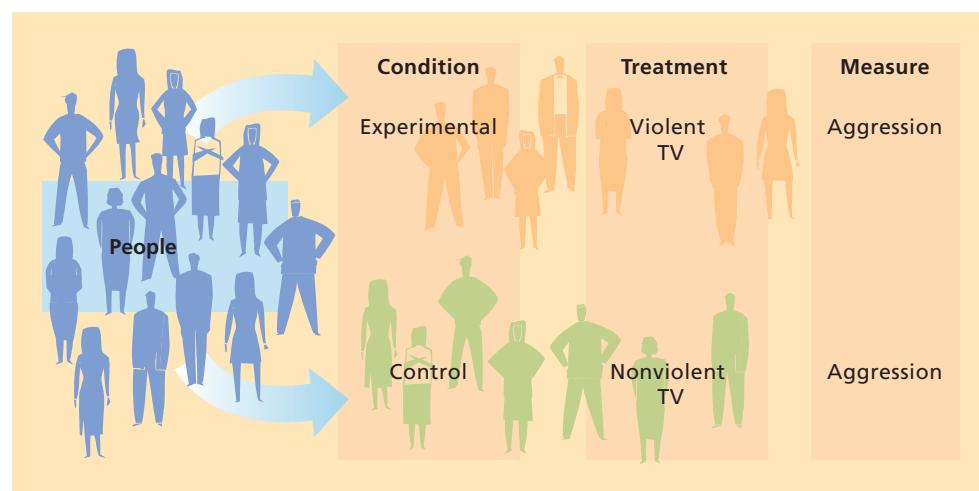
Recall that we were reluctant, on the basis of a correlation, to assume that obesity *caused* lower status (via discrimination) or that violence viewing *caused* aggressiveness (see Table 1.1 for more examples). A survey researcher might measure and statistically extract other possibly pertinent factors and see if the correlations survive. But one can never control for all the factors that might distinguish obese from non-obese, and viewers of violence from nonviewers. Maybe viewers of violence differ in education, culture, intelligence—or in dozens of ways the researcher has not considered.

**TABLE :: 1.1** Recognizing Correlational and Experimental Research

Can Participants Be Randomly Assigned to Condition?	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
Are early-maturing children more confident?	No → Correlational	
Do students learn more in online or classroom courses?	Yes → Experimental Take class online or in classroom	Learning
Do school grades predict vocational success?	No → Correlational	
Does playing violent video games increase aggressiveness?	Yes → Experimental Play violent or nonviolent game	Aggressiveness
Do people find comedy funnier when alone or with others?	(you answer)	
Do higher-income people have higher self-esteem?	(you answer)	

**FIGURE :: 1.5****Random Assignment**

Experiments randomly assign people either to a condition that receives the experimental treatment or to a control condition that does not. This gives the researcher confidence that any later difference is somehow caused by the treatment.

**random assignment**

The process of assigning participants to the conditions of an experiment such that all persons have the same chance of being in a given condition. (Note the distinction between random *assignment* in experiments and random *sampling* in surveys. Random assignment helps us infer cause and effect. Random sampling helps us generalize to a population.)

In one fell swoop, **random assignment** eliminates all such extraneous factors. With random assignment, each person has an equal chance of viewing the violence or the nonviolence. Thus, the people in both groups would, in every conceivable way—family status, intelligence, education, initial aggressiveness, hair color—average about the same. Highly intelligent people, for example, are equally likely to appear in both groups. Because random assignment creates equivalent groups, any later aggression difference between the two groups will almost surely have something to do with the only way they differ—whether or not they viewed violence (Figure 1.5).

**THE ETHICS OF EXPERIMENTATION**

Our television example illustrates why some conceivable experiments raise ethical issues. Social psychologists would not, over long periods, expose one group of children to brutal violence. Rather, they briefly alter people's social experience and note the effects. Sometimes the experimental treatment is a harmless, perhaps even enjoyable, experience to which people give their knowing consent. Occasionally, however, researchers find themselves operating in a gray area between the harmless and the risky.

Social psychologists often venture into that ethical gray area when they design experiments that engage intense thoughts and emotions. Experiments need not have what Elliot Aronson, Marilynn Brewer, and Merrill Carlsmith (1985) called **mundane realism**. That is, laboratory behavior need not be like everyday behavior, which is typically mundane, or unimportant. But the experiment *should* have **experimental realism**—it should engage the participants. Experimenters do not want their people consciously play-acting or ho-humming it; they want to engage real psychological processes. An example of such engagement would be delivering electric shocks as part of an experiment on aggression. Forcing people to choose whether to give intense or mild electric shock to someone else can be a realistic measure of aggression. It functionally simulates real aggression.

Achieving experimental realism sometimes requires deceiving people with a plausible cover story. If the person in the next room actually is not receiving the shocks, the experimenter does not want the participants to know that. That would destroy the experimental realism. Thus, approximately one-third of social psychological studies (though a decreasing number) have used **deception** (Korn & Nicks, 1993; Vitelli, 1988).

Experimenters also seek to hide their predictions lest the participants, in their eagerness to be “good subjects,” merely do what is expected or, in an ornery mood, do the opposite. Small wonder, says Ukrainian professor Anatoly Koladny, that only 15 percent of Ukrainian survey respondents declared themselves “religious” while under Soviet communism in 1990 when religion was oppressed by the

**mundane realism**

Degree to which an experiment is superficially similar to everyday situations.

**experimental realism**

Degree to which an experiment absorbs and involves its participants.

**deception**

In research, an effect by which participants are misinformed or misled about the study's methods and purposes.

government—and that 70 percent declared themselves “religious” in post-communist 1997 (Nielsen, 1998). In subtle ways, too, the experimenter’s words, tone of voice, and gestures may call forth desired responses. Even search dogs trained to detect explosives and drugs are more likely to bark false alerts in places where their handlers have been misled into thinking such illegal items are located (Lit & others, 2011). To minimize such **demand characteristics**—cues that seem to “demand” certain behavior—experimenters typically standardize their instructions or even use a computer to present them.

Researchers often walk a tightrope in designing experiments that will be involving yet ethical. To believe that you are hurting someone, or to be subjected to strong social pressure, may be temporarily uncomfortable. Such experiments raise the age-old question of whether ends justify means. The social psychologists’ deceptions are usually brief and mild compared with many misrepresentations in real life and in some of television’s reality shows. (One network reality TV series deceived women into competing for the hand of a handsome supposed millionaire, who turned out to be an ordinary laborer.)

University ethics committees review social psychological research to ensure that it will treat people humanely and that the scientific merit justifies any temporary deception or distress. Ethical principles developed by the American Psychological Association (2010), the Canadian Psychological Association (2000), and the British Psychological Society (2009) mandate investigators to do the following:

- Tell potential participants enough about the experiment to enable their **informed consent**.
- Be truthful. Use deception only if essential and justified by a significant purpose and not “about aspects that would affect their willingness to participate.”
- Protect participants (and bystanders, if any) from harm and significant discomfort.
- Treat information about the individual participants confidentially.
- **Debrief** participants. Fully explain the experiment afterward, including any deception. The only exception to this rule is when the feedback would be distressing, such as by making participants realize they have been stupid or cruel.

The experimenter should be sufficiently informative *and* considerate that people leave feeling at least as good about themselves as when they came in. Better yet, the participants should be compensated by having learned something (Sharpe & Faye, 2009). When treated respectfully, few participants mind being deceived (Epley & Huff, 1998; Kimmel, 1998). Indeed, say social psychology’s advocates, professors provoke far greater anxiety and distress by giving and returning course exams than researchers provoke in their experiments.

## Generalizing from Laboratory to Life

As the research on children, television, and violence illustrates, social psychology mixes everyday experience and laboratory analysis. Throughout this book, we do the same by drawing our data mostly from the laboratory and our illustrations mostly from life. Social psychology displays a healthy interplay between laboratory research and everyday life. Hunches gained from everyday experience often inspire laboratory research, which deepens our understanding of our experience.

This interplay appears in the children’s television experiment. What people saw in everyday life suggested correlational research, which led to experimental research. Network and government policymakers, those with the power to make changes, are now aware of the results. The consistency of findings on television’s effects—in the lab and in the field—is true of research in many other areas, including studies of helping, leadership style, depression, and self-efficacy. The effects

### **demand characteristics**

Cues in an experiment that tell the participant what behavior is expected.

### **informed consent**

An ethical principle requiring that research participants be told enough to enable them to choose whether they wish to participate.

### **debriefing**

In social psychology, the postexperimental explanation of a study to its participants. Debriefing usually discloses any deception and often queries participants regarding their understandings and feelings.

one finds in the lab have been mirrored by effects in the field. “The psychology laboratory has generally produced psychological truths rather than trivialities,” note Craig Anderson and colleagues (1999).

We need to be cautious, however, in generalizing from laboratory to life. Although the laboratory uncovers basic dynamics of human existence, it is still a simplified, controlled reality. It tells us what effect to expect of variable X, all other things being equal—which in real life they never are. Moreover, as you will see, the participants in many experiments are college students. Although that may help you identify with them, college students are hardly a random sample of all humanity (Henry, 2008a, 2008b). And most participants are from WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) cultures that represent but 12 percent of humanity (Henrich & others, 2010). Would we get similar results with people of different ages, educational levels, and cultures? That is always an open question.

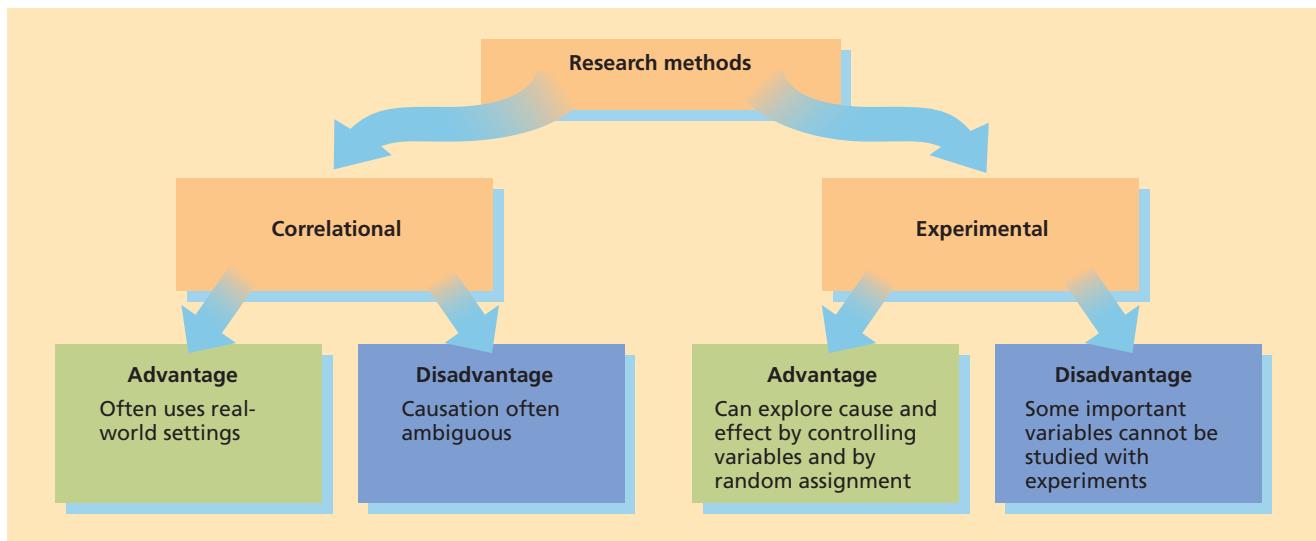
Nevertheless, we can distinguish between the *content* of people’s thinking and acting (for example, their attitudes) and the *process* by which they think and act (for example, *how* attitudes affect actions and vice versa). The content varies more from culture to culture than does the process. People from various cultures may hold different opinions yet form them in similar ways. Consider the following:

- College students in Puerto Rico have reported greater loneliness than do collegians on the U.S. mainland. Yet in the two cultures the ingredients of loneliness have been much the same—shyness, uncertain purpose in life, and low self-esteem (Jones & others, 1985).
- Ethnic groups differ in school achievement and delinquency, but the differences are “no more than skin deep,” report David Rowe and colleagues (1994). To the extent that family structure, peer influences, and parental education predict achievement or delinquency for one ethnic group, they do so for other groups.

Although our behaviors may differ, we are influenced by the same social forces. Beneath our surface diversity, we are more alike than different.

## SUMMING UP: Research Methods: How Do We Do Social Psychology?

- Social psychologists organize their ideas and findings into *theories*. A good theory will distill an array of facts into a much shorter list of predictive principles. We can use those predictions to confirm or modify the theory, to generate new research, and to suggest practical application.
- Most social-psychological research is either *correlational* or *experimental*. Correlational studies, sometimes conducted with systematic survey methods, discern the relationship between variables, such as between amount of education and amount of income. Knowing two things are naturally related is valuable information, but it is not a reliable indicator of what is causing what—or whether a third variable is involved.
- When possible, social psychologists prefer to conduct experiments that explore cause and effect. By constructing a miniature reality that is under their control, experimenters can vary one thing and then another and discover how those things, separately or in combination, affect behavior. We *randomly assign* participants to an experimental condition, which receives the experimental treatment, or to a control condition, which does not. We can then attribute any resulting difference between the two conditions to the *independent variable* (Figure 1.6).
- In creating experiments, social psychologists sometimes stage situations that engage people’s emotions. In doing so, they are obliged to follow professional ethical guidelines, such as obtaining people’s *informed consent*, protecting them from harm, and fully disclosing afterward any temporary deceptions. Laboratory experiments enable social psychologists to test ideas gleaned from life experience and then to apply the principles and findings to the real world.

**FIGURE :: 1.6**

Two Methods of Doing Research: Correlational and Experimental

## POSTSCRIPT: Why I Wrote This Book

I write this text to offer social psychology's powerful, hard-wrought principles. They have, I believe, the power to expand your mind and enrich your life. If you finish this book with sharpened critical thinking skills and with a deeper understanding of how we view and affect one another—and why we sometimes like, love, and help one another and sometimes dislike, hate, and harm one another—then I will be a satisfied author and you, I trust, will be a rewarded reader.

I write knowing that many readers are in the process of defining their life goals, identities, values, and attitudes. The novelist Chaim Potok recalls being urged by his mother to forgo writing: "Be a brain surgeon. You'll keep a lot of people from dying; you'll make a lot more money." Potok's response: "Mama, I don't want to keep people from dying; I want to show them how to live" (quoted by Peterson, 1992, p. 47).

Many of us who teach and write psychology are driven not only by a love for giving psychology away but also by wanting to help students live better lives—wiser, more fulfilling, more compassionate lives. In this we are like teachers and writers in other fields. "Why do we write?" asks theologian Robert McAfee Brown. "I submit that beyond all rewards . . . we write because we want to change things. We write because we have this [conviction that we] can make a difference. The 'difference' may be a new perception of beauty, a new insight into self-understanding, a new experience of joy, or a decision to join the revolution" (quoted by Marty, 1988). Indeed, I write hoping to do my part to restrain intuition with critical thinking, refine judgmentalism with compassion, and replace illusion with understanding.

*I conclude each chapter with a brief reflection on social psychology's human significance.*



## PART ONE

# Social Thinking



This book unfolds around its definition of social psychology: the scientific study of how we *think about* (Part One), *influence* (Part Two), and *relate to* (Part Three) one another. Part Four offers additional, focused examples of how the research and the theories of social psychology are applied to real life.

Part One examines the scientific study of how we think about one another (also called *social cognition*). Each chapter confronts some overriding questions: How reasonable are our social attitudes, explanations, and beliefs? Are our impressions of ourselves and others generally accurate? How does our social thinking form? How is it prone to bias and error, and how might we bring it closer to reality?

Chapter 2 explores the interplay between our sense of self and our social worlds. How do our social surroundings shape our self-identities? How does self-interest color our social judgments and motivate our social behavior?

Chapter 3 looks at the amazing and sometimes rather amusing ways we form beliefs about our social worlds. It also alerts us to some pitfalls of social thinking and suggests how to avoid them and think smarter.

Chapter 4 explores the links between our thinking and our actions, between our attitudes and our behaviors: Do our attitudes determine our behaviors, or vice versa? Or does it work both ways?

CHAPTER

2

# The Self in a Social World\*



**"There are three things extremely hard, Steel, a Diamond, and to know one's self."**

—Benjamin Franklin

**Spotlights and illusions: What do they teach us about ourselves?**

**Self-concept: Who am I?**

**What is the nature and motivating power of self-esteem?**

**What does it mean to have "perceived self-control"?**

**What is self-serving bias?**

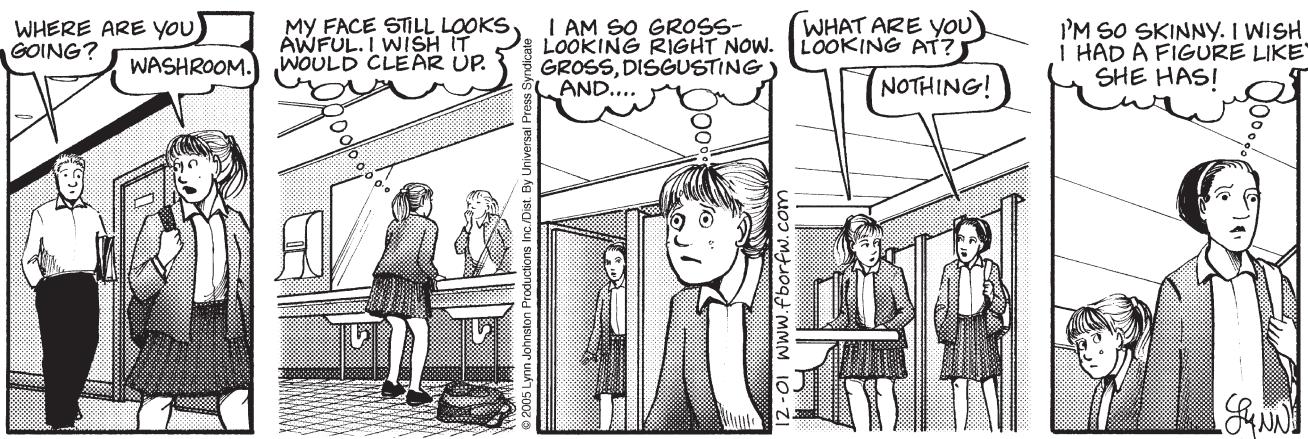
**How do people manage their self-presentation?**

**Postscript: Twin truths—The perils of pride, the powers of positive thinking**

**A**t the center of our worlds, more pivotal for us than anything else, is ourselves. As we navigate our daily lives, our sense of self continually engages the world.

Consider this example: One morning, you wake up to find your hair sticking up at weird angles on your head. It's too late to jump in the shower and you can't find a hat, so you smooth down the random spikes of your hair and dash out the door to class. All morning, you are acutely self-conscious about your very bad hair day. To your surprise, your friends in class don't say anything. Are they secretly laughing to themselves about how ridiculous you look, or are they too preoccupied with themselves to notice your spiky hair?

\* This 11th edition chapter is co-authored by Jean Twenge, professor of psychology at San Diego State University. Professor Twenge's research on social rejection and on generational changes in personality and the self has been published in many articles and books, including *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (2006) and *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement* (with W. Keith Campbell, 2009).



The spotlight effect: Overestimating others' noticing our behavior and appearance.

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## SPOTLIGHTS AND ILLUSIONS: WHAT DO THEY TEACH US ABOUT OURSELVES?

Describe the spotlight effect and its relation to the illusion of transparency.

### spotlight effect

The belief that others are paying more attention to our appearance and behavior than they really are.

Why do we often feel that others are paying more attention to us than they really are? The **spotlight effect** means seeing ourselves at center stage, thus intuitively overestimating the extent to which others' attention is aimed at us.

Timothy Lawson (2010) explored the spotlight effect by having college students change into a sweatshirt with "American Eagle" on the front before meeting a group of peers. Nearly 40 percent were sure the other students would remember what the shirt said, but only 10 percent actually did. Most observers did not even notice that the students changed sweatshirts after leaving the room for a few minutes. In another experiment, even noticeably embarrassing clothes, such as a T-shirt with singer Barry Manilow on it, provoked only 23 percent of observers to notice—many fewer than the 50 percent estimated by the unfortunate students sporting the 1970s soft rock warbler on their chests (Gilovich & others, 2000).

What's true of our dorky clothes and bad hair is also true of our emotions: our anxiety, irritation, disgust, deceit, or attraction (Gilovich & others, 1998). Fewer people notice than we presume. Keenly aware of our own emotions, we often suffer an **illusion of transparency**. If we're happy and we know it, then our face will surely

### illusion of transparency

The illusion that our concealed emotions leak out and can be easily read by others.

## research CLOSE-UP

### On Being Nervous About Looking Nervous

Have you ever felt self-conscious when approaching someone you felt attracted to, concerned that your nervousness was obvious? Or have you felt yourself trembling while speaking before an audience and presumed that everyone was noticing?

Kenneth Savitsky and Thomas Gilovich (2003) knew from their own and others' studies that people overestimate the extent to which their internal states "leak out." People asked to tell lies presume that others will detect their deceit, which feels so obvious. People

asked to sample horrid-tasting drinks presume that others notice their disgust, which they can barely suppress.

Many people who give a presentation report not just feeling anxious, but anxious that others will notice their anxiety. And if they feel their knees shaking and hands trembling, their worry that others are noticing may compound and perpetuate their anxiety. This is similar to fretting about not falling asleep, which further impedes falling asleep, or feeling anxious about stuttering, which worsens the stuttering. (As a former stutterer and speech therapy patient, I know this is true.)

Savitsky and Gilovich wondered whether an “illusion of transparency” might surface among inexperienced public speakers—and whether it might disrupt their performance. To find out, they invited 40 Cornell University students to their laboratory in pairs. One person stood at the podium and spoke for 3 minutes (on a topic such as “The Best and Worst Things About Life Today”) as the other sat and listened. Then the two switched positions and the other person gave a different 3-minute impromptu talk. Afterward, each rated how nervous they thought they appeared while speaking (from 0, *not at all*, to 10, *very*) and how nervous the other person seemed.

The results? People rated themselves as appearing relatively nervous (6.65, on average). But to their partner they appeared not so nervous (5.25), a difference great enough to be statistically significant (meaning that a difference this great, for this sample of people, is very unlikely to have been due to chance variation). Twenty-seven of the 40 participants (68 percent) believed that they appeared more nervous than did their partner.

To check on the reliability of their finding, Savitsky and Gilovich replicated (repeated) and extended the experiment by having people speak before an audience of people who weren’t going to be giving

speeches themselves, to rule out the possibility that this might explain the previous results. Once again, speakers overestimated the transparency of their nervousness.

Savitsky and Gilovich next wondered whether informing speakers that their nervousness isn’t so obvious might help them relax and perform better. They invited 77 more Cornell students to come to the lab and, after 5 minutes’ preparation, give a 3-minute videotaped speech on race relations at their university. Those in one group—the *control condition*—were given no further instructions. Those in the *reassured condition* were told that it was natural to feel anxious but that “You shouldn’t worry much about what other people think.... With this in mind you should just relax and try to do your best. Know that if you become nervous, you probably shouldn’t worry about it.” To those in the *informed condition* he explained the illusion of transparency. After telling them it was natural to feel anxious, the experimenter added that “Research has found that audiences can’t pick up on your anxiety as well as you might expect.... Those speaking feel that their nervousness is transparent, but in reality their feelings are not so apparent.... With this in mind, you should just relax and try to do your best. Know that if you become nervous, you’ll probably be the only one to know.”

After the speeches, the speakers rated their speech quality and their perceived nervousness (this time using a 7-point scale) and were also rated by the observers. As Table 2.1 shows, those informed about the illusion-of-transparency phenomenon felt better about their speech and their appearance than did those in the control and reassurance conditions. What’s more, the observers confirmed the speakers’ self-assessments.

So, the next time you feel nervous about looking nervous, pause to remember the lesson of these experiments: Other people are noticing less than you might suppose.

**TABLE :: 2.1 Average Ratings of Speeches by Speakers and Observers on a 1 to 7 Scale**

Type of Rating	Control Condition	Reassured Condition	Informed Condition
<i>Speakers' self-ratings</i>			
Speech quality	3.04	2.83	3.50*
Relaxed appearance	3.35	2.69	4.20*
<i>Observers' ratings</i>			
Speech quality	3.50	3.62	4.23*
Composed appearance	3.90	3.94	4.65*

\*Each of these results differs by a statistically significant margin from those of the control and reassured condition.

show it. And others, we presume, will notice. Actually, we can be more opaque than we realize. (See “Research Close-Up: On Being Nervous About Looking Nervous” on pages 34–35.)

We also overestimate the visibility of our social blunders and public mental slips. When we trigger the library alarm or accidentally insult someone, we may be mortified (“Everyone thinks I’m a jerk”). But research shows that what we agonize over, others may hardly notice and soon forget (Savitsky & others, 2001).

The spotlight effect and the related illusion of transparency are but two of many examples of the interplay between our sense of self and our social worlds. Here are more examples:

- *Social surroundings affect our self-awareness.* When we are the only member of our race, gender, or nationality in a group, we notice how we differ and how others are reacting to our difference. A White American friend once told me how self-consciously White he felt while living in a rural village in Nepal; an hour later, an African-American friend told me how self-consciously American she felt while in Africa.
- *Self-interest colors our social judgment.* When problems arise in a close relationship such as marriage, we usually attribute more responsibility to our partners than to ourselves. When things go *well* at home or work or play, we see ourselves as more responsible.
- *Self-concern motivates our social behavior.* In hopes of making a positive impression, we agonize about our appearance. Like savvy politicians, we also monitor others’ behavior and expectations and adjust our behavior accordingly.
- *Social relationships help define our sense of self.* In our varied relationships, we have varying selves, note Susan Andersen and Serena Chen (2002). We may be one self with Mom, another with friends, another with teachers. How we think of ourselves is linked to the person we’re with at the moment. And when relationships change, our self-concepts can change as well. College students who recently broke up with a romantic partner shifted their self-perceptions and felt less certain about who they were—one reason breakups can be so emotionally distressing (Slotter & others, 2010).

As these examples suggest, the traffic between ourselves and others runs both ways. Our ideas and feelings about ourselves affect how we respond to others. And others help shape our sense of self.

No topic in psychology today is more heavily researched than the self. In 2011, the word “self” appeared in 21,693 book and article summaries in *PsycINFO* (the online archive of psychological research)—more than 20 times the number that appeared in 1970. Our sense of self organizes our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Our sense of self enables us to remember our past, assess our present, and project our future—and thus to behave adaptively.

In later chapters, we will see that much of our behavior is not consciously controlled but, rather, automatic and unself-conscious. However, the self does enable long-term planning, goal-setting, and restraint. It imagines alternatives, compares itself with others, and manages its reputation and relationships. Moreover, as Mark Leary (2004a) has noted, the self can sometimes be an impediment to a satisfying life. Its egocentric preoccupations are what religious meditation practices seek to prune, by quieting the self, reducing its attachments to material pleasures, and redirecting it. “Mysticism,” adds psychologist Jonathan Haidt (2006), “everywhere and always, is about losing the self, transcending the self, and merging with something larger than the self.”

In the remainder of this chapter, we examine our self-concept (how we come to know ourselves) and the self in action (how our sense of self drives our attitudes and actions).

“NO TOPIC IS MORE  
INTERESTING TO PEOPLE  
THAN PEOPLE. FOR MOST  
PEOPLE, MOREOVER, THE  
MOST INTERESTING IS  
THE SELF.”

—ROY F. BAUMEISTER,  
*THE SELF IN SOCIAL  
PSYCHOLOGY*, 1999

## SUMMING UP: Spotlights and Illusions: What Do They Teach Us About Ourselves?

- Concerned with the impression we make on others, we tend to believe that others are paying more attention to us than they are (the *spotlight effect*).
- We also tend to believe that our emotions are more obvious than they are (the *illusion of transparency*).

## SELF-CONCEPT: WHO AM I?

Understand how, and how accurately, we know ourselves and what determines our self-concept.

You have many ways to complete the sentence “I am \_\_\_\_.” (What five answers might you give?) Your answers provide a glimpse of your **self-concept**.

### At the Center of Our Worlds: Our Sense of Self

The most important aspect of yourself is your self. To discover where this sense of self arises, neuroscientists are exploring the brain activity that underlies our constant sense of being oneself. Some studies suggest an important role for the right hemisphere. Put yours to sleep (with an anesthetic to your right carotid artery) and you likely will have trouble recognizing your own face. One patient with right hemisphere damage failed to recognize that he owned and was controlling his left hand (Decety & Sommerville, 2003). The “medial prefrontal cortex,” a neuron path located in the cleft between your brain hemispheres just behind your eyes, seemingly helps stitch together your sense of self. It becomes more active when you think about yourself (Farb & others, 2007; Zimmer, 2005).

The elements of your self-concept, the specific beliefs by which you define yourself, are your **self-schemas** (Markus & Wurf, 1987). *Schemas* are mental templates by which we organize our worlds. Our self-schemas—our perceiving ourselves as athletic, overweight, smart, or whatever—powerfully affect how we perceive, remember, and evaluate other people and ourselves. If athletics is central to your self-concept (if being an athlete is one of your self-schemas), then you will tend to notice others’ bodies and skills. You will quickly recall sports-related experiences. And you will welcome information that is consistent with your self-schema (Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1984). If your friend’s birthday is close to yours, you’ll be more likely to remember it (Kesebir & Oishi, 2010). The self-schemas that make up our self-concepts help us organize and retrieve our experiences.

### POSSIBLE SELVES

Our self-concepts include not only our self-schemas about who we currently are but also who we might become—our **possible selves**. Hazel Markus and colleagues (Inglehart & others, 1989; Markus & Nurius, 1986) note that our possible selves include our visions of the self we dream of becoming—the rich self, the thin self, the passionately

#### self-concept

What we know and believe about ourselves.

#### self-schema

Beliefs about self that organize and guide the processing of self-relevant information.



#### possible selves

Images of what we dream of or dread becoming in the future.

Oprah Winfrey's imagined possible selves, including the dreaded overweight self, the rich self, and the helpful self, motivated her to work to achieve the life she wanted.

loved and loving self. They also include the self we fear becoming—the underemployed self, the unloved self, the academically failed self. Such possible selves motivate us with a vision of the life we long for—or to avoid the one we dread.

## Development of the Social Self

The self has become a major social psychological focus because it helps organize our thinking and guide our social behavior (Figure 2.1). But what determines our self-concepts? Studies of twins point to genetic influences on personality and self-concept, but social experience also plays a part. Among these influences are the following:

- The roles we play
- The social identities we form
- The comparisons we make with others
- How other people judge us
- The surrounding culture

### THE ROLES WE PLAY

As we enact a new role—college student, parent, salesperson—we initially feel self-conscious. Gradually, however, what begins as playacting in the theater of life is absorbed into our sense of self. For example, while playing our roles we may give lip service to something we haven't really thought much about. After defending our group, we then justify our words by believing more strongly in it. Role playing becomes reality (see Chapter 4).

### SOCIAL COMPARISONS

#### **social comparison**

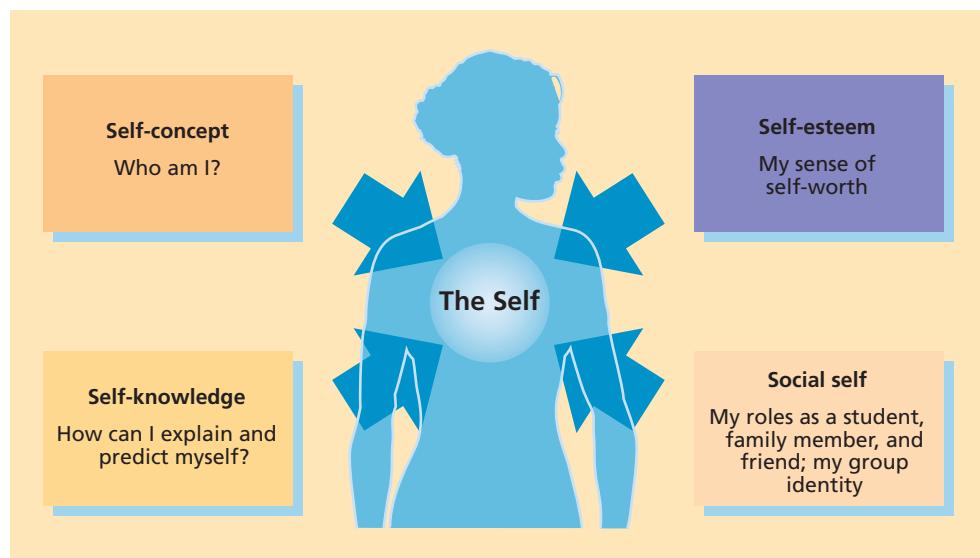
Evaluating one's abilities and opinions by comparing oneself with others.

How do we decide if we are rich, smart, or short? One way is through **social comparisons** (Festinger, 1954). Others around us help to define the standard by which we define ourselves as rich or poor, smart or dumb, tall or short: We compare ourselves with them and consider how we differ. Social comparison explains why students tend to have a higher academic self-concept if they attend a high school with mostly average students (Marsh & others, 2000), and how that self-concept can be threatened after graduation when a student who excelled in an average high school goes on to an academically selective university. The “big fish” is no longer in a small pond.

Much of life revolves around social comparisons. We feel handsome when others seem homely, smart when others seem dull, caring when others seem callous. When we witness a peer’s performance, we cannot resist implicitly comparing ourselves (Gilbert & others, 1995). We may, therefore, privately take some pleasure in a peer’s

**FIGURE :: 2.1**

**The Self**





### Private Pleasure in a Peer's Pratfall

In 2011, when powerful media magnates Rupert Murdoch and his son, James Murdoch, were embarrassed by illegal practices at one of their newspapers, some people felt *schadenfreude* (a German word for the pleasure felt over someone else's misfortune).

failure, especially when it happens to someone we envy and when we don't feel vulnerable to such misfortune ourselves (Lockwood, 2002; Smith & others, 1996).

Social comparisons can also diminish our satisfaction. When we experience an increase in affluence, status, or achievement, we "compare upward"—we raise the standards by which we evaluate our attainments. When climbing the ladder of success, we tend to look up, not down; we compare ourselves with others doing even better (Gruder, 1977; Suls & Tesch, 1978; Wheeler & others, 1982). When facing competition, we often protect our shaky self-concept by perceiving the competitor as advantaged. For example, college swimmers believed that their competitors had better coaching and more practice time (Shepperd & Taylor, 1999).

### OTHER PEOPLE'S JUDGMENTS

When people think well of us, it helps us think well of ourselves. Children whom others label as gifted, hardworking, or helpful tend to incorporate such ideas into their self-concepts and behavior (see Chapter 3). If minority students feel threatened by negative stereotypes of their academic ability, or if women feel threatened by low expectations for their math and science performance, they may "disidentify" with those realms. Rather than fight such prejudgments, they may identify their interests elsewhere (Steele, 2010; see Chapter 9).

*The looking-glass self* was how sociologist Charles H. Cooley (1902) described our use of how we think others perceive us as a mirror for perceiving ourselves. Fellow sociologist George Herbert Mead (1934) refined this concept, noting that what matters for our self-concepts is not how others actually see us but the way we *imagine* they see us. People generally feel freer to praise than to criticize; they voice their compliments and restrain their gibes. We may, therefore, overestimate others' appraisal, inflating our self-images (Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979).

Self-inflation, as we will see, is found most strikingly in Western countries. Shinobu Kitayama (1996) reports that Japanese visitors to North America are routinely struck by the many words of praise that friends offer one another. When he and his colleagues asked people how many days ago they last complimented someone, the most common American response was 1 day. In Japan, where people are socialized less to feel pride in personal achievement and more to feel shame in failing others, the most common response was 4 days.

Our prehistoric ancestors' fate depended on what others thought of them. Their survival was enhanced when protected by their group—in a time before grocery

"MAKE NO  
COMPARISONS!"

—KING CHARLES I, 1600–1649

stores, it was difficult for one person alone to hunt and gather enough food or to protect him- or herself from predators. When perceiving their group's disapproval, there was biological wisdom to their feeling shame and low self-esteem. As their heirs, having a similar deep-seated need to belong, we feel the pain of low self-esteem when we face social exclusion, notes Mark Leary (1998, 2004b). Self-esteem, he argues, is a psychological gauge by which we monitor and react to how others appraise us.

## Self and Culture

How did you complete the "I am \_\_\_\_" statement on page 37? Did you give information about your personal traits, such as "I am honest," "I am tall," or "I am outgoing"? Or did you also describe your social identity, such as "I am a Pisces," "I am a MacDonald," or "I am a Muslim"?

### individualism

The concept of giving priority to one's own goals over group goals and defining one's identity in terms of personal attributes rather than group identifications.

### independent self

Construing one's identity as an autonomous self.

### collectivism

Giving priority to the goals of one's group (often one's extended family or work group) and defining one's identity accordingly.

### interdependent self

Construing one's identity in relation to others.

For some people, especially those in industrialized Western cultures, **individualism** prevails. Identity is self-contained. Adolescence is a time of separating from parents, becoming self-reliant, and defining one's personal, **independent self**. One's identity—as a unique individual with particular abilities, traits, values, and dreams—remains fairly constant.

The psychology of Western cultures assumes that your life will be enriched by believing in your power of personal control. Western literature, from *The Iliad* to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, celebrates the self-reliant individual. Movie plots feature rugged heroes who buck the establishment. Songs proclaim "I Gotta Be Me," declare that "The Greatest Love of All" is loving oneself (Schoeneman, 1994), and state without irony that "I Believe the World Should Revolve Around Me." Individualism flourishes when people experience affluence, mobility, urbanism, and mass media (Freeman, 1997; Marshall, 1997; Triandis, 1994).

Most cultures native to Asia, Africa, and Central and South America place a greater value on **collectivism**, by respecting one's groups and identifying oneself accordingly. They nurture what Shinobu Kitayama and Hazel Markus (1995) call the **interdependent self**. In these cultures, people are more self-critical and have less need for positive self-regard (Heine & others, 1999). Malaysians, Indians, Koreans, Japanese, and traditional Kenyans such as the Maasai, for example, are much more likely than Australians, Americans, and the British to complete the "I am" statement with their group identities (Kanagawa & others, 2001; Ma & Schoeneman, 1997). When speaking, people using the languages of collectivist countries say "I" less often (Kashima & Kashima, 1998, 2003). A person might say "Went to the movie" rather than "I went to the movie." Compared with U.S. church websites, Korean church websites place more emphasis on social connections and participation and less on personal spiritual growth and self-betterment (Sasaki & Kim, 2011).

Pigeonholing cultures as solely individualist or collectivist oversimplifies, because within any culture individualism varies from person to person (Oyserman & others, 2002a, 2002b). There are individualist Chinese and collectivist Americans, and most of us sometimes behave communally, sometimes individualistically (Bandura, 2004). Individualism-collectivism also varies across a country's regions and political views. In the United States, Native Hawaiians and people living in the deep South exhibit greater collectivism than do those in Mountain West states such as Oregon and Montana (Plaut & others, 2002; Vandello & Cohen, 1999). Conservatives tend to be economic individualists ("don't tax or regulate me") and moral collectivists ("legislate against immorality"). Liberals tend to be economic collectivists (supporting national health care) and moral individualists ("keep your laws off my body"). Despite individual and subcultural variations, researchers continue to regard individualism and collectivism as genuine cultural variables (Schimmack & others, 2005).

## GROWING INDIVIDUALISM WITHIN CULTURES

Cultures can also change over time, and many seem to be growing more individualistic. New economic opportunities have challenged traditional collectivistic ways

in India. Chinese citizens younger than 25 are more likely than those older than 25 to agree with individualistic statements such as “make a name for yourself” and “live a life that suits your tastes” (Arora, 2005). Chinese citizens who are younger, more urban, more affluent, and only children—all modern attributes—are also more likely to endorse self-centered statements (Cai & others, 2011). In the United States, younger generations report significantly more positive self-feelings than young people did in the 1960s and 1970s (Gentile & others, 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2008; Twenge & others, 2011; but for an opposing view, see Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2010). One study found that popular song lyrics became more likely to use “I” and “me” and less likely to use “we” and “us” between 1980 and 2007 (DeWall & others, 2011), with the norm shifting from the sappy love song of the 1980s (“Endless Love,” 1981) to the self-celebration of the 2000s (Justin Timberlake singlehandedly bringing “Sexy Back,” 2006).

Even your name might show the shift toward individualism: American parents are now less likely to give their children common names and more likely to help them stand out with an unusual name. While nearly 20 percent of boys born in 1990 received one of the 10 most common names, only 8 percent received such a common name by 2010, with the numbers similar for girls (Twenge & others, 2010). Today, you don’t have to be the child of a celebrity to get a name as unique as Shiloh, Suri, Knox, or Apple.

Americans and Australians, most of whom are descended from those who struck out on their own to emigrate, are more likely than Europeans to give their children uncommon names. Parents in the western United States and Canada, descended from independent pioneers, are also more likely than those in the more established East to give their children uncommon names (Varnum & Kitayama, 2011). The more individualistic the time or the place, the more children receive unique names.

These changes demonstrate something that goes deeper than a name: the interaction between individuals and society. Did the culture focus on uniqueness first and cause the parents’ name choices, or did individual parents decide they wanted their children to be unique, thus creating the culture? A similar chicken-and-egg question applies to the song lyrics: Did a more self-focused population listen to more self-focused songs, or did listening to more self-focused songs make people more self-focused? The answer, though not yet fully understood, is probably both (Markus & Kitayama, 2010).

## CULTURE AND COGNITION

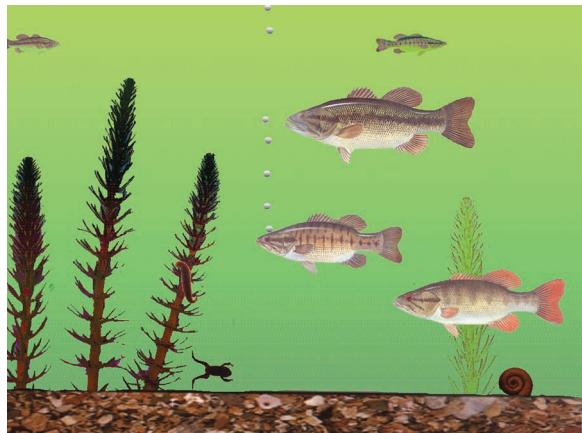
In his book *The Geography of Thought* (2003), social psychologist Richard Nisbett contends that collectivism also results in different ways of thinking. Consider: Which two—of a panda, a monkey, and a banana—go together? Perhaps a monkey and a panda because they both fit the category “animal”? Asians more often than Americans see relationships: Monkey eats banana. When shown an animated underwater scene (Figure 2.2), Japanese spontaneously recalled 60 percent more background features than did Americans, and they spoke of more relationships (the frog beside the plant). Americans look more at the focal object, such as a single big fish, and less at the surroundings (Chua & others, 2005; Nisbett, 2003), a result duplicated in studies examining activation in different areas of the brain (Goh & others, 2007; Lewis & others,



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**FIGURE :: 2.2****Asian and Western Thinking**

When shown an underwater scene, Americans focus on the biggest fish. Asians are more likely to reference the background, such as the plants, bubbles, and rocks (Nisbett, 2003).



people in relationship to one another and to their environment.

If you grew up in a Western culture, you were probably told to “express yourself”—through writing, the choices you make, the products you buy, and perhaps through your tattoos or piercings. When asked about the purpose of language, American students were more likely to explain that it allows self-expression, whereas Korean students focused on how language allows communication with others. American students were also more likely to see their choices as expressions of themselves and to evaluate their personal choices more favorably (Kim & Sherman, 2007). The individualized latte—“decaf, single shot, skinny, extra hot”—that seems just right at a North American coffee shop would seem strange in Seoul, note Kim and Hazel Markus (1999). In Korea, people place less value on expressing their uniqueness and more on tradition and shared practices (Choi & Choi, 2002; Figure 2.3). Korean advertisements tend to feature people together, whereas American advertisements highlight personal choice or freedom (Markus, 2001; Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008).

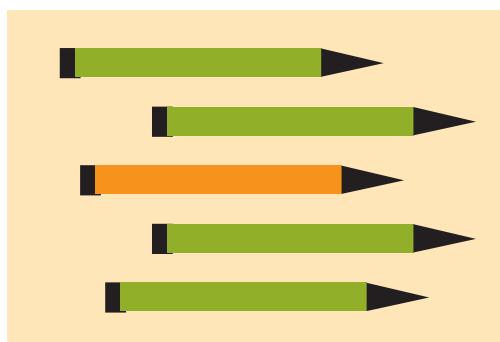
With an interdependent self, one has a greater sense of belonging. If they were uprooted and cut off from family, colleagues, and loyal friends, interdependent people would lose the social connections that define who they are. When Chinese participants were asked to think about their mothers, a brain region associated with the self became activated—an area that lit up for Western participants only when they thought about themselves (Zhu & others, 2007). Interdependent selves have not one self but many selves: self-with-parents, self-at-work, self-with-friends (Cross & others, 1992). As Figure 2.4 and Table 2.2 suggest, the interdependent self is embedded in social memberships. Conversation is less direct and more polite (Holtgraves, 1997), and people focus more on gaining social approval (Lalwani & others, 2006). In one study, 60 percent of American students said they had seriously dated someone even though their friends disliked him or her, compared to only 27 percent of Chinese students. Half of the Chinese students said they would stop dating someone if their parents disapproved, compared with less than one-third of American students (Zhang & Kline, 2009). In an interdependent culture, the goal of social life is to harmonize

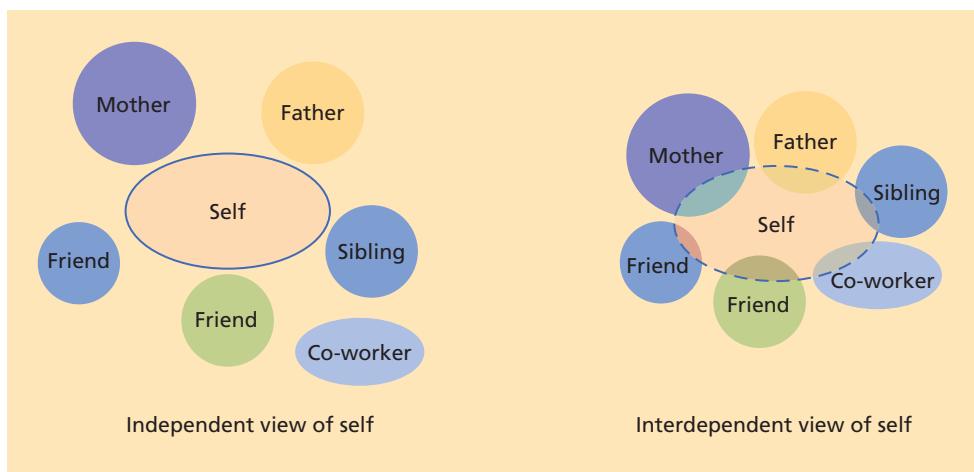
with and support one’s communities, not—as it is in more individualistic societies—to enhance one’s individual self and make choices independently.

Even within one culture, personal history can influence self-views. People who have moved from place to place are happier when others understand their constant, personal selves; people who have always lived in the same town are more pleased when someone recognizes

**FIGURE :: 2.3****Which Pen Would You Choose?**

When Heejung Kim and Hazel Markus (1999) invited people to choose one of these pens, 77 percent of Americans but only 31 percent of Asians chose the uncommon color (regardless of whether it was orange, as here, or green). This result illustrates differing cultural preferences for uniqueness and conformity, note Kim and Markus.





**FIGURE :: 2.4**  
Self-Construal as  
Independent or  
Interdependent

The independent self acknowledges relationships with others. But the interdependent self is more deeply embedded in others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

their collective identity (Oishi & others, 2007a, 2007b). Our self-concepts seem to adjust to our situation: If you interact with the same people all your life, they are more important to your identity than if you are uprooted every few years and must make new friends. Your self becomes your constant companion ("Wherever you go, there you are").

### CULTURE AND SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem in collectivist cultures correlates closely with "what others think of me and my group." Self-concept in these cultures is malleable (context-specific) rather than stable (enduring across situations). In one study, four in five Canadian students but only one in three Chinese and Japanese students agreed that "the beliefs that you hold about who you are (your inner self) remain the same across different activity domains" (Tafarodi & others, 2004).

For those in individualistic cultures, self-esteem is more personal and less relational. Threaten our *personal* identity and we'll feel angrier and gloomier than when someone threatens our collective identity (Gaertner & others, 1999). Unlike Japanese, who persist more on tasks when they are failing (wanting not to fall short of others' expectations), people in individualistic countries persist more when succeeding, because success elevates self-esteem (Heine & others, 2001). Western individualists like to make comparisons with others that boost their self-esteem. Asian collectivists make comparisons (often upward, with those doing better) in ways that facilitate self-improvement (White & Lehman, 2005).

So when, do you suppose, are university students in collectivist Japan and individualist United States most likely to report positive emotions such as happiness

"ONE NEEDS TO CULTIVATE THE SPIRITS OF SACRIFICING THE LITTLE ME TO ACHIEVE THE BENEFITS OF THE BIG ME."

—CHINESE SAYING

**TABLE :: 2.2** Self-Concept: Independent or Interdependent

	Independent	Interdependent
Identity is	Personal, defined by individual traits and goals	Social, defined by connections with others
What matters	Me—personal achievement and fulfillment; my rights and liberties	We—group goals and solidarity; our social responsibilities and relationships
Disapproves of	Conformity	Egotism
Illustrative motto	"To thine own self be true"	"No one is an island"
Cultures that support	Individualistic Western	Collectivistic Asian and Third World

and elation? For Japanese students, happiness comes with positive social engagement—with feeling close, friendly, and respectful. For American students, it more often comes with disengaged emotions—with feeling effective, superior, and proud (Kitayama & Markus, 2000). Conflict in collectivist cultures often takes place between groups; individualist cultures breed more conflict (and crime and divorce) between individuals (Triandis, 2000).

When Kitayama (1999), after 10 years of teaching and researching in America, visited his Japanese alma mater, Kyoto University, graduate students were “astounded” when he explained the Western idea of the independent self. “I persisted in explaining this Western notion of self-concept—one that my American students understood intuitively—and finally began to persuade them that, indeed, many Americans do have such a disconnected notion of self. Still, one of them, sighing deeply, said at the end, ‘Could this *really* be true?’”

When East meets West—as happens, for example, thanks to Western influences in urban Japan and to Japanese exchange students visiting Western countries—does the self-concept become more individualized? Are the Japanese influenced when exposed to Western promotions based on individual achievement, with admonitions to “believe in one’s own possibilities,” and with movies in which the heroic individual police officer catches the crook *despite* others’ interference? They seem to be, report Steven Heine and co-researchers (1999). Personal self-esteem increased among Japanese exchange students after spending 7 months at the University of British Columbia. In Canada, individual self-esteem is also higher among long-term Asian immigrants than among more recent immigrants (and than it is among those living in Asia).

## Self-Knowledge

“Know thyself,” admonished an ancient Greek oracle. We certainly try. We readily form beliefs about ourselves, and we in Western cultures don’t hesitate to explain why we feel and act as we do. But how well do we actually know ourselves?

“There is one thing, and only one in the whole universe which we know more about than we could learn from external observation,” noted C. S. Lewis (1952, pp. 18–19). “That one thing is [ourselves]. We have, so to speak, inside information;



Collectivism in action: Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, people acted together to help one another.

# THE inside STORY

Hazel Markus and Shinobu Kitayama  
on Cultural Psychology

We began our collaboration by wondering out loud. Japanese researcher Shinobu wondered why American life was so weird. American researcher Hazel countered with anecdotes about the strangeness of Japan. Cultural psychology is about making the strange familiar and the familiar strange. Our shared cultural encounters astonished us and convinced us that when it comes to psychological functioning, culture matters.

After weeks of lecturing in Japan to students with a good command of English, Hazel wondered why the students did not say anything—no questions, no comments. She assured students she was interested in ideas that were different from hers, so why was there no response? Where were the arguments, debates, and signs of critical thinking? Even if she asked a straightforward question, “Where is the best noodle shop?” the answer was invariably an audible intake of air followed by, “It depends.” Didn’t Japanese students have preferences, ideas, opinions, and attitudes? What is inside a head if it isn’t these things? How could you know someone if she didn’t tell you what she was thinking?

Shinobu was curious about why American students shouldn’t just listen to a lecture and why they felt the need to be constantly interrupting each other and talking over each other and the professor. Why did the comments and questions reveal strong emotions and have a competitive edge? What was the point of this arguing? Why did intelligence seem to be associated with getting the best of another person, even within a class where people knew each other well?

Shinobu expressed his amazement at American hosts who bombard their guests with choices. Do you want wine or beer, or soft drinks or juice, or coffee or tea? Why burden the guest with trivial decisions? Surely the host knew what would be good refreshment on this occasion and could simply provide something appropriate.

Choice as a burden? Hazel wondered if this could be the key to one particularly humiliating experience in Japan. A group of eight—all native Japanese except for Hazel—was in a French restaurant, and everyone was following the universal restaurant script and studying the menu. The waiter approached and stood nearby. Hazel

announced her choice of appetizer and entrée. Next was a tense conversation among the Japanese host and the Japanese guests. When the meal was served, it was not what she had ordered. Everyone at the table was served the same meal. This was deeply disturbing. If you can’t choose your own dinner, how could it be enjoyable? What was the point of the menu if everybody is served the same meal?

Could a sense of sameness be a good or a desirable feeling in Japan? When Hazel walked around the grounds of a temple in Kyoto, there was a fork in the path and a sign that read: “ordinary path.” Who would want to take the ordinary path? Where was the special, less traveled path? Choosing the non-ordinary path may be an obvious course for Americans, but in this case it led to the temple dump outside the temple grounds. The ordinary path did not denote the dull and unchallenging way, but meant the appropriate and the good way.

These exchanges inspired our experimental studies and remind us that there are ways of life beyond the ones that each of us knows best. So far, most of psychology has been produced by psychologists in middle-class White American settings studying middle-class White American respondents. In other sociocultural contexts, there can be different ideas and practices about how to be a person and how to live a meaningful life, and these differences have an influence on psychological functioning. It is this realization that fuels our continuing interest in collaboration and in cultural psychology.



Hazel Rose Markus  
Stanford University



Shinobu Kitayama  
University of Michigan

we are in the know.” Indeed. Yet sometimes we *think* we know, but our inside information is wrong. That is the unavoidable conclusion of some fascinating research.

## EXPLAINING OUR BEHAVIOR

Why did you choose where to go to college? Why did you lash out at your roommate? Why did you fall in love with that special person? Sometimes we know. Sometimes we don’t. Asked why we have felt or acted as we have, we produce plausible answers. Yet, when causes are subtle, our self-explanations are often wrong. We may dismiss factors that matter and inflate others that don’t. People may misattribute their rainy-day gloom to life’s emptiness (Schwarz & Clore, 1983). And people routinely deny being influenced by the media, which, they readily acknowledge, affects *others*.

“IN SOOTH, I KNOW NOT  
WHY I AM SO SAD.”

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, THE  
MERCHANT OF VENICE, 1596

Also thought provoking are studies in which people have recorded their moods every day for 2 or 3 months (Stone & others, 1985; Weiss & Brown, 1976; Wilson & others, 1982). They also recorded factors that might affect their moods: the day of the week, the weather, the amount they slept, and so forth. At the end of each study, the people judged how much each factor had affected their moods. Even with their attention on their daily moods, there was little relationship between their perceptions of how well a factor predicted their mood and how well it really did. For example, people thought they would experience more negative moods on Mondays, but in fact their moods were no more negative on Mondays than on other weekdays. This raises a disconcerting question: How much insight do we really have into what makes us happy or unhappy? As Daniel Gilbert (2007, 2011) notes, not much: We are remarkably bad predictors of what will make us happy. “We seem to know less about the worlds inside our heads than about the world our heads are inside.”

## PREDICTING OUR BEHAVIOR

People also err when predicting their behavior. Dating couples tend to predict the longevity of their relationships through rose-colored glasses. Their friends and family often know better, report Tara MacDonald and Michael Ross (1997). Among University of Waterloo students, their roommates were better predictors of whether their romances would survive than they were. Medical residents weren’t very good at predicting whether they would do well on a surgical skills exam, but their peers in the program predicted each other’s performance with startling accuracy (Lutsky & others, 1993). So if you’re in love and want to know whether it will last, don’t listen to your heart—ask your roommate. And if you want to predict your routine daily behaviors—how much time you will spend laughing, on the phone, or watching TV, for example—your close friends’ estimates will likely prove at least as accurate as your own (Vazire & Mehl, 2008).

**planning fallacy**  
The tendency to under-  
estimate how long it will take  
to complete a task.

One of the most common errors in behavior prediction is underestimating how long it will take to complete a task (called the **planning fallacy**). The Big Dig freeway construction project in Boston was supposed to take 10 years and actually took 20 years. The Sydney Opera House was supposed to be completed in 6 years; it took 16. In one study, college students writing a senior thesis paper were asked to predict when they would complete the project. On average, students finished 3 weeks later than their “most realistic” estimate—and a week later than their “worst-case scenario” estimate (Buehler & others, 2002). However, friends and teachers were able to predict just how late these papers would be. Just as you should ask your friends how long your relationship is likely to survive, if you want to know when you will finish your term paper, ask your roommate or your mom. You could also do what Microsoft does: Managers automatically add 30 percent onto a software developer’s estimate of completion—and 50 percent if the project involves a new operating system (Dunning, 2006).

So, how can you improve your self-predictions? The best way is to be more realistic about how long tasks took in the past. Apparently people underestimate how long something will take because they misremember previous tasks as taking less time than they in fact did (Roy & others, 2005).

Are people equally bad at predicting how much money they will spend? Johanna Peetz and Roger Buehler (2009) found that the answer was yes. Canadian undergraduates predicted that they would spend \$94 over the next week but actually spent \$122. Considering they had spent \$126 in the week before the study, their guess should have been more accurate. When they came back a week later, they still predicted they would spend only \$85 in the coming week. Students who said they wanted to save money were more likely to predict they would spend less—but ended up spending the same amount as everyone else. So just as we think we will complete tasks quickly, we think we will save our money. The difficulty lies in actually doing so. If Lao-tzu was right—"He who knows others is learned. He who knows himself is enlightened"—then most people, it would seem, are more learned than enlightened.

## PREDICTING OUR FEELINGS

Many of life's big decisions involve predicting our future feelings. Would marrying this person lead to lifelong contentment? Would entering this profession make for satisfying work? Would going on this vacation produce a happy experience? Or would the likelier results be divorce, job burnout, and holiday disappointment?

Sometimes we know how we will feel—if we fail that exam, win that big game, or soothe our tensions with a half-hour jog. We know what exhilarates us and what makes us anxious or bored. Other times we may mispredict our responses. Asked how they would feel if asked sexually harassing questions on a job interview, most women studied by Julie Woodzicka and Marianne LaFrance (2001) said they would feel angry. When actually asked such questions, however, women more often experienced fear.

Studies of "affective forecasting" reveal that people have greatest difficulty predicting the *intensity* and the *duration* of their future emotions (Wilson & Gilbert, 2003). People have mispredicted how they would feel some time after a romantic breakup, receiving a gift, losing an election, winning a game, and being insulted (Gilbert & Ebert, 2002; Loewenstein & Schkade, 1999). Some examples:

- When young men are sexually aroused by erotic photographs, then exposed to a passionate date scenario in which their date asks them to "stop," they admit that they might not stop. If not shown sexually arousing pictures first, they more often deny the possibility of being sexually aggressive. When not aroused, one easily mispredicts how one will feel and act when aroused—a phenomenon that leads to unexpected professions of love during lust, to unintended pregnancies, and to repeat offenses among sex abusers who have sincerely vowed "never again."
- Hungry shoppers do more impulse buying ("Those doughnuts would be delicious!") than do shoppers who have just enjoyed a quarter-pound blueberry muffin (Gilbert & Wilson, 2000). When we are hungry, we mispredict how gross those deep-fried doughnuts will seem when we are sated. When stuffed, we may underestimate how yummy a doughnut might be with a late-night glass of milk—a purchase whose appeal quickly fades when we have eaten one or two.



Predicting behavior, even one's own, is no easy matter, which may be why some people go to tarot card readers in hope of help.

"WHEN A FEELING WAS  
THERE, THEY FELT AS IF IT  
WOULD NEVER GO; WHEN  
IT WAS GONE, THEY FELT  
AS IF IT HAD NEVER BEEN;  
WHEN IT RETURNED, THEY  
FELT AS IF IT HAD NEVER  
GONE."

—GEORGE MACDONALD,  
WHAT'S MINE'S MINE, 1886

- How much will you like the guy you're about to speed date? Ask the woman who went before you. Female college students predicted their enjoyment of a date better when another woman who had speed-dated him clued them in than when relying on facts such as a picture and a profile. Yet at the end of the experiment, most women still said that relying on the profile would be a better predictor of their feelings than the subjective opinion of another speed-dater (Gilbert & others, 2009).
- When natural disasters like hurricanes occur, people predict that their sadness will be greater if more people are killed. But after Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, students' sadness was similar when it was believed that 50 people had been killed or 1,000 had been killed (Dunn & Ashton-James, 2008). What *did* influence how sad people felt? Seeing pictures of victims. No wonder poignant images on TV have so much influence on us after disasters.
- People overestimate how much their well-being would be affected by both bad events (a romantic breakup, failing to reach an athletic goal [Eastwick & others, 2007a; van Dijk & others, 2008]) and good events (warmer winters, weight loss, more television channels, more free time). Even extreme events, such as winning a state lottery or suffering a paralyzing accident, affect long-term happiness less than most people suppose.

Our intuitive theory seems to be: We want. We get. We are happy. If that were true, this chapter would have fewer words. In reality, note Daniel Gilbert and Timothy Wilson (2000), we often "miswant." People who imagine an idyllic desert island holiday with sun, surf, and sand may be disappointed when they discover "how much they require daily structure, intellectual stimulation, or regular infusions of Pop Tarts." We think that if our candidate or team wins we will be delighted for a long while. But study after study reveals our vulnerability to **impact bias**—overestimating the enduring impact of emotion-causing events. Faster than we expect, the emotional traces of such good tidings evaporate.

Moreover, we are especially prone to impact bias after *negative* events. When Gilbert and colleagues (1998) asked assistant professors to predict their happiness a few years after achieving tenure or not, most believed a favorable outcome was important for their future happiness: "Losing my job would crush my life's ambitions. It would be terrible." Yet when surveyed several years after the event, those denied tenure were about as happy as those who received it. Impact bias is important, say Wilson and Gilbert (2005), because people's "affective forecasts"—their predictions of their future emotions—influence their decisions. If people overestimate the intensity and the duration of the pleasure they will gain from purchasing a new car or undergoing cosmetic surgery, then they may make ill-advised investments in that new Mercedes or extreme makeover.

Let's make this personal. Gilbert and Wilson invite us to imagine how we might feel a year after losing our nondominant hands. Compared with today, how happy would you be?

Thinking about that, you perhaps focused on what the calamity would mean: no clapping, no shoe tying, no competitive basketball, no speedy keyboarding. Although you likely would forever regret the loss, your general happiness some time after the event would be influenced by "two things: (a) the event, and (b) everything else" (Gilbert & Wilson, 2000). In focusing on the negative event, we discount the importance of everything else that contributes to happiness and so overpredict our enduring misery. "Nothing that you focus on will make as much difference as you think," write researchers David Schkade and Daniel Kahneman (1998).

Moreover, say Wilson and Gilbert (2003), people neglect the speed and the power of their *psychological immune system*, which includes their strategies for rationalizing, discounting, forgiving, and limiting emotional trauma. Being largely ignorant

### impact bias

Overestimating the enduring impact of emotion-causing events.

"WEEPING MAY TARRY  
FOR THE NIGHT, BUT  
JOY COMES WITH THE  
MORNING."

—PSALM 30:5

of the speed and strength of our psychological immune system (a phenomenon Gilbert and Wilson call **immune neglect**), we adapt to disabilities, romantic break-ups, exam failures, tenure denials, and personal and team defeats more readily than we would expect. Ironically, as Gilbert and colleagues report (2004), major negative events (which activate our psychological defenses) can be less enduringly distressing than minor irritations (which don't activate our defenses). We are, under most circumstances, amazingly resilient.

### THE WISDOM AND ILLUSIONS OF SELF-ANALYSIS

To a striking extent, then, our intuitions are often dead wrong about what has influenced us and what we will feel and do. But let's not overstate the case. When the causes of our behavior are conspicuous and the correct explanation fits our intuition, our self-perceptions will be accurate (Gavanski & Hoffman, 1987). When the causes of behavior are obvious to an observer, they are usually obvious to us as well.

As Chapter 3 will explore further, we are unaware of much that goes on in our minds. Perception and memory studies show that we are more aware of the *results* of our thinking than of its process. For example, we experience the results of our mind's unconscious workings when we set a mental clock to record the passage of time or to awaken us at an appointed hour, or when we somehow achieve a spontaneous creative insight after a problem has unconsciously "incubated." Similarly, creative scientists and artists often cannot report the thought processes that produced their insights, although they have superb knowledge of the results.

Timothy Wilson (1985, 2002) offers a bold idea: The mental processes that *control* our social behavior are distinct from the mental processes through which we *explain* our behavior. Our rational explanations may therefore omit the unconscious attitudes that actually guide our behavior. In nine experiments, Wilson and colleagues (1989, 2008) found that the attitudes people consciously expressed toward things or people usually predicted their subsequent behavior reasonably well. Their attitude reports became useless, however, if the participants were first asked to *analyze* their feelings. For example, dating couples' level of happiness with their relationship accurately predicted whether they would still be dating several months later. But participants who first listed all the reasons they could think of why their relationship was good or bad before rating their happiness were misled—their happiness ratings were useless in predicting the future of the relationship! Apparently, the process of dissecting the relationship drew attention to easily verbalized factors that were actually not as important as harder-to-verbalize happiness. We are often "strangers to ourselves," Wilson concluded (2002).

Such findings illustrate that we have a **dual attitude system**, say Wilson and colleagues (2000). Our automatic *implicit* attitudes regarding someone or something often differ from our consciously controlled, *explicit* attitudes (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006; Nosek, 2007). From childhood, for example, we may retain a habitual, automatic fear or dislike of people for whom we now consciously verbalize respect and appreciation. Although explicit attitudes may change with relative ease, notes Wilson, "implicit attitudes, like old habits, change more slowly." With repeated practice, however, new habitual attitudes can replace old ones.

This research on the limits of our self-knowledge has two practical implications. The first is for psychological inquiry. *Self-reports are often untrustworthy.* Errors in self-understanding limit the scientific usefulness of subjective personal reports.

The second implication is for our everyday lives. The sincerity with which people report and interpret their experiences is no guarantee of the validity of those reports. Personal testimonies are powerfully persuasive (as we will see in Chapter 15, Social Psychology in Court). But they may also be wrong. Keeping this potential for error in mind can help us feel less intimidated by others and be less gullible.

### immune neglect

The human tendency to underestimate the speed and the strength of the "psychological immune system," which enables emotional recovery and resilience after bad things happen.

"SELF-CONTEMPLATION IS  
A CURSE THAT MAKES AN  
OLD CONFUSION WORSE."

—THEODORE ROETHKE,  
THE COLLECTED POEMS OF  
THEODORE ROETHKE, 1975

### dual attitude system

Differing implicit (automatic) and explicit (consciously controlled) attitudes toward the same object. Verbalized explicit attitudes may change with education and persuasion; implicit attitudes change slowly, with practice that forms new habit.

## SUMMING UP: Self-Concept: Who Am I?

- Our sense of self helps organize our thoughts and actions. When we process information with reference to ourselves, we remember it well (the self-reference effect). *Self-concept* consists of two elements: the *self-schemas* that guide our processing of self-relevant information, and the *possible selves* that we dream of or dread.
- Cultures shape the self, too. Many people in *individualistic* Western cultures assume an *independent self*. Others, often in *collectivistic* cultures, assume a more *interdependent self*. As Chapter 5 will further explain, these contrasting ideas contribute to cultural differences in social behavior.
- Our self-knowledge is curiously flawed. We often do not know why we behave the way we do. When influences upon our behavior are not conspicuous enough for any observer to see, we, too, can miss them. The unconscious, implicit processes that control our behavior may differ from our conscious, explicit explanations of it. We also tend to mispredict our emotions. We underestimate the power of our psychological immune systems and thus tend to overestimate the durability of our emotional reactions to significant events.

## WHAT IS THE NATURE AND MOTIVATING POWER OF SELF-ESTEEM?

Understand self-esteem and its implications for behavior and cognition.

### self-esteem

A person's overall self-evaluation or sense of self-worth.

Everyone desires self-esteem, which we are motivated to enhance. But how can self-esteem sometimes be problematic?

Is **self-esteem**—our overall self-evaluation—the sum of all our self-schemas and possible selves? If we see ourselves as attractive, athletic, smart, and destined to be rich and loved, will we have high self-esteem? Yes, say Jennifer Crocker and Connie Wolfe (2001)—when we feel good about the domains (looks, smarts, or whatever) important to our self-esteem. “One person may have self-esteem that is highly contingent on doing well in school and being physically attractive, whereas another may have self-esteem that is contingent on being loved by God and adhering to moral standards.” Thus, the first person will feel high self-esteem when made to feel smart and good-looking, the second person when made to feel moral.

But Jonathon Brown and Keith Dutton (1994) argue that this “bottom-up” view of self-esteem is not the whole story. The causal arrow, they believe, also goes the other way. People who value themselves in a general way—those with high self-esteem—are more likely to value their looks, abilities, and so forth. They are like new parents who, loving their infant, delight in the baby’s fingers, toes, and hair: The parents do not first evaluate their infant’s fingers or toes and then decide how much to value the whole baby.

Specific self-perceptions do have some influence, however. If you think you’re good at math, you will be more likely to do well at math. Although general self-esteem does not predict academic performance very well, academic self-concept—whether you think you are good in school—does predict performance (Marsh & O’Mara, 2008). Of course, each causes the other: Doing well at math makes you think you are good at math, which then motivates you to do even better. So if you want to encourage someone (or yourself!), it’s better if your praise is specific (“You’re good at math”) instead of general (“You’re great”) and if your kind words reflect true ability and performance (“You really improved on your last test”) rather than unrealistic optimism (“You can do anything”). Feedback is best when it is true and specific (Swann & others, 2007).

Imagine you're getting your grade back for the first test in a psychology class. When you see your grade, you groan—you're hovering somewhere between a D and an F. But then you get an encouraging e-mail with some review questions for the class and this message: "Students who have high self-esteem not only get better grades, but they remain self-confident and assured. . . . Bottom line: Hold your head—and your self-esteem—high." Another group of students instead get a message about taking personal control of their performance, or receive review questions only. So how would each group do on the final exam? To the surprise of the researchers, the students whose self-esteem was boosted did by far the worst on the final—in fact, they flunked it (Forsyth & others, 2007). Struggling students told to feel good about themselves, the researchers muse, may have thought, "I'm already great—why study?"

## Self-Esteem Motivation

Most people are extremely motivated to maintain their self-esteem. In fact, a study found that college students preferred a boost to their self-esteem to eating their favorite food, engaging in their favorite sexual activity, seeing a best friend, drinking alcohol, or receiving a paycheck (Bushman & others, 2011). So, somewhat incredibly, self-esteem was more important than sex, pizza, and beer!

What happens when your self-esteem is threatened—for example, by a failure or an unflattering comparison with someone else? When brothers have markedly different ability levels—for example, one is a great athlete and the other is not—they report not getting along well (Tesser, 1988).

Self-esteem threats also occur among friends, whose success can be more threatening than that of strangers (Zuckerman & Jost, 2001). Your level of self-esteem also makes a difference: High self-esteem people usually react to a self-esteem threat by compensating for it (blaming someone else or trying harder next time). These reactions help them preserve their positive feelings about themselves. Low self-esteem people, however, are more likely to "break" by blaming themselves or giving up (VanDellen & others, 2011).

What underlies the motive to maintain or enhance self-esteem? Mark Leary (1998, 2004b, 2007) believes that our self-esteem feelings are like a fuel gauge. Relationships enable surviving and thriving. Thus, the self-esteem gauge alerts us to threatened social rejection, motivating us to act with greater sensitivity to others' expectations. Studies confirm that social rejection lowers our self-esteem and makes



Among sibling relationships, the threat to self-esteem is greatest for an older child with a highly capable younger brother or sister.

### terror management theory

Proposes that people exhibit self-protective emotional and cognitive responses (including adhering more strongly to their cultural worldviews and prejudices) when confronted with reminders of their mortality.

us more eager for approval. Spurned or jilted, we feel unattractive or inadequate. Like a blinking dashboard light, this pain can motivate action—self-improvement and a search for acceptance and inclusion elsewhere.

Jeff Greenberg (2008) offers another perspective, called “**terror management theory**,” which argues that humans must find ways to manage their overwhelming fear of death. If self-esteem were only about acceptance, he counters, why do “people strive to be great rather than to just be accepted”? The reality of our own death, he argues, motivates us to gain recognition from our work and values. There’s a worm in the apple, however: Not everyone can achieve such recognition, which is exactly why it is valuable, and why self-esteem can never be wholly unconditional (“You’re special just for being you” is an example of self-esteem being granted unconditionally). To feel our lives are not in vain, Greenberg maintains, we must continually pursue self-esteem by meeting the standards of our societies.

## The “Dark Side” of Self-Esteem

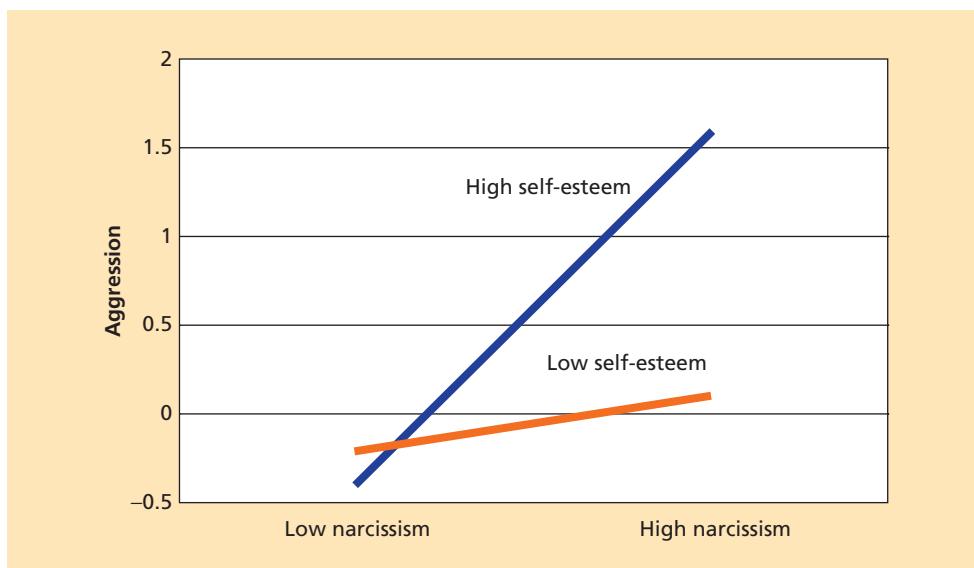
People with low self-esteem often have problems in life—they make less money, abuse drugs, and are more likely to be depressed (Salmela-Aro & Nurmi, 2007; Trzesniewski & others, 2006). As you learned in Chapter 1, though, a correlation between two variables is sometimes caused by a third factor. Maybe people low in self-esteem also faced poverty as children, experienced sexual abuse, or had parents who used drugs—all possible causes of later struggling. Sure enough, a study that controlled for these factors found that the link between self-esteem and negative outcomes disappeared (Boden & others, 2008). In other words, low self-esteem was not the cause of these young adults’ problems—the seeming cause, instead, was that many could not escape their tough childhoods.

High self-esteem does have some benefits—it fosters initiative, resilience, and pleasant feelings (Baumeister & others, 2003). Yet teen males who engage in sexual activity at an “inappropriately young age” tend to have *higher* than average self-esteem. So do teen gang leaders, extreme ethnocentrists, terrorists, and men in prison for committing violent crimes (Bushman & Baumeister, 2002; Dawes, 1994, 1998). “Hitler had very high self-esteem,” note Baumeister and co-authors (2003).

## NARCISSISM: SELF-ESTEEM’S CONCEITED SISTER

High self-esteem becomes especially problematic if it crosses over into narcissism, or having an inflated sense of self. Most people with high self-esteem value both individual achievement and relationships with others. Narcissists usually have high self-esteem, but they are missing the piece about caring for others (Campbell & others, 2002). Although narcissists are often outgoing and charming early on, their self-centeredness often leads to relationship problems in the long run (Campbell, 2005). The link between narcissism and problematic social relations led Delroy Paulhus and Kevin Williams (2002) to include narcissism in “The Dark Triad” of negative traits, along with Machiavellianism (manipulativeness) and antisocial psychopathy.

In a series of experiments conducted by Brad Bushman and Roy Baumeister (1998), undergraduate volunteers wrote essays and received rigged feedback that said, “This is one of the worst essays I’ve read!” Those who scored high on narcissism were much more likely to retaliate, blasting painful noise into the headphones of the student they believed had criticized them. Narcissists weren’t aggressive toward someone who praised them (“great essay!”). It was the insult that set them off. But what about self-esteem? Maybe only the “insecure” narcissists—those low in self-esteem—would lash out. But that’s not how it turned out—instead, the students high in both self-esteem and narcissism were the most aggressive. The same was true in a classroom setting—those who were high in both self-esteem and narcissism were the most likely to retaliate against a classmate’s criticism by giving him



or her a bad grade (Bushman & others, 2009; Figure 2.5). Narcissists can be charming and entertaining. But as one wit has said, "God help you if you cross them."

It's also possible to have too much narcissistic pride in your group, not just yourself. Polish undergraduates who displayed a "collective narcissism," believing their country was superior to others, were more prejudiced against Jewish people. Mexican undergraduates high in collective narcissism were more likely to view the construction of a U.S.-Mexico border wall as an insult and to endorse a boycott of U.S. products in retaliation (Golec deZavala & others, 2009). So whether someone has excessive pride in themselves or their group, others may end up suffering.

Some studies have found small correlations between low self-esteem and antisocial behavior, even when IQ and family income were taken into account (Donnellan & others, 2005; Trzesniewski & others, 2006). However, another study found that the link between low self-esteem and antisocial behavior disappeared when sexual abuse and earlier behavioral problems were considered (Boden & others, 2007). Kids aren't acting aggressively because they have low self-esteem, it seems, but because they were hurt in the past. "The enthusiastic claims of the self-esteem movement mostly range from fantasy to hogwash," says Baumeister (1996), who suspects he has "probably published more studies on self-esteem than anybody else.... The effects of self-esteem are small, limited, and not all good." Folks with high self-esteem, he reports, are more likely to be obnoxious, to interrupt, and to talk at people rather than with them (in contrast to the more shy, modest, self-folks with low self-esteem). "My conclusion is that self-control is worth 10 times as much as self-esteem."

What about the idea that an overinflated ego is just a cover for deep-seated insecurity? Do narcissistic people actually hate themselves "deep down inside"? Recent studies show that the answer is *no*. People who score high on measures of narcissistic personality traits also score high on measures of self-esteem. In case narcissists were claiming high self-esteem just for show, researchers also asked undergraduates to play a computer game where they had to press a key as quickly as possible to match the word "me" with words such as "good," "wonderful," "great," and "right," and words such as "bad," "awful," "terrible," and "wrong." High scorers on the narcissism scale were faster than others to associate themselves with good words, and slower than others to pair themselves with bad words (Campbell & others, 2007). And narcissists were even faster to identify with words such as "outspoken," "dominant," and "assertive." Although it might be comforting to think

"AFTER ALL THESE YEARS,  
I'M SORRY TO SAY, MY  
RECOMMENDATION IS  
THIS: FORGET ABOUT  
SELF-ESTEEM AND CON-  
CENTRATE MORE ON  
SELF-CONTROL AND SELF-  
DISCIPLINE. RECENT WORK  
SUGGESTS THIS WOULD  
BE GOOD FOR THE INDIVI-  
DUAL AND GOOD FOR  
SOCIETY."

—ROY BAUMEISTER, 2005

**FIGURE :: 2.5**  
**Narcissism, Self-Esteem,**  
**and Aggression**

Narcissism and self-esteem interact to influence aggression. In an experiment by Brad Bushman and colleagues (2009), the recipe for retaliation against a critical classmate required both narcissism and high self-esteem.

that an arrogant classmate is just covering for his insecurity, chances are that deep down inside he thinks he's *awesome*.

## NARCISSISM ON THE RISE

After tracking self-importance across the past several decades, psychologist Jean Twenge (2006; Twenge & others, 2008) reports that today's young generation—*Generation Me*, she calls it—express more narcissism (by agreeing with statements such as "If I ruled the world, it would be a better place" or "I think I am a special person"). Narcissism scores rose over time on college campuses from Alabama to Maryland to California (Stewart & Bernhardt, 2010; Twenge & Foster, 2008, 2010). Narcissism correlates with materialism, the desire to be famous, inflated expectations, fewer committed relationships and more "hooking up," more gambling, and more cheating, all of which have also risen as narcissism has increased. Narcissism is also linked to a lack of empathy—the ability to take someone else's perspective and be concerned about their problems—and empathy has dropped precipitously among college students (Konrath & others, 2011). The researchers speculate that today's generation may be so wrapped up in online interaction that their in-person interaction skills have atrophied. Or, they say, empathy might have declined because young people today are "feeling too busy on their paths to success," single-mindedly concentrating on their own achievement because the world is now so competitive. Yet, ironically, those high in narcissism and low in empathy are less—not more—successful in the long run, making lower grades in college and performing poorly at work (Judge & others, 2006; Robins & Beer, 2001).

## LOW VERSUS SECURE SELF-ESTEEM

The findings linking a highly positive self-concept with negative behavior exist in tension with the findings that people expressing low self-esteem are more vulnerable to assorted clinical problems, including anxiety, loneliness, and eating disorders. When feeling bad or threatened, low-self-esteem people often take a negative view of everything. They notice and remember others' worst behaviors and think their partners don't love them (Murray & others, 1998, 2002; Ybarra, 1999). Although there is no evidence that low-self-esteem people choose less desirable partners, they are quick to believe that their partners are criticizing or rejecting them. Perhaps as a result, low-self-esteem people are less satisfied with their relationships (Fincham & Bradbury, 1993). They may also be more likely to leave those relationships. Low-self-esteem undergraduates decided not to stay with roommates who saw them in a positive light (Swann & Pelham, 2002).

Secure self-esteem—one rooted more in feeling good about who one is than in grades, looks, money, or others' approval—is conducive to long-term well-being (Kernis, 2003; Schimel & others, 2001). Jennifer Crocker and colleagues (Crocker, 2002; Crocker and Luhtanen, 2003; Crocker and Park, 2004; Crocker and Knight, 2005) confirmed this in studies with University of Michigan students. Those whose self-worth was most fragile—most contingent on external sources—experienced more stress, anger, relationship problems, drug and alcohol use, and eating disorders than did those whose sense of self-worth was rooted more in internal sources, such as personal virtues.

Ironically, note Crocker and Lora Park (2004), those who pursue self-esteem, perhaps by seeking to become beautiful, rich, or popular, may lose sight of what really makes for quality of life. Moreover, if feeling good about ourselves is our goal, then we may become less open to criticism, more likely to blame than empathize with others, and more pressured to succeed at activities rather than enjoy them. Over time, such pursuit of self-esteem can fail to satisfy our deep needs for competence, relationship, and autonomy, note Crocker and Park. To focus less on one's self-image, and more on developing one's talents and relationships, eventually leads to greater well-being. Kristin Neff (2011) suggests we label this approach

self-compassion—leaving behind comparisons with others and instead treating ourselves with kindness. As an Indian proverb puts it, “There is nothing noble in being superior to some other person. The true nobility is in being superior to your previous self.”

## SUMMING UP: What Is the Nature and Motivating Power of Self-Esteem?

- *Self-esteem* is the overall sense of self-worth we use to appraise our traits and abilities. Our self-concepts are determined by multiple influences, including the roles we play, the comparisons we make, our social identities, how we perceive others appraising us, and our experiences of success and failure.
- Self-esteem motivation influences our cognitive processes: Facing failure, high-self-esteem people sustain their self-worth by perceiving other people as failing, too, and by exaggerating their superiority over others.
- Although high self-esteem is generally more beneficial than low, researchers have found that people high in both self-esteem and narcissism are the most aggressive. Someone with a big ego who is threatened or deflated by social rejection is potentially aggressive.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE “PERCEIVED SELF-CONTROL”?

Understand *self-concept* through examination of the self in action.

We have considered what a self-concept is, how it develops, and how well (or poorly) we know ourselves. Now let's see why our self-concepts matter, by viewing the self in action.

### The Self's Energy

The self's capacity for action has limits, note Roy Baumeister and colleagues (1998, 2000; Muraven & others, 1998). Consider:

- People who exert self-control—by forcing themselves to eat radishes rather than chocolates, or by suppressing forbidden thoughts—subsequently quit faster when given unsolvable puzzles.
- People who have tried to control their emotional responses to an upsetting movie exhibit decreased physical stamina.
- People who have spent their willpower on tasks such as controlling their emotions during an upsetting film later become more aggressive and more likely to fight with their partners (DeWall & others, 2007; Finkel & Campbell, 2001). They also become less restrained in their sexual thoughts and behaviors. When asked to express intimacy with their partner, those with depleted willpower were more likely to passionately kiss their partner and even remove some clothing right in the lab (Gailliot & Baumeister, 2007).

Effortful self-control depletes our limited willpower reserves. Our brain's “central executive” consumes available blood sugar when engaged in self-control (Gailliot, 2008). Self-control therefore operates similarly to muscular strength, conclude Baumeister and Julie Exline (2000): Both are weaker after exertion, replenished with rest, and strengthened by exercise.

Although the self's energy can be temporarily depleted, our self-concepts do influence our behavior (Graziano & others, 1997). Given challenging tasks, people who imagine themselves as hardworking and successful outperform those who imagine themselves as failures (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). Envision your positive possibilities and you become more likely to plan and enact a successful strategy.

## Self-Efficacy

### self-efficacy

A sense that one is competent and effective, distinguished from self-esteem, which is one's sense of self-worth. A sharpshooter in the military might feel high self-efficacy and low self-esteem.

Stanford psychologist Albert Bandura (1997, 2000, 2008) captured the power of positive thinking in his research and theorizing about **self-efficacy** (how competent we feel on a task). Believing in our own competence and effectiveness pays dividends (Bandura & others, 1999; Maddux and Gosselin, 2003). Children and adults with strong feelings of self-efficacy are more persistent, less anxious, and less depressed. They also live healthier lives and are more academically successful.

In everyday life, self-efficacy leads us to set challenging goals and to persist. More than 100 studies show that self-efficacy predicts worker productivity (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). When problems arise, a strong sense of self-efficacy leads workers to stay calm and seek solutions rather than ruminate on their inadequacy. Competence plus persistence equals accomplishment. And with accomplishment, self-confidence grows. Self-efficacy, like self-esteem, grows with hard-won achievements.

Even subtle manipulations of self-efficacy can affect behavior. Becca Levy (1996) discovered this when she subliminally exposed 90 older adults to words that evoked (primed) either a negative or a positive stereotype of aging. Some subjects viewed .066-second presentations of negative words such as "decline," "forgets," and "senile," or of positive words such as "sage," "wise," and "learned." At the conscious level, the participants perceived only a flash of light. Yet being given the positive words led to heightened "memory self-efficacy" (confidence in one's memory) and better memory performance. Viewing the negative words had the opposite effect. We can observe a similar phenomenon outside the laboratory: Older adults in China, where positive images of aging prevail and memory self-efficacy may be greater, seem to suffer less memory decline than is commonly observed in Western countries (Schacter & others, 1991).

If you believe you can do something, will that belief necessarily make a difference? That depends on a second factor: Do you have *control* over your outcomes? You may, for example, feel like an effective driver (high self-efficacy) yet feel endangered by drunken drivers (low control). You may feel like a competent student or worker but, fearing discrimination based on your age, gender, or appearance, you may think your prospects for success are dim.

Many people confuse self-efficacy with self-esteem. If you believe you can do something, that's self-efficacy. If you like yourself overall, that's self-esteem. When you were a child, your parents may have encouraged you by saying things such as "You're special!" (intended to build self-esteem) or "I know you can do it!" (intended to build self-efficacy). One study showed that self-efficacy feedback ("You tried really hard") led to better performance than self-esteem feedback ("You're really smart"). Children told they were smart were afraid to try again—maybe they wouldn't look so smart next time. Those praised for working hard, however, knew they could exert more effort again (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). If you want to encourage someone, focus on their self-efficacy, not their self-esteem.

## Locus of Control

"I have no social life," complained a 40-something single man to student therapist Jerry Phares. At Phares's urging, the patient went to a dance, where several women danced with him. "I was just lucky," he later reported. "It would never happen again." When Phares reported this to his mentor, Julian Rotter, it crystallized an idea he had been forming. In Rotter's experiments and in his clinical

practice, some people seemed to persistently "feel that what happens to them is governed by external forces of one kind or another, while others feel that what happens to them is governed largely by their own efforts and skills" (quoted by Hunt, 1993, p. 334).

What do you think about your own life? Are you more often in charge of your destiny or a victim of circumstance? Rotter called this dimension **locus of control**. With Phares, he developed 29 paired statements to measure a person's locus of control. Imagine taking this test. Which statements do you more strongly believe?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a. In the long run, people get the respect they deserve in this world. | or b. Unfortunately, people's worth passes unrecognized no matter how hard they try.                      |
| a. What happens to me is my own doing.                                 | or b. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.             |
| a. The average person can have an influence in government decisions.   | or b. This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much the little guy can do about it. |

### **locus of control**

The extent to which people perceive outcomes as internally controllable by their own efforts or as externally controlled by chance or outside forces.

If your answers to these questions (from Rotter, 1973) were mostly "a," you probably believe you control your own destiny (*internal locus of control*). If your answers were mostly "b," you probably feel chance or outside forces determine your fate (*external locus of control*, as in Figure 2.6). Those who see themselves as *internally* controlled are more likely to do well in school, be more productive at work, make more money, successfully stop smoking, maintain a healthy weight, deal with marital problems directly, be more satisfied with life, and achieve long-term goals (Findley & Cooper, 1983; Gale & others, 2008; Miller & others, 1986; Wang & others, 2010).

How much control we feel is related to how we explain setbacks. Perhaps you have known students who view themselves as victims—who blame poor grades on things beyond their control, such as their "bad" teachers, texts, or tests. If such students are coached to adopt a more hopeful sense of personal control—to believe that



**FIGURE :: 2.6**

Locus of Control

effort, good study habits, and self-discipline can make a difference—their academic performance tends to go up (Noel & others, 1987; Peterson & Barrett, 1987). They are also less likely to cheat: Students who were told that free will is an illusion—that what happened to them is outside their control—peaked at answers and paid themselves more money for mediocre work (Vohs & Schooler, 2008).

When rating employees' job performance, bosses gave significantly higher ratings to those with stronger free will beliefs, probably because these employees believed they could control their actions (Stillman & others, 2010). New life insurance sales representatives who view failures as controllable ("It's difficult, but with persistence I'll get better") sell more policies. They are only half as likely as their more pessimistic colleagues to quit during their first year (Seligman & Schulman, 1986). Among college swim team members, those with an optimistic "explanatory style" are more likely than pessimists to perform beyond expectations (Seligman & others, 1990). As the Roman poet Virgil said in the *Aeneid*, "They can because they think they can."

Some people, however, have taken these ideas a little too far. The popular book *The Secret*, for example, claims that thinking positive thoughts causes positive things to happen to you ("The only reason any person does not have enough money is because they are blocking money from coming to them with their thoughts"). So should we conclude that we need not help those poor Somalis in Africa—all they need to do is think happy thoughts? And if you are sick, they say, your thoughts just aren't positive enough—despite the thousands of cancer patients who desperately want to get well. Obviously, there are limits to the power of positive thinking. Being optimistic and feeling in control can reap great benefits, but poverty and sickness can happen to anyone.

"ARGUE FOR YOUR  
LIMITATIONS, AND SURE  
ENOUGH THEY'RE YOURS."  
—RICHARD BACH, *ILLUSIONS:*  
ADVENTURES OF A RELUCTANT  
MESSIAH, 1977

### learned helplessness

The sense of hopelessness and resignation learned when a human or animal perceives no control over repeated bad events.

## Learned Helplessness Versus Self-Determination

The benefits of feelings of control also appear in animal research. In research done before today's greater concern for animal welfare, dogs confined in a cage and taught that they could not escape shocks learned a sense of helplessness. Later, these dogs cowered passively in other situations when they *could* escape punishment. Dogs that learned personal control (by successfully escaping their first shocks) adapted easily to a new situation. Researcher Martin Seligman (1975, 1991) noted similarities to this **learned helplessness** in human situations. Depressed or oppressed people, for example, become passive because they believe their efforts have no effect. Helpless dogs and depressed people both suffer paralysis of the will, passive resignation, and even motionless apathy (Figure 2.7).

On the other hand, people benefit by training their self-control "muscles." College students who practiced self-control by sticking with an exercise program or reducing their impulse-buying also ate less junk food, cut down on alcohol, and studied more (Oaten & Cheng, 2006a, 2006b). So if you learn how to exert willpower in one area of your life, resisting temptation in other areas becomes easier too.

Ellen Langer and Judith Rodin (1976) tested the importance of personal control by treating elderly patients in a highly rated Connecticut nursing home in one of two ways. With one group, the benevolent caregivers emphasized "our responsibility to make this a home you can be proud of and happy in." They gave the patients their normal well-intentioned, sympathetic care and allowed them to assume a passive care-receiving role. Three weeks later, most of these patients were rated by themselves, by interviewers, and by nurses as further debilitated.

### FIGURE :: 2.7

#### Learned Helplessness

When animals and people experience uncontrollable bad events, they learn to feel helpless and resigned.



Langer and Rodin's other treatment promoted personal control. It emphasized opportunities for choice, the possibilities for influencing nursing-home policy, and the person's responsibility "to make of your life whatever you want." These patients were given small decisions to make and responsibilities to fulfill. During the ensuing 3 weeks, 93 percent of this group showed improved alertness, activity, and happiness.

Studies confirm that systems of governing or managing people that promote personal control will indeed promote health and happiness (Deci & Ryan, 1987). Here are some additional examples:

- Prisoners given some control over their environments—by being able to move chairs, control TV sets, and operate the lights—experience less stress, exhibit fewer health problems, and commit less vandalism (Ruback & others, 1986; Wener & others, 1987).
- Workers given leeway in carrying out tasks and making decisions experience improved morale (Miller & Monge, 1986). So do telecommuting workers who have more flexibility in balancing their work and personal life (Valcour, 2007).
- In all countries studied, people who perceive themselves as having free choice experience greater satisfaction with their lives. And countries where people experience more freedom have more satisfied citizens (Inglehart & others, 2008).

## THE COSTS OF EXCESS CHOICE

Can there ever be too much of a good thing such as freedom and self-determination? Barry Schwartz (2000, 2004) contends that individualistic modern cultures indeed have "an excess of freedom," causing decreased life satisfaction and increased rates of clinical depression. Too many choices can lead to paralysis, or what Schwartz calls "the tyranny of freedom." After choosing from among 30 kinds of jams or chocolates, people express less satisfaction with their choices than those choosing from among 6 options (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000). Making choices is also tiring. Students who read the catalog and chose which classes they would take during the upcoming semester—versus those who simply read it but made no choices—were later less likely to study for an important test and more likely to procrastinate by playing video games and reading magazines. In another study, students who chose among an array of consumer products were later less able to consume an unsavory but healthy drink (Vohs & others, 2008). So after choosing among the 19,000 possible beverage combinations at Starbucks or the 40,000 items at the average supermarket, you might be less satisfied with your choices and more likely to go home and eat the ice cream straight from the container.

Christopher Hsee and Reid Hastie (2006) illustrate how choice may enhance regret. Give employees a free trip to either Paris or Hawaii and they will be happy. But give them a choice between the two and they may be less happy. People who choose Paris may regret that it lacks the warmth and the ocean. Those who choose Hawaii may regret the lack of great museums.

In other experiments, people have expressed greater satisfaction with irrevocable choices (such as those made in an "all purchases final" sale) than with reversible choices (as when allowing refunds or exchanges). Ironically, people like and will pay for the freedom to reverse their choices. Yet, note Daniel Gilbert and Jane Ebert (2002), that same freedom "can inhibit the psychological processes that manufacture satisfaction."

Personal control: Inmates of Spain's modern Valencia prison have, with work and appropriate behavior, gained access to classes, sports facilities, cultural opportunities, and money in an account that can be charged for snacks.





*"This gives my confidence a real boost."*

Confidence and feelings of self-efficacy grow from successes.

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That principle may help explain a curious social phenomenon (Myers, 2000a): National surveys show that people expressed more satisfaction with their marriages several decades ago when marriage was more irrevocable ("all purchases final"). Today, despite greater freedom to escape bad marriages and try new ones, people tend to express somewhat less satisfaction with the marriage that they have.

Research on self-control gives us greater confidence in traditional virtues such as perseverance and hope. Bandura (2004) acknowledges that self-efficacy is fed by social persuasion ("You have what it takes to succeed") and by self-persuasion ("I think I can, I think I can"). Modeling—seeing similar others succeed with effort—helps, too. But the biggest source of self-efficacy, he says, is *mastery experiences*. "Successes build a robust belief in one's efficacy."

If your initial efforts to lose weight, stop

smoking, or improve your grades succeed, your self-efficacy increases.

A team of researchers led by Roy Baumeister (Baumeister & others, 2003) concurs with Bandura's conclusion about mastery experiences. "Praising all the children just for being themselves," they contend, "simply devalues praise." Better to praise and bolster self-esteem "in recognition of good performance. . . . As the person performs or behaves better, self-esteem is encouraged to rise, and the net effect will be to reinforce both good behavior and improvement. Those outcomes are conducive to both the happiness of the individual and the betterment of society."

## THE inside STORY

Daniel Gilbert on the Benefits of Irrevocable Commitments

In 2002 I changed my mind about the benefit of being able to change my mind.

Jane Ebert and I discovered that people are generally happier with decisions when they can't undo them. When participants in our experiments were able to undo their decisions they tended to consider both the positive and negative features of the decisions they had made. When they couldn't undo their decisions they tended to concentrate on the good features and ignore the bad. As such, they were more satisfied when they made irrevocable than revocable decisions. Ironically, subjects did not realize this would happen and strongly preferred to have the opportunity to change their minds.

Now, up until this point I had always believed that love causes marriage. But these experiments suggested to me that marriage would also cause love. If you take data seriously you act on it, so when these results came in I went home and proposed to the woman I was living with. She said yes, and it turned out that the data were right: I love my wife more than I loved my girlfriend. (Excerpted with permission from edge.org)

Daniel Gilbert  
Harvard University



## SUMMING UP: What Does It Mean to Have “Perceived Self-Control”?

- Several lines of research show the benefits of a sense of *self-efficacy* and feelings of control. People who believe in their own competence and effectiveness, and who have an internal *locus of control*, cope better and achieve more than others.
- *Learned helplessness* often occurs when attempts to improve a situation have proven fruitless; self-determination, in contrast, is bolstered by experiences of successfully exercising control and improving one’s situation.
- When people are given too many choices, they may be less satisfied with what they have than when offered a smaller range of choices.

## WHAT IS SELF-SERVING BIAS?

Explain self-serving bias and its adaptive and maladaptive aspects.

Most of us have a good reputation with ourselves. In studies of self-esteem, even low-scoring people respond in the midrange of possible scores. (A low-self-esteem person responds to statements such as “I have good ideas” with a qualifying adjective, such as “somewhat” or “sometimes.”) In a study of self-esteem across 53 nations, the average self-esteem score was above the midpoint in every country (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). In recent samples of U.S. college students, the most common score on a self-esteem measure was the maximum—in effect, “perfect” self-esteem (Gentile & others, 2010). One of social psychology’s most provocative yet firmly established conclusions concerns the potency of **self-serving bias**—a tendency to perceive oneself favorably.

### Explaining Positive and Negative Events

Many dozens of experiments have found that people accept credit when told they have succeeded. They attribute the success to their ability and effort, but they attribute failure to external factors such as bad luck or the problem’s inherent “impossibility” (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). Similarly, in explaining their victories, athletes commonly credit themselves, but they attribute losses to something else: bad breaks, bad referee calls, or the other team’s super effort or dirty play (Grove & others, 1991; Lalonde, 1992; Mullen & Riordan, 1988). And how much responsibility do you suppose car drivers tend to accept for their accidents? On insurance forms, drivers have described their accidents in words such as these: “An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my car, and vanished”; “As I reached an intersection, a hedge sprang up, obscuring my vision, and I did not see the other car”; and “A pedestrian hit me and went under my car” (*Toronto News*, 1977).

Situations that combine skill and chance (games, exams, and job applications) are especially prone to the phenomenon. When I win at Scrabble, it’s because of my verbal dexterity; when I lose, it’s because “Who could get anywhere with a Q but no U?” Politicians similarly tend to attribute their wins to themselves (hard work, constituent service, reputation, and strategy) and their losses to factors beyond their control (their district’s party makeup, their opponent’s name, and political trends) (Kingdon, 1967). When corporate profits are up, the CEOs welcome big bonuses for their managerial skill. When profits turn to losses, well, what could you expect in a down economy? This phenomenon of **self-serving attributions** (attributing positive outcomes to oneself and negative outcomes to something else) is one of the most potent of human biases (Mezulis & others, 2004). That might be for a

#### self-serving bias

The tendency to perceive oneself favorably.

#### self-serving attributions

A form of self-serving bias; the tendency to attribute positive outcomes to oneself and negative outcomes to other factors.

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good reason: Making self-serving attributions activates brain areas associated with reward and pleasure (Seidel & others, 2010).

Self-serving attributions contribute to marital discord, worker dissatisfaction, and bargaining impasses (Kruger & Gilovich, 1999). Small wonder that divorced people usually blame their partner for the breakup (Gray & Silver, 1990), or that managers often blame poor performance on workers' lack of ability or effort (Imai, 1994; Rice, 1985). (Workers are more likely to blame something external—supplies, excessive workload, difficult co-workers, or ambiguous assignments.) Small wonder, too, that people evaluate pay raises as fairer when they receive a bigger raise than most of their co-workers (Diekmann & others, 1997).

We help maintain our positive self-images by associating ourselves with success and distancing ourselves from failure. For example, "I got an A on my econ test" versus "The prof gave me a C on my history exam." Blaming failure or rejection on something external, even another's prejudice, is less depressing than seeing oneself as undeserving (Major & others, 2003). We will, however, acknowledge our distant past failings—those by our "former" self, note Anne Wilson and Michael Ross (2001). Describing their old precollege selves, their University of Waterloo students offered nearly as many negative as positive statements. When describing their present selves, they offered three times more positive statements. "I've learned and grown, and I'm a better person today," most people surmise. Chumps yesterday, champs today.

Ironically, we are even biased against seeing our own bias. People claim they avoid self-serving bias themselves but readily acknowledge that others commit this bias (Pronin & others, 2002). This "bias blind spot" can have serious consequences during conflicts. If you're negotiating with your roommate over who does household chores and you believe your roommate has a biased view of the situation, you're much more likely to become angry (Pronin & Ross, 2006). Apparently we see ourselves as objective and everyone else as biased. No wonder we fight, because we're each convinced we're "right" and free from bias. As the T-shirt slogan says, "Everyone is entitled to my opinion."

Is the self-serving bias universal, or are people in collectivistic cultures immune? People in collectivistic cultures associate themselves with positive words and valued traits (Gaertner & others, 2008; Yamaguchi & others, 2007). However, in some studies, collectivists are less likely to self-enhance by believing they are better than others (Falk & others, 2009; Heine & Hamamura, 2007), particularly in individualistic domains (Sedikides & others, 2003, 2005).

## Can We All Be Better Than Average?

Self-serving bias also appears when people compare themselves with others. If the sixth-century B.C. Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu was right that "at no time in the world will a man who is sane over-reach himself, over-spend himself, over-rate himself," then most of us are a little insane. For on *subjective, socially desirable, and common dimensions*, most people see themselves as better than the average

person. Compared with people in general, most people see themselves as more ethical, more competent at their job, friendlier, more intelligent, better looking, less prejudiced, healthier, and even more insightful and less biased in their self-assessments. (See “Focus On: Self-Serving Bias—How Do I Love Me? Let Me Count the Ways.”)

Every community, it seems, is like Garrison Keillor’s fictional Lake Wobegon, where “all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average.” Many people believe that they will become even more above average in the future—if I’m good now, I will be even better soon, they seem to think (Kanten & Teigen, 2008). One of Freud’s favorite jokes was the husband who told his wife, “If one of us should die, I think I would go live in Paris.”

The self-serving bias is also common in marriages. In a 2008 survey, 49 percent of married men said they did half to most of the child care. But only 31 percent of wives said their husbands did this much. In the same survey, 70 percent of women said they do most of the cooking, but 56 percent of the men said *they* do most of the cooking (Galinsky & others, 2009). The general rule: Group members’ estimates of how much they contribute to a joint task typically sum to more than 100 percent (Savitsky & others, 2005).

## focus ON

### Self-Serving Bias—How Do I Love Me? Let Me Count the Ways

“The one thing that unites all human beings, regardless of age, gender, religion, economic status, or ethnic background,” notes columnist Dave Barry (1998), “is that deep down inside, we all believe that we are above average drivers.” We also believe we are above average on most any other subjective and desirable trait. Among the many faces of self-serving bias are these:

- *Ethics.* Most businesspeople see themselves as more ethical than the average businessperson (Baumhart, 1968; Brenner & Molander, 1977). One national survey asked, “How would you rate your own morals and values on a scale from 1 to 100 (100 being perfect)?” Fifty percent of people rated themselves 90 or above; only 11 percent said 74 or less (Lovett, 1997).
- *Professional competence.* In one survey, 90 percent of business managers rated their performance as superior to their average peer (French, 1968). In Australia, 86 percent of people rated their job performance as above average, and only 1 percent as below average (Headey & Wearing, 1987). Most surgeons believe their patients’ mortality rate to be lower than average (Gawande, 2002).
- *Virtues.* In The Netherlands, most high school students rate themselves as more honest, persistent, original, friendly, and reliable than the average high school student (Hoorens, 1993, 1995).
- *Intelligence.* Most people perceive themselves as more intelligent, better looking, and much less prejudiced than their average peer (Public Opinion, 1984; Watt & Larkin, 2010; Wylie, 1979). When someone outperforms them, people tend to think of the other as a genius (Lassiter & Munhall, 2001).
- *Parental support.* Most adults believe they support their aging parents more than do their siblings (Lerner & others, 1991).
- *Health.* Los Angeles residents view themselves as healthier than most of their neighbors, and most college students believe they will outlive their actuarially predicted age of death by approximately 10 years (Larwood, 1978; Snyder, 1978).
- *Attractiveness.* Is it your experience, as it is mine, that most photos of you seem not to do you justice? One experiment showed people a lineup of faces—one their own, the others being their face morphed into those of less and more attractive faces (Epley & Whitchurch, 2008). When asked which was their actual face, people tended to identify an attractively enhanced version of their face.
- *Driving.* Most drivers—even most drivers who have been hospitalized for accidents—believe themselves to be safer and more skilled than the average driver (Guerin, 1994; McKenna & Myers, 1997; Svenson, 1981). Dave Barry was right.



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ship ability," I conjure up an image of a great leader whose style is similar to mine. By defining ambiguous criteria in our own terms, each of us can see ourselves as relatively successful. In one College Entrance Examination Board survey of 829,000 high school seniors, *none* rated themselves below average in "ability to get along with others" (a subjective, desirable trait), 60 percent rated themselves in the top 10 percent, and 25 percent saw themselves among the top 1 percent! In 2011, 77 percent of incoming college students described themselves as above average in their "drive to achieve," another subjective and desirable trait (Pryor & others, 2012).

Researchers have wondered: Do people really believe their above-average self-estimates? Is their self-serving bias partly a function of how the questions are phrased (Krizan & Suls, 2008)? When Eleanor Williams and Thomas Gilovich (2008) had people bet real money when estimating their relative performance on tests, they found that, yes, "people truly believe their self-enhancing self-assessments."

## Unrealistic Optimism

Optimism predisposes a positive approach to life. "The optimist," notes H. Jackson Brown (1990, p. 79), "goes to the window every morning and says, 'Good morning, God.' The pessimist goes to the window and says, 'Good God, morning.'"

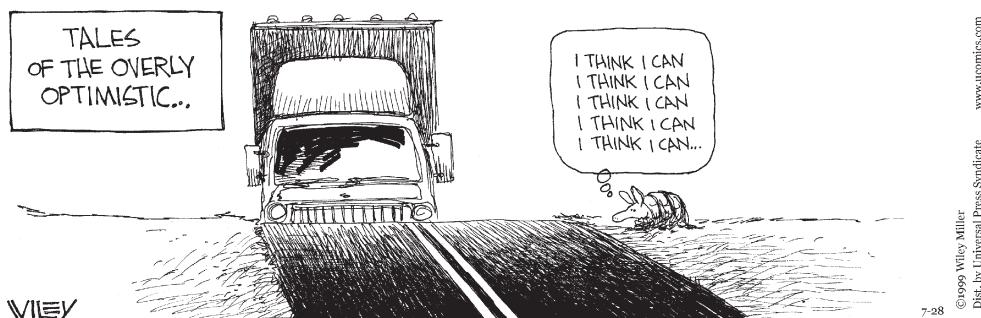
Studies of more than 90,000 people across 22 cultures reveal that most humans are more disposed to optimism than pessimism (Fischer & Chalmers, 2008). Indeed, many of us have what researcher Neil Weinstein (1980, 1982) terms "an unrealistic optimism about future life events." In a 2006–2008 worldwide poll, most people expected their lives to improve more in the next 5 years than they did in the past 5 years (Deaton, 2009)—an especially striking expectation considering the worldwide recession that followed. Partly because of their relative pessimism about others' fates (Hoorens & others, 2008; Shepperd, 2003), students perceive themselves as far more likely than their classmates to get a good job, draw a good salary, and own a home. They also see themselves as far *less* likely to experience negative events, such as developing a drinking problem, having a heart attack before age 40 years, or being fired. Adult women are much more likely to be unduly

"VIEWS OF THE FUTURE  
ARE SO ROSY THAT THEY  
WOULD MAKE POLLYANNA  
BLUSH."

—SHELLEY E. TAYLOR,  
POSITIVE ILLUSIONS, 1989

My wife and I used to pitch our laundry on the floor next to our bedroom clothes hamper. In the morning, one of us would put it in. When she suggested that I take more responsibility for this, I thought, "Huh? I already do it 75 percent of the time." So I asked her how often she thought she picked up the clothes. "Oh," she replied, "about 75 percent of the time."

Within commonly considered domains, subjective behavioral dimensions (such as "disciplined") trigger even greater self-serving bias than observable behavioral dimensions (such as "punctual"). Subjective qualities give us leeway in constructing our own definition of success (Dunning & others, 1989, 1991). Rating my "athletic ability," I ponder my basketball play, not the agonizing weeks I spent as a Little League baseball player hiding in right field. Assessing my "leadership



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optimistic than pessimistic about their relative risk of breast cancer (Waters & others, 2011). Football fans believe their favorite team has a 77 percent chance of winning their first game. Even after 4 months when (on average) their team won only half the time, they still hold out hope and predict a 70 percent chance of their team winning (Massey & others, 2011).

Parents extend their unrealistic optimism to their children, assuming their child is less likely to drop out of college, become depressed, or get lung cancer than the average child. According to a study (Lench & others, 2006), parents assumed their children would be more likely to complete college, remain healthy, and stay happy.

Illusory optimism increases our vulnerability. Believing ourselves immune to misfortune, we do not take sensible precautions. Sexually active undergraduate women who don't consistently use contraceptives perceived themselves, compared with other women at their university, as much *less* vulnerable to unwanted pregnancy (Burger & Burns, 1988). People trying to quit smoking who believe they are above average in willpower are more likely to keep cigarettes around and stand near others who are smoking—behaviors likely to lead to a relapse into smoking (Nordgren & others, 2009). Elderly drivers who rated themselves as “above average” were four times more likely than more modest drivers to flunk a driving test and be rated “unsafe” (Freund & others, 2005). Students who enter university with inflated assessments of their academic ability often suffer deflating self-esteem and well-being and are more likely to drop out (Robins & Beer, 2001). In perhaps the most wide-ranging example, many home buyers, mortgage lenders, and investors in the mid-2000s displayed unrealistic optimism in their belief that “housing never goes down,” accumulating large amounts of debt. The eventual result was a wave of home foreclosures that spawned the 2007–2009 recession, the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression. For illusory optimism, we often pay a price.

Those who cheerfully deny the effects of smoking or stumble into ill-fated relationships remind us that blind optimism, like pride, may go before a fall. When gambling, optimists persist longer than pessimists, even when piling up losses (Gibson & Sanbonmatsu, 2004). If those who deal in the stock market or in real estate perceive their business intuition as superior to that of their competitors, they, too, may be in for disappointment. Even the seventeenth-century economist Adam Smith, a defender of human economic rationality, foresaw that people would overestimate their chances of gain. This “absurd presumption in their own good fortune,” he said, arises from “the overweening conceit which the greater part of men have of their own abilities” (Spiegel, 1971, p. 243).

Unrealistic optimism appears to be on the rise. In the 1970s, half of American high school seniors predicted that they would be “very good” workers as adults—the highest rating available, and thus the equivalent of giving themselves five stars out of five. By 2006, two-thirds of teens believed they would achieve this stellar outcome (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Even more striking, half of high school seniors in 2000 believed that they would earn a graduate degree—even though only 9 percent

"O GOD, GIVE US GRACE  
TO ACCEPT WITH SEREN-  
ITY THE THINGS THAT  
CANNOT BE CHANGED,  
COURAGE TO CHANGE THE  
THINGS WHICH SHOULD  
BE CHANGED, AND THE  
WISDOM TO DISTINGUISH  
THE ONE FROM THE  
OTHER."

—REINHOLD NIEBUHR, THE  
SERENITY PRAYER, 1943



Illusory optimism: Most couples marry feeling confident of long-term love. Actually, in individualistic cultures, half of marriages fail.

### defensive pessimism

The adaptive value of anticipating problems and harnessing one's anxiety to motivate effective action.

Yet a dash of realism—or what Julie Norem (2000) calls **defensive pessimism**—can sometimes save us from the perils of unrealistic optimism. Defensive pessimism anticipates problems and motivates effective coping. As a Chinese proverb says, “Be prepared for danger while staying in peace.” Students who exhibit excess optimism (as many students destined for low grades do) benefit from some self-doubt, which motivates study (Prohaska, 1994; Sparrell & Shrauger, 1984). Students who are overconfident tend to underprepare, whereas their equally able but less confident peers study harder and get higher grades (Goodhart, 1986; Norem & Cantor, 1986; Showers & Ruben, 1987). Viewing things in a more immediate, realistic way often helps. Students in one experiment were wildly optimistic in predicting their test performance when the test was hypothetical, but they were surprisingly accurate when the test was imminent (Armor & Sackett, 2006). Believing you’re great when nothing can prove you wrong is one thing, but with an evaluation fast approaching, best not to look like a bragging fool.

It’s also important to listen to criticism. “One gentle rule I often tell my students,” writes David Dunning (2006), “is that if two people independently give them the same piece of negative feedback, they should at least consider the possibility that it might be true.” So, there is a power to negative as well as positive thinking. The moral: Success in school and beyond requires enough optimism to sustain hope and enough pessimism to motivate concern.

## False Consensus and Uniqueness

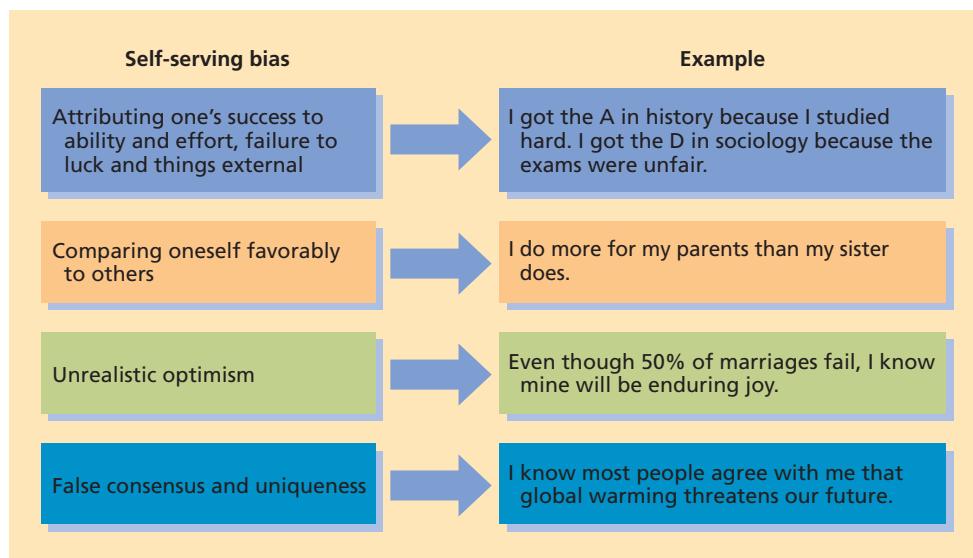
### false consensus effect

The tendency to overestimate the commonality of one's opinions and one's undesirable or unsuccessful behaviors.

We have a curious tendency to enhance our self-images by overestimating or underestimating the extent to which others think and act as we do. On matters of *opinion*, we find support for our positions by overestimating the extent to which others agree—a phenomenon called the **false consensus effect** (Krugler & Clement, 1994b; Marks & Miller, 1987; Mullen & Goethals, 1990). Sharad Goel, Winter Mason, and Duncan Watts (2010) found that Facebook users were 90 percent accurate in guessing when they agreed with their friends on political and other issues, but they were only 41 percent accurate in guessing disagreement. In other words, most of the time they thought their friends agreed with them when they didn’t. Business students asked to make decisions about ethical dilemmas overestimated how many other students made the same choice (Flynn & Wiltermuth, 2010).

were likely to actually do so (Reynolds & others, 2006). Although aiming high has benefits for success, those who aim too high may struggle with depression as they learn to adjust their goals to more realistic heights (Wrosch & Miller, 2009).

Optimism definitely beats pessimism in promoting self-efficacy, health, and well-being (Armor & Taylor, 1996; Segerstrom, 2001). As natural optimists, most people believe they will be happier with their lives in the future—a belief that surely helps create happiness in the present (Robinson & Ryff, 1999). If our optimistic prehistoric ancestors were more likely than their pessimistic neighbors to surmount challenges and survive, then small wonder that we are disposed to optimism (Haselton & Nettle, 2006).



**FIGURE :: 2.8**  
How Self-Serving Bias Works

White Australians prejudiced against Aborigines were more likely to believe that other Whites were also prejudiced (Watt & Larkin, 2010). The sense we make of the world seems like common sense.

When we behave badly or fail in a task, we reassure ourselves by thinking that such lapses also are common. After one person lies to another, the liar begins to perceive the *other* person as dishonest (Sagarin & others, 1998). If we feel sexual desire toward another, we may overestimate the other's reciprocal desire. We guess that others think and act as we do: "I lie, but doesn't everyone?" If we cheat on our income taxes, smoke, or enhance our appearance, we are likely to overestimate the number of other people who do likewise. As former *Baywatch* actor David Hasselhoff said, "I have had Botox. Everyone has!" "We don't see things as they are," says a proverb. "We see things as we are."

Dawes (1990) proposes that this false consensus may occur because we generalize from a limited sample, which prominently includes ourselves. Lacking other information, why not "project" ourselves; why not impute our own knowledge to others and use our responses as a clue to their likely responses? Most people are in the majority; so when people assume they are in the majority they are usually right. Also, we're more likely to spend time with people who share our attitudes and behaviors and, consequently, to judge the world from the people we know. Small wonder that Germans tend to think that the typical European looks rather German, whereas the Portuguese see Europeans as looking more Portuguese (Imhoff & others, 2011).

On matters of *ability* or when we behave well or successfully, however, a **false uniqueness effect** more often occurs (Goethals & others, 1991). We serve our self-image by seeing our talents and moral behaviors as relatively unusual. Dutch college students preferred being part of a larger group in matters of opinion such as politics (false consensus) but wanted to be part of a smaller group in matters of taste such as musical preferences (false uniqueness; Spears & others, 2009). After all, a band isn't cool anymore if too many people like it. Female college students who protect themselves while drinking by, for example, designating a driver or drinking only with a meal underestimate how many other women do the same (Benton & others, 2008). Thus, we may see our failings as relatively normal and our virtues as relatively exceptional.

To sum up, self-serving bias appears as self-serving attributions, self-congratulatory comparisons, illusory optimism, and false consensus for one's failings (Figure 2.8).

"EVERYBODY SAYS I'M PLASTIC FROM HEAD TO TOE.  
CAN'T STAND NEXT TO A RADIATOR OR I'LL MELT. I HAD (BREAST) IMPLANTS,  
BUT SO HAS EVERY SINGLE PERSON IN L.A."

—ACTRESS PAMELA LEE ANDERSON (QUOTED BY TALBERT, 1997)

### false uniqueness effect

The tendency to underestimate the commonality of one's abilities and one's desirable or successful behaviors.



*"I admit it does look very impressive. But you see nowadays everyone graduates in the top ten percent of his class."*

#### Can we all be better than average?

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the times when I absentmindedly overlooked it.

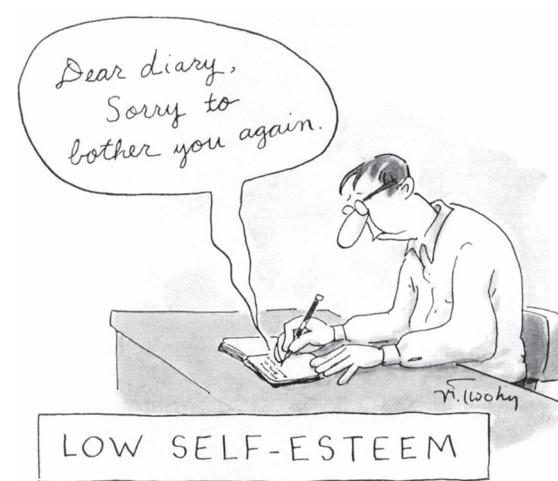
Are the biased perceptions, then, simply a perceptual error, an emotion-free glitch in how we process information? Or are self-serving *motives* also involved? It's now clear from research that we have multiple motives. Questing for self-knowledge, we're motivated to *assess our competence* (Dunning, 1995). Questing for self-confirmation, we're motivated to *verify our self-conceptions* (Sanitioso & others, 1990; Swann, 1996, 1997). Questing for self-affirmation, we're especially motivated to *enhance our self-image* (Sedikides, 1993). Self-esteem motivation, then, helps power our self-serving bias. As social psychologist Daniel Batson (2006) surmises, "The head is an extension of the heart."

## Reflections on Self-Esteem and Self-Serving Bias

If you are like some readers, by now you are finding self-serving bias either depressing or contrary to your own occasional feelings of inadequacy. Even people who exhibit the self-serving bias may feel inferior—to those who are a step or two higher on the ladder of success, attractiveness, or skill. Moreover, not everyone operates with a self-serving bias. Some people *do* suffer from low self-esteem. Positive self-esteem does have some benefits.

### THE SELF-SERVING BIAS AS ADAPTIVE

Self-esteem has its dark side, but also its bright side. When good things happen, people with high self-esteem are more likely to savor and sustain the good feelings (Wood & others, 2003). "Believing one has more talents and positive qualities than one's peers allows one to feel good about oneself and to enter the stressful circumstances of daily life with the resources conferred by a positive sense of self," noted Shelley Taylor and co-researchers (2003b).



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## Explaining Self-Serving Bias

Why do people perceive themselves in self-enhancing ways? One explanation sees the self-serving bias as a by-product of how we process and remember information about ourselves. Comparing ourselves with others requires us to notice, assess, and recall their behavior and ours. Thus, there are multiple opportunities for flaws in our information processing (Chambers & Windschitl, 2004). In one study, married people gave themselves credit for doing more housework than their spouses did. Might that not be due, as Michael Ross and Fiore Sicoly (1979) believed, to our greater recall for what we've actively done and our lesser recall for what we've not done or merely observed our partner doing? I could easily picture myself picking up the laundry off the bedroom floor, but I was less aware of

the times when I absentmindedly overlooked it.

Are the biased perceptions, then, simply a perceptual error, an emotion-free glitch in how we process information? Or are self-serving *motives* also involved? It's now clear from research that we have multiple motives. Questing for self-knowledge, we're motivated to *assess our competence* (Dunning, 1995). Questing for self-confirmation, we're motivated to *verify our self-conceptions* (Sanitioso & others, 1990; Swann, 1996, 1997). Questing for self-affirmation, we're especially motivated to *enhance our self-image* (Sedikides, 1993). Self-esteem motivation, then, helps power our self-serving bias. As social psychologist Daniel Batson (2006) surmises, "The head is an extension of the heart."

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Self-serving bias and its accompanying excuses also help protect people from depression (Snyder & Higgins, 1988; Taylor & others, 2003a). Nondepressed people usually exhibit self-serving bias. They excuse

their failures on laboratory tasks or perceive themselves as being more in control than they are. Depressed people's self-appraisals and their appraisals of how others really view them are not inflated (more on this in Chapter 14).

Self-serving bias additionally helps buffer stress. George Bonanno and colleagues (2005) assessed the emotional resiliency of workers who escaped from the World Trade Center or its environs on September 11, 2001. They found that those who displayed self-enhancing tendencies were the most resilient.

In their "terror management theory," Jeff Greenberg, Sheldon Solomon, and Tom Pyszczynski (1997; Greenberg, 2008) propose another reason why positive self-esteem is adaptive: It buffers anxiety, including anxiety related to our certain death. In childhood, we learn that when we meet the standards taught us by our parents, we are loved and protected; when we don't, love and protection may be withdrawn. We therefore come to associate viewing ourselves as good with feeling secure. Greenberg and colleagues argue that positive self-esteem—viewing oneself as good and secure—even protects us from feeling terror over our eventual death. Their research shows that reminding people of their mortality (for example, by writing a short essay on dying) motivates them to affirm their self-worth. When facing such threats, self-esteem buffers anxiety. In 2004, a year after the U.S. invasion, Iraqi teens who felt their country was under threat reported the highest self-esteem (Carlton-Ford & others, 2008).

As research on depression and anxiety suggests, there is practical wisdom in self-serving perceptions. It may be strategic to believe we are smarter, stronger, and more socially successful than we are. Cheaters may give a more convincing display of honesty if they believe themselves honorable. Belief in our superiority can also motivate us to achieve—creating a self-fulfilling prophecy—and can sustain our hope through difficult times (Willard & Gramzow, 2009).

## THE SELF-SERVING BIAS AS MALADAPTIVE

Although self-serving pride may help protect us from depression, it can also be maladaptive. People who blame others for their social difficulties are often unhappier than people who can acknowledge their mistakes (Anderson & others, 1983; Newman & Langer, 1981; Peterson & others, 1981).

Research by Barry Schlenker (1976; Schlenker & Miller, 1977a, 1977b) has also shown how self-serving perceptions can poison a group. As a rock band guitarist during his college days, Schlenker noted that "rock band members typically overestimated their contributions to a group's success and underestimated their contributions to failure. I saw many good bands disintegrate from the problems caused by these self-glorifying tendencies." In his later life as a University of Florida social psychologist, Schlenker explored group members' self-serving perceptions. In nine experiments, he had people work together on some task. He then falsely informed them that their group had done either well or poorly. In every one of those studies, the members of successful groups claimed more responsibility for their group's performance than did members of groups that supposedly failed at the task.

If most group members believe they are underpaid and underappreciated relative to their better-than-average contributions, disharmony and envy are likely. College presidents and academic deans will readily recognize the phenomenon. Ninety percent or more of college faculty members have rated themselves as superior to their average colleague (Blackburn & others, 1980; Cross, 1977). It is therefore inevitable that when merit salary raises are announced and half receive an average raise or less, many will feel themselves victims of injustice.

Self-serving biases also inflate people's judgments of their *groups*, a phenomenon called **group-serving bias**. When groups are comparable, most people consider their own group superior (Codol, 1976; Jourden & Heath, 1996; Taylor & Doria, 1981).

"VICTORY FINDS A HUN-DRED FATHERS BUT DEFEAT IS AN ORPHAN."

—COUNT GALEAZZO CIANO,  
THE CIANO DIARIES, 1938

"OTHER SINS ARE BEFORE OUR EYES; OUR OWN ARE BEHIND OUR BACK."

—SENECA, DE IRA, A.D. 43

## group-serving bias

Explaining away outgroup members' positive behaviors; also attributing negative behaviors to their dispositions (while excusing such behavior by one's own group).

Self-serving pride in group settings can become especially dangerous.  
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"**FALSE HUMILITY IS THE PRETENSE THAT ONE IS SMALL. TRUE HUMILITY IS THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF STANDING IN THE PRESENCE OF GREATNESS.**"

—JONATHAN SACKS,  
 BRITAIN'S CHIEF RABBI, 2000



*"Then we're in agreement. There's nothing rotten in Denmark.  
 Something is rotten everywhere else."*

- Sixty-six percent of Americans give their oldest child's public school a grade of A or B. But nearly as many—64 percent—give the nation's public schools a grade of C or D (Whitman, 1996).

That people see themselves and their groups with a favorable bias is hardly new. The tragic flaw portrayed in ancient Greek drama was *hubris*, or pride. Like the subjects of our experiments, the Greek tragic figures were not self-consciously evil; they merely thought too highly of themselves. In literature, the pitfalls of pride are portrayed again and again. In theology, pride has long been first among the "seven deadly sins."

If pride is akin to the self-serving bias, then what is humility? Is it self-contempt? Humility is not handsome people believing they are ugly and smart people trying to believe they are slow-witted. False modesty can actually be a cover for pride in one's better-than-average humility. (James Friedrich [1996] reports that most students congratulate themselves on being better than average at not thinking themselves better than average!) True humility is more like self-forgetfulness than false modesty. It leaves us free to recognize accurately and rejoice in our special talents and, with the same honesty, to recognize the talents of others.

## SUMMING UP: What Is Self-Serving Bias?

- Contrary to the presumption that most people suffer from low self-esteem or feelings of inferiority, researchers consistently find that most people exhibit a *self-serving bias*. In experiments and everyday life, we often take credit for our successes while blaming failures on the situation.
- Most people rate themselves as better than average on subjective, desirable traits and abilities.
- We exhibit unrealistic optimism about our futures.
- We overestimate the commonality of our opinions and foibles (*false consensus*) while underestimating the commonality of our abilities and virtues (*false uniqueness*).
- Such perceptions arise partly from a motive to maintain and enhance self-esteem—a motive that protects people from depression but contributes to misjudgment and group conflict.
- Self-serving bias can be adaptive in that it allows us to savor the good things that happen in our lives. When bad things happen, however, self-serving bias can have the maladaptive effect of causing us to blame others or feel cheated out of something we "deserved."

# HOW DO PEOPLE MANAGE THEIR SELF-PRESENTATION?

Identify self-presentation and understand how impression management can explain behavior.

So far, we have seen that the self is at the center of our social worlds, that self-esteem and self-efficacy pay some dividends, and that self-serving bias influences self-evaluations. Perhaps you have wondered: Are self-enhancing expressions always sincere? Do people have the same feelings privately as they express publicly? Or are they just putting on a positive face even while living with self-doubt?

## Self-Handicapping

Sometimes people sabotage their chances for success by creating impediments that make success less likely. Far from being deliberately self-destructive, such behaviors typically have a self-protective aim (Arkin & others, 1986; Baumeister & Scher, 1988; Rhodewalt, 1987): "I'm really not a failure—I would have done well except for this problem."

Why would people handicap themselves with self-defeating behavior? Recall that we eagerly protect our self-images by attributing failures to external factors. Can you see why, *fearing failure*, people might handicap themselves by partying half the night before a job interview or playing video games instead of studying before a big exam? When self-image is tied up with performance, it can be more self-deflating to try hard and fail than to procrastinate and have a ready excuse. If we fail while handicapped in some way, we can cling to a sense of competence; if we succeed under such conditions, it can only boost our self-image. Handicaps protect both self-esteem and public image by allowing us to attribute failures to something temporary or external ("I was feeling sick"; "I was out too late the night before") rather than to lack of talent or ability.

Steven Berglas and Edward Jones (1978) confirmed this analysis of **self-handicapping**. One experiment was announced as concerning "drugs and intellectual performance." Imagine yourself in the position of their Duke University participants. You guess answers to some difficult aptitude questions and then are told, "Yours was one of the best scores seen to date!" Feeling incredibly lucky, you are then offered a choice between two drugs before answering more of these items. One drug will aid intellectual performance and the other will inhibit it. Which drug do you want? Most students wanted the drug that would supposedly disrupt their thinking, thus providing a handy excuse for anticipated poorer performance.

Researchers have documented other ways people self-handicap. Fearing failure, people will

- reduce their preparation for important individual athletic events (Rhodewalt & others, 1984).
- give their opponent an advantage (Shepperd & Arkin, 1991).
- perform poorly at the beginning of a task in order not to create unreachable expectations (Baumgardner & Brownlee, 1987).
- not try as hard as they could during a tough, ego-involving task (Hormuth, 1986; Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987; Riggs, 1992; Turner & Pratkanis, 1993).

### self-handicapping

Protecting one's self-image with behaviors that create a handy excuse for later failure.

"IF YOU TRY TO FAIL, AND SUCCEED, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?"

—ANONYMOUS

*After losing to some younger rivals, tennis great Martina Navratilova confessed that she was "afraid to play my best. . . . I was scared to find out if they could beat me when I'm playing my best because if they can, then I am finished" (Frankel & Snyder 1987).*

## Impression Management

Self-serving bias, false modesty, and self-handicapping reveal the depth of our concern for self-image. To varying degrees, we are continually managing the impressions

### self-presentation

The act of expressing oneself and behaving in ways designed to create a favorable impression or an impression that corresponds to one's ideals.



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In familiar situations, self-presentation happens without conscious effort. In unfamiliar situations, perhaps at a party with people we would like to impress or in conversation with someone we have romantic interest in, we are acutely self-conscious of the impressions we are creating and we are therefore less modest than when among friends who know us well (Leary & others, 1994; Tice & others, 1995). Preparing to have our photographs taken, we may even try out different faces in a mirror. We do this even though active self-presentation depletes energy, which often leads to diminished effectiveness—for example, to less persistence on a tedious experimental task or more difficulty stifling emotional expressions (Vohs & others, 2005). The upside is that self-presentation can unexpectedly improve mood. People felt significantly better than they thought they would after doing their best to “put their best face forward” and concentrate on making a positive impression on their boyfriend or girlfriend. Elizabeth Dunn and colleagues (2008) conclude that “date nights” for long-term couples work because they encourage active self-presentation, which improves mood.

Social networking sites such as Facebook provide a new and sometimes intense venue for self-presentation. They are, says communications professor Joseph Walther, “like impression management on steroids” (Rosenbloom, 2008). Users make careful decisions about which pictures, activities, and interests to highlight in their profiles. Some even think about how their friends will affect the impression they make on others; one study found that those with more attractive friends were perceived as more attractive themselves (Walther & others, 2008). Given the concern with status and attractiveness on social networking sites, it is not surprising that people high in narcissistic traits thrive on Facebook, tallying up more friends and choosing more attractive pictures of themselves (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008).

Given our concern for self-presentation, it’s no wonder that people will self-handicap when failure might make them look bad. It’s no wonder that people take health risks—tanning their skin with wrinkle- and cancer-causing radiation; having piercings or tattoos done without proper hygiene; becoming anorexic; or yielding to peer pressures to smoke, get drunk, and do drugs (Leary & others, 1994). It’s no wonder that people express more modesty when their self-flattery is vulnerable to being debunked, perhaps by experts who will be scrutinizing

we create. Whether we wish to impress, intimidate, or seem helpless, we are social animals, playing to an audience. So great is the human desire for social acceptance that it can lead people to risk harming themselves through smoking, binge eating, premature sex, or drug and alcohol abuse (Rawn & Vohs, 2011).

**Self-presentation** refers to our wanting to present a desired image both to an external audience (other people) and to an internal audience (ourselves). We work at managing the impressions we create. We excuse, justify, or apologize as necessary to shore up our self-esteem and verify our self-images (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992). Just as we preserve our self-esteem, we also must make sure not to brag too much and risk the disapproval of others (Anderson & others, 2006). Social interaction is a careful balance of looking good while not looking *too* good.



Group identity. In Asian countries, self-presentation is restrained. Children learn to identify themselves with their groups.

their self-evaluations (Arkin & others, 1980; Riess & others, 1981; Weary & others, 1982). Professor Smith will likely express more modesty about the significance of her work when presenting it to professional colleagues than when presenting it to students.

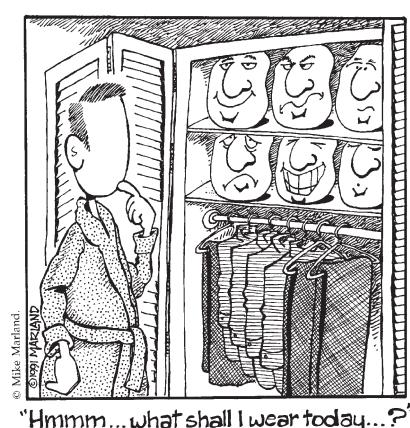
For some people, conscious self-presentation is a way of life. They continually monitor their own behavior and note how others react, then adjust their social performance to gain a desired effect. Those who score high on a scale of **self-monitoring** (who, for example, agree that "I tend to be what people expect me to be") act like social chameleons—they adjust their behavior in response to external situations (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1987). Having attuned their behavior to the situation, they are more likely to espouse attitudes they don't really hold (Zanna & Olson, 1982). Being conscious of others, they are less likely to act on their own attitudes. As Mark Leary (2004b) observed, the self they know often differs from the self they show. As social chameleons, those who score high in self-monitoring are also less committed to their relationships and more likely to be dissatisfied in their marriages (Leone & Hawkins, 2006).

Those who score low in self-monitoring care less about what others think. They are more internally guided and thus more likely to talk and act as they feel and believe (McCann & Hancock, 1983). For example, if asked to list their thoughts about gay couples, they simply express what they think, regardless of the attitudes of their anticipated audience (Klein & others, 2004). As you might imagine, someone who is extremely low in self-monitoring could come across as an insensitive boor, whereas extremely high self-monitoring could result in dishonest behavior worthy of a con artist. Most of us fall somewhere between those two extremes.

Presenting oneself in ways that create a desired impression is a delicate balancing act. People want to be seen as able but also

### **self-monitoring**

Being attuned to the way one presents oneself in social situations and adjusting one's performance to create the desired impression.



"**PUBLIC OPINION IS  
ALWAYS MORE TYRANNICAL TOWARDS THOSE WHO  
OBVIOUSLY FEAR IT THAN  
TOWARDS THOSE WHO  
FEEL INDIFFERENT TO IT.**"

—BERTRAND RUSSELL,  
*THE CONQUEST OF  
HAPPINESS*, 1930

as modest and honest (Carlston & Shovar, 1983). In most social situations, modesty creates a good impression, unsolicited boasting a bad one. Hence the false modesty phenomenon: We often display lower self-esteem than we privately feel (Miller & Schlenker, 1985). But when we have obviously done extremely well, the insincerity of a disclaimer ("I did well, but it's no big deal") may be evident. To make good impressions—to appear modest yet competent—requires social skill.

## SUMMING UP: How Do People Manage Their Self-Presentation?

- As social animals, we adjust our words and actions to suit our audiences. To varying degrees, we note our performance and adjust it to create the impressions we desire.
- Such tactics explain examples of false modesty, in which people put themselves down, extol future competitors, or publicly credit others while privately crediting themselves.
- Sometimes people will even *self-handicap* with self-defeating behaviors that protect self-esteem by providing excuses for failure.
- *Self-presentation* refers to our wanting to present a favorable image both to an external audience (other people) and to an internal audience (ourselves). With regard to an external audience, those who score high on a scale of *self-monitoring* adjust their behavior to each situation, whereas those low in self-monitoring may do so little social adjusting that they seem insensitive.

### POSTSCRIPT: Twin Truths—The Perils of Pride, the Powers of Positive Thinking

This chapter offered two memorable truths—the truth of self-efficacy and the truth of self-serving bias. The truth concerning self-efficacy encourages us not to resign ourselves to bad situations. We need to persist despite initial failures and to exert effort without being overly distracted by self-doubts. Secure self-esteem is likewise adaptive. When we believe in our positive possibilities, we are less vulnerable to depression and we feel less insecure.

Thus, it's important to think positively and try hard but not to be so self-confident that our goals are illusory or we alienate others with our narcissism. Taking self-efficacy too far leads to blaming the victim: If positive thinking can accomplish anything, then we have only ourselves to blame if we are unhappily married, poor, or depressed. For shame! If only we had tried harder, been more disciplined, less stupid. This viewpoint fails to acknowledge that bad things can happen to good people. Life's greatest achievements, but also its greatest disappointments, are born of the highest expectations.

These twin truths—self-efficacy and self-serving bias—remind me of what Pascal taught 300 years ago: No single truth is ever sufficient, because the world is complex. Any truth, separated from its complementary truth, is a half-truth.



CHAPTER

# 3

# Social Beliefs and Judgments



**How do we perceive our social worlds?**

**How do we judge our social worlds?**

**How do we explain our social worlds?**

**How do our expectations of our social worlds matter?**

**What can we conclude about social beliefs and judgments?**

**Postscript: Reflecting on illusory thinking**

There is curious power to partisanship. Consider American politics:

- In the late 1980s, most Democrats believed inflation had risen under Republican president Ronald Reagan (it had dropped).
- In 2010, most Republicans believed that taxes had increased under Barack Obama (for most Americans, taxes had decreased) (Cooper, 2010; Douthat, 2010).
- Obama is Muslim, agreed 31 percent of Republicans and 10 percent of Democrats surveyed by Pew (2010a). He is not.
- And he was born outside the United States, said 43 percent of Republicans and 9 percent of Democrats surveyed by Gallup shortly before the release of his long-form Hawaiian birth certificate (Morales, 2011a).

Such “motivated reasoning” transcends political parties. Feelings—such as a gut-level liking or disliking of certain politicians—powerfully influence how we interpret evidence and view reality. Partisanship predisposes perceptions. As an old Chinese proverb says, “Two-thirds of what we see is behind our eyes.”

Such differing responses to public evidence, which have been replicated in political perceptions throughout the world, illustrate the extent to which we construct social perceptions and beliefs as we

- perceive and recall events through the filters of our own assumptions;
- judge events, informed by our intuition, by implicit rules that guide our snap judgments, and by our moods;
- explain events by sometimes attributing them to the situation, sometimes to the person; and
- expect certain events, thereby sometimes helping bring them about.

This chapter explores how we perceive, judge, and explain our social worlds and how—and to what extent—our expectations matter.

## HOW DO WE PERCEIVE OUR SOCIAL WORLDS?

Understand the extent to which our assumptions and prejudgments guide our perceptions, interpretations, and recall.

Chapter 1 noted a significant fact about the human mind: Our preconceptions guide how we perceive and interpret information. We construe the world through belief-tinted glasses. “Sure, preconceptions matter,” people will agree; yet they fail to realize how great the effect is on themselves.

Let’s consider some provocative experiments. The first group of experiments examines how predispositions and prejudices affect how we perceive and interpret information. The second group plants a judgment in people’s minds *after* they have been given information to see how after-the-fact ideas bias recall. The overarching point: *We respond not to reality as it is but to reality as we construe it.*

### Priming

Unattended stimuli can subtly influence how we interpret and recall events. Imagine yourself, during an experiment, wearing earphones and concentrating on ambiguous spoken sentences such as “We stood by the bank.” When a pertinent word (*river* or *money*) is simultaneously sent to your other ear, you don’t consciously hear it. Yet the word “primes” your interpretation of the sentence (Baars & McGovern, 1994).

**priming**  
Activating particular associations in memory.

Our memory system is a web of associations, and **priming** is the awakening or activating of certain associations. Experiments show that priming one thought, even without awareness, can influence another thought, or even an action. John Bargh and colleagues (1996) asked people to complete a written sentence containing words such as “old,” “wise,” and “retired.” Shortly afterward, they observed these people walking more slowly to the elevator than did those not primed with aging-related words. Moreover, the slow walkers had no awareness of their walking speed or of having just viewed words that primed aging.

Often our thinking and acting are subtly primed by unnoticed events. Rob Holland and colleagues (2005) observed that Dutch students exposed to the scent of an all-purpose cleaner were quicker to identify cleaning-related words. In follow-up experiments, other students exposed to a cleaning scent recalled more cleaning-related activities when describing their day's activities and even kept their desk cleaner while eating a crumbly cookie. Moreover, all these effects occurred without the participants' conscious awareness of the scent and its influence.

Priming experiments (Bargh, 2006) have their counterparts in everyday life:

- Watching a scary movie alone at home can activate emotions that, without our realizing it, cause us to interpret furnace noises as a possible intruder.
- Depressed moods, as this chapter explains later, prime negative associations. Put people in a *good* mood and suddenly their past seems more wonderful, their future brighter.
- Watching violence will prime people to interpret ambiguous actions (a shove) and words ("punch") as aggressive.
- For many psychology students, reading about psychological disorders primes how they interpret their own anxieties and gloomy moods. Reading about disease symptoms similarly primes medical students to worry about their congestion, fever, or headache.

In a host of studies, priming effects surface even when the stimuli are presented subliminally—too briefly to be perceived consciously. What's out of sight may not be completely out of mind. An electric shock that is too slight to be felt may increase the perceived intensity of a later shock. An imperceptibly flashed word, "bread," may prime people to detect a related word, such as "butter," more quickly than they detect an unrelated word, such as "bottle" or "bubble." A subliminal color name facilitates speedier identification when the color appears on the computer screen, whereas an unseen wrong name delays color identification (Epley & others, 1999; Merikle & others, 2001). In each case, an invisible image or word primes a response to a later task.

Studies of how implanted ideas and images can prime our interpretations and recall illustrate one of this book's take-home lessons: *Much of our social information processing is automatic*. It is unintentional, out of sight, and happens without our conscious awareness.

Even physical sensations, thanks to our **embodied cognition**, prime our social judgments and vice versa. After holding a warm drink, people become more likely to rate someone more warmly and behave more generously (Ijzerman & Semin, 2009; Williams & Bargh, 2008). After receiving a cold shoulder treatment, people judge the experimental room as colder than do those treated warmly (Zhong & Leonardelli, 2008). Physical warmth accentuates social warmth, and social exclusion literally feels cold.



Posting the second sign may prime customers to be dissatisfied with the handling of their complaints at the first window.  
www.CartoonStock.com

## Perceiving and Interpreting Events

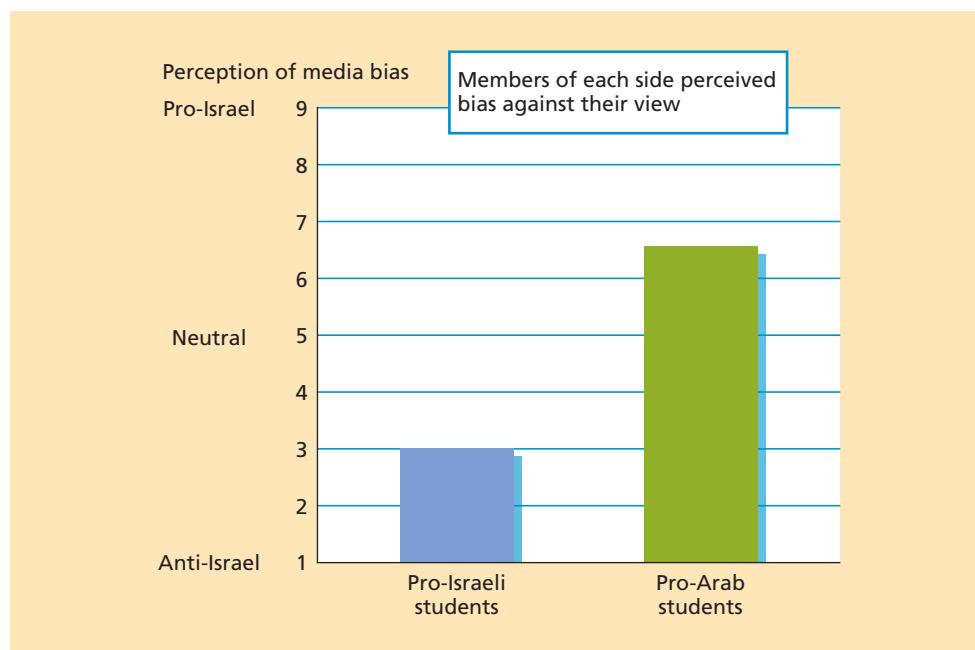
Despite some startling and oft-confirmed biases and logical flaws in how we perceive and understand one another, we're mostly accurate (Jussim, 2005). Our first

**embodied cognition**  
The mutual influence of bodily sensations on cognitive preferences and social judgments.

### FIGURE :: 3.1

Pro-Israeli and pro-Arab students who viewed network news descriptions of the “Beirut massacre” believed the coverage was biased against their point of view.

*Source:* Data from Vallone & others (1985).



impressions of one another are more often right than wrong. Moreover, the better we know people, the more accurately we can read their minds and feelings.

But on occasion, our prejudgments err. The effects of prejudgetments and expectations are standard fare for psychology’s introductory course. Consider this phrase:

A  
BIRD  
IN THE  
THE HAND

Did you notice anything wrong with it? There is more to perception than meets the eye.

**POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS** The same is true of social perception. Because social perceptions are very much in the eye of the beholder, even a simple stimulus may strike two people quite differently. Saying Britain’s David Cameron is “an okay prime minister” may sound like a put-down to one of his ardent admirers and like praise to someone who regards him with contempt. When social information is subject to multiple interpretations, preconceptions matter (Hilton & von Hippel, 1990).

An experiment by Robert Vallone, Lee Ross, and Mark Lepper (1985) reveals just how powerful preconceptions can be. They showed pro-Israeli and pro-Arab students six network news segments describing the 1982 killing of civilian refugees at two camps in Beirut, Lebanon. As Figure 3.1 illustrates, each group perceived the networks as hostile to its side.

The phenomenon is commonplace: Sports fans perceive referees as partial to the other side. Political candidates and their supporters nearly always view the news media as unsympathetic to their cause (Richardson & others, 2008).

It’s not just fans and politicians. People everywhere perceive mediators and media as biased against their position. “There is no subject about which people are less objective than objectivity,” noted one media commentator (Poniewozik, 2003). Indeed, people’s perceptions of bias can be used to assess their attitudes (Saucier & Miller, 2003). Tell me where you see bias, and you will signal your attitudes.

Our assumptions about the world can even make contradictory evidence seem supportive. For example, Ross and Lepper assisted Charles Lord (1979) in asking two groups of students to evaluate the results of two supposedly new research studies. Half the students favored capital punishment and half opposed it. Of the studies they

“ONCE YOU HAVE A BELIEF, IT INFLUENCES HOW YOU PERCEIVE ALL OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION. ONCE YOU SEE A COUNTRY AS HOSTILE, YOU ARE LIKELY TO INTERPRET AMBIGUOUS ACTIONS ON THEIR PART AS SIGNIFYING THEIR HOSTILITY.”

—POLITICAL SCIENTIST  
ROBERT JERVIS (1985)

evaluated, one confirmed and the other disconfirmed the students' beliefs about the deterrent effect of the death penalty. The results: Both proponents and opponents of capital punishment readily accepted evidence that confirmed their belief but were sharply critical of disconfirming evidence. Showing the two sides an *identical* body of mixed evidence had not lessened their disagreement but *increased* it. Likewise, when Anthony Bastardi and co-researchers (2011) showed people mixed evidence about the effects of day care on children, those planning to use day care found the evidence more supportive of their plans.

Is that why, in politics, religion, and science, ambiguous information often fuels conflict? Presidential debates in the United States have mostly reinforced predebate opinions. By nearly a 10-to-1 margin, those who already favored one candidate or the other perceived their candidate as having won (Kinder & Sears, 1985). Thus, report Geoffrey Munro and colleagues (1997), people on both sides may become even more supportive of their respective candidates after viewing a presidential debate.

**OUR PERCEPTIONS OF OTHERS** In addition to these studies of people's pre-existing social and political attitudes, researchers have manipulated people's preconceptions—with astonishing effects upon their interpretations and recollections.

Myron Rothbart and Pamela Birrell (1977) had University of Oregon students assess the facial expression of a man (Figure 3.2). Those told he was a Gestapo leader responsible for barbaric medical experiments on concentration camp inmates intuitively judged his expression as cruel. (Can you see that barely suppressed sneer?) Those told he was a leader in the anti-Nazi underground movement whose courage saved thousands of Jewish lives judged his facial expression as warm and kind. (Just look at those caring eyes and that almost smiling mouth.)

Filmmakers control people's perceptions of emotion by manipulating the setting in which they see a face. They call this the "Kulechov effect" after a Russian film director who would skillfully guide viewers' inferences by manipulating their assumptions. Kulechov demonstrated the phenomenon by creating three short films that presented identical footage of the face of an actor with a neutral expression after viewers had first been shown one of three different scenes: a dead woman, a bowl of soup, or a girl playing. As a result, in the first film the actor seemed sad, in the second thoughtful, and in the third happy.

#### OTHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF US

Construal processes also color others' perceptions of us. When we say something good or bad about another, people spontaneously tend to associate that trait with



*"I'd like your honest, unbiased and possibly career-ending opinion on something."*

Some circumstances make it difficult to be unbiased.  
© Alex Gregory/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

"THE ERROR OF OUR EYE  
DIRECTS OUR MIND: WHAT  
ERROR LEADS MUST ERR."  
—SHAKESPEARE, TROILUS AND  
CRESSIDA, 1601–1602



**FIGURE 3.2**

Judge for yourself: Is this person's expression cruel or kind? If told he was a Nazi, would your reading of his face differ?



Partisan perceptions. Supporters of a particular candidate or cause tend to see the media as favoring the other side.

"Come to think of it, cow's milk obviously suits calves better than babies." If the infant turns out to be suffering a high fever, will the sitter nevertheless persist in believing that bottle feeding causes colic (Ross & Anderson, 1982)? To find out, Lee Ross, Craig Anderson, and colleagues planted a falsehood in people's minds and then tried to discredit it.

Their research reveals that it is surprisingly difficult to demolish a falsehood, once the person conjures up a rationale for it. Each experiment first *implanted a belief*, either by proclaiming it to be true or by showing the participants some anecdotal evidence. Then the participants were asked to *explain why* it is true. Finally, the researchers totally *discredited* the initial information by telling the participants the truth: The information was manufactured for the experiment, and half the participants in the experiment had received opposite information. Nevertheless, the new belief survived approximately 75 percent intact, presumably because the participants still retained their invented explanations for the belief. This phenomenon, called **belief perseverance**, shows that beliefs can grow their own legs and survive the discrediting of the evidence that inspired them.

An example: Anderson, Lepper, and Ross (1980) asked participants to decide whether individuals who take risks make good or bad firefighters. One group considered a risk-prone person who was a successful firefighter and a cautious person who was unsuccessful. The other group considered cases suggesting the opposite conclusion. After forming their theory that risk-prone people make better or worse firefighters, the participants wrote explanations for it—for example, that risk-prone people are brave or that cautious people have fewer accidents. Once each explanation was formed, it could exist independently of the information that initially created the belief. When that information was discredited, the participants still held their self-generated explanations and therefore continued to believe that risk-prone people really do make better or worse firefighters.

These experiments suggest that the more we examine our theories and explain how they *might* be true, the more closed we become to information that challenges our beliefs. Once we consider why an accused person might be guilty, why an

us, report Lynda Mae, Donal Carlston, and John Skowronski (1999; Carlston & Skowronski, 2005)—a phenomenon they call *spontaneous trait transference*. If we go around talking about others being gossipy, people may then unconsciously associate "gossip" with us. Call someone a jerk and folks may later construe *you* as one. Describe someone as sensitive, loving, and compassionate, and you may seem more so. There is, it appears, intuitive wisdom in the childhood taunt, "I'm rubber, you're glue; what you say bounces off me and sticks to you."

The bottom line: We view our social worlds through the spectacles of our beliefs, attitudes, and values. That is one reason our beliefs are so important; they shape our interpretation of everything else.

## Belief Perseverance

Imagine a grandparent who decides, during an evening with a crying infant, that bottle feeding produces colicky babies:

### belief perseverance

Persistence of one's initial conceptions, such as when the basis for one's belief is discredited but an explanation of why the belief might be true survives.

offending stranger acts that way, or why a favored stock might rise in value, our explanations may survive challenges (Davies, 1997; Jelalian & Miller, 1984).

The evidence is compelling: Our beliefs and expectations powerfully affect how we mentally construct events. Usually, we benefit from our preconceptions, just as scientists benefit from creating theories that guide them in noticing and interpreting events. But the benefits sometimes entail a cost: We become prisoners of our own thought patterns. Thus, the supposed Martian “canals” that twentieth-century astronomers delighted in spotting (in fact, just dust or craters) turned out to be the product of intelligent life—an intelligence on Earth’s side of the telescope.

Is there a remedy for belief perseverance? There is: *Explain the opposite*. Charles Lord, Mark Lepper, and Elizabeth Preston (1984) repeated the capital punishment study described previously and added two variations. First, they asked some of their participants, when evaluating the evidence, to be “as objective and unbiased as possible.” That instruction accomplished nothing; whether for or against capital punishment, those who had received the plea made evaluations as biased as those who had not.

The researchers asked a third group to consider the opposite—to ask themselves “whether you would have made the same high or low evaluations had exactly the same study produced results on the *other* side of the issue.” After imagining an opposite finding, these people were much less biased in their evaluations of the evidence for and against their views. In his experiments, Craig Anderson (1982; Anderson & Sechler, 1986) consistently found that explaining *why* an opposite theory might be true—why a cautious rather than a risk-taking person might be a better firefighter—reduces or eliminates belief perseverance. Indeed, explaining any alternative outcome, not just the opposite, drives people to ponder various possibilities (Hirt & Markman, 1995).

## Constructing Memories of Ourselves and Our Worlds

Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Memory can be likened to a storage chest in the brain into which we deposit material and from which we can withdraw it later if needed. Occasionally, something is lost from the “chest,” and then we say we have forgotten.

Approximately 85 percent of college students said they agreed (Lamal, 1979). As one magazine ad put it, “Science has proven the accumulated experience of a lifetime is preserved perfectly in your mind.”

Actually, psychological research has proved the opposite. Our memories are not exact copies of experiences that remain on deposit in a memory bank. Rather, we construct memories at the time of withdrawal. Like a paleontologist inferring the appearance of a dinosaur from bone fragments, we reconstruct our distant past by using our current feelings and expectations to combine information fragments. Thus, we can easily (although unconsciously) revise our memories to suit our current knowledge. When one of my sons complained, “The June issue of *Cricket* never came,” and was then shown where it was, he delightedly responded, “Oh good, I knew I’d gotten it.”

When an experimenter or a therapist manipulates people’s presumptions about their past, a sizable percentage of people will construct false memories. Asked to imagine a made-up childhood experience in which they ran, tripped, fell, and stuck their hand through a window, or knocked over a punch bowl at a wedding, approximately one-fourth will later recall the fictitious event as something that actually happened (Loftus & Bernstein, 2005). In its search for truth, the mind sometimes constructs a falsehood.

In experiments involving more than 20,000 people, Elizabeth Loftus (2003, 2007, 2011a) and collaborators have explored our mind’s tendency to construct memories.

“WE HEAR AND APPREHEND ONLY WHAT WE ALREADY HALF KNOW.”

—HENRY DAVID THOREAU,

1817–1862

“MEMORY ISN’T LIKE READING A BOOK: IT’S MORE LIKE WRITING A BOOK FROM FRAGMENTARY NOTES.”

—JOHN F. KIHLSTROM (1994)

**misinformation effect**

Incorporating “misinformation” into one’s memory of the event, after witnessing an event and receiving misleading information about it.

**"A MAN SHOULD NEVER BE ASHAMED TO OWN THAT HE HAS BEEN IN THE WRONG, WHICH IS BUT SAYING IN OTHER WORDS, THAT HE IS WISER TODAY THAN HE WAS YESTERDAY."**

—JONATHAN SWIFT,  
THOUGHTS ON VARIOUS  
SUBJECTS, 1711

**"TRAVEL IS GLAMOROUS ONLY IN RETROSPECT."**

—PAUL THEROUX, IN  
THE OBSERVER

In the typical experiment, people witness an event, receive misleading information about it (or not), and then take a memory test. The repeated finding is the **misinformation effect**. People incorporate the misinformation into their memories: They recall a yield sign as a stop sign, hammers as screwdrivers, *Vogue* magazine as *Mademoiselle*, Dr. Henderson as “Dr. Davidson,” breakfast cereal as eggs, and a clean-shaven man as a fellow with a mustache. Suggested misinformation may even produce false memories of supposed child sexual abuse, argues Loftus.

This process affects our recall of social as well as physical events. Jack Croxton and colleagues (1984) had students spend 15 minutes talking with someone. Those who were later informed that this person liked them recalled the person’s behavior as relaxed, comfortable, and happy. Those informed that the person disliked them recalled the person as nervous, uncomfortable, and not so happy.

**RECONSTRUCTING OUR PAST ATTITUDES**

Five years ago, how did you feel about nuclear power? About your country’s president or prime minister? About your parents? If your attitudes have changed, what do you think is the extent of the change?

Experimenters have explored such questions, and the results have been unnerving. People whose attitudes have changed often insist that they have always felt much as they now feel. Daryl Bem and Keith McConnell (1970) conducted a survey among Carnegie Mellon University students. Buried in it was a question concerning student control over the university curriculum. A week later, the students agreed to write an essay opposing student control. After doing so, their attitudes shifted toward greater opposition to student control. When asked to recall how they had answered the question before writing the essay, the students “remembered” holding the opinion that they *now* held and denied that the experiment had affected them.

After observing Clark University students similarly denying their former attitudes, researchers D. R. Wixon and James Laird (1976) commented, “The speed, magnitude, and certainty” with which the students revised their own histories “was striking.” As George Vaillant (1977) noted after following adults through time, “It is all too common for caterpillars to become butterflies and then to maintain that in their youth they had been little butterflies. Maturation makes liars of us all.”

The construction of positive memories brightens our recollections. Terence Mitchell, Leigh Thompson, and colleagues (1994, 1997) report that people often exhibit *rosy retrospection*—they recall mildly pleasant events more favorably than they experienced them. College students on a 3-week bike trip, older adults on a guided tour of Austria, and undergraduates on vacation all reported enjoying their experiences as they were having them. But they later recalled such experiences even more fondly, minimizing the unpleasant or boring aspects and remembering the high points. Thus, the pleasant times during which I have sojourned in Scotland I now (back in my office facing deadlines and interruptions) romanticize as pure bliss. The drizzle and the pesky midges are but dim memories. The spectacular scenery and the fresh sea air and the favorite tea rooms are still with me. With any positive experience, some of our pleasure resides in the anticipation, some in the actual experience, and some in the rosy retrospection.

Cathy McFarland and Michael Ross (1985) found that as our relationships change, we also revise our recollections of other people. They had university students rate their steady dating partners. Two months later, they rated them again. Students who were more in love than ever had a tendency to overestimate their first impressions—it was “love at first sight.” Those who had broken up were more likely to *underestimate* their earlier liking—recalling the partner as somewhat selfish and bad-tempered.

Diane Holmberg and John Holmes (1994) discovered the phenomenon also operating among 373 newlywed couples, most of whom reported being very happy. When resurveyed 2 years later, those whose marriages had soured recalled that

things had always been bad. The results are “frightening,” say Holmberg and Holmes: “Such biases can lead to a dangerous downward spiral. The worse your current view of your partner is, the worse your memories are, which only further confirms your negative attitudes.”

It’s not that we are totally unaware of how we used to feel, just that when memories are hazy, current feelings guide our recall. When widows and widowers try to recall the grief they felt on their spouse’s death 5 years earlier, their current emotional state colors their memories (Safer & others, 2001). When patients recall their previous day’s headache pain, their current feelings sway their recollections (Eich & others, 1985). Parents of every generation bemoan the values of the next generation, partly because they misrecall their youthful values as being closer to their current values. And teens of every generation recall their parents as—depending on their current mood—wonderful or woeful (Bornstein & others, 1991).

## RECONSTRUCTING OUR PAST BEHAVIOR

Memory construction enables us to revise our own histories. Michael Ross, Cathy McFarland, and Garth Fletcher (1981) exposed some University of Waterloo students to a message convincing them of the desirability of toothbrushing. Later, in a supposedly different experiment, these students recalled brushing their teeth more often during the preceding 2 weeks than did students who had not heard the message. Likewise, judging from surveys, people report smoking many fewer cigarettes than are actually sold (Hall, 1985). And they recall casting more votes than were actually recorded (Bureau of the Census, 1993).

Social psychologist Anthony Greenwald (1980) noted the similarity of such findings to happenings in George Orwell’s novel *1984*—in which it was “necessary to remember that events happened in the desired manner.” Indeed, argued Greenwald, we all have “totalitarian egos” that revise the past to suit our present views. Thus, we underreport bad behavior and overreport good behavior.

Sometimes our present view is that we’ve improved—in which case we may misrecall our past as more unlike the present than it actually was. This tendency resolves a puzzling pair of consistent findings: Those who participate in psychotherapy and self-improvement programs for weight control, antismoking, and exercise show only modest improvement on average. Yet they often claim considerable benefit. Michael Conway and Michael Ross (1986) explain why: Having expended so much time, effort, and money on self-improvement, people may think, “I may not be perfect now, but I was worse before; this did me a lot of good.”

In Chapter 14, we will see that psychiatrists and clinical psychologists are not immune to these human tendencies. We all selectively notice, interpret, and recall events in ways that sustain our ideas. Our social judgments are a mix of observation and expectation, reason and passion.

“VANITY PLAYS LURID  
TRICKS WITH OUR  
MEMORY.”

—NOVELIST JOSEPH CONRAD,  
1857–1924

## SUMMING UP: How Do We Perceive Our Social Worlds?

- Our preconceptions strongly influence how we interpret and remember events. In a phenomenon called *priming*, people’s prejudgments have striking effects on how they perceive and interpret information.
- Other experiments have planted judgments or false ideas in people’s minds *after* they have been given information. These experiments reveal that as *before-the-fact judgments* bias our perceptions and interpretations, so *after-the-fact judgments* bias our recall.
- *Belief perseverance* is the phenomenon in which people cling to their initial beliefs and the reasons why a belief might be true, even when the basis for the belief is discredited.
- Far from being a repository for facts about the past, our memories are actually formed when we retrieve them, and they are subject to strong influence by the attitudes and feelings we hold at the time of retrieval.

# HOW DO WE JUDGE OUR SOCIAL WORLDS?

## Understand how we form social judgments.

As we have already noted, our cognitive mechanisms are efficient and adaptive, yet occasionally error-prone. Usually they serve us well. But sometimes clinicians misjudge patients, employers misjudge employees, people of one race misjudge people of another, and spouses misjudge their mates. The results can be misdiagnoses, labor strife, racial prejudices, and divorces. So, how—and how well—do we make intuitive social judgments?

When historians describe social psychology's first century, they will surely record 1980 to the present as the era of social cognition. By drawing on advances in cognitive psychology—in how people perceive, represent, and remember events—social psychologists have shed welcome light on how we form judgments. Let's look at what that research reveals of the marvels and mistakes of our social intuition.

## Intuitive Judgments

What are our powers of intuition—of immediately knowing something without reasoning or analysis? Advocates of “intuitive management” believe we should tune into our hunches. When judging others, they say, we should plug into the non-logical smarts of our “right brain.” When hiring, firing, and investing, we should listen to our premonitions. In making judgments, we should trust the force within.

Are the intuitionists right that important information is immediately available apart from our conscious analysis? Or are the skeptics correct in saying that intuition is “our knowing we are right, whether we are or not”?

Priming research hints that the unconscious indeed controls much of our behavior. As John Bargh and Tanya Chartrand (1999) explain, “Most of a person’s everyday life is determined not by their conscious intentions and deliberate choices but by mental processes that are put into motion by features of the environment and that operate outside of conscious awareness and guidance.” When the light turns red, we react and hit the brake before consciously deciding to do so. Indeed, reflect Neil Macrae and Lucy Johnston (1998), “to be able to do just about anything at all (e.g., driving, dating, dancing), action initiation needs to be decoupled from the inefficient (i.e., slow, serial, resource-consuming) workings of the conscious mind, otherwise inaction inevitably would prevail.”

## THE POWERS OF INTUITION

“The heart has its reasons which reason does not know,” observed seventeenth-century philosopher-mathematician Blaise Pascal. Three centuries later, scientists have proved Pascal correct. We know more than we know we know. Studies of our unconscious information processing confirm our limited access to what’s going on in our minds (Bargh & Ferguson, 2000; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Strack & Deutsch, 2004). Our thinking is partly **controlled** (reflective, deliberate, and conscious) and—more than psychologists once supposed—partly **automatic** (impulsive, effortless, and without our awareness). Automatic, intuitive thinking occurs not “on-screen” but off-screen, out of sight, where reason does not go. Consider these examples of automatic thinking:

- *Schemas* are mental concepts or templates that intuitively guide our perceptions and interpretations. Whether we hear someone speaking of religious sects or sex depends not only on the word spoken but also on how we automatically interpret the sound.

### controlled processing

“Explicit” thinking that is deliberate, reflective, and conscious.

### automatic processing

“Implicit” thinking that is effortless, habitual, and without awareness; roughly corresponds to “intuition.”

- *Emotional reactions* are often nearly instantaneous, happening before there is time for deliberate thinking. One neural shortcut takes information from the eye or the ear to the brain's sensory switchboard (the thalamus) and out to its emotional control center (the amygdala) before the thinking cortex has had any chance to intervene (LeDoux, 2002). Our ancestors who intuitively feared a sound in the bushes were usually fearing nothing. But when the sound was made by a dangerous predator, they became more likely to survive to pass their genes down to us than their more deliberative cousins.
- Given sufficient *expertise*, people may intuitively know the answer to a problem. Many skills, from piano playing to swinging a golf club, begin as a controlled, deliberate process of following rules and gradually become automatic and intuitive (Kruglanski & Gigerenzer, 2011). Master chess players intuitively recognize meaningful patterns that novices miss and often make their next move with only a glance at the board, as the situation cues information stored in their memory. Similarly, without knowing quite how, we recognize a friend's voice after the first spoken word of a phone conversation.
- Faced with a decision but lacking the expertise to make an informed snap judgment, our *unconscious thinking* may guide us toward a satisfying choice. That's what Dutch psychologist Ap Dijksterhuis and co-workers (Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006; Dijksterhuis & others, 2006; Strick & others, 2010) discovered after showing people, for example, a dozen pieces of information about each of four potential apartments. Compared with people who made instant decisions or were given time to analyze the information, the most satisfying decisions were made by those who were distracted and unable to focus consciously on the problem. Although these findings are controversial (González-Vallejo & others, 2008; Lassiter & others, 2009; Newell & others, 2008), this much seems true: When facing a tough decision, it often pays to take our time—even to sleep on it—and to await the intuitive result of our out-of-sight information processing (Sio & Ormerod, 2009).

Some things—facts, names, and past experiences—we remember explicitly (consciously). But other things—skills and conditioned dispositions—we remember *implicitly*, without consciously knowing or declaring that we know. It's true of us all but most strikingly evident in people with brain damage who cannot form new explicit memories. One such person never could learn to recognize her physician, who would need to reintroduce himself with a handshake each day. One day, the physician affixed a tack to his hand, causing the patient to jump with pain. When the physician next returned, he was still unrecognized (explicitly). But the patient, retaining an implicit memory, would not shake his hand.

Equally dramatic are the cases of *blindsight*. Having lost a portion of the visual cortex to surgery or stroke, people may be functionally blind in part of their field of vision. Shown a series of sticks in the blind field, they report seeing nothing. After correctly guessing whether the sticks are vertical or horizontal, the patients are astounded when told, "You got them all right." Like the patient who "remembered" the painful handshake, these people know more than they know they know.

Consider your own taken-for-granted capacity to recognize a face. As you look at it, your brain breaks the visual information into subdimensions such as color, depth, movement, and form and works on each aspect simultaneously before reassembling the components. Finally, using automatic processing, your brain compares the perceived image with previously stored images. Voilà! Instantly and effortlessly, you recognize your grandmother. If intuition is immediately knowing something without reasoned analysis, then perceiving is intuition par excellence.

So, many routine cognitive functions occur automatically, unintentionally, without awareness. We might remember how automatic processing helps us get through

life by picturing our minds as functioning like large corporations. Our CEO—our controlled consciousness—attends to many of the most important, complex, and novel issues, while subordinates deal with routine affairs and matters requiring instant action. Like a CEO, consciousness sets goals and priorities, often with little knowledge of operational activities in the underlying departments. This delegation of resources enables us to react to many situations quickly and efficiently. The bottom line: Our brain knows much more than it tells us.

### THE LIMITS OF INTUITION

We have seen how automatic, intuitive thinking can “make us smart” (Gigerenzer, 2007, 2010). Elizabeth Loftus and Mark Klinger (1992) nevertheless spoke for other cognitive scientists in having doubts about the brilliance of intuition. They reported “a general consensus that the unconscious may not be as smart as previously believed.” For example, although subliminal stimuli can trigger a weak, fleeting response—enough to evoke a feeling if not conscious awareness—there is no evidence that commercial subliminal tapes can “reprogram your unconscious mind” for success. In fact, a significant body of evidence indicates that they can’t (Greenwald, 1992).

Social psychologists have explored not only our error-prone hindsight judgments but also our capacity for illusion—for perceptual misinterpretations, fantasies, and constructed beliefs. Michael Gazzaniga (1992, 1998, 2008) reports that patients whose brain hemispheres have been surgically separated will instantly fabricate—and believe—explanations of their own puzzling behaviors. If the patient gets up and takes a few steps after the experimenter flashes the instruction “walk” to the patient’s nonverbal right hemisphere, the verbal left hemisphere will instantly provide the patient with a plausible explanation (“I felt like getting a drink”).

Illusory intuition also appears in the vast new literature on how we take in, store, and retrieve social information. As perception researchers study visual illusions for what they reveal about our normal perceptual mechanisms, social psychologists study illusory thinking for what it reveals about normal information processing. These researchers want to give us a map of everyday social thinking, with the hazards clearly marked.

As we examine some of these efficient thinking patterns, remember this: Demonstrations of how people create counterfeit beliefs do not prove that all beliefs are counterfeit (although to recognize counterfeiting, it helps to know how it’s done).

## Overconfidence

So far we have seen that our cognitive systems process a vast amount of information efficiently and automatically. But our efficiency has a trade-off; as we interpret our experiences and construct memories, our automatic intuitions sometimes err. Usually, we are unaware of our flaws.

To explore this **overconfidence phenomenon**, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (1979) gave people factual statements and asked them to fill in the blanks, as in the following sentence: “I feel 98 percent certain that the air distance between New Delhi and Beijing is more than \_\_\_\_ miles but less than \_\_\_\_ miles.” Most individuals were overconfident: Approximately 30 percent of the time, the correct answers lay outside the range they felt 98 percent confident about.

To find out whether overconfidence extends to social judgments, David Dunning and associates (1990) created a game show. They asked Stanford University students to guess a stranger’s answers to a series of questions, such as “Would you prepare for a difficult exam alone or with others?” and “Would you rate your lecture notes as neat or messy?” Knowing the type of question but not the actual questions, the participants first interviewed their target person about background, hobbies, academic interests, aspirations, astrological sign—anything they thought might be helpful. Then, while the targets privately answered 20 of the two-choice

### overconfidence phenomenon

The tendency to be more confident than correct—to overestimate the accuracy of one’s beliefs.

*The air distance between New Delhi and Beijing is 2,500 miles.*

## DOONESBURY

by Garry Trudeau



questions, the interviewers predicted their target's answers and rated their own confidence in the predictions.

The interviewers guessed right 63 percent of the time, beating chance by 13 percent. But, on average, they *felt* 75 percent sure of their predictions. When guessing their own roommates' responses, they were 68 percent correct and 78 percent confident. Moreover, the most confident people were most likely to be overconfident. People also are markedly overconfident when judging whether someone is telling the truth or when estimating things such as the sexual history of their dating partner or the activity preferences of their roommates (DePaulo & others, 1997; Swann & Gill, 1997).

Ironically, *incompetence feeds overconfidence*. It takes competence to recognize what competence is, note Justin Kruger and David Dunning (1999). Students who score at the bottom on tests of grammar, humor, and logic are most prone to overestimating their gifts at such. Those who don't know what good logic or grammar is are often unaware that they lack it. If you make a list of all the words you can form out of the letters in "psychology," you may feel brilliant—but then stupid when a friend starts naming the ones you missed. Deanna Caputo and Dunning (2005) re-created this phenomenon in experiments, confirming that our ignorance of our ignorance sustains our self-confidence. Follow-up studies indicate that this "ignorance of one's incompetence" occurs mostly on relatively easy-seeming tasks. On very difficult tasks, poor performers more often appreciate their lack of skill (Burson & others, 2006).

Ignorance of one's incompetence helps explain David Dunning's (2005) startling conclusion from employee assessment studies that "what others see in us . . . tends to be more highly correlated with objective outcomes than what we see in ourselves." In one study, participants watched someone walk into a room, sit, read a weather report, and walk out (Borkenau & Liebler, 1993). Based on nothing more than that, their estimate of the person's intelligence correlated with the person's intelligence score about as well as did the person's own self-estimate (.30 vs. .32)! If ignorance can beget false confidence, then—yikes!—where, we may ask, are you and I unknowingly deficient?

In Chapter 2, we noted that people overestimate their long-term emotional responses to good and bad happenings. Are people better at predicting their own behavior? To find out, Robert Vallone and colleagues (1990) had college students predict in September whether they would drop a course, declare a major, elect to

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live off campus next year, and so forth. Although the students felt, on average, 84 percent sure of those self-predictions, they were wrong nearly twice as often as they expected to be. Even when feeling 100 percent sure of their predictions, they erred 15 percent of the time.

In estimating their chances for success on a task, such as a major exam, people's confidence runs highest when the moment of truth is off in the future. By exam day, the possibility of failure looms larger and confidence typically drops (Gilovich & others, 1993; Shepperd & others, 2005). Roger Buehler and colleagues (1994, 2010) report that most students also confidently underestimate how long it will take them to complete papers and other major assignments. They are not alone:

- *The "planning fallacy."* How much free time do you have today? How much free time do you expect you will have a month from today? Most of us overestimate how much we'll be getting done, and therefore how much free time we will have (Zauberman & Lynch, 2005). Professional planners, too, routinely underestimate the time and expense of projects. In 1969, Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau proudly announced that a \$120 million stadium with a retractable roof would be built for the 1976 Olympics. The roof was completed in 1989 and cost \$120 million by itself. In 1985, officials estimated that Boston's "Big Dig" highway project would cost \$2.6 billion and take until 1998. The cost ballooned to \$14.6 billion and the project took until 2006.
- *Stockbroker overconfidence.* Investment experts market their services with the confident presumption that they can beat the stock market average, forgetting that for every stockbroker or buyer saying "Sell!" at a given price, there is another saying "Buy!" A stock's price is the balance point between those mutually confident judgments. Thus, incredible as it may seem, economist Burton Malkiel (2011) reports that mutual fund portfolios selected by investment analysts have not outperformed randomly selected stocks.
- *Political overconfidence.* Overconfident decision makers can wreak havoc. It was a confident Adolf Hitler who from 1939 to 1945 waged war against the rest of Europe. It was a confident Lyndon Johnson who in the 1960s invested U.S. weapons and soldiers in the effort to salvage democracy in South Vietnam.

"THE WISE KNOW TOO  
WELL THEIR WEAKNESS TO  
ASSUME INFALLIBILITY; AND  
HE WHO KNOWS MOST,  
KNOWS BEST HOW LITTLE  
HE KNOWS."

—THOMAS JEFFERSON,  
WRITINGS

REGARDING THE ATOMIC  
BOMB: "THAT IS THE BIG-  
GEST FOOL THING WE  
HAVE EVER DONE. THE  
BOMB WILL NEVER GO OFF,  
AND I SPEAK AS AN EXPERT  
IN EXPLOSIVES."

—ADMIRAL WILLIAM LEAHY TO  
PRESIDENT TRUMAN, 1945



The perils of overconfidence. Before its exploded drilling platform spewed oil into the Gulf of Mexico, BP downplayed safety concerns, and then was overconfident that the spill would be modest (Mohr & others, 2010; Urbina, 2010).

What produces overconfidence? Why doesn't experience lead us to a more realistic self-appraisal? For one thing, people tend to recall their mistaken judgments as times when they were *almost* right. Philip Tetlock (1998a, 1998b, 1999, 2005) observed this after inviting various academic and government experts to project—from their viewpoint in the late 1980s—the future governance of the Soviet Union, South Africa, and Canada. Five years later, communism had collapsed, South Africa had become a multiracial democracy, and Canada's French-speaking minority had not seceded. Experts who had felt more than 80 percent confident were right in predicting these turns of events less than 40 percent of the time. Yet, reflecting on their judgments, those who erred believed they were still basically right. I was "almost right," said many. "The hardliners almost succeeded in their coup attempt against Gorbachev." "The Quebecois

separatists almost won the secessionist referendum.” “But for the coincidence of de Klerk and Mandela, there would have been a much bloodier transition to black majority rule in South Africa.” The Iraq War was a good idea, just badly executed, excused many of those who had supported it. Among political experts—and also stock market forecasters, mental health workers, and sports prognosticators—overconfidence is hard to dislodge.

## CONFIRMATION BIAS

People also tend not to seek information that might disprove what they believe. P. C. Wason (1960) demonstrated this, as you can, by giving participants a sequence of three numbers—2, 4, 6—that conformed to a rule he had in mind. (The rule was simply *any three ascending numbers*.) To enable the participants to discover the rule, Wason invited each person to generate additional sets of three numbers. Each time, Wason told the person whether or not the set conformed to his rule. As soon as participants were sure they had discovered the rule, they were to stop and announce it.

The result? Seldom right but never in doubt: 23 of the 29 participants convinced themselves of a wrong rule. They typically formed some erroneous belief about the rule (for example, counting by two’s) and then searched for *confirming* evidence (for example, by testing 8, 10, 12) rather than attempting to *disconfirm* their hunches. We are eager to verify our beliefs but less inclined to seek evidence that might disprove them, a phenomenon called the **confirmation bias**.

Confirmation bias helps explain why our self-images are so remarkably stable. In experiments at the University of Texas at Austin, William Swann and Stephen Read (1981; Swann & others, 1992a, 1992b, 2007) discovered that students seek, elicit, and recall feedback that confirms their beliefs about themselves. People seek as friends and spouses those who bolster their own self views—even if they think poorly of themselves (Swann & others, 1991, 2003).

Swann and Read (1981) liken this *self-verification* to how someone with a domineering self-image might behave at a party. Upon arriving, the person seeks those guests whom she knows will acknowledge her dominance. In conversation, she then presents her views in ways that elicit the respect she expects. After the party, she has trouble recalling conversations in which her influence was minimal and more easily recalls her persuasiveness in the conversations that she dominated. Thus, her experience at the party confirms her self-image.

## REMEDIES FOR OVERCONFIDENCE

What lessons can we draw from research on overconfidence? One lesson is to be wary of other people’s dogmatic statements. Even when people are sure they are right, they may be wrong. Confidence and competence need not coincide.

Three techniques have successfully reduced the overconfidence bias. One is *prompt feedback* (Lichtenstein & Fischhoff, 1980). In everyday life, weather forecasters and those who set the odds in horse racing both receive clear, daily feedback. And experts in both groups do quite well at estimating their probable accuracy (Fischhoff, 1982).

To reduce “planning fallacy” overconfidence, people can be asked to *unpack a task*—to break it down into its subcomponents—and estimate the time required for each. Justin Kruger and Matt Evans (2004) report that doing so leads to more realistic estimates of completion time.

When people think about why an idea *might* be true, it begins to seem true (Koehler, 1991). Thus, a third way to reduce overconfidence is to get people to think of one good reason *why* their judgments *might be wrong*; that is, force them to consider disconfirming information (Koriat & others, 1980). Managers might foster more realistic judgments by insisting that all proposals and recommendations include reasons why they might *not* work.

“WHEN YOU KNOW A THING, TO HOLD THAT YOU KNOW IT; AND WHEN YOU DO NOT KNOW A THING, TO ALLOW THAT YOU DO NOT KNOW IT; THIS IS KNOWLEDGE.”

—CONFUCIUS, ANALECTS

## confirmation bias

A tendency to search for information that confirms one’s preconceptions.

Still, we should be careful not to undermine people's reasonable self-confidence or to destroy their decisiveness. In times when their wisdom is needed, those lacking self-confidence may shrink from speaking up or making tough decisions. Overconfidence can cost us, but realistic self-confidence is adaptive.

## Heuristics: Mental Shortcuts

### heuristic

A thinking strategy that enables quick, efficient judgments.

With precious little time to process so much information, our cognitive system is fast and frugal. It specializes in mental shortcuts. With remarkable ease, we form impressions, make judgments, and invent explanations. We do so by using **heuristics**—simple, efficient thinking strategies. Heuristics enable us to live and make routine decisions with minimal effort (Shah & Oppenheimer, 2008). In most situations, our snap generalizations—"That's dangerous!"—are adaptive. The speed of these intuitive guides promotes our survival. The biological purpose of thinking is less to make us right than to keep us alive. In some situations, however, haste makes error.

### THE REPRESENTATIVENESS HEURISTIC

University of Oregon students were told that a panel of psychologists interviewed a sample of 30 engineers and 70 lawyers and summarized their impressions in thumbnail descriptions. The following description, they were told, was drawn at random from the sample of 30 engineers and 70 lawyers:

Twice divorced, Frank spends most of his free time hanging around the country club. His clubhouse bar conversations often center on his regrets at having tried to follow his esteemed father's footsteps. The long hours he had spent at academic drudgery would have been better invested in learning how to be less quarrelsome in his relations with other people.

*Question:* What is the probability that Frank is a lawyer rather than an engineer?

Asked to guess Frank's occupation, more than 80 percent of the students surmised he was one of the lawyers (Fischhoff & Bar-Hillel, 1984). Fair enough. But how do you suppose those estimates changed when the sample description was given to another group of students, modified to say that 70 percent were engineers? Not in the slightest. The students took no account of the base rate of engineers and lawyers; in their minds, Frank was more *representative* of lawyers, and that was all that seemed to matter.

To judge something by intuitively comparing it to our mental representation of a category is to use the **representativeness heuristic**. Representativeness (typicalness) usually is a reasonable guide to reality. But, as we saw with "Frank" above, it doesn't always work. Consider Linda, who is 31, single, outspoken, and very bright. She majored in philosophy in college. As a student, she was deeply concerned with discrimination and other social issues, and she participated in anti-nuclear demonstrations. Based on that description, would you say it is more likely that

- a. Linda is a bank teller.
- b. Linda is a bank teller and active in the feminist movement.

Most people think *b* is more likely, partly because Linda better *represents* their image of feminists (Mellers & others, 2001). But ask yourself: Is there a better chance that Linda is *both* a bank teller *and* a feminist than that she's a bank teller (whether feminist or not)? As Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman (1983) reminded us, the conjunction of two events cannot be more likely than either one of the events alone.

### THE AVAILABILITY HEURISTIC

Consider the following: Do more people live in Iraq or in Tanzania? (See page 94 for the answer.)

**TABLE :: 3.1** Fast and Frugal Heuristics

Heuristic	Definition	Example	But May Lead to
Representativeness	Snap judgments of whether someone or something fits a category	Deciding that Carlos is a librarian rather than a trucker because he better represents one's image of librarians	Discounting other important information
Availability	Quick judgments of likelihood of events (how available in memory)	Estimating teen violence after school shootings	Overweighting vivid instances and thus, for example, fearing the wrong things

You probably answered according to how readily Iraqis and Tanzanians come to mind. If examples are readily *available* in our memory—as Iraqis tend to be—then we presume that other such examples are commonplace. Usually this is true, so we are often well served by this cognitive rule, called the **availability heuristic** (Table 3.1). Said simply, the more easily we recall something, the more likely it seems.

But sometimes the rule deludes us. If people hear a list of famous people of one sex (Oprah Winfrey, Lady Gaga, and Hillary Clinton) intermixed with an equal-size list of unfamous people of the other sex (Donald Scarr, William Wood, and Mel Jasper), the famous names will later be more cognitively available. Most people will subsequently recall having heard more (in this instance) women's names (McKelvie, 1995, 1997; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). Likewise, media attention to gay–lesbian issues makes gays and lesbians cognitively available. Thus, the average U.S. adult in a 2011 Gallup poll estimated that 25 percent of Americans are gay or lesbian (Morales, 2011b)—some seven times the number who, in surveys, actually self-identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Gates, 2011).

Even fictional happenings in novels, television, and movies leave images that later penetrate our judgments (Gerrig & Prentice, 1991; Green & others, 2002; Mar & Oatley, 2008). The more absorbed and “transported” the reader (“I could easily picture the events”), the more the story affects the reader’s later beliefs (Diekman & others, 2000). Readers who are captivated by romance novels, for example, may gain readily available sexual scripts that influence their own sexual attitudes and behaviors.

Or consider this: Order these four cities according to their crime rates: Atlanta, Los Angeles, New York, St. Louis. If, with available images from TV crime dramas in mind, you thought New York and Los Angeles are the most crime-ridden, guess again; they’re the least crime-ridden of the four (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011).

Our use of the availability heuristic highlights a basic principle of social thinking: People are slow to deduce particular instances from a general truth, but they are remarkably quick to infer general truth from a vivid instance. No wonder that after hearing and reading stories of rapes, robberies, and beatings, 9 out of 10 Canadians overestimated—usually by a considerable margin—the percentage of crimes that involved violence (Doob & Roberts, 1988). And no wonder that South Africans, after a series of headline-grabbing gangland robberies and slayings, estimated that violent crime had almost doubled between 1998 and 2004, when actually it had decreased substantially (Wines, 2005).

The availability heuristic explains why vivid, easy-to-imagine events, such as shark attacks or diseases with easy-to-picture symptoms, may seem more likely to occur than harder-to-picture events (MacLeod & Campbell, 1992; Sherman & others, 1985).

### availability heuristic

A cognitive rule that judges the likelihood of things in terms of their availability in memory. If instances of something come readily to mind, we presume it to be commonplace.

"MOST PEOPLE REASON DRAMATICALLY, NOT QUANTITATIVELY."

—JURIST OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, JR., 1841–1935

Likewise, powerful anecdotes can be more compelling than statistical information. We fret over extremely rare child abduction, even if we don't buckle our children in the backseat. We dread terrorism but are indifferent to global climate change—"Armageddon in slow motion." Especially after the 2011 Japanese tsunami and nuclear power catastrophe, we fear nuclear power, with little concern for the many more deaths related to coal mining and burning (von Hippel, 2011). In short, we worry about remote possibilities while ignoring higher probabilities, a phenomenon that Cass Sunstein (2007b) calls our "probability neglect."

Because news footage of airplane crashes is a readily available memory for most of us—especially since September 11, 2001—we often suppose we are more at risk traveling in commercial airplanes than in cars. Actually, from 2003 to 2005, U.S. travelers were 230 times more likely to die in a car crash than on a commercial flight covering the same distance (National Safety Council, 2008). In 2006, reports the Flight Safety Foundation, there was one airliner accident for every 4.2 million flights by Western-built commercial jets (Wald, 2008). For most air travelers, the most dangerous part of the journey is the drive to the airport.

Soon after 9/11, as many people abandoned air travel and took to the roads, I estimated that if Americans flew 20 percent less and instead drove those unflown miles, we could expect an additional 800 traffic deaths in the ensuing year (Myers, 2001). It took a curious German researcher (why didn't I think of this?) to check that prediction against accident data, which confirmed an excess of some 350 deaths in the last 3 months of 2001 compared with the 3-month average in the preceding 5 years (Gigerenzer, 2004). The 9/11 terrorists appear to have killed more people unnoticed—on America's roads—than they did with the 266 fatalities on those four planes.

By now it is clear that our naive statistical intuitions, and our resulting fears, are driven not by calculation and reason but by emotions attuned to the availability heuristic. After this book is published, there likely will be another dramatic natural or terrorist event, which will again propel our fears, vigilance, and resources in a new direction. Terrorists, aided by the media, may again achieve their objective of

**Answer to Question  
on page 92:** *Tanzania's 43 million people greatly outnumber Iraq's 31 million. Most people, having more vivid images of Iraqis, guess wrong.*



Vivid, memorable—and therefore cognitively available—events influence our perception of the social world. The resulting "probability neglect" often leads people to fear the wrong things, such as fearing flying or terrorism more than smoking, driving, or climate change. If four jumbo jets filled with children crashed every day—approximating the number of childhood diarrhea deaths resulting from the rotavirus—something would have been done about it.

Reprinted courtesy of Dave Bohn.

capturing our attention, draining our resources, and distracting us from the mundane, undramatic, insidious risks that, over time, devastate lives, such as the rotavirus that each day claims the equivalent of four 747s filled with children (Parashar & others, 2006). But then again, dramatic events can also serve to awaken us to real risks. That, say some scientists, is what happened when the extreme floods, droughts, snows, and tornadoes of 2011 raised concern that global climate change, by raising sea levels and spawning extreme weather, is destined to become nature's own weapon of mass destruction. For Australians and Americans, a temporary hot day can prime people to believe more in global warming (Li & others, 2011). Even feeling hot in an *indoor* room increases people's belief in global warming (Risen & Critcher, 2011).

## Counterfactual Thinking

Easily imagined (cognitively available) events also influence our experiences of guilt, regret, frustration, and relief. If our team loses (or wins) a big game by one point, we can easily imagine the other outcome, and thus we feel regret (or relief). Imagining worse alternatives helps us feel better. Imagining better alternatives, and pondering what we might do differently next time, helps us prepare to do better in the future (Epstude & Roese, 2008).

In Olympic competition, athletes' emotions after an event reflect mostly how they did relative to expectations, but also their **counterfactual thinking**—their *mentally simulating what might have been* (McGraw & others, 2005; Medvec & others, 1995). Bronze medalists (for whom an easily imagined alternative was finishing without a medal) exhibit more joy than silver medalists (who could more easily imagine having won the gold). On the medal stand, it has been said, happiness is as simple as 1-3-2. Similarly, the higher a student's score within a grade category (such as B 1), the *worse* they feel (Medvec & Savitsky, 1997). The B 1 student who misses an A– by a point feels worse than the B 1 student who actually did worse and just made a B 1 by a point.

Such counterfactual thinking occurs when we can easily picture an alternative outcome (Kahneman & Miller, 1986; Markman & McMullen, 2003; Petrocelli & others, 2011):

- If we barely miss a plane or a bus, we imagine making it if *only* we had left at our usual time, taken our usual route, not paused to talk. If we miss our connection by a half hour or after taking our usual route, it's harder to simulate a different outcome, so we feel less frustration.
- If we change an exam answer, then get it wrong, we will inevitably think "If only . . ." and will vow next time to trust our immediate intuition—although, contrary to student lore, answer changes are more often from incorrect to correct (Kruger & others, 2005).
- The team or the political candidate who barely loses will simulate over and over how they could have won (Sanna & others, 2003).

Counterfactual thinking underlies our feelings of luck. When we have barely escaped a bad event—avoiding defeat with a last-minute goal or standing near a falling icicle—we easily imagine a negative counterfactual (losing, being hit) and therefore feel "good luck" (Teigen & others, 1999). "Bad luck" refers to bad events that did happen but easily might not have.

The more significant and unlikely the event, the more intense the counterfactual thinking (Roese & Hur, 1997). Bereaved people who have lost a spouse or a child in a vehicle accident, or a child to sudden infant death syndrome, commonly report replaying and

"TESTIMONIALS MAY BE MORE COMPELLING THAN MOUNTAINS OF FACTS AND FIGURES (AS MOUNTAINS OF FACTS AND FIGURES IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY SO COMPELLINGLY DEMONSTRATE.)"

—MARK SNYDER (1988)

### counterfactual thinking

Imagining alternative scenarios and outcomes that might have happened, but didn't.



Counterfactual thinking. When *Deal or No Deal* game show contestants dealt too late (walking away with a lower amount than they were previously offered) or too early (foregoing their next choice, which would have led to more money), they likely experienced counterfactual thinking—imaging what might have been.

*People are more often apologetic about actions than inactions (Zeelenberg & others, 1998).*

undoing the event (Davis & others, 1995, 1996). One friend of mine survived a head-on collision with a drunk driver that killed his wife, daughter, and mother. He recalled, "For months I turned the events of that day over and over in my mind. I kept reliving the day, changing the order of events so that the accident wouldn't occur" (Sittser, 1994).

Across Asian and Western cultures, most people, however, live with less regret over things done than over things they failed to do, such as, "I wish I had been more serious in college" or "I should have told my father I loved him before he died" (Gilovich & Medvec, 1994; Rajagopal & others, 2006). In one survey of adults, the most common regret was not taking their education more seriously (Kinnier & Metha, 1989). Would we live with less regret if we dared more often to reach beyond our comfort zone—to venture out, risking failure, but at least having tried?

## Illusory Thinking

Another influence on everyday thinking is our search for order in random events, a tendency that can lead us down all sorts of wrong paths.

### ILLUSORY CORRELATION

It is easy to see a correlation where none exists. When we expect to find significant relationships, we easily associate random events, perceiving an **illusory correlation**. William Ward and Herbert Jenkins (1965) showed people the results of a hypothetical 50-day cloud-seeding experiment. They told participants which of the 50 days the clouds had been seeded and which days it rained. The information was nothing more than a random mix of results: Sometimes it rained after seeding; sometimes it didn't. Participants nevertheless became convinced—in conformity with their ideas about the effects of cloud seeding—that they really had observed a relationship between cloud seeding and rain.

Other experiments confirm the principle: *People easily misperceive random events as confirming their beliefs* (Crocker, 1981; Jennings & others, 1982; Trolier & Hamilton, 1986). If we believe a correlation exists, we are more likely to notice and recall confirming instances. If we believe that premonitions correlate with events, we notice and remember any joint occurrence of the premonition and the event's later occurrence. If we believe that overweight women are unhappier, we perceive that we have witnessed such a correlation even when we have not (Viken & others, 2005). We ignore or forget all the times unusual events do not coincide.

If, after we think about a friend, the friend calls us, we notice and remember that coincidence. We don't notice all the times we think of a friend without any ensuing call, or receive a call from a friend about whom we've not been thinking.

**THE FAMILY CIRCUS** By Bil Keane



"I wish they didn't turn on that seatbelt sign so much! Every time they do, it gets bumpy."

### illusion of control

Perception of uncontrollable events as subject to one's control or as more controllable than they are.

### ILLUSION OF CONTROL

Our tendency to perceive random events as related feeds an **illusion of control**—the idea that

*chance events are subject to our influence.* This keeps gamblers going and makes the rest of us do all sorts of unlikely things.

**GAMBLING** Ellen Langer (1977) demonstrated the illusion of control in betting experiments. Compared with those given an assigned lottery number, people who chose their own number demanded four times as much money when asked if they would sell their ticket. When playing a game of chance against an awkward and nervous person, they bet significantly more than when playing against a dapper, confident opponent. Being the person who throws the dice or spins the wheel increases people's confidence (Wohl & Enzle, 2002). In these and other ways, more than 50 experiments have consistently found people acting as if they can predict or control chance events (Presson & Benassi, 1996; Thompson & others, 1998).

Observations of real-life gamblers confirm these experimental findings. Dice players may throw softly for low numbers and hard for high numbers (Henslin, 1967). The gambling industry thrives on gamblers' illusions. Gamblers attribute wins to their skill and foresight. Losses become "near misses" or "flukes," or for the sports gambler, a bad call by the referee or a freakish bounce of the ball (Gilovich & Douglas, 1986).

Stock traders also like the "feeling of empowerment" that comes from being able to choose and control their own stock trades, as if their being in control can enable them to outperform the market average. One ad declared that online investing "is about control." Alas, the illusion of control breeds overconfidence and frequent losses after stock market trading costs are subtracted (Barber & Odean, 2001a, 2001b).

People like feeling in control, and so when experiencing a lack of control, will act to create a sense of predictability. In experiments, loss of control has led people to form illusory correlations in stock market information, to perceive nonexistent conspiracies, and to develop superstitions (Whitson & Galinsky, 2008).

**REGRESSION TOWARD THE AVERAGE** Tversky and Kahneman (1974) noted another way by which an illusion of control may arise: We fail to recognize the statistical phenomenon of **regression toward the average**. Because exam scores fluctuate partly by chance, most students who get extremely high scores on an exam will get lower scores on the next exam. If their first score is at the ceiling, their second score is more likely to fall back ("regress") toward their own average than to push the ceiling even higher. That is why a student who does consistently good work, even if never the best, will sometimes end a course at the top of the class. Conversely, the lowest scoring students on the first exam are likely to improve. If those who scored lowest go for tutoring after the first exam, the tutors are likely to feel effective when the student improves, even if the tutoring had no effect.

Indeed, when things reach a low point, we will try anything, and whatever we try—going to a psychotherapist, starting a new diet-exercise plan, reading a self-help book—is more likely to be followed by improvement than by further deterioration. Sometimes we recognize that events are not likely to continue at an unusually good or bad extreme. Experience has taught us that when everything is going great, something will go wrong, and that when life is dealing us terrible blows, we can usually look forward to things getting better. Often, though, we fail to recognize this regression effect.

### regression toward the average

The statistical tendency for extreme scores or extreme behavior to return toward one's average.



Regression to the average. When we are at an extremely low point, anything we try will often seem effective. "Maybe a yoga class will improve my life." Events seldom continue at an abnormal low.

We puzzle at why baseball's rookie of the year often has a more ordinary second year—did he become overconfident? Self-conscious? We forget that exceptional performance tends to regress toward normality.

By simulating the consequences of using praise and punishment, Paul Schaffner (1985) showed how the illusion of control might infiltrate human relations. He invited Bowdoin College students to train an imaginary fourth-grade boy, "Harold," to come to school by 8:30 each morning. For each school day during a 3-week period, a computer displayed Harold's arrival time, which was always between 8:20 and 8:40. The students would then select a response to Harold, ranging from strong praise to strong reprimand. As you might expect, they usually praised Harold when he arrived before 8:30 and reprimanded him when he arrived after 8:30. Because Schaffner had programmed the computer to display a random sequence of arrival times, Harold's arrival time tended to improve (to regress toward 8:30) after he was reprimanded. For example, if Harold arrived at 8:39, he was almost sure to be reprimanded, and his randomly selected next-day arrival time was likely to be earlier than 8:39. Thus, *even though their reprimands were having no effect*, most students ended the experiment believing that their reprimands had been effective.

This experiment demonstrates Tversky and Kahneman's provocative conclusion: Nature operates in such a way that we often feel punished for rewarding others and rewarded for punishing them. In actuality, as every student of psychology knows, positive reinforcement for doing things right is usually more effective and has fewer negative side effects.

## Moods and Judgments

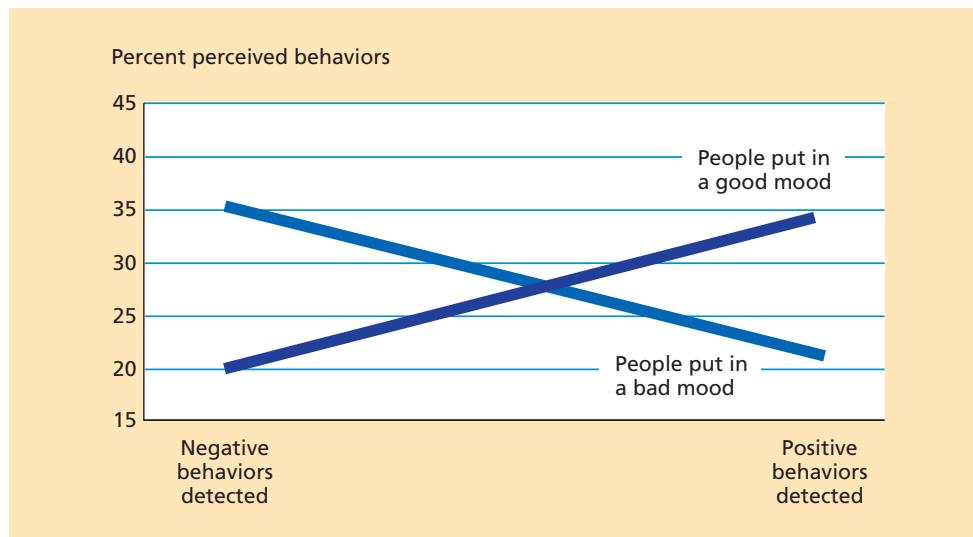
Social judgment involves efficient information processing. It also involves our feelings: Our moods infuse our judgments. Some studies compare happy and sad individuals (Myers, 1993, 2000b). Unhappy people—especially those bereaved or depressed—tend to be more self-focused and brooding. A depressed mood motivates intense thinking—a search for information that makes one's environment more understandable and controllable (Weary & Edwards, 1994).

Happy people, by contrast, are more trusting, more loving, more responsive. If people are made temporarily happy by receiving a small gift while mall-shopping, they will report, a few moments later on an unrelated survey, that their cars and TV sets are working beautifully—better, if you took their word for it, than those belonging to folks who replied after not receiving gifts.

Moods pervade our thinking. To West Germans enjoying their team's World Cup soccer victory (Schwarz & others, 1987) and to Australians emerging from a heart-warming movie (Forgas & Moylan, 1987), people seem good-hearted, life seems wonderful. After (but not before) a 1990 football game between rivals Alabama and Auburn, victorious Alabama fans deemed war less likely and potentially devastating than did the gloomier Auburn fans (Schweitzer & others, 1992). When we are in a happy mood, the world seems friendlier, decisions are easier, and good news more readily comes to mind (DeSteno & others, 2000; Isen & Means, 1983; Stone & Glass, 1986).

Let a mood turn gloomy, however, and thoughts switch onto a different track. Off come the rose-colored glasses; on come the dark glasses. Now the bad mood primes our recollections of negative events (Bower, 1987; Johnson & Magaro, 1987). Our relationships seem to sour. Our self-images take a dive. Our hopes for the future dim. And other people's behavior seems more sinister (Brown & Taylor, 1986; Mayer & Salovey, 1987).

University of New South Wales social psychologist Joseph Forgas (1999, 2008, 2010, 2011) had often been struck by how moody people's "memories and judgments change with the color of their mood." To understand this "mood infusion," he began to experiment. Imagine yourself in one such study. Using hypnosis,

**FIGURE :: 3.3**

A temporary good or bad mood strongly influenced people's ratings of their videotaped behavior. Those in a bad mood detected far fewer positive behaviors.

*Source:*Forgas & others (1984).

Forgas and colleagues (1984) put you in a good or a bad mood and then have you watch a videotape (made the day before) of yourself talking with someone. If made to feel happy, you feel pleased with what you see, and you are able to detect many instances of your poise, interest, and social skill. If you've been put in a bad mood, viewing the same tape seems to reveal a quite different you—one who is stiff, nervous, and inarticulate (Figure 3.3). Given how your mood colors your judgments, you feel relieved at how things brighten when the experimenter switches you to a happy mood before leaving the experiment. Curiously, note Michael Ross and Garth Fletcher (1985), we don't attribute our changing perceptions to our mood shifts. Rather, the world really seems different.

Our moods color how we judge our worlds partly by bringing to mind past experiences associated with the mood. When we are in a bad mood, we have more depressing thoughts. Mood-related thoughts may distract us from complex thinking about something else. Thus, when emotionally aroused—when angry or even in a very good mood—we become more likely to make snap judgments and evaluate others based on stereotypes (Bodenhausen & others, 1994; Paulhus & Lim, 1994).

## SUMMING UP: How Do We Judge Our Social Worlds?

- We have an enormous capacity for automatic, efficient, intuitive thinking. Our cognitive efficiency, although generally adaptive, comes at the price of occasional error. Because we are generally unaware of those errors entering our thinking, it is useful to identify ways in which we form and sustain false beliefs.
- First, we often overestimate our judgments. This *overconfidence phenomenon* stems partly from the much greater ease with which we can imagine why we might be right than why we might be wrong. Moreover, people are much more likely to search for information that can confirm their beliefs than for information that can disconfirm them.
- Second, when given compelling anecdotes or even useless information, we often ignore useful base-rate information. This is partly due to the later ease of recall of vivid information (the *availability heuristic*).
- Third, we are often swayed by illusions of correlation and personal control. It is tempting to perceive correlations where none exist (*illusory correlation*) and to think we can predict or control chance events (the *illusion of control*).
- Finally, moods infuse judgments. Good and bad moods trigger memories of experiences associated with those moods. Moods color our interpretations of current experiences. And by distracting us, moods can also influence how deeply or superficially we think when making judgments.

# HOW DO WE EXPLAIN OUR SOCIAL WORLDS?

Recognize how—and how accurately—we explain others' behavior.

People make it their business to explain other people, and social psychologists make it their business to explain people's explanations.

Our judgments of people depend on how we explain their behavior. Depending on our explanation, we may judge killing as murder, manslaughter, self-defense, or heroism. Depending on our explanation, we may view a homeless person as lacking initiative or as victimized by job and welfare cutbacks. Depending on our explanation, we may interpret someone's friendly behavior as genuine warmth or as ingratiating. Attribution theory helps us make sense of how this explanation works.

## Attributing Causality: To the Person or the Situation

We endlessly analyze and discuss why things happen as they do, especially when we experience something negative or unexpected (Weiner, 1985, 2008, 2010). If worker productivity declines, do we assume the workers are getting lazier? Or has their workplace become less efficient? Does a young boy who hits his classmates have a hostile personality? Or is he responding to relentless teasing? Researchers found that married people often analyze their partners' behaviors, especially their negative behaviors. Cold hostility, more than a warm hug, is likely to leave the partner wondering *why?* (Holtzworth-Munroe & Jacobson, 1985; Holtzworth & Jacobson, 1988).

Spouses' answers correlate with marriage satisfaction. Unhappy couples usually offer distress-maintaining explanations for negative acts ("She was late because she doesn't care about me"). Happy couples more often externalize ("She was late because of heavy traffic"). Explanations for positive acts similarly work either to maintain distress ("He brought me flowers because he wants sex") or to enhance the relationship ("He brought me flowers to show he loves me") (Hewstone & Fincham, 1996; McNulty & others, 2008; Weiner, 1995).

Antonia Abbey (1987, 1991, 2011; Abbey & others, 1998) and colleagues have

repeatedly found that men are more likely than women to attribute a woman's friendliness to mild sexual interest. (Men's romantic interest is easier to read [Place & others, 2009]). Men's misreading of women's warmth as a sexual come-on—an example of **misattribution**—can contribute to behavior that women regard as sexual harassment or even rape (Farris & others, 2008; Kolivas & Gross, 2007; Pryor & others, 1997). Many men believe women are flattered by repeated requests for dates, which women more often view as harassment (Rotundo & others, 2001).

Misattribution is particularly likely when men are in positions of power. A manager may misinterpret a subordinate woman's submissive or friendly behavior and, full of himself, see her in sexual terms (Bargh & Raymond, 1995). Men

### misattribution

Mistakenly attributing a behavior to the wrong source.



A misattribution? Date rape sometimes begins with a man's misreading a woman's warmth as a sexual come-on.

more often than women think about sex (see Chapter 5). Men also are more likely than women to assume that others share their feelings (recall from Chapter 2 the “false consensus effect”). Thus, a man may greatly overestimate the sexual significance of a woman’s courtesy smile (Levesque & others, 2006; Nelson & LeBoeuf, 2002).

Such misattributions help explain the greater sexual assertiveness exhibited by men throughout the world and the greater tendency of men in various cultures, from Boston to Bombay, to justify rape by arguing that the victim consented or implied consent (Kanekar & Nazareth, 1988; Muehlenhard, 1988; Shotland, 1989). Women more often judge forcible sex as meriting conviction and a stiff sentence (Schutte & Hosch, 1997). Misattributions also help explain why, in one national survey, the 23 percent of American women who said they had been forced into unwanted sexual behavior was eight times greater than the 3 percent of American men who said they had ever forced a woman into a sexual act (Laumann & others, 1994).

**Attribution theory** analyzes how we explain people’s behavior and what we infer from it. The variations of attribution theory share some common assumptions. As Daniel Gilbert and Patrick Malone (1995) explain, each “construes the human skin as a special boundary that separates one set of ‘causal forces’ from another. On the sunny side of the epidermis are the external or situational forces that press inward upon the person, and on the meaty side are the internal or personal forces that exert pressure outward. Sometimes these forces press in conjunction, sometimes in opposition, and their dynamic interplay manifests itself as observable behavior.”

Attribution theory pioneer Fritz Heider (1958) and others after him analyzed the “commonsense psychology” by which people explain everyday events. They concluded that when we observe someone acting intentionally, we sometimes attribute that person’s behavior to *internal* causes (for example, the person’s disposition or mental state) and sometimes to *external* causes (for example, something about the person’s situation). A teacher may wonder whether a child’s underachievement is due to lack of motivation and ability (a **dispositional attribution**) or to physical and social circumstances (a **situational attribution**). Also, some of us are more inclined to attribute behavior to stable personality; others tend more to attribute behavior to situations (Bastian & Haslam, 2006; Robins & others, 2004).

## INFERRING TRAITS

Edward Jones and Keith Davis (1965) noted that we often infer that other people’s actions are indicative of their intentions and dispositions. If I observe Rick making a sarcastic comment to Linda, I infer that Rick is a hostile person. Jones and Davis’s “theory of correspondent inferences” specified the conditions under which people



### attribution theory

The theory of how people explain others’ behavior—for example, by attributing it either to internal dispositions (enduring traits, motives, and attitudes) or to external situations.

### dispositional attribution

Attributing behavior to the person’s disposition and traits.

### situational attribution

Attributing behavior to the environment.

To what should we attribute a student’s sleepiness? To lack of sleep? To boredom? Whether we make internal or external attributions depends on whether we notice her consistently sleeping in this and other classes, and on whether other students react as she does to this particular class.

### spontaneous trait inference

An effortless, automatic inference of a trait after exposure to someone's behavior.

*An exception: Asians are less likely to attribute people's behavior to their personality traits (Na & Kitayama, 2011).*

infer traits. For example, normal or expected behavior tells us less about the person than does unusual behavior. If Samantha is sarcastic in a job interview, where a person would normally be pleasant, that tells us more about Samantha than if she is sarcastic with her siblings.

The ease with which we infer traits—a phenomenon called **spontaneous trait inference**—is remarkable. In experiments at New York University, James Uleman (1989; Uleman & others, 2008) gave students statements to remember, such as “The librarian carries the old woman’s groceries across the street.” The students would instantly, unintentionally, and unconsciously infer a trait. When later they were helped to recall the sentence, the most valuable clue word was not “books” (to cue librarian) or “bags” (to cue groceries) but “helpful”—the inferred trait that I suspect you, too, spontaneously attributed to the librarian. Given even just 1/10th of a second exposure to someone’s face, people will spontaneously infer some personality traits (Willis & Todorov, 2006).

### COMMONSENSE ATTRIBUTIONS

As the theory of correspondent inferences suggests, attributions often are rational. Pioneering attribution theorist Harold Kelley (1973) described how we explain behavior by using information about “consistency,” “distinctiveness,” and “consensus” (Figure 3.4).

*Consistency:* How consistent is the person’s behavior in this situation?

*Distinctiveness:* How specific is the person’s behavior to this particular situation?

*Consensus:* To what extent do others in this situation behave similarly?

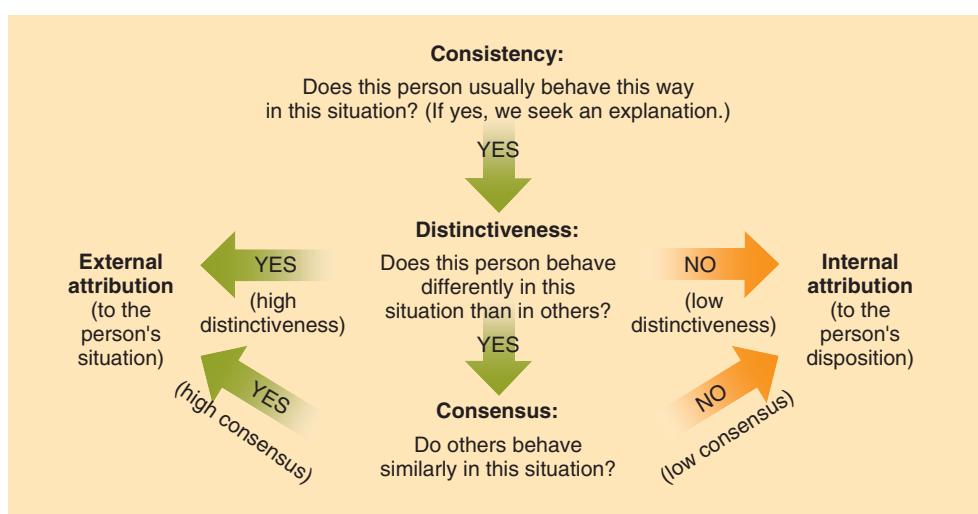
When explaining why Edgar is having trouble with his computer, most people would use information concerning *consistency* (Is Edgar usually unable to get his computer to work?), *distinctiveness* (Does Edgar have trouble with other computers, or only this one?), and *consensus* (Do other people have similar problems with this make of computer?). If we learn that Edgar alone consistently has trouble with this and other computers, we likely will attribute the troubles to Edgar, not to defects in this computer.

So our commonsense psychology often explains behavior logically. But Kelley also found that people often discount a contributing cause of behavior if other plausible causes are already known. If we can specify one or two sufficient reasons a student might have done poorly on an exam, we often ignore or discount alternative possibilities (McClure, 1998). When given information about people’s college grade average and asked to judge their suitability for graduate school, people discount the school’s grading leniency (Moore & others, 2010).

### FIGURE :: 3.4

#### Harold Kelley’s Theory of Attributions

Three factors—consistency, distinctiveness, and consensus— influence whether we attribute someone’s behavior to internal or external causes. Try creating your own examples, such as the following: If Mary and many others criticize Steve (with consensus), and if Mary isn’t critical of others (high distinctiveness), then we make an external attribution (it’s something about Steve). If Mary alone (low consensus) criticizes Steve, and if she criticizes many other people, too (low distinctiveness), then we are drawn to an internal attribution (it’s something about Mary).



## The Fundamental Attribution Error

Social psychology's most important lesson concerns the influence of our social environment. At any moment, our internal state, and therefore what we say and do, depends on the situation as well as on what we bring to the situation. In experiments, a slight difference between two situations sometimes greatly affects how people respond. As a professor, I have seen this when teaching the same subject at both 8:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Silent stares would greet me at 8:30; at 7:00, I had to break up a party. In each situation, some individuals were more talkative than others, but the difference between the two situations exceeded the individual differences.

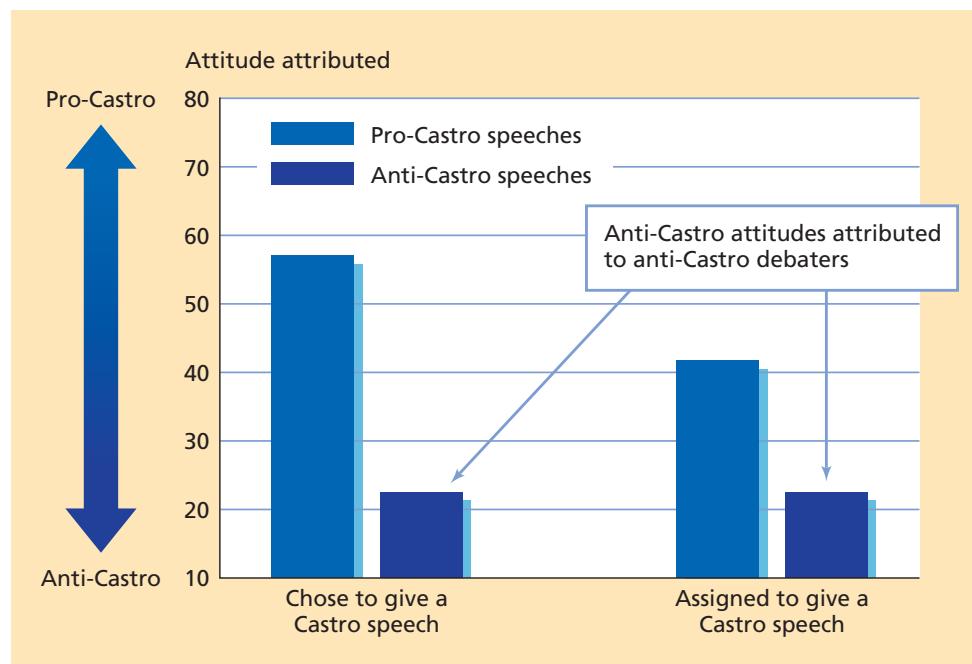
Attribution researchers have found a common problem with our attributions. When explaining someone's behavior, we often underestimate the impact of the situation and overestimate the extent to which it reflects the individual's traits and attitudes. Thus, even knowing the effect of the time of day on classroom conversation, I found it terribly tempting to assume that the people in the 7:00 p.m. class were more extraverted than the "silent types" who came at 8:30 a.m. Likewise, we may infer that people fall because they're clumsy rather than because they were tripped; that people smile because they're happy rather than faking friendliness, and that people speed past us on the highway because they're aggressive rather than late for an important meeting.

This discounting of the situation, dubbed by Lee Ross (1977) the **fundamental attribution error**, appears in many experiments. In the first such study, Edward Jones and Victor Harris (1967) had Duke University students read debaters' speeches supporting or attacking Cuba's leader, Fidel Castro. When told that the debater chose which position to take, the students logically enough assumed it reflected the person's own attitude. But what happened when the students were told that the debate coach had assigned the position? People who are merely feigning a position write more forceful statements than you'd expect (Allison & others, 1993; Miller & others, 1990). Thus, even knowing that the debater had been told to take a pro- or anti-Castro position did not prevent students from inferring that the debater in fact had the assigned leanings (Figure 3.5). People seemed to think, "Yeah, I know he was assigned that position, but, you know, I think he really believes it."

Even when people know they are *causing* someone else's behavior, they still underestimate external influences. If individuals dictate an opinion that someone

### **fundamental attribution error**

The tendency for observers to underestimate situational influences and overestimate dispositional influences upon others' behavior. (Also called *correspondence bias* because we so often see behavior as corresponding to a disposition.)

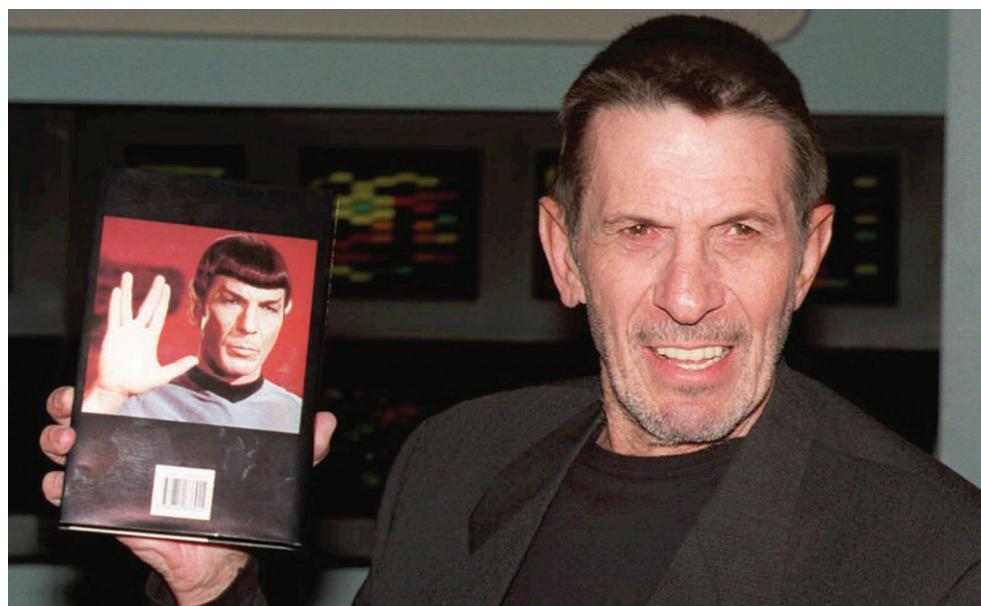


**FIGURE :: 3.5**  
**The Fundamental Attribution Error**

When people read a debate speech supporting or attacking Fidel Castro, they attributed corresponding attitudes to the speechwriter, even when the debate coach assigned the writer's position.

*Source:* Data from Jones & Harris (1967).

When viewing a movie actor playing a “good-guy” or a “bad-guy” role, we find it difficult to escape the illusion that the scripted behavior reflects an inner disposition. Perhaps that is why Leonard Nimoy, who played Mr. Spock in the original “Star Trek” series, titled one of his books *I Am Not Spock*.



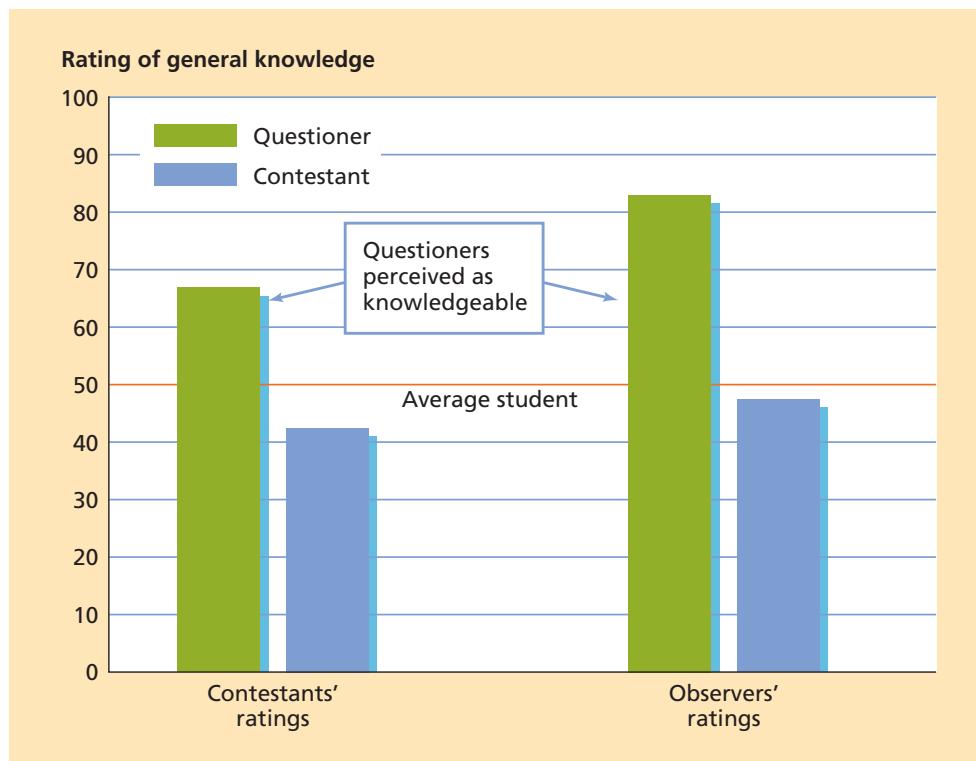
else must then express, they still tend to see the person as actually holding that opinion (Gilbert & Jones, 1986). If people are asked to be either self-enhancing or self-deprecating during an interview, they are very aware of why they are acting so. But they are *unaware* of their effect on another person. If Juan acts modestly, his naive partner Bob is likely to exhibit modesty as well. Juan will easily understand his own behavior, but he will think that poor Bob suffers from low self-esteem (Baumeister & others, 1988). In short, we tend to presume that others *are* the way they act. Observing Cinderella cowering in her oppressive home, people (ignoring the situation) infer that she is meek; dancing with her at the ball, the prince sees a suave and glamorous person.

The discounting of social constraints was evident in a thought-provoking experiment by Lee Ross and collaborators (Ross & others, 1977). The experiment re-created Ross's firsthand experience of moving from graduate student to professor. His doctoral oral exam had proved a humbling experience as his apparently brilliant professors quizzed him on topics they specialized in. Six months later, Dr. Ross was himself an examiner, now able to ask penetrating questions on *his* favorite topics. Ross's hapless student later confessed to feeling exactly as Ross had a half-year before—dissatisfied with his ignorance and impressed with the apparent brilliance of the examiners.

In the experiment, with Teresa Amabile and Julia Steinmetz, Ross set up a simulated quiz game. He randomly assigned some Stanford University students to play the role of questioner, some to play the role of contestant, and others to observe. The researchers invited the questioners to make up difficult questions that would demonstrate their wealth of knowledge. Any one of us can imagine such questions using one's own domain of competence: “Where is Bainbridge Island?” “How did Mary, Queen of Scots, die?” “Which has the longer coastline, Europe or Africa?” If even those few questions have you feeling a little uninformed, then you will appreciate the results of this experiment.\*

Everyone had to know that the questioners would have the advantage. Yet both contestants and observers (but not the questioners) came to the erroneous conclusion that the questioners *really were* more knowledgeable than the contestants (Figure 3.6).

\* Bainbridge Island is across Puget Sound from Seattle. Mary was ordered beheaded by her cousin Queen Elizabeth I. Although the African continent is more than double the area of Europe, Europe's coastline is longer. (It is more convoluted, with many harbors and inlets, a geographical fact that contributed to its role in the history of maritime trade.)

**FIGURE :: 3.6**

Both contestants and observers of a simulated quiz game assumed that a person who had been randomly assigned the role of questioner was far more knowledgeable than the contestant. Actually, the assigned roles of questioner and contestant simply made the questioner seem more knowledgeable. The failure to appreciate this illustrates the fundamental attribution error.

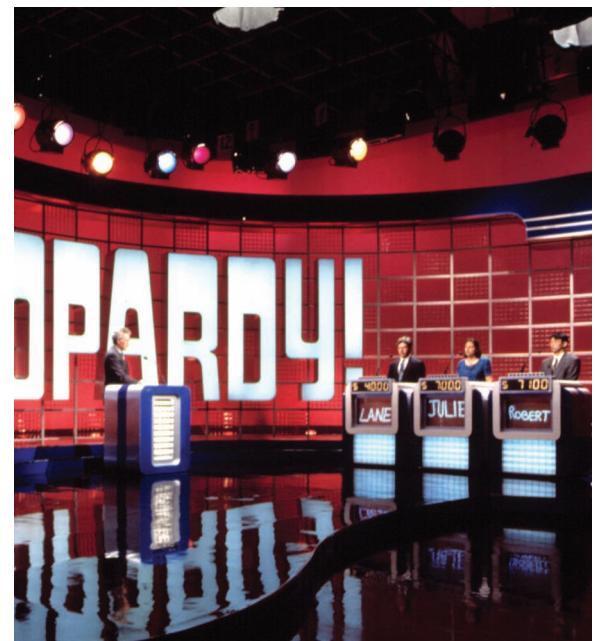
*Source:* Data from Ross & others (1977).

Follow-up research shows that these misimpressions are hardly a reflection of low social intelligence. If anything, college students and other intelligent and socially competent people are *more* likely to make the attribution error (Bauman & Skitka, 2010; Block & Funder, 1986).

In real life, those with social power usually initiate and control conversations, which often leads underlings to overestimate their knowledge and intelligence. Medical doctors, for example, are often presumed to be experts on all sorts of questions unrelated to medicine. Similarly, students often overestimate the brilliance of their teachers. (As in the experiment, teachers are questioners on subjects of their special expertise.) When some of these students later become teachers, they are usually amazed to discover that teachers are not so brilliant after all.

To illustrate the fundamental attribution error, most of us need look no further than our own experiences. Determined to make some new friends, Bev plasters a smile on her face and anxiously plunges into a party. Everyone else seems quite relaxed and happy as they laugh and talk with one another. Bev wonders to herself, "Why is everyone always so at ease in groups like this while I'm feeling shy and tense?" Actually, everyone else is feeling nervous, too, and making the same attribution error in assuming that Bev and the others *are* as they *appear*—confidently convivial.

People often attribute keen intelligence to those, such as teachers and quiz show hosts, who test others' knowledge.



## WHY DO WE MAKE THE ATTRIBUTION ERROR?

So far we have seen a bias in the way we explain other people's behavior: We often ignore powerful situational determinants. Why do we tend to underestimate the situational determinants of others' behavior but not of our own?

The fundamental attribution error: observers underestimating the situation. Driving into a gas station, we may think the person parked at the second pump (blocking access to the first) is inconsiderate. That person, having arrived when the first pump was in use, attributes her behavior to the situation.



**PERSPECTIVE AND SITUATIONAL AWARENESS** Attribution theorists have pointed out that we observe others from a different perspective than we observe ourselves (Jones, 1976; Jones & Nisbett, 1971). When we act, the *environment* commands our attention. When we watch another person act, that *person* occupies the center of our attention and the environment becomes relatively invisible. If I'm mad, it's the situation that's making me angry. But someone I see getting mad may seem like an ill-tempered person.

From his analysis of 173 studies, Bertram Malle (2006) concluded that the actor-observer difference is actually minimal. When our action feels intentional and admirable, we attribute it to our own good reasons, not to the situation. It's only when we behave badly that we're more likely to attribute our behavior to the situation, while someone observing us may spontaneously infer a trait.

In some experiments, people have viewed a videotape of a suspect confessing during a police interview. If they viewed the confession through a camera focused on the suspect, they perceived the confession as genuine. If they viewed it through a camera focused on the detective, they perceived it as more coerced (Lassiter & Irvine, 1986; Lassiter & others, 2005, 2007). The camera perspective influenced people's guilt judgments even when the judge instructed them not to allow this to happen (Lassiter & others, 2002).

In courtrooms, most confession videotapes focus on the confessor. As we might expect, noted Daniel Lassiter and Kimberly Dudley (1991), such tapes yield a nearly 100 percent conviction rate when played by prosecutors. Aware of this research, reports Lassiter, New Zealand has made it a national policy that police interrogations be filmed with equal focus on the officer and the suspect, such as by filming them with side profiles of both.

As the once-visible person recedes in their memory, observers often give more and more credit to the situation. As we saw previously in the groundbreaking attribution error experiment by Edward Jones and Victor Harris (1967), immediately after hearing someone argue an assigned position, people assume that's how the person really felt. Jerry Burger and M. L. Palmer (1991) found that a week later they are much more ready to credit the situational constraints. The day after a presidential election, Burger and Julie Pavelich (1994) asked voters why the election turned out as it did. Most attributed the outcome to the candidates' personal traits and positions (the winner from the incumbent party was likable). When they asked

other voters the same question a year later, only a third attributed the verdict to the candidates. More people now credited circumstances, such as the country's good mood and the robust economy.

Let's make this personal: Are you generally quiet, talkative, or does it depend on the situation? "Depends on the situation" is a common answer. Likewise, when asked to predict their feelings 2 weeks after receiving grades or learning the outcome of their country's national election, people expect the situation to rule their emotions; they underestimate the importance of their own sunny or dour dispositions (Quoidbach & Dunn, 2010). But when asked to describe a friend—or to describe what they were like 5 years ago—people more often ascribe trait descriptions. When recalling our past, we become like observers of someone else, note researchers Emily Pronin and Lee Ross (2006). For most of us, the "old you" is someone other than today's "real you." We regard our distant past selves (and our distant future selves) almost as if they were other people occupying our body.

All these experiments point to a reason for the attribution error: *We find causes where we look for them.* To see this in your own experience, consider: Would you say your social psychology instructor is a quiet or a talkative person?

My guess is you inferred that he or she is fairly outgoing. But consider: Your attention focuses on your instructor while he or she behaves in a public context that demands speaking. The instructor also observes his or her own behavior in many different situations—in the classroom, in meetings, at home. "Me talkative?" your instructor might say. "Well, it all depends on the situation. When I'm in class or with good friends, I'm rather outgoing. But at conventions and in unfamiliar situations I feel and act rather shy." Because we are acutely aware of how our behavior varies with the situation, we see ourselves as more variable than other people (Baxter & Goldberg, 1987; Kammer, 1982; Sande & others, 1988). "Nigel is uptight, Fiona is relaxed. With me it varies."

**CULTURAL DIFFERENCES** Cultures also influence attribution error (Ickes, 1980; Watson, 1982). A Western worldview predisposes people to assume that people, not situations, cause events. Internal explanations are more socially approved (Jellison & Green, 1981). "You can do it!" we are assured by the pop psychology of positive-thinking Western culture. You get what you deserve and deserve what you get.

As children grow up in Western culture, they learn to explain behavior in terms of the other's personal characteristics (Rhodes & others, 1990; Ross, 1981). As a first-grader, one of my sons unscrambled the words "gate the sleeve caught Tom on his" into "The gate caught Tom on his sleeve." His teacher, applying the Western cultural assumptions of the curriculum materials, marked that wrong. The "right" answer located the cause within Tom: "Tom caught his sleeve on the gate."

The fundamental attribution error occurs across varied cultures (Krull & others, 1999). Yet people in Eastern Asian cultures are somewhat more sensitive than Westerners are to the importance of situations. Thus, when aware of the social context, they are less inclined to assume that others' behavior corresponds to their traits (Choi & others, 1999; Farwell & Weiner, 2000; Masuda & Kitayama, 2004).



Focusing on the person.  
Would you infer that your professor for this course, or the professor shown here, is naturally outgoing?

"AND IN IMAGINATION HE  
BEGAN TO RECALL THE  
BEST MOMENTS OF HIS  
PLEASANT LIFE. . . . BUT  
THE CHILD WHO HAD EXPE-  
RIENCED THAT HAPPINESS  
EXISTED NO LONGER, IT  
WAS LIKE A REMINISCENCE  
OF SOMEBODY ELSE."

—LEO TOLSTOY, *THE DEATH*

OF IVAN ILYICH, 1886

*Under alcohol's influence, people's attentional focus narrows and they become more likely to attribute someone's action—perhaps a bump at a bar—to intentionality (Begue & others, 2010). Thinking that a jolt or seeming insult was intentional may then trigger an aggravated reaction.*

Some languages promote external attributions. Instead of "I was late," Spanish idiom allows one to say, "The clock caused me to be late." In collectivist cultures, people less often perceive others in terms of personal dispositions (Lee & others, 1996; Zebrowitz-McArthur, 1988). They are less likely to spontaneously interpret a behavior as reflecting an inner trait (Newman, 1993). When told of someone's actions, Hindus in India are less likely than Americans to offer dispositional explanations ("She is kind") and more likely to offer situational explanations ("Her friends were with her") (Miller, 1984).

The fundamental attribution error is *fundamental* because it colors our explanations in basic and important ways. Researchers in Britain, India, Australia, and the United States have found that people's attributions predict their attitudes toward the poor and the unemployed (Furnham, 1982; Pandey & others, 1982; Skitka, 1999; Wagstaff, 1983; Weiner & others, 2011). Those who attribute poverty and unemployment to personal dispositions ("They're just lazy and undeserving") tend to adopt political positions unsympathetic to such people (Figure 3.7). Those who make *situational attributions* ("If you or I were to live with the same overcrowding, poor education, and discrimination, would we be any better off?") tend to adopt political positions that offer more direct support to the poor. Tell me your attributions for poverty and I will guess your politics.

Can we benefit from being aware of the attribution error? I once assisted with some interviews for a faculty position. One candidate was interviewed by six of us at once; each of us had the opportunity to ask two or three questions. I came away thinking, "What a stiff, awkward person he is." The second candidate I met privately over coffee, and we immediately discovered we had a close, mutual friend. As we talked, I became increasingly impressed by what a "warm, engaging, stimulating person she is." Only later did I remember the fundamental attribution error and reassess my analysis. I had attributed his stiffness and her warmth to their dispositions; in fact, I later realized, such behavior resulted partly from the difference in their interview situations.

*Whether conservatives or liberals offer more situational attributions depends on the topic. When explaining poverty, liberals offer stronger situational attributions. When explaining U.S. Marines' killing of Iraqi civilians, conservatives offer stronger situational attributions (Morgan & others, 2010).*

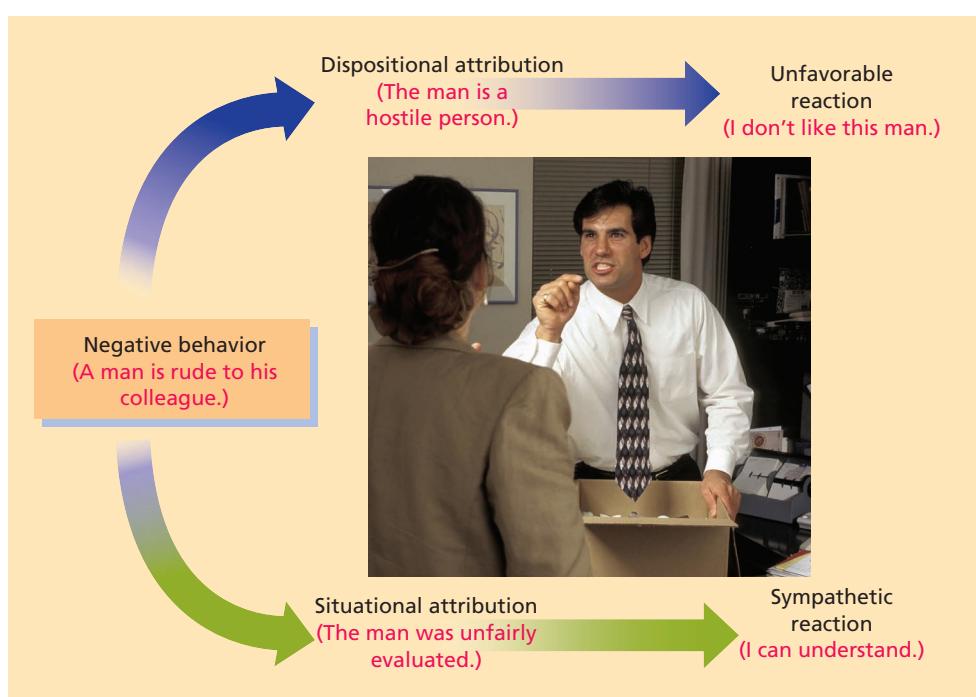
## FIGURE :: 3.7

### Attributions and Reactions

How we explain someone's negative behavior determines how we feel about it.

## WHY WE STUDY ATTRIBUTION ERRORS

This chapter, like the one before it, explains some foibles and fallacies in our social thinking. Reading about these may make it seem, as one of my students put it,



that “social psychologists get their kicks out of playing tricks on people.” Actually, the experiments are not designed to demonstrate “what fools these mortals be” (although some of the experiments are rather amusing). Rather, their purpose is to reveal how we think about ourselves and others.

If our capacity for illusion and self-deception is shocking, remember that our modes of thought are generally adaptive. Illusory thinking is often a by-product of our mind’s strategies for simplifying complex information. It parallels our perceptual mechanisms, which generally give us useful images of the world but sometimes lead us astray.

A second reason for focusing on thinking biases such as the fundamental attribution error is humanitarian. One of social psychology’s “great humanizing messages,” note Thomas Gilovich and Richard Eibach (2001), is that people should not always be blamed for their problems. “More often than people are willing to acknowledge,” they conclude, “failure, disability, and misfortune are . . . the product of real environmental causes.”

A third reason for focusing on biases is that we are mostly unaware of them and can benefit from greater awareness. As with other biases, such as the self-serving bias (see Chapter 2), people see themselves as less susceptible than others to attribution errors (Pronin, 2008). My hunch is that you will find more surprises, more challenges, and more benefit in an analysis of errors and biases than you would in a string of testimonies to the human capacity for logic and intellectual achievement. That is also why world literature so often portrays pride and other human failings. Social psychology aims to expose us to fallacies in our thinking in the hope that we will become more rational, more in touch with reality.

“MOST POOR PEOPLE ARE  
NOT LAZY. . . . THEY CATCH  
THE EARLY BUS. THEY RAISE  
OTHER PEOPLE’S CHIL-  
DREN. THEY CLEAN THE  
STREETS. NO, NO, THEY’RE  
NOT LAZY.”

—THE REVEREND JESSE  
JACKSON, ADDRESS TO THE  
DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL  
CONVENTION, JULY 1988

## SUMMING UP: How Do We Explain Our Social Worlds?

- *Attribution theory* involves how we explain people’s behavior. *Misattribution*—attributing a behavior to the wrong source—is a major factor in sexual harassment, as a person in power (typically male) interprets friendliness as a sexual come-on.
- Although we usually make reasonable attributions, we often commit the *fundamental attribution error* (also called *correspondence bias*) when explaining other people’s behavior. We attribute their behavior

so much to their inner traits and attitudes that we discount situational constraints, even when those are obvious. We make this attribution error partly because when we watch someone act, that *person* is the focus of our attention and the situation is relatively invisible. When *we* act, our attention is usually on what we are reacting to—the situation is more visible.

## HOW DO OUR EXPECTATIONS OF OUR SOCIAL WORLDS MATTER?

Gain insight into how our social beliefs matter.

Having considered how we explain and judge others—efficiently, adaptively, but sometimes erroneously—we conclude this chapter by pondering the effects of our social judgments. Do our social beliefs matter? Can they change reality?

Our social beliefs and judgments do matter. They influence how we feel and act, and by so doing may help generate their own reality. When our ideas lead us to act in ways that produce their apparent confirmation, they have become what sociologist Robert Merton (1948) termed **self-fulfilling prophecies**—beliefs that

**self-fulfilling prophecy**

A belief that leads to its own fulfillment.

# focus ON

## The Self-Fulfilling Psychology of the Stock Market

On the evening of January 6, 1981, Joseph Granville, a popular Florida investment adviser, wired his clients: "Stock prices will nosedive; sell tomorrow." Word of Granville's advice soon spread, and January 7 became the heaviest day of trading in the previous history of the New York Stock Exchange. All told, stock values lost \$40 billion.

Nearly a half-century ago, John Maynard Keynes likened such stock market psychology to the popular beauty contests then conducted by London newspapers. To win, one had to pick the six faces out of a hundred that were, in turn, chosen most frequently by the other newspaper contestants. Thus, as Keynes wrote, "Each competitor has to pick not those faces which he himself finds prettiest, but those which he thinks likeliest to catch the fancy of the other competitors."

Investors likewise try to pick not the stocks that touch their fancy but the stocks that other investors will favor. The name of the game is predicting others' behavior. As one Wall Street fund manager explained, "You may or may not agree with Granville's view—but that's usually beside the point." If you think his advice will cause others

to sell, then you want to sell quickly, before prices drop more. If you expect others to buy, you buy now to beat the rush.

The self-fulfilling psychology of the stock market worked to an extreme on Monday, October 19, 1987, when the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 20 percent. Part of what happens during such crashes is that the media and the rumor mill focus on whatever bad news is available to explain them. Once reported, the explanatory news stories further diminish people's expectations, causing declining prices to fall still lower. The process also works in reverse by amplifying good news when stock prices are rising.

In April of 2000, the volatile technology market again demonstrated a self-fulfilling psychology, now called "momentum investing." After 2 years of eagerly buying stocks (because prices were rising), people started frantically selling them (because prices were falling). Such wild market swings—"irrational exuberance" followed by a crash—are mainly self-generated, noted economist Robert Shiller (2005). In 2008 and 2009, the market psychology headed south again as another bubble burst.

lead to their own fulfillment. If, led to believe that their bank is about to crash, its customers race to withdraw their money, then their false perceptions may create reality, noted Merton. If people are led to believe that stocks are about to soar, they will indeed. (See "Focus On: The Self-Fulfilling Psychology of the Stock Market.")

In his well-known studies of *experimenter bias*, Robert Rosenthal (1985, 2006) found that research participants sometimes live up to what they believe experimenters expect of them. In one study, experimenters asked individuals to judge the success of people in various photographs. The experimenters read the same instructions to all their participants and showed them the same photos. Nevertheless, experimenters who expected their participants to see the photographed people as successful obtained higher ratings than did those who expected their participants to see the people as failures. Even more startling—and controversial—are reports that teachers' beliefs about their students similarly serve as self-fulfilling prophecies. If a teacher believes a student is good at math, will the student do well in the class? Let's examine this.

## Teacher Expectations and Student Performance

Teachers do have higher expectations for some students than for others. Perhaps you have detected this after having a brother or sister precede you in school, after receiving a label such as "gifted" or "learning disabled," or after being tracked with "high-ability" or "average-ability" students. Perhaps conversation in the teachers' lounge sent your reputation ahead of you. Or perhaps your new teacher scrutinized

Rosenthal (2008) recalls submitting a paper describing his early experiments on experimenter bias to a leading journal and to an American Association for the Advancement of Science prize competition. On the same day, some weeks later, he received a letter from the journal rejecting his paper, and from the association naming it the year's best social science research. In science, as in everyday life, some people appreciate what others do not, which is why it often pays to try and, when rebuffed, to try again.

your school file or discovered your family's social status. It's clear that teachers' evaluations correlate with student achievement: Teachers think well of students who do well. That's mostly because teachers accurately perceive their students' abilities and achievements. "About 75 percent of the correlation between teacher expectations and student future achievement reflects accuracy," report Lee Jussim, Stacy Robustelli, and Thomas Cain (2009).

But are teachers' evaluations ever a *cause* as well as a consequence of student performance? One correlational study of 4300 British schoolchildren by William Crano and Phyllis Mellon (1978) suggested yes. Not only is high performance followed by higher teacher evaluations but also the reverse is true as well.

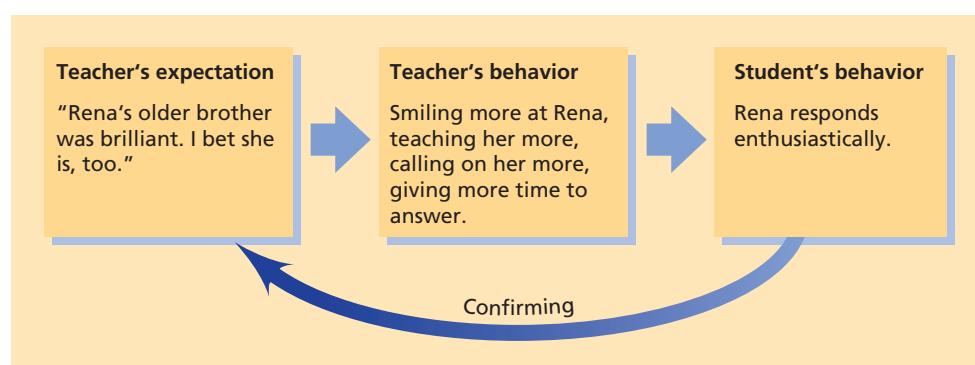
Could we test this "teacher-expectations effect" experimentally? Pretend we gave a teacher the impression that Dana, Sally, Todd, and Manuel—four randomly selected students—are unusually capable. Will the teacher give special treatment to these four and elicit superior performance from them? In a now-famous experiment, Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson (1968) reported precisely that. Randomly selected children in a San Francisco elementary school who were said (on the basis of a fictitious test) to be on the verge of a dramatic intellectual spurt did then spurt ahead in IQ score.

That dramatic result seemed to suggest that the school problems of “disadvantaged” children might reflect their teachers’ low expectations. The findings were soon publicized in the national media as well as in many college textbooks. However, further analysis—which was not as highly publicized—revealed the teacher-expectations effect to be not as powerful and reliable as this initial study had led many people to believe (Jussim & others, 2009; Spitz, 1999). By Rosenthal’s own count, in only approximately 4 in 10 of the nearly 500 published experiments did expectations significantly affect performance (Rosenthal, 1991, 2002). Low expectations do not doom a capable child, nor do high expectations magically transform a slow learner into a valedictorian. Human nature is not so pliable.

High expectations do, however, seem to boost low achievers, for whom a teacher's positive attitude may be a hope-giving breath of fresh air (Madon & others, 1997). How are such expectations transmitted? Rosenthal and other investigators report that teachers look, smile, and nod more at "high-potential students." Teachers also may teach more to their "gifted" students, set higher goals for them, call on them more, and give them more time to answer (Cooper, 1983; Harris & Rosenthal, 1985, 1986; Jussim, 1986).

In one study, Elisha Babad, Frank Bernieri, and Rosenthal (1991) videotaped teachers talking to, or about, unseen students for whom they held high or low expectations. A random 10-second clip of either the teacher's voice or the teacher's face was enough to tell viewers—both children and adults—whether this was a good or a poor student and how much the teacher liked the student. (You read that right: 10 seconds.) Although teachers may think they can conceal their feelings and behave impartially toward the class, students are acutely sensitive to teachers' facial expressions and body movements (Figure 3.8).

*Self-presumed expectations associated with one's gender ("women are bad at math") or race ("Blacks don't do so well on aptitude tests") can create anxiety that suppresses test scores. Remove the "stereotype threat" (see Chapter 9) and performance may improve.*



## FIGURE :: 3.8

### Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

Teacher expectations can become self-fulfilling prophecies. But for the most part, teachers' expectations accurately reflect reality (Jussim & Harber, 2005).

*To judge a teacher or professor's overall warmth and enthusiasm also takes but a thin slice of behavior—mere seconds (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992, 1993).*

Reading the experiments on teacher expectations makes me wonder about the effect of students' expectations upon their teachers. You no doubt begin many of your courses having heard "Professor Smith is interesting" and "Professor Jones is a bore." Robert Feldman and Thomas Prohaska (1979; Feldman & Theiss, 1982) found that such expectations can affect both student and teacher. Students in a learning experiment who expected to be taught by an excellent teacher perceived their teacher (who was unaware of their expectations) as more competent and interesting than did students with low expectations. Furthermore, the students actually learned more. In a later experiment, women who were led to expect their male instructor to be sexist had a less positive experience with him, performed worse, and rated him as less competent than did women not given the sexist expectation (Adams & others, 2006).

Were these results due entirely to the students' perceptions or also to a self-fulfilling prophecy that affected the teacher? In a follow-up experiment, Feldman and Prohaska videotaped teachers and had observers rate their performances. Teachers were judged most capable when assigned a student who nonverbally conveyed positive expectations.

To see whether such effects might also occur in actual classrooms, a research team led by David Jamieson (Jamieson & others, 1987) experimented with four Ontario high school classes taught by a newly transferred teacher. During individual interviews, they told students in two of the classes that both other students and the research team rated the teacher very highly. Compared with the control classes, students who were given positive expectations paid better attention during class. At the end of the teaching unit, they also got better grades and rated the teacher as clearer in her teaching. The attitudes that a class has toward its teacher are as important, it seems, as the teacher's attitude toward the students.

## Getting from Others What We Expect

So the expectations of experimenters and teachers, although usually reasonably accurate, occasionally act as self-fulfilling prophecies. How widespread are self-fulfilling prophecies? Do we get from others what we expect of them? Studies show that our perceptions of others are more accurate than biased (Jussim, 2012). Self-fulfilling prophecies have "less than extraordinary power." Yet sometimes, self-fulfilling prophecies do operate in work settings (with managers who have high or low expectations), in courtrooms (as judges instruct juries), and in simulated police contexts (as interrogators with guilty or innocent expectations interrogate and pressure suspects) (Kassin & others, 2003; Rosenthal, 2003, 2006).

Do self-fulfilling prophecies color our personal relationships? There are times when negative expectations of someone lead us to be extra nice to that person, which induces him or her to be nice in return—thus *disconfirming* our expectations. But a more common finding in studies of social interaction is that, yes, we do to some extent get what we expect (Olson & others, 1996).

In laboratory games, hostility nearly always begets hostility: People who perceive their opponents as noncooperative will readily induce them to be noncooperative (Kelley & Stahelski, 1970). Each party's perception of the other as aggressive, resentful, and vindictive induces the other to display those behaviors in self-defense, thus creating a vicious self-perpetuating circle. In another experiment, people anticipated interacting with another person of a different race. When led to expect that the person disliked interacting with someone of their race, they felt more anger and displayed more hostility toward the person (Butz & Plant, 2006). Likewise, whether I expect my wife to be in a bad mood or in a loving mood may affect how I relate to her, thereby inducing her to confirm my belief.

So, do intimate relationships prosper when partners idealize each other? Are positive illusions of the other's virtues self-fulfilling? Or are they more often self-defeating, by creating high expectations that can't be met? Among University of

Waterloo dating couples followed by Sandra Murray and associates (1996a, 1996b, 2000), positive ideals of one's partner were good omens. Idealization helped buffer conflict, bolster satisfaction, and turn self-perceived frogs into princes or princesses. When someone loves and admires us, it helps us become more the person he or she imagines us to be.

When dating couples deal with conflicts, hopeful optimists and their partners tend to perceive each other as engaging constructively. Compared to those with more pessimistic expectations, they then feel more supported and more satisfied with the outcome (Srivastava & others, 2006). Among married couples, too, those who worry that their partner doesn't love and accept them interpret slight hurts as rejections, which motivates them to devalue the partner and distance themselves. Those who presume their partner's love and acceptance respond less defensively, read less into stressful events, and treat the partner better (Murray & others, 2003). Love helps create its presumed reality.

Several experiments conducted by Mark Snyder (1984) at the University of Minnesota show how, once formed, erroneous beliefs about the social world can induce others to confirm those beliefs, a phenomenon called **behavioral confirmation**. In a classic study, Snyder, Elizabeth Tanke, and Ellen Berscheid (1977) had male students talk on the telephone with women they thought (from having been shown a picture) were either attractive or unattractive. Analysis of just the women's comments during the conversations revealed that the supposedly attractive women spoke more warmly than the supposedly unattractive women. The men's erroneous beliefs had become a self-fulfilling prophecy by leading them to act in a way that influenced the women to fulfill the men's stereotype that beautiful people are desirable people.

Behavioral confirmation also occurs as people interact with partners holding mistaken beliefs. People who are believed lonely behave less sociably (Rotenberg & others, 2002). People who believe they are accepted and liked (rather than disliked) then behave warmly—and do get accepted and liked (Stinson & others, 2009). Men who are believed sexist behave less favorably toward women (Pinel, 2002). Job interviewees who are believed to be warm behave more warmly.

Imagine yourself as one of the 60 young men or 60 young women in an experiment by Robert Ridge and Jeffrey Reber (2002). Each man is to interview one of the women to assess her suitability for a teaching assistant position. Before doing so, he is told either that she feels attracted to him (based on his answers to a biographical questionnaire) or not attracted. (Imagine being told that someone you were about to meet reported considerable interest in getting to know you and in dating you, or none whatsoever.) The result was behavioral confirmation: Applicants believed to feel an attraction exhibited more flirtatiousness (without being aware of doing so). Ridge and Reber believe that this process, like the misattribution phenomenon discussed previously, may be one of the roots of sexual harassment. If a woman's behavior seems to confirm a man's beliefs, he may then escalate his overtures until they become sufficiently overt for the woman to recognize and interpret them as inappropriate or harassing.

Expectations influence children's behavior, too. After observing the amount of litter in three classrooms, Richard Miller and colleagues (1975) had the teacher and others repeatedly tell one class that they should be neat and tidy. This persuasion increased the amount of litter placed in wastebaskets from 15 to 45 percent, but only temporarily. Another class, which also had been placing only 15 percent of



Behavioral confirmation. If each of these people feels attracted to the other, but presumes that feeling isn't reciprocated, they may each act cool to avoid feeling rejected—and decide that the other's coolness confirms the presumption. Danu Stinson and colleagues (2009) note that such "self-protective inhibition of warmth" dooms some would-be relationships.

### **behavioral confirmation**

A type of self-fulfilling prophecy whereby people's social expectations lead them to behave in ways that cause others to confirm their expectations.

"THE MORE HE TREATED HER AS THOUGH SHE WERE REALLY VERY NICE, THE MORE LOTTY EXPANDED AND BECAME REALLY VERY NICE, AND THE MORE HE, AFFECTED IN HIS TURN, BECAME REALLY VERY NICE HIMSELF; SO THAT THEY WENT ROUND AND ROUND, NOT IN A VICIOUS BUT IN A HIGHLY VIRTUOUS CIRCLE."

—ELIZABETH VON ARNIM,  
THE ENCHANTED APRIL, 1922

its litter in wastebaskets, was repeatedly congratulated for being so neat and tidy. After 8 days of hearing this, and still 2 weeks later, these children were fulfilling the expectation by putting more than 80 percent of their litter in wastebaskets. Tell children they are hardworking and kind (rather than lazy and mean), and they may live up to their labels.

These experiments help us understand how social beliefs, such as stereotypes about people with disabilities or about people of a particular race or sex, may be self-confirming. How others treat us reflects how we and others have treated them.

## SUMMING UP: How Do Our Expectations of Our Social Worlds Matter?

- Our beliefs sometimes take on lives of their own. Usually, our beliefs about others have a basis in reality. But studies of experimenter bias and teacher expectations show that an erroneous belief that certain people are unusually capable (or incapable) can lead teachers and researchers to give those people special treatment. This may elicit superior (or inferior) performance and, therefore, seem to confirm an assumption that is actually false.
- Similarly, in everyday life we often get *behavioral confirmation* of what we expect. Told that someone we are about to meet is intelligent and attractive, we may come away impressed with just how intelligent and attractive he or she is.

## WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE ABOUT SOCIAL BELIEFS AND JUDGMENTS?

View human nature through cognitive social psychology.

Social cognition studies reveal that our information-processing powers are impressive for their efficiency and adaptiveness ("in apprehension how like a god!" exclaimed Shakespeare's Hamlet). Yet we are also vulnerable to predictable errors and misjudgments ("headpiece filled with straw," said T. S. Eliot). What practical lessons, and what insights into human nature, can we take home from this research?

We have reviewed reasons why people sometimes form false beliefs. We cannot easily dismiss these experiments: Most of their participants were intelligent people, often students at leading universities. Moreover, people's intelligence scores are uncorrelated with their vulnerability to many different thinking biases (Stanovich & West, 2008). One can be very smart and exhibit seriously bad judgment.

Trying hard also doesn't eliminate thinking biases. These predictable distortions and biases occurred even when payment for right answers motivated people to think optimally. As one researcher concluded, the illusions "have a persistent quality not unlike that of perceptual illusions" (Slovic, 1972).

Research in cognitive social psychology thus mirrors the mixed review given humanity in literature, philosophy, and religion. Many research psychologists have spent lifetimes exploring the awesome capacities of the human mind. We are smart enough to have cracked our own genetic code, to have invented talking computers, and to have sent people to the moon. Three cheers for human reason.

Well, two cheers—because the mind's premium on efficient judgment makes our intuition more vulnerable to misjudgment than we suspect. With remarkable ease, we form and sustain false beliefs. Led by our preconceptions, feeling overconfident, persuaded by vivid anecdotes, perceiving correlations and control even

where none may exist, we construct our social beliefs and then influence others to confirm them. "The naked intellect," observed novelist Madeleine L'Engle, "is an extraordinarily inaccurate instrument."

But have these experiments just been intellectual tricks played on hapless participants, thus making them look worse than they are? Richard Nisbett and Lee Ross (1980) contended that, if anything, laboratory procedures overestimate our intuitive powers. The experiments usually present people with clear evidence and warn them that their reasoning ability is being tested. Seldom does real life say to us: "Here is some evidence. Now put on your intellectual Sunday best and answer these questions."

Often our everyday failings are inconsequential, but not always so. False impressions, interpretations, and beliefs can produce serious consequences. Even small biases can have profound social effects when we are making important social judgments: Why are so many people homeless? Unhappy? Homicidal? Does my friend love me or my money? Cognitive biases even creep into sophisticated scientific thinking. Human nature has hardly changed in the 3000 years since the Old Testament psalmist noted that "no one can see his own errors."

Is this too cynical? Leonard Martin and Ralph Erber (2005) invite us to imagine that an intelligent being swooped down and begged for information that would help it understand the human species. When you hand it this social psychology text, the alien says "thank you" and zooms back off into space. How would you feel about having offered social psychology's analysis of human life? Joachim Krueger and David Funder (2003a, 2003b) wouldn't feel too good. Social psychology's preoccupation with human foibles needs balancing with "a more positive view of human nature," they argue.

Fellow social psychologist Lee Jussim (2005, 2012) agrees, adding, "Despite the oft demonstrated existence of a slew of logical flaws and systematic biases in lay judgment and social perception, such as the fundamental attribution error, false consensus, over-reliance on imperfect heuristics, self-serving biases, etc., people's perceptions of one another are surprisingly (though rarely perfectly) accurate." The elegant analyses of the imperfections of our thinking are themselves a tribute to human wisdom. Were one to argue that all human thought is illusory, the assertion would be self-refuting, for it, too, would be but an illusion. It would be logically equivalent to contending "All generalizations are false, including this one."

As medical science assumes that any given body organ serves a function, so behavioral scientists find it useful to assume that our modes of thought and behavior are adaptive. The rules of thought that produce false beliefs and deficient intuition usually serve us well. Frequently, the errors are a by-product of our mental shortcuts that simplify the complex information we receive.

Nobel laureate psychologist Herbert Simon (1957) was among the modern researchers who first described the bounds of human reason. Simon contends that to cope with reality, we simplify it. Consider the complexity of a chess game: The number of possible games is greater than the number of particles in the universe. How do we cope? We adopt some simplifying rules—heuristics. These heuristics sometimes lead us to defeat. But they do enable us to make efficient snap judgments.

Illusory thinking can likewise spring from useful heuristics that aid our survival. In many ways, heuristics do make us smart (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011). The belief in our power to control events helps maintain hope and effort. If things are sometimes subject to control and sometimes not, we maximize our outcomes by positive thinking. Optimism pays dividends. We might even say that our beliefs are like scientific theories—sometimes in error yet useful as generalizations. As social psychologist Susan Fiske (1992) says, "Thinking is for doing."

Might we reduce errors in our social thinking? In school, math teachers teach, teach, teach until the mind is finally trained to process numerical information accurately and automatically. We assume that such ability does not come naturally;

"IN CREATING THESE PROBLEMS, WE DIDN'T SET OUT TO FOOL PEOPLE. ALL OUR PROBLEMS FOOLED US, TOO."

—AMOS TVERSKY (1985)

"THE PURPOSES IN THE HUMAN MIND ARE LIKE DEEP WATER, BUT THE INTELLIGENT WILL DRAW THEM OUT."

—PROVERBS 20:5

"COGNITIVE ERRORS . . . EXIST IN THE PRESENT BECAUSE THEY LED TO SURVIVAL AND REPRODUCTIVE ADVANTAGES FOR HUMANS IN THE PAST."

—EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGISTS MARTIE HASELTON AND DAVID BUSS (2000)

"THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY  
IS THE SPIRIT WHICH IS  
NOT TOO SURE THAT IT IS  
RIGHT; THE SPIRIT OF LIB-  
ERTY IS THE SPIRIT WHICH  
SEEKS TO UNDERSTAND  
THE MINDS OF OTHER MEN  
AND WOMEN; THE SPIRIT  
OF LIBERTY IS THE SPIRIT  
WHICH WEIGHS THEIR  
INTERESTS ALONGSIDE ITS  
OWN WITHOUT BIAS."

—LEARNED HAND, "THE SPIRIT  
OF LIBERTY," 1952

otherwise, why bother with the years of training? Research psychologist Robyn Dawes (1980a, 1980b)—who was dismayed that “study after study has shown [that] people have very limited abilities to process information on a conscious level, particularly social information”—suggested that we should also teach, teach, teach how to process social information.

Richard Nisbett and Lee Ross (1980) have agreed that education could indeed reduce our vulnerability to certain types of error. They offer the following recommendations:

- Train people to recognize likely sources of error in their own social intuition.
- Set up statistics courses geared to everyday problems of logic and social judgment. Given such training, people do in fact reason better about everyday events (Lehman & others, 1988; Nisbett & others, 1987).
- Make such teaching more effective by illustrating it richly with concrete, vivid anecdotes and examples from everyday life.
- Teach memorable and useful slogans, such as “It’s an empirical question,” “Which hat did you draw that sample out of?” or “You can lie with statistics, but a well-chosen example does the job better.”

## SUMMING UP: What Can We Conclude About Social Beliefs and Judgments?

Research on social beliefs and judgments reveals how we form and sustain beliefs that usually serve us well but sometimes lead us astray. A balanced social

psychology will therefore appreciate both the powers and the perils of social thinking.

## POSTSCRIPT: Reflecting on Illusory Thinking

"ROB THE AVERAGE MAN  
OF HIS LIFE-ILLUSION, AND  
YOU ROB HIM ALSO OF HIS  
HAPPINESS."

—HENRIK IBSEN, *THE WILD  
DUCK*, 1884

Is research on pride and error too humbling? Surely we can acknowledge the hard truth of our human limits and still sympathize with the deeper message that people are more than machines. Our subjective experiences are the stuff of our humanity—our art and our music, our enjoyment of friendship and love, our mystical and religious experiences.

The cognitive and social psychologists who explore illusory thinking are not out to remake us into unfeeling logical machines. They know that emotions enrich human experience and that intuitions are an important source of creative ideas. They add, however, the humbling reminder that our susceptibility to error also makes clear the need for disciplined training of the mind. The American writer Norman Cousins (1978) called this “the biggest truth of all about learning: that its purpose is to unlock the human mind and to develop it into an organ capable of thought—conceptual thought, analytical thought, sequential thought.”

Research on error and illusion in social judgment reminds us to “judge not”—to remember, with a dash of humility, our potential for misjudgment. It also encourages us not to feel intimidated by the arrogance of those who cannot see their own potential for bias and error. We humans are wonderfully intelligent yet fallible creatures. We have dignity but not deity.

Such humility and distrust of human authority is at the heart of both religion and science. No wonder many of the founders of modern science were religious people whose convictions predisposed them to be humble before nature and skeptical of human authority (Hooykaas, 1972; Merton, 1938). Science always involves an interplay between intuition and rigorous test, between creative hunch and skepticism. To sift reality from illusion requires both open-minded curiosity and hard-headed rigor. This perspective could prove to be a good attitude for approaching all of life: to be critical but not cynical, curious but not gullible, open but not exploitable.

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CHAPTER

4

# Behavior and Attitudes



**"The ancestor of every action is a thought."**

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays, First Series*, 1841

**How well do our attitudes predict our behavior?**

**When does our behavior affect our attitudes?**

**Why does our behavior affect our attitudes?**

**Postscript: Changing ourselves through action**

What is the relationship between what we are (on the inside) and what we do (on the outside)? Philosophers, theologians, and educators speculate about the connections between attitude and action, character and conduct, and private word and public deed. Underlying most teaching, counseling, and child rearing is an assumption: Our private beliefs and feelings determine our public behavior; so if we want to change behavior, we must first change hearts and minds.

In the beginning, social psychologists agreed: To know people's attitudes is to predict their actions. As demonstrated by genocidal killers and by suicide terrorists, extreme attitudes can produce extreme behavior. Countries whose people detest another country's leaders are more likely to produce terrorist acts against them (Krueger & Malečková, 2009). Hateful attitudes spawn violent behavior.

But in 1964, Leon Festinger concluded that the evidence showed that changing people's attitudes hardly affects their behavior. Festinger believed the attitude-behavior relation works the other way around. As Robert Abelson (1972) put it, we are "very well trained and very good at finding reasons for what we do, but not very good at doing what we find reasons for." This chapter explores the interplay of attitudes and behavior.

**attitude**

A favorable or unfavorable evaluative reaction toward something or someone (often rooted in one's beliefs, and exhibited in one's feelings and intended behavior).

**"ALL THAT WE ARE IS THE RESULT OF WHAT WE HAVE THOUGHT."**

—BUDDHA, 563 B.C.–483 B.C.

DHAMMA-PADA

**"THOUGHT IS THE CHILD OF ACTION."**

—BENJAMIN DISRAELI, VIVIAN

GRAY, 1926

When social psychologists talk about someone's attitude, they refer to beliefs and feelings related to a person or an event and the resulting behavior tendency. Taken together, favorable or unfavorable evaluative reactions toward something—often rooted in beliefs and exhibited in feelings and inclinations to act—define a person's **attitude** (Eagly & Chaiken, 2005). Thus, a person may have a negative attitude toward coffee, a neutral attitude toward the French, and a positive attitude toward the next-door neighbor.

Attitudes efficiently size up the world. When we have to respond quickly to something, the way we feel about it can guide how we react. For example, a person who believes a particular ethnic group is lazy and aggressive may *feel* dislike for such people and therefore intend to act in a discriminatory manner. You can remember these three dimensions as the ABCs of attitudes: Affect (feelings), Behavior tendency, and Cognition (thoughts) (Figure 4.1).

The study of attitudes is central to social psychology and was one of its first concerns. For much of the last century, researchers wondered how much our attitudes affect our actions.

## HOW WELL DO OUR ATTITUDES PREDICT OUR BEHAVIOR?

State the extent to which, and under what conditions, our inner attitudes drive our outward actions.

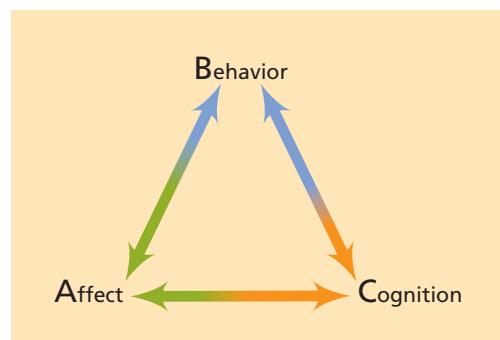
A blow to the supposed power of attitudes came when social psychologist Allan Wicker (1969) reviewed several dozen research studies covering a variety of people, attitudes, and behaviors. Wicker offered a shocking conclusion: People's expressed attitudes hardly predicted their varying behaviors.

- Student attitudes toward cheating bore little relation to the likelihood of their actually cheating.
- Attitudes toward the church were only modestly linked with worship attendance on any given Sunday.
- Self-described racial attitudes provided little clue to behaviors in actual situations. Many people *say* they express being upset with someone making racist

remarks; yet, when they hear racism (such as someone using the N-word) respond indifferently (Kawakami & others, 2009).

The disjunction between attitudes and actions is what Daniel Batson and his colleagues (1997, 2001, 2002; Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2007, 2008) call “moral hypocrisy” (appearing moral while avoiding the costs of being so). Their studies presented people with

**FIGURE :: 4.1**  
The ABCs of Attitudes



an appealing task with a possible \$30 prize and a dull task with no rewards. The participants had to assign themselves to one of the tasks and a supposed second participant to the other. Only 1 in 20 believed that assigning the positive task to themselves was the more moral thing to do, yet 80 percent did so. In follow-up experiments, participants were given coins they could flip privately if they wanted. Even if they chose to flip, 90 percent assigned themselves to the positive task! (Was that because they could specify the consequences of heads and tails after the coin toss?) In another experiment, Batson put a sticker on each side of the coin, indicating what the flip outcome would signify. Still, 24 of 28 people who made the toss assigned themselves to the positive task. When morality and greed were put on a collision course, greed usually won.

If people don't walk the same line that they talk, it's little wonder that attempts to change behavior by changing attitudes often fail. Warnings about the dangers of smoking affect only minimally those who already smoke. Increasing public awareness of the desensitizing and brutalizing effects of television violence has stimulated many people to voice a desire for less violent programming—yet they still watch media murder as much as ever. Sex education programs have often influenced *attitudes* toward abstinence and condom use without affecting long-term abstinence and condom use *behaviors*. We are, it seems, a population of hypocrites.

All in all, the developing picture of what controls behavior emphasized external social influences, such as others' behavior and expectations, and played down internal factors, such as attitudes and personality. Thus, the original thesis that attitudes determine actions was countered during the 1960s by the antithesis that attitudes determine virtually nothing.

Thesis. Antithesis. Is there a synthesis? The surprising finding that what people *say* often differs from what they *do* sent social psychologists scurrying to find out why. Surely, we reasoned, convictions and feelings sometimes make a difference.

Indeed. In fact, what I am about to explain now seems so obvious that I wonder why most social psychologists (myself included) were not thinking this way before the early 1970s. I must remind myself, however, that truth seldom seems obvious until it is known.

## When Attitudes Predict Behavior

The reason—now obvious—why our behavior and our expressed attitudes differ is that both are subject to other influences. Many other influences. One social psychologist counted 40 factors that complicate their relationship (Triandis, 1982; see also Kraus, 1995). Our attitudes do predict our behavior when these *other influences on what we say and do are minimal*, when the attitude is *specific to the behavior*, and when the *attitude is potent*.

### WHEN SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON WHAT WE SAY ARE MINIMAL

Unlike a physician measuring heart rate, social psychologists never get a direct reading on attitudes. Rather, we measure *expressed* attitudes. Like other behaviors, expressions are subject to outside influences. Sometimes, for example, we say what we think others want to hear. In late 2002, many U.S. legislators, sensing their country's post-9/11 fear, anger, and patriotic fervor, publicly voted to support President Bush's planned war against Iraq while privately having reservations (Nagourney, 2002). On the roll-call vote, strong social influence—fear of criticism—had distorted the true sentiments.



Attitudes and behavior misaligned. After former U.S. congressman Mark Souder and staff member Tracey Jackson together recorded a pro-abstinence video, news broke that the two had been having an affair outside of their own marriages. "You'll go crazy if you don't have some sense of irony," the family values advocate told a local newspaper (Elliott, 2010).

"I HAVE OPINIONS OF MY OWN, STRONG OPINIONS, BUT I DON'T ALWAYS AGREE WITH THEM."

—PRESIDENT GEORGE

H. W. BUSH

# THE inside STORY

Mahzarin R. Banaji on Discovering Experimental Social Psychology

Graduating from high school in India at age 15, I had but a single goal—to leave my well-adjusted and secure family to live the patently more daring and exciting life of a secretarial assistant. Proficient at typing scores of words a minute, I looked forward to a life of independence that involved living a block away from my parents. My mother, despite not having attended college, persuaded me to try college—but only for a semester, we agreed, after which I would be free to choose my path.

The end of my first semester at Nizam College came and went. Mother didn't ask about my plans. I didn't have to swallow and tell. Just before one holiday trip home, I bought the five volumes of the 1968 *Handbook of Social Psychology* for the equivalent of a dollar apiece (it seemed like a lot of book for the money). By the end of a 24-hour train ride home, I had polished off one volume and knew with blunt clarity that this science, which studied social processes experimentally, was something I had to do.

Doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships enabled me to work with three remarkable people early in my career: Tony Greenwald at Ohio State, and Claude Steele and Elizabeth Loftus at the University of Washington. At Yale, while still interested in human memory researchers, I discovered that memories come in both explicit (conscious)

and implicit (unconscious) forms. Might this also be true of attitudes, beliefs, and values? Hesitantly, I wrote the words "Implicit Attitudes" as the title of a grant proposal, not knowing it would become such a central part of what my students and I would study for the next two decades.

With Tony Greenwald and Brian Nosek, I have enjoyed an extended collaboration on implicit social cognition that few scientists are blessed with. From the hundreds of studies that have used the Implicit Association Test ([projectimplicit.net](http://projectimplicit.net)) and the millions of tests taken, we now know that people carry knowledge (stereotypes) and feelings (attitudes) of which they are unaware, and which often contrast with their conscious expressions. We know that subcortical brain activity can be an independent marker of implicit attitudes, that people differ in their implicit attitudes, and that such attitudes and stereotypes predict real-life behavior. Most optimistically, we know that implicit attitudes, even old ones, can be modified by experience.

Mahzarin Banaji  
Harvard University



Today's social psychologists have some clever means at their disposal for minimizing social influences on people's attitude reports. Some of these complement traditional self-report measures of *explicit* (conscious) attitudes with measures of *implicit* (unconscious) attitudes. One such test measures facial muscle responses to various statements (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981). Those measurements, the researchers hope, can reveal enough of a microsmile or a microfrown to indicate the participant's attitude about a given statement.

A newer and widely used attitude measure, the **implicit association test (IAT)**, uses reaction times to measure how quickly people associate concepts (Greenwald & others, 2002, 2003). One can, for example, measure implicit racial attitudes by assessing whether White people take longer to associate positive words with Black faces than with White faces. Implicit attitude researchers have offered various IAT assessments online ([projectimplicit.net](http://projectimplicit.net)). The some 5 million completed tests since 1998 have, they report, shown that

- *Implicit biases are pervasive.* For example, 80 percent of people show more implicit negativity toward the elderly compared with the young.
- *People differ in implicit bias.* Depending on their group memberships, their conscious attitudes, and the bias in their immediate environment, some people exhibit more implicit bias than others.

## implicit association test (IAT)

A computer-driven assessment of implicit attitudes. The test uses reaction times to measure people's automatic associations between attitude objects and evaluative words. Easier pairings (and faster responses) are taken to indicate stronger unconscious associations.

- *People are often unaware of their implicit biases.* Despite thinking themselves unprejudiced, even the researchers exhibit some implicit biases (negative associations with various social groups).

Do implicit biases predict behavior? A review of the available research (now over 200 investigations) reveals that both explicit (self-report) and implicit attitudes help predict people's behaviors and judgments (Greenwald & others, 2008; Nosek & others, 2011). Thus, explicit and implicit attitudes may together predict behavior better than either alone (Spence & Townsend, 2007). The behavior predictions range from dental flossing to the fate of romantic relationships to suicide attempts (Lee & others, 2010; Millar, 2011; Nock & others, 2010). In one study, hiring managers received job applications that were matched on credential strength, but with one, the applicants' photos were digitally altered to make them appear obese. Several months later, when 153 of the managers completed an IAAT, their automatic anti-obesity bias score predicted which applicants they had invited for interviews (Agerström & Rooth, 2011).

For attitudes formed early in life—such as racial and gender attitudes—implicit and explicit attitudes frequently diverge, with implicit attitudes often being the better predictor of behavior. For example, implicit racial attitudes have successfully predicted interracial roommate relationships (Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2006). For other attitudes, such as those related to consumer behavior and support for political candidates, explicit self-reports are the better predictor. (See "The Inside Story: Mahzarin R. Banaji on Discovering Experimental Social Psychology.")

Recent neuroscience studies have identified brain centers that produce our automatic, implicit reactions (Stanley & others, 2008). One area deep in the brain (the amygdala, a center for threat perception) is active as we automatically evaluate social stimuli. For example, White people who show strong unconscious racial bias on the IAT also exhibit high amygdala activation when viewing unfamiliar Black faces rather than White faces. Other frontal lobe areas are involved in detecting and regulating implicit attitudes.

A word of caution: Despite much excitement over these recent studies of implicit attitudes hiding in the mind's basement, the implicit associations test has detractors (Arkes & Tetlock, 2004; Blanton & others, 2006, 2007, 2009). They note that, unlike an aptitude test, the IAT is not reliable enough for use in assessing and comparing individuals. Moreover, a score that suggests some relative bias doesn't distinguish a positive bias for one group (or greater familiarity with one group) from a negative bias against another. The critics also wonder whether compassion and guilt rather than latent hostility might slow one's speed in associating Blacks with positive words. Regardless, the existence of distinct explicit and implicit attitudes confirms one of twenty-first-century psychology's biggest lessons: our "dual processing" capacity for both *controlled* (deliberate, conscious, explicit) and *automatic* (effortless, habitual, implicit) thinking.

## WHEN OTHER INFLUENCES ON BEHAVIOR ARE MINIMAL

On any occasion, it's not only our inner attitudes that guide us but also the situation we face. As Chapters 5 to 8 will illustrate again and again, social influences can be enormous—enormous enough to induce people to violate their deepest convictions. So, would *averaging* many occasions enable us to detect more clearly the impact of our attitudes? Predicting people's behavior is like predicting a baseball or cricket player's hitting. The outcome of any particular turn at bat is nearly impossible to predict. But when we aggregate many times at bat, we can compare their approximate batting *averages*.

To use a research example, people's general attitude toward religion poorly predicts whether they will go to worship services during the coming week (because attendance is also influenced by the weather, the worship leader, how one is feeling, and so forth). But religious attitudes predict quite well the total quantity of

"THERE ARE STILL BARRIERS  
OUT THERE, OFTEN  
UNCONSCIOUS."

—SENATOR HILLARY RODHAM  
CLINTON, PRESIDENTIAL  
CAMPAIGN CONCESSION  
SPEECH, 2008

"DO I CONTRADICT  
MYSELF? VERY WELL THEN  
I CONTRADICT MYSELF.  
(I AM LARGE, I CONTAIN  
MULTITUDES.)"

—WALT WHITMAN, SONG OF  
MYSELF, 1855

religious behaviors over time (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974; Kahle & Berman, 1979). The findings define a *principle of aggregation*: The effects of an attitude become more apparent when we look at a person's aggregate or average behavior than when we consider isolated acts.

### WHEN ATTITUDES SPECIFIC TO THE BEHAVIOR ARE EXAMINED

Other conditions further improve the predictive accuracy of attitudes. As Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein (1977, 2005) point out, when the measured attitude is a general one—for instance, an attitude toward Asians—and the behavior is very specific—for instance, a decision whether to help a particular Asian in a particular situation—we should not expect a close correspondence between words and actions. Indeed, report Fishbein and Ajzen, in 26 out of 27 such research studies, attitudes did not predict behavior. But attitudes did predict behavior in all 26 studies they could find in which the measured attitude was directly pertinent to the situation. Thus, attitudes toward the general concept of "health fitness" poorly predict specific exercise and dietary practices, but an individual's attitudes about the costs and benefits of jogging are a fairly strong predictor of whether he or she jogs regularly.

Better yet for predicting behavior, says Ajzen in his and Fishbein's "theory of planned behavior," is knowing people's *intended* behaviors and their perceived self-efficacy and control (Figure 4.2). Moreover, four dozen experimental tests confirm that inducing new intentions induces new behavior (Webb & Sheeran, 2006). Even asking people about their intentions to engage in a behavior increases its likelihood (Levav & Fitzsimons, 2006). Ask people if they intend to floss their teeth in the next two weeks or to vote in an upcoming election; they will become more likely to do so.

Further studies—more than 700 studies with 276,000 participants—confirmed that specific, relevant attitudes do predict intended and actual behavior (Armitage & Conner, 2001; Six & Eckes, 1996; Wallace & others, 2005). For example, attitudes toward condoms strongly predict condom use (Albarracin & others, 2001). And attitudes toward recycling (but not general attitudes toward environmental issues) predict intention to recycle, which predicts actual recycling (Nigbur & others, 2010; Oskamp, 1991). To change habits through persuasion, we must alter people's attitudes toward *specific* practices.



**FIGURE :: 4.2**

#### The Theory of Planned Behavior

Icek Ajzen, working with Martin Fishbein, has shown that one's (a) attitudes, (b) perceived social norms, and (c) feelings of control together determine one's intentions, which guide behavior.

Compared with their general attitudes toward a healthy lifestyle, people's specific attitudes regarding jogging predict their jogging behavior much better.

So far we have seen two conditions under which attitudes will predict behavior: (1) when we minimize other influences upon our attitude statements and on our behavior, and (2) when the attitude is specifically relevant to the observed behavior. A third condition exists: An attitude predicts behavior better when the attitude is potent.

## WHEN ATTITUDES ARE POTENT

Much of our behavior is automatic. We act out familiar scripts without reflecting on what we're doing. We respond to people we meet in the hall with an automatic "Hi." We answer the restaurant cashier's question "How was your meal?" by saying, "Fine," even if we found it tasteless.

Such mindlessness is adaptive. It frees our minds to work on other things. For habitual behaviors—seat belt use, coffee consumption, class attendance—conscious intentions hardly are activated (Ouellette & Wood, 1998). As the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1911, p. 61) argued, "Civilization advances by extending the number of operations which we can perform without thinking about them."

**BRINGING ATTITUDES TO MIND** If we were prompted to think about our attitudes before acting, would we be truer to ourselves? Mark Snyder and William Swann (1976) wanted to find out. Two weeks after 120 of their University of Minnesota students indicated their attitudes toward affirmative-action employment policies, Snyder and Swann invited them to act as jurors in a sex-discrimination court case. The participants' attitudes predicted verdicts only for those who were first induced to remember their attitudes—by giving them "a few minutes to organize your thoughts and views on the affirmative-action issue." Our attitudes become potent if we think about them.

Self-conscious people usually are in touch with their attitudes (Miller & Grush, 1986). That suggests another way to induce people to focus on their inner convictions: *Make them self-aware*, perhaps by having them act in front of a mirror (Carver & Scheier, 1981). Maybe you, too, can recall suddenly being acutely aware of yourself upon entering a room with a large mirror. Making people self-aware in this way promotes consistency between words and deeds (Froming & others, 1982; Gibbons, 1978).

Edward Diener and Mark Wallbom (1976) noted that nearly all college students say that cheating is morally wrong. But will they follow the advice of Shakespeare's Polonius, "To thine own self be true"? Diener and Wallbom set University of Washington students to work on an anagram-solving task (which, they were told, was to predict IQ) and told them to stop when a bell in the room sounded. Left alone, 71 percent cheated by working past the bell. Among students made self-aware—by working in front of a mirror while hearing their own tape-recorded voices—only 7 percent cheated. It makes one wonder: Would eye-level mirrors in stores make people more self-conscious of their attitudes about stealing?

Remember Batson's studies of moral hypocrisy described on pages 120–121? In a later experiment, Batson and his colleagues (2002) found that mirrors did bring behavior into line with espoused moral attitudes. When people flipped a coin while facing a mirror, the coin flip became scrupulously fair. Exactly half of the self-conscious participants assigned the other person to the positive task.

**FORGING STRONG ATTITUDES THROUGH EXPERIENCE** The attitudes that best predict behavior are accessible (easily brought to mind) as well as stable (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006). And when attitudes are forged by experience, not just by hearsay, they are more accessible, more enduring, and more likely to guide actions. In one study, university students all expressed negative attitudes about their school's response to a housing shortage. But given opportunities to act—to sign a petition, solicit signatures, join a committee, or write a letter—only those whose attitudes grew from direct experience acted (Regan & Fazio, 1977).

"THINKING IS EASY, ACT-  
ING DIFFICULT, AND TO  
PUT ONE'S THOUGHTS  
INTO ACTION, THE MOST  
DIFFICULT THING IN THE  
WORLD."

—GERMAN POET GOETHE,  
1749–1832

"WITHOUT DOUBT IT IS A  
DELIGHTFUL HARMONY  
WHEN DOING AND SAYING  
GO TOGETHER."

—MONTAIGNE, ESSAYS, 1588

"IT IS EASIER TO PREACH  
VIRTUE THAN TO  
PRACTICE IT."

—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD,  
MAXIMS, 1665

## SUMMING UP: How Well Do Our Attitudes Predict Our Behavior?

- How do our inner *attitudes* (evaluative reactions toward some object or person, often rooted in beliefs) relate to our external behavior? Although popular wisdom stresses the impact of attitudes on behavior, in fact, attitudes are often poor predictors of behaviors. Moreover, changing people's attitudes typically fails to produce much change in their behavior. These findings inspired social psychologists to find out why we so often fail to play the game we talk.
- The answer: Our expressions of attitudes and our behaviors are each subject to many influences. Our attitudes will predict our behavior (1) if these "other influences" are minimized, (2) if the attitude corresponds very closely to the predicted behavior (as in voting studies), and (3) if the attitude is potent (because something reminds us of it, or because we acquired it by direct experience). Under these conditions, what we think and feel predicts what we do.

## WHEN DOES OUR BEHAVIOR AFFECT OUR ATTITUDES?

Summarize evidence that we can act ourselves into a way of thinking.

If social psychology has taught us anything during the past 25 years, it is that we can think ourselves into a way of acting. Now we turn to a more startling idea: that *behavior determines attitudes*. It's true that we sometimes stand up for what we believe. But it's also true that we come to believe in what we stand up for. Social-psychological theories inspired much of the research that underlies that conclusion. Instead of beginning with these theories, however, let's first see what there is to explain. As we engage evidence that behavior affects attitudes, speculate *why* this is and then compare your ideas with social psychologists' explanations.

Consider the following incidents:

- Sarah is hypnotized and told to take off her shoes when a book drops on the floor. Fifteen minutes later a book drops, and Sarah quietly slips out of her loafers. "Sarah," asks the hypnotist, "why did you take off your shoes?" "Well . . . my feet are hot and tired," Sarah replies. "It has been a long day." The act produces the idea.
- George has electrodes temporarily implanted in the brain region that controls his head movements. When neurosurgeon José Delgado (1973) stimulates the electrodes by remote control, George always turns his head. Unaware of the remote stimulation, he offers a reasonable explanation for his head turning: "I'm looking for my slipper." "I heard a noise." "I'm restless." "I was looking under the bed."
- Carol's severe seizures were relieved by surgically separating her two brain hemispheres. Now, in an experiment, psychologist Michael Gazzaniga (1985) flashes a picture of a nude woman to the left half of Carol's field of vision, which projects to her nonverbal right brain hemisphere. A sheepish smile spreads over her face, and she begins chuckling. Asked why, she invents—and apparently believes—a plausible explanation: "Oh—that funny machine." Frank, another split-brain patient, has the word "smile" flashed to his nonverbal right hemisphere. He obliges and forces a smile. Asked why, he explains, "This experiment is very funny."

The mental aftereffects of our behavior also appear in many social-psychological examples of self-persuasion. As we will see over and over, attitudes follow behavior.

## Role Playing

The word **role** is borrowed from the theater and, as in the theater, refers to actions expected of those who occupy a particular social position. When enacting new social roles, we may at first feel phony. But our unease seldom lasts.

Think of a time when you stepped into some new role—perhaps your first days on a job or at college. That first week on campus, for example, you may have been supersensitive to your new social situation and tried valiantly to act mature and to suppress your high school behavior. At such times you may have felt self-conscious. You observed your new speech and actions because they weren't natural to you. Then one day something amazing happened: Your pseudo-intellectual talk no longer felt forced. The role began to fit as comfortably as your old jeans and T-shirt.

In one famous study, college men volunteered to spend time in a simulated prison constructed in Stanford's psychology department by Philip Zimbardo (1971; Haney & Zimbardo, 1998, 2009). Zimbardo wanted to find out: Is prison brutality a product of evil prisoners and malicious guards? Or do the institutional roles of guard and prisoner embitter and harden even compassionate people? Do the people make the place violent? Or does the place make the people violent?

By a flip of a coin, Zimbardo designated some students as guards. He gave them uniforms, billy clubs, and whistles and instructed them to enforce the rules. The other half, the prisoners, were locked in cells and made to wear humiliating hospital-gown-like outfits. After a jovial first day of "playing" their roles, the guards and the prisoners, and even the experimenters, got caught up in the situation. The guards began to disparage the prisoners, and some devised cruel and degrading routines. The prisoners broke down, rebelled, or became apathetic. There developed, reported Zimbardo (1972), a "growing confusion between reality and illusion, between role-playing and self-identity. . . . This prison which we had created . . . was absorbing us as creatures of its own reality." Observing the emerging social pathology, Zimbardo was forced to call off the planned two-week simulation after only six days.

The point is not that we are powerless to resist imposed roles. In Zimbardo's prison simulation, in Abu Ghraib Prison (where guards degraded Iraq war prisoners), and in other atrocity-producing situations, some people become sadistic and others do not (Haslam & Reicher, 2007; Mastroianni & Reed, 2006; Zimbardo, 2007). In water, salt dissolves and sand does not. So also, notes John Johnson (2007), when placed in a rotten barrel, some people become bad apples and others do not. Behavior is a product of both the individual person and the situation, and the prison study appears to have attracted volunteers who were prone to aggressiveness (McFarland & Carnahan, 2009).

The deeper lesson of the role-playing studies is not that we are powerless machines. Rather, it concerns how what is unreal (an artificial role) can subtly morph into what is real. In a new career—as teacher, soldier, or businessperson, for example—we enact a role that shapes our attitudes.

Imagine playing the role of slave—not just for six days but for decades. If a few days altered the behavior of those in Zimbardo's "prison," imagine the corrosive effects of decades of subservient behavior. The master may be even more

### role

A set of norms that defines how people in a given social position ought to behave.

"NO MAN, FOR ANY CONSIDERABLE PERIOD, CAN WEAR ONE FACE TO HIMSELF AND ANOTHER TO THE MULTITUDE WITHOUT FINALLY GETTING BEWILDERED AS TO WHICH MAY BE TRUE."

—NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE,

1850

Guards and prisoners in the Stanford prison simulation quickly absorbed the roles they played.



After the Abu Ghraib degradation of Iraqi prisoners, Philip Zimbardo (2004a, 2004b) noted "direct and sad parallels between similar behavior of the 'guards' in the Stanford Prison Experiment." Such behavior, he contends, is attributable to a toxic situation that can make good people into perpetrators of evil. "It's not that we put bad apples in a good barrel. We put good apples in a bad barrel. The barrel corrupts anything that it touches."



profoundly affected, because the master's role is chosen. Frederick Douglass, a former slave, recalls his new owner's transformation as she absorbed her role:

My new mistress proved to be all she appeared when I first met her at the door—a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. . . . I was utterly astonished at her goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her. She was entirely unlike any other white woman I had ever seen. . . . The meanest slave was put fully at ease in her presence, and none left without feeling better for having seen her. Her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music. But, alas! this kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon. (Douglass, 1845, pp. 57–58)

## Saying Becomes Believing

People often adapt what they say to please their listeners. They are quicker to tell people good news than bad, and they adjust their message toward their listener's position (Manis & others, 1974; Tesser & others, 1972; Tetlock, 1983). When induced to give spoken or written support to something they doubt, people will often feel bad about their deceit. Nevertheless, they begin to believe what they are saying—provided they weren't bribed or coerced into doing so. When there is no compelling external explanation for one's words, saying becomes believing (Klaas, 1978).

Tory Higgins and his colleagues (Higgins & McCann, 1984; Higgins & Rholes, 1978) illustrated how saying becomes believing. They had university students read a personality description of someone and then summarize it for someone else, who was believed either to like or to dislike that person. The students wrote a more positive description when the recipient liked the person. Having said positive things, they also then liked the person more themselves. Asked to recall what they had read, they remembered the description as more positive than it was. In short, people tend to adjust their messages to their listeners, and, having done so, to believe the altered message.

## The Foot-in-the-Door Phenomenon

Most of us can recall times when, after agreeing to help out with a project or an organization, we ended up more involved than we ever intended, vowing that in the future we would say no to such requests. How does this happen?

# focus ON

## Saying Becomes Believing

University of Oregon psychologist Ray Hyman (1981) described how acting the role of a palm reader convinced him that palmistry worked.

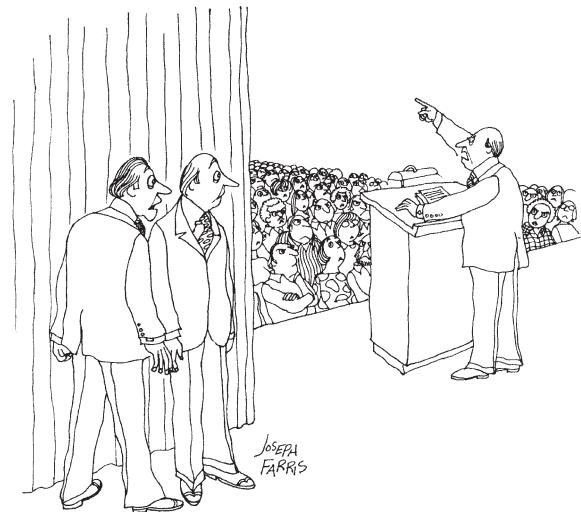
I started reading palms when I was in my teens as a way to supplement my income from doing magic and mental shows. When I started I did not believe in palmistry. But I knew that to "sell" it I had to act as if I did. After a few years I became a firm believer in palmistry. One day the late Stanley Jaks, who

was a professional mentalist and a man I respected, tactfully suggested that it would make an interesting experiment if I deliberately gave readings opposite to what the lines indicated. I tried this out with a few clients. To my surprise and horror my readings were just as successful as ever. Ever since then I have been interested in the powerful forces that convince us, [palm] reader and client alike, that something is so when it really isn't. (p. 86)

In keeping with the "attitude follows behavior" principle, experiments suggest that if you want people to do a big favor for you, an effective strategy is to get them to do a small favor first. In the best-known demonstration of this **foot-in-the-door phenomenon**, researchers posing as drive-safely volunteers asked Californians to permit the installation of huge, poorly lettered "Drive Carefully" signs in their front yards. Only 17 percent consented. Others were first approached with a small request: Would they display three-inch "Be a safe driver" window signs? Nearly all readily agreed. When approached two weeks later to allow the large, ugly signs in their front yards, 76 percent consented (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). One project helper who went from house to house later recalled that, not knowing who had been previously visited, "I was simply stunned at how easy it was to convince some people and how impossible to convince others" (Ornstein, 1991).

Other researchers have confirmed the foot-in-the-door phenomenon with altruistic behaviors.

- Patricia Pliner and her collaborators (1974) found 46 percent of Toronto suburbanites were willing to give to the Canadian Cancer Society when approached directly. Others, asked a day ahead to wear a lapel pin publicizing the drive (which all agreed to do), were nearly twice as likely to donate.
- Angela Lipsitz and others (1989) report that ending blood-drive reminder calls with, "We'll count on seeing you then, OK? [pause for response]" increased the show-up rate from 62 to 81 percent.
- In Internet chat rooms, Paul Markey and his colleagues (2002) requested help ("I can't get my e-mail to work. Is there any way I can get you to send me an e-mail?"). Help increased—from 2 to 16 percent—by including a smaller prior request ("I am new to this whole computer thing. Is there any way you can tell me how to look at someone's profile?").
- Nicolas Guégan and Céline Jacob (2001) tripled the rate of French Internet users contributing to child land-mine victims organizations (from 1.6 to 4.9 percent) by first inviting them to sign a petition against land mines.



*"Good God! He's giving the white-collar voter's speech to the blue collars."*

Saying becomes believing: In expressing our thoughts to others, we sometimes tailor our words to what we think the others will want to hear, and then come to believe our own words.

© Joseph Farris/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

### foot-in-the-door phenomenon

The tendency for people who have first agreed to a small request to comply later with a larger request.



The foot-in-the-door phenomenon.

Blondie © 1994 King Features Syndicate.

"YOU WILL EASILY FIND FOLK TO DO FAVORS IF YOU CULTIVATE THOSE WHO HAVE DONE THEM."

—PUBLILIUS SYRUS, 42 B.C.

### lowball technique

A tactic for getting people to agree to something. People who agree to an initial request will often still comply when the requester ups the ante. People who receive only the costly request are less likely to comply with it.

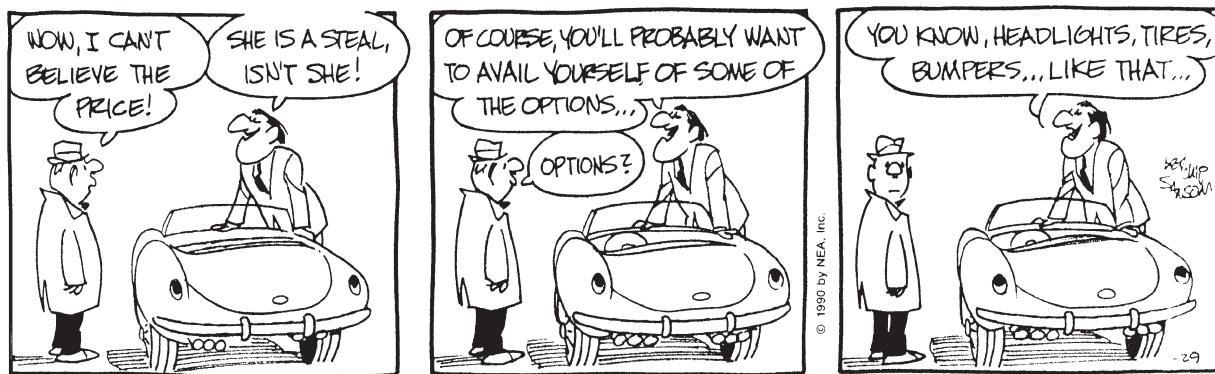
Note that in these experiments, as in many of the 100+ other foot-in-the-door experiments, the initial compliance—wearing a lapel pin, stating one's intention, signing a petition—was voluntary (Burger & Guadagno, 2003). We will see again and again that when people commit themselves to public behaviors *and* perceive those acts to be their own doing, they come to believe more strongly in what they have done.

Social psychologist Robert Cialdini is a self-described “patsy.” “For as long as I can recall, I’ve been an easy mark for the pitches of peddlers, fund-raisers, and operators of one sort or another.” To better understand why one person says yes to another, he spent three years as a trainee in various sales, fund-raising, and advertising organizations, discovering how they exploit “the weapons of influence.” He also put those weapons to the test in simple experiments. In one, Cialdini and his collaborators (1978) explored a variation of the foot-in-the-door phenomenon by experimenting with the **lowball technique**. After the customer agrees to buy a new car because of its bargain price and begins completing the sales forms, the salesperson removes the price advantage by charging for options or by checking with a boss who disallows the deal because “we’d be losing money.” Folklore has it that more lowballed customers now stick with the higher-priced purchase than would have agreed to it at the outset. Airlines and hotels use the tactic by attracting inquiries with great deals available on only a few seats or rooms; then, when those aren’t available, they hope the customer will agree to a higher-priced option.

Cialdini and his collaborators found that this technique indeed works. When they invited introductory psychology students to participate in an experiment at 7:00 A.M., only 24 percent showed up. But if the students first agreed to participate without knowing the time and only then were asked to participate at 7:00 A.M., 53 percent came.

Marketing researchers and salespeople have found that the principle works even when we are aware of a profit motive (Cialdini, 1988). A harmless initial commitment—returning a postcard for more information and a “free gift,” agreeing to listen to an investment possibility—often moves us toward a larger commitment. Because salespeople sometimes exploited the power of those small commitments by trying to bind people to purchase agreements, many states now have laws that allow customers a few days to think over their purchases and cancel. To counter the effect of these laws, many companies use what the sales-training program of one company calls “a very important psychological aid in preventing customers from backing out of their contracts” (Cialdini, 1988, p. 78). They simply have the customer, rather than the salesperson, fill out the agreement. Having written it themselves, people usually live up to their commitment.

The foot-in-the-door phenomenon is a lesson worth remembering. Someone trying to seduce us—financially, politically, or sexually—will often use this technique to create a momentum of compliance. The practical lesson: Before agreeing to a small request, think about what may follow.



The lowball technique.

The Born Loser © Newspaper Enterprise Association.

## Evil and Moral Acts

The attitudes-follow-behavior principle works with immoral acts as well. Evil sometimes results from gradually escalating commitments. A trifling evil act can whittle down one's moral sensitivity, making it easier to perform a worse act. To paraphrase La Rochefoucauld's 1665 book of *Maxims*, it is not as difficult to find a person who has never succumbed to a given temptation as to find a person who has succumbed only once. After telling a "white lie" and thinking, "Well, that wasn't so bad," the person may go on to tell a bigger lie.

Another way in which evil acts influence attitudes is the paradoxical fact that we tend not only to hurt those we dislike but also to dislike those we hurt. Several studies (Berscheid & others, 1968; Davis & Jones, 1960; Glass, 1964) found that harming an innocent victim—by uttering hurtful comments or delivering electric shocks—typically leads aggressors to disparage their victims, thus helping them justify their cruel behavior. This is especially so when we are coaxed into it, not coerced. When we agree to a deed voluntarily, we take more responsibility for it.

The phenomenon appears in wartime. Prisoner-of-war camp guards would sometimes display good manners to captives in their first days on the job, but not for long. Soldiers ordered to kill may initially react with revulsion to the point of sickness over their act. But not for long (Waller, 2002). Before long, they will denigrate their enemies with nicknames. People tend to dehumanize their enemies and humanize their pets.

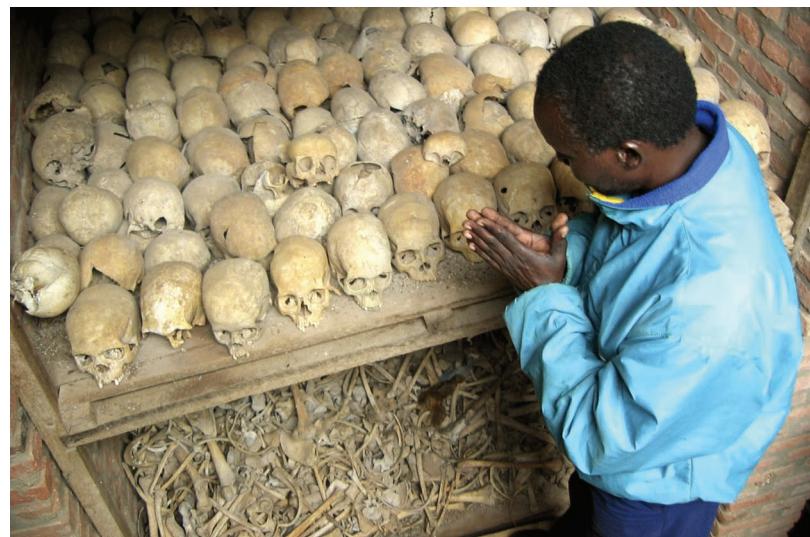
Attitudes also follow behavior in peacetime. A group that holds another in slavery will likely come to perceive the slaves as having traits that justify their oppression. Prison staff who participate in executions experience "moral disengagement" by coming to believe (more strongly than do other prison staff) that their victims deserve their fate (Osofsky & others, 2005). Actions and attitudes feed each other, sometimes to the point of moral numbness. The more one harms another and adjusts one's attitudes, the easier it becomes to do harm. Conscience is corroded.

To simulate the "killing begets killing" process, Andy Martens and his collaborators (2007) asked University of Arizona students to kill some bugs. They wondered: Would killing initial bugs in a

"OUR SELF-DEFINITIONS  
ARE NOT CONSTRUCTED  
IN OUR HEADS; THEY ARE  
FORGED BY OUR DEEDS."

—ROBERT MCAFEE BROWN,  
CREATIVE DISLOCATION: THE  
MOVEMENT OF GRACE, 1980

Cruel acts, such as the 1994 Rwandan genocide, tend to breed even crueler and more hate-filled attitudes.



**FIGURE :: 4.3****Killing Begets Killing**

Students who initially perceived themselves as killing several bugs, by dropping them in this apparent killing machine, later killed an increased number of bugs during a self-paced killing period. (In reality, no bugs were harmed.)



“practice” trial increase students’ willingness to kill more bugs later? To find out, they asked some students to look at one small bug in a container, then to dump it into the coffee grinding machine shown in Figure 4.3, and then to press the “on” button for 3 seconds. (No bugs were actually killed. An unseen stopper at the base of the insert tube prevented the bug from actually entering the opaque killing machine, which had torn bits of paper to simulate the sound of a killing.) Others, who initially killed five bugs (or so they thought), went on to “kill” significantly more bugs during an ensuing 20-second period.

Harmful acts shape the self, but so, thankfully, do moral acts. Our character is reflected in what we do when we

think no one is looking. Researchers have tested character by giving children temptations when it seems no one is watching. Consider what happens when children resist the temptation. In a dramatic experiment, Jonathan Freedman (1965) introduced elementary school children to an enticing battery-controlled robot, instructing them not to play with it while he was out of the room. Freedman used a severe threat with half the children and a mild threat with the others. Both were sufficient to deter the children.

Several weeks later a different researcher, with no apparent relation to the earlier events, left each child to play in the same room with the same toys. Of the children who had been given the severe threat, three-fourths now freely played with the robot; of those given the mild deterrent, two-thirds still resisted playing with it. Apparently, the deterrent was strong enough to elicit the desired behavior yet mild enough to leave them with a sense of choice. Having earlier chosen consciously *not* to play with the toy, the mildly deterred children internalized their decisions. Moral action, especially when chosen rather than coerced, affects moral thinking.

Moreover, positive behavior fosters liking for the person. Doing a favor for an experimenter or another participant, or tutoring a student, usually increases liking of the person helped (Blanchard & Cook, 1976). People who pray for a romantic partner (even in controlled experiments) thereafter exhibit greater commitment and fidelity to the partner (Fincham & others, 2010). It is a lesson worth remembering: If you wish to love someone more, act as if you do.

In 1793 Benjamin Franklin tested the idea that doing a favor engenders liking. As clerk of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, he was disturbed by opposition from another important legislator. So Franklin set out to win him over:

I did not . . . aim at gaining his favour by paying any servile respect to him but, after some time, took this other method. Having heard that he had in his library a certain very scarce and curious book I wrote a note to him expressing my desire of perusing that book and requesting he would do me the favour of lending it to me for a few days. He sent it immediately and I return'd it in about a week, expressing strongly my sense of the favour. When we next met in the House he spoke to me (which he had never done before), and with great civility; and he ever after manifested a readiness to serve me on all occasions, so that we became great friends and our friendship continued to his death. (quoted by Rosenzweig, 1972, p. 769)

## INTERRACIAL BEHAVIOR AND RACIAL ATTITUDES

If moral action feeds moral attitudes, will positive interracial behavior reduce racial prejudice—much as mandatory seat belt use has produced more favorable

**"WE DO NOT LOVE PEOPLE  
SO MUCH FOR THE GOOD  
THEY HAVE DONE US, AS  
FOR THE GOOD WE HAVE  
DONE THEM."**

—LEO TOLSTOY, WAR AND  
PEACE, 1867–1869

seat belt attitudes? That was part of social scientists' testimony before the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision to desegregate schools. Their argument ran like this: If we wait for the heart to change—through preaching and teaching—we will wait a long time for racial justice. But if we legislate moral action, we can, under the right conditions, indirectly affect heartfelt attitudes.

That idea runs counter to the presumption that "you can't legislate morality." Yet attitude change has, as some social psychologists predicted, followed desegregation. Consider the following:

- Following the Supreme Court decision, the percentage of White Americans favoring integrated schools jumped and now includes nearly everyone. (For other examples of old and current racial attitudes, see Chapter 9.)
- In the 10 years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the percentage of White Americans who described their neighborhoods, friends, co-workers, or other students as all-White declined by about 20 percent for each of those measures. Interracial behavior was increasing. During the same period, the percentage of White Americans who said that Blacks should be allowed to live in any neighborhood increased from 65 percent to 87 percent (*ISR Newsletter*, 1975). Attitudes were changing, too.
- More uniform national standards against discrimination were followed by decreasing differences in racial attitudes among people of differing religions, classes, and geographic regions. As Americans came to act more alike, they came to think more alike (Greeley & Sheatsley, 1971; Taylor & others, 1978).

## Social Movements

We have now seen that a society's laws and, therefore, its behavior can have a strong influence on its racial attitudes. A danger lies in the possibility of employing the same idea for political socialization on a mass scale. For many Germans during the 1930s, participation in Nazi rallies, displaying the Nazi flag, and especially the public greeting "Heil Hitler" established a profound inconsistency between behavior and belief. Historian Richard Grunberger (1971) reports that for those who had their doubts about Hitler, "the 'German greeting' was a powerful conditioning device. Having once decided to intone it as an outward token of conformity, many experienced . . . discomfort at the contradiction between their words and their feelings. Prevented from saying what they believed, they tried to establish their psychic equilibrium by consciously making themselves believe what they said" (p. 27).

The practice is not limited to totalitarian regimes. Political rituals—the daily flag salute by schoolchildren, singing the national anthem—use public conformity to build a private belief in patriotism. I recall participating in air-raid drills in my elementary school not far from the Boeing Company in Seattle. After we acted repeatedly as if we were the targets of Russian attack, we came to fear the Russians.

Many people assume that the most potent social indoctrination comes through *brainwashing*, a term coined to describe what happened to American prisoners of war (POWs) during the 1950s Korean War. Although the "thought-control" program was not as irresistible as "brainwashing" suggests, the results still were disconcerting. Hundreds of prisoners cooperated with their captors. Twenty-one chose to remain after being granted permission to return to America. And many of those who did return came home believing "although communism won't work in America, I think it's a good thing for Asia" (Segal, 1954).

"WE BECOME JUST  
BY THE PRACTICE  
OF JUST ACTIONS,  
SELF-CONTROLLED  
BY EXERCISING SELF-  
CONTROL, AND COUR-  
AGEOUS BY PERFORMING  
ACTS OF COURAGE."

—ARISTOTLE

Our political rituals—the daily flag salute by schoolchildren, singing the national anthem—use public conformity to build private allegiance.



"YOU CAN USE SMALL COMMITMENTS TO MANIPULATE A PERSON'S SELF-IMAGE; YOU CAN USE THEM TO TURN CITIZENS INTO 'PUBLIC SERVANTS,' PROSPECTS INTO 'CUSTOMERS,' PRISONERS INTO 'COLLABORATORS.'"

—ROBERT CIALDINI,  
INFLUENCE, 1988

Edgar Schein (1956) interviewed many of the POWs and reported that the captors' methods included a gradual escalation of demands. The captors always started with trivial requests and gradually worked up to more significant ones. "Thus after a prisoner had once been 'trained' to speak or write out trivia, statements on more important issues were demanded." Moreover, they always expected active participation, be it just copying something or participating in group discussions, writing self-criticism, or uttering public confessions. Once a prisoner had spoken or written a statement, he felt an inner need to make his beliefs consistent with his acts. That often drove prisoners to persuade themselves of what they had done wrong. The "start small and build" tactic was an effective application of the foot-in-the-door technique, and it continues to be so today in the socialization of terrorists and torturers (Chapter 6).

Now let me ask you, before reading further, to play theorist. Ask yourself: Why in these studies and real-life examples did attitudes follow behavior? Why might playing a role or making a speech influence your attitude?

## SUMMING UP: When Does Our Behavior Affect Our Attitudes?

- The attitude-action relation also works in the reverse direction: We are likely not only to think ourselves into action but also to act ourselves into a way of thinking. When we act, we amplify the idea underlying what we have done, especially when we feel responsible for it. Many streams of evidence converge on this principle. The actions prescribed by social *roles* mold the attitudes of the role players.
- Similarly, what we say or write can strongly influence attitudes that we subsequently hold.
- Research on the *foot-in-the-door phenomenon* reveals that committing a small act makes people more willing to do a larger one later.
- Actions also affect our moral attitudes: That which we have done, even if it is evil, we tend to justify as right.
- Similarly, our racial and political behaviors help shape our social consciousness: We not only stand up for what we believe, we also believe in what we have stood up for.
- Political and social movements may legislate behavior designed to lead to attitude change on a mass scale.

## WHY DOES OUR BEHAVIOR AFFECT OUR ATTITUDES?

State the theories that seek to explain the attitudes-follow-behavior phenomenon. Discuss how the contest between these competing theories illustrates the process of scientific explanation.

We have seen that several streams of evidence merge to form a river: the effect of actions on attitudes. Do these observations contain any clues to *why* action affects attitude? Social psychology's detectives suspect three possible sources. *Self-presentation theory* assumes that for strategic reasons we express attitudes that make us appear consistent. *Cognitive dissonance theory* assumes that to reduce discomfort, we justify our actions to ourselves. *Self-perception theory* assumes that our actions are self-revealing (when uncertain about our feelings or beliefs, we look to our behavior, much as anyone else would).

## Self-Presentation: Impression Management

The first explanation for why actions affect attitudes began as a simple idea. Who among us does not care what people think? People spend billions on clothes, diets, cosmetics, and now plastic surgery—all because of their fretting over what others think. We see making a good impression as a way to gain social and material rewards, to feel better about ourselves, even to become more secure in our social identities (Leary, 1994, 2001, 2004b, 2007, 2010).

No one wants to look foolishly inconsistent. To avoid seeming so, we express attitudes that match our actions. To appear consistent, we may pretend those attitudes. Even if that means displaying a little insincerity or hypocrisy, it can pay off in managing the impression we are making—or so self-presentation theory suggests.

Does our feigning consistency explain why expressed attitudes shift toward consistency with behavior? To some extent, yes—people exhibit a much smaller attitude change when a fake lie detector inhibits them from trying to make a good impression (Paulhus, 1982; Tedeschi & others, 1987).

But there is more to attitudes than self-presentation, for people express their changed attitudes even to someone who has no knowledge of their earlier behavior. Two other theories explain why people sometimes internalize their self-presentations as genuine attitude changes.

## Self-Justification: Cognitive Dissonance

One theory is that our attitudes change because we are motivated to maintain consistency among our cognitions. That is the implication of Leon Festinger's (1957) famous **cognitive dissonance** theory. The theory is simple, but its range of application is enormous, making "cognitive dissonance" part of the vocabulary of today's educated people. It assumes that we feel tension, or a lack of harmony ("dissonance"), when two simultaneously accessible thoughts or beliefs ("cognitions") are psychologically inconsistent. Festinger argued that to reduce this unpleasant arousal, we often adjust our thinking. This simple idea, and some surprising predictions derived from it, have spawned more than 2,000 studies (Cooper, 1999).

One way people minimize dissonance, Festinger believed, is through **selective exposure** to agreeable information. Studies have asked people about their views on various topics, and then invited them to choose whether they wanted to view information supporting or opposing their viewpoint. By about a two to one ratio, people (less secure and open-minded people, especially) preferred supporting rather than challenging information (Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2010; Hart & others, 2009; Sweeny & others, 2010). Thus, reported a bipartisan U.S. Senate (2004) intelligence committee, the belief that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction led government leaders to welcome information supporting their assumption and to downplay contradictory information, and thus to launch a war. People are especially keen on reading information that supports their political, religious, and ethical views—a phenomenon that most of us can illustrate from our own favorite news and blog sources.



*"I see he finally got rid of that idiotic comb-over."*

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### cognitive dissonance

Tension that arises when one is simultaneously aware of two inconsistent cognitions. For example, dissonance may occur when we realize that we have, with little justification, acted contrary to our attitudes or made a decision favoring one alternative despite reasons favoring another.

### selective exposure

The tendency to seek information and media that agree with one's views and to avoid dissonant information.

On more practical and less values-relevant topics, “accuracy motives” are more likely to drive us. Thus, we welcome a home inspection before buying or a second opinion before surgery.

Dissonance theory pertains mostly to discrepancies between behavior and attitudes. We are aware of both. Thus, if we sense some inconsistency, perhaps some hypocrisy, we feel pressure for change. That helps explain why British and U.S. cigarette smokers have been much less likely than nonsmokers to believe that smoking is dangerous (Eiser & others, 1979; Saad, 2002).

After the 2003 Iraq War, noted the director of the Program of International Policy Attitudes, some Americans struggled to reduce their “experience of cognitive dissonance” (Kull, 2003). The war’s main premise had been that Saddam Hussein, unlike most other brutal dictators whom the world was tolerating, had weapons of mass destruction. As the war began, only 38 percent of Americans said the war was justified even if Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction (Gallup, 2003). Nearly four in five Americans believed their invading troops would find such, and a similar percentage supported the just-launched war (Duffy, 2003; Newport & others, 2003).

When no such weapons were found, the war-supporting majority experienced dissonance, which was heightened by their awareness of the war’s financial and human costs, by scenes of Iraq in chaos, by surging anti-American attitudes in Europe and in Muslim countries, and by inflamed pro-terrorist attitudes. To reduce their dissonance, noted the Program of International Policy Attitudes, some Americans revised their memories of their government’s primary rationale for going to war. The reasons now became liberating an oppressed people from tyrannical and genocidal rule and laying the groundwork for a more peaceful and democratic Middle East. Three months after the war began, the once-minority opinion became, for a time, the majority view: 58 percent of Americans now supported the war even if there were none of the proclaimed weapons of mass destruction (Gallup, 2003). “Whether or not they find weapons of mass destruction doesn’t matter,” suggested Republican pollster Frank Luntz (2003), “because the rationale for the war changed.”

In *Mistakes Were Made (But Not By Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts*, social psychologists Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson (2007, p. 7) illustrate dissonance reduction by leaders of various political parties when faced with clear evidence that a decision they made or a course of action they chose turned out to be wrong, even disastrous. This human phenomenon is nonpartisan, note Tavris and Aronson: “A president who has justified his actions to himself, believing that he has *the truth*, becomes impervious to self-correction.” For example, Democratic President Lyndon Johnson’s biographer described him as someone who held to his beliefs, even when sinking in the quagmire of Vietnam, regardless “of the facts in the matter.” And Republican president George W. Bush, in the years after launching the Iraq war, said that “knowing what I know today, I’d make the decision again” (2005), that “I’ve never been more convinced that the decisions I made are the right decisions” (2006), and that “this war has . . . come at a high cost in lives and treasure, but those costs are necessary” (2008).

Cognitive dissonance theory offers an explanation for self-persuasion, and it offers several surprising predictions. See if you can anticipate them.

## INSUFFICIENT JUSTIFICATION

Imagine you are a participant in a famous experiment staged by the creative Festinger and his student J. Merrill Carlsmith (1959). For an hour, you are required to perform dull tasks, such as turning wooden knobs again and again. After you finish, the experimenter (Carlsmith) explains that the study concerns how expectations affect performance. The next participant, waiting outside, must be led to expect an *interesting* experiment. The seemingly upset experimenter, whom Festinger had spent hours coaching until he became extremely convincing, explains

that the assistant who usually creates this expectation couldn't make this session. Wringing his hands, he pleads, "Could you fill in and do this?"

It's for science and you are being paid, so you agree to tell the next participant (who is actually the experimenter's accomplice) what a delightful experience you have just had. "Really?" responds the supposed participant. "A friend of mine was in this experiment a week ago, and she said it was boring." "Oh, no," you respond, "it's really very interesting. You get good exercise while turning some knobs. I'm sure you'll enjoy it." Finally, someone else who is studying how people react to experiments has you complete a questionnaire that asks how much you actually enjoyed your knob-turning experience.

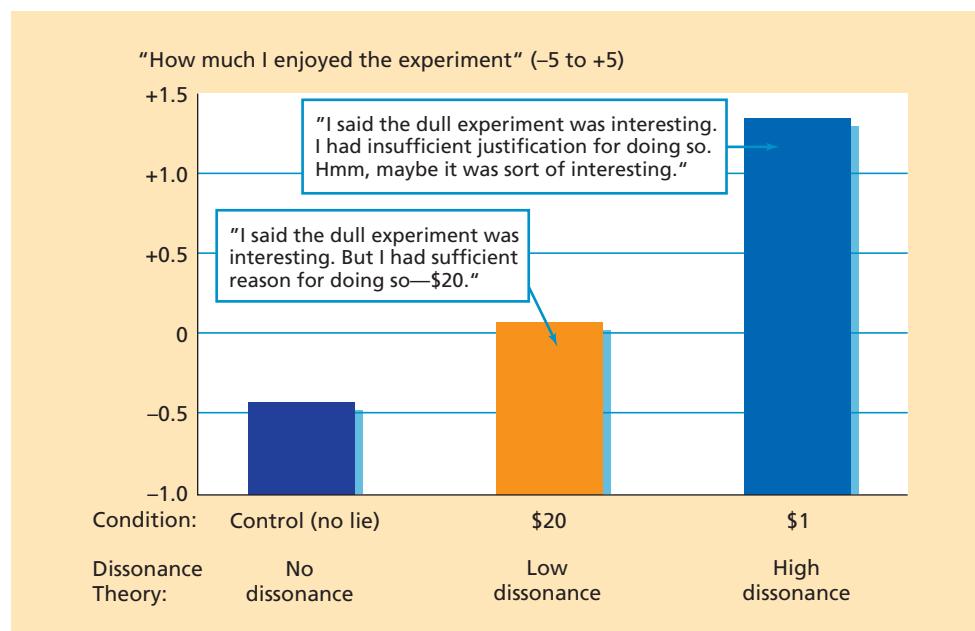
Now for the prediction: Under which condition are you most likely to believe your little lie and say that the dull experiment was indeed interesting? When paid \$1 for fibbing, as some of the participants were? Or when paid a then-lavish \$20, as others were? Contrary to the common notion that big rewards produce big effects, Festinger and Carlsmith made an outrageous prediction: Those paid just \$1 (hardly sufficient justification for a lie) would be most likely to adjust their attitudes to their actions. Having **insufficient justification** for their actions, they would experience more discomfort (dissonance) and thus be more motivated to believe in what they had done. Those paid \$20 had sufficient justification for what they had done and hence should have experienced less dissonance. As Figure 4.4 shows, the results fit this intriguing prediction.\*

In dozens of later experiments, this attitudes-follow-behavior effect was strongest when people felt some choice and when their actions had foreseeable consequences. One experiment had people read disparaging lawyer jokes into a recorder (for example, "How can you tell when a lawyer is lying? His lips are moving."). The reading produced more negative attitudes toward lawyers when it was a chosen rather than a coerced activity (Hobden & Olson, 1994). Other experiments have

### insufficient justification

Reduction of dissonance by internally justifying one's behavior when external justification is "insufficient."

\*There is a seldom-reported final aspect of this 1950s experiment. Imagine yourself finally back with the experimenter, who is truthfully explaining the whole study. Not only do you learn that you've been duped, but also the experimenter asks for the \$20 back. Do you comply? Festinger and Carlsmith note that all their Stanford student participants willingly reached into their pockets and gave back the money. This is a foretaste of some quite amazing observations on compliance and conformity discussed in Chapter 6. As we will see, when the social situation makes clear demands, people usually respond accordingly.



**FIGURE 4.4**  
**Insufficient Justification**

Dissonance theory predicts that when our actions are not fully explained by external rewards or coercion, we will experience dissonance, which we can reduce by believing in what we have done.

*Source:* Data from Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959.



Dissonance theory suggests that parents should aim to elicit desired behavior non-coercively, thus motivating children to internalize the appropriate attitudes.

engaged people to write essays for a measly \$1.50 or so. When the essay argues something they don't believe in—for instance, a tuition increase—the underpaid writers begin to feel somewhat greater sympathy with the policy. Pretense becomes reality.

Earlier we noted how the insufficient justification principle works with punishments. Children were more likely to internalize a request not to play with an attractive toy if they were given a mild threat that insufficiently justified their compliance. When a parent says, “Clean up your room, Joshua, or else expect a hard spanking,” Joshua won’t need to internally justify cleaning his room. The severe threat is justification enough.

Note that cognitive dissonance theory focuses not on the relative effectiveness of rewards and punishments administered after the act but, rather, on what induces a desired action. It aims to have Joshua say, “I am cleaning up my room because I want a clean room,” rather than, “I am cleaning up my room because my parents will kill me if I don’t.” Students who perceive their required community service as something they would have chosen to do are more likely to anticipate future volunteering than those who feel coerced (Stukas & others, 1999). The principle is this: *Attitudes follow behaviors for which we feel some responsibility*.

Authoritarian management will be effective, the theory predicts, only when the authority is present—because people are unlikely to internalize forced behavior. Bree, a formerly enslaved talking horse in C. S. Lewis’s *The Horse and His Boy* (1974), observes, “One of the worst results of being a slave and being forced to do things is that when there is no one to force you any more you find you have almost lost the power of forcing yourself” (p. 193). Dissonance theory insists that encouragement and inducement should be enough to elicit the desired action (so that attitudes may follow the behavior). But it suggests that managers, teachers, and parents should use only enough incentive to elicit the desired behavior.

### DISSONANCE AFTER DECISIONS

The emphasis on perceived choice and responsibility implies that decisions produce dissonance. When faced with an important decision—what college to attend, whom to date, which job to accept—we are sometimes torn between two equally attractive alternatives. Perhaps you can recall a time when, having committed yourself, you became painfully aware of dissonant cognitions—the desirable features of what you had rejected and the undesirable features of what you had chosen. If you decided

to live on campus, you may have realized you were giving up the spaciousness and freedom of an apartment in favor of cramped, noisy dorm quarters. If you elected to live off campus, you may have realized that your decision meant physical separation from campus and friends, and having to cook and clean for yourself.

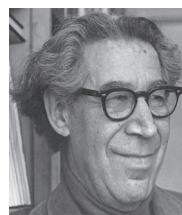
After making important decisions, we usually reduce dissonance by upgrading the chosen alternative and downgrading the unchosen option.

## THE inside STORY

### Leon Festinger on Dissonance Reduction

Following a 1934 earthquake in India, there were rumors outside the disaster zone of worse disasters to follow. It occurred to me that these rumors might be “anxiety-justifying”—cognitions that would justify their lingering fears. From that germ of an idea, I developed my theory of dissonance reduction—making your view of the world fit with how you feel or what you’ve done.

Leon Festinger (1920–1989)





Big decisions can produce big dissonance when one later ponders the negative aspects of what is chosen and the positive aspects of what was not chosen.

In the first published dissonance experiment (1956), Jack Brehm brought some of his wedding gifts to his University of Minnesota lab and had women rate eight products, such as a toaster, a radio, and a hair dryer. Brehm then showed the women two objects they had rated closely and told them they could have whichever they chose. Later, when rerating the eight objects, the women increased their evaluations of the item they had chosen and decreased their evaluations of the rejected item. It seems that after we have made our choices, the grass does not then grow greener on the other side of the fence. (Afterward, Brehm confessed he couldn't afford to let them keep what they chose.)

With simple decisions, this deciding-becomes-believing effect can breed overconfidence (Blanton & others, 2001): "What I've decided must be right." The effect can occur very quickly. Robert Knox and James Inkster (1968) found that racetrack bettors who had just put down their money felt more optimistic about their bets than did those who were about to bet. In the few moments that intervened between standing in line and walking away from the betting window, nothing had changed—except the decisive action and the person's feelings about it. There may sometimes be but a slight difference between two options, as I can recall in helping make faculty tenure decisions. The competence of one faculty member who barely makes it and that of another who barely loses seems not very different—until after you make and announce the decision.

Our preferences influence our decisions, which then sharpen our preferences. This choices-influence-preferences effect occurs even after people press a button to choose what they think was

**Post-decision dissonance.**  
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I don't like to agonize over my decisions until after I've made them.

"EVERY TIME YOU MAKE A CHOICE YOU ARE TURNING THE CENTRAL PART OF YOU, THE PART OF YOU THAT CHOOSES, INTO SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT WAS BEFORE."

—C. S. LEWIS, MERE CHRISTIANITY, 1942

a subliminally presented vacation alternative (nothing was actually shown them). They later tended to prefer the holiday that they believed they had chosen (Sharot & others, 2010).

Decisions, once made, grow their own self-justifying legs of support. Often, these new legs are strong enough that when one leg is pulled away—perhaps the original one, as in the Iraq war case—the decision does not collapse. Rosalia decides to take a trip home if it can be done for an airfare under \$500. It can, so she makes her reservation and begins to think of additional reasons why she will be glad to see her family. When she goes to buy the tickets, however, she learns there has been a fare increase to \$575. No matter; she is now determined to go. As when being lowballed by a car dealer, it never occurs to people, reports Robert Cialdini (1984, p. 103), "that those additional reasons might never have existed had the choice not been made in the first place."

It's not just grown-ups who do this. A Yale University team led by Louisa Egan (2007) invited 4-year-olds to rate different stickers on a scale of smiley faces. With each child, the researchers then picked three stickers that the child had rated equally, and randomly identified two (let's call them Sticker A and Sticker B) from which the children could choose one to take home. Next, they let the child choose one more—either the unchosen sticker or the third one, Sticker C. The result (which put a smiley on my face): The children apparently reduced dissonance by down-playing the appeal of the unchosen first sticker, thus moving them to favor Sticker C 63 percent of the time (rather than half the time, as we might have expected). They repeated the experiment with capuchin monkeys, using alternative sweets instead of stickers. As with the children, so with the monkeys: They, too, revised their attitudes after making an initial decision.

## Self-Perception

Although dissonance theory has inspired much research, an even simpler theory also explains its phenomena. Consider how we make inferences about other people's attitudes. We see how a person acts in a particular situation, and then we attribute the behavior either to the person's traits and attitudes or to environmental forces. If we see parents coercing 10-year-old Brett into saying, "I'm sorry," we attribute Brett's apology to the situation, not to his personal regret. If we see Brett apologizing with no apparent inducement, we attribute the apology to Brett himself (Figure 4.5).

**Self-perception theory** (proposed by Daryl Bem, 1972) assumes that we make similar inferences when we observe our own behavior. When our attitudes are weak or ambiguous, we are in the position of someone observing us from the outside. Hearing myself talk informs me of my attitudes; seeing my actions provides clues to how strong my beliefs are. This is especially so when I can't easily attribute my behavior to external constraints. The acts we freely commit are self-revealing.

The pioneering psychologist William James proposed a similar explanation for emotion a century ago. We infer our emotions, he suggested, by observing our bodies and our behaviors. A stimulus such as a growling bear confronts a woman in the forest. She tenses, her heartbeat increases, adrenaline flows, and she runs away. Observing all this, she then experiences fear. At a college where I am to give a lecture, I awake before dawn and am unable to get back to sleep. Noting my wakefulness, I conclude that I must be anxious. One friend of mine was shaking while standing offstage waiting to give a lecture and inferred he was really nervous. When he discovered the floor over the air-handling system was vibrating, his self-perceived nervousness vanished.

Do people who observe themselves agreeing to a small request indeed come to perceive themselves as the helpful sort of person who responds positively to requests for help? Is that why, in the foot-in-the-door experiments, people will then later agree to larger requests? Indeed, yes, it appears (Burger & Caldwell, 2003). Behavior can modify self-concept.

**self-perception theory**  
The theory that when we are unsure of our attitudes, we infer them much as would someone observing us—by looking at our behavior and the circumstances under which it occurs.

"SELF-KNOWLEDGE IS BEST LEARNED, NOT BY CONTEMPLATION, BUT ACTION."

—GOETHE, 1749–1832

**FIGURE :: 4.5**

Three Theories Explain Why Attitudes Follow Behavior

## EXPRESSIONS AND ATTITUDE

You may be skeptical of the self-perception effect, as I initially was. Experiments on the effects of facial expressions suggest a way for you to experience it. When James Laird (1974, 1984) induced college students to frown while attaching electrodes to their faces—"contract these muscles," "pull your brows together"—they reported feeling angry. It's more fun to try out Laird's other finding: Those induced to make a smiling face felt happier and found cartoons more humorous. Those induced to repeatedly practice happy (versus sad or angry) expressions may recall more happy memories and find the happy mood lingering (Schnall & Laird, 2003). A Japanese research team created similar expressions—and emotions—by taping rubber bands to the sides of the face and then running them over either the top of the head (raising the cheeks into a smile) or under the chin (Mori & Mori, 2009).

Clever follow-up studies have found more examples of this **facial (and body) feedback effect:**

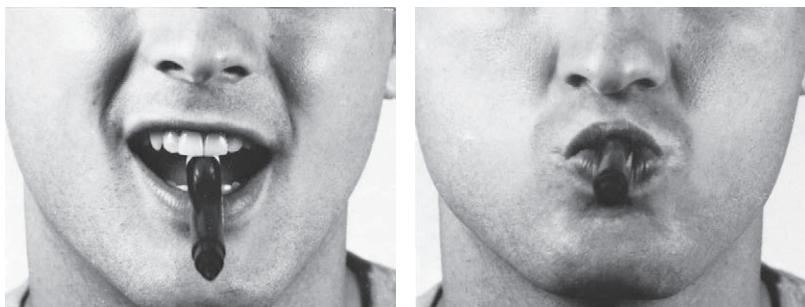
- Botox smoothes emotional wrinkles. If it's hard for us to know what the frozen-faced Botoxed are feeling, it's also hard for them to know themselves. Paralyzing the frowning muscles with Botox slows activity in people's emotion-related brain circuits and slows their reading of sadness- or anger-related sentences (Havas & others, 2010; Hennenlotter & others, 2008). Moreover, being unable to mimic others' expressions, it's harder for them to understand others' emotions (Neal & Chartrand, 2011). Botox messes with embodied cognition.
- When people are instructed to sit straight and push out their chest, they feel more confidence in their written ideas than when sitting slouched forward and with eyes downcast (Briñol & others, 2009).
- People who assume high-power rather than low-power poses (think hands on hips rather than a contracted posture) experience increased testosterone, feelings of power, and risk-tolerance (Carney & others, 2010).

"I CAN WATCH MYSELF  
AND MY ACTIONS, JUST  
LIKE AN OUTSIDER."

—ANNE FRANK, *THE DIARY OF  
A YOUNG GIRL*, 1947

### facial feedback effect

The tendency of facial expressions to trigger corresponding feelings such as fear, anger, or happiness.



According to German psychologist Fritz Strack and colleagues (1988), people find cartoons funnier while holding a pen with their teeth (using smiling muscles) than while holding it with their lips (using muscles incompatible with smiling).

**"THE FREE EXPRESSION BY OUTWARD SIGNS OF EMOTION INTENSIFIES IT. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE REPRESSION, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, OF ALL OUTWARD SIGNS SOFTENS OUR EMOTIONS."**

—CHARLES DARWIN,  
THE EXPRESSION OF THE  
EMOTIONS IN MAN AND  
ANIMALS, 1897

All Nippon Airways employees, biting wooden chopsticks, beam during a smile training session.

can trigger the emotions. Contrariwise, extending the middle finger makes others' ambiguous expressions seem more hostile (Chandler & Schwarz, 2009).

Even your gait can affect how you feel. When you get up from reading this chapter, walk for a minute taking short, shuffling steps, with eyes downcast. It's a great way to feel depressed. "Sit all day in a moping posture, sigh, and reply to everything with a dismal voice, and your melancholy lingers," noted William James (1890, p. 463). Want to feel better? Walk for a minute taking long strides with your arms swinging and your eyes straight ahead.

If our expressions influence our feelings, then would imitating others' expressions help us know what they are feeling? An experiment by Katherine Burns Vaughan and John Lanzetta (1981) suggests it would. They asked Dartmouth College students to observe someone receiving electric shock. They told some of the observers to make a pained expression whenever the shock came on. If, as Freud and others supposed, expressing an emotion allows us to discharge it, then the pained expression should be inwardly calming (Cacioppo & others, 1991). However, compared with other students who did not act out the expressions, these grimacing students perspired more and had faster heart rates whenever they saw the shock being delivered. Acting out the person's emotion enabled the observers to feel more empathy. The implication: To sense how other people are feeling, let your own face mirror their expressions.

Actually, you hardly need to try. Observing others' faces, postures, writing styles, and voices, we naturally and unconsciously mimic (Hatfield & others, 1992; Ireland & Pennebaker, 2010). We synchronize our movements, postures, and tones of voice with theirs. Doing so helps us tune in to what they're feeling. It also makes for "emotional contagion," which helps explain why it's fun to be around happy people and depressing to be around depressed people (Chapter 14).



We have all experienced this phenomenon. We're feeling crabby, but then the phone rings or someone comes to the door and elicits from us warm, polite behavior. "How's everything?" "Just fine, thanks. How are things with you?" "Oh, not bad...." If our crankiness was not intense, this warm behavior may change our whole attitude. It's tough to smile and feel grouchy. Going through the motions

Our facial expressions also influence our attitudes. In a clever experiment, Gary Wells and Richard Petty (1980) had University of Alberta students “test headphone sets” by making either vertical or horizontal head movements while listening to a radio editorial. Who most agreed with the editorial? Those who had been nodding their heads up and down. Why? Wells and Petty surmised that positive thoughts are compatible with vertical nodding and incompatible with horizontal motion. Try it yourself when listening to someone: Do you feel more agreeable when nodding rather than shaking your head? Even being seated in a left- rather than right-leaning chair has led people to lean more left in their expressed political attitudes (Oppenheimer & Trail, 2010)!

At the University of Cologne, Thomas Mussweiler (2006) likewise discovered that stereotyped actions feed stereotyped thinking. In one clever experiment, he induced some people to move about in the portly manner of an obese person—by having them wear a life vest and by putting weights on their wrists and ankles—and then to give their impressions of someone described on paper. Compared with those in a control condition, those whose movements simulated obesity perceived the target person as exhibiting traits (friendliness, sluggishness, unhealthiness) that people often perceive in obese people. In follow-up experiments, people induced to move slowly, as an elderly person might, ascribed more elderly stereotypic traits to a target person. Doing influenced thinking.

Postures also affect performance. After noting that people associate an arms-folded posture with determination and persistence, Ron Friedman and Andrew Elliot (2008) had students attempt to solve impossible anagrams. Those instructed to work with their arms folded persevered for an average 55 seconds, nearly double the 30 seconds of those with their hands on their thighs.

## OVERJUSTIFICATION AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATIONS

Recall the insufficient justification effect: The smallest incentive that induces people to do something most effectively gets them to like it and keep on doing it. Cognitive dissonance theory explains this: When external inducements are insufficient to justify our behavior, we reduce dissonance internally by justifying the behavior.

Self-perception theory offers a different explanation: People explain their behavior by noting the conditions under which it occurs. Imagine hearing someone proclaim the wisdom of a tuition increase for a hefty \$20. Surely the statement would seem more sincere if you thought the person was expressing those opinions for no pay. Perhaps we make similar inferences when observing ourselves. We observe our uncoerced action and infer our attitude.

Self-perception theory goes a step further. Contrary to the notion that rewards always increase motivation, it suggests that unnecessary rewards can have a hidden cost. Rewarding people for doing what they already enjoy may lead them to attribute their action to the reward. If so, this would undermine their self-perception that they do it because they like it. Experiments by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1991, 1997, 2008), by Mark Lepper and David Greene (1979), and by Ann Boggiano and her colleagues (1985,



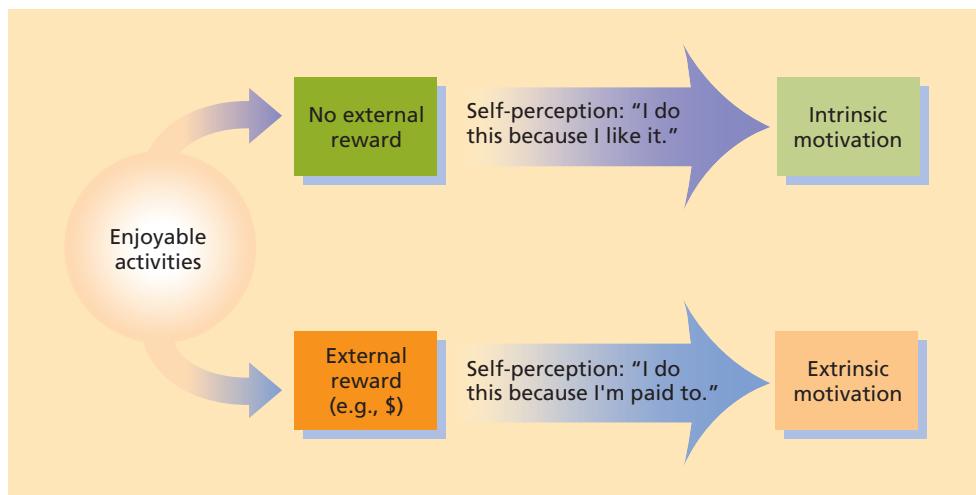
*“I don’t sing because I am happy.  
I am happy because I sing.”*

**Self-perception at work.**  
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### FIGURE :: 4.6

#### Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

When people do something they enjoy, without reward or coercion, they attribute their behavior to their love of the activity. External rewards undermine intrinsic motivation by leading people to attribute their behavior to the incentive.



#### overjustification effect

The result of bribing people to do what they already like doing; they may then see their actions as externally controlled rather than intrinsically appealing.

1987, 1992) have confirmed this **overjustification effect**. Pay people for playing with puzzles, and they will later play with the puzzles less than will those who play for no pay. Promise children a reward for doing what they intrinsically enjoy (for example, playing with Magic Markers), and you will turn their play into work (Figure 4.6).

A folktale illustrates the overjustification effect: An old man lived alone on a street where boys played noisily every afternoon. The din annoyed him, so one day he called the boys to his door. He told them he loved the cheerful sound of children's voices and promised them each 50 cents if they would return the next day. Next afternoon the youngsters raced back and played more lustily than ever. The old man paid them and promised another reward the next day. Again they returned, whooping it up, and the man again paid them; this time 25 cents. The following day they got only 15 cents, and the man explained that his meager resources were being exhausted. "Please, though, would you come to play for 10 cents tomorrow?" The disappointed boys told the man they would not be back. It wasn't worth the effort, they said, to play all afternoon at his house for only 10 cents.

As self-perception theory implies, an *unanticipated* reward does not diminish intrinsic interest, because people can still attribute their actions to their own motivation (Bradley & Mannell, 1984; Tang & Hall, 1995). (It's like the heroine who, having fallen in love with the woodcutter, now learns that he's really a prince.) And if compliments for a good job make us feel more competent and successful, this can actually increase our intrinsic motivation. When rightly administered, rewards may also boost creativity (Eisenberger & others, 1999, 2001, 2003).

The overjustification effect occurs when someone offers an unnecessary reward beforehand in an obvious effort to control behavior. What matters is what a reward implies: Rewards and praise that inform people of their achievements—that make them feel, "I'm very good at this"—boost intrinsic motivation. Rewards that seek to control people and lead them to believe it was the reward that caused their effort—"I did it for the money"—diminish the intrinsic appeal of an enjoyable task (Rosenfeld & others, 1980; Sansone, 1986).

How then can we cultivate people's enjoyment of initially unappealing tasks? Maria may find her first piano lessons frustrating. Toshi may not have an intrinsic love of ninth-grade science. DeShawn may embark on a career not looking forward to making those first sales calls. In such cases, the parent, the teacher, or the manager should probably use some incentives to coax the desired behavior (Boggiano & Ruble, 1985; Cooke & others, 2011; Workman & Williams, 1980). After the person

complies, suggest an intrinsic reason for doing so: "I'm not surprised that sales call went well, because you are so good at making a first impression."

If we provide students with just enough justification to perform a learning task and use rewards and labels to help them feel competent, we may enhance their enjoyment and their eagerness to pursue the subject on their own. When there is too much justification—as happens in classrooms where teachers dictate behavior and use rewards to control the children—student-driven learning may diminish (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991, 2008). My younger son eagerly consumed 6 or 8 library books a week—until our library started a reading club that promised a party to those who read 10 books in three months. Three weeks later he began checking out only 1 or 2 books during our weekly visits. Why? "Because you only need to read 10 books, you know."

## Comparing the Theories

We have seen one explanation of why our actions might only *seem* to affect our attitudes (*self-presentation theory*). And we have seen two explanations of why our actions genuinely affect our attitudes: (1) the *dissonance-theory* assumption that we justify our behavior to reduce our internal discomfort, and (2) the *self-perception-theory* assumption that we observe our behavior and make reasonable inferences about our attitudes, much as we observe other people and infer *their* attitudes.

These two explanations seem to contradict each other. Which is right? It's difficult to find a definitive test. In most instances they make the same predictions, and we can bend each theory to accommodate most of the findings we have considered (Greenwald, 1975). Self-perception theorist Daryl Bem (1972) even suggested it boils down to a matter of personal loyalties and preferences. This illustrates the human element in scientific theorizing. Neither dissonance theory nor self-perception theory has been handed to us by nature. Both are products of human imagination—creative attempts to simplify and explain what we've observed.

It is not unusual in science to find that a principle, such as "attitudes follow behavior," is predictable from more than one theory. Physicist Richard Feynman (1967) marveled that "one of the amazing characteristics of nature" is the "wide range of beautiful ways" in which we can describe it: "I do not understand the reason why it is that the correct laws of physics seem to be expressible in such a tremendous variety of ways" (pp. 53–55). Like different roads leading to the same place, different sets of assumptions can lead to the same principle. If anything, this strengthens our confidence in the principle. It becomes credible not only because of the data supporting it but also because it rests on more than one theoretical pillar.

### DISSONANCE AS AROUSAL

Can we say that one of our theories is better? On one key point, strong support has emerged for dissonance theory. Recall that dissonance is, by definition, an aroused state of uncomfortable tension. To reduce that tension, we supposedly change our attitudes. Self-perception theory says nothing about tension being aroused when our actions and attitudes are not in harmony. It assumes merely that when our attitudes are weak to begin with, we will use our behavior and its circumstances as a clue to those attitudes (like the person who said, "How do I tell what I think till I see what I say?" [Forster, 1976]).

Are conditions that supposedly produce dissonance (for example, making decisions or taking actions that are contrary to one's attitudes) indeed uncomfortably arousing? Clearly yes, providing that the behavior has unwanted consequences for which the person feels responsible (Cooper, 1999; Elliot & Devine, 1994).



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*"No, Hoskins, you're not going to do it just because I'm telling you to do it. You're going to do it because you believe in it."*

People rarely internalize coerced behavior.  
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### self-affirmation theory

A theory that (a) people often experience a self-image threat after engaging in an undesirable behavior; and (b) they can compensate by affirming another aspect of the self. Threaten people's self-concept in one domain, and they will compensate either by refocusing or by doing good deeds in some other domain.

"RATHER AMAZINGLY,  
40 YEARS AFTER ITS  
PUBLICATION, THE THEORY  
OF COGNITIVE DISSO-  
NANCE LOOKS AS STRONG  
AND AS INTERESTING  
AS EVER."

—SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIST  
JACK W. BREHM (1999)

If, in the privacy of your room, you say something you don't believe, dissonance will be minimal. It will be much greater if there are unpleasant results—if someone hears and believes you, if the statement causes harm and the negative effects are irrevocable, and if the person harmed is someone you like. If, moreover, you feel responsible for those consequences—if you can't easily excuse your act because you freely agreed to it and if you were able to foresee its consequences—then uncomfortable dissonance will be aroused. Such dissonance-related arousal is detectable as increased perspiration and heart rate (Cacioppo & Petty, 1986; Croyle & Cooper, 1983; Losch & Cacioppo, 1990).

Why is "volunteering" to say or do undesirable things so arousing? Because, suggests Claude Steele's (1988) **self-affirmation theory**, such acts are embarrassing. They make us feel foolish. They threaten our sense of personal competence and goodness. Justifying our actions and

decisions is therefore *self-affirming*; it protects and supports our sense of integrity and self-worth. When people engage in dissonance-generating actions, their thinking left frontal lobes buzz with extra arousal (Harmon-Jones & others, 2008). This is the grinding gears of belief change at work.

What do you suppose happens, then, if we offer people who have committed self-contradictory acts a way to reaffirm their self-worth, such as doing good deeds? In several experiments Steele found that, with their self-concepts restored, people felt much less need to justify their acts (Steele & others, 1993). People with high and secure self-esteem also engage in less self-justification (Holland & others, 2002).

So, dissonance conditions do indeed arouse tension, especially when they threaten positive feelings of self-worth. But is this arousal necessary for the attitudes-follow-behavior effect? Steele and his colleagues (1981) believe the answer is yes. When drinking alcohol reduces dissonance-produced arousal, the attitudes-follow-behavior effect disappears. In one of their experiments, they induced University of Washington students to write essays favoring a big tuition increase. The students reduced their resulting dissonance by softening their antituition attitudes—unless after writing the unpleasant essays they drank alcohol.

### SELF-PERCEIVING WHEN NOT SELF-CONTRADICTING

Dissonance procedures are uncomfortably arousing. That makes for self-persuasion after acting contrary to one's attitudes. But dissonance theory cannot explain attitude changes that occur without dissonance. When people argue a position that is in line with their opinion, although a step or two beyond it, procedures that eliminate arousal do not eliminate attitude change (Fazio & others, 1977, 1979). Dissonance theory also does not explain the overjustification effect, because being paid to do what you like to do should not arouse great tension. And what about situations where the action does not contradict any attitude—when, for example, people are induced to smile or grimace? Here, too, there should be no dissonance. For these cases, self-perception theory has a ready explanation.

In short, it appears that dissonance theory successfully explains what happens when we act contrary to clearly defined attitudes: We feel tension, so we adjust our attitudes to reduce it. Dissonance theory, then, explains attitude *change*. In situations where our attitudes are not well formed, self-perception theory explains attitude *formation*. As we act and reflect, we develop more readily accessible attitudes to guide our future behavior (Fazio, 1987; Roese & Olson, 1994).

## SUMMING UP: Why Does Our Behavior Affect Our Attitudes?

Three competing theories explain why our actions affect our attitude reports.

- *Self-presentation theory* assumes that people, especially those who self-monitor their behavior hoping to create good impressions, will adapt their attitude reports to appear consistent with their actions. The available evidence confirms that people do adjust their attitude statements out of concern for what other people will think. But it also shows that some genuine attitude change occurs.

Two of these theories propose that our actions trigger genuine attitude change.

- *Dissonance theory* explains this attitude change by assuming that we feel tension after acting contrary to our attitudes or making difficult decisions. To reduce that arousal, we internally justify our

behavior. Dissonance theory further proposes that the less external justification we have for our undesirable actions, the more we feel responsible for them, and thus the more dissonance arises and the more attitudes change.

- *Self-perception theory* assumes that when our attitudes are weak, we simply observe our behavior and its circumstances, then infer our attitudes. One interesting implication of self-perception theory is the “overjustification effect”: Rewarding people to do what they like doing anyway can turn their pleasure into drudgery (if the reward leads them to attribute their behavior to the reward).
- Evidence supports predictions from both theories, suggesting that each describes what happens under certain conditions.

## POSTSCRIPT: Changing Ourselves Through Action

To make anything a habit, do it.

To not make it a habit, do not do it.

To unmake a habit, do something else in place of it.

—Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus

This chapter’s attitudes-follow-behavior principle offers a powerful lesson for life: If we want to change ourselves in some important way, it’s best not to wait for insight or inspiration. Sometimes we need to act—to begin to write that paper, to make those phone calls, to see that person—even if we don’t feel like acting. Jacques Barzun (1975) recognized the energizing power of action when he advised aspiring writers to engage in the act of writing even if contemplation had left them feeling uncertain about their ideas:

If you are too modest about yourself or too plain indifferent about the possible reader and yet are required to write, then you have to pretend. Make believe that you want to bring somebody around to your opinion; in other words, adopt a thesis and start expounding it. . . . With a slight effort of the kind at the start—a challenge to utterance—you will find your pretense disappearing and a real concern creeping in. The subject will have taken hold of you as it does in the work of all habitual writers. (pp. 173–174)

This attitudes-follow-behavior phenomenon is not irrational or magical. That which prompts us to act may also prompt us to think. Writing an essay or role-playing an opposing view forces us to consider arguments we otherwise might have ignored. Also, we remember information best after explaining it in our own terms. As one student wrote me, “It wasn’t until I tried to verbalize my beliefs that I really understood them.” As a teacher and a writer, I must therefore remind myself to not

"IF WE WISH TO CONQUER  
UNDESIRABLE EMOTIONAL  
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WE MUST . . . COLDBLOOD-  
EDLY GO THROUGH THE  
OUTWARD MOTIONS OF  
THOSE CONTRARY DISPO-  
SITIONS WE PREFER TO  
CULTIVATE."

—WILLIAM JAMES, "WHAT IS  
AN EMOTION?" 1884

always lay out finished results. It is better to stimulate students to think through the implications of a theory, to make them active listeners and readers. Even taking notes deepens the impression. William James (1899) made the point a century ago: "No reception without reaction, no impression without correlative expression—this is the great maxim which the teacher ought never to forget."

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## PART TWO

# Social Influence



So far in this book we have considered mostly “within-the-skin” phenomena—how we think about one another. Now we consider “between-skins” happenings—how we influence and relate to one another. Therefore, in Chapters 5 through 8 we probe social psychology’s central concern: the powers of social influence.

What are these unseen social forces that push and pull us? How powerful are they? Research on social influence helps illuminate the invisible strings by which our social worlds move us about. The next four chapters reveal these subtle powers, especially cultural influences (Chapter 5), the forces of social conformity (Chapter 6), the principles of persuasion (Chapter 7), the consequences of participation in groups (Chapter 8), and how all these influences operate together in everyday situations.

Seeing these influences, we may better understand why people feel and act as they do. And we may ourselves become less vulnerable to unwanted manipulation and more adept at pulling our own strings.

CHAPTER

5

# Genes, Culture, and Gender



**"By birth, the same; by custom, different."**

—Confucius, *The Analects*

Approaching Earth from light-years away, alien scientists assigned to study the species *Homo sapiens* feel their excitement rising. Their plan: to observe two randomly sampled humans. Their first subject, Jan, is a verbally combative trial lawyer who grew up in Nashville but moved west seeking the "California lifestyle." After an affair and a divorce, Jan is enjoying a second marriage. Friends describe Jan as an independent thinker who is self-confident, competitive, and somewhat domineering.

Their second subject, Tomoko, lives with his spouse and their two children in a rural Japanese village, a walk from the homes of both their parents. Tomoko is proud of being a good son, a loyal spouse, and a protective parent. Friends describe Tomoko as kind, gentle, respectful, sensitive, and supportive of extended family.

From their small sample of two people of different genders and cultures, what might our alien scientists conclude about human nature? Would they wonder whether the two are from different subspecies? Or would they be struck by deeper similarities beneath the surface differences?

The questions faced by our alien scientists are those faced by today's earthbound scientists: How do we humans differ? How are we alike? In a world struggling with cultural differences, can we learn to accept our diversity, value our cultural identities, yet recognize

**How are we influenced by human nature and cultural diversity?**

**How are males and females alike and different?**

**Evolution and gender: Doing what comes naturally?**

**Culture and gender: Doing as the culture says?**

**What can we conclude about genes, culture, and gender?**

**Postscript: Should we view ourselves as products or architects of our social worlds?**

our human kinship? I believe we can. To see why, let's consider the evolutionary, cultural, and social roots of our humanity. Then let's see how each might help us understand gender similarities and differences.

## HOW ARE WE INFLUENCED BY HUMAN NATURE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY?

Summarize two perspectives on human similarities and differences: the evolutionary perspective, emphasizing human kinship, and the cultural perspective, emphasizing human diversity.

In many important ways, Jan and Tomoko are more alike than different. As members of one great family with common ancestors, they share not only a common biology but also common behavior tendencies. Each of them sleeps and wakes, feels hunger and thirst, and develops language through identical mechanisms. Jan and Tomoko both prefer sweet tastes to sour and fear snakes more than sparrows. They both divide the visual spectrum into similar colors and divide time into past, present, and future. They and their kin across the globe all know how to read one another's frowns and smiles.

Jan and Tomoko, and all of us everywhere, are intensely social. We join groups, conform, and recognize distinctions of social status. We return favors, punish offenses, and grieve a child's death. As children, beginning at about 8 months of age, we displayed fear of strangers, and as adults we favor members of our own groups. Confronted by those with dissimilar attitudes or attributes, we react warily or negatively. Anthropologist Donald Brown (1991, 2000) identified several hundred such universal behavior and language patterns. To sample among just those beginning with "v," all human societies have verbs, violence, visiting, and vowels.

Even much of our morality is common across cultures and eras. Before they can walk, babies will display a moral sense by disapproving what's wrong or naughty (Bloom, 2010). People old and young, female and male, whether living in Tokyo, Tehran, or Toledo, all respond negatively when asked, "If a lethal gas is leaking into a vent and is headed toward a room with seven people, is it okay to push someone into the vent—saving the seven but killing the one?" And they respond more approvingly when asked if it's okay to allow someone to fall into the vent, again sacrificing one life but saving seven (Hauser, 2006, 2009).

Our alien scientists could drop in anywhere and find humans conversing and arguing, laughing and crying, feasting and dancing, singing and worshiping. Everywhere, humans prefer living with others—in families and communal groups—to living alone. Everywhere, the family dramas that entertain us—from Greek tragedies to Chinese fiction to Mexican soap operas—portray similar plots (Dutton, 2006). Similar, too, are adventure stories in which strong and courageous men, supported by wise old people, overcome evil to the delight of beautiful women or threatened children.

Such commonalities define our shared human nature. Although differences draw our attention, we're more alike than different. We're all kin beneath the skin.

### Genes, Evolution, and Behavior

The universal behaviors that define human nature arise from our biological similarity. We may say, "My ancestors came from Ireland" or "My roots are in China" or "I'm Italian," but anthropologists tell us that if we could trace our ancestors

back 100,000 or more years, we would see that we are all Africans (Shipman, 2003). In response to climate change and the availability of food, those early hominids migrated across Africa into Asia, Europe, the Australian subcontinent and, eventually, the Americas. As they adapted to their new environments, early humans developed differences that, measured on anthropological scales, are recent and superficial. Those who stayed in Africa had darker skin pigment—what Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker (2002) calls “sunscreen for the tropics”—and those who went far north of the equator evolved lighter skins capable of synthesizing vitamin D in less direct sunlight. Still, historically, we all are Africans.

We were Africans recently enough that “there has not been much time to accumulate many new versions of the genes,” notes Pinker (2002, p. 143). Indeed, biologists who study our genes have found that we humans—even humans as seemingly different as Jan and Tomoko—are strikingly similar, like members of one tribe. We may be more numerous than chimpanzees, but chimps are more genetically varied.

To explain the traits of our species, and all species, the British naturalist Charles Darwin (1859) proposed an evolutionary process. Follow the genes, he advised. Darwin’s idea, to which philosopher Daniel Dennett (2005) would give “the gold medal for the best idea anybody ever had,” was that **natural selection** enables evolution.

The idea, simplified, is this:

- Organisms have many and varied offspring.
- Those offspring compete for survival in their environment.
- Certain biological and behavioral variations increase their chances of reproduction and survival in that environment.
- Those offspring that do survive are more likely to pass their genes to ensuing generations.
- Thus, over time, population characteristics may change.

Natural selection implies that certain genes—those that predisposed traits that increased the odds of surviving long enough to reproduce and nurture descendants—became more abundant. In the snowy Arctic environment, for example, genes programming a thick coat of camouflaging white fur have won the genetic competition in polar bears.

Natural selection, long an organizing principle of biology, has recently become an important principle for psychology as well. **Evolutionary psychology** studies how natural selection predisposes not just physical traits suited to particular contexts—polar bears’ coats, bats’ sonar, humans’ color vision—but also psychological traits and social behaviors that enhance the preservation and spread of one’s genes (Buss, 2005, 2007, 2009). We humans are the way we are, say evolutionary psychologists, because nature selected those who had our traits—those who, for example, preferred the sweet taste of nutritious, energy-providing foods and who disliked the bitter or sour flavors of foods that are toxic. Those lacking such preferences were less likely to survive to contribute their genes to posterity.

As mobile gene machines, we carry not only the physical legacy but also the psychological legacy of our ancestors’ adaptive preferences. We long for whatever helped them survive, reproduce, and nurture their offspring to survive and reproduce. Even negative emotions—anxiety, loneliness, depression, anger—are nature’s way of motivating us to cope with survival challenges. “The purpose of the heart is to pump blood,” notes evolutionary psychologist David Barash (2003). “The brain’s purpose,” he adds, is to direct our organs and our behavior “in a way that maximizes our evolutionary success. That’s it.”

The evolutionary perspective highlights our universal human nature. We not only share certain food preferences but we also share answers to social questions, such as, Whom should I trust? Whom should I help? When, and with whom, should I mate? Who may dominate me, and whom may I control? Evolutionary

### natural selection

The evolutionary process by which heritable traits that best enable organisms to survive and reproduce in particular environments are passed to ensuing generations.

### evolutionary psychology

The study of the evolution of cognition and behavior using principles of natural selection.

“PSYCHOLOGY WILL BE  
BASED ON A NEW  
FOUNDATION.”

—CHARLES DARWIN, ON THE  
ORIGIN OF SPECIES, 1859

psychologists contend that our emotional and behavioral answers to those questions are the same answers that worked for our ancestors.

And what should we fear? Mostly, we fear dangers faced by our distant ancestors. We fear foes, unfamiliar faces, and heights—and thus, possible terrorists, the ethnically different, and airplanes. We fear what's immediate and sudden more than greater, gradual harms from historically newer threats, such as smoking or climate change.

Because our social tasks are common to people everywhere, humans everywhere tend to agree on the answers. For example, all humans rank others by authority and status. And all have ideas about economic justice (Fiske, 1992). Evolutionary psychologists highlight these universal characteristics that have evolved through natural selection. Cultures, however, provide the specific rules for working out these elements of social life.

## Culture and Behavior

"STAND TALL, BIPEDAL APE. THE SHARK MAY OUTSWIM YOU, THE CHEETAH OUTRUN YOU, THE SWIFT OUTFLY YOU, THE REDWOOD OUTLAST YOU. BUT YOU HAVE THE BIGGEST GIFTS OF ALL."

—RICHARD DAWKINS,

THE DEVIL'S CHAPLAIN, 2003

### culture

The enduring behaviors, ideas, attitudes, and traditions shared by a large group of people and transmitted from one generation to the next.

"SOMEHOW THE ADHERENTS OF THE 'NURTURE' SIDE OF THE ARGUMENTS HAVE SCARED THEMSELVES SILLY AT THE POWER AND INEVITABILITY OF GENES AND MISSED THE GREATEST LESSON OF ALL: THE GENES ARE ON THEIR SIDE."

—MATT RIDLEY, NATURE VIA NURTURE, 2003

Perhaps our most important similarity, the hallmark of our species, is our capacity to learn and adapt. Our genes enable an adaptive human brain—a cerebral hard drive that receives the culture's software. Evolution has prepared us to live creatively in a changing world and to thrive in environments from equatorial jungles to arctic ice fields. Compared with bees, birds, and bulldogs, nature has humans on a looser genetic leash. Ironically, our shared human biology enables our cultural diversity. It enables those in one **culture** to value promptness, welcome frankness, or accept premarital sex, whereas those in another culture do not. As social psychologist Roy Baumeister (2005, p. 29) observes, "Evolution made us for culture." (See "Focus On: The Cultural Animal.")

Evolutionary psychology incorporates environmental influences. It recognizes that nature and nurture interact in forming us. Genes are not fixed blueprints; their expression depends on the environment, much as the tea I am now drinking was not "expressed" until meeting a hot water environment. One study of New Zealand young adults revealed a gene variation that put people at risk for depression, but only if they had also experienced major life stresses such as a marital breakup (Caspi & others, 2003). Neither the stress nor the gene alone produced depression, but the two interacting did.

We humans have been selected not only for big brains and biceps but also for culture. We come prepared to learn language and to bond and cooperate with others in securing food, caring for young, and protecting ourselves. Nature therefore predisposes us to learn whatever culture we are born into. The cultural perspective highlights human adaptability. People's "natures are alike," said Confucius; "it is their habits that carry them far apart." And far apart we still are, note world culture researchers Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2005). Despite increasing education, "we are not moving toward a uniform global culture: cultural convergence is not taking place. A society's cultural heritage is remarkably enduring" (p. 46).

### CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The diversity of our languages, customs, and expressive behaviors confirms that much of our behavior is socially programmed, not hardwired. The genetic leash is long. As sociologist Ian Robertson (1987) has noted:

Americans eat oysters but not snails. The French eat snails but not locusts. The Zulus eat locusts but not fish. The Jews eat fish but not pork. The Hindus eat pork but not beef. The Russians eat beef but not snakes. The Chinese eat snakes but not people. The Jalé of New Guinea find people delicious. (p. 67)

If we all lived as homogeneous ethnic groups in separate regions of the world, as some people still do, cultural diversity would be less relevant to our daily living. In Japan, where 98.5 percent of people are Japanese (CIA, 2011), internal cultural

# focus ON

## The Cultural Animal

We are, said Aristotle, the social animal. We humans have at least one thing in common with wolves and bees: We flourish by organizing ourselves into groups and working together.

But more than that, notes Roy Baumeister, we are—as he labels us in the title of his 2005 book—*The Cultural Animal*. Humans more than other animals harness the power of culture to make life better. “Culture is a better way of being social,” he writes. We have culture to thank for our communication through language, our driving safely on one side of the road, our eating fruit in winter, and our use of money to pay for our cars and fruit. Culture facilitates our survival and reproduction, and nature has blessed us with a brain that, like no other, enables culture.

Other animals show the rudiments of culture and language. Monkeys have been observed to learn new food-washing techniques, which then are passed across future generations. And chimps exhibit a modest capacity for language. But no species can accumulate progress across generations as smartly as humans. Your nineteenth-century ancestors had no cars, no indoor plumbing, no electricity, no air conditioning, no Internet, no smartphones,

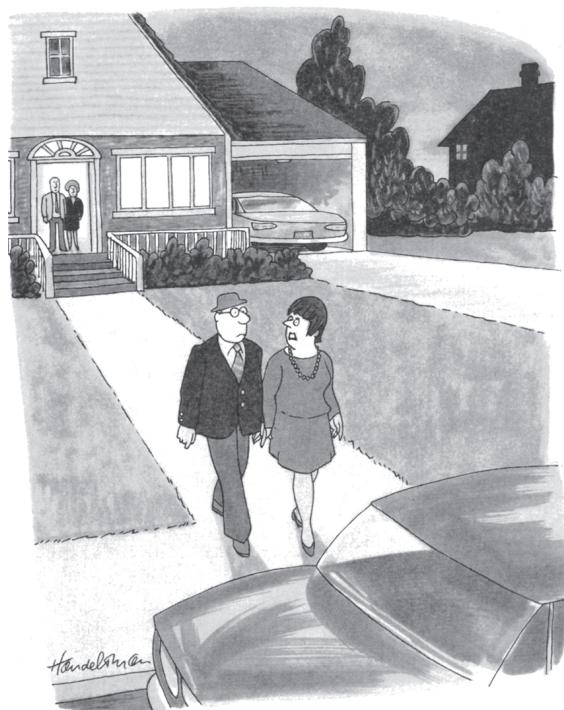
no Facebook pages, and no Post-it notes—all things for which you can thank culture. Intelligence enables innovation, and culture enables dissemination—the transmission of information and innovation across time and place.

The division of labor is “another huge and powerful advantage of culture,” notes Baumeister. Few of us grow food or build shelter, yet nearly everyone reading this book enjoys food and shelter. Indeed, books themselves are a tribute to the division of labor enabled by culture. Although only one lucky person’s name goes on this book’s cover, the product is actually the work of a coordinated team of researchers, reviewers, assistants, and editors. Books and other media disseminate knowledge, providing the engine of progress.

“Culture is what is special about human beings,” concludes Baumeister. “Culture helps us to become something much more than the sum of our talents, efforts, and other individual blessings. In that sense, culture is the greatest blessing of all. . . . Alone we would be but cunning brutes, at the mercy of our surroundings. Together, we can sustain a system that enables us to make life progressively better for ourselves, our children, and those who come after.”

differences are minimal. In contrast, these differences are encountered many times each day by most residents of New York City, where more than one-third of the 8 million residents are foreign-born.

Increasingly, cultural diversity surrounds us. More and more we live in a global village, connected to our fellow villagers by electronic social networks, jumbo jets, and international trade. The mingling of cultures is nothing new. “American” jeans were invented in 1872 by German immigrant Levi Strauss by combining Genes, the trouser style of Genoese sailors, with denim cloth from a French town (Legrain, 2003). An unknown pundit has said that nothing typifies globalization like the death of Princess Diana: “An English princess with an Egyptian boyfriend crashes in



*“Women kiss women good night. Men kiss women good night. But men do not kiss men good night—especially in Armonk.”*

Although some norms are universal, every culture has its own norms—rules for accepted and expected social behavior.

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Cultures mixing. As these London schoolmates illustrate (one of Muslim heritage, the other Anglo Saxon), immigration and globalization are bringing once-distant cultures together.



their hands. In many areas of the globe, your best manners and mine are serious breaches of etiquette. Foreigners visiting Japan often struggle to master the rules of the social game—when to take off their shoes, how to pour the tea, when to give and open gifts, how to act toward someone higher or lower in the social hierarchy.

Migration and refugee evacuations are mixing cultures more than ever. “East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,” wrote the nineteenth-century British author Rudyard Kipling. But today, East and West, and North and South, meet all the time. Italy is home to many Albanians, Germany to Turks, England (where Mohammed in its various spellings is now the most frequent name given to newborn boys [Cohen, 2011]) to Pakistanis. The result is both friendship and conflict. One in 5 Canadians and 1 in 8 Americans is an immigrant. As we work, play, and live with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, it helps to understand how our cultures influence us and how our cultures differ. In a conflict-laden world, achieving peace requires a genuine appreciation for both our genuine differences and our deep similarities.

## NORMS: EXPECTED BEHAVIOR

As etiquette rules illustrate, all cultures have their accepted ideas about appropriate behavior. We often view these social expectations, or **norms**, as a negative force that imprisons people in a blind effort to perpetuate tradition. Norms do restrain and control us—so successfully and so subtly that we hardly sense their existence. Like fish in the ocean, we are all so immersed in our cultures that we must leap out of them to understand their influence. “When we see other Dutch people behaving in what foreigners would call a Dutch way,” noted Dutch psychologists Willem Koomen and Anton Dijker (1997), “we often do not realize that the behavior is typically Dutch.”

There is no better way to learn the norms of our culture than to visit another culture and see that its members do things *that* way, whereas we do them *this* way. When living in Scotland, I acknowledged to my children that, yes, Europeans eat meat with the fork facing down in the left hand. “But we Americans consider it good manners to cut the meat and then transfer the fork to the right hand. I admit it’s inefficient. But it’s the way *we* do it.”

To those who don’t accept them, such norms may seem arbitrary and confining. To most in the Western world, the Muslim woman’s veil seems arbitrary and

a French tunnel, riding in a German car with a Dutch engine, driven by a Belgian who was high on Scotch whiskey, followed closely by Italian paparazzi on Japanese motorcycles, and is treated by an American doctor using medicines from Brazil.”

Confronting another culture is sometimes a startling experience. American males may feel uncomfortable when Middle Eastern heads of state greet the U.S. president with a kiss on the cheek. A German student, accustomed to speaking to “Herr Professor” only on rare occasions, considers it strange that at my institution most faculty office doors are open and students stop by freely. An Iranian student on her first visit to an American McDonald’s restaurant fumbles around in her paper bag looking for the eating utensils until she sees the other customers eating their french fries with, of all things,



confining, but not to most in Muslim cultures. Just as a stage play moves smoothly when the actors know their lines, so social behavior occurs smoothly when people know what to expect. Norms grease the social machinery. In unfamiliar situations, when the norms may be unclear, we monitor others' behavior and adjust our own accordingly.

Cultures vary in their norms for expressiveness, punctuality, rule-breaking, and personal space. Consider the following:

**EXPRESSIVENESS** To someone from a relatively formal northern European culture, a person whose roots are in an expressive Mediterranean culture may seem "warm, charming, inefficient, and time-wasting." To the Mediterranean person, the northern European may seem "efficient, cold, and overconcerned with time" (Beaulieu, 2004; Triandis, 1981).

**PUNCTUALITY** Latin American business executives who arrive late for a dinner engagement may be mystified by how obsessed their North American counterparts are with punctuality. North American tourists in Japan may wonder about the lack of eye contact from passing pedestrians. (See "Research Close-Up: Passing Encounters, East and West.")

**RULE-BREAKING** When people see social norms being violated, such as banned graffiti on a wall, they become more likely to follow the rule-breaking norm by violating other rules, such as littering. In six experiments, a Dutch research team led by Kees Keizer (2008) found people more than doubly likely to disobey social rules when it appeared that others were doing so. For example, when useless flyers were put on bike handles, one-third of cyclists tossed the flyer on the ground as litter when there was no graffiti on the adjacent wall. But more than two-thirds did so when the wall was covered with graffiti (Figure 5.1).

**PERSONAL SPACE** Personal space is a sort of portable bubble or buffer zone that we like to maintain between ourselves and others. As the situation changes, the bubble varies in size. With strangers, most Americans maintain a fairly large personal space, keeping 4 feet or more between us. On uncrowded buses, or in restrooms or libraries, we protect our space and respect others' space. We let friends come closer (Novelli & others, 2010).

Individuals differ: Some people prefer more personal space than others (Smith, 1981; Sommer, 1969; Stockdale, 1978). Groups differ, too: Adults maintain more distance than children. Men keep more distance from one another than do women. For reasons unknown, cultures near the equator prefer less space and more touching and hugging. Thus, the British and the Scandinavians prefer more distance than the French and the Arabs; North Americans prefer more space than Latin Americans.

## FIGURE :: 5.1

### Degraded Surroundings Can Degrade Behavior

In a University of Groningen study, people mostly did not litter the ground with an unwanted flyer when an adjacent wall was clean, but *did* litter when the wall was graffiti laden.

### personal space

The buffer zone we like to maintain around our bodies. Its size depends on our familiarity with whoever is near us.

"SOME 30 INCHES FROM  
MY NOSE, THE FRONTIER  
OF MY PERSON GOES."

—W. H. AUDEN, 1907–1973

# research CLOSE-UP

## Passing Encounters, East and West

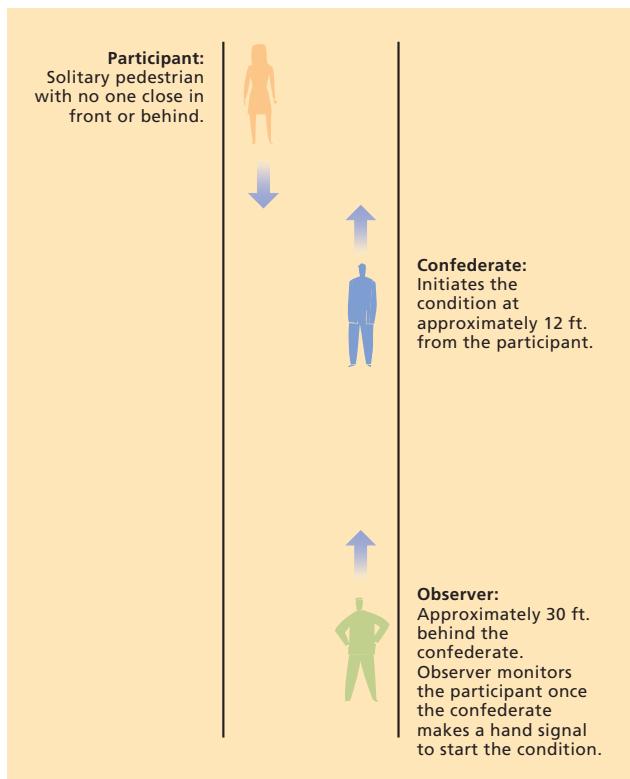
On my Midwestern American campus and in my town, sidewalk passersby routinely glance and smile at one another. In Britain, where I have spent two years, such microinteractions are visibly less common. To a European, our greeting passing strangers might seem a bit silly and disrespectful of privacy; to a Midwesterner, avoiding eye contact—what sociologists have called “civil inattention”—might seem aloof.

To quantify the culture difference in pedestrian interactions, an international team led by Miles Patterson and Yuichi Iizuka (2007) conducted a simple field experiment both in the United States and in Japan with the unwitting participation of more than 1,000 pedestrians. Their procedure illustrates how social psychologists sometimes conduct unobtrusive research in natural settings (Patterson, 2008). As Figure 5.2 depicts, a confederate (an accomplice of the experimenter) would initiate one of three behaviors when within about 12 feet of an

approaching pedestrian on an uncrowded sidewalk: (1) avoidance (looking straight ahead), (2) glancing at the person for less than a second, and (3) looking at the person and smiling. A trailing observer would then record the pedestrian’s reaction. Did the pedestrian glance at the confederate? smile? nod? verbally greet the confederate? (The order of the three conditions was randomized and unknown to the trailing observer, ensuring that the person recording the data was “blind” to the experimental condition.)

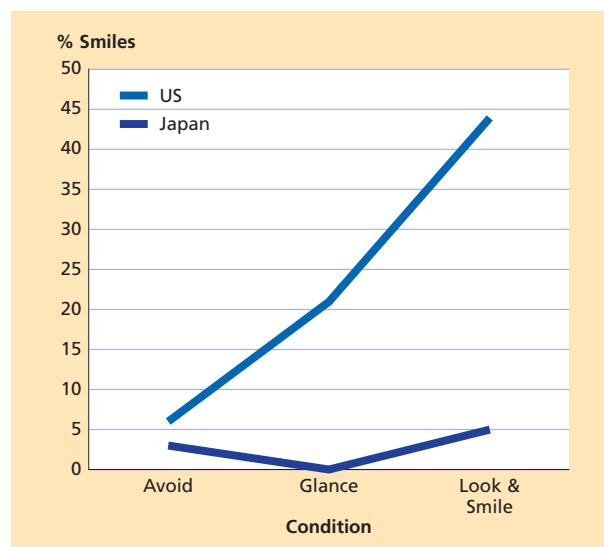
As you might expect, the pedestrians were more likely to look at someone who looked at them and to smile at, nod to, or greet someone who also smiled at them. This was especially so when that someone was female rather than male. But as Figure 5.3 shows, the culture differences were nevertheless striking. As the research team expected, in view of Japan’s greater respect for privacy and cultural reserve when interacting with outgroups, Americans were much more likely to smile at, nod to, or greet the confederate.

In Japan, they conclude, “there is little pressure to reciprocate the smile of the confederate because there is no relationship with the confederate and no obligation to respond.” By contrast, the American norm is to reciprocate a friendly gesture.



**FIGURE :: 5.2**  
Illustration of Passing Encounter

Source: Patterson & others (2006).



**FIGURE :: 5.3**  
American and Japanese Pedestrian Responses, by Condition

Source: Adapted from Patterson & others (2006).

To see the effect of encroaching on another's personal space, play space invader. Stand or sit a foot or so from a friend and strike up a conversation. Does the person fidget, look away, back off, show other signs of discomfort? These are the signs of arousal noted by space-invading researchers (Altman & Vinsel, 1978).

Cultures differ not only in their norms for such behaviors, but also in the strength of their norms. One 33-nation study asked people to rate the appropriateness of various behaviors (such as eating or crying) in different situations (such as at a bank or a party). Societies exposed to threats such as territorial conflict or resource scarcity tend to be "tighter" cultures, with strong, enforced norms (Gelfand & others, 2011).



Former President Bush honored Saudi friendship norms when strolling with Crown Prince Abdullah in 2005. Many heterosexual North American men were, however, startled by the violation of their own norm of distance from other men.

## CULTURAL SIMILARITY

Thanks to human adaptability, cultures differ. Yet beneath the veneer of cultural differences, cross-cultural psychologists see "an essential universality" (Lonner, 1980). As members of one species, we find that the processes that underlie our differing behaviors are much the same everywhere. At ages 4 to 5, for example, children across the world begin to exhibit a "theory of mind" that enables them to infer what others are thinking (Norenzayan & Heine, 2005). If they witness a toy being moved while another child isn't looking, they become able—no matter their culture—to infer that the other child will *think* it still is where it was.

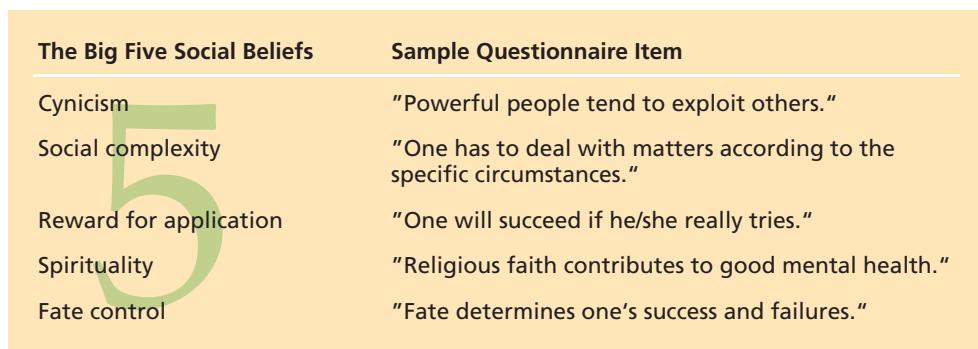
**UNIVERSAL FRIENDSHIP NORMS** People everywhere have some common norms for friendship. From studies conducted in Britain, Italy, Hong Kong, and Japan, Michael Argyle and Monika Henderson (1985) noted several cultural variations in the norms that define the role of friend. For example, in Japan it's especially



"Look, everyone here loves vanilla, right? So let's start there."

Despite enormous cultural variation, we humans do hold some things in common.  
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**FIGURE :: 5.4**  
**Leung and Bond's  
Universal Social Belief  
Dimensions**



The Big Five Social Beliefs	Sample Questionnaire Item
Cynicism	"Powerful people tend to exploit others."
Social complexity	"One has to deal with matters according to the specific circumstances."
Reward for application	"One will succeed if he/she really tries."
Spirituality	"Religious faith contributes to good mental health."
Fate control	"Fate determines one's success and failures."

important not to embarrass a friend with public criticism. But there are also some apparently universal norms: Respect the friend's privacy; make eye contact while talking; don't divulge things said in confidence.

**UNIVERSAL TRAIT DIMENSIONS** Around the world, people tend to describe others along five personality dimensions: stable, outgoing, open, agreeable, and conscientious (John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 2008). If a test specifies where you stand on these "Big Five" dimensions, it pretty well describes your personality, no matter where you live. Moreover, a 49-country study revealed that nation-to-nation differences in people's scores on Big Five traits such as conscientiousness and extraversion are smaller than most people suppose (Terracciano & others, 2005). Australians see themselves as unusually outgoing. The German-speaking Swiss see themselves as strikingly conscientious. And Canadians describe themselves as distinctly agreeable. Actually, however, these national stereotypes exaggerate real differences that are quite modest.

**UNIVERSAL SOCIAL BELIEF DIMENSIONS** Likewise, say Hong Kong social psychologists Kwok Leung and Michael Harris Bond (2004), there are five universal dimensions of social beliefs. In each of the 38 countries they studied, people vary in the extent to which they endorse and apply these social understandings in their daily lives: cynicism, social complexity, reward for application, spirituality, and fate control (Figure 5.4). People's adherence to these social beliefs appears to guide their living. Those who espouse cynicism express lower life satisfaction and favor assertive influence tactics and right-wing politics. Those who espouse reward for application are inclined to invest themselves in study, planning, and competing.

**UNIVERSAL STATUS NORMS** Roger Brown (1965, 1987; Kroger & Wood, 1992) has studied another universal norm. Wherever people form status hierarchies, they also talk to higher-status people in the respectful way they often talk to strangers. And they talk to lower-status people in the more familiar, first-name way they speak to friends. Patients call their physician "Dr. So and So"; the physician may reply using the patients' first names. Students and professors typically address one another in a similarly nonmutual way.

Most languages have two forms of the English pronoun "you": a respectful form and a familiar form (for example, *Sie* and *du* in German, *vous* and *tu* in French, *usted* and *tu* in Spanish). People typically use the familiar form with intimates and subordinates—with close friends and family members but also in speaking to children and pets. A German adolescent receives a boost when strangers begin addressing him or her as "Sie" instead of "du."

This first aspect of Brown's universal norm—that *forms of address communicate not only social distance but also social status*—correlates with a second aspect: *Advances in intimacy are usually suggested by the higher-status person*. In Europe, where most twosomes begin a relationship with the polite, formal "you" and may eventually progress to the more intimate "you," someone obviously has to initiate the increased intimacy. Who do you suppose does so? On some congenial

*In The Female Eunuch, Germaine Greer notes how the language of affection reduces women to foods and baby animals—honey, lamb, sugar, sweetie-pie, kitten, chick.*



Norms—rules for accepted and expected behavior—vary by culture.

occasion, the elder or richer or more distinguished of the two is the one to say, “Let’s say ‘du’ to each other.”

This norm extends beyond language to every type of advance in intimacy. It is more acceptable to borrow a pen from or put a hand on the shoulder of one’s intimates and subordinates than to behave in such a casual way with strangers or superiors. Similarly, the president of my college invites faculty to his home before they invite him to theirs. In the progression toward intimacy, the higher-status person is typically the pacesetter.

**THE INCEST TABOO** The best-known universal norm is the taboo against incest: Parents are not to have sexual relations with their children, nor siblings with one another. Although the taboo apparently is violated more often than psychologists once believed, the norm is still universal. Every society disapproves of incest. Given the biological penalties for inbreeding (through the emergence of disorders linked to recessive genes), evolutionary psychologists can easily understand why people everywhere are predisposed against incest.

**NORMS OF WAR** Humans even have cross-cultural norms for conducting war. In the midst of killing one’s enemy, there are agreed-upon rules that have been honored for centuries. You are to wear identifiable uniforms, surrender with a gesture of submission, and treat prisoners humanely. (If you can’t kill them before they surrender, you should feed them thereafter.) However, although cross-cultural, these norms are not universal. During the Iraq War that began under the George W. Bush administration, Iraqi forces violated these norms by showing surrender flags and then attacking, and by dressing soldiers as liberated civilians to set up ambushes. A U.S. military spokesperson complained that “both of these actions are among the most serious violations of the laws of war” (Clarke, 2003).

So, some norms are culture-specific, others are universal. The force of culture appears in varying norms, whereas it is largely our genetic predispositions—our human nature—that account for the universality of some norms. Thus, we might think of nature as universal and nurture as culture-specific.

So far in this chapter, we have affirmed our biological kinship as members of one human family. We have also acknowledged our cultural diversity. And we have noted how norms vary within and across cultures. Remember that our quest in social psychology is not just to catalog differences but also to identify universal principles of behavior. Our aim is what cross-cultural psychologist Walter Lonner (1989) has called “a universalistic psychology—a psychology that is as valid and meaningful in Omaha and Osaka as it is in Rome and Botswana.”

Attitudes and behaviors will always vary with culture, but the processes by which attitudes influence behavior vary much less. People in Nigeria and Japan

"I AM CONFIDENT THAT  
[IF] MODERN PSYCHOLOGY  
HAD DEVELOPED IN,  
LET US SAY, INDIA, THE  
PSYCHOLOGISTS THERE  
WOULD HAVE DISCOVERED  
MOST OF THE PRINCIPLES  
DISCOVERED BY THE  
WESTERNERS."

—CROSS-CULTURAL  
PSYCHOLOGIST JOHN  
E. WILLIAMS (1993)

define teen roles differently from people in Europe and North America, but in all cultures role expectations guide social relations. English writer G. K. Chesterton had the idea nearly a century ago: When someone “has discovered why men in Bond Street wear black hats he will at the same moment have discovered why men in Timbuctoo wear red feathers.”

## SUMMING UP: How Are We Influenced by Human Nature and Cultural Diversity?

- How are we humans alike, how do we differ—and why? *Evolutionary psychologists* study how *natural selection* favors behavioral traits that promote the perpetuation of one’s genes. Although part of evolution’s legacy is our human capacity to learn and adapt (and therefore to differ from one another), the evolutionary perspective highlights the kinship that results from our shared human nature.
- The cultural perspective highlights human diversity—the behaviors and ideas that define a group and

that are transmitted across generations. The differences in attitudes and behaviors from one *culture* to another indicate the extent to which we are the products of cultural *norms* and roles. Yet cross-cultural psychologists also examine the “essential universality” of all people. For example, despite their differences, cultures have a number of norms in common, such as respecting privacy in friendships and disapproving of incest.

## HOW ARE MALES AND FEMALES ALIKE AND DIFFERENT?

Describe how males and females are alike, and how they differ.

There are many obvious dimensions of human diversity—height, weight, hair color, to name a few. But for people’s self-concepts and social relationships, the two dimensions that matter most—and that people first attune to—are race and, especially, gender (Stangor & others, 1992). When you were born, the first thing people wanted to know about you was, “Is it a boy or a girl?” It’s believed to be either one or the other, and not a matter left to choice. When a Canadian couple in 2011 vowed to keep secret the gender of their baby, “Storm,” so that the child could later develop its own gender identity without having to meet gender expectations, a storm of criticism erupted (AP, 2011).

Many cultures, like North American cultures, deliver a strong message: Everyone *must* be assigned a gender. When an intersex child is born with a combination of male and female sex organs, physicians and the family traditionally have felt compelled to assign the child a gender by diminishing the ambiguity surgically. Between day and night there is dusk. Between hot and cold there is warm. But between male and female there has been, socially speaking, essentially nothing. The closest thing to an exception is *transgender* people, whose sense of being male or female differs from their birth sex (APA, 2010). A person may feel like a woman in a man’s body or a man in a woman’s body—and may dress according to the identity they feel.

### gender

In psychology, the characteristics, whether biological or socially influenced, by which people define male and female.

### Gender and Genes

In Chapter 9, we will consider how race and sex affect the way others regard and treat us. For now, let’s consider **gender**—the characteristics people associate with male and female. What behaviors are characteristic and expected of males? of females?

"Of the 46 chromosomes in the human genome, 45 are unisex," noted Judith Rich Harris (1998). Females and males are therefore similar in many physical traits and developmental milestones, such as the age of sitting up, teething, and walking. They also are alike in many psychological traits, such as overall vocabulary, creativity, intelligence, self-esteem, and happiness. Women and men feel the same emotions and longings, both dote on their children, and they have similar-appearing brains (although, on average, men have more neurons and women have more neural connections). Indeed, noted Janet Shibley Hyde (2005) from her review of 46 meta-analyses (each a statistical digest of dozens of studies), the common result for most variables studied is *gender similarity*. Your "opposite sex" is actually your nearly identical sex.

So shall we conclude that men and women are essentially the same, except for a few anatomical oddities that hardly matter apart from special occasions? Actually, some differences do exist, and it is these differences, not the many similarities, that capture attention and make news. In both science and everyday life, differences excite interest—enough to have stimulated some 18,000 studies comparing females and males (Ellis & others, 2008). Compared with males, the average female

- has 70 percent more fat, has 40 percent less muscle, is 5 inches shorter, and weighs 40 pounds less.
- is more sensitive to smells and sounds.
- is doubly vulnerable to anxiety disorders and depression.

Compared with females, the average male is

- slower to enter puberty (by about two years) but quicker to die (by four years, worldwide).
- three times more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD (attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder), four times more likely to commit suicide, and five times more likely to be killed by lightning.
- more capable of wiggling the ears.

During the 1970s, many scholars worried that studies of such gender differences might reinforce stereotypes. Would gender differences be construed as women's deficits? Although the findings confirm some stereotypes of women—as less physically aggressive, more nurturant, and more socially sensitive—those traits are not only celebrated by many feminists but also preferred by most people, whether male or female (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Swim, 1994). Small wonder, then, that most people rate their beliefs and feelings regarding women as more *favorable* than their feelings regarding men (Eagly, 1994; Haddock & Zanna, 1994).

Let's compare men's and women's social connections, dominance, aggressiveness, and sexuality. After we have described these few differences, we can then consider how the evolutionary and cultural perspectives might explain them. Do gender differences reflect natural selection? Are they culturally constructed—a reflection of the roles that men and women often play and the situations in which they act? Or do genes and culture together bend the genders?

## Independence Versus Connectedness

Individual men display outlooks and behavior that vary from fierce competitiveness to caring nurturance. So do individual women. Without denying that, several late-twentieth-century feminist psychologists contended that women more than men give priority to close, intimate relationships (Chodorow, 1978, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan & others, 1990; Miller, 1986). Consider the evidence:

**PLAY** Compared with boys, girls talk more intimately and play less aggressively, noted Eleanor Maccoby (2002) from her decades of research on gender development. They also play in smaller groups, often talking with one friend. Boys more

*Even in physical traits, individual differences among men and among women far exceed the average differences between the sexes. Don Schollander's world-record-setting 4 minutes, 12 seconds in the 400-meter freestyle swim at the 1964 Olympics trailed the times of all eight women racing in the 2008 Olympic finals for that event.*

"THERE SHOULD BE NO  
QUALMS ABOUT THE  
FORTHRIGHT STUDY OF  
RACIAL AND GENDER  
DIFFERENCES; SCIENCE IS  
IN DESPERATE NEED OF  
GOOD STUDIES THAT . . .  
INFORM US OF WHAT WE  
NEED TO DO TO HELP  
UNDERREPRESENTED  
PEOPLE TO SUCCEED IN  
THIS SOCIETY. UNLIKE THE  
OSTRICH, WE CANNOT  
AFFORD TO HIDE OUR  
HEADS FOR FEAR OF  
SOCIALLY UNCOMFORT-  
ABLE DISCOVERIES."  
—DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOL-  
OGIST SANDRA SCARR (1988)



Girls' play is often in small groups and imitates relationships. Boys' play is more often competitive or aggressive.



often do larger group activities (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). And as they each interact with their own gender, their differences from girls grow.

**FRIENDSHIP** As adults, women in individualist cultures describe themselves in more relational terms, welcome more help, experience more relationship-linked emotions, and are more attuned to others' relationships (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Gabriel & Gardner, 1999; Tamres & others, 2002; Watkins & others, 1998, 2003). In conversation, men more often focus on tasks and on connections with large groups, whereas women focus on personal relationships (Tannen, 1990). "Perhaps because of their greater desire for intimacy," report Joyce Benenson and colleagues (2009), during their first year of college, women are twice as likely as men to change roommates.

On the phone, women's conversations last longer, and girls send more than twice as many text messages as do boys (Friebel & Seabright, 2011; Lenhart, 2010; Smoreda & Licoppe, 2000). On the computer, women also spend more time sending emails, in which they express more emotion (Crabtree, 2002; Thomson & Murachver, 2001). And they spend more time on social networking sites (Pryor & others, 2010).

When in groups, women share more of their lives and offer more support (Dindia & Allen, 1992; Eagly, 1987). When facing stress, men tend to respond with "fight or flight"; often, their response to a threat is combat. In nearly all studies, notes Shelley Taylor (2002), women who are under stress more often "tend and befriend"; they turn to friends and family for support. Among first-year college students, 5 in 10 males and 7 in 10 females say it is *very important* to "help others who are in difficulty" (Sax & others, 2002).

**VOCATIONS** In general, report Felicia Pratto and her colleagues (1997), men gravitate disproportionately to jobs that enhance inequalities (prosecuting attorney, corporate advertising); women gravitate to jobs that reduce inequalities (public defender, advertising work for a charity). Studies of 640,000 people's job preferences reveal that men more than women value earnings, promotion, challenge, and power; women more than men value good hours, personal relationships, and opportunities to help others (Konrad & others, 2000; Pinker, 2008). Indeed, in most of the North American caregiving professions, such as social worker, teacher, and nurse, women outnumber men. Worldwide, women's vocational interests, compared with men's, usually relate more to people and less to things (Diekman & others, 2010; Eagly, 2009; Lippa, 2008a). Men's comparatively greater preference for working with things and women's for working with people also appears in half a million people's responses to various interest inventories (Su & others, 2009).

**FAMILY RELATIONS** Women's connections as mothers, daughters, sisters, and grandmothers bind families (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Following their child's birth,

"IN THE DIFFERENT VOICE  
OF WOMEN LIES THE  
TRUTH OF AN ETHIC OF  
CARE."

—CAROL GILLIGAN,  
IN A DIFFERENT VOICE, 1982

parents (women especially) become more traditional in their gender-related attitudes and behaviors (Ferriman & others, 2009; Katz-Wise, 2010). Women spend more time caring for both preschoolers and aging parents (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). Compared with men, they buy three times as many gifts and greeting cards, write two to four times as many personal letters, and make 10 to 20 percent more long-distance calls to friends and family (Putnam, 2000). Asked to provide photos that portray who they are, women include more photos of parents and of themselves with others (Clancy & Dollinger, 1993).

**SMILING** Smiling, of course, varies with situations. Yet across more than 400 studies, women's greater connectedness has been expressed in their generally higher rate of smiling (LaFrance & others, 2003). For example, when Marianne LaFrance (1985) analyzed 9,000 college yearbook photos, she found females more often smiling. So did Amy Halberstadt and Martha Saitta (1987) in 1,100 magazine and newspaper photos and 1,300 people in shopping malls, parks, and streets.

**EMPATHY** When surveyed, women are far more likely to describe themselves as having **empathy**, or being able to feel what another feels—to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. To a lesser extent, the empathy difference extends to laboratory studies:

- Shown slides or told stories, girls react with more empathy (Hunt, 1990).
- Given upsetting experiences in the laboratory or in real life, women more than men express empathy for others enduring similar experiences (Batson & others, 1996).
- Observing another receiving pain after misbehaving, women's empathy-related brain circuits display elevated activity even when men's do not—after the other had misbehaved (Singer & others, 2006).
- Women are more likely to cry or report feeling distressed at another's distress (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). In a 2003 Gallup poll, 12 percent of American men and 43 percent of women reported having cried as a result of the war in Iraq.

All these differences help to explain why, compared with male friendships, both men and women report friendships with women to be more intimate, enjoyable, and nurturing (Rubin, 1985; Sapadin, 1988). When you want empathy and understanding, someone to whom you can disclose your joys and hurts, to whom do you turn? Most men and women usually turn to women.

One explanation for this male-female empathy difference is that women tend to outperform men at reading others' emotions. In her analysis of 125 studies of men's and women's sensitivity to nonverbal cues, Judith Hall (1984, 2006) discerned that women are generally superior at decoding others' emotional

"CONTRARY TO WHAT  
MANY WOMEN BELIEVE,  
IT'S FAIRLY EASY TO  
DEVELOP A LONG-TERM,  
STABLE, INTIMATE, AND  
MUTUALLY FULFILLING  
RELATIONSHIP WITH A  
GUY. OF COURSE THIS GUY  
HAS TO BE A LABRADOR  
RETRIEVER."

—DAVE BARRY, DAVE  
BARRY'S COMPLETE GUIDE  
TO GUYS, 1995

### empathy

The vicarious experience of another's feelings; putting oneself in another's shoes.

*What do you think: Should Western women become more self-reliant and more attuned to their culture's individualism? Or might women's relational approach to life help transform power-oriented Western societies (marked by high levels of child neglect, loneliness, and depression) into more caring communities?*



*Because they are generally empathic and skilled at reading others' emotions, girls are less vulnerable to autism, which to Simon Baron-Cohen (2004, 2005) represents an "extreme male brain."*

messages. For example, shown a 2-second silent film clip of the face of an upset woman, women guess more accurately whether she is criticizing someone or discussing her divorce. Women also are more often strikingly better than men at recalling others' appearance, report Marianne Schmid Mast and Judith Hall (2006). In experiments, high-status people are less accurate in reading others' emotions (Kraus & others, 2010).

Finally, women are more skilled at *expressing* emotions nonverbally, says Hall. This is especially so for positive emotion, report Erick Coats and Robert Feldman (1996). They had people talk about times they had been happy, sad, and angry. When shown 5-second silent video clips of those reports, observers could much more accurately discern women's than men's emotions when recalling happiness. Men, however, were slightly more successful in conveying anger.

## Social Dominance

Imagine two people: One is "adventurous, autocratic, coarse, dominant, forceful, independent, and strong." The other is "affectionate, dependent, dreamy, emotional, submissive, and weak." If the first person sounds more to you like a man and the second like a woman, you are not alone, report John Williams and Deborah Best (1990, p. 15). From Asia to Africa and Europe to Australia, people rate men as more dominant, driven, and aggressive. Moreover, studies of nearly 80,000 people across 70 countries show that men more than women rate power and achievement as important (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005).

These perceptions and expectations correlate with reality. In essentially every society, men *are* socially dominant (Pratto, 1996). As Peter Hegarty and his colleagues (2010) have observed, across time, men's names have come first: "King and Queen," "his and hers," "Mr. and Mrs.," "Bill and Hillary." Shakespeare never wrote plays with titles such as *Juliet and Romeo* or *Cleopatra and Antony*.

As we will see, gender differences vary greatly by culture, and gender differences are shrinking in many industrialized societies as women assume more managerial and leadership positions. Yet

- Women in 2011 were but 19 percent of the world's legislators (IPU, 2011).
  - Men more than women are concerned with social dominance and are more likely to favor conservative political candidates and programs that preserve group inequality (Eagly & others, 2004; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).
  - Men are half of all jurors but have been 90 percent of elected jury leaders; men are also the leaders of most ad hoc laboratory groups (Colarelli & others, 2006; Davis & Gilbert, 1989; Kerr & others, 1982).
  - In Britain, men hold 87 percent of top-100 company board positions (BIS, 2011).
  - Women's wages are "between 70 and 90 percent of men's wages in a majority of countries," reports the United Nations (2010). Only about one-fifth of this wage gap is attributable to gender differences in education, work experience, or job characteristics (World Bank, 2003).



*"That was a fine report, Barbara. But since the sexes speak different languages, I probably didn't understand a word of it."*

Across many studies, people *perceive* leaders as having more culturally masculine traits—as being more confident, forceful, independent, and outspoken (Koenig & others, 2011). When writing letters of recommendation, people more often use such “agentic” adjectives when describing male candidates, and more “communal” adjectives (helpful, kind, sympathetic, nurturing, tactful) when describing women candidates (Madera & others, 2009). The net effect may be to disadvantage women applying for leadership roles.

Men’s style of communicating undergirds their social power. In situations where roles aren’t rigidly scripted, men tend to be more autocratic, women more democratic (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In leadership roles, men tend to excel as directive, task-focused leaders; women excel more often in the “transformational” leadership that is favored by more and more organizations, with inspirational and social skills that build team spirit. Men more than women place priority on winning, getting ahead, and dominating others (Sidanius & others, 1994). This may explain why people’s preference for a male leader is greater for competitions between groups, such as when countries are at war, than when conflicts occur within a group (Van Vugt & Spisak, 2008).

Men also act more impulsively and take more risks (Byrnes & others, 1999; Cross & others, 2011). One study of data from 35,000 stockbroker accounts found that “men are more overconfident than women” and therefore made 45 percent more stock trades (Barber & Odean, 2001a). Because trading costs money, and because men’s trades proved no more successful, their results underperformed the stock market by 2.65 percent, compared with women’s 1.72 percent underperformance. The men’s trades were riskier—and the men were the poorer for it.

In writing, women tend to use more communal prepositions (“with”), fewer quantitative words, and more present tense. One computer program, which taught itself to recognize gender differences in word usage and sentence structure, successfully identified the author’s gender in 80 percent of 920 British fiction and nonfiction works (Koppel & others, 2002).

In conversation, men’s style reflects their concern for independence, women’s for connectedness. Men are more likely to act as powerful people often do—talking assertively, interrupting intrusively, touching with the hand, staring more, smiling less (Leaper & Robnett, 2011). Stating the results from a female perspective, women’s influence style tends to be more indirect—less interruptive, more sensitive, more polite, less cocky, and more qualified and hedged.

So is it right to declare (in the title words of one 1990s bestseller), *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus?* Actually, note Kay Deaux and Marianne LaFrance (1998), men’s and women’s conversational styles vary with the social context. Much of the style we attribute to men is typical of people (men and women) in positions of status and power (Hall & others, 2006). For example, students nod more when speaking with professors than when speaking with peers, and women nod more than men (Helweg-Larsen & others, 2004). Men—and people in high-status roles—tend to talk louder and to interrupt more (Hall & others, 2005). Moreover, individuals vary; some men are hesitant, some women assertive. To suggest that women and men are from different emotional planets greatly oversimplifies.

*Some gender differences do not correlate with status and power. For example, women at all status levels tend to smile more (Hall & others, 2005).*



*“It’s a guy thing.”*

## Aggression

### aggression

Physical or verbal behavior intended to hurt someone. In laboratory experiments, this might mean delivering electric shocks or saying something likely to hurt another's feelings.

"IF WOMEN WERE IN CHARGE OF ALL THE WORLD'S NATIONS THERE WOULD BE—I SINCERELY BELIEVE THIS—VIRTUALLY NO MILITARY CONFLICTS, AND WHEN THERE WAS A MILITARY CONFLICT, EVERYONE INVOLVED WOULD FEEL JUST AWFUL AND THERE WOULD SOON BE A HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGE OF THOUGHT-FUL NOTES . . . FOLLOWED BY A PEACE LUNCHEON."

—HUMORIST DAVE BARRY,  
1997 (REPRINTED FROM  
FUNNY TIMES, 2011)

By **aggression**, psychologists mean behavior intended to hurt. Throughout the world, hunting, fighting, and warring are primarily male activities (Wood & Eagly, 2007). In surveys, men admit to more aggression than do women. In laboratory experiments, men indeed exhibit more physical aggression, for example, by administering what they believe are hurtful electric shocks (Knight & others, 1996). In Canada, the male-to-female arrest ratio is 8 to 1 for murder (Statistics Canada, 2010). In the United States, where 92 percent of prisoners are male, it is 9 to 1 (FBI, 2009). Almost all suicide terrorists have been young men (Kruglanski & Golec de Zavala, 2005). So also are nearly all battlefield deaths and death row inmates.

But again the gender difference fluctuates with the context. When there is provocation, the gender gap shrinks (Bettencourt & Kernahan, 1997; Richardson, 2005). And within less assaultive forms of aggression—for instance, slapping a family member, throwing something, or verbally attacking someone—women are no less aggressive than men (Björkqvist, 1994; White & Kowalski, 1994). Indeed, says John Archer (2000, 2004, 2007, 2009) from his statistical digests of dozens of studies, women may be slightly more likely to commit indirect aggressive acts, such as spreading malicious gossip. But all across the world and at all ages, men much more often injure others with physical aggression.

## Sexuality

There is also a gender gap in sexual attitudes and assertiveness (Petersen & Hyde, 2010). It's true that in their physiological and subjective responses to sexual stimuli, women and men are "more similar than different" (Griffitt, 1987). Yet consider the following:

- "I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying 'casual' sex with different partners," agreed 48 percent of men and 12 percent of women in an Australian survey (Bailey & others, 2000). One 48-nation study showed country-by-country variation in acceptance of unrestricted sexuality, ranging from relatively promiscuous Finland to relatively monogamous Taiwan (Schmitt, 2005). But in every country studied, it was the men who expressed more desire for unrestricted sex. Likewise, when the BBC surveyed more than 200,000 people in 53 nations, men everywhere more strongly agreed that "I have a strong sex drive" (Lippa, 2008b).
- The American Council on Education's recent survey of a quarter of a million first-year college students offers a similar finding. "If two people really like each other, it's all right for them to have sex even if they've known each other for only a very short time," agreed 58 percent of men but only 34 percent of women (Pryor & others, 2005).
- In a survey of 3,400 randomly selected 18- to 59-year-old Americans, half as many men (25 percent) as women (48 percent) cited affection for the partner as a reason for first intercourse. How often do they think about sex? "Every day" or "several times a day," said 19 percent of women and 54 percent of men (Laumann & others, 1994). Canadians concur, with 11 percent of women and 46 percent of men saying "several times a day" (Fischstein & others, 2007).

The gender difference in sexual attitudes carries over to behavior. "With few exceptions anywhere in the world," reported cross-cultural psychologist Marshall Segall and his colleagues (1990, p. 244), "males are more likely than females to initiate sexual activity."

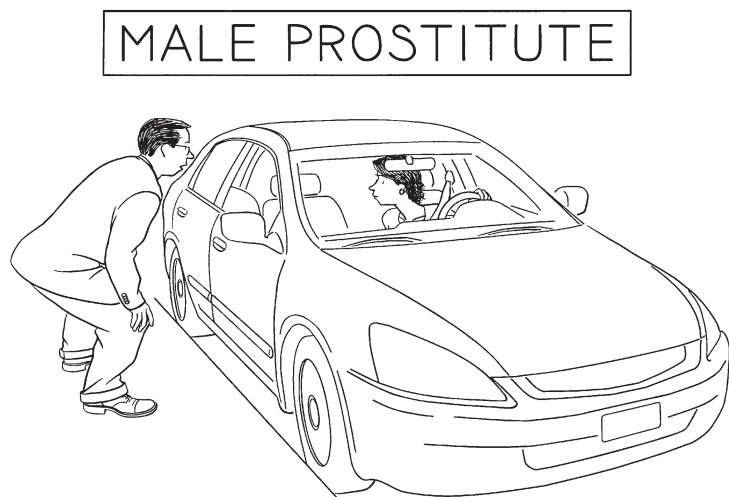
Compared with lesbians, gay men also report more interest in uncommitted sex, more frequent sex, more interest in pornography, more responsiveness to visual stimuli, and more concern with partner attractiveness (Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007;

Rupp & Wallen, 2008; Schmitt, 2007). The 47 percent of coupled American lesbians is double the 24 percent of gay men who are coupled (Doyle, 2005). Among those electing civil unions in Vermont and same-sex marriage in Massachusetts, two-thirds have been female couples (Belluck, 2008; Rothblum, 2007). “It’s not that gay men are oversexed,” observed Steven Pinker (1997). “They are simply men whose male desires bounce off other male desires rather than off female desires.”

Indeed, not only do men fantasize more about sex, have more permissive attitudes, and seek more partners, they also are more quickly aroused, desire sex more often, masturbate more frequently, use more pornography, are less successful at celibacy, refuse sex less often, take more risks, expend more resources to gain sex, and prefer more sexual variety (Baumeister & others, 2001; Baumeister & Vohs, 2004; Petersen & Hyde, 2011). In one sample of 18- to 25-year-old collegians, the median man thought about sex about once per hour, the median woman about once every two hours, albeit with great individual differences (Fisher & others, 2011). One survey asked 16,288 people from 52 nations how many sexual partners they desired in the next month. Among those unattached, 29 percent of men and 6 percent of women wanted more than one partner (Schmitt, 2003, 2005). These results were identical for straight and gay people (29 percent of gay men and 6 percent of lesbians desired more than one partner).

“Everywhere sex is understood to be something females have that males want,” offered anthropologist Donald Symons (1979, p. 253). Small wonder, say Baumeister and Vohs, that cultures everywhere attribute greater value to female than male sexuality, as indicated in gender asymmetries in prostitution and courtship, where men generally offer money, gifts, praise, or commitment in implicit exchange for a woman’s sexual engagement. In human sexual economics, they note, women rarely if ever pay for sex. Like labor unions opposing “scab labor” as undermining the value of their own work, most women oppose other women’s offering “cheap sex,” which reduces the value of their own sexuality. Across 185 countries, the scarcer the available men, the *higher* is the teen pregnancy rate—because when men are scarce “women compete against each other by offering sex at a lower price in terms of commitment” (Barber, 2000; Baumeister & Vohs, 2004). When women are scarce, as is increasingly the case in China and India, the market value of their sexuality rises, and they are able to command greater commitment.

Sexual fantasies, too, express the gender difference (Ellis & Symons, 1990). In male-oriented erotica, women are unattached and lust driven. In romance novels,



*“Oh yeah, baby, I’ll listen to you—I’ll listen to you all night long.”*

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whose primary market is women, a tender male is emotionally consumed by his devoted passion for the heroine. Social scientists aren't the only ones to have noticed. "Women can be fascinated by a four-hour movie with subtitles wherein the entire plot consists of a man and a woman yearning to have, but never actually having a relationship," observes humorist Dave Barry (1995). "Men HATE that. Men can take maybe 45 seconds of yearning, and they want everybody to get naked. Followed by a car chase. A movie called 'Naked People in Car Chases' would do really well among men."

As detectives are more intrigued by crime than virtue, so psychological detectives are more intrigued by differences than similarities. Let us therefore remind ourselves: *Individual* differences far exceed gender differences. Females and males are hardly opposite (altogether different) sexes. Rather, they differ like two folded hands—similar but not the same, fitting together yet differing as they grasp each other.

## SUMMING UP: How Are Males and Females Alike and Different?

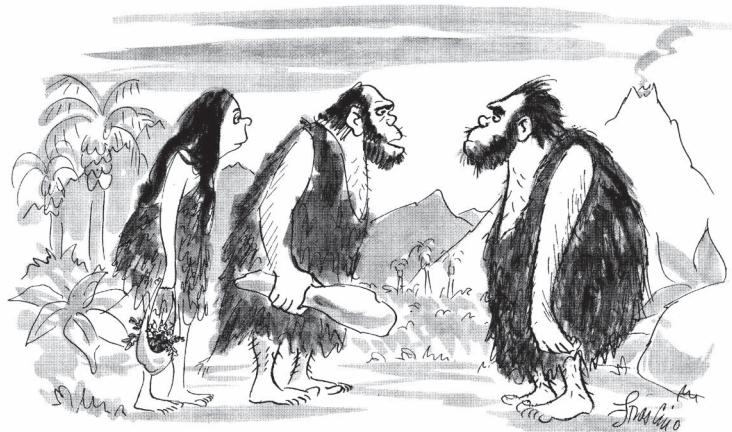
- Boys and girls, and men and women, are in many ways alike. Yet their differences attract more attention than their similarities.
- Social psychologists have explored *gender* differences in independence versus connectedness. Women typically do more caring, express more *empathy* and emotion, and define themselves more in terms of relationships.
- Men and women also tend to exhibit differing social dominance and *aggression*. In every known culture on earth, men tend to have more social power and are more likely than women to engage in physical aggression.
- Sexuality is another area of marked gender differences. Men more often think about and initiate sex, whereas women's sexuality tends to be inspired by emotional passion.

## EVOLUTION AND GENDER: DOING WHAT COMES NATURALLY?

Compare and contrast how evolutionary psychologists, and psychologists working from a sociocultural perspective, seek to explain gender variations.

Mindful of the evidence, gender researcher Diane Halpern (2010) describes "consistent findings of sex differences that hold up across studies, across species, and across cultures." But why? "What do you think is the main reason men and women have different personalities, interests, and abilities?" asked the Gallup Organization (1990) in a national survey. "Is it mainly because of the way men and women are raised, or are the differences part of their biological makeup?" Among the 99 percent who answered the question (apparently without questioning its assumptions), about the same percentage answered "upbringing" as said "biology."

There are, of course, certain salient biological sex differences. Men's genes predispose the muscle mass to hunt game; women's the capability to breastfeed infants. Are biological sex differences limited to such obvious distinctions in reproduction and physique? Or do men's and women's genes, hormones, and brains differ in ways that also contribute to behavioral differences?



*"I hunt and she gathers—otherwise, we couldn't make ends meet."*

© Ed Frascino/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

## Gender and Mating Preferences

Noting the worldwide persistence of gender differences in aggressiveness, dominance, and sexuality, evolutionary psychologist Douglas Kenrick (1987) suggested, as have many others since, that "we cannot change the evolutionary history of our species, and some of the differences between us are undoubtedly a function of that history." Evolutionary psychology predicts no sex differences in all those domains in which the sexes faced similar adaptive challenges (Buss, 1995b, 2009). Both sexes regulate heat with sweat. The two have similar taste preferences to nourish their bodies. And they both grow calluses where the skin meets friction. But evolutionary psychology does predict sex differences in behaviors relevant to mating and reproduction.

Consider, for example, the male's greater sexual initiative. The average male produces many trillions of sperm in his lifetime, making sperm cheap compared with eggs. (If you happen to be an average man, you will make more than 1,000 sperm while reading this sentence.) Moreover, while a female brings one fetus to term and then nurses it, a male can spread his genes by fertilizing many females. Women's investment in childbearing is, just for starters, 9 months; men's investment may be 9 seconds.

Thus, say evolutionary psychologists, females invest their reproductive opportunities carefully, by looking for signs of resources and commitment. Males compete with other males for chances to win the genetic sweepstakes by sending their genes into the future, and thus look for healthy, fertile soil in which to plant their seed. Women want to find men who will help them tend the garden—resourceful and monogamous dads rather than wandering cads. Women seek to reproduce wisely, men widely. Or so the theory goes.

Moreover, evolutionary psychology suggests, physically dominant males excelled in gaining access to females, which over generations enhanced male aggression and dominance as the less-aggressive males had fewer chances to reproduce. Exposing men to images of attractive women primes increased support for international aggression, which is consistent with the theory that mating desires may be one motivation for war (Chang & others, 2011). Whatever genes helped Montezuma II to become Aztec king were also given to his offspring, along with those from many of the 4,000 women in his harem (Wright, 1998). If our ancestral mothers benefited from being able to read their infants' and suitors' emotions, then natural selection may have similarly favored emotion-detecting ability in females. Underlying all these presumptions is a principle: *Nature selects traits that help send one's genes into the future*.

Little of this process is conscious. Few people in the throes of passion stop to think, "I want to give my genes to posterity." Rather, say evolutionary psychologists, our

*In species for which males provide more parental investment than females, notes evolutionary psychologist David Schmitt (2006), males have a longer-term mating strategy, are more discriminating among potential mates, and die later.*

**"A HEN IS ONLY AN EGG'S WAY OF MAKING ANOTHER EGG."**

—SAMUEL BUTLER, 1835–1901

natural yearnings are our genes' way of making more genes. Emotions execute evolution's dispositions, much as hunger executes the body's need for nutrients.

Medical researcher and author Lewis Thomas (1971) captured the idea of hidden evolutionary predispositions in his fanciful description of a male moth responding to a female's release of bombykol, a single molecule of which will tremble the hairs of any male within miles and send him driving upwind in ardor. But it is doubtful if the moth has an awareness of being caught in an aerosol of chemical attractant. On the contrary, he probably finds suddenly that it has become an excellent day, the weather remarkably bracing, the time appropriate for a bit of exercise of the old wings, a brisk turn upwind.

"Humans are living fossils—collections of mechanisms produced by prior selections pressures," says David Buss (1995a). And that, evolutionary psychologists believe, helps explain not only male aggression but also the differing sexual attitudes and behaviors of females and males. Although a man's interpretation of a woman's smile as sexual interest usually proves wrong, occasionally being right can have reproductive payoff.

Evolutionary psychology also predicts that men will strive to offer what women will desire—external resources and physical protection. Male peacocks strut their feathers; male humans, their abs, Audis, and assets (Sundie & others, 2011). In one experiment, teen males rated "having lots of money" as more important after they were put alone in a room with a teen female (Roney, 2003). In one Cardiff, Wales, study, men rated a woman as equally attractive whether she was at the wheel of a humble Ford Fiesta or a swanky Bentley; women found the man more attractive if seen in the luxury car (Dunn & Searle, 2010). "Male achievement is ultimately a courtship display," says Glenn Wilson (1994).

To attract men, women may balloon their breasts, Botox their wrinkles, and liposuction their fat to offer men the youthful, healthy appearance (connoting fertility) that men desire—while, in some experiments, demeaning the success and appearance of other attractive women (Agthe & others, 2008; Vukovic & others, 2008). Women's and men's mate preferences confirm these observations. Consider the following:

- Studies in 37 cultures, from Australia to Zambia, reveal that men everywhere feel attracted to women whose physical features, such as youthful faces and forms, suggest fertility. Women everywhere feel attracted to men whose wealth, power, and ambition promise resources for protecting and nurturing offspring (Figure 5.5). But there are gender similarities, too: Whether residing on an Indonesian island or in urban São Paulo, both women and men desire kindness, love, and mutual attraction.

## FIGURE :: 5.5

### Human Mating Preferences

David Buss and 50 collaborators surveyed more than 10,000 people from all races, religions, and political systems on six continents and five islands. Everywhere, men preferred attractive physical features suggesting youth and health—and reproductive fitness. Everywhere, women preferred men with resources and status.

*Source:* From Buss (1994b).



- Men everywhere tend to be most attracted to women whose age and features suggest peak fertility. For teen boys, this is a woman several years older than themselves. For mid-20s men, it's women their own age. For older men, it's younger women, and the older the man, the greater the age difference he prefers when selecting a mate (Kenrick & others, 2009). One finds this pattern worldwide, in European singles ads, Indian marital ads, and marriage records from the Americas, Africa, and the Philippines (Singh, 1993; Singh & Randall, 2007). Women of all ages prefer men just slightly older than themselves. Again, say the evolutionary psychologists, we see that natural selection predisposes men to feel attracted to female features associated with fertility.
- Monthly fertility also matters. Women's behaviors, scents, and voices provide subtle clues to their ovulation, which men can detect (Haselton & Gildersleeve, 2011). When at peak fertility, women express greater preference for masculine faces, greater apprehensiveness of potentially threatening men, and greater ability to detect men's sexual orientation (Eastwick, 2009; Little & others, 2008; Navarrete & others, 2009; Rule & others, 2011).

Reflecting on those findings, Buss (1999) reports feeling somewhat astonished "that men and women across the world differ in their mate preferences in precisely the ways predicted by the evolutionists. Just as our fears of snakes, heights, and spiders provide a window for viewing the survival hazards of our evolutionary ancestors, our mating desires provide a window for viewing the resources our ancestors needed for reproduction. We all carry with us today the desires of our successful forebears."



Larry King, 25 years older than seventh wife, Shawn Southwick-King.

## Reflections on Evolutionary Psychology

Without disputing natural selection—nature's process of selecting physical and behavioral traits that enhance gene survival—critics see a problem with evolutionary explanations. Evolutionary psychologists sometimes start with an effect (such as the male-female difference in sexual initiative) and then work backward to construct an explanation for it. That approach is reminiscent of functionalism, a dominant theory in psychology during the 1920s, whose logic went like this: "Why does that behavior occur? Because it serves such and such a function." As biologists Paul Ehrlich and Marcus Feldman (2003) have pointed out, the evolutionary theorist can hardly lose when employing hindsight. Today's evolutionary psychology is like yesterday's Freudian psychology, say such critics: Either theory can be retrofitted to whatever happens.

The way to overcome the hindsight bias is to imagine things turning out otherwise. Let's try it. Imagine that women were stronger and more physically aggressive than men. "But of course!" someone might say, "all the better for protecting their young." And if human males were never known to have extramarital affairs, might we not see the evolutionary wisdom behind their fidelity? There is more to bringing offspring to maturity than merely depositing sperm, so men and women both gain by investing jointly in their children. Males who are loyal to their mates and offspring are more apt to ensure that their young will survive to perpetuate

# focus ON

## Evolutionary Science and Religion

A century and a half after Charles Darwin wrote *On the Origin of Species*, controversy continues over his big idea: that every earthly creature is descended from another earthly creature. The controversy rages most intensely in the United States, where a Gallup survey reveals that half of adults do not believe that evolution accounts for "how human beings came to exist on Earth" and that 40 percent believe humans were created "within the past 10,000 years or so" (Newport, 2007b, 2010). This skepticism of evolution persists despite evidence, including research showing species' genetic relatedness, which long ago persuaded 95 percent of scientists that "human beings have developed over millions of years" (Gallup, 1996).

For most scientists, mutation and natural selection explain the emergence of life, including its ingenious designs. For example, the human eye, an engineering marvel that encodes and transmits a rich stream of information, has its building blocks "dotted around the animal kingdom," enabling nature to select mutations that over time improved the design (Dennett, 2005). Indeed, many scientists are fond of quoting the famous dictum of geneticist (and Russian Orthodox Church member) Theodosius Dobzhansky, "Nothing makes sense in biology except in the light of evolution."

Alan Leshner (2005), the American Association for the Advancement of Science's executive director, laments the polarization caused by zealots at both the antiscience

and the antireligious extremes. To resolve the growing science-religion tension, he believes "we must take every opportunity to make clear to the general public that science and religion are not adversaries. They can co-exist comfortably, and both have a place and provide important benefits to society."

There are many scientists who concur with Leshner, believing that science offers answers to questions such as "when?" and "how?" and that religion offers answers to "who?" and "why?" In the fifth century, St. Augustine anticipated today's science-affirming people of faith: "The universe was brought into being in a less than fully formed state, but was gifted with the capacity to transform itself from unformed matter into a truly marvelous array of structures and forms" (Wilford, 1999).

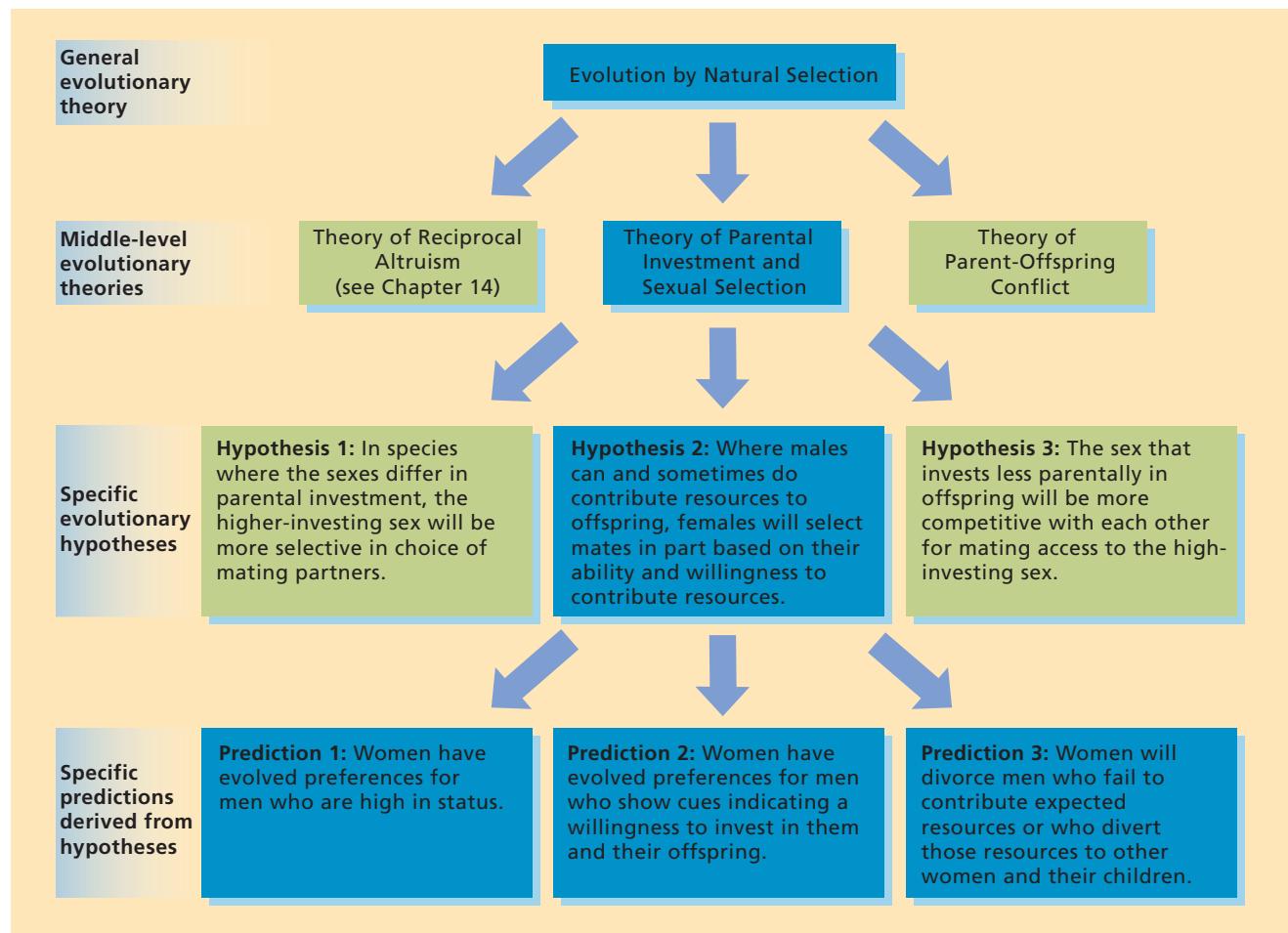
And the universe truly is marvelous, say cosmologists. Had gravity been a tiny bit stronger or weaker, or had the carbon proton weighed ever so slightly more or less, our universe—which is so extraordinarily right for producing life—would never have produced us. Although there are questions beyond science (why is there something rather than nothing?), this much appears true, concludes cosmologist Paul Davies (2004, 2007): Nature seems ingeniously devised to produce self-replicating, information-processing systems (us). Although we appear to have been created over eons of time, the end result is our wonderfully complex, meaningful, and hope-filled existence.

their genes. Monogamy also increases men's certainty of paternity. (These are, in fact, evolutionary explanations—again based on hindsight—for why humans, and certain other species whose young require a heavy parental investment, tend to pair off and be monogamous).

Evolutionary psychologists reply that criticisms of their theories as being hindsight-based are "flat-out wrong." They argue that hindsight plays no less a role in cultural explanations: Why do women and men differ? Because their culture *socializes* their behavior! When people's roles vary across time and place, "culture" describes those roles better than it explains them. And far from being mere hindsight conjecture, say evolutionary psychologists, their field is an empirical science that tests evolutionary predictions with data from animal behavior, cross-cultural observations, and hormonal and genetic studies. As in many scientific fields, observations inspire a theory that generates new, testable predictions (Figure 5.6). The predictions alert us to unnoticed phenomena and allow us to confirm, refute, or revise the theory. Thus, evolutionary psychologists take credit for predicting—and confirming—that

- gender generates jealousy (Levy & Kelly, 2010). Men more often than women experience sexual jealousy (concern about their partner's physical relationship with another). Women more than men experience emotional jealousy (concern about their partner's emotional involvement with another).

*Outside mainstream science, other critics challenge the teaching of evolution. (See "Focus On: Evolutionary Science and Religion.")*

**FIGURE :: 5.6**

Sample predictions derived from evolutionary psychology by David Buss (1995a).

- we favor others who share our genes, such as family members, or can return our favors.
- our memories tend to retain survival-relevant information, such as food location (Confer & others, 2010).

Critics nevertheless contend that the empirical evidence is not strongly supportive of evolutionary psychology's predictions (Buller, 2005, 2009). They also worry that evolutionary speculation about sex and gender "reinforces male-female stereotypes" (Small, 1999). Might evolutionary explanations for gang violence, homicidal jealousy, and rape reinforce and justify male aggression as natural "boys will be boys" behaviors? But remember, reply the evolutionary psychologists, evolutionary wisdom is wisdom from the past. It tells us what behaviors worked in our early history as a species. Whether such tendencies are still adaptive today is an entirely different question.

Evolutionary psychology's critics acknowledge that evolution helps explain both our commonalities and our differences (a certain amount of diversity aids survival). But they contend that our common evolutionary heritage does not, by itself, predict the enormous cultural variation in human marriage patterns (from one spouse to a succession of spouses to multiple wives to multiple husbands to spouse swapping). Nor does it explain cultural changes in behavior patterns over mere decades of time. The most significant trait that nature has endowed us with,

it seems, is the capacity to adapt—to learn and to change. Evolution is *not* genetic determinism, say its defenders, because evolution has prepared us to adapt to varied environments (Confer & others, 2010). As everyone agrees, cultures vary and cultures change.

## Gender and Hormones

If genes predispose gender-related traits, they must do so by their effects on our bodies. In male embryos, the genes direct the formation of testes, which begin to secrete testosterone, the male sex hormone that influences masculine appearance. Studies indicate that girls who were exposed to excess testosterone during fetal development tend to exhibit more tomboyish play behavior than other girls (Hines, 2004). Other case studies have followed males who, having been born without penises, are reared as girls (Reiner & Gearhart, 2004). Despite their being put in dresses and treated as girls, most exhibit male-typical play and eventually—in most cases, not without emotional distress—come to have a male identity.

The gender gap in aggression also seems influenced by testosterone. In various animals, administering testosterone heightens aggressiveness. In humans, violent male criminals have higher than normal testosterone levels; so do National Football League players and boisterous fraternity members (Dabbs, 2000). Moreover, for both humans and monkeys, the gender difference in aggression appears early in life (before culture has much effect) and wanes as testosterone levels decline during adulthood. No one of these lines of evidence is conclusive. Taken together, they convince many scholars that sex hormones matter. But so, as we will see, does culture.

As people mature to middle age and beyond, a curious thing happens. Women become more assertive and self-confident, and men become more empathic and less domineering (Kasen & others, 2006; Lowenthal & others, 1975; Pratt & others, 1990). Hormone changes are one possible explanation for the shrinking gender differences. Role demands are another. Some speculate that during courtship and early parenthood, social expectations lead both sexes to emphasize traits that enhance their roles. While courting, providing, and protecting, men play up their macho sides and forgo their needs for interdependence and nurturance (Gutmann, 1977). While courting and rearing young children, young women restrain their impulses to assert and be independent. As men and women graduate from these early adult roles, they supposedly express more of their restrained tendencies. Each becomes more **androgynous**—capable of both assertiveness and nurturance.

"THE FINEST PEOPLE  
MARRY THE TWO SEXES IN  
THEIR OWN PERSON."

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON,  
JOURNALS, 1843

### androgynous

From *andro*(man) + *gyn* (woman)—thus mixing both masculine and feminine characteristics.

## SUMMING UP: Summing Up: Evolution and Gender: Doing What Comes Naturally?

- Evolutionary psychologists theorize how evolution might have predisposed gender differences in behaviors such as aggression and sexual initiative. Nature's mating game favors males who take sexual initiative toward females—especially those with physical features suggesting fertility—and who seek aggressive dominance in competing with other males. Females, who have fewer reproductive chances, place a greater priority on selecting mates offering the resources to protect and nurture their young.
- Critics say that evolutionary explanations are sometimes after-the-fact conjectures that fail to account for the reality of cultural diversity; they also question whether enough empirical evidence exists to support evolutionary psychology's theories and are concerned that these theories will reinforce troublesome stereotypes.
- Although biology (for example, in the form of male and female hormones) plays an important role in gender differences, social roles are also a major influence. What's agreed is that nature endows us with a remarkable capacity to adapt to differing contexts.

# CULTURE AND GENDER: DOING AS THE CULTURE SAYS?

Understand how culture's influence is vividly illustrated by differing gender roles across place and time.

Culture, as we noted earlier, is what's shared by a large group and transmitted across generations—ideas, attitudes, behaviors, and traditions. Like biological creatures, cultures vary and compete for resources and thus evolve over time (Mesoudi, 2009). Cultures evolve through a “culture cycle,” noted Hazel Markus and Alana Conner (2011): “1) people create the cultures to which they later adapt, and 2) cultures shape people so that they act in ways that perpetuate their cultures.” Humans are culturally shaped culture shapers.

We can see the shaping power of culture in ideas about how men and women should behave. And we can see culture in the disapproval they endure when they violate those expectations (Kite, 2001). In countries everywhere, girls spend more time helping with housework and child care, and boys spend more time in unsupervised play (Edwards, 1991; Kalenkoski & others, 2009; United Nations, 2010). Even in contemporary, dual-career, North American marriages, men do most of the household repairs, and women arrange the child care (Bianchi & others, 2000; Fisher & others, 2007).

Gender socialization, it has been said, gives girls “roots” and boys “wings.” Peter Crabb and Dawn Bielawski (1994) surveyed twentieth-century children’s books that received the prestigious Caldecott Award and found that the books showed girls four times more often than boys using household objects (such as broom, sewing needle, or pots and pans), and boys five times more often than girls using production objects (such as pitchfork, plow, or gun). For adults, the situation is not much different. In all the world’s regions, reported the United Nations (2010), “women spend at least twice as much time as men on unpaid domestic work,” and their total work hours (paid + unpaid) exceed men’s. Moreover, women are “rarely employed in jobs with status, power and authority” and are the chief executive of only 13 of the world’s 500 largest corporations. Such behavior expectations for males and females—of who should cook, wash dishes, hunt game, and lead companies and countries—define **gender roles**.

Does culture construct these gender roles? Or do gender roles merely reflect men’s and women’s natural behavior tendencies? The variety of gender roles across cultures and over time shows that culture indeed helps construct our gender roles.

“AT THE UNITED NATIONS,  
WE HAVE ALWAYS UNDER-  
STOOD THAT OUR WORK  
FOR DEVELOPMENT  
DEPENDS ON BUILDING A  
SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP  
WITH THE AFRICAN FARMER  
AND HER HUSBAND.”

—SECRETARY-GENERAL KOFI  
ANNAN, 2002

**gender role**  
A set of behavior  
expectations (norms) for  
males and females.



Three months after the southeast Asian tsunami on December 26, 2004, Oxfam (2005) counted deaths in eight villages and found that female deaths were at least triple those of men. (The women were more likely to be in or near their homes, near the shore, and less likely to be at sea or away from home on errands or at work.)

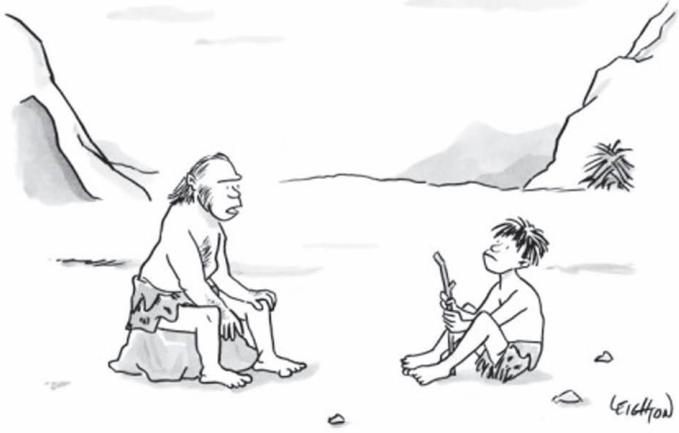


In Western countries, gender roles are becoming more flexible. No longer is preschool teaching necessarily women's work and piloting necessarily men's work.



In modern cultures, more than in ages past, things (including gender roles) are not the way they were.

© Robert Leighton/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com



*"When I was your age, things were exactly the way they are now."*

## Gender Roles Vary with Culture

Despite gender role inequalities, the majority of the world's people would ideally like to see more parallel male and female roles. A 2003 Pew Global Attitudes survey asked 38,000 people whether life was more satisfying when both spouses work and share child care, or when women stay home and care for the children while the husband provides. In 41 of 44 countries, most chose the first answer.

However, big country-to-country differences exist. Egyptians disagreed with the world majority opinion by 2 to 1, whereas Vietnamese concurred by 11 to 1. When jobs are scarce, should men have more right to a job? Yes, agreed about 1 in 8 people in Britain, Spain, and the United States—and 4 in 5 people in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Nigeria (Pew, 2010, July 10).

## Gender Roles Vary over Time

In the last half-century—a thin slice of our long history—gender roles have changed dramatically. In 1938, just 1 in 5 Americans approved “of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her.” By 1996, 4 in 5 approved (Niemi & others, 1989; NORC, 1996). In 1967, 57 percent of first-year American collegians agreed that “the activities of married women are best confined to the home and family.” In 2005, when the question was last asked, only 20 percent agreed (Astin & others, 1987; Pryor & others, 2005).

Behavioral changes have accompanied this attitude shift. In 1965 the Harvard Business School had never granted a degree to a woman. In 2010, 38 percent of its graduates were women. From 1960 to 2011, women rose from 6 percent to 47 percent of U.S. medical students and from 3 percent to 50 percent of law students (AMA, 2010; ABA, 2011; Hunt, 2000). In the mid-1960s American married women devoted *seven times* as many hours to housework as did their husbands (Bianchi & others, 2000). By 2010, the gender gap had shrunk, yet persisted: 20 percent of men and 49 percent of women did housework in an average day; with women averaging 2.6 hours on their housework days and men 2.1 hours on theirs (BLS, 2011).

The changing male-female roles cross many cultures, as illustrated by women's gradually increasing representation in the parliaments of most nations (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; IPU, 2011). Such changes,

across cultures and over a remarkably short time, signal that evolution and biology do not fix gender roles: Time also bends the genders.

## Peer-Transmitted Culture

Cultures, like ice cream, come in many flavors. On Wall Street, men mostly wear suits and women often wear skirts and dresses. In Scotland, many men wear pleated skirts (kilts) as formal dress. In some equatorial cultures, men and women wear virtually nothing at all. How are such traditions preserved across generations?

The prevailing assumption is what Judith Rich Harris (1998, 2007) calls *The Nurture Assumption*: Parental nurture, the way parents bring their children up, governs who their children become. On that much, Freudians and behaviorists—and your next-door neighbor—agree. Comparing the extremes of loved children and abused children suggests that parenting *does* matter. Moreover, children do acquire many of their values, including their political affiliation and religious faith, at home. But if children's personalities likewise are molded by parental example and nurture, then children who grow up in the same families should be noticeably alike, shouldn't they?

That presumption is refuted by the most astonishing, agreed-upon, and dramatic finding of developmental psychology. In the enduring words of behavior geneticists Robert Plomin and Denise Daniels (1987), "Two children in the same family [are on average] as different from one another as are pairs of children selected randomly from the population."

The evidence from studies of twins and biological and adoptive siblings indicates that genetic influences explain roughly 50 percent of individual variations in personality traits. Shared environmental influences—including the shared home influence—account for only 0 to 10 percent of their personality differences. So what accounts for the other 40 to 50 percent? It's largely *peer influence*, Harris argues. What children and teens care most about is not what their parents think but what peers think. Children and youth learn their culture—their games, their musical tastes, their accents, even their dirty words—mostly from peers. Most teens therefore talk, act, and dress more like their peers than their parents. In hindsight, that makes sense. It's their peers with whom they play and eventually will work and mate. Consider the following:

- Preschoolers will often refuse to try a certain food despite parents' urgings—until they are put at a table with a group of children who like it.
- Although children of smokers have an elevated smoking rate, the effect seems largely peer mediated. Such children more often have friends who model smoking, who suggest its pleasures, and who offer cigarettes.
- Young immigrant children whose families are transplanted into foreign cultures usually grow up preferring the language and norms of their new peer culture. They may "code-switch" when they step back into their homes, but their hearts and minds are with their peer groups. Likewise, deaf children of hearing parents who attend schools for the deaf usually leave their parents' culture and assimilate into deaf culture.

Ergo, if we left a group of children with their same schools, neighborhoods, and peers but switched the parents around, says Harris (1996) in taking her argument to its limits, they "would develop into the same sort of adults." Parents have an important influence, but it's substantially indirect; parents help define the schools, neighborhoods, and peers that directly influence whether their children become delinquent, use drugs, or get pregnant. Moreover, children often take their cues from slightly older children, who get their cues from older youth, who take theirs from young adults in the parents' generation.

The links of influence from parental group to child group are loose enough that the cultural transmission is never perfect. And in both human and primate



Children learn many of their attitudes from their peers.

cultures, change comes from the young. When one monkey discovers a better way of washing food or when people develop a new idea about fashion or gender roles, the innovation usually comes from the young and is more readily embraced by younger adults. Thus, cultural traditions continue; yet cultures change.

## SUMMING UP: Culture and Gender: Doing as the Culture Says?

- The most heavily researched of roles—*gender roles*—reflect biological influence but also illustrate culture’s strong impact. The universal tendency has been for males, more than females, to occupy socially dominant roles.
- Gender roles show significant variation from culture to culture and from time to time.
- Much of culture’s influence is transmitted to children by their peers.

## WHAT CAN WE CONCLUDE ABOUT GENES, CULTURE, AND GENDER?

Explain how biology and culture interact, and also how our individual personalities interact with our situations.

### Biology and Culture

We needn’t think of evolution and culture as competitors. Cultural norms subtly yet powerfully affect our attitudes and behavior. But they don’t do so independent of biology. Everything social and psychological is ultimately biological. If others’ expectations influence us, that is part of our biological programming. Moreover, what our biological heritage initiates, culture may accentuate. Genes and hormones predispose males to be more physically aggressive than females. But culture

amplifies that difference through norms that expect males to be tough and females to be the kinder, gentler sex.

Biology and culture may also **interact**. Advances in genetic science indicate how experience uses genes to change the brain (Quartz & Sejnowski, 2002). Environmental stimuli can activate genes that produce new brain cell branching receptors. Visual experience activates genes that develop the brain's visual area. Parental touch activates genes that help offspring cope with future stressful events. Genes are not set in stone; they respond adaptively to our experiences.

A new field of *epigenetics* (meaning "in addition to" genetics) explores the molecular mechanisms by which environments trigger genetic expression. Experience may attach complex molecules to parts of DNA molecules, thereby preventing any genes in that stretch of DNA from producing the proteins coded by that gene. Diet, drugs, and stress, including child abuse, can all produce the epigenetic molecules that regulate gene expression (Champagne & others, 2003; Champagne & Mashoodh, 2009; McGowan & others, 2010).

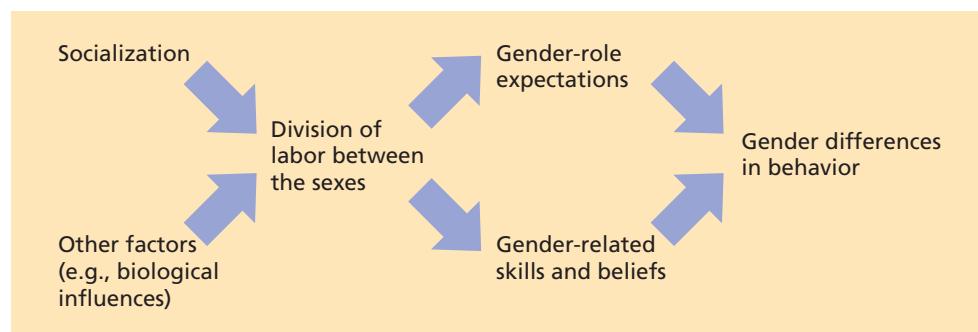
Biology and experience interact when biological traits influence how the environment reacts. Men, being 8 percent taller and averaging almost double the proportion of muscle mass, are bound to experience life differently from women. Or consider this: A very strong cultural norm dictates that males should be taller than their female mates. In one U.S. study, only 1 in 720 married couples violated that norm (Gillis & Avis, 1980). With hindsight, we can speculate a psychological explanation: Perhaps being taller helps men perpetuate their social power over women. But we can also speculate evolutionary wisdom that might underlie the cultural norm: If people preferred partners of their own height, tall men and short women would often be without partners. As it is, evolution dictates that men tend to be taller than women, and culture dictates the same for couples. So the height norm might well be a result of biology *and* culture.

Alice Eagly (2009) and Wendy Wood (Wood & Eagly, 2007) theorize how biology and culture interact (Figure 5.7). They believe that a variety of factors, including biological influences and childhood socialization, predispose a sexual division of labor. In adult life the immediate causes of gender differences in social behavior are the *roles* that reflect this sexual division of labor. Men, because of their biologically endowed strength and speed, tend to be found in roles demanding physical power. Women's capacity for childbearing and breastfeeding inclines them to more nurturant roles. Each sex then tends to exhibit the behaviors expected of those who fill such roles and to have their skills and beliefs shaped accordingly. Nature and nurture are a "tangled web." As role assignments become more equal, Eagly predicts that gender differences "will gradually lessen."

Indeed, note Eagly and Wood, in cultures with greater equality of gender roles, the gender difference in mate preferences (men seeking youth and domestic skill, women seeking status and earning potential) is less. Likewise, as women's employment in formerly male occupations has increased, the gender difference in

### interaction

A relationship in which the effect of one factor (such as biology) depends on another factor (such as environment).



**FIGURE :: 5.7**

### A Social-Role Theory of Gender Differences in Social Behavior

Various influences, including childhood experiences and factors, bend males and females toward differing roles. It is the expectations and the skills and beliefs associated with these differing roles that affect men's and women's behavior.

*Source:* Adapted from Eagly (1987, 2009) and Eagly & Wood (1991).

# THE inside STORY

Alice Eagly on Gender Similarities and Differences

I began my work on gender with a project on social influence in the early 1970s. Like many feminist activists of the day, I initially assumed that, despite negative cultural stereotypes about women, the behavior of women and men is substantially equivalent. Over the years, my views have evolved considerably. I have found that some social behaviors of women and men are somewhat different, especially in situations that bring gender roles to mind.

People should not assume that these differences necessarily reflect unfavorably on women. Women's tendencies to be more attuned to other people's concerns and to treat others more democratically are favorably evaluated and can be assets in many situations. In fact, my

research on gender stereotypes shows that, if we take both negative and positive qualities into account, the stereotype of women is currently more favorable than the stereotype of men. However, the qualities of niceness and nurturance that are important in expectations about women may decrease their power and effectiveness in situations that call for assertive and competitive behavior.

Alice Eagly  
Northwestern University



self-reported masculinity/femininity has decreased (Twenge, 1997). As men and women enact more similar roles, some psychological differences shrink.

But not all, report David Schmitt and his international colleagues (2008). Personality tests taken by men and women in 55 nations show that across the world, women report more extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. These gender differences are greatest in (surprise) prosperous, educated, egalitarian countries. In less fortunate economic and social contexts, suggests Schmitt, "the development of one's inherent personality traits is more restrained."

Although biology predisposes men to strength tasks and women to infant care, Wood and Eagly (2002) conclude that "the behavior of women and men is sufficiently malleable that individuals of both sexes are fully capable of effectively carrying out organizational roles at all levels." For today's high-status and often high-tech work roles, male size and aggressiveness matter little. Moreover, lowered birthrates mean that women are less constrained by pregnancy and nursing. The end result, when combined with competitive pressures for employers to hire the best talent regardless of gender, is greater gender equality.

## The Power of the Situation and the Person

*Food for thought: If Bohr's statement is a great truth, what is its opposite?*

"There are trivial truths and great truths," declared the physicist Niels Bohr. "The opposite of a trivial truth is plainly false. The opposite of a great truth is also true." Each chapter in this unit on social influence teaches a great truth: *the power of the situation*. This great truth about the power of external pressures would explain our behavior if we were passive, like tumbleweeds. But, unlike tumbleweeds, we are not just blown here and there by the situations in which we find ourselves. We act; we react. We respond, and we get responses. We can resist the social situation and sometimes even change it. For that reason, I've chosen to conclude each of these "social influence" chapters by calling attention to the opposite of the great truth: *the power of the person*.

Perhaps stressing the power of culture leaves you somewhat uncomfortable. Do external forces determine your behavior? Most of us see ourselves as free beings, as the originators of our actions (well, at least of our good actions). We worry that

cultural explanations for our actions might lead to what philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre called “bad faith”—evading responsibility by blaming something or someone for one’s fate.

Actually, social control (the power of the situation) and personal control (the power of the person) no more compete with each other than do biological and cultural explanations. Social and personal explanations are both valid, for at any moment we are both the creatures and the creators of our social worlds. We may well be the products of the interplay of our genes and environment. But it is also true that the future is coming, and it is our job to decide where it is going. Our choices today determine our environment tomorrow.

Social situations do profoundly influence individuals. But individuals also influence social situations. The two *interact*. Asking whether external situations or inner dispositions determine behavior is like asking whether length or width determines a room’s area.

The interaction occurs in at least three ways (Snyder & Ickes, 1985).

- *A given social situation often affects different people differently.* Because our minds do not see reality identically or objectively, we respond to a situation as we construe it. And some people (groups as well as individuals) are more sensitive and responsive to social situations than others (Snyder, 1983). The Japanese, for example, are more responsive to social expectations than the British (Argyle & others, 1978).
- *People often choose their situations* (Ickes & others, 1997). Given a choice, sociable people elect situations that evoke social interaction. When you chose your college, you were also choosing to expose yourself to a specific set of social influences. Ardent political liberals are unlikely to choose to live in suburban Dallas, join the Chamber of Commerce, and watch Fox News. They are more likely to live in San Francisco or Toronto, join Greenpeace, and read the *Huffington Post*—in other words, to choose a social world that reinforces their inclinations.
- *People often create their situations.* Recall again that our preconceptions can be self-fulfilling: If we expect someone to be extraverted, hostile, intelligent, or sexy, our actions toward the person may induce the very behavior we expect. What, after all, makes a social situation but the people in it? A conservative environment is created by conservatives. What takes place in the sorority or fraternity is created by its members. The social environment is not like the weather—something that just happens to us. It is more like our homes—something we make for ourselves.

Thus, power resides both in persons and in situations. *We create and are created by our cultural worlds.*

“THE WORDS OF  
TRUTH ARE ALWAYS  
PARADOXICAL.”

—LAO-TZU, THE SIMPLE WAY,  
6TH CENTURY B.C.

## SUMMING UP: What Can We Conclude About Genes, Culture, and Gender?

- Biological and cultural explanations need not be contradictory. Indeed, they *interact*. Biological factors operate within a cultural context, and culture builds on a biological foundation.
- The great truth about the power of social influence is but half the truth if separated from its

complementary truth: the power of the person. Persons and situations interact in at least three ways. First, individuals vary in how they interpret and react to a given situation. Second, people choose many of the situations that influence them. Third, people help create their social situations.

**POSTSCRIPT:****Should We View Ourselves as Products or Architects of Our Social Worlds?**

The reciprocal causation between situations and persons allows us to see people as either *reacting to* or *acting upon* their environment. Each perspective is correct, for we are both the products and the architects of our social worlds. But is one perspective wiser? In one sense, it is wise to see ourselves as the creatures of our environments (lest we become too proud of our achievements and blame ourselves too much for our problems) and to see others as free actors (lest we become paternalistic and manipulative).

Perhaps, however, we would do well more often to assume the reverse—to view ourselves as free agents and to view others as situationally influenced. We would then assume self-efficacy as we view ourselves, and we would seek understanding and social reform as we relate to others. Most religions, in fact, encourage us to take responsibility for ourselves but to refrain from judging others. Is that because our natural inclination is the opposite: to excuse our own failures while blaming others for theirs?

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CHAPTER

6

# Conformity and Obedience



**"Whatever crushes individuality is despotism, by whatever name it may be called."**

—John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, 1859

**"The social pressures community brings to bear are a mainstay of our moral values."**

—Amitai Etzioni, *The Spirit of Community*, 1993

**What is conformity?**

**What are the classic conformity and obedience studies?**

**What predicts conformity?**

**Why conform?**

**Who conforms?**

**Do we ever want to be different?**

**Postscript: On being an individual within community**

You have surely experienced the phenomenon: As a controversial speaker or a music concert finishes, the adoring fans near the front leap to their feet, applauding. The approving folks just behind them follow their example and join the standing ovation. Now the wave of people standing reaches people who, unprompted, would merely be giving polite applause from their comfortable seats. Seated among them, part of you wants to stay seated ("this speaker was nothing exciting"). But as the wave of standing people sweeps by, will you alone stay seated? It's not easy being a minority of one. Unless you heartily dislike what you've just heard, you will probably rise to your feet, at least briefly.

Such scenes of conformity raise this chapter's questions:

- Why, given our diversity, do we so often behave as social clones?
- Under what circumstances are we most likely to conform?
- Are certain people more likely than others to conform?
- Who resists the pressure to conform?
- Is conformity as bad as my image of a docile "herd" implies?

Should I instead be describing their "group solidarity" and "social sensitivity"?

## WHAT IS CONFORMITY?

Define conformity, and compare compliance, obedience, and acceptance.

Let us take the last question first. Is conformity good or bad? That question has no scientific answer. Assuming the values most of us share, we can say that conformity is at times bad (when it leads someone to drive drunk or to join in racist behavior), at times good (when it inhibits people from cutting into a theater line), and at times inconsequential (when it disposes tennis players to wear white).

In Western individualistic cultures, where submitting to peer pressure is not admired, the word “conformity” carries a negative connotation. How would you feel if you overheard someone describing you as a “real conformist”? I suspect you would feel hurt. North American and European social psychologists, reflecting their individualistic cultures, give social influence negative labels (conformity, submission, compliance) rather than positive ones (communal sensitivity, responsiveness, cooperative team play).

In Japan, going along with others is a sign not of weakness but of tolerance, self-control, and maturity (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). “Everywhere in Japan,” observed Lance Morrow (1983), “one senses an intricate serenity that comes to a people who know exactly what to expect from each other.” Such is also true of self-organized U2 fans whom Marie Helweg-Larsen and Barbara LoMonaco (2008) observed queuing overnight for unreserved concert places at or near the front rail. With the U2 fan code of honor, it’s first come, first served. Fans disdain line cutters.

The moral: We choose labels to suit our values and judgments. Labels both describe and evaluate, and they are inescapable. So let us be clear on the meanings of these labels: conformity, compliance, obedience, acceptance.

Conformity is not just acting as other people act; it is also being *affected* by how they act. It is acting or thinking differently from the way you would act and think if you were alone. Thus, **conformity** is a change in behavior or belief to accord with others. When, as part of a crowd, you rise to cheer a game-winning goal, are you conforming? When, along with millions of others, you drink milk or coffee, are you conforming? When you and everyone else agree that women look better with longer hair than with crew cuts, are you conforming? Maybe, maybe not. The key is whether your behavior and beliefs would be the same apart from the group. Would you rise to cheer the goal if you were the only fan in the stands?

There are several varieties of conformity (Nail & others, 2000). Consider three: compliance, obedience, and acceptance. Sometimes we conform to an expectation or a request without really believing in what we are doing. We put on the necktie or the dress, although we dislike doing so. This insincere, outward conformity is **compliance**. We comply primarily to reap a reward or avoid a punishment. If our compliance is to an explicit command, we call it **obedience**.

Sometimes we genuinely believe in what the group has persuaded us to do. We may join millions of others in exercising because we accept that exercise is healthy. This sincere, inward conformity is called **acceptance**. There is even a neuroscience of compliance and acceptance: The shorter-lived memories that underlie public compliance have a different neural basis than the memories that underlie longer-term private acceptance (Edelson & others, 2011; Zaki & others, 2011).

Acceptance sometimes follows compliance; we may come to inwardly believe something we initially questioned. As Chapter 4 emphasized, attitudes follow behavior. Unless we feel no responsibility for our behavior, we usually become sympathetic to what we have stood up for.

### conformity

A change in behavior or belief as the result of real or imagined group pressure.

### compliance

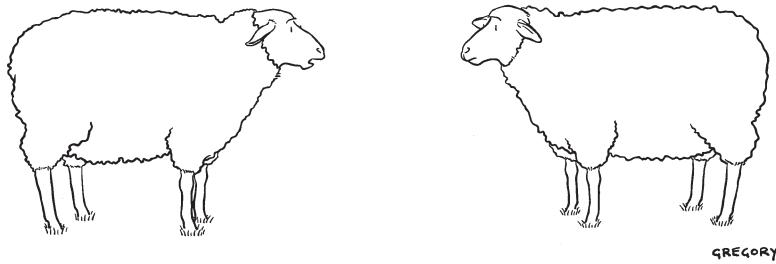
Conformity that involves publicly acting in accord with an implied or explicit request while privately disagreeing.

### obedience

Acting in accord with a direct order or command.

### acceptance

Conformity that involves both acting and believing in accord with social pressure.



*“Sure, I follow the herd—not out of brainless obedience, mind you, but out of a deep and abiding respect for the concept of community.”*

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## SUMMING UP: What Is Conformity?

Conformity—changing one’s behavior or belief as a result of group pressure—comes in two forms. Compliance is outwardly going along with the group while inwardly

disagreeing; a subset of compliance is *obedience*, compliance with a direct command. Acceptance is believing as well as acting in accord with social pressure.

## WHAT ARE THE CLASSIC CONFORMITY AND OBEDIENCE STUDIES?

Describe how social psychologists have studied conformity in the laboratory. Explain what their findings reveal about the potency of social forces and the nature of evil.

Researchers who study conformity and obedience construct miniature social worlds—laboratory microcultures that simplify and simulate important features of everyday social influence. Some of these studies revealed such startling findings that they have been widely replicated, making them “classic” experiments. We will consider three, each of which provides a method for studying conformity—and plenty of food for thought.

### Sherif's Studies of Norm Formation

The first classic study bridges Chapter 5’s focus on culture’s power to perpetuate norms with this chapter’s focus on conformity. Muzafer Sherif (1935, 1937) wondered whether it was possible to observe the emergence of a social norm in the laboratory. Like biologists seeking to isolate a virus so they can experiment with it, Sherif wanted to isolate and then experiment with norm formation.

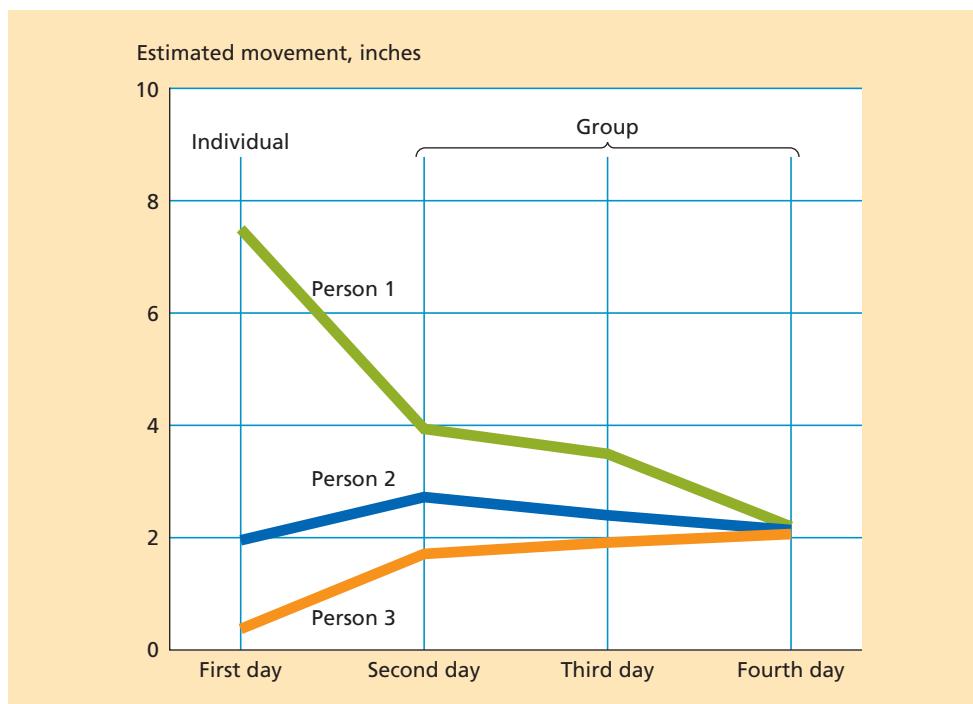
Imagine yourself a participant in one of Sherif’s experiments. You find yourself seated in a dark room. Fifteen feet in front of you a pinpoint of light appears. At first, nothing happens. Then for a few seconds it moves erratically and finally disappears. Now you must guess how far it moved. The dark room gives you no way to judge distance, so you offer an uncertain “six inches.” The experimenter repeats the procedure. This time you say, “Ten inches.” With further repetitions, your estimates continue to average about eight inches.

The next day you return to the darkened room, joined by two other participants who had the same experience the day before. When the light goes off for the first time, the other two people offer their best guesses from the day before. “One inch,” says one. “Two inches,” says the other. A bit taken aback, you nevertheless

**FIGURE :: 6.1****A Sample Group from Sheriff's Study of Norm Formation**

Three individuals converge as they give repeated estimates of the apparent movement of a point of light.

*Source:* Data from Sherif & Sherif (1969), p. 209.



say, "Six inches." With repetitions of this group experience, both on this day and for the next two days, will your responses change? The Columbia University men whom Sherif tested changed their estimates markedly. As Figure 6.1 illustrates, a group norm typically emerged. (The norm was false. Why? The light never moved! Sherif had taken advantage of an optical illusion called the **autokinetic phenomenon**.)

Sherif and others have used this technique to answer questions about people's suggestibility. When people were retested alone a year later, would their estimates again diverge or would they continue to follow the group norm? Remarkably, they continued to support the group norm (Rohrer & others, 1954). (Does that suggest compliance or acceptance?)

Struck by culture's seeming power to perpetuate false beliefs, Robert Jacobs and Donald Campbell (1961) studied the transmission of false beliefs in their Northwestern University laboratory. Using the autokinetic phenomenon, they had a confederate give an inflated estimate of how far the light had moved. The confederate then left the experiment and was replaced by another real participant, who was in turn replaced by a still newer member. The inflated illusion persisted (although diminishing) for five generations of participants. These people had become "unwitting conspirators in perpetuating a cultural fraud." The lesson of these experiments: Our views of reality are not ours alone.

In everyday life, the results of suggestibility are sometimes amusing. One person coughs, laughs, or yawns, and others are soon doing the same. (See "Research Close-Up: Contagious Yawning.") One person checks her cell phone and then others check theirs.

Comedy-show laugh tracks capitalize on our suggestibility. Laugh tracks work especially well when we presume that the laughing audience is folks like us—"recorded here at La Trobe University" in one study by Michael Platow and colleagues (2004)—rather than a group that's unlike us. Just being around happy people can help us feel happier, a phenomenon that Peter Totterdell and his colleagues (1998) call "mood linkage." In their studies of British nurses and accountants, people within the same work groups tended to share up and down moods. People within a social network also move toward sharing similar obesity, sleep loss, loneliness, happiness, and drug use (Christakis & Fowler, 2009). Friends function as a social system.

**autokinetic phenomenon**

Self (*auto*) motion (*kinetic*). The apparent movement of a stationary point of light in the dark.

"WHY DOTH ONE MAN'S YAWNING MAKE ANOTHER YAWN?"

—ROBERT BURTON, ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY, 1621

# research CLOSE-UP

## Contagious Yawning

Yawning is a behavior that you and I share with most vertebrates. Primates do it. So do cats and crocodiles and birds and turtles and even fish. But why, and when?

Sometimes, notes University of Maryland, Baltimore County, psychologist Robert Provine (2005), scientific research neglects commonplace behavior—including the behaviors he loves to study, such as laughing and yawning. To study yawning by the method of naturalistic observation, notes Provine, one needs only a stopwatch, a notepad, and a pencil. Yawning, he reports, is a “fixed action pattern” that lasts about six seconds, with a long inward breath and shorter climactic (and pleasurable) exhalation. It often comes in bouts, with just over a minute between yawns. And it is equally common among men and women. Even patients who are totally paralyzed and unable to move their body voluntarily may yawn normally, indicating that this is automatic behavior.

### When do we yawn?

We yawn when we are bored or tense. When Provine asked participants to watch a TV test pattern for 30 minutes, they yawned 70 percent more often than others in a control group who watched less-boring music videos. But tension can also elicit yawning, which is commonly observed among paratroopers before their first jump, Olympic athletes before their event, and violinists waiting to go onstage. A friend says she has often been embarrassed when learning something new at work, because her anxiety about getting it right invariably causes her to have a “yawning fit.”

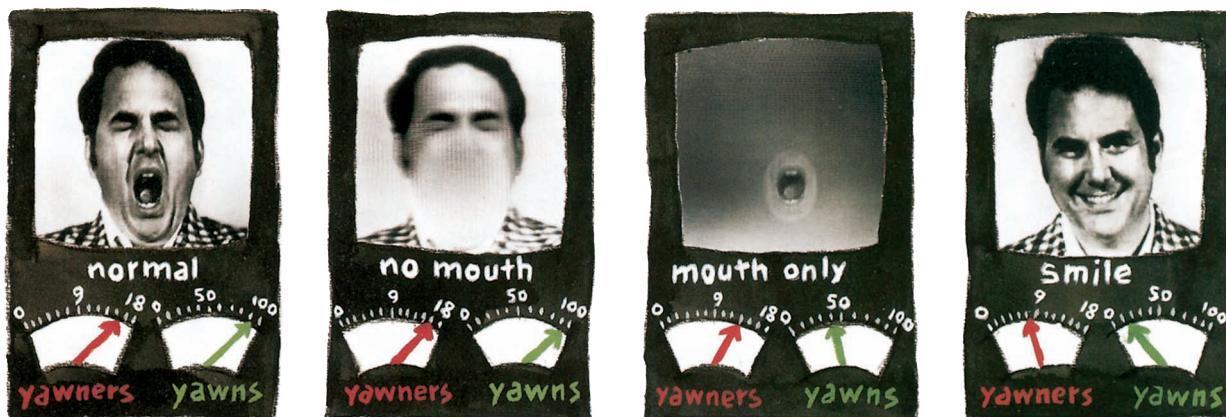
We yawn when we are sleepy. No surprise here, except perhaps that people who kept a yawning diary for

Provine recorded even more yawns in the hour after waking than in the yawn-prone hour before sleeping. Often, we awaken and yawn-stretch. And so do our dogs and cats when they rouse from slumber.

We yawn when others yawn. To test whether yawning, like laughter, is contagious, Provine exposed people to a five-minute video of a man yawning repeatedly. Sure enough, 55 percent of viewers yawned, as did only 21 percent of those viewing a video of smiles. A yawning face acts as a stimulus that activates a yawn’s fixed action pattern, even if the yawn is presented in black-and-white, upside down, or as a mid-yawn still image. The discovery of brain “mirror neurons”—neurons that rehearse or mimic witnessed actions—suggests a biological mechanism that explains why our yawns so often mirror others’ yawns—and why even dogs often yawn after observing a human yawn (Joly-Mascheroni & others, 2008).

To see what parts of the yawning face are most potent, Provine had viewers watch a whole face, a face with the mouth masked, a mouth with the face masked, or (as a control condition) a nonyawning smiling face. As Figure 6.2 shows, the yawning faces triggered yawns even with the mouth masked. Thus, covering your mouth when yawning likely won’t suppress yawn contagion.

Just thinking about yawning usually produces yawns, reports Provine—a phenomenon you may have noticed while reading this box. While reading Provine’s research on contagious yawning, I yawned four times (and felt a little silly).



**FIGURE :: 6.2**

### What Facial Features Trigger Contagious Yawns?

Robert Provine (2005) invited 4 groups of 30 people each to watch 5-minute videotapes of a smiling adult, or a yawning adult, parts of whose face were masked for two of the groups. A yawning mouth triggered some yawns, but yawning eyes and head motion triggered even more.



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"WHEN PEOPLE ARE FREE  
TO DO AS THEY PLEASE,  
THEY USUALLY IMITATE  
EACH OTHER."

—ERIC HOFER, THE  
PASSIONATE STATE OF  
MIND, 1955

The chameleon effect. Our natural mimicry of others' postures and language generally elicits liking—except when echoing others' negative expressions such as anger.

From Alex (Sandy) Pentland, "To Signal Human" in *American Scientist*, May–June, 2010, p. 207. Copyright © 2010 American Scientist. Reprinted by Permission.

Another form of social contagion is what Tanya Chartrand and John Bargh (1999) call "the chameleon effect." Picture yourself in one of their experiments, working alongside a confederate who occasionally either rubbed her face or shook her foot. Would you—like their participants—be more likely to rub your face when with a face-rubbing person and shake your foot when with a foot-shaking person? If so, it would quite likely be an automatic behavior, done without any conscious intention to conform. Behavior synchronizing includes speaking; people tend to mirror the grammar that they read and hear (Ireland & Pennebaker, 2010). And, because our behavior influences our attitudes and emotions, our natural mimicry inclines us to feel what the other feels (Neumann & Strack, 2000).

An experiment in the Netherlands by Rick van Baaren and his colleagues (2004) indicates that your mimicry would also incline the other to like you and be helpful to you and to others. People become more likely to help pick up dropped pens for someone whose behavior has mimicked their own. Being mimicked seems to enhance social bonds, which even leads to donating more money to a charity. In a follow-up experiment, Chartrand, van Baaren, and their colleagues had an interviewer invite students to try a new sports drink while sometimes mirroring the student's postures and movements, with just enough delay to make it not noticeable (Tanner & others, 2008). By the experiment's end, the copied students became more likely to consume the new drink and say they would buy it. There is one exception to the imitation-fosters-fondness rule: mimicking another's anger fosters *disliking* (Van der Velde & others, 2010).

Suggestibility can also occur on a large scale. In late March 1954, Seattle newspapers reported damage to car windshields in a city 80 miles to the north. On the morning of April 14, similar windshield damage was reported 65 miles away, and later that day only 45 miles away. By nightfall, whatever was causing this windshield pitting had reached Seattle. Before the end of April 15, the Seattle police department had received complaints of damage to more than 3,000 windshields (Medalia & Larsen, 1958). That evening Seattle's mayor called on President Eisenhower for help.

I was a Seattle 11-year-old at the time. I recall searching our windshield, frightened by the explanation that a Pacific H-bomb test was raining fallout on Seattle. On April 16, however, the newspapers hinted that the real culprit might be mass suggestibility. After April 17 there were no more complaints. Later analysis of the pitted windshields concluded that the cause was ordinary road damage. Why did local residents notice this only after April 14? Given the suggestion, we had looked carefully *at* our windshields instead of *through* them.

Suggestibility is not always so amusing. Hijackings, UFO sightings, and even suicides tend to come in waves. (See "Focus On: Mass Delusions.") Shortly after the 1774 publication of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's first novel, young European men started dressing in yellow trousers and blue jackets, as had Goethe's protagonist, a young



# focus ON

## Mass Delusions

Suggestibility on a mass scale appears as collective delusions—spontaneous spreading of false beliefs. Occasionally, this appears as “mass hysteria”—the spread of bodily complaints within a school or workplace with no organic basis for the symptoms. One 2,000-student high school was closed for two weeks as 170 students and staff sought emergency treatment for stomach ailments, dizziness, headaches, and drowsiness. After investigators looked high and low for viruses, germs, pesticides, herbicides—anything that would make people ill—they found . . . nothing (Jones & others, 2000). In the weeks following September 11, 2001, groups of children at schools scattered across the United States started breaking out in itchy red rashes without any apparent cause (Talbot, 2002).

Unlike a viral condition, the rash spread by “line of sight.” People got the rash as they saw others getting it (even if they had no close contact). Everyday skin conditions—eczema, acne, dry skin in overheated classrooms—got noticed, and perhaps amplified by anxiety. As with so many mass hysterias, rumors of a problem had caused people to notice their ordinary, everyday symptoms and to attribute them to their school. This helps explain why, in 16 percent of English and Welsh chemical leaks that entailed physical symptoms, “mass

psychogenic illness” rather than the leak itself was found to be the cause (Page & others, 2010).

Sociologists Robert Bartholomew and Erich Goode (2000) report on earlier mass delusions from the last millennium. During the Middle Ages, European convents reportedly experienced outbreaks of imitative behaviors. In one large French convent, at a time when it was believed that humans could be possessed by animals, one nun began to meow like a cat. Eventually, “all the nuns meowed together every day at a certain time.” In a German convent, a nun reportedly fell to biting her companions, and before long “all the nuns of this convent began biting each other.” In time, the biting mania spread to other convents.

On June 24, 1947, Kenneth Arnold was piloting his private plane near Mount Rainier when he spotted nine glittering objects in the sky. Worried that he may have seen foreign guided missiles, he tried reporting what he saw to the FBI. Discovering its office closed, he went to his local newspaper and reported crescent-shaped objects that moved “like a saucer would if you skipped it across the water.” When the Associated Press then reported the sighting of “saucers” in more than 150 newspapers, the term “flying saucers” was created by headline writers, triggering a worldwide wave of flying saucer sightings.

man named Werther. Although the fashion epidemic triggered by the book was amusing, another apparent effect was less amusing and led to the book’s banning in several areas. In the novel, Werther commits suicide with a pistol after being rejected by the woman whose heart he failed to win; after the book’s publication, reports began accumulating of young men imitating Werther’s desperate act.

Two centuries later, sociologist David Phillips confirmed such imitative suicidal behavior and described it as “the Werther effect.” Phillips and his colleagues (1985, 1989) discovered that suicides, as well as fatal auto accidents and private airplane crashes (which sometimes disguise suicides), increase after a highly publicized suicide. For example, following Marilyn Monroe’s August 6, 1962, suicide, there were 200 more August suicides in the United States than normal. Moreover, the increase happens only in places where the suicide story is publicized. The more publicity, the greater the increase in later fatalities.

Although not all studies have found the copycat suicide phenomenon, it has surfaced in Germany; in a London psychiatric unit that experienced 14 patient suicides in one year; and in one high school that, within 18 days after one student committed suicide, suffered two suicides, seven suicide attempts, and 23 students reporting suicidal thoughts (Joiner, 1999; Jonas, 1992). In both Germany and the United States, suicide rates rise slightly following fictional suicides on soap operas, and, ironically, even after serious dramas that focus on the suicide problem (Gould & Shaffer, 1986; Hafner & Schmidtke, 1989; Phillips, 1982). Phillips reports that teenagers are most susceptible, a finding that would help explain the occasional clusters

of teen copycat suicides. In the days following Saddam Hussein's widely publicized hanging, boys in at least five countries slipped nooses around their own heads and hung themselves, apparently accidentally (AP, 2007).

## Asch's Studies of Group Pressure

Participants in Sherif's darkened-room autokinetic experiments faced an ambiguous reality. Consider a less ambiguous perceptual problem faced by a young boy named Solomon Asch (1907–1996). While attending the traditional Jewish Seder at Passover, Asch recalled,

I asked my uncle, who was sitting next to me, why the door was being opened. He replied, "The prophet Elijah visits this evening every Jewish home and takes a sip of wine from the cup reserved for him."

I was amazed at this news and repeated, "Does he really come? Does he really take a sip?"

My uncle said, "If you watch very closely, when the door is opened you will see—you watch the cup—you will see that the wine will go down a little."

And that's what happened. My eyes were riveted upon the cup of wine. I was determined to see whether there would be a change. And to me it seemed . . . that indeed something was happening at the rim of the cup, and the wine did go down a little. (Aron & Aron, 1989, p. 27)

"HE WHO SEES THE TRUTH,  
LET HIM PROCLAIM IT, WITH-  
OUT ASKING WHO IS FOR IT  
OR WHO IS AGAINST IT."

—HENRY GEORGE, THE IRISH  
LAND QUESTION, 1881

Years later, social psychologist Asch recreated his boyhood experience in his laboratory. Imagine yourself as one of Asch's volunteer subjects. You are seated sixth in a row of seven people. The experimenter explains that you will be in a study of perceptual judgments, and then asks you to say which of the three lines in Figure 6.3 matches the standard line. You can easily see that it's line 2. So it's no surprise when the five people responding before you all say, "Line 2."

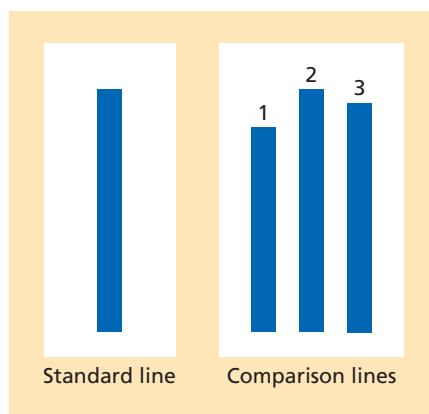
The next comparison proves as easy, and you settle in for what seems a simple test. But the third trial startles you. Although the correct answer seems just as clear-cut, the first person gives a wrong answer. When the second person gives the same wrong answer, you sit up in your chair and stare at the cards. The third person agrees with the first two. Your jaw drops; you start to perspire. "What is this?" you ask yourself. "Are they blind? Or am I?" The fourth and fifth people agree with the others. Then the experimenter looks at you. Now you are experiencing an epistemological dilemma: "What is true? Is it what my peers tell me or what my eyes tell me?"

Dozens of college students experienced that conflict in Asch's experiments. Those in a control condition who answered alone were correct more than 99 percent of the time. Asch wondered: If several others (confederates coached by the experimenter) gave identical wrong answers, would people declare what they would otherwise have denied? Although some people never conformed, three-quarters did so at least once. All told, 37 percent of the responses were conforming (or should we say "trusting of others").

**FIGURE :: 6.3**

Sample Comparison  
from Solomon Asch's  
Conformity Procedure

The participants judged which of three comparison lines matched the standard.



Of course, that means 63 percent of the time people did *not* conform. The experiments show that most people "tell the truth even when others do not," note Bert Hodges and Anne Geyer (2006). Despite the independence shown by many of his participants, Asch's (1955) feelings about the conformity were as clear as the correct answers to his questions: "That reasonably intelligent and well-meaning young people are willing to call white black is a matter of concern. It raises questions about our ways of education and about the values that guide our conduct."



In one of Asch's conformity experiments, subject number 6 experienced uneasiness and conflict after hearing five people before him give a wrong answer.

Asch's procedure became the standard for hundreds of later experiments. Those experiments lacked what Chapter 1 called the "mundane realism" of everyday conformity, but they did have "experimental realism." People became emotionally involved in the experience. The Sherif and Asch results are startling because they involved no obvious pressure to conform—there were no rewards for "team play," no punishments for individuality. Other experiments have explored conformity in everyday situations, such as these:

- *Dental flossing* Sarah Schmiege and her cohorts (2010) told students either that "Our studies show that [fellow] University of Colorado students your age floss approximately [X] times per week," where X was either the participant's own flossing rate, as reported in prior questioning, or five greater than that number. Those given the inflated estimate not only expressed increased intent to floss, but also flossed more over the ensuing three months.
- *Cancer screening* Monika Sieverding and her colleagues (2010) approached middle-aged German men on the street and invited them to sign up to receive information about cancer screening. If led to believe few ("only 18 percent!") of other men in Germany had undergone the screening, a similar 18 percent signed up. But 39 percent signed up after being told that most other men ("indeed 65 percent!") had been screened. Health education campaigns had best not publicize low participation rates, surmised the researchers.
- *Soccer referee decisions* In many sports, from figure skating to soccer football, referees make instantaneous decisions amid crowd noise. When rating a skating performance or deciding whether a soccer player collision merits a yellow card, does the crowd noise—which increases when an opposing player commits a seeming infraction—make a difference? To find out, Christian Unkelbach and Daniel Memmert (2010) examined 1,530 soccer matches across five seasons in Germany's premier league. On average, home teams received 1.89 yellow cards and away teams 2.35. Moreover, the difference was greater in louder soccer stadiums where fans were not separated from the field by a running track. And in laboratory experiments, professional referees who judged filmed foul scenes awarded more yellow cards when a scene was accompanied by high-volume noise.

*Ethical note: Professional ethics usually dictate explaining the experiment afterward (see Chapter 1). Imagine you were an experimenter who had just finished a session with a conforming participant. Could you explain the deception without making the person feel gullible and dumb?*

If people are that conforming in response to such minimal pressure, how compliant will they be if they are directly coerced? Could someone force the average North American or European to perform cruel acts? I would have guessed not: Their humane, democratic, individualistic values would make them resist such pressure. Besides, the easy verbal pronouncements of those experiments are a giant step away from actually harming someone; you and I would never yield to coercion to hurt another. Or would we? Social psychologist Stanley Milgram wondered.

## Milgram's Obedience Experiments

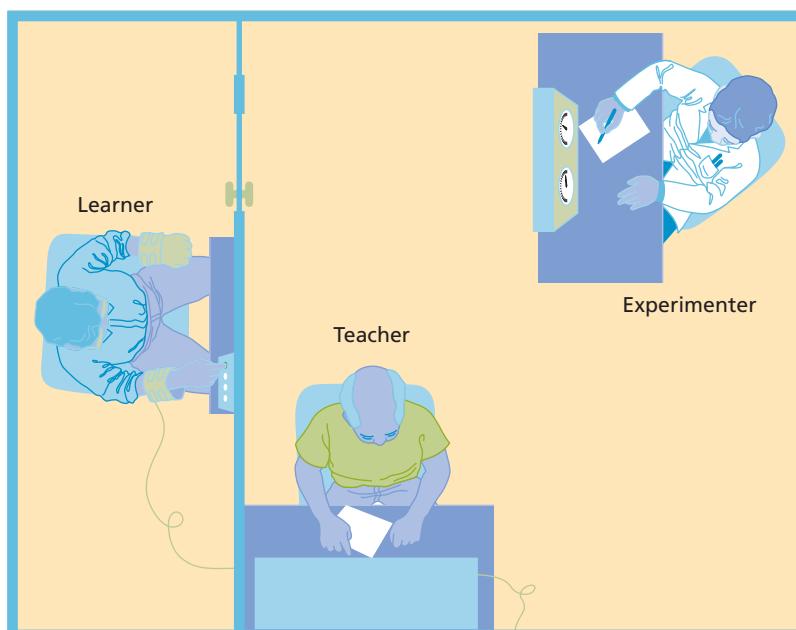
Milgram's (1965, 1974) experiments—"the most famous, or infamous, stud[ies] in the annals of scientific psychology" (Benjamin & Simpson, 2009)—tested what happens when the demands of authority clash with the demands of conscience. "Perhaps more than any other empirical contributions in the history of social science," noted Lee Ross (1988), "they have become part of our society's shared intellectual legacy—that small body of historical incidents, biblical parables, and classic literature that serious thinkers feel free to draw on when they debate about human nature or contemplate human history."

Although you may recall a mention of this research in a prior course, let's go backstage and examine the studies in depth. Here is the scene staged by Milgram, a creative artist who wrote stories and stage plays, and who used trial-and-error pilot testing to hone this drama for maximum impact (Russell, 2011): Two men come to Yale University's psychology laboratory to participate in a study of learning and memory. A stern experimenter in a lab coat explains that this is a pioneering study of the effect of punishment on learning. The experiment requires one of them to teach a list of word pairs to the other and to punish errors by delivering shocks of increasing intensity. To assign the roles, they draw slips out of a hat. One of the men (a mild-mannered, 47-year-old accountant who is actually the experimenter's confederate) says that his slip says "learner" and is ushered into an adjacent room. The other man (a volunteer who has come in response to a newspaper ad) is assigned to the role of "teacher." He takes a mild sample shock and then looks on as the experimenter straps the learner into a chair and attaches an electrode to his wrist.

Teacher and experimenter then return to the main room (Figure 6.4), where the teacher takes his place before a "shock generator" with switches ranging from 15 to 450 volts in 15-volt increments. The switches are labeled "Slight Shock," "Very Strong Shock," "Danger: Severe Shock," and so forth. Under the 435- and 450-volt switches appears "XXX." The experimenter tells the teacher to "move one level higher on the shock generator" each time the learner gives a wrong answer. With each flick of a switch, lights flash, relay switches click, and an electric buzzer sounds.

If the participant complies with the experimenter's requests, he hears the learner grunt at 75, 90, and 105 volts. At 120 volts the learner shouts that the shocks are painful. And at 150 volts he cries out, "Experimenter, get me out of here! I won't be in the experiment anymore! I refuse to go on!" By 270 volts his protests have become screams of agony, and his pleas to be let out continue. At 300 and 315 volts,

**FIGURE :: 6.4**  
**Milgram's Obedience Experiment**  
Source: Milgram, 1974.



he screams his refusal to answer. After 330 volts he falls silent. In answer to the teacher's inquiries and pleas to end the experiment, the experimenter states that the nonresponses should be treated as wrong answers. To keep the participant going, he uses four verbal prods:

- Prod 1: Please continue (or Please go on).
- Prod 2: The experiment requires that you continue.
- Prod 3: It is absolutely essential that you continue.
- Prod 4: You have no other choice; you must go on.

How far would you go? Milgram described the experiment to 110 psychiatrists, college students, and middle-class adults. People in all three groups guessed that they would disobey by about 135 volts; none expected to go beyond 300 volts. Recognizing that self-estimates may reflect self-serving bias, Milgram asked them how far they thought *other* people would go. Virtually no one expected anyone to proceed to XXX on the shock panel. (The psychiatrists guessed about one in a thousand.)

But when Milgram conducted the experiment with 40 men—a vocational mix of 20- to 50-year-olds—26 of them (65 percent) progressed all the way to 450 volts. Those who stopped often did so at the 150-volt point, when the learner's protestations became more compelling (Packer, 2008).

Wondering if people today would similarly obey, Jerry Burger (2009) replicated Milgram's experiment—though only to the 150-volt point. At that point, 70 percent of participants were still obeying, a slight reduction from Milgram's result. (In Milgram's experiment, most who were obedient to this point continued to the end. In fact, all who reached 450 volts complied with a command to *continue* the procedure until, after two further trials, the experimenter called a halt.)

Having expected a low rate of obedience, and with plans to replicate the experiment in Germany and assess the culture difference, Milgram was disturbed (A. Milgram, 2000). So instead of going to Germany, Milgram next made the learner's protests even more compelling. As the learner was strapped into the chair, the teacher heard him mention his "slight heart condition" and heard the experimenter's reassurance that "although the shocks may be painful, they cause no permanent tissue damage." The learner's anguished protests were to little avail; of 40 new men in this experiment, 25 (63 percent) fully complied with the experimenter's demands (Figure 6.5). Ten later studies that included women found that women's compliance rates were similar to men's (Blass, 1999).

Burger and his colleagues (2011) later analyzed their participants' spontaneous comments. Whether people stopped or obeyed was not predictable from their expressing concern for the learner's well-being, which most did, but from their voicing feelings of responsibility for their actions.

## The Ethics of Milgram's Experiments

The obedience of his subjects disturbed Milgram. The procedures he used disturbed many social psychologists (Miller, 1986). The "learner" in these experiments actually received no shock (he disengaged himself from the electric chair and turned on a tape recorder that delivered the protests). Nevertheless, some critics said that Milgram did to his participants what they assumed they were doing to their victims: He stressed them against their will. Indeed, like Nazi executioners in the early days of the Holocaust (Brooks, 2011), many of the "teachers" did experience agony. They sweated, trembled, stuttered, bit their lips, groaned, or even broke into uncontrollable nervous laughter. A *New York Times* reviewer complained that the cruelty inflicted by the experiments "upon their unwitting subjects is surpassed only by the cruelty that they elicit from them" (Marcus, 1974).

Critics also argued that the participants' self-concepts may have been altered. One participant's wife told him, "You can call yourself Eichmann" (referring to Nazi death camp administrator Adolf Eichmann). CBS television depicted the results and the controversy in a two-hour dramatization. "A world of evil so terrifying no one dares penetrate its secret. Until Now!" declared a *TV Guide* ad for the program (Elms, 1995).

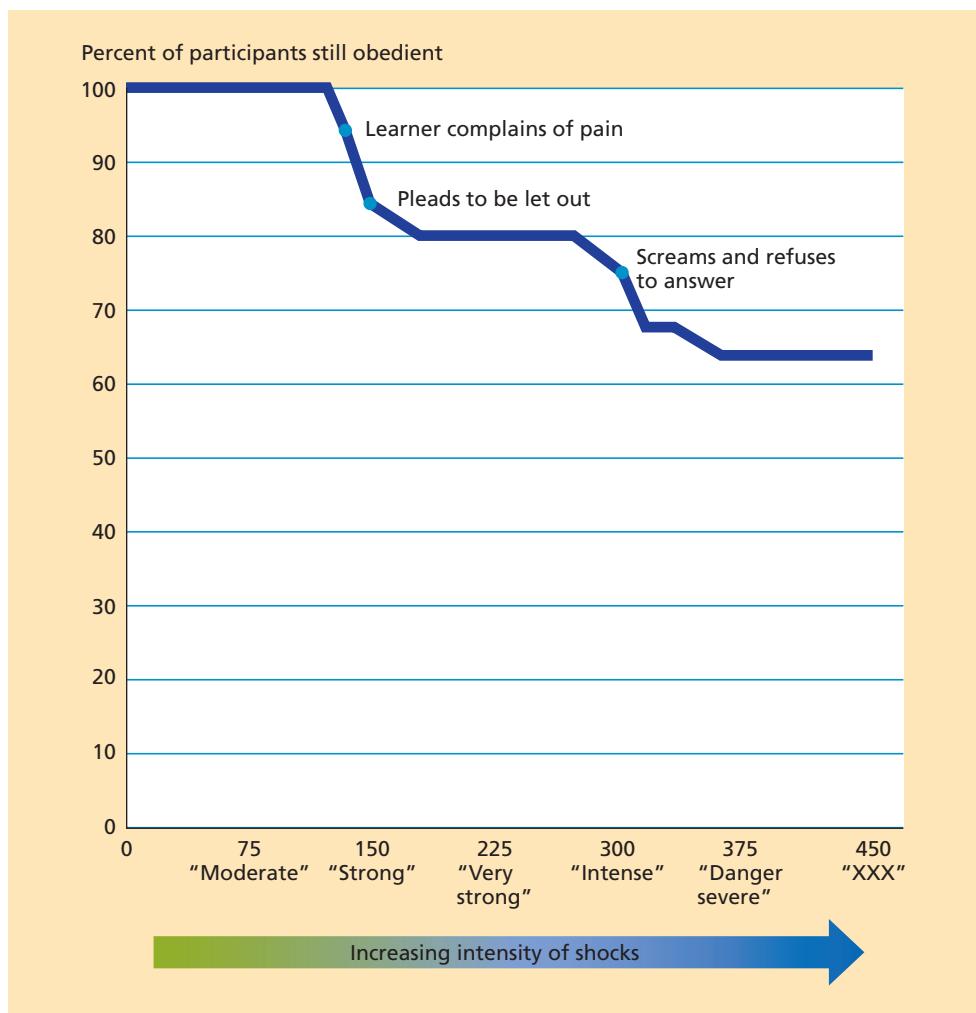
In his own defense, Milgram pointed to the important lessons taught by his nearly two-dozen experiments with a diverse sample of more than 1,000 participants. He also reminded critics of the support he received from the participants after the

In a virtual reality re-creation of the Milgram experiments, participants responded—when shocking a virtual onscreen woman—much as did Milgram's participants, with perspiration and racing heart (Slater & others, 2006).

**FIGURE :: 6.5**  
**The Milgram Obedience Experiment**

Percentage of participants complying despite the learner's cries of protest and failure to respond.

*Source:* From Milgram, 1965.



deception was revealed and the experiment explained. When surveyed afterward, 84 percent said they were glad to have participated; only 1 percent regretted volunteering. A year later, a psychiatrist interviewed 40 of those who had suffered most and concluded that, despite the temporary stress, none was harmed.

The ethical controversy was "terribly overblown," Milgram believed:

There is less consequence to subjects in this experiment from the standpoint of effects on self-esteem, than to university students who take ordinary course examinations, and who do not get the grades they want. . . . It seems that [in giving exams] we are quite prepared to accept stress, tension, and consequences for self-esteem. But in regard to the process of generating new knowledge, how little tolerance we show. (quoted by Blass, 1996)

## What Breeds Obedience?

Milgram did more than reveal the extent to which people will obey an authority; he also examined the conditions that breed obedience. When he varied the social conditions, compliance ranged from 0 to 93 percent fully obedient. Four factors that determined obedience were the victim's emotional distance, the authority's closeness and legitimacy, whether or not the authority was part of a respected institution, and the liberating effects of a disobedient fellow participant.

### THE VICTIM'S DISTANCE

Milgram's participants acted with greatest obedience and least compassion when the "learners" could not be seen (and could not see them). When the victim was

remote and the “teachers” heard no complaints, nearly all obeyed calmly to the end. That situation minimized the learner’s influence relative to the experimenter’s. But what if we made the learner’s pleas and the experimenter’s instructions more equally visible? When the learner was in the same room, “only” 40 percent obeyed to 450 volts. Full compliance dropped to a still-astonishing 30 percent when teachers were required to force the learner’s hand into contact with a shock plate. In a reenacted Milgram experiment—with videotaped actors who were either hidden or seen on a computer screen and known to be feigning hurt—participants were, again, much less obedient when the victim was visible (Dambrun & Vatiné, 2010).

In everyday life, too, it is easiest to abuse someone who is distant or depersonalized. People who might never be cruel to someone in person may be nasty when posting comments to anonymous people on Internet discussion boards. Throughout history, executioners have often depersonalized those being executed by placing hoods over their heads. The ethics of war allow one to bomb a helpless village from 40,000 feet but not to shoot an equally helpless villager. In combat with an enemy they can see, many soldiers either do not fire or do not aim. Such disobedience is rare among those given orders to kill with the more distant artillery or aircraft weapons (Padgett, 1989).

As the Holocaust began, some Germans, under orders, used machine guns or rifles to kill men, women, and children standing before them. But others could not bring themselves to do so, and some who did were left shaken by the experience of face-to-face killing. That led Heinrich Himmler, the Nazi “architect of genocide,” to devise a “more humane” killing, one that would visually separate the killers and their victims. The solution was the construction of concrete gas chambers, where the killers would not see or hear the human consequences of their horror (Russell & Gregory, 2005).

On the positive side, people act most compassionately toward those who are personalized. That is why appeals for the unborn, for the hungry, or for animal rights are nearly always personalized with a compelling photograph or description. When queried by researchers John Lydon and Christine Dunkel-Schetter (1994), expectant women expressed more commitment to their pregnancies if they had seen ultrasound pictures of their fetuses that clearly displayed body parts.

## CLOSENESS AND LEGITIMACY OF THE AUTHORITY

The physical presence of the experimenter also affected obedience. When Milgram’s experimenter gave the commands by telephone, full obedience dropped to 21 percent (although many lied and said they were obeying). Other studies confirm that when the one making the command is physically close, compliance increases. Given a light touch on the arm, people are more likely to lend a dime, sign a petition, or sample a new pizza (Kleinke, 1977; Smith & others, 1982; Willis & Hamm, 1980).

The authority, however, must be perceived as legitimate. In another twist on the basic experiment, the experimenter received a rigged telephone call that required him to leave the laboratory. He said that since the equipment recorded data automatically, the “teacher” should just go ahead. After the experimenter left, another person, who had been assigned a clerical role (actually a second confederate), assumed



An obedient participant in Milgram’s “touch” condition forces the victim’s hand onto the shock plate. Usually, however, “teachers” were more merciful to victims who were this close to them.

**"DISTANCE NEGATES  
RESPONSIBILITY."**

—GUY DAVENPORT

*Imagine you had the power to prevent either a tsunami that would kill 25,000 people on the planet’s other side, a crash that would kill 250 people at your local airport, or a car accident that would kill a close friend. Which would you prevent?*

# focus ON

## Personalizing the Victims

Innocent victims trigger more compassion if personalized. In a week when a soon-forgotten earthquake in Iran killed 3,000 people, one small boy died, trapped in a well shaft in Italy, and the whole world grieved. Concerned that the projected death statistics of a nuclear war are impersonal to the point of being incomprehensible, international law professor Roger Fisher proposed a way to personalize the victims:

It so happens that a young man, usually a navy officer, accompanies the president wherever he goes. This young man has a black attaché case which contains the codes that are needed to fire nuclear weapons.

I can see the president at a staff meeting considering nuclear war as an abstract question. He might conclude, "On SIOP Plan One, the decision is affirmative. Communicate the Alpha line XYZ." Such jargon keeps what is involved at a distance.

My suggestion, then, is quite simple. Put that needed code number in a little capsule and implant that capsule right next to the heart of a volunteer. The volunteer will carry with him a big, heavy butcher knife as he accompanies the president. If ever the president wants to fire nuclear weapons, the only way he can do so is by first, with his own hands, killing one human being.

"George," the president would say, "I'm sorry, but tens of millions must die." The president then would have to look at someone and realize what death is—what an *innocent* death is. Blood on the White House carpet: it's reality brought home.

When I suggested this to friends in the Pentagon, they said, "My God, that's terrible. Having to kill someone would distort the president's judgment. He might never push the button."

**Source:** Adapted from "Preventing Nuclear War" by Roger Fisher, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March 1981, pp. 11–17.

command. The clerk "decided" that the shock should be increased one level for each wrong answer and instructed the teacher accordingly. Now 80 percent of the teachers refused to comply fully. The confederate, feigning disgust at this defiance, sat down in front of the shock generator and tried to take over the teacher's role. At that point most of the defiant participants protested. Some tried to unplug the generator. One large man lifted the zealous confederate from his chair and threw him across the room. This rebellion against an illegitimate authority contrasted sharply with the deferential politeness usually shown the experimenter.

It also contrasts with the behavior of hospital nurses who in one study were called by an unknown physician and ordered to administer an obvious drug overdose (Hofling & others, 1966). The researchers told one group of nurses and nursing students about the experiment and asked how they would react. Nearly all said they would not have followed the order. One said she would have replied, "I'm sorry, sir, but I am not authorized to give any medication without a written order, especially one so large over the usual dose and one that I'm unfamiliar with. If it were possible, I would be glad to do it, but this is against hospital policy and my own ethical standards." Nevertheless, when 22 other nurses were actually given the phoned-in overdose order, all but one obeyed without delay (until being intercepted on their way to the patient). Although not all nurses are so compliant (Krackow & Blass, 1995; Rank & Jacobson, 1977), these nurses were following a familiar script: Doctor (a legitimate authority) orders; nurse obeys.

Compliance with legitimate authority was also apparent in the strange case of the "rectal ear ache" (Cohen & Davis, 1981). A doctor ordered eardrops for a patient suffering infection in the right ear. On the prescription, the doctor abbreviated "place in right ear" as "place in R ear." Reading the order, the compliant nurse put the required drops in the compliant patient's rectum.

The compliant nurse might empathize with the reported 70 fast-food restaurant managers in 30 states who, between 1995 and 2006, complied with orders from



Given orders, most soldiers will torch people's homes or kill—behaviors that in other contexts they would consider immoral.

a self-described authority, usually posing as a police officer (ABC News, 2004; Snopes, 2008; Wikipedia, 2008). The supposed officer described a generic employee or customer. Once the manager had identified someone fitting the description, the authoritative-sounding caller gave an order to strip-search the person to see if he or she had stolen property. One male Taco Bell manager in Arizona pulled aside a 17-year-old female customer who fit the description and, with the caller giving orders, carried out a search that included body cavities. After forcing a 19-year-old female employee to strip against her will, a South Dakota restaurant manager explained that “I never wanted to do it. . . . I was just doing what he told me to do.” The manager feared that disobedience might mean losing his job or going to jail, explained his defense lawyer.

In another incident, a McDonald’s manager received a call from an “Officer Scott” who described an employee he said was suspected of purse stealing. The female manager brought an 18-year-old woman who fit the description into the office and followed a series of orders to have her empty her pockets and successive pieces of clothing. Over her 3½ hours of humiliating detention, the requests became progressively more bizarre, including sexual contact with a male. The traumatized teen sued McDonald’s, claiming they had not adequately forewarned staff of the scam, and was awarded \$6.1 million (CNN, 2007).

### INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

If the prestige of the authority is that important, then perhaps the institutional prestige of Yale University legitimized the Milgram experiment commands. In post-experimental interviews, many participants said that had it not been for Yale’s reputation, they would not have obeyed. To see whether that was true, Milgram moved the experiment to less prestigious Bridgeport, Connecticut. He set himself up in a modest commercial building as the “Research Associates of Bridgeport.” When the “learner-has-a-heart-condition” experiment was run with the same personnel, what percentage of the men do you suppose fully obeyed? Although the obedience rate (48 percent) was still remarkably high, it was significantly lower than the 65 percent rate at Yale.

In everyday life, too, authorities backed by institutions wield social power. Robert Ornstein (1991) tells of a psychiatrist friend who was called to the edge of a cliff above San Mateo, California, where one of his patients, Alfred, was threatening to jump. When the psychiatrist’s reasoned reassurance failed to dislodge Alfred, the psychiatrist could only hope that a police crisis expert would soon arrive.

# THE inside STORY

## Stanley Milgram on Obedience

While working for Solomon E. Asch, I wondered whether his conformity experiments could be made more humanly significant. First, I imagined an experiment similar to Asch's, except that the group induced the person to deliver shocks to a protesting victim. But a control was needed to see how much shock a person would give in the absence of group pressure. Someone, presumably the experimenter, would have to instruct the subject to give the shocks. But now a new question arose: Just how far would a person go when ordered to administer such shocks? In my mind, the issue had shifted to the willingness of people to comply with destructive orders. It was an exciting moment for me. I realized that this simple question was both humanly important and capable of being precisely answered.

The laboratory procedure gave scientific expression to a more general concern about authority, a concern forced upon members of my generation, in particular

upon Jews such as myself, by the atrocities of World War II. The impact of the Holocaust on my own psyche energized my interest in obedience and shaped the particular form in which it was examined.

**Source:** Abridged from the original for this book and from Milgram, 1977, with permission of Alexandra Milgram.



Stanley Milgram (1933–1984)

Although no expert came, another police officer, unaware of the drama, happened onto the scene, took out his power bullhorn, and yelled at the assembled cliffside group: "Who's the ass who left that Pontiac station wagon double-parked out there in the middle of the road? I almost hit it. Move it *now*, whoever you are." Hearing the message, Alfred obediently got down at once, moved the car, and then without a word got into the police cruiser for a trip to the nearby hospital.

### THE LIBERATING EFFECTS OF GROUP INFLUENCE

These classic experiments give us a negative view of conformity. But conformity can also be constructive. The heroic firefighters who rushed into the flaming World Trade Center towers were "incredibly brave," note social psychologists Susan Fiske, Lasana Harris, and Amy Cuddy (2004), but they were also "partly obeying their superiors, partly conforming to extraordinary group loyalty." Consider, too, the occasional liberating effect of conformity. Perhaps you can recall a time you felt justifiably angry at an unfair teacher but you hesitated to object. Then one or two other students spoke up about the unfair practices, and you followed their example, which had a liberating effect. Milgram captured this liberating effect of conformity by placing the teacher with two confederates who were to help conduct the procedure. During the experiment, both confederates defied the experimenter, who then ordered the real participant to continue alone. Did he? No. Ninety percent liberated themselves by conforming to the defiant confederates.

### Reflections on the Classic Studies

The common response to Milgram's results is to note their counterparts in the "I was only following orders" defenses of Adolf Eichmann, in Nazi Germany; of American Lieutenant William Calley, who in 1968 directed the unprovoked slaughter of hundreds of Vietnamese in the village of My Lai; and of the "ethnic cleansings" occurring in Iraq, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

Soldiers are trained to obey superiors. Thus, one participant in the My Lai massacre recalled:

[Lieutenant Calley] told me to start shooting. So I started shooting, I poured about four clips into the group. . . . They were begging and saying, "No, no." And the mothers were hugging their children and. . . . Well, we kept right on firing. They was waving their arms and begged. (Wallace, 1969)

The "safe" scientific contexts of the obedience experiments differ from the wartime contexts. Moreover, much of the mockery and brutality of war and genocide goes beyond obedience (Miller, 2004). Some of those who implemented the Holocaust were "willing executioners" who hardly needed to be commanded to kill (Goldhagen, 1996).

The obedience experiments also differ from the other conformity experiments in the strength of the social pressure: Obedience is explicitly commanded. Yet both the Asch and the Milgram experiments share certain commonalities. They showed how compliance can take precedence over moral sense. They succeeded in pressuring people to go against their own consciences. They did more than teach an academic lesson; they sensitized us to moral conflicts in our own lives. And they illustrated and affirmed two familiar social psychological principles: the link between *behavior and attitudes* and the power of the situation.

*The United States military now trains soldiers to disobey inappropriate, unlawful orders.*

## BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDES

Chapter 4 noted a situation in which attitudes fail to determine behavior: when external influences override inner convictions. These experiments vividly illustrate that principle. When responding alone, Asch's participants nearly always gave the correct answer. It was another matter when they stood alone against a group.

In the obedience experiments, a powerful social pressure (the experimenter's commands) overcame a weaker one (the remote victim's pleas). Torn between the pleas of the victim and the orders of the experimenter, between the desire to avoid doing harm and the desire to be a good participant, a surprising number of people chose to obey.

Why were the participants unable to disengage themselves? Imagine yourself as the teacher in yet another version of Milgram's experiment (one he never conducted). Assume that when the learner gives the first wrong answer, the experimenter asks you to zap him with 330 volts. After flicking the switch, you hear the learner scream, complain of a heart disturbance, and plead for mercy. Do you continue?

I think not. Recall the step-by-step entrapment of the foot-in-the-door phenomenon (Chapter 4) as we compare this hypothetical experiment to what Milgram's participants experienced. Their first commitment was mild—15 volts—and it elicited no protest. By the time they delivered 75 volts and heard the learner's first groan, they already had complied 5 times, and the next request was to deliver only slightly more. By the time they delivered 330 volts, the participants had complied 22 times and reduced some of their dissonance. They were therefore in a different psychological state from that of someone beginning the experiment at that point. The same thing occurred with the fast-food restaurant managers in the strip-search scam, after they had complied with initially reasonable-seeming orders from a supposed authority. As we saw in Chapter 4, external behavior and internal disposition can feed each other, sometimes in an escalating spiral. Thus, reported Milgram (1974, p. 10):



"Maybe I was too patriotic." So said ex-torturer Jeffrey Benzien, shown here demonstrating the "wet bag" technique to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He would place a cloth over victims' heads, bringing them to the terrifying brink of asphyxiation over and over again. Such terror tactics were used by the former security police to get an accused person to disclose, for example, where guns were hidden. "I did terrible things," Benzien admitted with apologies to his victims, though he claimed only to be following orders.

"MEN'S ACTIONS ARE TOO STRONG FOR THEM. SHOW ME A MAN WHO HAD ACTED AND WHO HAD NOT BEEN THE VICTIM AND SLAVE OF HIS ACTION."

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON,  
REPRESENTATIVE MEN:  
GOETHE, 1850

Many subjects harshly devalue the victim as a consequence of acting against him. Such comments as, "He was so stupid and stubborn he deserved to get shocked," were common. Once having acted against the victim, these subjects found it necessary to view him as an unworthy individual, whose punishment was made inevitable by his own deficiencies of intellect and character.

During the early 1970s, Greece's military junta used this "blame-the-victim" process to train torturers (Haritos-Fatouros, 1988, 2002; Staub, 1989, 2003). There, as in the earlier training of SS officers in Nazi Germany, the military selected candidates based on their respect for and submission to authority. But such tendencies alone do not a torturer make. Thus, they would first assign the trainee to guard prisoners, then to participate in arrest squads, then to hit prisoners, then to observe torture, and only then to practice it. Step by step, an obedient but otherwise decent person evolved into an agent of cruelty. Compliance bred acceptance. If we focus on the end point—450 volts of torture administered—we are aghast at the evil conduct. If we consider how one gets there—in tiny steps—we understand.

As a Holocaust survivor, University of Massachusetts social psychologist Ervin Staub knows too well the forces that can transform citizens into agents of death. From his study of human genocide across the world, Staub (2003) shows where gradually increasing aggression can lead. Too often, criticism produces contempt, which licenses cruelty, which, when justified, leads to brutality, then killing, then systematic killing. Evolving attitudes both follow and justify actions. Staub's disturbing conclusion: "Human beings have the capacity to come to experience killing other people as nothing extraordinary" (1989, p. 13).

But humans also have a capacity for heroism. During the Nazi Holocaust, the French village of Le Chambon sheltered 5,000 Jews and other refugees destined for deportation to Germany. The villagers were mostly Protestants whose own authorities, their pastors, had taught them to "resist whenever our adversaries will demand of us obedience contrary to the orders of the Gospel" (Rochat, 1993; Rochat & Modigliani, 1995). Ordered to divulge the locations of sheltered Jews, the head pastor modeled disobedience: "I don't know of Jews, I only know of human beings." Without knowing how terrible the war would be, the resisters, beginning in 1940, made an initial commitment and then—supported by their beliefs, by their own authorities, and by one another—remained defiant till the village's liberation in 1944. Here and elsewhere, the

ultimate response to Nazi occupation came early. Initial helping heightened commitment, leading to more helping.

Even in an individualistic culture, few of us desire to challenge our culture's clearest norms, as did Stephen Gough while walking the length of Britain naked (apart from hat, socks, boots, and a rucksack). Starting in June 2003, he made it from Lands End, England's most southerly point, to John O'Groats, Scotland's most northerly mainland point. During his 7-month, 847-mile trek he was arrested 15 times and spent about five months behind bars. "My naked activism is firstly and most importantly about me standing up for myself, a declaration of myself as a beautiful human being," Gough (2003) declared from his website.



## THE POWER OF THE SITUATION

The most important lesson of Chapter 5 (that culture is a powerful shaper of lives) and this chapter's most important lesson (that immediate situational forces are just as powerful) reveal the strength of the social context. To feel this for yourself, imagine violating some minor norms: standing up in the middle of a class; singing out loud in a restaurant; playing golf in a suit. In trying to break with social constraints, we suddenly realize how strong they are.

The students in one Pennsylvania State University experiment found it surprisingly difficult to violate the norm of being “nice” rather than confrontational. Participants imagined themselves discussing with three others whom to select for survival on a desert island. They were asked to imagine one of the others, a man, injecting three sexist comments, such as, “I think we need more women on the island to keep the men satisfied.” How would they react to such sexist remarks? Only 5 percent predicted they would ignore each of the comments or wait to see how others reacted. But when Janet Swim and Lauri Hyers (1999) engaged other students in discussions where such comments were actually made by a male confederate, 55 percent (not 5 percent) said nothing. Likewise, although people predict they would be upset by witnessing a person making a racial slur—and would avoid picking the racist person as a partner in an experiment—those actually experiencing such an event typically exhibit indifference (Kawakami & others, 2009). These experiments demonstrate the power of normative pressures and how hard it is to predict behavior, even our own behavior.

How ironic that in 2011, the human struggle with confrontation should play out at Swim and Hyers’ university—Penn State—in a public debate about how its revered football coach and other university officials should have responded to learning that a fellow coach had sexually abused boys. (The coaches reportedly did pass on the reports to superiors, but allowed the alleged abuser to continue using university facilities.) Commentators were outraged; they presumed that *they* themselves would have acted more strongly. But the lessons of history, of bystander response (see Chapter 12), and of these experiments remind us that *saying* what we would do in a hypothetical situation is often easier than *doing* it in a real situation.

Milgram’s experiments also offer a lesson about evil. In horror movies and suspense novels, evil results from a few bad apples, a few depraved killers. In real life we similarly think of Hitler’s extermination of Jews or of Osama bin Laden’s terrorist plot. But evil also results from social forces—from the heat, humidity, and disease that help make a whole barrel of apples go bad. The American military police, whose abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison horrified the world, were under stress, taunted by many they had come to save, angered by comrades’ deaths, overdue to return home, and under lax supervision—an evil situation that produced evil behavior (Fiske, 2004; Lankford, 2009). Situations can induce ordinary people to capitulate to cruelty.

This is especially true when, as happens often in complex societies, the most terrible evil evolves from a sequence of small evils. German civil servants surprised Nazi leaders with their willingness to handle the paperwork of the Holocaust. They were not killing Jews, of course; they were merely pushing paper (Silver & Geller, 1978). When fragmented, evil becomes easier. Milgram studied this compartmentalization of evil by involving yet another 40 men more indirectly. With someone else triggering the shock, they had only to administer the learning test. Now, 37 of the 40 fully complied.

So it is in our everyday lives: The drift toward evil usually comes in small increments, without any conscious intent to do evil. Procrastination involves a similar unintended drift, toward self-harm (Sabini & Silver, 1982). A student knows the deadline for a term paper weeks ahead. Each diversion from work on the paper—a video game here, a TV program there—seems harmless enough. Yet gradually the student veers toward not doing the paper without ever consciously deciding not to do it.

It is tempting to assume that Eichmann and the Auschwitz death camp commanders were uncivilized monsters. Indeed, their evil was fueled by virulent anti-Semitism. And the social situation alone does not explain why, in the same neighborhood or death camp, some personalities displayed vicious cruelty and others heroic kindness. Still, the commanders would not have stood out to us as monsters. After a hard day’s work, they would relax by listening to Beethoven and Schubert. Of the 14 men who formulated the Final Solution leading to the Nazi Holocaust, 8 had European university doctorates (Patterson, 1996). Like most other Nazis, Eichmann himself was outwardly indistinguishable from common people

“THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY  
OF THIS CENTURY REVEALS  
A MAJOR LESSON: OFTEN  
IT IS NOT SO MUCH THE  
KIND OF PERSON A MAN IS  
AS THE KIND OF SITUATION  
IN WHICH HE FINDS HIM-  
SELF THAT DETERMINES  
HOW HE WILL ACT.”

—STANLEY MILGRAM, OBEDI-  
ENCE TO AUTHORITY, 1974

“I WOULD SAY, ON  
THE BASIS OF HAVING  
OBSERVED A THOU-  
SAND PEOPLE . . . THAT  
IF A SYSTEM OF DEATH  
Camps WERE SET UP IN  
THE UNITED STATES OF  
THE SORT WE HAD SEEN  
IN NAZI GERMANY, ONE  
WOULD BE ABLE TO FIND  
SUFFICIENT PERSONNEL  
FOR THOSE CAMPS IN ANY  
MEDIUM-SIZED AMERICAN  
TOWN.”

—STANLEY MILGRAM, ON  
CBS’S 60 MINUTES, 1979

The “unexceptional” 9/11 terrorists. Hijackers Nawaf al-Hazmi (blue shirt) and Salem al-Hazmi (white shirt) were normal-looking, normal-acting passengers as they went through Dulles Airport security on September 11, 2001.



with ordinary jobs (Arendt, 1963; Zillmer & others, 1995). Mohamed Atta, the leader of the 9/11 attacks, reportedly had been a “good boy” and an excellent student from a healthy family. Zacarias Moussaoui, the would-be twentieth 9/11 attacker, had been very polite when applying for flight lessons and buying knives. He called women “ma’am.” The pilot of the second plane to hit the World Trade Center was said to be an amiable, “laid-back” fellow, much like the “intelligent, friendly, and ‘very courteous’” pilot of the plane that dove into the Pentagon. If these men had lived next door to us, they would hardly have fit our image of evil monsters. They were “unexceptional” people (McDermott, 2005).

As Milgram noted (1974, p. 6), “The most fundamental lesson of our study is that ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process.” As Mister Rogers often reminded his preschool television audience, “Good people sometimes do bad things.” Under the sway of evil forces, even nice people are sometimes corrupted as they construct moral rationalizations for immoral behavior (Tsang, 2002). So it is that ordinary soldiers may, in the end, follow orders to shoot defenseless civilians; admired political leaders may lead their citizens into ill-fated wars; ordinary employees may follow instructions to produce and distribute harmful, degrading products; and ordinary group members may heed commands to brutally haze initiates.

So, does a situational analysis of harm-doing exonerate harm-doers? Does it absolve them of responsibility? In laypeople’s minds, the answer is to some extent yes, notes Arthur Miller (2006). But the psychologists who study the roots of evil insist otherwise. To explain is not to excuse. To understand is not to forgive. You can forgive someone whose behavior you don’t understand, and you can understand someone whom you do not forgive. Moreover, adds James Waller (2002), “When we understand the ordinariness of extraordinary evil, we will be less surprised by evil, less likely to be unwitting contributors to evil, and perhaps better equipped to forestall evil.” Jerry Burger’s replication of the famous Milgram study excluded those familiar with it. Had such people—with the knowledge you now have—been included, might the obedience rate have been much lower (Elms, 2009)?

Finally, a comment on the experimental method used in conformity research (see synopsis, Table 6.1): Conformity situations in the laboratory differ from those in everyday life. How often are we asked to judge line lengths or administer shock?

**TABLE :: 6.1** Summary of Classic Obedience Studies

Topic	Researcher	Method	Real-Life Example
Norm formation	Sherif	Assessing suggestibility regarding seeming movement of light	Interpreting events differently after hearing from others; appreciating a tasty food that others love
Conformity	Asch	Agreement with others' obviously wrong perceptual judgments	Doing as others do; fads such as tattoos
Obedience	Milgram	Complying with commands to shock another	Soldiers or employees following questionable orders

But as combustion is similar for a burning match and a forest fire, so we assume that psychological processes in the laboratory and in everyday life are similar (Milgram, 1974). We must be careful in generalizing from the simplicity of a burning match to the complexity of a forest fire. Yet controlled experiments on burning matches can give us insights into combustion that we cannot gain by observing forest fires. So, too, the social-psychological experiment offers insights into behavior not readily revealed in everyday life. The experimental situation is unique, but so is every social situation. By testing with a variety of unique tasks, and by repeating experiments at different times and places, researchers probe for the common principles that lie beneath the surface diversity.

The classic conformity experiments answered some questions but raised others: Sometimes people conform; sometimes they do not. (1) *When* do they conform? (2) *Why* do people conform? Why don't they ignore the group and "to their own selves be true"? (3) Is there a type of *person* who is likely to conform? In the next section we will take these questions one at a time.

## SUMMING UP: What Are the Classic Conformity and Obedience Studies?

Three classic sets of experiments illustrate how researchers have studied conformity.

- Muzafer Sherif observed that others' judgments influenced people's estimates of the movement of a point of light that actually did not move. Norms for "proper" answers emerged and survived both over long periods of time and through succeeding generations of research participants.
- Solomon Asch had people listen to others' judgments of which of three comparison lines was equal to a standard line and then make the same judgment themselves. When the others unanimously gave a wrong answer, the participants conformed 37 percent of the time.
- Stanley Milgram's obedience experiments elicited an extreme form of compliance. Under optimum

conditions—a legitimate, close-at-hand commander, a remote victim, and no one else to exemplify disobedience—65 percent of his adult male participants fully obeyed instructions to deliver what were supposedly traumatizing electric shocks to a screaming, innocent victim in an adjacent room.

- These classic experiments expose the potency of several phenomena. Behavior and attitudes are mutually reinforcing, enabling a small act of evil to foster the attitude that leads to a bigger evil act. The power of the situation can induce good people, faced with dire circumstances, to commit reprehensible acts (although dire situations may produce heroism in others).

## WHAT PREDICTS CONFORMITY?

Identify situations that trigger much—and little—conformity.

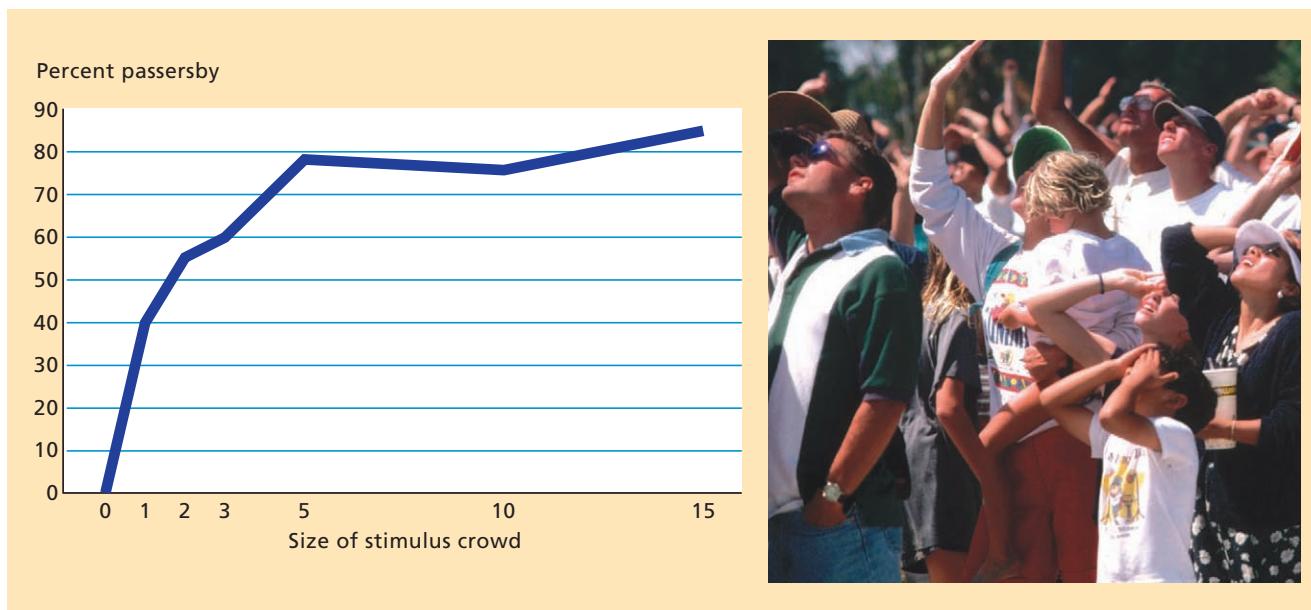
Social psychologists wondered: If even Asch's noncoercive, unambiguous situation could elicit a 37 percent conformity rate, would other settings produce even more? Researchers soon discovered that conformity did grow if the judgments were difficult or if the participants felt incompetent. The more insecure we are about our judgments, the more influenced we are by others.

Group attributes also matter. Conformity is highest when the group has three or more people and is unanimous, cohesive, and high in status. Conformity is also highest when the response is public and made without prior commitment. Let's look at each of these conditions.

### Group Size

In laboratory experiments, a small group can have a big effect. Asch and other researchers found that 3 to 5 people will elicit much more conformity than just 1 or 2. Increasing the number of people beyond 5 yields diminishing returns (Gerard & others, 1968; Rosenberg, 1961). In a field experiment, Milgram and his colleagues (1969) had 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, or 15 people pause on a busy New York City sidewalk and look up. As Figure 6.6 shows, the percentage of passersby who also looked up increased as the number looking up increased from 1 to 5 persons.

The way the group is "packaged" also makes a difference. Rutgers University researcher David Wilder (1977) gave students a jury case. Before giving their own judgments, the students watched videotapes of four confederates giving their judgments. When the confederates were presented as two independent groups of two people, the participants conformed more than when the four confederates presented their judgments as a single group. Similarly, two groups of three people elicited more conformity than one group of six, and three groups of two people elicited even more. The agreement of independent small groups makes a position more credible.



**FIGURE :: 6.6**

#### Group Size and Conformity

The percentage of passersby who imitated a group looking upward increased as group size increased to 5 persons.

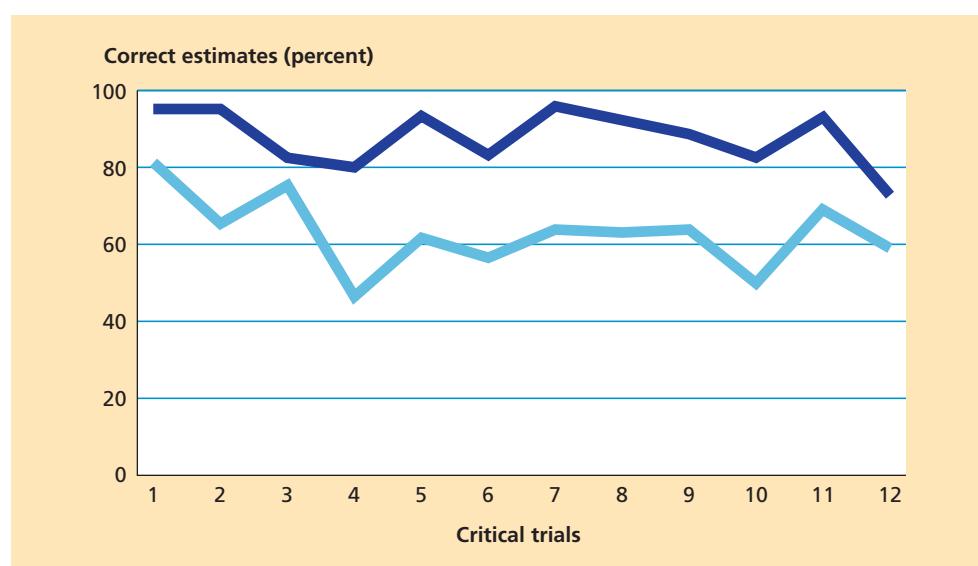
Source: Data from Milgram, Bickman, & Berkowitz, 1969.

## Unanimity

Imagine yourself in a conformity experiment in which all but one of the people responding before you give the same wrong answer. Would the example of this one nonconforming confederate be as liberating as it was for the individuals in Milgram's obedience experiment? Several experiments reveal that someone who punctures a group's unanimity deflates its social power (Allen & Levine, 1969; Asch, 1955; Morris & Miller, 1975). As Figure 6.7 illustrates, people will usually voice their own convictions if just one other person has also differed from the majority. The participants in such experiments often later say they felt warm toward and close to their nonconforming ally. Yet they deny that the ally influenced them: "I would have answered just the same if he weren't there."

It's difficult to be a minority of one; few juries are hung because of one dissenting juror. And only 1 in 10 U.S. Supreme Court decisions over the past half-century has had a lone dissenter; most have been unanimous or a 5–4 split (Granberg & Bartels, 2005).

Conformity experiments teach the practical lesson that it is easier to stand up for something if you can find someone else to stand up with. Many religious



**FIGURE :: 6.7**

### The Effect of Unanimity on Conformity

When someone giving correct answers punctures the group's unanimity, individuals conform only one-fourth as often.

*Source:* From Asch, 1955.



It is difficult to stand alone as a minority of one. But doing so sometimes makes a hero, as was the lone dissenting jury member played by Henry Fonda in the classic movie *12 Angry Men*.

"MY OPINION, MY CONVICTION, GAINS INFINITELY IN STRENGTH AND SUCCESS, THE MOMENT A SECOND MIND HAS ADOPTED IT."

—NOVALIS, FRAGMENT

groups recognize this. Following the example of Jesus, who sent his disciples out in pairs, the Mormons send two missionaries into a neighborhood together. The support of the one comrade greatly increases a person's social courage.

Observing someone else's dissent—even when it is wrong—can increase our own independence. Charlan Nemeth and Cynthia Chiles (1988) discovered this after having people observe a lone individual in a group of four misjudge blue stimuli as green. Although the dissenter was wrong, after they had observed him the observers were more likely to exhibit their own form of independence: 76 percent of the time they correctly labeled red slides "red" even when everyone else was incorrectly calling them "orange." Participants who had no opportunity to observe the "green" dissenter conformed 70 percent of the time.

## Cohesion

A minority opinion from someone outside the groups we identify with—from someone at another college or of a different religion—sways us less than the same minority opinion from someone within our group (Clark & Maass, 1988). A heterosexual arguing for gay rights would sway heterosexuals more effectively than would a homosexual. People even comply more readily with requests from those said to share their birthday, their first name, or features of their fingerprint (Burger & others, 2004; Silvia, 2005).

The more **cohesive** a group is, the more power it gains over its members. In college sororities, for example, friends tend to share binge-eating tendencies, especially as they grow closer (Crandall, 1988). People within an ethnic group may feel a similar "own-group conformity pressure"—to talk, act, and dress as "we" do. Blacks who "act White" or Whites who "act Black" may be mocked by their peers (Contrada & others, 2000).

In experiments, too, group members who feel attracted to the group are more responsive to its influence (Berkowitz, 1954; Lott & Lott, 1961; Sakurai, 1975). Fearing rejection by group members whom they like, they allow them a certain power (Hogg, 2001). In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, the seventeenth-century philosopher John Locke recognized the cohesiveness factor: "Nor is there one in ten thousand who is stiff and insensible enough to bear up under the constant dislike and condemnation of his own club."

Our inclination to go with our group—to think what it thinks and do what it does—surfaced in one experiment as people reported greater liking for a piece of music that was said to be liked by people akin to themselves (but disliked the music more when it was liked by someone *unlike* themselves [Hilmert & others, 2006]). Likewise, when university students compare themselves with drinkers who are dissimilar from themselves, they become *less* likely to drink (Lane & others, 2011). And after observing cheating by someone wearing a T-shirt from their own university, participants in another experiment became more likely to cheat. But if the cheater wore a T-shirt from a competing university, it had the opposite effect: the participants became more honest (Gino & others, 2009). Cohesion-fed conformity also appears in college dorms, where students' attitudes over time become more similar to those living near them (Cullum & Harton, 2007).

And it has tragically appeared in massacres, as men have been unwilling to separate themselves from their close comrades, even when killing was not something they would have done apart from their group. Historian Christopher Browning (1992) recalls the nearly 500-man German Reserve Police Battalion 101 being awakened in Poland one morning in July 1942. Their well-liked commander nervously explained that they had been ordered to send the male adults from the 1,800 Jews in a nearby village to a work camp, and to shoot the women, children, and elderly. With obvious discomfort over this task, he offered to let any of the older men who did not feel up to the task to step out. Only a dozen did. The rest participated, with many of them being physically sick with disgust afterwards.

In post-war testimonies from some 125 men, most of whom were middle-aged family men, anti-Semitism did not explain their actions. Rather, reported Browning, they were constrained by the power of cohesion: Don't break ranks. The men felt a "strong urge not to separate themselves from the group by stepping out" (p. 71).

## Status

As you might suspect, higher-status people tend to have more impact (Driskell & Mullen, 1990). Junior group members—even junior social psychologists—acknowledge more conformity to their group than do senior group members (Jetten & others, 2006). Or consider this: Studies of jaywalking behavior, conducted with the unwitting aid of nearly 24,000 pedestrians, reveal that the baseline jaywalking rate of 25 percent decreases to 17 percent in the presence of a nonjaywalking confederate and increases to 44 percent in the presence of another jaywalker (Mullen & others, 1990). The nonjaywalker best discourages jaywalking when well dressed. Even chimps are more likely to imitate the behaviors of high-ranking group members (Horner & others, 2010). Among both humans and other primates, prestige begets influence.

Milgram (1974) reported that in his obedience experiments, people of lower status accepted the experimenter's commands more readily than people of higher status. After delivering 450 volts, a 37-year-old welder turned to the higher-status experimenter and deferentially asked, "Where do we go from here, Professor?" (p. 46). Another participant, a divinity school professor who disobeyed at 150 volts, said, "I don't understand why the experiment is placed above this person's life" and plied the experimenter with questions about "the ethics of this thing" (p. 48).

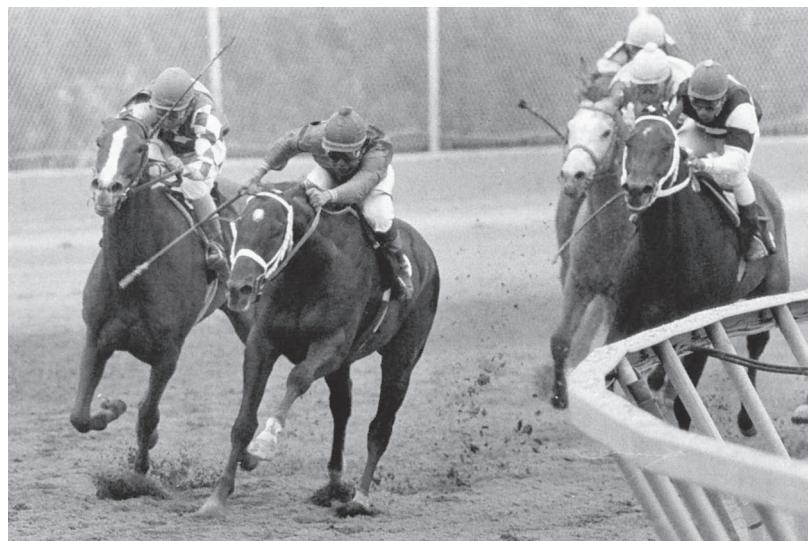
## Public Response

One of conformity researchers' first questions was this: Would people conform more in their public responses than in their private opinions? Or would they wobble more in their private opinions but be unwilling to conform publicly, lest they appear wishy-washy?

The answer is now clear: In experiments, people conform more when they must respond in front of others rather than writing their answers privately. Asch's participants, after hearing others respond, were less influenced by group pressure if they could write answers that only the experimenter would see. Likewise, when college instructors ask controversial questions, students express more diverse opinions when answering anonymously, with clickers, than when raising hands (Stowell & others, 2010). It is much easier to stand up for what we believe in the privacy of the voting booth than before a group.

## Prior Commitment

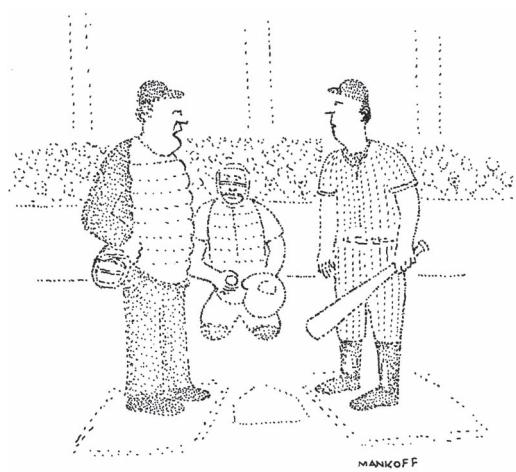
In 1980, Genuine Risk became the second filly ever to win the Kentucky Derby. In her next race, the Preakness, she came off the last turn gaining on the leader, Codex, a colt. As they came out of the turn neck and neck, Codex moved sideways toward Genuine Risk, causing her to hesitate and giving him a narrow victory. Had Codex brushed Genuine Risk? Had his jockey even whipped Genuine Risk in the face?



Did Codex brush against Genuine Risk? After race referees publicly announced their decision, no amount of evidence could budge them.

Prior commitment: Once they commit themselves to a position, people seldom yield to social pressure. Real umpires and referees rarely reverse their initial judgments.

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*"All right! Have it your own way. It was a ball."*

without the immediate commitment—and observe whether the commitment makes a difference. Again, imagine yourself in an Asch-type experiment. The experimenter displays the lines and asks you to respond first. After you give your judgment and then hear everyone else disagree, the experimenter offers you an opportunity to reconsider. In the face of group pressure, do you now back down?

People almost never do (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). After having made a public commitment, they stick to it. At most, they will change their judgments in later situations (Saltzstein & Sandberg, 1979). We may therefore expect that judges of diving or gymnastic competitions, for example, will seldom change their ratings after seeing the other judges' ratings, although they might adjust their later performance ratings.

Prior commitments restrain persuasion, too. When simulated juries make decisions, hung verdicts are more likely in cases when jurors are polled by a show of hands rather than by secret ballot (Kerr & MacCoun, 1985). Making a public commitment makes people hesitant to back down.

Smart persuaders know this. Salespeople ask questions that prompt us to make statements for, rather than against, what they are marketing. Environmentalists ask people to commit themselves to recycling, energy conservation, or bus riding. That's because behavior then changes more than when environmental appeals are heard without inviting a commitment (Katzev & Wang, 1994). Teens 14 to 17 who make a public virginity-till-marriage pledge reportedly become somewhat more likely to remain sexually abstinent, or to delay intercourse, than similar teens who don't make the pledge (Bearman & Brückner, 2001; Brückner & Bearman, 2005; Uecker, 2008). (If they violate their pledge, however, they are somewhat less likely to use a condom.)

**"THOSE WHO NEVER  
RETRACT THEIR OPINIONS  
LOVE THEMSELVES MORE  
THAN THEY LOVE TRUTH."**

—JOUBERT, PENSÈES

The race referees huddled. After a brief deliberation they judged that no foul had occurred and confirmed Codex as the winner. The decision caused an uproar. Televised instant replays showed that Codex had indeed brushed Genuine Risk, the sentimental favorite. A protest was filed. The officials reconsidered their decision, but they did not change it.

Did their declared judgment immediately after the race affect officials' openness toward reaching a different decision later? We will never know for sure. We can, however, put people through a laboratory version of this event—with and

## SUMMING UP: What Predicts Conformity?

- Using conformity testing procedures, experimenters have explored the circumstances that produce conformity. Certain situations appear to be especially powerful. For example, conformity is affected by the characteristics of the group: People conform most when three or more people, or groups, model the behavior or belief.
- Conformity is reduced if the modeled behavior or belief is not unanimous.
- Conformity is enhanced by group cohesion.
- The higher the status of those modeling the behavior or belief, the greater likelihood of conformity.
- People also conform most when their responses are public (in the presence of the group).
- A prior commitment to a certain behavior or belief increases the likelihood that a person will stick with that commitment rather than conform.

# WHY CONFORM?

**Identify and understand the two forms of social influence that explain why people will conform to others.**

"Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in the shape of a camel?" asks Shakespeare's Hamlet of Polonius. "'Tis like a camel indeed," replies Polonius. "Methinks it is a weasel," says Hamlet a moment later. "It is backed like a weasel," acknowledges Polonius. "Or like a whale?" wonders Hamlet. "Very like a whale," agrees Polonius. Question: Why does Polonius so readily agree every time Hamlet changes his mind?

Or consider this situation: There I was, an American attending my first lecture during an extended visit at a German university. As the lecturer finished, I lifted my hands to join in the clapping. But rather than clap, the other people began rapping the tables with their knuckles. What did this mean? Did they disapprove of the speech? Surely, not everyone would be so openly rude to a visiting dignitary. Nor did their faces express displeasure. No, I realized, this must be a German ovation. Whereupon, I added my knuckles to the chorus.

What prompted this conformity? Why had I not clapped even while the others rapped? Why did Polonius so readily echo Hamlet's words? There are two possibilities: A person may bow to the group (a) to be accepted and avoid rejection or (b) to obtain important information. Morton Deutsch and Harold Gerard (1955) named these two possibilities **normative influence** and **informational influence**. The first springs from our desire to be *liked*, and the second from our desire to be *right*.

Normative influence is "going along with the crowd" to avoid rejection, to stay in people's good graces, or to gain their approval. Perhaps the subordinate Polonius agreed with Hamlet, the higher-status Prince of Denmark, to curry favor.

In the laboratory and in everyday life, groups often reject those who deviate consistently (Miller & Anderson, 1979; Schachter, 1951). That's a lesson learned by a media studies professor who became an outcast while playing the online game "City of Heroes" (Vargas, 2009). The professor, with whom I empathize because (I am not making this up) we share the same name—David Myers—played by the rules but did not conform to the customs. Much as drivers who go 50 in a 70 mph zone are disliked for violating norms but not rules, Myers was derided with instant messages: "I hope your mother gets cancer." "EVERYONE HATES YOU." "If you kill me one more time I will come and kill you for real and I am not kidding."

As most of us know, social rejection is painful; when we deviate from group norms, we often pay an emotional price. Brain scans show that group judgments differing from one's own activate a brain area that also is active when one feels the pain of bad betting decisions (Klucharev & others, 2009). Gerard (1999) recalls that in one of his conformity experiments, an initially friendly participant became upset, asked to leave the room, and returned looking

sick and visibly shaken. I became worried and suggested that we discontinue the session. He absolutely refused to stop and continued through all 36 trials, not yielding to the others on a single trial. After the experiment was over and I explained the subterfuge to him, his entire body relaxed and he sighed with relief. Color returned to his face. I asked him why he had left the room. "To vomit," he said. He did not yield, but at what a price! He wanted so much to be accepted and liked by the others and was afraid he would not be because he had stood his ground against them. There you have normative pressure operating with a vengeance.

Sometimes the high price of deviation compels people to support what they do not believe in or at least to suppress their disagreement. "I was afraid that Leideritz and others would think I was a coward," reported one German officer, explaining his reluctance to dissent from mass executions (Waller, 2002). Fearing a court-martial for disobedience, some of the soldiers at My Lai participated in the massacre.

## **normative influence**

Conformity based on a person's desire to fulfill others' expectations, often to gain acceptance.

## **informational influence**

Conformity occurring when people accept evidence about reality provided by other people.

"IF YOU WORRY ABOUT  
MISSING THE BOAT—  
REMEMBER THE TITANIC."

—ANONYMOUS

Normative influence leads to compliance, especially for people who have recently seen others ridiculed or who are seeking to climb a status ladder (Hollander, 1958; Janes & Olson, 2000). As John F. Kennedy (1956) recalled, “‘The way to get along,’ I was told when I entered Congress, ‘is to go along’” (p. 4).

*Normative* influence often sways us without our awareness. When a research team led by Jessica Nolan (2008) asked 810 Californians what influenced their energy conservation, people rated environmental protection and saving money ahead of other people doing it. Yet it was their beliefs about how often their neighbors tried to conserve that best predicted their own self-reported conservation. And in a follow-up study, it was door-hung normative messages, such as “99% of people in your community reported turning off unnecessary lights to save energy,” that produced the greatest drop in electricity use.

*Informational* influence, on the other hand, leads people to privately accept others' influence. Viewing a changing cloud shape, Polonius may actually see what Hamlet helps him see. When reality is ambiguous, as it was for participants in the autokinetic situation, other people can be a valuable source of information. The individual may reason, “I can't tell how far the light is moving. But this guy seems to know.”

Our friends have extra influence on us for informational as well as normative reasons (Denrell, 2008; Denrell & Le Mens, 2007). If our friend buys a particular car and takes us to a particular restaurant, we will gain information that may lead us to like what our friend likes—even if we don't care what our friend likes. Our friends influence the experiences that inform our attitudes.

To discover what the brain is doing when people experience an Asch-type conformity experiment, an Emory University neuroscience team put participants in a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) brain scanner while having them answer perceptual questions after hearing others' responses (Berns & others, 2005). (The task involved mentally rotating a figure to find its match among several possibilities.) When the participants conformed to a wrong answer, the brain regions dedicated to perception became active. And when they went *against* the group, brain regions associated with emotion became active. These results suggest that when people conform, their perceptions may be genuinely influenced. Follow-up fMRI studies have identified neural activity associated with normative influence (in a brain area that is active when people are anxious about social rejection) and with informational influence (in areas involved with one's judgments of a stimulus) (Zaki & others, 2011).

So, concern for *social image* produces *normative influence*. The desire to be *correct* produces *informational influence*. In day-to-day life, normative and informational influence often occur together. I was not about to be the only person in that German lecture hall clapping (normative influence). Yet the others' behavior also showed me the appropriate way to express my appreciation (informational influence).

Conformity experiments have sometimes isolated either normative or informational influence. Conformity is greater when people respond publicly before a group; this surely reflects normative influence (because people receive the same information whether they respond publicly or privately). On the other hand, conformity is greater when participants feel incompetent, when the task is difficult, and when the individuals care about being right—all signs of informational influence.

## SUMMING UP: Why Conform?

- Experiments reveal two reasons people conform. *Normative influence* results from a person's desire for acceptance: We want to be liked. The tendency to conform more when responding publicly reflects normative influence.
- *Informational influence* results from others' providing evidence about reality. The tendency to conform more on difficult decision-making tasks reflects informational influence: We want to be right.



Chimpanzees, like humans, have been observed to ape their peers, especially those of high status. They may copy tool use or food-washing habits observed in role models. And after they have observed and picked up a cultural way of doing something—perhaps a technique for scooping up tasty ants with a stick—they persist.

## WHO CONFORMS?

Describe how conformity varies not only with situations but also with persons. Discuss social contexts in which personality traits shine through.

Are some people generally more susceptible (or should I say, more open) to social influence? Among your friends, can you identify some who are “conformists” and others who are “independent”? In their search for the conformer, researchers have focused on three predictors: personality, culture, and social roles.

### Personality

During the late 1960s and 1970s, researchers observed only weak connections between personal characteristics and social behaviors such as conformity (Mischel, 1968). In contrast with the demonstrable power of situational factors, personality scores were poor predictors of individuals’ behavior. If you wanted to know how conforming or aggressive or helpful someone was going to be, it seemed you were better off knowing about the situation rather than the person’s psychological test scores. As Milgram (1974) concluded: “I am certain that there is a complex personality basis to obedience and disobedience. But I know we have not found it” (p. 205).

During the 1980s, the idea that personal dispositions make little difference prompted personality researchers to pinpoint the circumstances under which traits *do* predict behavior. Their research affirms a principle that we met in Chapter 4: Although internal factors (attitudes, traits) seldom precisely predict a specific action, they better predict a person’s *average* behavior across many situations (Epstein, 1980; Rushton & others, 1983). An analogy may help: Just as your response to a single test item is hard to predict, so is your behavior in a single situation. And just as your total score across the many items of a test is more predictable, so is your total conformity (or outgoingness or aggressiveness) across many situations.

Personality also predicts behavior better when social influences are weak. Milgram’s obedience experiments created “strong” situations; their clear-cut demands made it difficult for personality differences to operate. Even so, Milgram’s

Personality effects loom larger when we note people's differing reactions to the same situation, as when one person reacts with terror and another with delight to a roller coaster ride.



participants differed widely in how obedient they were, and there is good reason to suspect that sometimes his participants' hostility, respect for authority, and concern for meeting expectations affected their obedience (Blass, 1990, 1991). And in "weaker" situations—as when two strangers sit in a waiting room with no cues to guide their behavior—individual personalities are free to shine (Ickes & others, 1982; Monson & others, 1982; and see Cooper & Withey's (2009) call for more research).

But even in strong situations, individuals differ. An Army report on the Abu Ghraib prison abuse praised three men who, despite threats of ridicule and court-martial, stood apart from their comrades (O'Connor, 2004). Lt. David Sutton terminated one

incident and alerted his commanders. "I don't want to judge, but yes, I witnessed something inappropriate and I reported it," said Sutton. Navy dog handler William Kimbro resisted "significant pressure" to participate in "improper interrogations." And Specialist Joseph Darby blew the whistle, giving military police the evidence that raised the alarm. Darby, called a "rat" by some, received death threats for his dissent and was given military protection. But back home, his mother joined others in applauding: "Honey, I'm so proud of you because you did the good thing and good always triumphs over evil, and the truth will always set you free" (ABC News, December 2004).

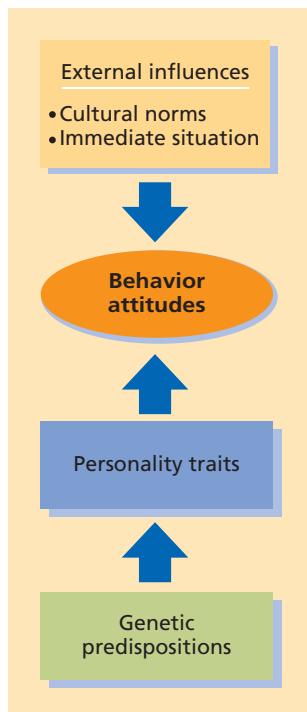
The pendulum of professional opinion swings. Without discounting the undeniable power of the social forces recognized in the 1960s and 1970s, the pendulum has swung back toward an appreciation of individual personality and its genetic predispositions (Figure 6.8). Like the attitude researchers we considered earlier, personality researchers are clarifying and reaffirming the connection between who we are and what we do. Thanks to their efforts, today's social psychologists now agree with pioneering theorist Kurt Lewin's (1936) dictum: "Every psychological

## FIGURE :: 6.8

Traits and situations together shape behavior. Research on the "Big Five" personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness) shows them to be genetically disposed characteristics that, along with external influences, guide our lives (McCrae, 2011).

"I DON'T WANT TO  
GET ADJUSTED TO THIS  
WORLD."

—WOODY GUTHRIE



event depends upon the state of the person and at the same time on the environment, although their relative importance is different in different cases" (p. 12).

## Culture

When researchers in Australia, Austria, Germany, Italy, Jordan, South Africa, Spain, and the United States repeated the obedience experiments, how do you think the results compared with those with American participants? The obedience rates were similar, or even higher—85 percent in Munich (Blass, 2000).

But does cultural background help predict how *conforming* people will be? Indeed it does. James Whittaker and Robert Meade (1967) repeated Asch's conformity experiment in several countries and found similar conformity rates in most—31 percent in Lebanon, 32 percent in Hong Kong, 34 percent in Brazil—but 51 percent among the Bantu of Zimbabwe, a tribe with strong sanctions against non-conformity. When Milgram (1961) used a different conformity procedure to compare Norwegian and French students, he consistently found the French students to be less conforming. An analysis by Rod Bond and Peter Smith (1996) of 133 studies in 17 countries showed how cultural values influence conformity. Compared with people in individualistic countries, those in collectivist countries (where harmony is prized and connections help define the self) are more responsive to others' influence. In collectivist Japan, Western observers were struck by the absence of looting and lawlessness following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami; respect for social norms prevailed (Cafferty, 2011). In individualist countries, university students see themselves as more nonconforming than others in their consumer purchases and political views—as individuals amid the sheep (Pronin & others, 2007).

There may be some biological wisdom to cultural differences in conformity. Although nonconformity supports creative problem solving, groups thrive when coordinating their responses to threats. Thus, note Damian Murray and his co-workers (2011), countries that have a high risk of nine different pathogens, such as malaria, typhus, and tuberculosis, tend to have cultures that display relatively high conformity levels. Conformity supports social norms regarding food preparation, hygiene, public health, and contact with unknown people, report the researchers.

Cultural differences also exist within any country. For example, in five studies, Nicole Stephens and her co-researchers (2007) found that working-class people tend to prefer similarity to others, whereas middle-class people more strongly preferred to see themselves as unique individuals. In an experiment, people chose a pen from among five green and orange pens (with three or four of one color). Of university students from working-class backgrounds, 72 percent picked one from the majority color, as did only 44 percent of those from middle-class backgrounds (with a college-graduate parent). Those from working-class backgrounds also came to like their chosen pen more after seeing someone else make the same choice. They responded more positively to a friend's knowingly buying the same car they had just bought. And they were also more likely to prefer visual images that they knew others had chosen.

In addition, cultures may change over time. Replications of Asch's experiment with university students in Britain, Canada, and the United States sometimes trigger less conformity than Asch observed two or three decades earlier (Lalancette & Standing, 1990; Larsen, 1974, 1990; Nicholson & others, 1985; Perrin & Spencer, 1981). So conformity and obedience are universal phenomena, yet they vary across cultures and eras.

## Social Roles

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts.  
—William Shakespeare



Heiress Patricia Hearst as "Tanya," the revolutionary, and as a suburban socialite.



Role theorists have assumed, as did William Shakespeare's character Jaques in *As You Like It*, that social life is like acting on a theatrical stage, with all its scenes, masks, and scripts. And those roles have much to do with conformity. Social roles allow some freedom of interpretation to those who act them out, but some aspects of any role *must* be performed. A student must at least show up for exams, turn in papers, and maintain some minimum grade point average.

When only a few norms are associated with a social category (for example, riders on an escalator should stand to the right and walk to the left), we do not regard the position as a social role. It takes a whole cluster of norms to define a role. My roles as a professor or as a father compel me to honor a whole set of norms. Although I may acquire my particular image by violating the least important norms (valuing efficiency, I rarely arrive early for anything), violating my role's most important norms (failing to meet classes, abusing my children) could have led to my being fired or having my children removed from my care.

Roles have powerful effects. In Chapter 4 we noted that we tend to absorb our roles. On a first date or on a new job, you may act the role self-consciously. As you internalize the role, self-consciousness subsides. What felt awkward now feels genuine.

That is the experience of many immigrants, Peace Corps workers, and international students and executives. After arriving in a new country, it takes time to learn how to talk and act appropriately in the new context—to conform, as I did with the Germans who rapped their knuckles on their desks. And the almost universal experience of those who repatriate back to their home country is reentry distress (Sussman, 2000). In ways one may not have been aware of, the process of conforming will have shifted one's behavior, values, and identity to accommodate a different place. One must "re-conform" to one's former roles before being back in sync.

The case of kidnapped newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst illustrates the power of role playing. In 1974, when she was 19, Hearst was kidnapped by some young revolutionaries who called themselves the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). Soon Hearst publicly announced that she had joined her captors and renounced her former life, her wealthy parents, and her fiancé. She asked that people "try to understand the changes I've gone through." Twelve days later, a bank camera recorded her participation in an SLA armed holdup.

Nineteen months later, Hearst was apprehended. After two years' incarceration and "deprogramming," she resumed her role as an heiress, marrying "well" and becoming a suburban Connecticut mother and author who devotes much of her time to charitable causes (Johnson, 1988; Schiffman, 1999). If Patricia Hearst had really been a "closet" revolutionary all along, or had she merely obeyed her captors to escape punishment, people could have understood her actions. What they could not understand (and what therefore made this one of the biggest news stories of the

1970s) was that, as Philip Brickman (1978) wrote, “she could really be an heiress, really a revolutionary, and then perhaps really an heiress again.” Surely, a role shift on this scale could not happen to you or me—or could it?

Yes and no. As we saw earlier in this chapter, our actions depend not only on the power of the situation but also on our personalities. Not everyone responds in the same way to pressure to conform. In Patricia Hearst’s predicament, you or I might respond differently. Nevertheless, we have seen that social situations can move most “normal” people to behave in “abnormal” ways. This is clear from those experiments that put well-intentioned people in bad situations to see whether good or evil prevails. To a dismaying extent, evil wins. Nice guys often don’t finish nice.

### ROLE REVERSAL

Role playing can also be a positive force. By intentionally playing a new role and conforming to its expectations, people sometimes change themselves or empathize with people whose roles differ from their own.

Roles often come in pairs defined by relationships—parent and child, teacher and student, doctor and patient, employer and employee. Role reversals can help each understand the other. A negotiator or a group leader can therefore create better communication by having the two sides reverse roles, with each arguing the other’s position. Or each side can be asked to restate the other party’s point (to the other’s satisfaction) before replying. The next time you get into a difficult argument with a friend or parent, try to restate the other person’s perceptions and feelings before going on with your own. This intentional, temporary conformity may repair your relationship.

So far in this chapter, we have discussed classic studies of conformity and obedience, identified the factors that predict conformity, and considered who conforms and why. Remember that our primary quest in social psychology is not to catalog differences but to identify universal principles of behavior.

Social roles will always vary with culture, but the processes by which those roles influence behavior vary much less. People in Nigeria and Japan define teen roles differently from people in Europe and North America, but in all cultures role expectations guide the conformity found in social relations.

"GREAT SPIRIT, GRANT  
THAT I MAY NOT CRITI-  
CIZE MY NEIGHBOR  
UNTIL I HAVE WALKED  
FOR A MOON IN HIS  
MOCCASINS."

—NATIVE AMERICAN PRAYER

## SUMMING UP: Who Conforms?

- The question “Who conforms?” has produced few definitive answers. Personality scores are poor predictors of specific acts of conformity but better predictors of average conformity. Trait effects sometimes seem strongest in “weak” situations where social forces do not overwhelm individual differences.
- Although conformity and obedience are universal, different cultures socialize people to be more or less socially responsive.
- Social roles involve a certain degree of conformity, and conforming to expectations is an important task when stepping into a new social role.

## DO WE EVER WANT TO BE DIFFERENT?

Explain what can motivate people to actively resist social pressure—by doing Z when compelled to do A.

This chapter emphasizes the power of social forces. It is therefore fitting that we conclude by again reminding ourselves of the power of the person. We are not just billiard balls moving where pushed. We may act according to our own values, independently of the forces that push upon us. Knowing that someone is trying to coerce us may even prompt us to react in the *opposite* direction.

"TO DO JUST THE OPPO-  
SITE IS ALSO A FORM OF  
IMITATION."

—LICHENBERG, APHORIS-  
MEN, 1764–1799

**Reactance.**

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## Reactance

### **reactance**

A motive to protect or restore one's sense of freedom. Reactance arises when someone threatens our freedom of action.

Individuals value their sense of freedom and self-efficacy. When blatant social pressure threatens their sense of freedom, they often rebel. Think of Romeo and Juliet, whose love was intensified by their families' opposition. Or think of children asserting their freedom and independence by doing the opposite of what their parents ask. Savvy parents therefore offer their children choices instead of commands: "It's time to clean up: Do you want a bath or a shower?"

The theory of psychological **reactance**—that people act to protect their sense of freedom—is supported by experiments showing that attempts to restrict a person's freedom often produce an anticonformity "boomerang effect" (Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Nail & others, 2000). In one field experiment, many nongeeky students stopped wearing a "Livestrong" wristband when nearby geeky academic students started wearing the band (Berger & Heath, 2008). Likewise, rich Brits stopped wearing Burberry caps after the caps caught on among soccer hooligans (Clevstrom & Passariello, 2006).

Reactance may contribute to underage drinking. A survey of 18- to 24-year-olds by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (1997) revealed that 69 percent of those over the legal drinking age (21) had been drunk in the last year, as had 77 percent of those *under* 21. In the United States, a survey of students on 56 campuses revealed a 25 percent rate of alcohol abstinence among students of legal drinking age (21) but only a 19 percent abstinence rate among students under 21 (Engs & Hanson, 1989).

## Asserting Uniqueness

Imagine a world of complete conformity, where there were no differences among people. Would such a world be a happy place? If nonconformity can create discomfort, can sameness create comfort?

People feel uncomfortable when they appear too different from others. But in individualistic Western cultures they also feel uncomfortable when they appear exactly like everyone else. As experiments by C. R. Snyder and Howard Fromkin (1980) have shown, people feel better when



Reactance at work? Underage students have been found to be less often abstinent and more often drinking to excess than students over the legal drinking age.

they see themselves as moderately unique. Moreover, they act in ways that will assert their individuality. In one experiment, Snyder (1980) led Purdue University students to believe that their “10 most important attitudes” were either distinct from or nearly identical to the attitudes of 10,000 other students. When they next participated in a conformity experiment, those deprived of their feeling of uniqueness were the ones most likely to assert their individuality by nonconformity. Moreover, individuals who have the highest “need for uniqueness” tend to be the least responsive to majority influence (Imhoff & Erb, 2009).

Both social influence and the desire for uniqueness appear in popular baby names. People seeking less commonplace names often hit upon the same ones at the same time. Among the top 10 U.S. girls’ baby names for 2007 were Isabella (2), Madison (5), and Olivia (7). Those who in the 1960s broke out of the pack by naming their baby Rebecca, thinking they were bucking convention, soon discovered their choice was part of a new pack, noted Peggy Orenstein (2003). Hillary, a popular late ‘80s, early ‘90s name, became less original-seeming and less frequent (even among her admirers) after Hillary Clinton became famous. Although the popularity of such names then fades, observes Orenstein, it may resurface with a future generation. Max, Rose, and Sophie sound like the roster of a retirement home—or a primary school.

Seeing oneself as unique also appears in people’s “spontaneous self-concepts.” William McGuire and his Yale University colleagues (McGuire & others, 1979; McGuire & Padawer-Singer, 1978) invited children to “tell us about yourself.” In reply, the children mostly mentioned their distinctive attributes. Foreign-born children were more likely than others to mention their birthplace. Redheads were more likely than black- and brown-haired children to volunteer their hair color. Light and heavy children were the most likely to refer to their body weight. Minority children were the most likely to mention their race.

Likewise, we become more keenly aware of our gender when we are with people of the other gender (Cota & Dion, 1986). When I attended an American Psychological Association meeting with 10 others—all women, as it happened—I immediately was aware of my gender. As we took a break at the end of the second day, I joked that the line would be short at my bathroom, triggering the woman sitting next to me to notice what hadn’t crossed her mind—the group’s gender makeup.

The principle, says McGuire, is that “one is conscious of oneself insofar as, and in the ways that, one is different.” Thus, “If I am a Black woman in a group of White women, I tend to think of myself as a Black; if I move to a group of Black men, my blackness loses salience and I become more conscious of being a woman” (McGuire & others, 1978). This insight helps us understand why White people who grow up amid non-White people tend to have a strong White identity, why gays may be more conscious of their sexual identity than straights, and why any minority group tends to be conscious of its distinctiveness and how the surrounding culture relates to it (Knowles & Peng, 2005). The majority group, being less conscious of race, may see the minority group as hypersensitive. When occasionally living in Scotland, where my American accent marks me as a foreigner, I become conscious of my national identity and sensitive to how others react to it.

When the people of two cultures are nearly identical, they still will notice their differences,

*When body tattoos come to be perceived as pack behavior—as displaying conformity rather than individuality—will their popularity decline?*

“WHEN I'M IN AMERICA,  
I HAVE NO DOUBT I'M A  
JEW, BUT I HAVE STRONG  
DOUBTS ABOUT WHETHER  
I'M REALLY AN AMERI-  
CAN. AND WHEN I GET  
TO ISRAEL, I KNOW I'M AN  
AMERICAN, BUT I HAVE  
STRONG DOUBTS ABOUT  
WHETHER I'M A JEW.”

—LESLIE FIEDLER, FIEDLER ON  
THE ROOF, 1991

“SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS,  
THE RECOGNITION OF A  
CREATURE BY ITSELF AS  
A 'SELF,' [CANNOT] EXIST  
EXCEPT IN CONTRAST WITH  
AN 'OTHER,' A SOMETHING  
WHICH IS NOT THE SELF.”

—C. S. LEWIS, THE PROBLEM  
OF PAIN, 1940



Asserting our uniqueness. Though not wishing to be greatly deviant, most of us express our distinctiveness through our personal styles and dress.

however small. Even trivial distinctions may provoke scorn and conflict. Jonathan Swift satirized the phenomenon in *Gulliver's Travels* with the story of the Little-Endians' war against the Big-Endians. Their difference: The Little-Endians preferred to break their eggs on the small end, the Big-Endians on the large end. On a world scale, the differences may not seem great between Sunni and Shia. But anyone who reads the news knows that these small differences have meant big conflicts (Rothbart & Taylor, 1992). Rivalry is often most intense when the other group closely resembles you.

So, although we do not like being greatly deviant, we are, ironically, all alike in wanting to feel distinctive and in noticing how we are distinctive. (In thinking you are different, you are like everyone else.) But as research on the self-serving bias (Chapter 2) makes clear, it is not just any kind of distinctiveness we seek but distinctiveness in the right direction. Our quest is not merely to be different from the average, but *better* than average.

## SUMMING UP: Do We Ever Want to Be Different?

- Social psychology's emphasis on the power of social pressure must be joined by a complementary emphasis on the power of the person. We are not puppets. When social coercion becomes blatant, people often experience *reactance*—a motivation to defy the coercion in order to maintain their sense of freedom.
- We are not comfortable being greatly different from a group, but neither do we want to appear the same as everyone else. Thus, we act in ways that preserve our sense of uniqueness and individuality. In a group, we are most conscious of how we differ from the others.

## POSTSCRIPT: On Being an Individual Within Community

Do your own thing. Question authority. If it feels good, do it. Follow your bliss. Don't conform. Think for yourself. Be true to yourself. You owe it to yourself.

We hear words like those over and again if we live in an individualistic Western nation, such as those of Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, or, especially, the United States. The unchallenged assumption that individualism is good and conformity is bad is what Chapter 1 called a "social representation," a collectively shared idea. Our mythical cultural heroes—from Sherlock Holmes to Luke Skywalker to Neo of the *Matrix* trilogy—often stand up against institutional rules. Individualists assume the preeminence of individual rights and celebrate the one who stands against the group.

In 1831 the French writer Alexis de Tocqueville coined the term "individualism" after traveling in America. Individualists, he noted, owe no one "anything and hardly expect anything from anybody. They form the habit of thinking of themselves in isolation and imagine that their whole destiny is in their hands." A century and a half later, psychotherapist Fritz Perls (1972) epitomized this radical individualism in his "Gestalt prayer":

I do my thing, and you do your thing.  
I am not in this world to live up to your expectations.  
And you are not in this world to live up to mine.

Psychologist Carl Rogers (1985) agreed: "The only question which matters is, 'Am I living in a way which is deeply satisfying to me, and which truly expresses me?'"

As we noted in Chapter 2, that is hardly the only question that matters to people in many other cultures, including those of Asia, South America, and most of Africa. Where *community* is prized, conformity is accepted. Schoolchildren often display

their solidarity by wearing uniforms; many workers do the same. To maintain harmony, confrontation and dissent are muted. "The stake that stands out gets pounded down," say the Japanese. South Africans have a word that expresses human connection. *Ubuntu*, explained Desmond Tutu (1999), conveys the idea that "my humanity is caught up by, is inextricably bound up in, yours." *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, says a Zulu maxim: "A person is a person through other persons."

Amitai Etzioni (1993), a past president of the American Sociological Association, urges us toward a "communitarian" individualism that balances our nonconformist individualism with a spirit of community. Fellow sociologist Robert Bellah (1995/1996) concurs. "Communitarianism is based on the value of the sacredness of the individual," he explains. But it also "affirms the central value of solidarity . . . that we become who we are through our relationships."

As Westerners in various nations, most readers of this book enjoy the benefits of nonconformist individualism. Communitarians remind us that we also are social creatures having a basic need to belong. Conformity is neither all bad nor all good. We therefore do well to balance our "me" and our "we," our needs for independence and for attachment, our individuality and our social identity.

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CHAPTER

# 7

# Persuasion



**"To swallow and follow, whether old doctrine or new propaganda, is a weakness still dominating the human mind."**

—Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Human Work*, 1904

**"Remember that to change thy mind and to follow him that sets thee right, is to be none the less a free agent."**

—Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, *Meditations*, viii, 16, 121–180

**What paths lead to persuasion?**

**What are the elements of persuasion?**

**Extreme persuasion: How do cults indoctrinate?**

**How can persuasion be resisted?**

**Postscript: Being open but not naive**

Many of life's powers can either harm or help us. Nuclear power enables us to light up homes or wipe out cities. Sexual power helps us to express committed love or to seek selfish gratification. Similarly, **persuasion**'s power enables us to promote health or to sell addiction, to advance peace or stir up hate, to enlighten or deceive. And such powers are great. Consider the following:

- *The spread of weird beliefs:* About 1 American in 5 thinks the sun revolves around the earth (Dean, 2005). About 1 in 5 have expressed belief that President Obama is a Muslim and 1 in 4 that he was born outside the United States (Blanton, 2011; Pew, 2010). Others deny that the moon landing and the Holocaust happened.
- *A trillion-dollar war:* The United States' invasion of Iraq was enabled by persuasive messages that led half of Americans to believe that Iraq dictator Saddam Hussein was involved in the 9/11 attacks and 4 in 5 to believe that weapons of mass destruction would be found (Duffy, 2003; Gallup Organization, 2003; Newport & others, 2003). Both beliefs, history records, were false. Shortly before the war, Americans, under the influence of their leaders and media, favored military action against Iraq by 2 to 1, whereas Europeans were opposing it by the same margin

### **persuasion**

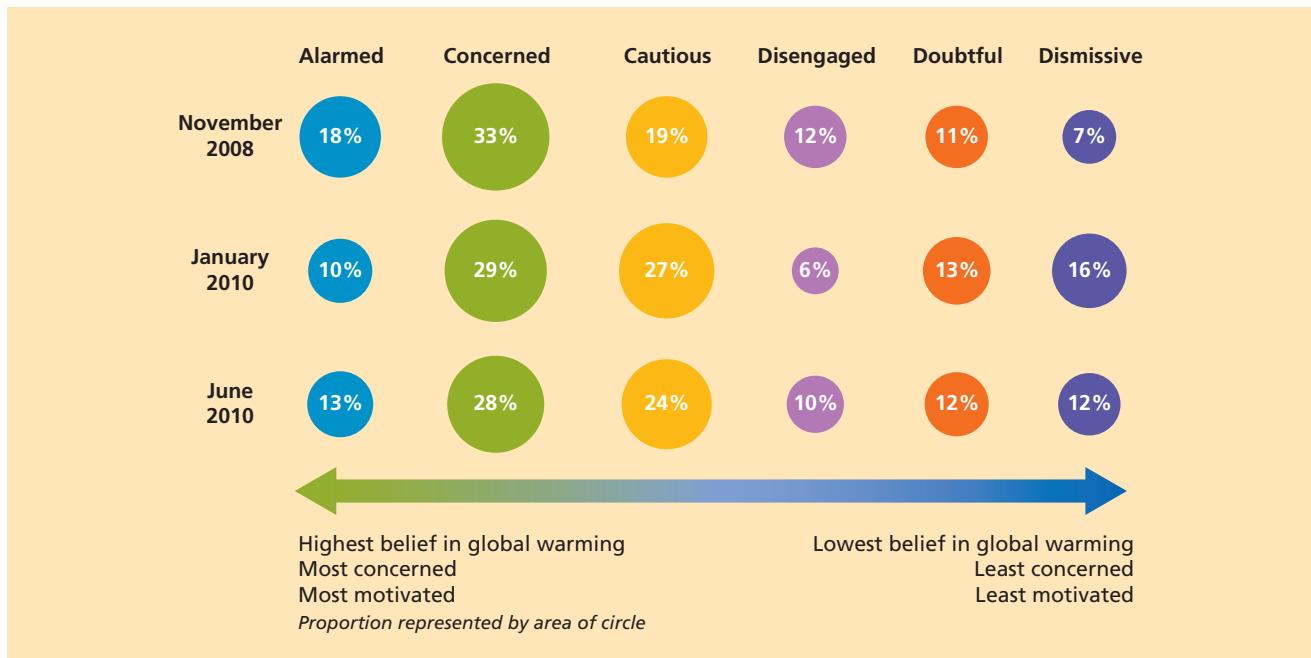
The process by which a message induces change in beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors.

"SPEECH HAS POWER.  
WORDS DO NOT FADE.  
WHAT STARTS OUT AS A  
SOUND ENDS IN A DEED."

—RABBI ABRAHAM HESCHEL,  
1961

(Burkholder, 2003; Moore, 2003; Pew Research Center, 2003). Depending on where they lived, people received, discussed, and believed differing information. Persuasion matters.

- *Climate change skepticism:* The scientific community, represented by various national academies of science and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, is in a virtual consensus about three facts of life: (1) Atmospheric greenhouse gases are accumulating; (2) diminishing sea ice and rising land, sea, and atmospheric temperatures all confirm the world's warming; and (3) this climate change will almost certainly produce rising sea levels and more extreme weather, including record floods, tornadoes, droughts, and high temperatures. "Climate change is occurring, is caused largely by human activities, and poses significant risks," declares the U.S. National Research Council (2010). Nevertheless, as the past decade was ending, popular climate *skepticism* was growing. The number of Americans who believed global warming has been happening declined from 84 to 74 percent between 2007 and 2010, as concern diminished (Krosnick, 2010; Figure 7.1). In Britain, the proportion who believed climate change was not only happening but also "now established as largely manmade" dropped from 41 percent in 2009 to 26 percent in 2010. And the number of Germans fearing global warming dropped to 42 percent, from



**FIGURE :: 7.1**  
**Global Climate Change Concern of U.S. Adults**

Indexed by the Yale Project on Climate Change and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication (Leiserowitz & others, 2011).

62 percent 4 years earlier (Rosenthal, 2010). Researchers wondered: Why is the scientific consensus failing to persuade and to motivate action? And what might be done?

- *Promoting healthier living:* Due partly to health-promotion campaigns, the Centers for



Disease Control and Prevention reports that the American cigarette smoking rate has plunged to 21 percent, half the rate of 40 years ago. Statistics Canada reports a similar smoking decline in Canada. And the rate of new U.S. collegians reporting abstinence from beer has increased—from 26 percent in 1982 to 62 percent in 2010 (Pryor & others, 2007, 2010).

As the previous examples show, efforts to persuade are sometimes diabolical, sometimes controversial, and sometimes beneficial. Persuasion is neither inherently good nor bad. It is a message's purpose and content that elicit judgments of good or bad. The bad we call "propaganda." The good we call "education." Education is more factually based and less coercive than propaganda. Yet generally we call it "education" when we believe it, "propaganda" when we don't (Lumsden & others, 1980).

Persuasion, whether it be education or propaganda, is everywhere—at the heart of politics, marketing, courtship, parenting, negotiation, evangelism, and courtroom decision making. Social psychologists therefore seek to understand what leads to effective, long-lasting attitude change. What factors affect persuasion? As persuaders, how can we most effectively "educate" others?

Imagine that you are a marketing or advertising executive. Or imagine that you are a preacher, trying to increase love and charity among your parishioners. Or imagine that you want to restrain climate change, to encourage breast-feeding, or to campaign for a political candidate. What could you do to make yourself and your message persuasive? And if you are wary of being influenced, to what tactics should you be alert?

To answer such questions, social psychologists usually study persuasion the way some geologists study erosion—by observing the effects of various factors in brief, controlled experiments. The effects are small and are most potent on weak attitudes that don't touch our values. Yet they enable us to understand how, given enough time, such factors could produce big effects.

Persuasion is everywhere. When we approve of it, we may call it "education."

"ADS ARE PROPAGANDA BY DEFINITION. WE ARE IN THE PERSUASION BUSINESS, THE PROPAGANDA BUSINESS."

—A U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE'S STAFF EXECUTIVE, 2011  
(QUOTED BY EDSALL, 2011)

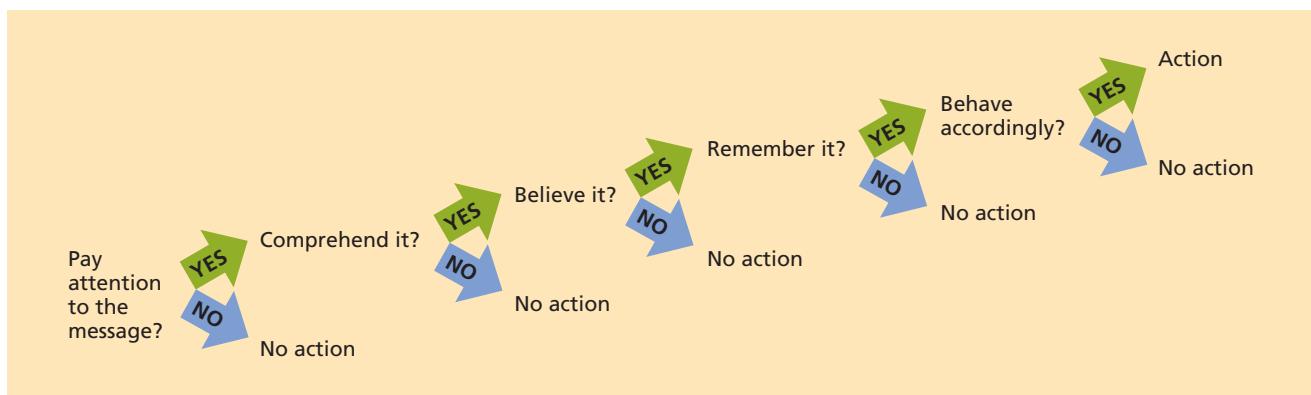
"A FANATIC IS ONE WHO CAN'T CHANGE HIS MIND AND WON'T CHANGE THE SUBJECT."

—WINSTON CHURCHILL, 1954

## WHAT PATHS LEAD TO PERSUASION?

Identify two paths leading to influence. Describe the type of cognitive processing each involves—and its effects.

While serving as chief psychologist for the U.S. War Department during World War II, Yale professor Carl Hovland and colleagues (1949) supported the war effort by studying persuasion. Hoping to boost soldier morale, the Hovland team



**FIGURE :: 7.2**  
**The Hurdles of the Persuasion Process**

To elicit action, a persuasive message must clear several hurdles. What is crucial, however, is not so much remembering the message itself as remembering one's own thoughts in response.

*Source:* Adapted from W. J. McGuire. "An Information-Processing Model of Advertising Effectiveness," in *Behavioral and Management Sciences in Marketing*, H. L. Davis and A. J. Silk, eds. Copyright © 1978. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons.

studied the effects of training films and historical documentaries on new recruits' attitudes toward the war. Back at Yale after the war, they continued studying what makes a message persuasive. Their research manipulated factors related to the communicator, the content of the message, the channel of communication, and the audience.

Ohio State University researchers then focused on people's *thoughts* in response to persuasive messages. If a message is clear but unconvincing, then you will easily counterargue the message and won't be persuaded. If the message offers convincing arguments, then your thoughts will be more favorable and you will most likely be persuaded. People's "cognitive responses" matter.

As shown in Figure 7.2, persuasion entails clearing several hurdles. Any factors that help people clear the persuasion hurdles will increase persuasion. For example, if an attractive source increases your attention to a message, then the message should have a better chance of persuading you.

## The Central Route

Richard Petty and John Cacioppo (Cass-ee-OH-poh) (1986; Petty & others, 2009) and Alice Eagly and Shelly Chaiken (1993, 1998) took this one step further. They theorized that persuasion is likely to occur via one of two routes. When people are motivated and able to think about an issue, they are likely to take the **central route to persuasion**—focusing on the arguments. If those arguments are strong and compelling, persuasion is likely. If the message offers only weak arguments, thoughtful people will notice that the arguments aren't very compelling and will counterargue.

## The Peripheral Route

But sometimes the strength of the arguments doesn't matter. Sometimes we're not motivated or able to think carefully. If we're distracted, uninvolved, or just plain busy, we may not take the time to reflect on the message's content. Rather than analyzing whether the arguments are compelling, we might follow the **peripheral route to persuasion**—focusing on cues that trigger automatic acceptance without much thinking. In these situations, easily understood familiar

### central route to persuasion

Occurs when interested people focus on the arguments and respond with favorable thoughts.

### peripheral route to persuasion

Occurs when people are influenced by incidental cues, such as a speaker's attractiveness.

statements are more persuasive than novel statements with the same meaning. Thus, for uninvolved or distracted people, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket” has more impact than “Don’t risk everything on a single venture” (Howard, 1997).

Smart advertisers adapt ads to their consumers’ thinking. They do so for good reason. Much of consumer behavior—such as one’s spontaneous decision, while shopping, to pick up some ice cream of a particular brand—is made unthinkingly (Dijksterhuis & others, 2005). Something as minor as German music may lead customers to buy German wine, whereas others, hearing French music, reach for French wine (North & others, 1997). Billboards and television commercials—media that consumers are able to take in for only brief amounts of time—therefore use the peripheral route, with visual images as peripheral cues. Instead of providing arguments in favor of smoking, cigarette ads associate the product with images of beauty and pleasure. So do soft-drink ads that promote “the real thing” with images of youth, vitality, and happy polar bears. On the other hand, magazine computer ads (which interested, logical consumers may pore over for some time) seldom feature Hollywood stars or great athletes. Instead, they offer customers information on competitive features and prices.

These two routes to persuasion—one explicit and reflective, the other more implicit and automatic—were a forerunner to today’s “dual processing” models of the human mind. Central route processing often swiftly changes explicit attitudes. Peripheral route processing more slowly builds implicit attitudes, through repeated associations between an attitude object and an emotion (Jones & others, 2009; Petty & Brinöl, 2008; Walther & others, 2011).



Peripheral route processing. “Product placements” on TV and in movies aim to influence implicit attitudes.

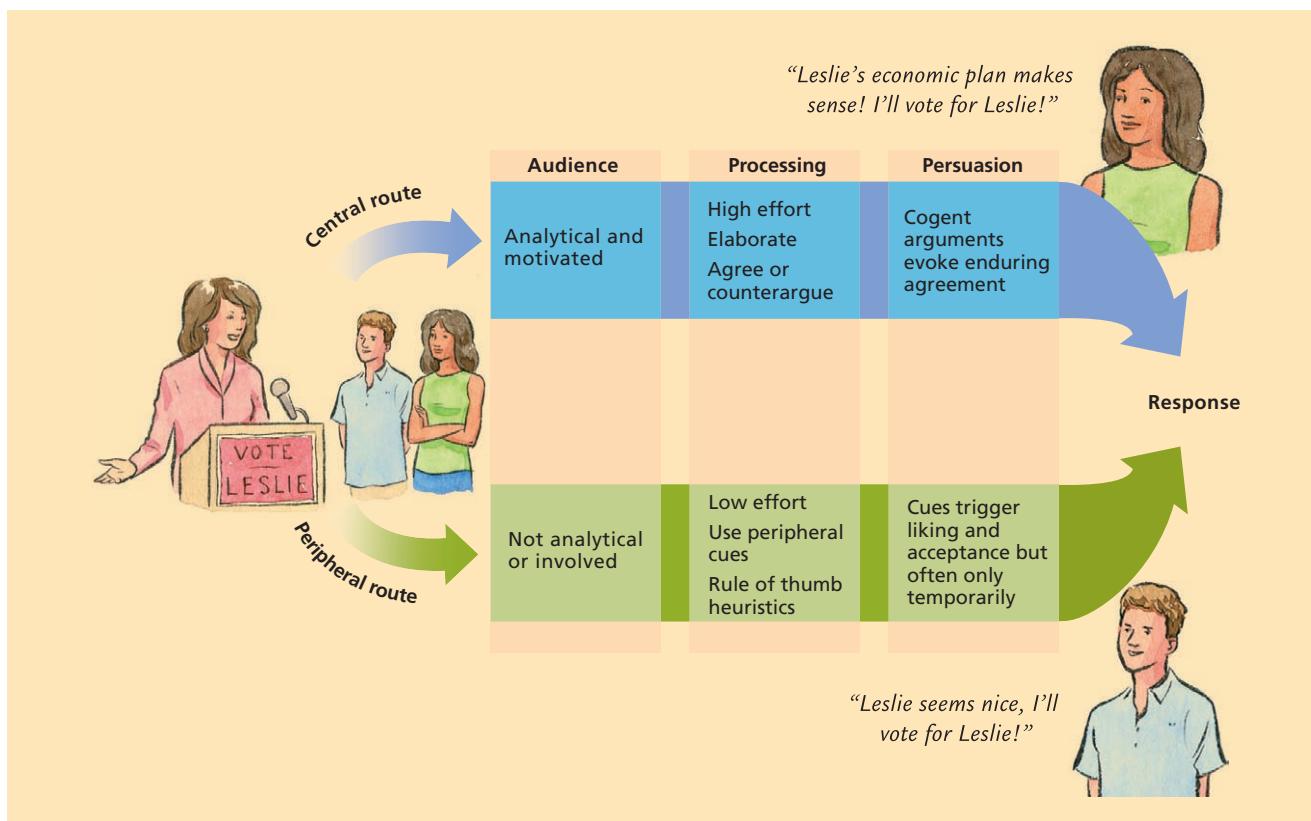
“ALL EFFECTIVE PROPAGANDA MUST BE LIMITED TO A VERY FEW POINTS AND MUST HARP ON THESE IN SLOGANS UNTIL THE LAST MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDS.”

—ADOLF HITLER, MEIN KAMPF, 1926

## Different Paths for Different Purposes

The ultimate goal of the advertiser, the preacher, and even the teacher is not just to have people pay attention to the message and move on. Typically, the goal is behavior change (buying a product, loving one’s neighbor, or studying more effectively). Are the two routes to persuasion equally likely to fulfill that goal? Petty and colleagues (1995, 2009) note how central route processing can lead to more enduring change than does the peripheral route. When people are thinking carefully and mentally elaborating on issues, they rely not just on the strength of persuasive appeals but on their own thoughts in response as well. It’s not so much the arguments that are persuasive as the way they get people thinking. And when people think deeply rather than superficially, any changed attitude will more likely persist, resist attack, and influence behavior (Petty & others, 1995, 2009; Verplanken, 1991).

None of us has the time to thoughtfully analyze all issues. Often we take the peripheral route, by using simple rule-of-thumb heuristics, such as “trust the experts” or “long messages are credible” (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994). Residents of my community once voted on a complicated issue involving the legal ownership of our local hospital. I didn’t have the time or the interest to study that question myself (I had this book to write). But I noted that referendum supporters were all



**FIGURE :: 7.3**  
**The Central and Peripheral Routes to Persuasion**

Computer ads typically take the central route, by assuming their audience wants to systematically compare features and prices. Soft-drink ads usually take the peripheral route, by merely associating their product with glamour, pleasure, and good moods. Central route processing more often produces enduring attitude change.

people I either liked or regarded as experts. So I used a simple heuristic—friends and experts can be trusted—and voted accordingly. We all make snap judgments using such heuristics: If a speaker is articulate and appealing, has apparently good motives, and has several arguments (or better, if the different arguments come from different sources), we usually take the easy peripheral route and accept the message without much thought (Figure 7.3).

## SUMMING UP: What Paths Lead to Persuasion?

- Sometimes *persuasion* occurs as people focus on arguments and respond with favorable thoughts. Such systematic, or *central route*, persuasion occurs when people are naturally analytical or involved in the issue.
- When issues don't engage systematic thinking, persuasion may occur through a faster, "*peripheral route*," as people use heuristics or incidental cues to make snap judgments.
- Central route persuasion, being more thoughtful and less superficial, is more durable and more likely to influence behavior.

# WHAT ARE THE ELEMENTS OF PERSUASION?

Describe how the factors that comprise persuasion affect the likelihood that we will take either the central or the peripheral route to persuasion.

Among the ingredients of persuasion explored by social psychologists are these four: (1) the communicator, (2) the message, (3) how the message is communicated, and (4) the audience. In other words, *who says what, by what method, to whom?*

## Who Says? The Communicator

Imagine the following scene: I. M. Wright, a middle-aged American, is watching the evening news. In the first segment, a small group of radicals is shown burning an American flag. As they do, one shouts through a bullhorn that whenever any government becomes oppressive, “it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it. . . . It is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government!” Angered, Mr. Wright mutters to his wife, “It’s sickening to hear them spouting that Communist line.” In the next segment, a presidential candidate speaking before an antitax rally declares, “Thrift should be the guiding principle in our government expenditure. It should be made clear to all government workers that corruption and waste are very great crimes.” An obviously pleased Mr. Wright relaxes and smiles: “Now that’s the kind of good sense we need. That’s my kinda guy.”

Now switch the scene. Imagine Mr. Wright hearing the same revolutionary line about “the Right of the People” at a July 4 oration of the Declaration of Independence (from which the line comes) and hearing a Communist speaker read the thrift sentence from *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* (from which it comes). Would he now react differently?

Social psychologists have found that who is saying something does affect how an audience receives it. In one experiment, when the Socialist and Liberal leaders in the Dutch parliament argued identical positions using the same words, each was most effective with members of his own party (Wiegman, 1985). “Accepting that there are differences between people” sounds sensible to most of us—unless we hear those words spoken by former South African prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd (1958), explaining his government’s segregationist apartheid policy. It’s not just the message that matters, but also who says it. What makes one communicator more persuasive than another?

### credibility

Believability. A credible communicator is perceived as both expert and trustworthy.

### CREDIBILITY

Any of us would find a statement about the benefits of exercise more believable if it came from the Royal Society or National Academy of Sciences rather than from a tabloid newspaper. But the effects of source **credibility** (perceived expertise and trustworthiness) diminish after a month or so. If a credible person’s message is persuasive, its impact may fade as its source is forgotten or dissociated from the message. And the impact of a noncredible person may correspondingly increase over time if people



*“If I seem excited, Mr. Bolling, it’s only because I know that I can make you a very rich man.”*

Effective persuaders know how to convey a message effectively.  
© Charles Barsotti/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

**sleeper effect**

A delayed impact of a message that occurs when an initially discounted message becomes effective, such as we remember the message but forget the reason for discounting it.

"BELIEVE AN EXPERT."

—VIRGIL, AENEID, 19 B.C.

remember the message better than the reason for discounting it (Cook & Flay, 1978; Kumkale & Albarracín, 2004; Pratkanis & others, 1988). This delayed persuasion, after people forget the source or its connection with the message, is called the **sleeper effect**.

**PERCEIVED EXPERTISE** How does one become an authoritative "expert"? One way is to begin by saying things the audience agrees with, which makes one seem smart. One reason the "scientific consensus" about climate change fails to persuade is that people count as "expert" someone whose conclusions support their own pre-existing values and views. Researchers have observed this "congenial views seems more expert" phenomenon on topics ranging from climate change to nuclear waste to gun laws (Kahan & others, 2010).

It also helps to be seen as *knowledgeable* on the topic. A message about tooth-brushing from "Dr. James Rundle of the Canadian Dental Association" is more convincing than the same message from "Jim Rundle, a local high school student who did a project with some of his classmates on dental hygiene" (Olson & Cal, 1984). After spending more than a decade studying high school marijuana use, University of Michigan researchers concluded that scare messages from unreliable sources did not affect marijuana use during the 1960s and 1970s. From a credible source, however, scientific reports of the biological and psychological results of long-term marijuana use "can play an important role in reducing . . . drug use" (Bachman & others, 1988).

Another way to appear credible is to *speak confidently*. Whether pitching a business plan or giving advice, a charismatic, energetic, confident-seeming person often is convincing (Moore & Swift, 2011; Pentland, 2010). Bonnie Erickson and collaborators (1978) had University of North Carolina students evaluate courtroom testimony given in a straightforward manner or in a more hesitant manner. For example:

**Question:** Approximately how long did you stay there before the ambulance arrived?

**Answer:** [Straightforward] Twenty minutes. Long enough to help get Mrs. David straightened out.

[Hesitating] Oh, it seems like it was about uh, 20 minutes. Just long enough to help my friend Mrs. David, you know, get straightened out.

The students found the straightforward witnesses much more competent and credible.

**PERCEIVED TRUSTWORTHINESS** Speech style affects a speaker's apparent trustworthiness. Gordon Hemsley and Anthony Doob (1978) found that if videotaped witnesses looked their questioner *straight in the eye* instead of gazing downward, they impressed people as more believable.

Trustworthiness is also higher if the audience believes the communicator is *not trying to persuade* them. In an experimental version of what later became the "hidden-camera" method of television advertising, Elaine Hatfield and Leon Festinger (Walster & Festinger, 1962) had some Stanford University undergraduates eavesdrop on graduate students' conversations. (What they actually heard was a tape recording.) When the conversational topic was relevant to the eavesdroppers (having to do with campus regulations), the speakers had more influence if the listeners presumed the speakers were unaware of the eavesdropping. After all, if people think no one is listening, why would they be less than fully honest?

We also perceive as sincere those who *argue against their own self-interest*. Alice Eagly, Wendy Wood, and Shelly Chaiken (1978) presented University of

Massachusetts students with a speech attacking a company's pollution of a river. When they said the speech was given by a political candidate with a business background or to an audience of company supporters, it seemed unbiased and was persuasive. When the same antibusiness speech was supposedly given to environmentalists by a pro-environment politician, listeners could attribute the politician's arguments to personal bias or to the audience. Being willing to suffer for one's beliefs—which Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, and other great leaders have done—also helps convince people of one's sincerity (Knight & Weiss, 1980).

Norman Miller and colleagues (1976) at the University of Southern California found that perceptions of trustworthiness and credibility also increase when people *talk fast*. People who listened to tape-recorded messages rated fast speakers (about 190 words per minute) as more objective, intelligent, and knowledgeable than slow speakers (about 110 words per minute). They also found the more rapid speakers more persuasive. John F. Kennedy, an exceptionally effective public speaker, sometimes spoke in bursts approaching 300 words per minute.

Some television ads are obviously constructed to make the communicator appear both expert and trustworthy. A drug company may peddle its pain reliever using a speaker in a white lab coat, who declares confidently that most doctors recommend the product's key ingredient (which is merely aspirin). Given such peripheral cues, people who don't care enough to analyze the evidence may automatically infer that the product is special. Other ads seem not to use the credibility principle. It's not primarily for his expertise about sports apparel that Nike paid Tiger Woods \$100 million to appear in its ads.

Thus, communicators gain credibility if they appear to be expert and trustworthy (Pornpitakpan, 2004). When we know in advance that a source is credible, we think more favorable thoughts in response to the message. If we learn the source *after* a message generates favorable thoughts, high credibility strengthens our confidence in our thinking, which also strengthens the persuasive impact of the message (Brinöl & others, 2002, 2004; Tormala & others, 2006).

## ATTRACTIVENESS AND LIKING

Most of us deny that endorsements by star athletes and entertainers affect us. We know that stars are seldom knowledgeable about the products they endorse. Besides, we know the intent is to persuade us; we don't just accidentally eavesdrop on Jennifer Lopez discussing clothes or fragrances. Such ads are based on another characteristic of an effective communicator: **attractiveness**.

We may think we are not influenced by attractiveness or likability, but researchers have found otherwise. We're more likely to respond to those we like, a phenomenon well-known to those organizing charitable solicitations and candy sales. Even a mere fleeting conversation with someone is enough to increase our liking for that person and our responsiveness to his or her influence (Burger & others, 2001). Our liking may open us up to the communicator's arguments (central route persuasion), or it may trigger positive associations when we see the product later (peripheral route persuasion). As with credibility, the liking-begets-persuasion principle suggests applications (Table 7.1).

Attractiveness comes in several forms. *Physical attractiveness* is one. Arguments, especially emotional ones, are often more influential when they come from people we consider beautiful (Chaiken, 1979; Dion & Stein, 1978; Pallak & others, 1983). Most people understand that attractiveness matters most when people are making superficial judgments. In experiments, people exploit opportunities to use attractive communicators with less analytical recipients (Vogel & others, 2010).

*Similarity also makes for attractiveness.* As Chapter 11 will emphasize, we tend to like people who are like us. We also are influenced by them, a fact that was harnessed by a successful antismoking campaign that featured youth appealing to other youth through ads that challenged the tobacco industry about its

### attractiveness

Having qualities that appeal to an audience. An appealing communicator (often someone similar to the audience) is most persuasive on matters of subjective preference.

**TABLE :: 7.1 Six Persuasion Principles**

In his book *Influence: Science and Practice*, persuasion researcher Robert Cialdini (2008) illustrates six principles that underlie human relationships and human influence. (This chapter describes the first two.)

Principle	Application
<i>Authority</i> : People defer to credible experts.	Establish your expertise; identify problems you have solved and people you have served.
<i>Liking</i> : People respond more affirmatively to those they like.	Win friends and influence people. Create bonds based on similar interests, praise freely.
<i>Social proof</i> : People allow the example of others to validate how to think, feel, and act.	Use “peer power”—have respected others lead the way.
<i>Reciprocity</i> : People feel obliged to repay in kind what they’ve received.	Be generous with your time and resources. What goes around, comes around.
<i>Consistency</i> : People tend to honor their public commitments.	Instead of telling restaurant reservation callers “Please call if you change your plans,” ask, “Will you call if you change your plans?” and no-shows will drop.
<i>Scarcity</i> : People prize what’s scarce.	Highlight genuinely exclusive information or opportunities.



Attractive communicators, such as Rihanna endorsing her perfume, often trigger peripheral route persuasion. We associate their message or product with our good feelings toward the communicator, and we approve and believe.

important than credibility? Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Timothy Brock (1965) found paint store customers influenced by the testimony of a similarly ordinary person who had recently bought the same amount of paint they planned to buy; they were less influenced by an expert who had recently purchased 20 times as much. But recall that when discussing dental hygiene, a leading dentist (a dissimilar but expert source) was more persuasive than a student (a similar but inexpert source).

Such seemingly contradictory findings bring out the scientific detective in us. They suggest that an undiscovered factor is at work—that similarity is more important given the presence of factor X, and credibility is more important given the absence of factor X. Factor X, as George Goethals and Erick Nelson (1973) discovered, is whether the topic is more one of *subjective preference* or *objective reality*.

destructiveness and its marketing practices (Krisberg, 2004). People who *act* as we do, subtly mimicking our postures, are likewise more influential. Thus, salespeople are sometimes taught to “mimic and mirror”: If the customer’s arms or legs are crossed, cross yours; if she smiles, smile back. (See “Research Close-Up: Experimenting with a Virtual Social Reality.”)

Another example: Theodore Dembroski, Thomas Lasater, and Albert Ramirez (1978) gave African American junior high students an audiotaped appeal for proper dental care. When a dentist assessed the cleanliness of their teeth the next day, those who heard the appeal from an African American dentist (whose face they were shown) had cleaner teeth. As a general rule, people respond better to a message that comes from someone in their group (Van Knippenberg & Wilke, 1992; Wilder, 1990).

Is similarity, as in this instance, more

# research CLOSE-UP

## Experimenting with a Virtual Social Reality

University of California, Santa Barbara social psychologist Jim Blascovich developed a new interest soon after walking into a colleague's virtual reality lab. Wearing a headset, Blascovich found himself facing a plank across a virtual deep pit. Although he knew that the room had no pit, he couldn't suppress his fear and bring himself to walk the plank.

The experience triggered a thought: Might social psychologists have a use for virtual environments? Might they offer people real-seeming experiences that the researcher could control and manipulate? Might this allow social psychologists to study conformity? To enable physically remote people to interact in a virtual meeting? To observe people's responses to another's physical deformity? To explore persuasion?

The experimental power of virtual human interaction is shown in an experiment by Blascovich's former associate, Jeremy Bailenson, in collaboration with graduate student Nick Yee. At Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab, 69 student volunteers fitted with a 3-D virtual reality headset found themselves across the table from a virtual human—a computer-generated man or woman who delivered a 3-minute pitch for a university security policy that required students to carry an ID at all times.

The digital person featured realistic-looking lips that moved, eyes that blinked, and a head that swayed. For half the participants, those movements mimicked, with a 4-second delay, the student's movements. If the student tilted her head and looked up, the digital chameleon would do the same. Earlier experiments with real humans had found that such mimicry fosters liking, by suggesting empathy and rapport (see Chapter 11). In Bailenson and Yee's (2005) experiment, students with a mimicking rather than a nonmimicking digital companion similarly liked the partner more. They also found the mimicker more interesting, honest, and persuasive; they paid better attention to it (looking away less often); and they were somewhat more likely to agree with the message.

For Blascovich and Bailenson (2011), such studies illustrate the potential of virtual social realities. Creating stimuli that imply others' presence costs less, requires less effort, and provides more experimental control than creating stimuli with others' actual presence. People, even trained confederates, are difficult to control. Digital people can be perfectly controlled. And exact replications become possible.



Experimenting with a virtual social reality. In an experiment by Jeremy Bailenson and Nick Yee, a person whose expressions and movements echoed one's own was both liked and persuasive.

When the choice concerns matters of personal value, taste, or way of life, *similar* communicators have the most influence. But on judgments of fact—Does Sydney have less rainfall than London?—confirmation of belief by a *dissimilar* person does more to boost confidence. A dissimilar person provides a more independent judgment.

## What Is Said? The Message Content

It matters not only who says something but also *what* that person says. If you were to help organize an appeal to get people to vote for school taxes or to stop smoking or to give money to world hunger relief, you might wonder how best to promote central route persuasion. Common sense could lead you to either side of these questions:

- Is a logical message more persuasive—or one that arouses emotion?
- Will you get more opinion change by advocating a position only slightly discrepant from the listeners' existing opinions or by advocating an extreme point of view?
- Should the message express your side only, or should it acknowledge and refute the opposing views?
- If people are to present both sides—say, in successive talks at a community meeting or in a political debate—is there an advantage to going first or last?

Let's take these questions one at a time.

### REASON VERSUS EMOTION

"THE TRUTH IS ALWAYS THE STRONGEST ARGUMENT."

—SOPHOCLES, PHAEDRA,  
496–406 B.C.

"OPINION IS ULTIMATELY DETERMINED BY THE FEELINGS AND NOT THE INTELLECT."

—HERBERT SPENCER, SOCIAL STATICS, 1851

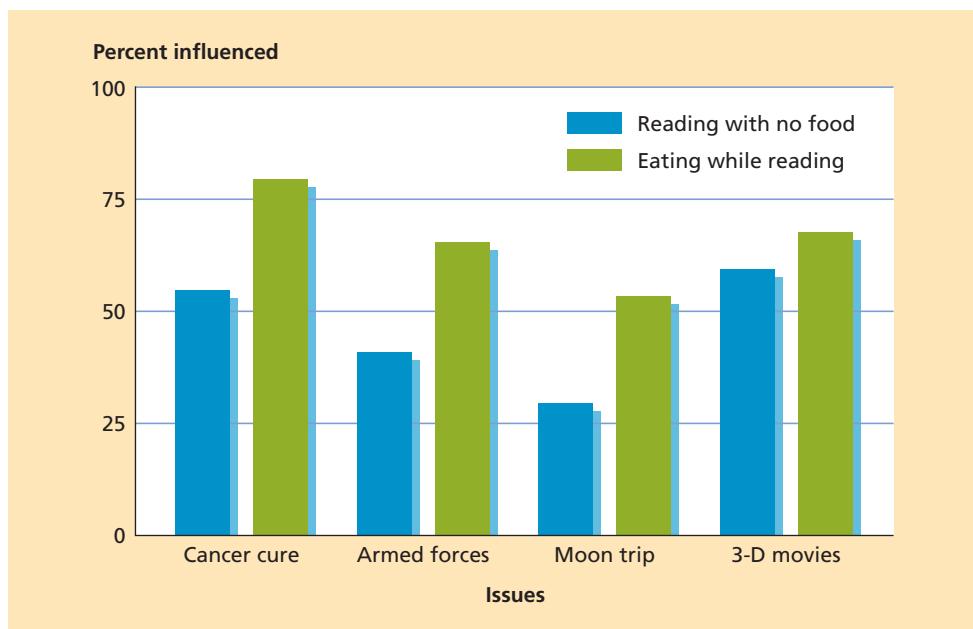
Suppose you were campaigning in support of world hunger relief. Would you best itemize your arguments and cite an array of impressive statistics? Or would you be more effective presenting an emotional approach—perhaps the compelling story of one starving child? In my community, supporters of a proposed antidiscrimination ordinance protecting gay people wondered: To what extent might opinions be swayed by reason and evidence related to sexual orientation, and to what extent by emotion? Is what matters more *what* people know or their feelings toward *whom* they know? Of course, an argument can be both reasonable and emotional. You can marry passion and logic. Still, which is *more* influential—reason or emotion? Was Shakespeare's Lysander right: "The will of man is by his reason sway'd"? Or was Lord Chesterfield's advice wiser: "Address yourself generally to the senses, to the heart, and to the weaknesses of mankind, but rarely to their reason"?

The answer: It depends on the audience. Well-educated or analytical people are responsive to rational appeals (Cacioppo & others, 1983, 1996; Hovland & others, 1949). Thoughtful, involved audiences often travel the central route; they are more responsive to reasoned arguments. Uninterested audiences more often travel the peripheral route; they are more affected by their liking of the communicator (Chaiken, 1980; Petty & others, 1981).

To judge from interviews before major elections, many voters are uninvolved. As we might therefore expect, Americans' voting preferences have been more predictable from emotional reactions to the candidates than from their beliefs about the candidates' traits and likely behaviors (Abelson & others, 1982). What matters is not just candidates' positions (which candidate embodies your views) but their likeability (who you want to spend time with).

It also matters how people's attitudes were formed. When people's initial attitudes are formed primarily through emotion, they are more persuaded by later emotional appeals; when their initial attitudes are formed primarily through reason, they are more persuaded by later intellectual arguments (Edwards, 1990; Fabrigar & Petty, 1999). New emotions may sway an emotion-based attitude. But to change an information-based attitude, more information may be needed.

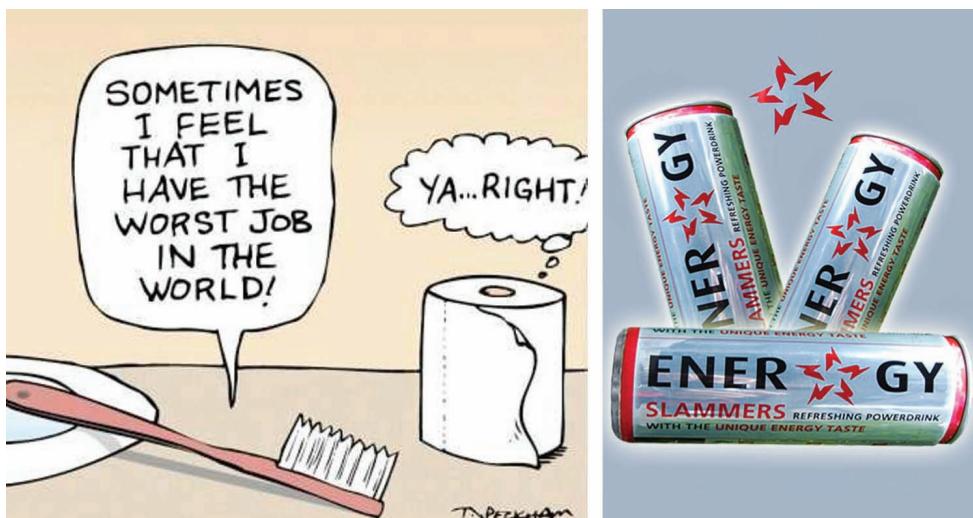
**THE EFFECT OF GOOD FEELINGS** Messages also become more persuasive through association with good feelings. Irving Janis and colleagues (1965; Dabbs & Janis, 1965) found that Yale students were more convinced by persuasive messages if they were allowed to enjoy peanuts and Pepsi while reading the messages (Figure 7.4). Similarly, Mark Galizio and Clyde Hendrick (1972) found that Kent State University students were more persuaded by folk-song lyrics accompanied by pleasant guitar music than they were by unaccompanied lyrics. There is, it seems,



**FIGURE :: 7.4**

People who snacked as they read were more persuaded than those who read without snacking.

*Source:* Data from Janis, Kaye, & Kirschner (1965).



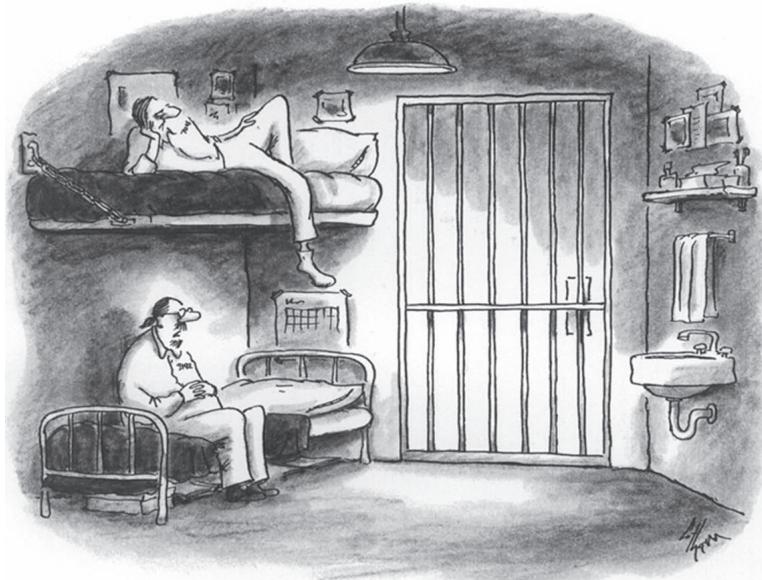
**FIGURE :: 7.5**

In experiments at Radboud University Nijmegen, humor enhanced people's liking for products such as these.

something to be gained from conducting business over sumptuous lunches with soft background music.

Good feelings often enhance persuasion, partly by enhancing positive thinking and partly by linking good feelings with the message (Petty & others, 1993). As noted in Chapter 3, people who are in a good mood view the world through rose-colored glasses. But they also make faster, more impulsive decisions; they rely more on peripheral cues (Bodenhausen, 1993; Braverman, 2005; Moons & Mackie, 2007). Unhappy people ruminate more before reacting, so they are less easily swayed by weak arguments. (They also produce more cogent persuasive messages [Forgas, 2007].) Thus, if you can't make a strong case, you might want to put your audience in a good mood and hope they'll feel good about your message without thinking too much about it.

Knowing that humor can put people in a good mood, a Dutch research team led by Madelijn Strick (Strick & others, 2009) invited people to view ads in the vicinity of either funny cartoons (Figure 7.5) or the same cartoons altered to be unfunny. Their finding: Products associated with humor were better liked, as measured by an implicit attitude test, and were more often chosen.



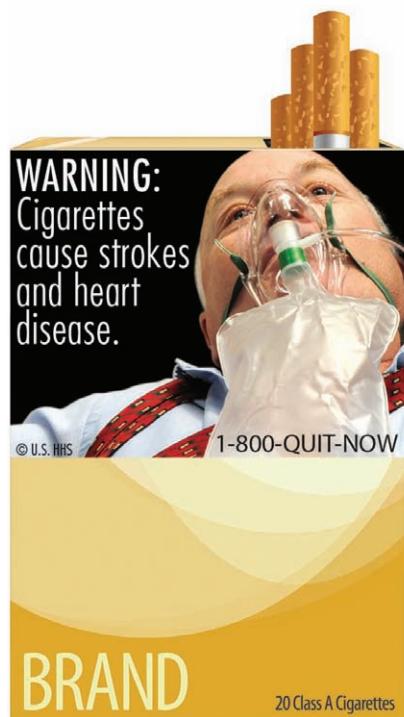
*"If the jury had been sequestered in a nicer hotel,  
this would probably never have happened."*

Good feelings help create positive attitudes.

© Frank Cotham/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

ened and vulnerable people feel, the more they respond (de Hoog & others, 2007; Leventhal, 1970; Robberson & Rogers, 1998).

The effectiveness of fear-arousing communications has been applied in ads discouraging not only smoking but also risky sexual behaviors and drinking and driving. When Claude Levy-Leboyer (1988) found that attitudes toward alcohol and drinking habits among French youth were changed effectively by fear-arousing pictures, the French government incorporated such pictures into its TV spots.



A proposed new U.S. cigarette warning, shown here, uses fear arousal.

### THE EFFECT OF AROUSING FEAR

Messages can also be effective by evoking negative emotions. When persuading people to cut down on smoking, get a tetanus shot, or drive carefully, a fear-arousing message can be potent (de Hoog & others, 2007; Muller & Johnson, 1990). By requiring cigarette makers to include graphic representations of the hazards of smoking on each pack of cigarettes, more than three dozen other governments have assumed—correctly, it turns out—that showing cigarette smokers the horrible things that can happen to smokers adds to persuasiveness (O'Hegarty & others, 2007; Peters & others, 2007; Stark & others, 2008). If its courts will allow, the United States will follow the example of other nations in requiring graphic photo warnings (Reardon, 2011; Wilson, 2011).

But how much fear should you arouse? Should you evoke just a little fear, lest people become so frightened that they tune out your painful message? Or should you try to scare the daylights out of them? Experiments show that, often, the more fright-

One effective antismoking ad campaign offered graphic "truth" ads. In one, vans pull up outside an unnamed corporate tobacco office. Teens pile out and unload 1,200 body bags covering two city blocks. As a curious corporate suit peers out a window above, a teen shouts into a loudspeaker: "Do you know how many people tobacco kills every day? . . . We're going to leave these here for you, so you can see what 1,200 people actually look like" (Nicholson, 2007). Unlike teens who viewed a simultaneous cerebral Philip Morris ad (lecturing, "Think. Don't Smoke") and were not less likely to smoke, those viewing the more dramatic and edgy ad became significantly less inclined to smoke (Farrelly & others, 2002, 2008).

Fear-arousing communications have also been used to increase breast cancer detection behaviors, such as getting mammograms or doing breast self-exams, and checking for signs of skin cancer. Sara Banks, Peter Salovey, and colleagues (1995) had women aged 40–66 years who had not obtained

mammograms view an educational video on mammography. Of those who received a positively framed message (emphasizing that getting a mammogram can save your life through early detection), only half got a mammogram within 12 months. Of those who received a fear-framed message (emphasizing that not getting a mammogram can cost you your life), two-thirds got a mammogram within 12 months.

Playing on fear works best if a message leads people not only to fear the severity and likelihood of a threatened event but also to perceive a solution and feel capable of implementing it (DeVos-Comby & Salovey, 2002; Maddux & Rogers, 1983; Ruiter & others, 2001). Many ads designed to reduce sexual risks will aim both to arouse fear—“AIDS kills”—and to offer a protective strategy: Abstain, wear a condom, or save sex for a committed relationship. Also, “gain-framed” messages are often equally effective as “loss-framed” messages (O’Keefe & Jensen, 2011). Gain-framed messages focus on the advantages of healthy behavior (for example, “If you wear sunscreen, you’ll have attractive skin” rather than “If you don’t wear sunscreen, you’ll have unattractive skin”). Thus, a global climate change article that ends by describing future catastrophic consequences is less persuasive to many skeptics than one that concludes by discussing possible solutions (Feinberg & Willer, 2010).

Vivid propaganda often exploits fears. The Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer* aroused fear with hundreds of unsubstantiated anecdotes about Jews who were said to have ground rats to make hash, seduced non-Jewish women, and cheated families out of their life savings. Streicher’s appeals, like most Nazi propaganda, were emotional, not logical. The appeals also gave clear, specific instructions on how to combat “the danger”: They listed Jewish businesses so readers would avoid them, encouraged readers to submit for publication the names of Germans who patronized Jewish shops and professionals, and directed readers to compile lists of Jews in their area (Bytwerk & Brooks, 1980).

Vivid stories can also, however, be used for good, especially when what’s most memorable conveys the central message rather than distracting from it (Guadagno & others, 2011). After the genocidal conflict between Rwanda’s Hutus and Tutsi, a yearlong field experiment explored the impact of a radio soap opera that featured stories of prejudice, conflict, communication, reconciliation, and even love across group lines in two fictional communities. Compared with a control group exposed to a health-related radio soap opera, listeners became more accepting of empathy, cooperation, trauma healing, and even intermarriage (Paluck, 2009). Fiction fostered forbearance.

## DISCREPANCY

Picture the following scene: Nicole arrives home on spring vacation and hopes to convert her portly, middle-aged father to her new “health-fitness lifestyle.” She runs 5 miles a day. Her father says his idea of exercise is “channel surfing.” Nicole thinks, “Would I be more likely to get Dad off his duff by urging him to try a modest exercise program, say a daily walk, or by trying to get him involved in something strenuous, say a program of calisthenics and running? Maybe if I asked him to take up a rigorous exercise program, he would compromise and at least take up something worthwhile. But then again maybe he’d write me off and do nothing.”

Like Nicole, social psychologists can reason either way. Disagreement produces discomfort, and discomfort prompts people to change their opinions. (Recall from Chapter 4 the effects of dissonance.) So perhaps greater disagreement will produce more change. Then again, a communicator who proclaims an uncomfortable message may be discredited. People who disagree with conclusions drawn by a newscaster rate the newscaster as more biased, inaccurate, and untrustworthy. People are more open to conclusions within their range of acceptability (Liberman & Chaiken, 1992; Zanna, 1993). So perhaps greater disagreement will produce less change.

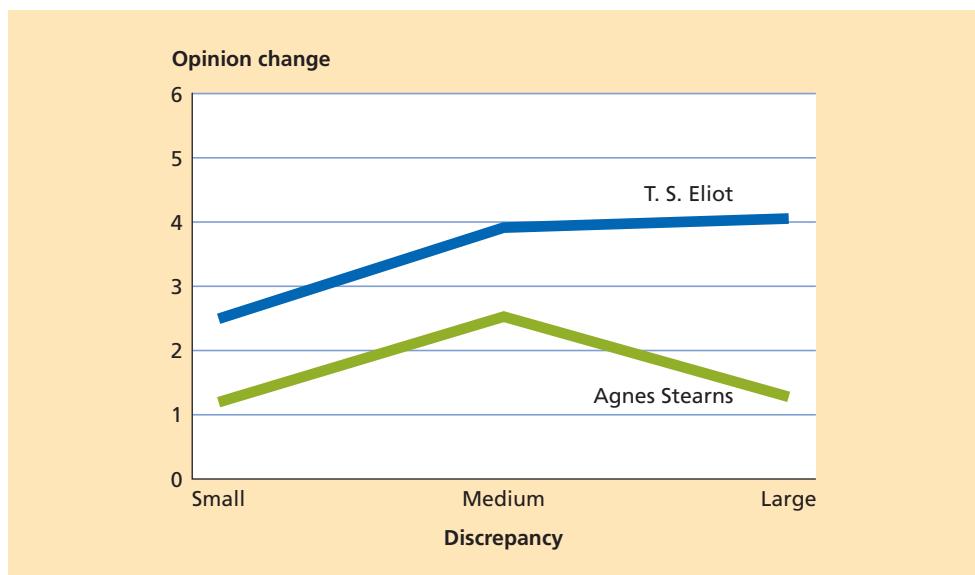
AL GORE TO PRESENTERS  
OF HIS CLIMATE CHANGE  
FILM: “YOU’RE TELLING  
SOME NOT ONLY INCON-  
VENIENT TRUTHS BUT  
HARD TRUTHS, AND IT CAN  
BE SCARY AS HELL. YOU’RE  
NOT GOING TO GET  
PEOPLE TO GO WITH YOU  
IF YOU SCARE THEM  
WITH FEAR.”

—QUOTED BY POOLEY (2007)

**FIGURE :: 7.6****Discrepancy Interacts with Communicator Credibility**

Only a highly credible communicator maintains effectiveness when arguing an extreme position.

*Source:* Data from Aronson, Turner, & Carlsmith (1963).



Elliot Aronson, Judith Turner, and Merrill Carlsmith (1963) reasoned that a *credible source*—one hard to discount—would elicit the most opinion change when advocating a *greatly discrepant* position. Sure enough, when credible T. S. Eliot was said to have highly praised a disliked poem, people changed their opinion more than when he gave it faint praise. But when “Agnes Stearns, a student at Mississippi State Teachers College,” evaluated a disliked poem, high praise was no more persuasive than faint praise. Thus, as Figure 7.6 shows, discrepancy and credibility *interact*: The effect of a large versus small discrepancy depends on whether the communicator is credible.

So the answer to Nicole’s question—“Should I argue an extreme position?”—is, “It depends.” Is Nicole in her adoring father’s eyes a highly prestigious, authoritative source? If so, Nicole should push for a complete fitness program. If not, Nicole would be wise to make a more modest appeal.

The answer also depends on her father’s engagement with the issue. Deeply involved people tend to accept only a narrow range of views. To them, a moderately discrepant message may seem foolishly radical, especially if the message argues an opposing view rather than being a more extreme version of their own view (Pallak & others, 1972; Petty & Cacioppo, 1979; Rhine & Severance, 1970). Thus, social psychologists Arie Kruglanski, Michele Gelfand, and Rohan Gunaratna (2010) advise how to construct messages that may help deradicalize committed terrorists: Build such messages upon elements of their preexisting beliefs.

On the other hand, if Nicole’s father has not yet thought much either way about exercise, she can probably take a more extreme position. So, if you are a credible authority and your audience isn’t much concerned with your issue, go for it: Advocate a discrepant view.

### ONE-SIDED VERSUS TWO-SIDED APPEALS

Supporters of my community’s gay rights initiative faced a strategic question: Should they acknowledge and seek to refute each of the opposition’s arguments? Or would that likely backfire, by planting ideas that people would remember long after forgetting the discounting? Once again, common sense offers no clear answer. Acknowledging the opposing arguments might confuse the audience and weaken the case. On the other hand, a message might seem fairer and be more disarming if it recognizes the opposition’s arguments.

Carol Werner and colleagues (2002) showed the disarming power of a simple two-sided message in an experiment on aluminum-can recycling. Signs added to

wastebaskets in a University of Utah classroom building said, for example, "No Aluminum Cans Please!!!! Use the Recycler Located on the First Floor, Near the Entrance." When a final persuasive message acknowledged and responded to the main counterargument—"It May Be Inconvenient. But It Is Important!!!!!!!!!!"—recycling reached 80 percent (double the rate before any message, and more than in other message conditions).

After Germany's defeat in World War II, the U.S. Army did not want soldiers to relax and think that the still-ongoing war with Japan would become easy. So Carl Hovland and colleagues (1949) in the Army's Information and Education Division designed two radio broadcasts. Both argued that the Pacific war would last at least two more years. One broadcast was one-sided; it did not acknowledge contradictory arguments, such as the advantage of fighting only one enemy instead of two. The other broadcast was two-sided; it mentioned and responded to the opposing arguments. As Figure 7.7 illustrates, the effectiveness of the message depended on the listener. A one-sided appeal was most effective with those who already agreed. An appeal that acknowledged opposing arguments worked better with those who disagreed.

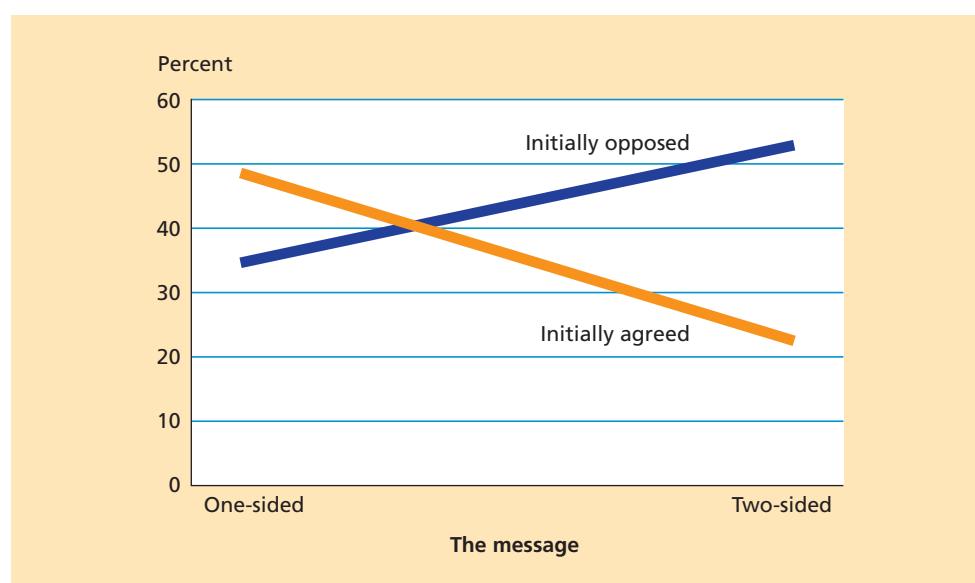
Experiments also reveal that a two-sided presentation is more persuasive and enduring if people are (or will be) aware of opposing arguments (Jones & Brehm, 1970; Lumsdaine & Janis, 1953). In simulated trials, a defense case becomes more credible when the defense brings up damaging evidence before the prosecution does (Williams & others, 1993). Thus, a political candidate speaking to a politically informed group, or a community group advocating for or against gay rights, would indeed be wise to respond to the opposition. So, *if your audience will be exposed to opposing views, offer a two-sided appeal.*

This interaction effect typifies persuasion research. For optimists, positive persuasion works best ("The new plan reduces tuition in exchange for part-time university service"). For pessimists, negative persuasion is more effective ("All students will have to work part-time for the university, lest they pay out-of-state tuition") (Geers & others, 2003). We might wish that persuasion variables had simple effects. (It would make this an easier chapter to study.) Alas, most variables, note Richard Petty and Duane Wegener (1998), "have complex effects—increasing persuasion in some situations and decreasing it in others."

As students and scientists, we cherish "Occam's razor"—seeking the simplest possible principles. But if human reality is complex, well, our principles will need to have some complexity—to acknowledge interaction effects—as well.

"OPPONENTS FANCY  
THEY REFUTE US WHEN  
THEY REPEAT THEIR OWN  
OPINION AND PAY NO  
ATTENTION TO OURS."

—GOETHE, MAXIMS AND  
REFLECTIONS, 1829



**FIGURE :: 7.7**  
**The Interaction of Initial Opinion with One-Versus Two-Sidedness**

After Germany's defeat in World War II, American soldiers skeptical of a message suggesting Japan's strength were more persuaded by a two-sided communication. Soldiers initially agreeing with the message were strengthened more by a one-sided message.

*Source:* Data from Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield (1949).

## PRIMACY VERSUS RECENCY

Imagine that you are a consultant to a prominent politician who must soon debate another prominent politician over a ballot proposition on bilingual education. Three weeks before the vote, each politician is to appear on the nightly news and present a prepared statement. By the flip of a coin, your side receives the choice of whether to speak first or last. Knowing that you are a former social psychology student, everyone looks to you for advice.

You mentally scan your old books and lecture notes. Would first be better? People's preconceptions control their interpretations. Moreover, a belief, once formed, is difficult to discredit, so going first could give voters ideas that would favorably bias how they perceive and interpret the second speech. Besides, people may pay more attention to what comes first. Then again, people remember recent things better. Might it really be more effective to speak last?

Your first line of reasoning predicts what is most common, a **primacy effect**: Information presented early is most persuasive. First impressions are important. For example, can you sense a difference between these two descriptions?

- John is intelligent, industrious, impulsive, critical, stubborn, and envious.
- John is envious, stubborn, critical, impulsive, industrious, and intelligent.

When Solomon Asch (1946) gave those sentences to college students in New York City, those who read the adjectives in the intelligent-to-envious order rated the person more positively than did those given the envious-to-intelligent order. The earlier information seemed to color their interpretation of the later information, producing the primacy effect.

Some other primacy effect examples:

- In some experiments, people who succeed on a guessing task 50 percent of the time—but whose successes come early—seem more capable than those whose successes come after early failures (Jones & others, 1968; Langer & Roth, 1975; McAndrew, 1981).
- In political polls and in primary election voting, candidates benefit from being listed first on the ballot (Moore, 2004b).
- Norman Miller and Donald Campbell (1959) gave Northwestern University students a condensed transcript from an actual civil trial. They placed the plaintiff's testimony and arguments in one block and those for the defense in another. The students read both blocks. When they returned a week later to declare their opinions, most sided with the information they had read first.

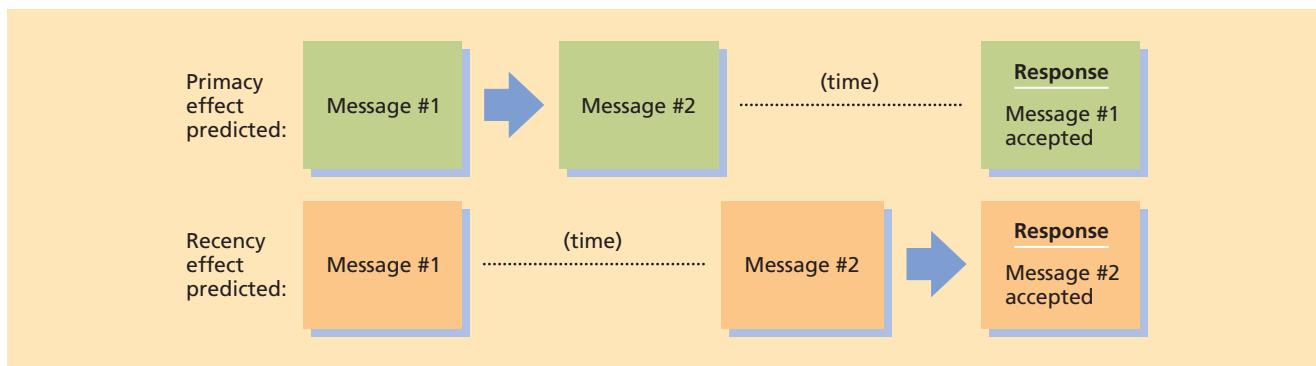
### recency effect

Information presented last sometimes has the most influence. Recency effects are less common than primacy effects.

What about the opposite possibility? Would our better memory of recent information ever create a **recency effect**? We have all experienced what the book of Proverbs observed: "The one who first states a case seems right, until the other comes and cross-examines." We know from our experience (as well as from memory experiments) that today's events can temporarily outweigh significant past events. As we noted in Chapter 3, today's blizzard makes long-term global warming seem less a threat, just as today's sweltering heat makes it seem more a threat.

To test for a possible recency effect, Miller and Campbell gave another group of students one block of testimony to read. A week later, the researchers had them read the second block and then immediately state their opinions. The results were the reverse of the other condition—a recency effect. Apparently the first block of arguments, being a week old, had largely faded from memory.

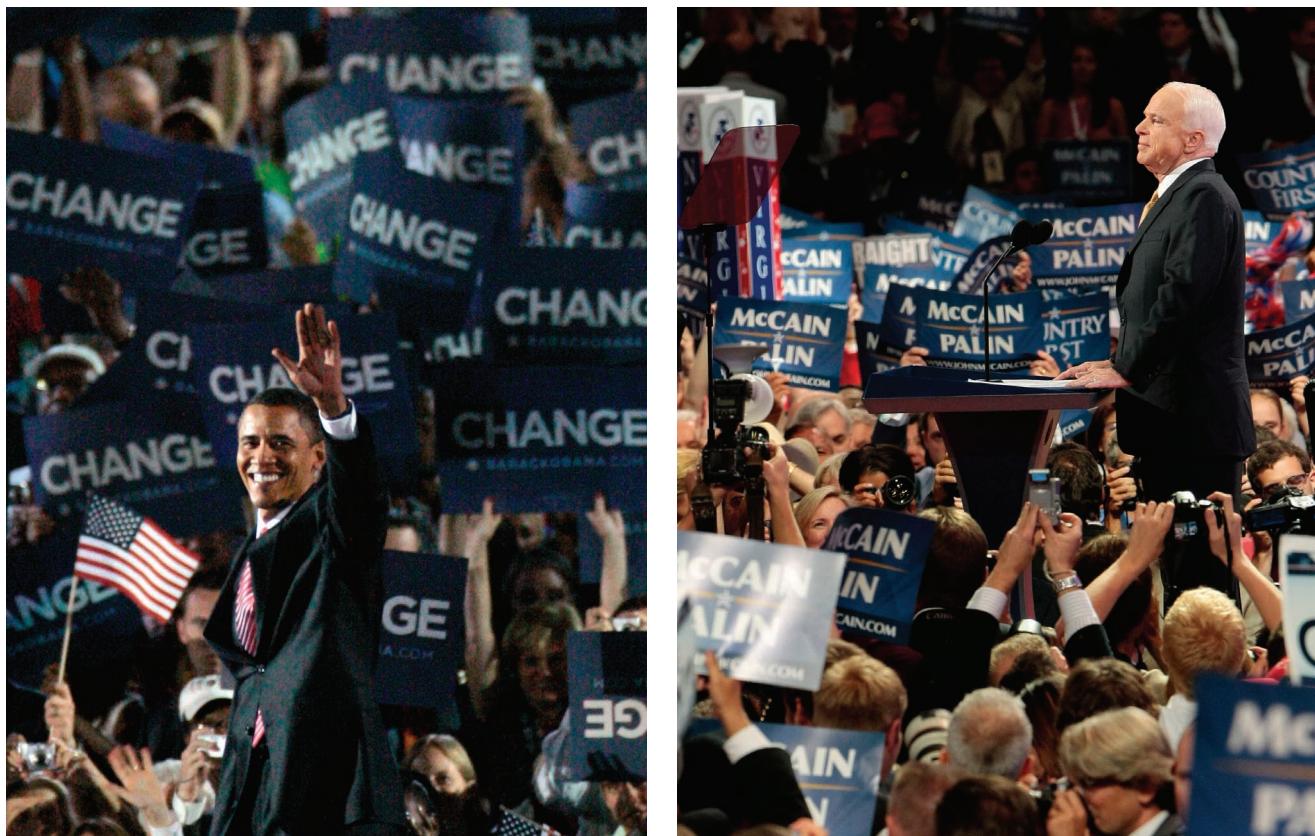
Forgetting creates the recency effect (1) when enough time separates the two messages *and* (2) when the audience commits itself soon after the second message. When the two messages are back-to-back, followed by a time gap, the primacy effect usually occurs (Figure 7.8). This is especially so when the first message stimulates thinking (Haugtvedt & Wegener, 1994). What advice would you now give to the political debater?



**FIGURE :: 7.8**

### Primacy Effect Versus Recency Effect

When two persuasive messages are back-to-back and the audience then responds at some later time, the first message has the advantage (primacy effect). When the two messages are separated in time and the audience responds soon after the second message, the second message has the advantage (recency effect).



In 2008, the U.S. Democratic Party convention was immediately followed by the Republican Party convention, after which there was a 2-month time gap before the election. If experiments on primacy and recency are applicable, which party would benefit most from this timing?

Dana Carney and Mahzarin Banaji (2008) discovered that order can also affect simple preferences. When encountering two people or horses or foods or whatever, people tend to prefer the first presented option. For example, when offered two similar-looking pieces of bubble gum, one placed after the other on a white clipboard, 62 percent, when asked to make a snap judgment, chose the first-presented piece. Across four experiments, the findings were consistent: "First is best."

## How Is It Said? The Channel of Communication

### channel of communication

The way the message is delivered—whether face-to-face, in writing, on film, or in some other way.

For persuasion, there must be communication. And for communication, there must be a **channel**: a face-to-face appeal, a written sign or document, a media advertisement.

Commonsense psychology places faith in the power of written words. How do we try to get people to attend a campus event? We post notices. How do we get drivers to slow down and keep their eyes on the road? We put “Drive Carefully” messages on billboards. How do we discourage students from dropping trash on campus? We post antilitter messages on campus bulletin boards.

### ACTIVE EXPERIENCE OR PASSIVE RECEPTION?

Are spoken appeals more persuasive? Not necessarily. Those of us who speak publicly, as teachers or persuaders, often become so enamored of our spoken words that we overestimate their power. Ask college students what aspect of their college experience has been most valuable or what they remember from their first year, and few, I am sad to say, recall the brilliant lectures that we faculty remember giving.

Thomas Crawford (1974) and associates tested the impact of the spoken word by going to the homes of people from 12 churches shortly before and after they heard sermons opposing racial bigotry and injustice. When asked during the second interview whether they had heard or read anything about racial prejudice or discrimination since the previous interview, only 10 percent recalled the sermons spontaneously. When the remaining 90 percent were asked directly whether their priest had “talked about prejudice or discrimination in the last couple of weeks,” more than 30 percent denied hearing such a sermon. The end result: The sermons left racial attitudes unaffected.



Advertising power. Cigarette advertising campaigns have correlated with teen smoking increases among the targeted gender (Pierce & Gilpin, 1995; Pierce & others, 1994). This photo shows models practicing the “correct” pucker and blow technique for a 1950s TV ad.

When you stop to think about it, an effective preacher has many hurdles to surmount. As Figure 7.2 showed, a persuasive speaker must deliver a message that clears five hurdles: It must not only get attention but also be understandable, convincing, memorable, and compelling. A carefully thought-out appeal must consider each of those steps in the persuasion process.

Consider another well-intentioned effort. At Scripps College in California, a weeklong antilitter campaign urged students to “Keep Scripps’ campus beautiful,” “Let’s clean up our trash,” and so forth. Such slogans were placed in students’ mailboxes each morning and displayed on prominent posters. The day before the campaign began, social psychologist Raymond Paloutzian (1979) placed litter near a trash can along a well-traveled sidewalk. Then he stepped back to record the behavior of 180 passersby. No one picked up anything. On the last day of the campaign, he repeated the test with 180 more passersby. Did the pedestrians now race one another in their zeal to comply with the appeals? Hardly. Only 2 of the 180 picked up the trash.

Passively received appeals, however, are not always futile. My drugstore sells

two brands of aspirin, one heavily advertised and one unadvertised. Apart from slight differences in how fast each tablet crumbles in your mouth, any pharmacist will tell you the two brands are identical. Aspirin is aspirin. Our bodies cannot tell the difference. But our pocketbooks can. The advertised brand sells to millions of people for three times the price of the unadvertised brand.

With such power, can the media help a wealthy political candidate buy an election? In presidential primaries, those who spend the most usually get the most votes (Grush, 1980; Open Secrets, 2005). Advertising exposure helps make an unfamiliar candidate into a familiar one. As we will see in Chapter 11, mere exposure to unfamiliar stimuli breeds liking. Moreover, *mere repetition* can make things believable (Dechêne & others, 2010; Moons & others, 2009).

Researcher Hal Arkes (1990) calls such findings “scary.” As political manipulators know, believable lies can displace hard truths. Repeated clichés can cover complex realities. Even repeatedly saying that a consumer claim is *false* can, when the discounting is presented amid other true and false claims, lead older adults later to misremember it as *true* (Skurnik & others, 2005). As they forget the discounting, their lingering familiarity with the claim can make it seem believable. In the political realm, even correct information may fail to discount implanted misinformation (Bullock, 2006; Nyhan & Reifler, 2008). Thus, in the 2008 U.S. presidential election, false rumors—that Obama was a Muslim, that McCain wanted to keep U.S. forces in Iraq for 100 years—resisted efforts at disconfirmation, which sometimes helped make the falsehood seem familiar and thus true.

Mere repetition of a statement also serves to increase its fluency—the ease with which it spills off our tongue—which increases believability (McGlone & Tofiqhbakhsh, 2000). Other factors, such as rhyming, further increase fluency and believability. “Haste makes waste” may say essentially the same thing as “rushing causes mistakes,” but it seems more true. Whatever makes for fluency (familiarity, rhyming) also makes for credibility.

Because passively received appeals are sometimes effective and sometimes not, can we specify in advance the topics on which a persuasive appeal will be successful? There is a simple rule: Persuasion *decreases* as the significance and familiarity of the issue *increase*. On minor issues, such as which brand of aspirin to buy, it’s easy to demonstrate the media’s power. On more familiar and important issues, such as attitudes about a lengthy and controversial war, persuading people is like trying to push a piano uphill. It is not impossible, but one shove won’t do it.

As we saw in Chapter 4, Behavior and Attitudes, active experience also strengthens attitudes. When we act, we amplify the idea behind what we’ve done, especially when we feel responsible. What is more, attitudes more often endure and influence our behavior when rooted in our own experience. Compared with attitudes formed passively, experience-based attitudes are more confident, more stable, and less vulnerable to attack. These principles are evident in many studies that show that the most effective HIV-prevention interventions not only give people information but also give them behavioral training, such as by practicing assertiveness in refusing sex and using protection (Albarracin & others, 2005).

## PERSONAL VERSUS MEDIA INFLUENCE

Persuasion studies demonstrate that the major influence on us is not the media but our contact with people. Modern selling strategies seek to harness the power of word-of-mouth personal influence through “viral marketing,” “creating a buzz,” and “seeding” sales (Walker, 2004). The *Harry Potter* series was not expected to be a best seller (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* had a first printing of 500 copies). It was kids talking to other kids that made it so.

Two classic field experiments illustrate the strength of personal influence. Some years ago, Samuel Eldersveld and Richard Dodge (1954) studied political persuasion in Ann Arbor, Michigan. They divided citizens intending not to vote for a revision of the city charter into three groups. Among those exposed only to what they saw and heard in the mass media, 19 percent changed their minds and voted in

“AH, THAT IS ALWAYS  
THE WAY WITH YOU MEN;  
YOU BELIEVE NOTHING  
THE FIRST TIME, AND IT  
IS FOOLISH ENOUGH TO  
LET MERE REPETITION  
CONVINCE YOU OF WHAT  
YOU CONSIDER IN ITSELF  
UNBELIEVABLE.”

—GEORGE MACDONALD,  
PHANTASTES, 1858

“YOU DO REALIZE, YOU  
WILL NEVER MAKE A FOR-  
TUNE OUT OF WRITING  
CHILDREN’S BOOKS?”

—J. K. ROWLING’S LITERARY  
AGENT BEFORE RELEASE  
OF HARRY POTTER AND THE  
SORCERER’S STONE

favor of the revision on election day. Of a second group, who received four mailings in support of the revision, 45 percent voted for it. Among people in a third group, who were visited personally and given the appeal face-to-face, 75 percent cast their votes for the revision.

In another field experiment, a research team led by John Farquhar and Nathan Maccoby (Farquhar & others, 1977; Maccoby, 1980; Maccoby & Alexander, 1980) tried to reduce the frequency of heart disease among middle-aged adults in three small California cities. To check the relative effectiveness of personal and media influence, they interviewed and medically examined 1200 participants before the project began and at the end of each of the following 3 years. Residents of Tracy, California, received no persuasive appeals other than those occurring in their regular media. In Gilroy, California, a 2-year multimedia campaign used TV, radio, newspapers, and direct mail to teach people about coronary risk and what they could do to reduce it. In Watsonville, California, this media campaign was supplemented by personal contacts with two-thirds of those participants whose blood pressure, weight, and age put them in a high-risk group. Using behavior-modification principles, the researchers helped the Watsonville participants set specific goals and reinforced their successes.

As Figure 7.9 shows, after 1, 2, and 3 years, the high-risk participants in Tracy (the control town) were at about as much at risk as before. High-risk participants in Gilroy, which was deluged with media appeals, improved their health habits and decreased their risk somewhat. Those in Watsonville, who received personal contacts as well as the media campaign, changed most.

**MEDIA INFLUENCE: THE TWO-STEP FLOW** Although face-to-face influence is usually greater than media influence, we should not underestimate the media's power. Those who personally influence our opinions must get their ideas from some source, and often their sources are the media. Elihu Katz (1957) observed that many of the media's effects operate in a **two-step flow of communication**: from media to opinion leaders to the rank and file. In any large group, it is these *opinion leaders* and trendsetters—"the influentials"—that marketers and politicians seek to woo (Keller & Berry, 2003). Opinion leaders are individuals perceived as experts. They may include talk show hosts and editorial columnists; doctors, teachers, and

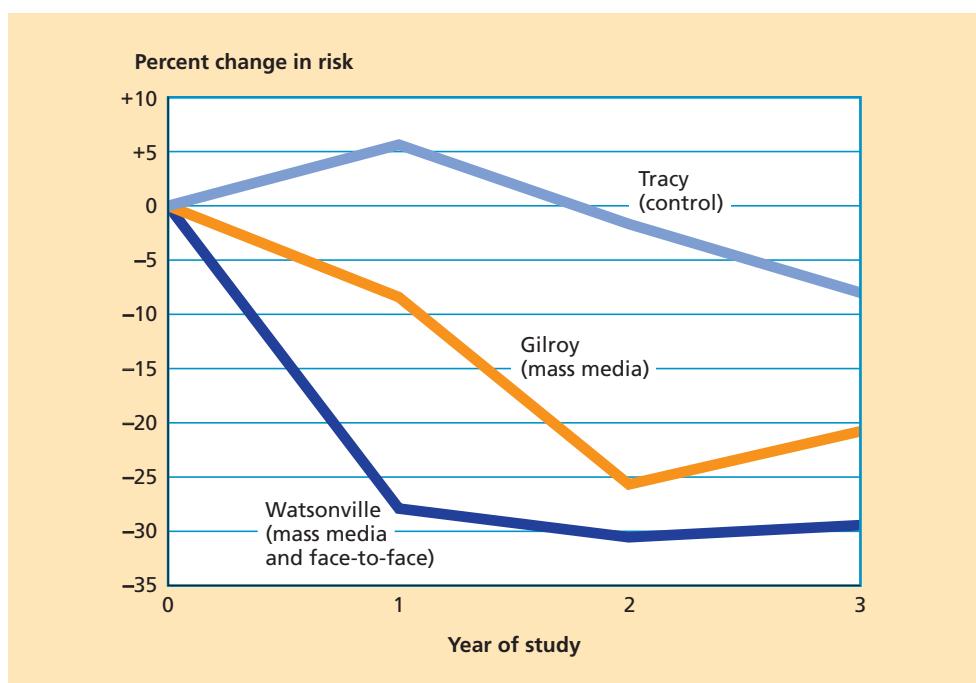
### two-step flow of communication

The process by which media influence often occurs through opinion leaders, who in turn influence others.

**FIGURE :: 7.9**

Percentage change from baseline (0) in coronary risk after 1, 2, or 3 years of health education.

Source: Data from Maccoby (1980).



scientists; and people in all walks of life who have made it their business to absorb information and to inform their friends and family. If I want to evaluate computer equipment, I defer to the opinions of my sons, who get many of their ideas from the printed page. Sell them and you will sell me.

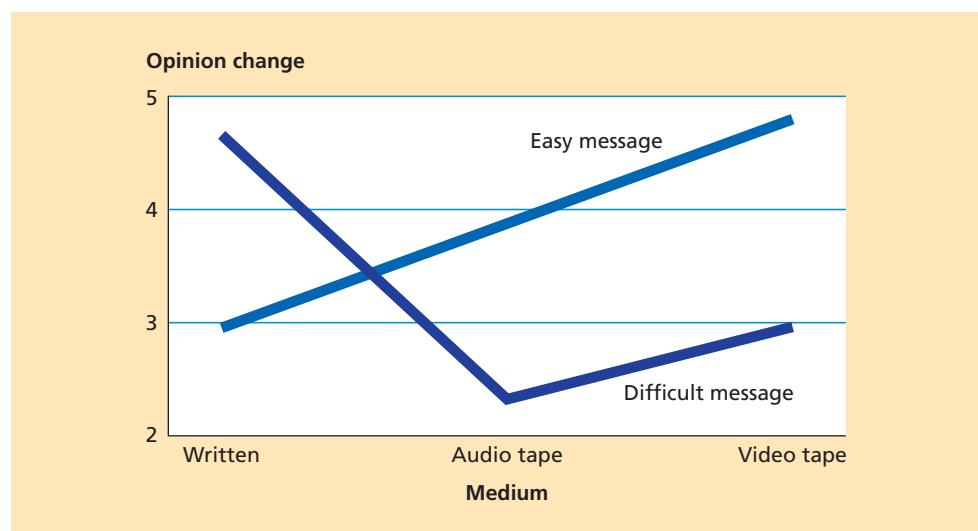
The two-step flow of information influences the drugs your physician describes, reports a Stanford School of Business research team (Nair & others, 2008). Physicians look to opinion leaders within their social network—often a university hospital-based specialist—when deciding what drugs to favor. For more than 9 in 10 physicians, this influence comes through personal contact. The largest drug companies know that opinion leaders drive sales, and therefore they target about one-third of their marketing dollars on these influential people.

The two-step flow model reminds us that media influences penetrate the culture in subtle ways. Even if the media had little direct effect on people's attitudes, they could still have a major indirect effect. Those rare children who grow up without watching television do not grow up beyond television's influence. Unless they live as hermits, they will join in TV-imitative play on the schoolground. They will ask their parents for the TV-related toys their friends have. They will beg or demand to watch their friends' favorite programs, and they will do so when visiting friends' homes. Parents can just say no, but they cannot switch off television's influence.

**COMPARING MEDIA** Lumping together all media, from mass mailings to television to social networking, oversimplifies. Studies comparing different media find that the more lifelike the medium, the more persuasive its message. Thus, the order of persuasiveness seems to be: live (face-to-face), videotaped, audiotaped, and written.

To add to the complexity, messages are best *comprehended* and *recalled* when written. Comprehension is one of the first steps in the persuasion process (recall Figure 7.2). So Shelly Chaiken and Alice Eagly (1976) reasoned that if a message is difficult to comprehend, persuasion should be greatest when the message is written because readers will be able to work through the message at their own pace. The researchers gave University of Massachusetts students easy or difficult messages in writing, on audiotape, or on videotape. Figure 7.10 displays their results: Difficult messages were indeed most persuasive when written; easy messages, when videotaped. The TV medium takes control of the pacing of the message away from the recipients. By drawing attention to the communicator and away from the message itself, TV also encourages people to focus on peripheral cues, such as the communicator's attractiveness (Chaiken & Eagly, 1983).

*In study after study, most people agree that mass media influence attitudes—other people's attitudes, but not their own (Duck & others, 1995).*



**FIGURE :: 7.10**

Easy-to-understand messages are most persuasive when videotaped. Difficult messages are most persuasive when written. Thus, the difficulty of the message interacts with the medium to determine persuasiveness.

*Source:* Data from Chaiken & Eagly (1976).

## To Whom Is It Said? The Audience

Persuasion varies with who . . . says what . . . by what medium . . . to whom. Let's consider two audience characteristics: age and thoughtfulness.

### HOW OLD ARE THEY?

As evident during the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign—with John McCain the decided favorite of older voters and Barack Obama of younger voters—people's social and political attitudes correlate with their age. Social psychologists offer two possible explanations for age differences:

- A *life cycle explanation*: Attitudes change (for example, become more conservative) as people grow older.
- A *generational explanation*: Attitudes do *not* change; older people largely hold onto the attitudes they adopted when they were young. Because these attitudes are different from those being adopted by young people today, a generation gap develops. (Figure 7.11 offers one example of a large generation gap.).

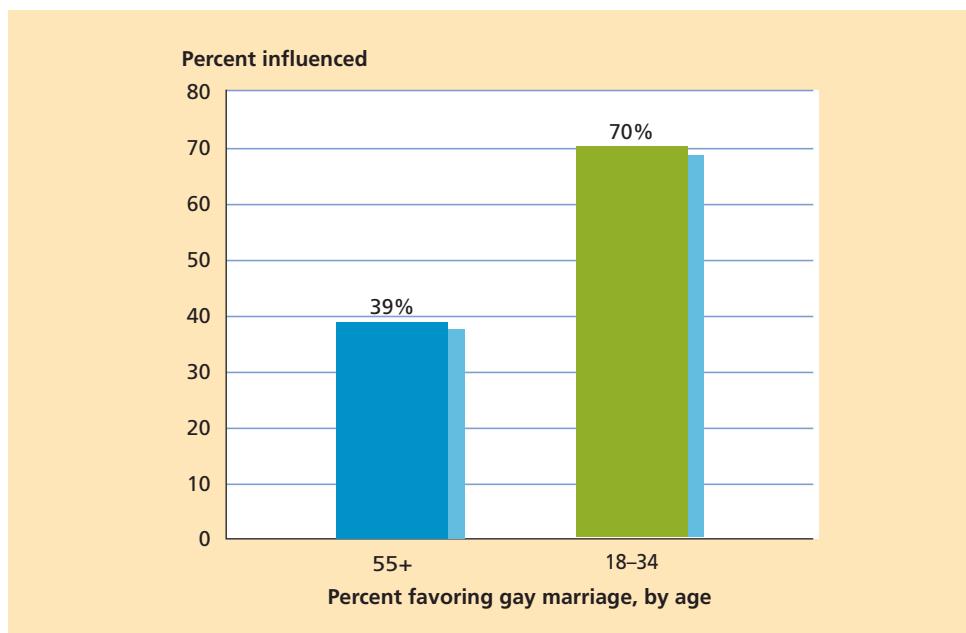
The evidence mostly supports the generational explanation. In surveys and resurveys of groups of younger and older people over several years, the attitudes of older people usually show less change than do those of young people. As David Sears (1979, 1986) put it, researchers have “almost invariably found generational rather than life cycle effects.”

The teens and early twenties are important formative years (Koenig & others, 2008; Krosnick & Alwin, 1989). Attitudes are changeable then, and the attitudes formed tend to stabilize through middle adulthood. Gallup interviews of more than 120,000 people suggest that political attitudes formed at age 18—relatively Republican-favoring during the popular Reagan era, and more Democratic-favoring during the unpopular George W. Bush era—tend to last (Silver, 2009).

Young people might therefore be advised to choose their social influences—the groups they join, the media they imbibe, the roles they adopt—carefully. In analyzing National Opinion Research Center archives, James Davis (2004) discovered, for example, that Americans reaching age 16 during the 1960s have, ever since, been more politically liberal than average. Much as tree rings can, years later, reveal the telltale marks laid down by a drought, so attitudes decades later may reveal

**FIGURE :: 7.11**

A generation gap in 2011 U.S. attitudes regarding same-sex marriage, as reported by Gallup. A “life cycle” explanation of generational differences in attitudes suggests that people become more conservative with age. A “generational explanation” suggests that each generation tends to hold on to attitudes formed during the adolescent and early adults years.



the events, such as the Vietnam War and civil rights era of the 1960s, that shaped the adolescent and early twenties mind. For many people, these years are a critical period for the formation of attitudes and values.

Vermont's Bennington College provides a striking example. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, Bennington students—women from privileged, conservative families—encountered a free-spirited environment led by a left-leaning young faculty. One of those professors, social psychologist Theodore Newcomb, later denied that the faculty was trying to make “good little liberals” out of its students. Yet the students became much more liberal than was typical of those from their social backgrounds. Moreover, attitudes formed at Bennington endured. A half-century later, the Bennington women, now 70ish, voted Democratic by a three-to-one margin in the 1984 presidential election, whereas other college-educated women who were in their seventies were voting Republican by a three-to-one margin (Alwin & others, 1991). The views embraced at an impressionable time had survived a lifetime of wider experience.

Adolescent and early adult experiences are formative partly because they make deep and lasting impressions. When Howard Schuman and Jacqueline Scott (1989) asked people to name the one or two most important national or world events of the previous half-century, most recalled events from their teens or early twenties. For those who experienced the Great Depression or World War II as 16- to 24-year-olds, those events overshadowed the civil rights movement and the Kennedy assassination of the early sixties, the Vietnam War and moon landing of the late sixties, and the women’s movement of the seventies—all of which were imprinted on the minds of younger people who experienced them as 16- to 24-year-olds. We may therefore expect that today’s young adults will include events such as 9/11 and the Iraq war or the ensuing economic recession as memorable turning points.

That is not to say that older adults are inflexible. Studies conducted by Norval Glenn in 1980 and 1981 found that most people in their fifties and sixties had more liberal sexual and racial attitudes than they had in their thirties and forties. Given the “sexual revolution” that began in the 1960s and became mainstream in the 1970s, these middle-aged people had apparently changed with the times. Few of us are utterly uninfluenced by changing cultural norms. Moreover, near the end of their lives, older adults may again become more susceptible to attitude change, perhaps because of a decline in the strength of their attitudes (Visser & Krosnick, 1998). Or perhaps, as some research suggests, resistance to attitude change peaks in midlife because that’s when people tend to occupy higher power social roles, which call forth resoluteness (Eaton & others, 2009).

## WHAT ARE THEY THINKING?

The crucial aspect of central route persuasion is not the message but the responses it evokes in a person’s mind. Our minds are not sponges that soak up whatever pours over them. If a message summons favorable thoughts, it persuades us. If it provokes us to think of contrary arguments, we remain unpersuaded.

**FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED—IF YOU CARE ENOUGH TO COUNTER-ARGUE** What circumstances breed counterargument? One is knowing that someone is going to try to persuade you. If you had to tell your family that you wanted to drop out of school, you would likely anticipate their pleading with you to stay. So you might develop a list of arguments to counter every conceivable argument they might make.

Jonathan Freedman and David Sears (1965) demonstrated the difficulty of trying to persuade people under such circumstances. They warned one group of California high schoolers that they were going to hear a talk: “Why Teenagers Should Not Be Allowed to Drive.” Those forewarned did not budge in their opinions. Others, not forewarned, did budge. In courtrooms, too, defense attorneys sometimes forewarn juries about prosecution evidence to come. With mock juries, such “stealing thunder” neutralizes its impact (Dolnik & others, 2003).

“TO BE FOREWARNED  
AND THEREFORE FORE-  
ARMED . . . IS EMINENTLY  
RATIONAL IF OUR BELIEF  
IS TRUE; BUT IF OUR BELIEF  
IS A DELUSION, THIS SAME  
FOREWARNING AND FORE-  
ARMING WOULD OBVI-  
OUSLY BE THE METHOD  
WHEREBY THE DELU-  
SION RENDERED ITSELF  
INCURABLE.”

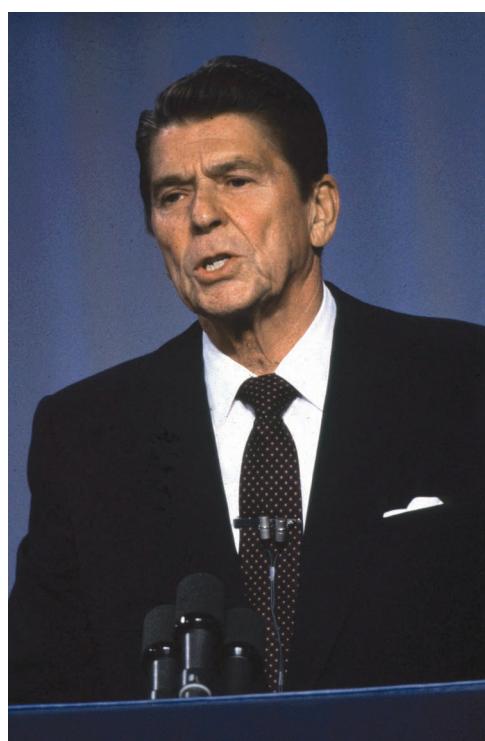
—C. S. LEWIS, SCREWTAPE  
PROPOSES A TOAST, 1965

**DISTRACTION DISARMS COUNTERARGUING** Persuasion is also enhanced by a distraction that inhibits counterarguing (Festinger & Maccoby, 1964; Keating & Brock, 1974; Osterhouse & Brock, 1970). Political ads often use this technique. The words promote the candidate, and the visual images keep us occupied so we don't analyze the words. Distraction is especially effective when the message is simple (Harkins & Petty, 1982; Regan & Cheng, 1973). Sometimes, though, distraction precludes our processing an ad. That helps explain why ads viewed during violent or sexual TV programs are so often unremembered and ineffective (Bushman, 2005, 2007).

**UNINVOLVED AUDIENCES USE PERIPHERAL CUES** Recall the two routes to persuasion—the central route of systematic thinking and the peripheral route of heuristic cues. Like a road that winds through a small town, the central route has starts and stops as the mind analyzes arguments and formulates responses. Like the freeway that bypasses the town, the peripheral route speeds people to their destination. Analytical people—those with a high **need for cognition**—enjoy thinking carefully and prefer central routes (Cacioppo & others, 1996). People who like to conserve their mental resources—those with a low need for cognition—are quicker to respond to such peripheral cues as the communicator's attractiveness and the pleasantness of the surroundings.

This simple theory—that *what we think in response to a message is crucial*, especially if we are motivated and able to think about it—has generated many predictions, most of which have been confirmed by Petty, Cacioppo, and others (Axsom & others, 1987; Haddock & others, 2008; Harkins & Petty, 1987). Many experiments have explored ways to stimulate people's thinking

- by using *rhetorical questions*.
- by presenting *multiple speakers* (for example, having each of three speakers give one argument instead of one speaker giving three).
- by making people *feel responsible* for evaluating or passing along the message.
- by *repeating* the message.
- by getting people's *undistracted attention*.



"Are you better off than you were four years ago?" Ronald Reagan soared to victory with a memorable rhetorical question that triggered voters' thinking.

The consistent finding with each of these techniques: *Stimulating thinking makes strong messages more persuasive and (because of counterarguing) weak messages less persuasive*.

The theory also has practical implications. Effective communicators care not only about their images and their messages but also about how their audience is likely to react. The best instructors get students to think actively. They ask rhetorical questions, provide intriguing examples, and challenge students with difficult problems. Such techniques foster the central route to persuasion. In classes in which the instruction is less engaging, you can still provide your own central processing. If you think about the material and elaborate on the arguments, you are likely to do better in the course.

During the final days of a closely contested 1980 U.S. presidential campaign, Ronald Reagan effectively used

rhetorical questions to stimulate desired thoughts in voters' minds. His summary statement in the presidential debate began with two potent rhetorical questions that he repeated often during the campaign's remaining week: "Are you better off than you were four years ago? Is it easier for you to go and buy things in the stores than it was four years ago?" Most people answered no, and Reagan, thanks partly to the way he prodded people to take the central route, won by a bigger-than-expected margin.

## SUMMING UP: What Are the Elements of Persuasion?

- What makes persuasion effective? Researchers have explored four factors: the communicator (who says it), the message (what is said), the *channel* (how it is said), and the audience (to whom it is said).
- *Credible* communicators tend to be persuasive. People who speak unhesitatingly, who talk fast, and who look listeners straight in the eye seem more credible. So do people who argue against their own self-interest. An *attractive* communicator is especially effective on matters of taste and personal values.
- Associating a message with good feelings makes it more convincing. People often make quicker, less reflective judgments while in good moods. Fear-arousing messages can also be effective, especially if the recipients feel vulnerable but can take protective action.
- How discrepant a message should be from an audience's existing opinions depends on the communicator's credibility. And whether a one- or two-sided message is more persuasive depends on whether the audience already agrees with the message, is unaware of opposing arguments, and is unlikely later to consider the opposition.
- When two sides of an issue are included, the *primacy effect* often makes the first message more persuasive. If a time gap separates the presentations, the more likely result will be a *recency effect* in which the second message prevails.
- Another important consideration is how the message is communicated. Usually, face-to-face appeals work best. Print media can be effective for complex messages. And the mass media can be effective when the issue is minor or unfamiliar, and when the media reach opinion leaders.
- Finally, it matters who receives the message. The age of the audience makes a difference; young people's attitudes are more subject to change. What does the audience think while receiving a message? Do they think favorable thoughts? Do they counterargue? Were they forewarned?

## EXTREME PERSUASION: HOW DO CULTS INDOCTRINATE?

State some persuasion and group influence principles that have been harnessed by new religious movements ("cults").

On March 22, 1997, in California, Marshall Herff Applewhite and 37 of his disciples decided the time had come to shed their bodies—mere "containers"—and be whisked up to a UFO trailing the Hale-Bopp Comet, en route to heaven's gate. So they put themselves to sleep by mixing phenobarbital into pudding or applesauce, washing it down with vodka, and then fixing plastic bags over their heads so they would suffocate in their slumber. On that same day, a cottage in the Quebec village of St. Casimir exploded in an inferno, consuming 5 people—the latest of 74 members of the Order of the Solar Temple to have committed suicide in Canada, Switzerland, and France. All were hoping to be transported to the star Sirius, nine light-years away.

The question on many minds: What persuades people to leave behind their former beliefs and join these mental chain gangs? Should we attribute their strange



One of 37 suicide victims seeking heaven's gate.

behaviors to strange personalities? Or do their experiences illustrate the common dynamics of social influence and persuasion?

Bear two things in mind. First, this is hindsight analysis. It uses persuasion principles to explain, after the fact, a curious social phenomenon. Second, explaining *why* people believe something says nothing about the *truth* of their beliefs. That is a logically separate issue. A psychology of religion might tell us *why* a theist believes in God and an atheist disbelieves, but it cannot tell us who is right. Explaining either belief does nothing to change its validity. Remember that if someone tries to discount your beliefs by saying, "You just believe that because . . .," you might recall Archbishop William Temple's reply to a questioner who challenged: "Well, of course, Archbishop, the point is that you believe what you believe because of the way you were brought up." To which the archbishop replied: "That is as it may be. But the fact remains that you believe I believe what I believe because of the way I was brought up, because of the way you were brought up."

In recent decades, several **cults**—which some social scientists prefer to call new religious movements—have gained much publicity: Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, Jim Jones's People's Temple, David Koresh's Branch Davidians, and Marshall Applewhite's Heaven's Gate.

Sun Myung Moon's mixture of Christianity, anticomunism, and glorification of Moon himself as a new messiah attracted a worldwide following. In response to Moon's declaration "What I wish must be your wish," many people committed themselves and their incomes to the Unification Church.

In 1978 in Guyana, 914 disciples of Jim Jones, who had followed him there from San Francisco, shocked the world when they died by following his order to down a suicidal grape drink laced with tranquilizers, painkillers, and a lethal dose of cyanide.

In 1993, high-school dropout David Koresh used his talent for memorizing Scripture and mesmerizing people to seize control of a faction of the Branch Davidian sect. Over time, members were gradually relieved of their bank accounts and possessions. Koresh also persuaded the men to live celibately while he slept with their wives and daughters, and he convinced his 19 "wives" that they should bear his children. Under siege after a shootout that killed 6 members and 4 federal agents, Koresh told his followers they would soon die and go with him straight to heaven. Federal agents rammed the compound with tanks, hoping to inject tear gas. By the end of the assault, 86 people were consumed in a fire.

### **cult (also called new religious movement)**

A group typically characterized by (1) distinctive rituals and beliefs related to its devotion to a god or a person, (2) isolation from the surrounding "evil" culture, and (3) a charismatic leader. (A sect, by contrast, is a spinoff from a major religion.)



*"You go on home without me, Irene. I'm going to join this man's cult."*

Hundreds of thousands of people in recent years have been recruited by members of some 2500 religious cults, but seldom through an abrupt decision.

© Charles Addams. With permission Tee and Charles Addams Foundation.

Marshall Applewhite was not similarly tempted to command sexual favors. Having been fired from two music teaching jobs for affairs with students, he sought sexless devotion by castration, as had 7 of the other 17 Heaven's Gate men who died with him (Chua-Eoan, 1997; Gardner, 1997). While in a psychiatric hospital in 1971, Applewhite had linked up with nurse and astrology dabbler Bonnie Lu Nettles, who gave the intense and charismatic Applewhite a cosmological vision of a route to "the next level." Preaching with passion, he persuaded his followers to renounce families, sex, drugs, and personal money with promises of a spaceship voyage to salvation.

How could these things happen? What persuaded these people to give such total allegiance? Shall we make dispositional explanations—by blaming the victims? Shall we dismiss them as gullible or unbalanced? Or can familiar principles of conformity, compliance, dissonance, persuasion, and group influence explain their behavior—putting them on common ground with the rest of us who in our own ways are shaped by such forces?

## Attitudes Follow Behavior

As Chapter 4 showed over and again, people usually internalize commitments made voluntarily, publicly, and repeatedly. Cult leaders seem to know this.

### COMPLIANCE BREEDS ACCEPTANCE

New converts soon learn that membership is no trivial matter. They are quickly made active members of the team. Behavioral rituals, public recruitment, and fund-raising strengthen the initiates' identities as members. Those in social psychological experiments come to believe in what they bear witness to (Aronson & Mills, 1959; Gerard & Mathewson, 1966), and cult initiates likewise become committed advocates. The greater the personal commitment, the more the need to justify it.

### THE FOOT-IN-THE-DOOR PHENOMENON

How are people induced to make a commitment to such a drastic life change? Seldom by an abrupt, conscious decision. One does not just decide, "I'm through with mainstream religion. I'm gonna find a cult." Nor do cult recruiters approach people

on the street with, "Hi. I'm a Moonie. Care to join us?" Rather, the recruitment strategy exploits the foot-in-the-door principle. Unification Church recruiters, for example, would invite people to a dinner and then to a weekend of warm fellowship and discussions of philosophies of life. At the weekend retreat, they would encourage the attenders to join them in songs, activities, and discussion. Potential converts were then urged to sign up for longer training retreats. The pattern in cults is for the activities to become gradually more arduous, culminating in having recruits solicit contributions and attempt to convert others.

Once converts have entered the cult, they find that monetary offerings are at first voluntary, then mandatory. Jim Jones eventually inaugurated a required 10-percent-of-income contribution, which soon increased to 25 percent. Finally, he ordered members to turn over to him everything they owned. Workloads also became progressively more demanding. Former cult member Grace Stoen recalls the gradual progress:

Nothing was ever done drastically. That's how Jim Jones got away with so much. You slowly gave up things and slowly had to put up with more, but it was always done very gradually. It was amazing, because you would sit up sometimes and say, wow, I really have given up a lot. I really am putting up with a lot. But he did it so slowly that you figured, I've made it this far, what the hell is the difference? (Conway & Siegelman, 1979, p. 236)

## Persuasive Elements

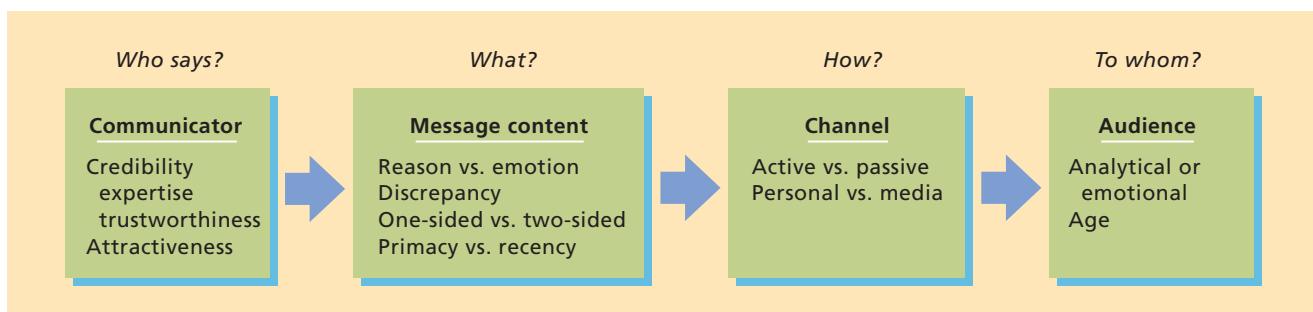
We can also analyze cult persuasion using the factors discussed in this chapter (and summarized in Figure 7.12): *Who* (the communicator) said *what* (the message) to *whom* (the audience)?

### THE COMMUNICATOR

Successful cults typically have a charismatic leader—someone who attracts and directs the members. As in experiments on persuasion, a credible communicator is someone the audience perceives as expert and trustworthy—for example, as "Father" Moon.

Jim Jones used "psychic readings" to establish his credibility. Newcomers were asked to identify themselves as they entered the church before services. Then one of his aides would quickly call the person's home and say, "Hi. We're doing a survey, and we'd like to ask you some questions." During the service, one ex-member recalled, Jones would call out the person's name and say

Have you ever seen me before? Well, you live in such and such a place, your phone number is such and such, and in your living room you've got this, that, and the other, and on your sofa you've got such and such a pillow. . . . Now do you remember me ever being in your house? (Conway & Siegelman, 1979, p. 234)



**FIGURE :: 7.12**

### Variables Known to Affect the Impact of Persuasive Communications

In real life, these variables may interact; the effect of one may depend on the level of another.

Trust is another aspect of credibility. Cult researcher Margaret Singer (1979) noted that middle-class Caucasian youths are more vulnerable to recruitment because they are more trusting. They lack the “street smarts” of lower-class youths (who know how to resist a hustle) and the wariness of upper-class youths (who have been warned of kidnappers since childhood). Many cult members have been recruited by friends or relatives, people they trust (Stark & Bainbridge, 1980).

### THE MESSAGE

The vivid, emotional messages and the warmth and acceptance with which the group showers lonely or depressed people can be strikingly appealing: Trust the master, join the family; we have the answer, the “one way.” The message echoes through channels as varied as lectures, small-group discussions, and direct social pressure.

### THE AUDIENCE

Recruits are often young people under 25 years old, still at that comparatively open age before attitudes and values stabilize. Some, such as the followers of Jim Jones, are less educated people who like the message’s simplicity and find it difficult to counterargue. But most are educated, middle-class people who, taken by the ideals, overlook the contradictions in those who profess selflessness and practice greed, who pretend concern and behave callously.

Potential converts are often at turning points in their lives, facing personal crises, or vacationing or living away from home. They have needs; the cult offers them an answer (Lofland & Stark, 1965; Singer, 1979). Gail Maeder joined Heaven’s Gate after her T-shirt shop had failed. David Moore joined when he was 19, just out of high school, and searching for direction. Times of social and economic upheaval are especially conducive to someone who can make apparent simple sense out of the confusion (O’Dea, 1968; Sales, 1972).

Most of those who have carried out suicide bombings in the Middle East (and other places such as Bali, Madrid, and London) were, likewise, young men at the transition between adolescence and adult maturity. Like cult recruits, they come under the influence of authoritative, religiously oriented communicators. These compelling voices indoctrinate them into seeing themselves as “living martyrs” whose fleeting moment of self-destruction will be their portal into bliss and heroism. To overcome the will to survive, each candidate makes public commitments—creating a will, writing good-bye letters, making a farewell video—that create a psychological point of no return (Kruglanski & Golec de Zavala, 2005). All of this typically transpires in the relative isolation of small cells, with group influences that fan hatred for the enemy.

## Group Effects

Cults also illustrate the next chapter’s theme: the power of a group to shape members’ views and behavior. The cult typically separates members from their previous social support systems and isolates them with other cult members. There may then occur what Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge (1980) call a “social implosion”: External ties weaken until the group collapses inward socially, each person engaging only with other group members. Cut off from families and former friends, they lose access to counterarguments. The group now offers identity and defines reality. Because the cult frowns on or punishes disagreements, the apparent consensus helps eliminate any lingering doubts. Moreover, stress and emotional arousal narrow attention, making people “more susceptible to poorly supported arguments, social pressure, and the temptation to derogate nongroup members” (Baron, 2000).

Marshall Applewhite and Bonnie Nettles at first formed their own group of two, reinforcing each other’s aberrant thinking—a phenomenon that psychiatrists call *folie à deux* (French for “insanity of two”). As others joined them, the group’s social

"AVOID 'TOTAL SITUATIONS' WHERE YOU LOSE CONTACT WITH YOUR SOCIAL SUPPORT AND INFORMATIONAL NETWORKS. NEVER ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE CUT OFF EMOTIONALLY FROM YOUR FAMILIAR AND TRUSTED REFERENCE GROUPS OF FAMILY, FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS, CO-WORKERS—DO NOT ACCEPT PUTDOWNS AGAINST THEM."

—PHILLIP ZIMBARDO AND  
CINCY X. WANG, "DR. Z'S

20 HINTS ABOUT RESISTING UNWANTED INFLUENCES ON YOU," 2007

isolation facilitated peculiar thinking. Internet conspiracy groups can likewise foster paranoia. Heaven's Gate was skilled in Internet recruiting.

These techniques—increasing behavioral commitments, persuasion, and group isolation—do not, however, have unlimited power. The Unification Church successfully recruited fewer than 1 in 10 people who attended its workshops (Ennis & Verrilli, 1989). Most who joined Heaven's Gate left before that fateful day. David Koresh ruled with a mix of persuasion, intimidation, and violence. As Jim Jones made his demands more extreme, he, too, increasingly had to control people with intimidation. He used threats of harm to those who fled the community, beatings for noncompliance, and drugs to neutralize disagreeable members. By the end, he was as much an arm twister as a mind bender.

Some of these cult influence techniques bear similarities to techniques used by more benign, widely accepted groups. Buddhist and Catholic monasteries, for example, have cloistered adherents with kindred spirits. Fraternity and sorority members have reported that the initial "love bombing" of potential cult recruits is not unlike their own "rush" period. Members lavish prospective pledges with attention and make them feel special. During the pledge period, new members are somewhat isolated, cut off from old friends who did not pledge. They spend time studying the history and rules of their new group. They suffer and commit time on its behalf. They are expected to comply with all its demands. The result is usually a committed new member.

Much the same is true of some therapeutic communities for recovering drug and alcohol abusers. Zealous self-help groups form a cohesive "social cocoon," have intense beliefs, and exert a profound influence on members' behavior (Galanter, 1989, 1990).

Another constructive use of persuasion is in counseling and psychotherapy, which social counseling psychologist Stanley Strong views "as a branch of applied social psychology" (1978, p. 101). Like Strong, psychiatrist Jerome Frank (1974, 1982) recognized years ago that it takes persuasion to change self-defeating attitudes and behaviors. Frank noted that the psychotherapy setting, like cults and zealous self-help groups, provides (1) a supportive, confiding social relationship; (2) an offer of expertise and hope; (3) a special rationale or myth that explains one's difficulties and offers a new perspective; and (4) a set of rituals and learning experiences that promises a new sense of peace and happiness.

Military training creates cohesion and commitment through some of the same tactics used by leaders of new religious movements, fraternities, and therapeutic communities.



I choose the examples of fraternities, sororities, self-help groups, and psychotherapy not to disparage them but to illustrate two concluding observations. First, if we attribute new religious movements to the leader's mystical force or to the followers' peculiar weaknesses, we may delude ourselves into thinking we are immune to social control techniques. In truth, our own groups—and countless political leaders, educators, and other persuaders—successfully use many of these same tactics on us. Between education and indoctrination, enlightenment and propaganda, conversion and coercion, therapy and mind control, there is but a blurry line.

Second, the fact that Jim Jones and other cult leaders abused the power of persuasion does not mean persuasion is intrinsically bad. Knowing that persuasive power, like nuclear power, can be harnessed for evil purposes should alert us, as scientists and citizens, to guard against its immoral use. But the power itself is neither inherently evil nor inherently good; it is how we use it that determines whether its effect is destructive or constructive. Condemning persuasion because of deceit is like condemning eating because of gluttony.

## SUMMING UP: Extreme Persuasion: How Do Cults Indoctrinate?

The successes of religious *cults* provide an opportunity to see powerful persuasion processes at work. It appears that their successes result from three general techniques:

- Eliciting behavioral commitments (as described in Chapter 4)

- Applying principles of effective persuasion (this chapter)
- Isolating members in like-minded groups (to be discussed in Chapter 8)

## HOW CAN PERSUASION BE RESISTED?

Identify some tactics for *resisting* influence. How might we prepare people to resist unwanted persuasion?

Martial arts trainers devote as much time teaching defensive blocks, deflections, and parries as they do teaching attack. "On the social influence battlefield," note Brad Sagarin and colleagues (2002), researchers have focused more on persuasive attack than on defense. Being persuaded comes naturally, Daniel Gilbert and colleagues (1990, 1993) report. It is easier to accept persuasive messages than to doubt them. To *understand* an assertion (say, that lead pencils are a health hazard) is to *believe* it—at least temporarily, until one actively undoes the initial, automatic acceptance. If a distracting event prevents the undoing, the acceptance lingers.

Still, blessed with logic, information, and motivation, we do resist falsehoods. If the credible-seeming repair person's uniform and the doctor's title have intimidated us into unthinking agreement, we can rethink our habitual responses to authority. We can seek more information before committing time or money. We can question what we don't understand.

### Strengthening Personal Commitment

Chapter 6 presented another way to resist: Before encountering others' judgments, make a public commitment to your position. Having stood up for your convictions, you will become less susceptible (or, should we say, less "open") to what others have to say. In mock civil trials, straw polls of jurors can foster a hardening of expressed positions, leading to more deadlocks (Davis & others, 1993).

## CHALLENGING BELIEFS

How might we stimulate people to commit themselves? Charles Kiesler (1971) offered one possible way: Mildly attack their position. Kiesler found that when committed people were attacked strongly enough to cause them to react, but not so strongly as to overwhelm them, they became even more committed. Kiesler explained: "When you attack committed people and your attack is of inadequate strength, you drive them to even more extreme behaviors in defense of their previous commitment" (p. 88). Perhaps you can recall that happening in an argument, as those involved escalated their rhetoric, committing themselves to increasingly extreme positions.

## DEVELOPING COUNTERARGUMENTS

There is a second reason a mild attack might build resistance. Like inoculations against disease, even weak arguments will prompt counterarguments, which are then available for a stronger attack. William McGuire (1964) documented this in some famous experiments. McGuire wondered: Could we inoculate people against persuasion much as we inoculate them against a virus? Is there such a thing as **attitude inoculation**? Could we take people raised in a "germ-free ideological environment"—people who hold some unquestioned belief—and stimulate their mental defenses? And would subjecting them to a small dose of belief-threatening material inoculate them against later persuasion?

That is what McGuire did. First, he found some cultural truisms, such as "It's a good idea to brush your teeth after every meal if at all possible." He then showed that people were vulnerable to a powerful, credible assault upon those truisms (for example, prestigious authorities were said to have discovered that too much tooth-brushing can damage one's gums). If, however, before having their belief attacked, they were "immunized" by first receiving a small challenge to their belief, *and* if they read or wrote an essay in refutation of this mild attack, then they were better able to resist the powerful attack.

Robert Cialdini and colleagues (2003) agree that appropriate counterarguments are a great way to resist persuasion. But they wondered how to bring them to mind in response to an opponent's ads. The answer, they suggest, is a "poison parasite" defense—one that combines a poison (strong counterarguments) with a parasite (retrieval cues that bring those arguments to mind when seeing the opponent's ads). In their studies, participants who viewed a familiar political ad were least persuaded by it when they had earlier seen counterarguments overlaid on a replica

## THE inside STORY

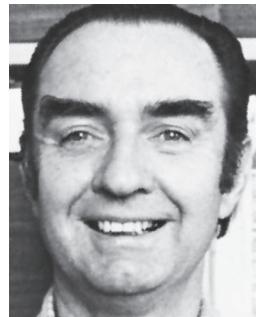
### William McGuire on Attitude Inoculation

I confess to having felt like Mr. Clean when doing this immunization work because I was studying how to help people resist being manipulated. Then, after our research was published, an advertising executive called and said, "Very interesting, Professor: I was delighted to read about it." Somewhat righteously, I replied, "Very nice of you to say that, Mr. Executive, but I'm really on the other side. You're trying to persuade people, and I'm trying to make them more resistant." "Oh, don't underrate yourself, Professor," he said. "We can use what

you're doing to diminish the effect of our competitors' ads." And sure enough, it has become almost standard for advertisers to mention other brands and deflate their claims.

William McGuire (1925–2007)

Yale University





A "poison parasite" ad.

of the ad. Seeing the ad again thus also brought to mind the puncturing counterarguments. Antismoking ads have effectively done this, for example, by re-creating a "Marlboro Man" commercial set in the rugged outdoors but now showing a coughing, decrepit cowboy.

## Real-Life Applications: Inoculation Programs

Could attitude inoculation work outside the laboratory by preparing people to resist unwanted persuasion? Applied research on smoking prevention and consumer education offers encouraging answers.

### INOCULATING CHILDREN AGAINST PEER PRESSURE TO SMOKE

Consider how laboratory research findings can lead to practical applications. One research team had high school students "inoculate" seventh-graders against peer pressures to smoke (McAlister & others, 1980). The seventh-graders were taught to respond to advertisements implying that liberated women smoke by saying, "She's not really liberated if she is hooked on tobacco." They also acted in role plays in which, after being called "chicken" for not taking a cigarette, they answered with statements such as "I'd be a real chicken if I smoked just to impress you." After several of these sessions during the seventh and eighth grades, the inoculated students were half as likely to begin smoking as were uninoculated students at another junior high school—one that had an identical parental smoking rate (Figure 7.13).

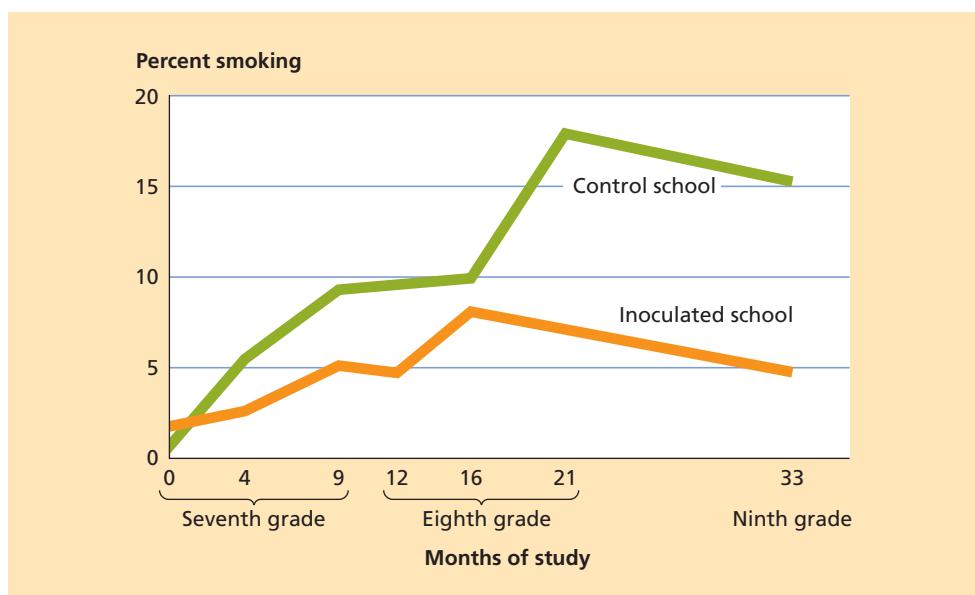
Other research teams have confirmed that inoculation procedures, sometimes supplemented by other life skill training, reduce teen smoking (Botvin & others, 1995, 2008; Evans & others, 1984; Flay & others, 1985). Most newer efforts emphasize strategies for resisting social pressure. One study exposed sixth- to eighth-graders to antismoking films or to information about smoking, together with role plays of student-generated ways of refusing a cigarette (Hirschman & Leventhal, 1989). A year and a half later, 31 percent of those who watched the antismoking films had taken up smoking. Among those who role-played refusing, only 19 percent had begun smoking.

Antismoking and drug education programs apply other persuasion principles, too. They use attractive peers to communicate information. They trigger the students' own cognitive processing ("Here's something you might want to think about"). They get the students to make a public commitment (by making a rational decision about smoking and then announcing it, along with their reasoning, to their classmates). Some of these smoking-prevention programs require only 2–6 hours

**FIGURE :: 7.13**

The percentage of cigarette smokers at an “inoculated” junior high school was much less than at a matched control school using a more typical smoking education program.

*Source:* Data from McAlister & others (1980), Telch & others (1981).



of class, using prepared printed materials or videotapes. Today, any school district or teacher wishing to use the social psychological approach to smoking prevention can do so easily, inexpensively, and with the hope of significant reductions in future smoking rates and associated health costs.

### INOCULATING CHILDREN AGAINST THE INFLUENCE OF ADVERTISING

Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Italy, and Sweden all restrict advertising that targets children (McGuire, 2002). In the United States, notes Robert Levine in *The Power of Persuasion: How We're Bought and Sold*, the average child sees more than 10,000 commercials a year. “Two decades ago,” he notes, “children drank twice as much milk as soda. Thanks to advertising, the ratio is now reversed” (2003, p. 16).

Smokers often develop an “initial brand choice” in their teens, stated a 1981 report from researchers at Philip Morris (Federal Trade Commission, 2003). “Today’s teenager is tomorrow’s potential regular customer, and the overwhelming majority of smokers first begin to smoke while still in their teens” (Lichtblau, 2003). That explains why some cigarette and smokeless tobacco companies aggressively market to college and university students, by advertising, by sponsoring parties, and by offering free cigarettes (usually in situations in which students are also drinking), all as part of their marketing of nicotine to “entry level” smokers (Farrell, 2005).

Hoping to restrain advertising’s influence, researchers have studied how to immunize young children against the effects of television commercials. Their research was prompted partly by studies showing that children, especially those under age 8 years, (1) have trouble distinguishing commercials from programs and fail to grasp their persuasive intent, (2) trust television advertising rather indiscriminately, and (3) desire and badger their parents for advertised products (Adler & others, 1980; Feshbach, 1980; Palmer & Dorr, 1980). Children, it seems, are an advertiser’s dream: gullible, vulnerable, and an easy sell.

Armed with these findings, citizens’ groups have given the advertisers of such products a chewing out (Moody, 1980): “When a sophisticated advertiser spends millions to sell unsophisticated, trusting children an unhealthy product, this can

“IN GENERAL, MY CHILDREN REFUSE TO EAT ANYTHING THAT HASN’T DANCED ON TELEVISION.”

—ERMA BOMBECK



Children are the advertiser's dream. Researchers have therefore studied ways to inoculate children against the more than 10,000 ads they see each year, many as they are glued to a TV set.

only be called exploitation." In "Mothers' Statement to Advertisers" (Motherhood Project, 2001), a broad coalition of women echoed this outrage:

For us, our children are priceless gifts. For you, our children are customers, and childhood is a "market segment" to be exploited. . . . The line between meeting and creating consumer needs and desire is increasingly being crossed, as your battery of highly trained and creative experts study, analyze, persuade, and manipulate our children. . . . The driving messages are "You deserve a break today," "Have it your way," "Follow your instincts. Obey your thirst," "Just Do It," "No Boundaries," "Got the Urge?" These [exemplify] the dominant message of advertising and marketing: that life is about selfishness, instant gratification, and materialism.

On the other side are the commercial interests. They claim that ads allow parents to teach their children consumer skills and, more important, finance children's television programs. In the United States, the Federal Trade Commission has been in the middle, pushed by research findings and political pressures while trying to decide whether to place new constraints on TV ads for unhealthy foods and for R-rated movies aimed at underage youth.

Meanwhile, researchers have found that inner-city seventh-graders who are able to think critically about ads—who have "media resistance skills"—also better resist peer pressure as eighth-graders and are less likely to drink alcohol as ninth-graders (Epstein & Botvin, 2008). Researchers have also wondered whether children can be taught to resist deceptive ads. In one such effort, a team of investigators led by Norma Feshbach (1980; S. Cohen, 1980) gave small groups of Los Angeles-area elementary schoolchildren three half-hour lessons in analyzing commercials. The children were inoculated by viewing ads and discussing them. For example, after viewing a toy ad, they were immediately given the toy and challenged to make it do what they had just seen in the commercial. Such experiences helped breed a more realistic understanding of commercials.

Consumer advocates worry that inoculation may be insufficient. Better to clean the air than to wear gas masks. It is no surprise, then, that parents resent it when advertisers market products to children, then place them on lower store shelves where kids will see them, pick them up, and nag and whine until sometimes wearing the parent down. For that reason, urges the "Mothers' Code for Advertisers," there should be no advertising in schools, no targeting children under 8 years, no

"WHEN IT COMES TO TARING KID CONSUMERS,  
WE AT GENERAL MILLS  
FOLLOW THE PROCTER  
AND GAMBLE MODEL OF  
'CRADLE TO GRAVE.' . . . WE  
BELIEVE IN GETTING THEM  
EARLY AND HAVING THEM  
FOR LIFE."

—WAYNE CHILICKI, GENERAL  
MILLS (QUOTED BY MOTHER-  
HOOD PROJECT, 2001)

product placements in movies and programs targeting children and adolescents, and no ads directed at children and adolescents “that promote an ethic of selfishness and a focus on instant gratification” (Motherhood Project, 2001).

## Implications of Attitude Inoculation

The best way to build resistance to brainwashing probably is not just stronger indoctrination into one’s current beliefs. If parents are worried that their children might become members of a cult, they might better teach their children about the various cults and prepare them to counter persuasive appeals.

For the same reason, religious educators should be wary of creating a “germ-free ideological environment” in their churches and schools. People who live amid diverse views become more discerning and more likely to modify their views only in response to credible arguments (Levitin & Visser, 2008). Also, a challenge to one’s views, if refuted, is more likely to solidify one’s position than to undermine it, particularly if the threatening material can be examined with like-minded others (Visser & Mirabile, 2004). Cults apply this principle by forewarning members of how families and friends will attack the cult’s beliefs. When the expected challenge comes, the member is armed with counterarguments.

Another implication is that, for the persuader, an ineffective appeal can be worse than none. Can you see why? Those who reject an appeal are inoculated against further appeals. Consider an experiment in which Susan Darley and Joel Cooper (1972) invited students to write essays advocating a strict dress code. Because that was against the students’ own positions and the essays were to be published, all chose *not* to write the essay—even those offered money to do so. After turning down the money, they became even more extreme and confident in their anti-dress code opinions. Those who have rejected initial appeals to quit smoking may likewise become immune to further appeals. Ineffective persuasion, by stimulating the listener’s defenses, may be counterproductive. It may “harden the heart” against later appeals.

## SUMMING UP: How Can Persuasion Be Resisted?

- How do people resist persuasion? A prior public commitment to one’s own position, stimulated perhaps by a mild attack on the position, breeds resistance to later persuasion.
- A mild attack can also serve as an *inoculation*, stimulating one to develop counterarguments that will then be available if and when a strong attack comes.
- This implies, paradoxically, that one way to strengthen existing attitudes is to challenge them, although the challenge must not be so strong as to overwhelm them.

## POSTSCRIPT: Being Open but Not Naïve

As recipients of persuasion, our human task is to live in the land between gullibility and cynicism. Some people say that being persuadable is a weakness. “Think for yourself,” we are urged. But is being closed to informational influence a virtue, or is it the mark of a fanatic? How can we live with humility and openness to others and yet be critical consumers of persuasive appeals?

To be open, we can assume that every person we meet is, in some ways, our superior. Each person we encounter has some expertise that exceeds our own and thus has something to teach us. As we connect, we can hope to learn from this person and to reciprocate by sharing our knowledge.

To be critical thinkers, we might take a cue from inoculation research. Do you want to build your resistance to false messages without becoming closed to valid messages? Be an active listener. Force yourself to counterargue. Don't just listen; react. After hearing a political speech, discuss it with others. If the message cannot withstand careful analysis, so much the worse for it. If it can, its effect on you will be that much more enduring.

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CHAPTER

# 8

# Group Influence



**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world."**

—Anthropologist Margaret Mead

Tawna is nearing the end of her daily run. Her mind prods her to keep going; her body begs her to walk the remaining six blocks. She compromises and does a slow jog home. The next day conditions are identical, except that two friends run with her. Tawna runs her route 2 minutes faster. She wonders, "Did I run better merely because Gail and Sonja went along? Would I always run better if in a group?"

At almost every turn, we are involved in groups. Our world contains not only 7 billion individuals but also 196 nation-states, 4 million local communities, 20 million economic organizations, and hundreds of millions of other formal and informal groups—couples having dinner, housemates hanging out, soldiers plotting strategy. How do such groups influence individuals?

Group interactions often have dramatic effects. Intellectuals hang out with other intellectuals, and they strengthen one another's intellectual interests. Deviant youth hang out with other deviant youth, amplifying one another's antisocial tendencies. But how do these groups affect attitudes? And what influences lead groups to make smart and dumb decisions?

### What is a group?

**Social facilitation:** How are we affected by the presence of others?

**Social loafing:** Do individuals exert less effort in a group?

**Deindividuation:** When do people lose their sense of self in groups?

**Group polarization:** Do groups intensify our opinions?

**Groupthink:** Do groups hinder or assist good decisions?

**The influence of the minority:** How do individuals influence the group?

**Postscript:** Are groups bad for us?

Individuals also influence their groups. As the 1957 classic film *12 Angry Men* opens, 12 wary murder trial jurors file into the jury room. It is a hot day. The tired jurors are close to agreement and eager for a quick verdict convicting a teenage boy of knifing his father. But one maverick, played by Henry Fonda, refuses to vote guilty. As the heated deliberation proceeds, the jurors one by one change their minds until they reach a unanimous verdict: "Not guilty." In real trials, a lone individual seldom sways the entire group. Yet history is made by minorities that sway majorities. What helps make a minority—or a leader—persuasive?

We will examine these intriguing phenomena of group influence one at a time. But first things first: What is a group and why do groups exist?

## WHAT IS A GROUP?

The answer to this question seems self-evident—until several people compare their definitions. Are jogging partners a group? Are airplane passengers a group? Is a group those who identify with one another, who sense they belong together? Is a group those who share common goals and rely on one another? Does a group form when individuals become organized? When their relationships with one another continue over time? These are among the social psychological definitions of a group (McGrath, 1984).

Group dynamics expert Marvin Shaw (1981) argued that all groups have one thing in common: Their members interact. Therefore, he defines a **group** as two or more people who interact and who influence one another. A pair of jogging companions, then, would indeed constitute a group. Different groups help us meet different human needs—to *affiliate* (to belong to and connect with others), to *achieve*, and to gain a social *identity* (Johnson & others, 2006).

By Shaw's definition, students working individually in a computer room would not be a group. Although physically together, they are more a collection of individuals than an interacting group (though each may be part of a group with dispersed others in an online chat room). The distinction between collections of unrelated individuals in a computer lab and the more influential group behavior among interacting individuals sometimes blurs. People who are merely in one another's presence do sometimes influence one another. At a football game, they may perceive themselves as "us" fans in contrast with "them"—the opposing fans.

In this chapter, we consider three examples of such collective influence: *social facilitation*, *social loafing*, and *deindividuation*. These three phenomena can occur with minimal interaction (in what we call "minimal group situations"). Then we consider three examples of social influence in interacting groups: *group polarization*, *groupthink*, and *minority influence*.

### SUMMING UP: What Is a Group?

- A *group* exists when two or more people interact for more than a few moments, affect one another in some way, and think of themselves as "us."

# SOCIAL FACILITATION: HOW ARE WE AFFECTED BY THE PRESENCE OF OTHERS?

Describe how we are affected by the mere presence of another person—by people who are not competing, do not reward or punish, and in fact do nothing except be present as a passive audience or as **co-actors**.

## The Mere Presence of Others

More than a century ago, Norman Triplett (1898), a psychologist interested in bicycle racing, noticed that cyclists' times were faster when they raced together than when each one raced alone against the clock. Before he peddled his hunch (that others' presence boosts performance), Triplett conducted one of social psychology's first laboratory experiments. Children told to wind string on a fishing reel as rapidly as possible wound faster when they worked with competing co-actors than when they worked alone. "The bodily presence of another contestant . . . serves to liberate latent energy," concluded Triplett.

A modern reanalysis of Triplett's data revealed that the difference did not reach statistical significance (Stroebe, 2012; Strube, 2005). But ensuing experiments did find that others' presence improves the speed with which people do simple multiplication problems and cross out designated letters. It also improves the accuracy with which people perform simple motor tasks, such as keeping a metal stick in contact with a dime-sized disk on a moving turntable (F. H. Allport, 1920; Dashiell, 1930; Travis, 1925). This **social facilitation** effect also occurs with animals. In the presence of others of their species, ants excavate more sand, chickens eat more grain, and sexually active rat pairs mate more often (Bayer, 1929; Chen, 1937; Larsson, 1956).

But wait: Other studies revealed that on some tasks the presence of others *hinders* performance. In the presence of others, cockroaches, parakeets, and green finches learn mazes more slowly (Allee & Masure, 1936; Gates & Allee, 1933; Klopfer, 1958). This disruptive effect also occurs with people. Others' presence diminishes efficiency at learning nonsense syllables, completing a maze, and performing complex multiplication problems (Dashiell, 1930; Pessin, 1933; Pessin & Husband, 1933).

Saying that the presence of others sometimes facilitates performance and sometimes hinders it is about as satisfying as the typical Scottish weather forecast—predicting that it might be sunny but then again it might rain. By 1940, social facilitation research ground to a halt, and it lay dormant for 25 years until awakened by the touch of a new idea.

Social psychologist Robert Zajonc (1923–2008, pronounced *Zy-ence*, rhymes with *science*) wondered whether these seemingly contradictory findings could be reconciled. As often happens at creative moments in science, Zajonc (1965) used one field of research to illuminate another. The illumination

### co-actors

Co-participants working individually on a noncompetitive activity.

### social facilitation

(1) Original meaning: the tendency of people to perform simple or well-learned tasks better when others are present. (2) Current meaning: the strengthening of dominant (prevailing, likely) responses in the presence of others.

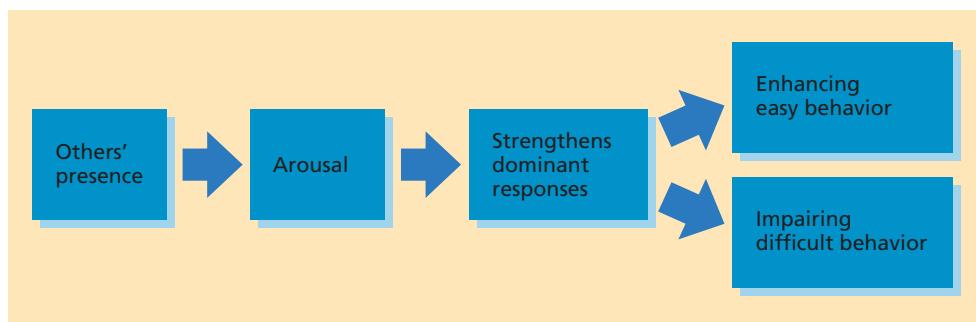


Social facilitation: Do you ride faster when bicycling with others?

### FIGURE :: 8.1

#### The Effects of Social Arousal

Robert Zajonc reconciled apparently conflicting findings by proposing that arousal from others' presence strengthens dominant responses (the correct responses only on easy or well-learned tasks).



came from a well-established experimental psychology principle: Arousal enhances whatever response tendency is dominant. Increased arousal enhances performance on easy tasks for which the most likely—"dominant"—response is correct. People solve easy anagrams, such as *akec*, fastest when aroused. On complex tasks, for which the correct answer is not dominant, increased arousal promotes *incorrect* responding. On more difficult anagrams, such as *theloacco*, people do worse when aroused.

Could this principle solve the mystery of social facilitation? It seemed reasonable to assume that others' presence will arouse or energize people (Mullen & others, 1997); most of us can recall feeling tense or excited in front of an audience. If social arousal facilitates dominant responses, it should *boost performance on easy tasks and hurt performance on difficult tasks*.

With that explanation, the confusing results made sense. Winding fishing reels, doing simple multiplication problems, and eating were all easy tasks for which the responses were well learned or naturally dominant. Sure enough, having others around boosted performance. Learning new material, doing a maze, and solving complex math problems were more difficult tasks for which the correct responses were initially less probable. In these cases, the presence of others increased the number of *incorrect* responses on these tasks. The same general rule—*arousal facilitates dominant responses*—worked in both cases (Figure 8.1). Suddenly, what had looked like contradictory results no longer seemed contradictory.

Zajonc's solution, so simple and elegant, left other social psychologists thinking what Thomas H. Huxley thought after first reading Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*: "How extremely stupid not to have thought of that!" It seemed obvious—once Zajonc had pointed it out. Perhaps, however, the pieces fit so neatly only through the spectacles of hindsight. Would the solution survive direct experimental tests?

After almost 300 studies, conducted with the help of more than 25,000 volunteers, the solution has survived (Bond & Titus, 1983; Guerin, 1993, 1999). Social arousal facilitates dominant responses, whether right or wrong. For example, Peter Hunt and Joseph Hillery (1973) found that in others' presence, students took less time to learn a simple maze and more time to learn a complex one (just as the cockroaches do!). And James Michaels and collaborators (1982) found that good pool players in a student union (who had made 71 percent of their shots while being unobtrusively observed) did even better (80 percent) when four observers came up to watch them play. Poor shooters (who had previously averaged 36 percent) did even worse (25 percent) when closely observed. Likewise, novice drivers more often fail driving tests when tested with another to-be-tested person in the car rather than alone (Rosenbloom & others, 2007).

Athletes, actors, and musicians perform well-practiced skills, which helps explain why they often perform best when energized by the responses of a supportive audience. Studies of more than a quarter million college and professional athletic events worldwide reveal that home teams win approximately 6 in 10 games (somewhat fewer for baseball and football, somewhat more for basketball and soccer, but

"MERE SOCIAL CONTACT  
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TION OF THE ANIMAL  
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—KARL MARX, *DAS KAPITAL*,

1867

"DISCOVERY CONSISTS OF  
SEEING WHAT EVERYBODY  
HAS SEEN AND THINKING  
WHAT NOBODY HAD  
THOUGHT."

—ALBERT VON SZENT-

GYÖRGYI, *THE SCIENTIST*

SPECULATES, 1962

**TABLE :: 8.1 Home Advantage in Major Team Sports**

Sport	Games Studied	Percentage of Home Games Won
Baseball	120,576	55.6
American football	11,708	57.3
Ice hockey	50,739	56.5
Basketball	30,174	63.7
Soccer	40,380	67.4

Source: Jeremy Jamieson (2010).

consistently more than half [Table 8.1]). The home advantage may, however, also stem from the players' familiarity with their home environment, less travel fatigue, feelings of dominance derived from territorial control, or increased team identity when cheered by fans (Zillmann & Paulus, 1993).

## Crowding: The Presence of Many Others

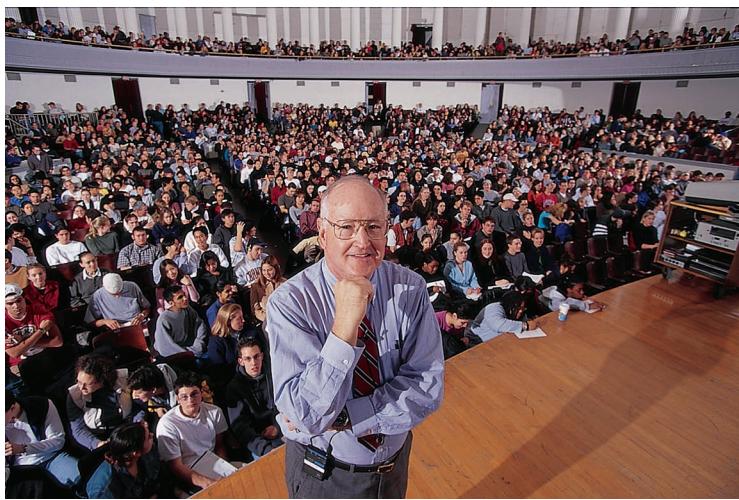
So people do respond to others' presence. But does the presence of observers always arouse people? In times of stress, a comrade can be comforting. Nevertheless, with others present, people perspire more, breathe faster, tense their muscles more, and have higher blood pressure and a faster heart rate (Geen & Gange, 1983; Moore & Baron, 1983). Even a supportive audience may elicit poorer performance on challenging tasks (Butler & Baumeister, 1998). Having your entire extended family attend your first piano recital probably won't boost your performance.

The effect of others' presence increases with their number (Jackson & Latané, 1981; Knowles, 1983). Sometimes the arousal and self-conscious attention created by a large audience interferes even with well-learned, automatic behaviors, such as speaking. Given *extreme* pressure, we're vulnerable to "choking." Stutterers tend to stutter more in front of larger audiences than when speaking to just one or two people (Mullen, 1986).

Being *in* a crowd also intensifies positive or negative reactions. When they sit close together, friendly people are liked even more, and *unfriendly* people are disliked even more (Schiffenbauer & Schiavo, 1976; Storms & Thomas, 1977). In experiments with Columbia University students and with Ontario Science Center visitors, Jonathan Freedman and co-workers (1979, 1980) had an accomplice listen to a humorous tape or watch a movie with other participants. When they all sat close together, the accomplice could more readily induce the individuals to laugh and clap. As theater directors and sports fans know, and as researchers have confirmed, a "good house" is a full house (Aiello & others, 1983; Worchel & Brown, 1984).

Perhaps you've noticed that a class of 35 students feels more warm and lively in a room that seats just 35 than when spread around a room that seats 100. When others are close by, we are more likely to notice and join in their laughter or clapping. But crowding also enhances arousal, as Gary Evans (1979) found. He tested 10-person groups of University of Massachusetts students, either in a room 20 by 30 feet or in one 8 by 12 feet. Compared with those in the large room, those densely packed had higher pulse rates and blood pressure (indicating arousal). On difficult tasks they made more errors, an effect of crowding replicated by Dinesh Nagar and Janak Pandey (1987) with university students in India. Crowding, then, has a similar effect to being observed by a crowd: it enhances arousal, which facilitates dominant responses.

*Heightened arousal in crowded homes also tends to increase stress. Crowding produces less distress in homes divided into many spaces, however, enabling people to withdraw in privacy (Evans & others, 1996, 2000).*



A good house is a full house, as James Maas's Cornell University introductory psychology students experienced in this 2000-seat auditorium. If the class had 100 students meeting in this large space, it would feel much less energized.

### evaluation apprehension

Concern for how others are evaluating us.

contrast to the effect of the watching audience, the mere presence of these blindfolded people did *not* boost well-practiced responses.

Other experiments confirmed Cottrell's conclusion: The enhancement of dominant responses is strongest when people think they are being evaluated. In one experiment, individuals running on a University of California at Santa Barbara jogging path sped up as they came upon a woman seated on the grass—if she was facing them rather than sitting with her back turned (Worringham & Messick, 1983).

The self-consciousness we feel when being evaluated can also interfere with behaviors that we perform best automatically (Mullen & Baumeister, 1987). If self-conscious basketball players analyze their body movements while shooting critical free throws, they are more likely to miss.

### DRIVEN BY DISTRACTION

Glenn Sanders, Robert Baron, and Danny Moore (1978; Baron, 1986) carried evaluation apprehension a step further. They theorized that when we wonder how co-actors are doing or how an audience is reacting, we become distracted. This *conflict* between paying attention to others and paying attention to the task overloads our cognitive system, causing arousal. We are “driven by distraction.” This arousal comes not just from the presence of another person but even from a nonhuman distraction, such as bursts of light (Sanders, 1981a, 1981b).

### MERE PRESENCE

Zajonc, however, believed that the mere presence of others produces some arousal even without evaluation apprehension or arousing distraction. Recall that facilitation effects also occur with nonhuman animals. This hints at an innate social arousal mechanism common to much of the zoological world. (Animals probably are not consciously worrying about how other animals are evaluating them.) At the human level, most runners are energized when running with someone else, even one who neither competes nor evaluates. And university rowing team members, perhaps aided by an endorphin boost from the communal activity, tolerate twice as much pain after rowing together rather than solo (Cohen & others, 2009).

This is a good time to remind ourselves that a good theory is a scientific shorthand: It simplifies and summarizes a variety of observations. Social facilitation theory does this well. It is a simple summary of many research findings. A good theory also offers

## Why Are We Aroused in the Presence of Others?

What you do well, you will be energized to do best in front of others (unless you become hyperaroused and self-conscious). What you find difficult may seem impossible in the same circumstances. What is it about other people that creates arousal? Evidence supports three possible factors (Aiello & Douthitt, 2001; Feinberg & Aiello, 2006): evaluation apprehension, distraction, and mere presence.

### EVALUATION APPREHENSION

Nickolas Cottrell surmised that observers make us apprehensive because we wonder how they are evaluating us. To test whether **evaluation apprehension** exists, Cottrell and associates (1968) blindfolded observers, supposedly in preparation for a perception experiment. In con-

clear predictions that (1) help confirm or modify the theory, (2) guide new exploration, and (3) suggest practical applications. Social facilitation theory has definitely generated the first two types of prediction: (1) The basics of the theory (that the presence of others is arousing and that this social arousal enhances dominant responses) have been confirmed, and (2) the theory has brought new life to a long-dormant field of research.

Are there (3) some practical applications? We can make some educated guesses. As Figure 8.2 shows, many new office buildings have replaced private offices with large, open areas divided by low partitions. Might the resulting awareness of others' presence help boost the performance of well-learned tasks but disrupt creative thinking on complex tasks? Can you think of other possible applications?



**FIGURE 8.2**

In the “open-office plan,” people work in the presence of others. Increasingly, office environments provide their workers with “collaborative spaces” (Arieff, 2011).

## SUMMING UP: Social Facilitation: How Are We Affected by the Presence of Others?

- Social psychology's most elementary issue concerns the mere presence of others. Some early experiments on this question found that performance improved with observers or *co-actors* present. Others found that the presence of others can hurt performance. Robert Zajonc reconciled those findings by applying a well-known principle from experimental psychology: Arousal facilitates dominant responses. Because the presence of others is arousing, the presence of observers or co-actors boosts performance on easy tasks (for which the correct response is dominant) and hinders performance on difficult tasks (for which incorrect responses are dominant).
- Being in a crowd, or in crowded conditions, is similarly arousing and facilitates dominant responses.
- But why are we aroused by others' presence? Experiments suggest that the arousal stems partly from *evaluation apprehension* and partly from distraction—a conflict between paying attention to others and concentrating on the task. Other experiments, including some with animals, suggest that the presence of others can be arousing even when we are not evaluated or distracted.

## SOCIAL LOAFING: DO INDIVIDUALS EXERT LESS EFFORT IN A GROUP?

Assess the level of individual effort we can expect from members of work groups. In a team tug-of-war, will eight people on a side exert as much force as the sum of their best efforts in individual tugs-of-war? If not, why not?

Social facilitation usually occurs when people work toward individual goals and when their efforts, whether winding fishing reels or solving math problems, can be individually evaluated. These situations parallel some everyday work situations.

But what about those in which people pool their efforts toward a *common* goal and where individuals are *not* accountable for their efforts? A team tug-of-war provides one such example. Organizational fund-raising—pooling candy sale proceeds to pay for the class trip—provides another. So does a class group project on which all students get the same grade. On such “additive tasks”—tasks where the group’s achievement depends on the sum of the individual efforts—will team spirit boost productivity? Will bricklayers lay bricks faster when working as a team than when working alone? One way to attack such questions is with laboratory simulations.

## Many Hands Make Light Work

Nearly a century ago, French engineer Max Ringelmann (reported by Kravitz & Martin, 1986) found that the collective effort of tug-of-war teams was but half the sum of the individual efforts. Contrary to the presumption that “in unity there is strength,” this suggested that group members may actually be *less* motivated when performing additive tasks. Maybe, though, poor performance stemmed from poor coordination—people pulling a rope in slightly different directions at slightly different times. A group of Massachusetts researchers led by Alan Ingham (1974) cleverly eliminated that problem by making individuals think others were pulling with them, when in fact they were pulling alone. Blindfolded participants were assigned the first position in the apparatus shown in Figure 8.3 and told, “Pull as hard as you can.” They pulled 18 percent harder when they knew they were pulling alone than when they believed that behind them two to five people were also pulling.

Researchers Bibb Latané, Kipling Williams, and Stephen Harkins (1979; Harkins & others, 1980) kept their ears open for other ways to investigate this diminished effort, which they labeled **social loafing**. They observed that the noise produced by six people shouting or clapping “as loud as you can” was less than three times that produced by one person alone. Like the tug-of-war task, however, noisemaking is vulnerable to group inefficiency. So Latané and associates followed Ingham’s example by leading their Ohio State University participants to believe others were shouting or clapping with them, when in fact they were doing so alone.

Their method was to blindfold six people, seat them in a semicircle, and have them put on headphones, over which they were blasted with the sound of people shouting or clapping. People could not hear their own shouting or clapping, much less that of others. On various trials they were instructed to shout or clap either

### **social loafing**

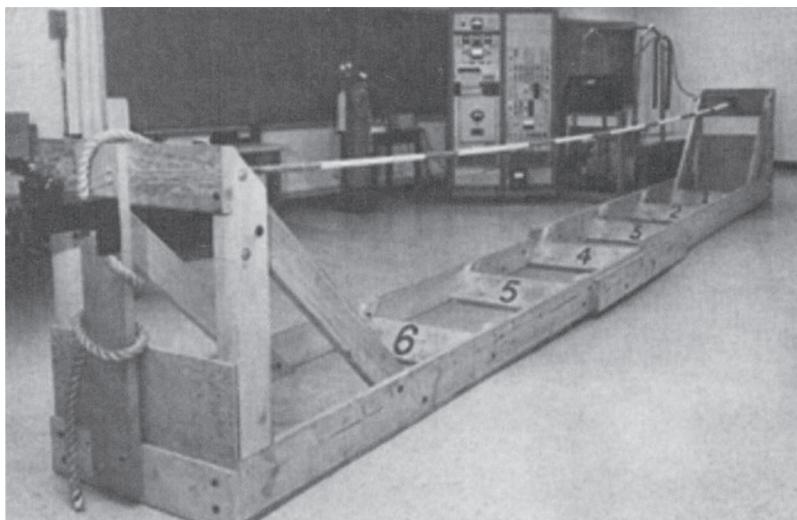
The tendency for people to exert less effort when they pool their efforts toward a common goal than when they are individually accountable.

### FIGURE :: 8.3

#### The Rope-Pulling Apparatus

People in the first position pulled less hard when they thought people behind them were also pulling.

*Source:* Data from Ingham, Levinger, Graves, & Peckham, 1974. Photo by Alan G. Ingham.



alone or along with the group. People who were told about this experiment guessed the participants would shout louder when with others, because they would be less inhibited (Harkins, 1981). The actual result? Social loafing: When the participants believed five others were also either shouting or clapping, they produced one-third less noise than when they thought themselves alone. Social loafing occurred even when the participants were high school cheerleaders who believed themselves to be cheering together rather than alone (Hardy & Latané, 1986).

Curiously, those who clapped both alone and in groups did not view themselves as loafing; they perceived themselves as clapping equally in both situations. This parallels what happens when students work on group projects for a shared grade. Williams reports that all agree loafing occurs—but no one admits to doing the loafing.

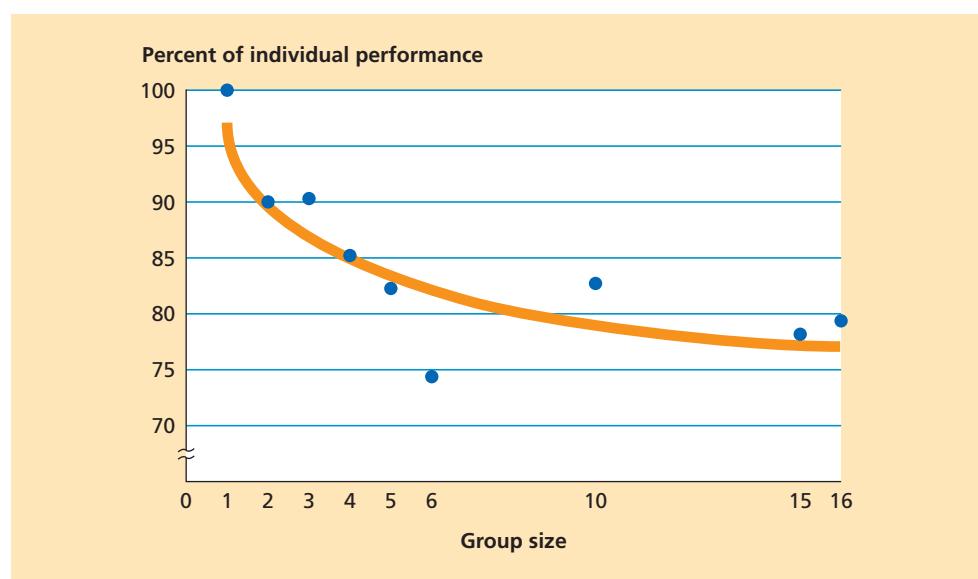
John Sweeney (1973), a political scientist interested in the policy implications of social loafing, observed the phenomenon in a cycling experiment. University of Texas students pumped exercise bicycles more energetically (as measured by electrical output) when they knew they were being individually monitored than when they thought their output was being pooled with that of other riders. In the group condition, people were tempted to **free-ride** on the group effort.

In this and 160 other studies (Karau & Williams, 1993; Figure 8.4), we see a twist on one of the psychological forces that makes for social facilitation: evaluation apprehension. In the social loafing experiments, individuals believed they were evaluated only when they acted alone. The group situation (rope pulling, shouting, and so forth) *decreased* evaluation apprehension. When people are not accountable and cannot evaluate their own efforts, responsibility is diffused across all group members (Harkins & Jackson, 1985; Kerr & Bruun, 1981). By contrast, the social facilitation experiments *increased* exposure to evaluation. When made the center of attention, people self-consciously monitor their behavior (Mullen & Baumeister, 1987). So, when being observed *increases* evaluation concerns, social facilitation occurs; when being lost in a crowd *decreases* evaluation concerns, social loafing occurs (Figure 8.5).

To motivate group members, one strategy is to make individual performance identifiable. Some football coaches do this by filming and evaluating each player individually. Whether in a group or not, people exert more effort when their outputs are individually identifiable: University swim team members swim faster in intrasquad relay races when someone monitors and announces their individual times (Williams & others, 1989).

### free riders

People who benefit from the group but give little in return.

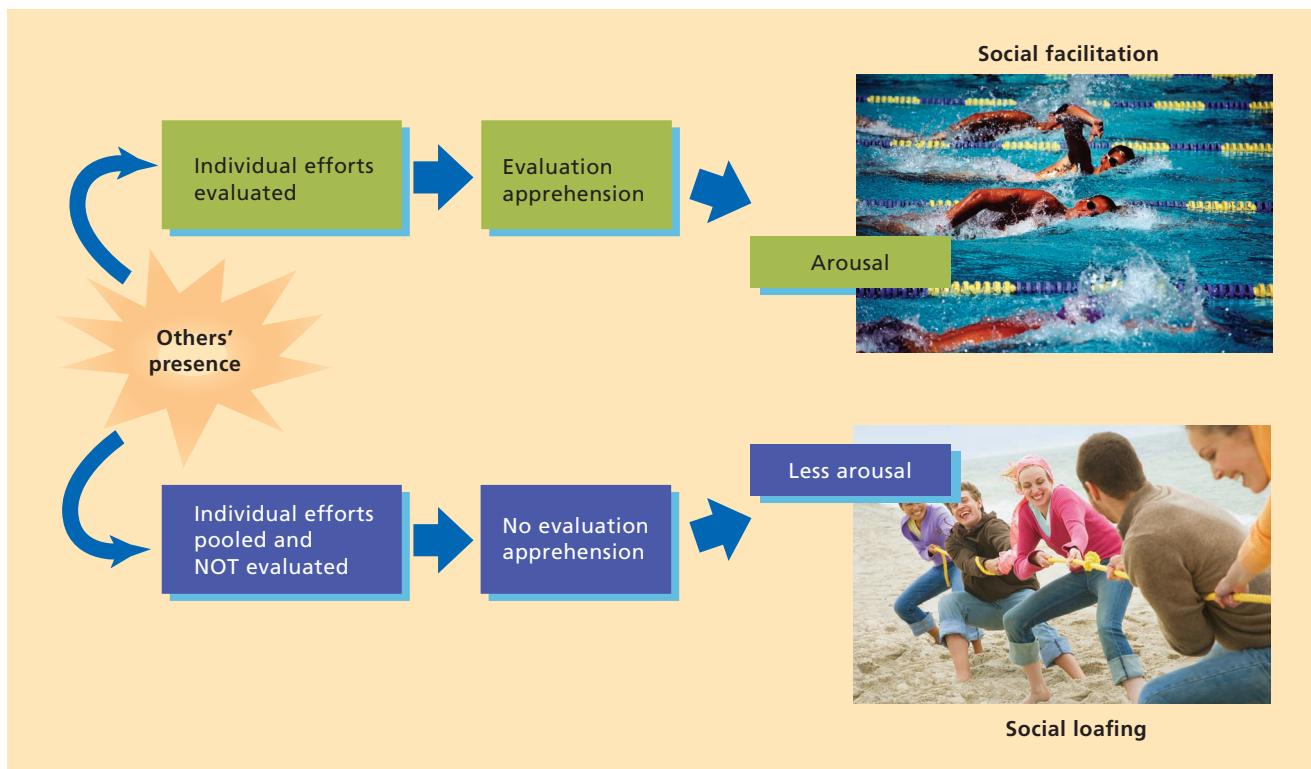


**FIGURE :: 8.4**

### Effort Decreases as Group Size Increases

A statistical digest of 49 studies, involving more than 4000 participants, revealed that effort decreases (loafing increases) as the size of the group increases. Each dot represents the aggregate data from one of these studies.

*Source:* From K. D. Williams, J. M. Jackson, & S. J. Karau, in *Social Dilemmas: Perspectives on Individuals and Groups*, edited by D. A. Schroeder. Copyright © 1992 by Praeger Publishers. Reprinted with permission of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., Westport, CT.



**FIGURE :: 8.5**  
**Social Facilitation or Social Loafing?**

When individuals cannot be evaluated or held accountable, loafing becomes more likely. An individual swimmer is evaluated on her ability to win the race. In tug-of-war, no single person on the team is held accountable, so any one member might relax or loaf.

## Social Loafing in Everyday Life

How widespread is social loafing? In the laboratory, the phenomenon occurs not only among people who are pulling ropes, cycling, shouting, and clapping but also among those who are pumping water or air, evaluating poems or editorials, producing ideas, typing, and detecting signals. Do these consistent results generalize to everyday worker productivity?

In one small experiment, assembly-line workers produced 16 percent more product when their individual output was identified, even though they knew their pay would not be affected (Faulkner & Williams, 1996). And consider: A key job in a pickle factory once was picking the right size dill pickle halves off the conveyor belt and stuffing them into jars. Unfortunately, workers were tempted to stuff any size pickle in, because their output was not identifiable (the jars went into a common hopper before reaching the quality-control section). Williams, Harkins, and Latané (1981) note that research on social loafing suggests “making individual production identifiable, and raises the question: ‘How many pickles could a pickle packer pack if pickle packers were only paid for properly packed pickles?’”

Researchers have also found evidence of social loafing in varied cultures, particularly by assessing agricultural output in formerly communist countries. On their collective farms under communism, Russian peasants worked one field one day, another field the next, with little direct responsibility for any given plot. For their own use, they were given small private plots. One analysis found that the private plots occupied 1 percent of the agricultural land, yet produced 27 percent

of the Soviet farm output (H. Smith, 1976). In communist Hungary, private plots accounted for only 13 percent of the farmland but produced one-third of the output (Spivak, 1979). When China began allowing farmers to sell food grown in excess of that owed to the state, food production jumped 8 percent per year—2.5 times the annual increase in the preceding 26 years (Church, 1986). In an effort to tie rewards to productive effort, today's Russia is "decollectivizing" many of its farms (Kramer, 2008).

What about collectivist cultures under noncommunist regimes? Latané and co-researchers (Gabrenya & others, 1985) repeated their sound-production experiments in Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, India, and Malaysia. Their findings? Social loafing was evident in all those countries, too. Seventeen later studies in Asia reveal that people in collectivist cultures do, however, exhibit less social loafing than do people in individualist cultures (Karau & Williams, 1993; Kugihara, 1999). As we noted in Chapter 2, loyalty to family and work groups runs strong in collectivist cultures. Likewise, women (as Chapter 5 explained) tend to be less individualistic than men—and to exhibit less social loafing.

In North America, workers who do not pay dues or volunteer time to their unions or professional associations nevertheless are usually happy to accept the benefits those organizations provide. So, too, are public television viewers who don't respond to their station's fund drives. This hints at another possible explanation of social loafing. When rewards are divided equally, regardless of how much one contributes to the group, any individual gets more reward per unit of effort by free-riding on the group. So people may be motivated to slack off when their efforts are not individually monitored and rewarded. Situations that welcome free riders can therefore be, in the words of one commune member, a "paradise for parasites."

But surely collective effort does not always lead to slacking off. Sometimes the goal is so compelling and maximum output from everyone is so essential that team spirit maintains or intensifies effort. In an Olympic crew race, will the individual rowers in an eight-person crew pull their oars with less effort than those in a one- or two-person crew?

The evidence assures us they will not. People in groups loaf less when the task is *challenging, appealing, or involving* (Karau & Williams, 1993; Tan & Tan, 2008). On challenging tasks, people may perceive their efforts as indispensable (Harkins & Petty, 1982; Kerr, 1983; Kerr & others, 2007). When people see others in their group as unreliable or as unable to contribute much, they work harder (Plaks & Higgins, 2000; Williams & Karau, 1991). But, in many situations, so do less capable individuals as they strive to keep up with others' greater productivity (Weber & Hertel, 2007). Adding incentives or challenging a group to strive for certain standards also promotes collective effort (Harkins & Szymanski, 1989; Shepperd & Wright, 1989). Group members will work hard when convinced that high effort will bring rewards (Shepperd & Taylor, 1999).

Groups also loaf less when their members are *friends* or they feel identified with or indispensable to their group (Davis & Greenlees, 1992; Gockel & others, 2008; Karau & Williams, 1997; Worchsel & others, 1998). Even just expecting to interact with someone again serves to increase effort on team projects (Groenenboom & others, 2001). Collaborate on a class project with others whom you will be seeing often and you will probably feel more motivated than you would if you never expected to see them again. Cohesiveness intensifies effort.

These findings parallel those from studies of everyday work groups. When groups are given challenging objectives, when they are rewarded for group success,



Teamwork at the Charles River regatta in Boston. Social loafing occurs when people work in groups but without individual accountability—unless the task is challenging, appealing, or involving and the group members are friends.

and when there is a spirit of commitment to the “team,” group members work hard (Hackman, 1986). Keeping work groups small can also help members believe their contributions are indispensable (Comer, 1995). Although social loafing is common when group members work without individual accountability, many hands need not always make light work.

## SUMMING UP: Social Loafing: Do Individuals Exert Less Effort in a Group?

- Social facilitation researchers study people’s performance on tasks where they can be evaluated individually. However, in many work situations, people pool their efforts and work toward a common goal without individual accountability.
- Group members often work less hard when performing such “additive tasks.” This finding parallels everyday situations in which diffused responsibility tempts individual group members to *free-ride* on the group’s effort.
- People may, however, put forth even more effort in a group when the goal is important, rewards are significant, and team spirit exists.

## DEINDIVIDUATION: WHEN DO PEOPLE LOSE THEIR SENSE OF SELF IN GROUPS?

Define “deindividuation” and identify circumstances that trigger it.

In April 2003, in the wake of American troops entering Iraq’s cities, looters—“liberated” from the scrutiny of Saddam Hussein’s police—ran rampant. Hospitals lost beds. The National Library lost tens of thousands of old manuscripts and lay in smoldering ruins. Universities lost computers, chairs, even lightbulbs. The National Museum in Baghdad lost 15,000 stolen objects—most of what had not previously been removed to safekeeping (Burns, 2003a, 2003b; Lawler, 2003c; Polk & Schuster, 2005). “Not since the Spanish conquistadors ravaged the Aztec and Inca cultures has so much been lost so quickly,” reported *Science* (Lawler, 2003a). “They came in mobs: A group of 50 would come, then would go, and another would come,” explained one university dean (Lawler, 2003b).

Such reports—and those of the 2011 arson and looting that occurred in London and other English cities—had the rest of the world wondering: What happened to the looters’ sense of morality? Why did such behavior erupt? And why was it not anticipated?

Their behavior even left many of the rioters later wondering what possessed them. In court, some of the arrested rioters seemed bewildered by their behavior (Smith, 2011). The mother of one of them, a recent university graduate, explained that her daughter had been sobbing in her bedroom since her arrest over a stolen television. “She doesn’t even know why she took it. She doesn’t need a telly.” An engineering student, arrested after looting a supermarket while he was walking home, was said by his lawyer to having “got caught up in the moment” and was now “incredibly ashamed” (Somaiya, 2011).

## Doing Together What We Would Not Do Alone

Social facilitation experiments show that groups can arouse people, and social loafing experiments show that groups can diffuse responsibility. When arousal and diffused responsibility combine, and normal inhibitions diminish, the results may be startling. People may commit acts that range from a mild lessening of restraint (throwing food in the dining hall, snarling at a referee, screaming during a rock concert) to impulsive self-gratification (group vandalism, orgies, thefts) to destructive social explosions (police brutality, riots, lynchings).

These unrestrained behaviors have something in common: They are somehow provoked by the power of a group. Groups can generate a sense of excitement, of being caught up in something bigger than one's self. It is harder to imagine a single rock fan screaming deliriously at a private rock concert, or a single police officer beating a defenseless offender or suspect. It's in group situations that people are more likely to abandon normal restraints, to forget their individual identity, to become responsive to group or crowd norms—in a word, to become what Leon Festinger, Albert Pepitone, and Theodore Newcomb (1952) labeled **deindividuated**. What circumstances elicit this psychological state?

### GROUP SIZE

A group has the power not only to arouse its members but also to render them unidentifiable. The snarling crowd hides the snarling basketball fan. A lynch mob enables its members to believe they will not be prosecuted; they perceive the action as the *group's*. Looters, made faceless by the mob, are freed to loot. In an analysis of 21 instances in which crowds were present as someone threatened to jump from a building or a bridge, Leon Mann (1981) found that when the crowd was small and exposed by daylight, people usually did not try to bait the person with cries of "Jump!" But when a large crowd or the cover of night gave people anonymity, the crowd usually did bait and jeer.

Brian Mullen (1986) reported a similar effect associated with lynch mobs: The bigger the mob, the more its members lose self-awareness and become willing to commit atrocities, such as burning, lacerating, or dismembering the victim.

In each of these examples, from sports crowds to lynch mobs, evaluation apprehension plummets. People's attention is focused on the situation, not on themselves. And because "everyone is doing it," all can attribute their behavior to the situation rather than to their own choices.

### ANONYMITY

How can we be sure that the effect of crowds means greater anonymity? We can't. But we can experiment with anonymity to see if it actually lessens inhibitions. Philip Zimbardo (1970, 2002) got the idea for such an experiment from his undergraduate students, who questioned how good boys in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* could so suddenly become monsters after painting their faces. To experiment with such anonymity, he dressed New York University women in identical white coats and hoods, rather like Ku Klux Klan members (Figure 8.6). Asked to deliver electric shocks to a woman, they pressed the shock button twice as long as did women who were unconcealed and wearing large name tags. Even dimmed lighting or wearing



Apparently acting without their normal conscience, people looted Iraqi institutions after the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime.

### deindividuation

Loss of self-awareness and evaluation apprehension; occurs in group situations that foster responsiveness to group norms, good or bad.

**FIGURE :: 8.6**

In Philip Zimbardo's deindividuation research, anonymous women delivered more shock to helpless victims than did identifiable women.



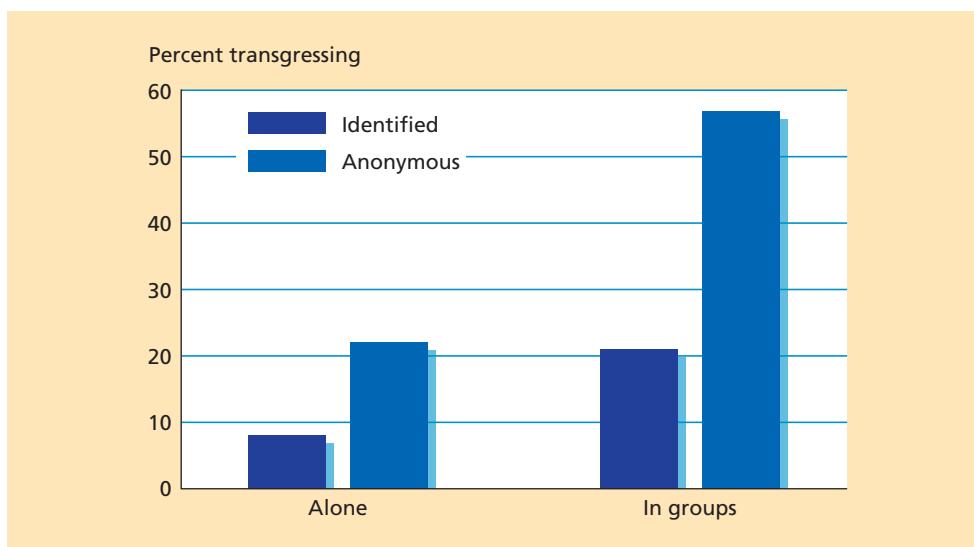
sunglasses increases people's perceived anonymity, and thus their willingness to cheat or behave selfishly (Zhong & others, 2010).

The Internet offers similar anonymity. Millions of those who were aghast at the looting by the Baghdad mobs were on those very days anonymously pirating music tracks using file-sharing software. With so many doing it, and with so little concern about being caught, downloading someone's copyright-protected property and then offloading it to an MP3 player just didn't seem terribly immoral. When compared with face-to-face conversations, the anonymity offered by chat rooms, newsgroups, and listservs also has been observed to foster higher levels of hostile, uninhibited "flaming" behavior (Douglas & McGarty, 2001). Internet bullies who would never say someone's face say, "Get a life, you phony," will hide behind their anonymity. Facebook, to its credit, requires people to use their real names, which constrains the bullying, hate-filled, and inflammatory comments.

On several occasions, anonymous online bystanders have egged on people threatening suicide, sometimes with live video feeding the scene to scores of people. Online communities "are like the crowd outside the building with the guy on the ledge," noted one analyst of technology's social effects (quoted by Stelter, 2008). Sometimes a caring person tried to talk the person down, while others, in effect, chanted, "Jump, jump." "The anonymous nature of these communities only emboldens the meanness or callousness of the people on these sites."

Testing deindividuation on the streets, Patricia Ellison, John Govern, and their colleagues (1995) had a confederate driver stop at a red light and wait for 12 seconds whenever she was followed by a convertible or a 4  $\geq$  4 vehicle. While enduring the wait, she recorded any horn-honking (a mild aggressive act) by the car behind. Compared with drivers of convertibles and 4  $\geq$  4s with the car tops down, those who were relatively anonymous (with the tops up) honked one-third sooner, twice as often, and for nearly twice as long. Anonymity feeds incivility.

A research team led by Ed Diener (1976) cleverly demonstrated the effect both of being in a group and of being physically anonymous. At Halloween, they observed 1,352 Seattle children trick-or-treating. As the children, either alone or in groups, approached 1 of 27 homes scattered throughout the city, an experimenter greeted them warmly, invited them to "take *one* of the candies," and then left the candy unattended. Hidden observers noted that children in groups were more than twice as likely to take extra candy as solo children. Also, children who had been asked their names and where they lived were less than half as likely to transgress as those who were left anonymous. As Figure 8.7 shows, the transgression rate varied dramatically with the situation. When they were deindividuated both by group immersion and by anonymity, most children stole extra candy.

**FIGURE 8.7**

Children were more likely to transgress by taking extra Halloween candy when in a group, when anonymous, and, especially, when deindividuated by the combination of group immersion and anonymity.

*Source:* Data from Diener & others (1976).

Those studies make me wonder about the effect of wearing uniforms. Preparing for battle, warriors in some tribal cultures (like some rabid sports fans) depersonalize themselves with body and face paints or special masks. After the battle, some cultures kill, torture, or mutilate any remaining enemies; other cultures take prisoners alive. Robert Watson (1973) scrutinized anthropological files and discovered this: The cultures with depersonalized warriors were also the cultures that brutalized their enemies. In Northern Ireland, 206 of 500 violent attacks studied by Andrew Silke (2003) were conducted by attackers who wore masks, hoods, or other face disguises. Compared with undisguised attackers, these anonymous attackers inflicted more serious injuries, attacked more people, and committed more vandalism.

Does becoming physically anonymous *always* unleash our worst impulses? Fortunately, no. In all these situations, people were responding to clear antisocial cues. Robert Johnson and Leslie Downing (1979) point out that the Klan-like outfits worn by Zimbardo's participants may have been stimulus cues for hostility. In an experiment at the University of Georgia, women put on nurses' uniforms before deciding how much shock someone should receive. When those wearing the nurses' uniforms were made anonymous, they became *less* aggressive in administering shocks than when their names and personal identities were stressed. From their analysis of 60 deindividuation studies, Tom Postmes and Russell Spears (1998; Reicher & others, 1995) concluded that being anonymous makes one less self-conscious, more group-conscious, and more responsive to cues present in the situation, whether negative (Klan uniforms) or positive (nurses' uniforms).

### AROUSING AND DISTRACTING ACTIVITIES

Aggressive outbursts by large groups are often preceded by minor actions that arouse and divert people's attention. Group shouting, chanting, clapping, or dancing serve both to hype people up and to reduce self-consciousness.

Ed Diener's experiments (1976, 1979) have shown that activities such as throwing rocks and group singing can set the stage for more disinhibited behavior. There is a self-reinforcing pleasure in acting impulsively while observing others doing likewise. When we see others act as we are acting, we think they feel as we do, which reinforces our own feelings (Orive, 1984). Moreover, impulsive group action absorbs our attention. When we yell at the referee, we are not thinking about our values; we are reacting to the immediate situation. Later, when we stop to think about what we have done or said, we sometimes feel chagrined. Sometimes. At other times we seek

"ATTENDING A SERVICE IN THE GOTHIC CATHEDRAL, WE HAVE THE SENSATION OF BEING ENCLOSED AND STEEPED IN AN INTEGRAL UNIVERSE, AND OF LOSING A PRICKLY SENSE OF SELF IN THE COMMUNITY OF WORSHIPERS."

—YI-FU TUAN, 1982

### **self-awareness**

A self-conscious state in which attention focuses on oneself. It makes people more sensitive to their own attitudes and dispositions.

deindividuating group experiences—dances, worship experiences, team sports—where we can enjoy intense positive feelings and closeness to others.

### **Diminished Self-Awareness**

Group experiences that diminish self-consciousness tend to disconnect behavior from attitudes. Research by Ed Diener (1980) and Steven Prentice-Dunn and Ronald Rogers (1980, 1989) revealed that unself-conscious, deindividuated people are less restrained, less self-regulated, more likely to act without thinking about their own values, and more responsive to the situation. Those findings complement and reinforce the experiments on **self-awareness**.

Self-awareness is the opposite of deindividuation. Those made self-aware, by acting in front of a mirror or a TV camera, exhibit *increased* self-control, and their actions more clearly reflect their attitudes. In front of a mirror, people taste-testing cream cheese varieties eat less of the high-fat variety (Sentryz & Bushman, 1998).

People made self-aware are also less likely to cheat (Beaman & others, 1979; Diener & Wallbom, 1976). So are those who generally have a strong sense of themselves as distinct and independent (Nadler & others, 1982). In Japan, where (mirror or no mirror) people more often imagine how they might look to others, people are no more likely to cheat when not in front of a mirror (Heine & others, 2008). The principle: People who are self-conscious, or who are temporarily made so, exhibit greater consistency between their words outside a situation and their deeds in it.

We can apply those findings to many situations in everyday life. Circumstances that decrease self-awareness, as alcohol consumption does, increase deindividuation (Hull & others, 1983). Deindividuation decreases in circumstances that increase self-awareness: mirrors and cameras, small towns, bright lights, large name tags, undistracted quiet, individual clothes and houses (Ickes & others, 1978). When a teenager leaves for a party, a parent's parting advice could well be "Have fun, and remember who you are." In other words, enjoy being with the group, but be self-aware; maintain your personal identity; be wary of deindividuation.

## **SUMMING UP: Deindividuation: When Do People Lose Their Sense of Self in Groups?**

- When high levels of social arousal combine with diffused responsibility, people may abandon their normal restraints and lose their sense of individuality.
- Such *deindividuation* is especially likely when people are in a large group, are physically anonymous, and are aroused and distracted.
- The resulting diminished *self-awareness* and self-restraint tend to increase people's responsiveness to the immediate situation, be it negative or positive. Deindividuation is less likely when self-awareness is high.

## **GROUP POLARIZATION: DO GROUPS INTENSIFY OUR OPINIONS?**

Describe and explain how interaction with like-minded people tends to amplify preexisting attitudes.

Many conflicts grow as people on both sides talk mostly with like-minded others. Which effect—good or bad—does group interaction more often have? Police brutality and mob violence demonstrate its destructive potential. Yet support-group

leaders, management consultants, and educational theorists proclaim group interaction's benefits, and social and religious movements urge their members to strengthen their identities by fellowship with like-minded others.

Studies of people in small groups have produced a principle that helps explain both bad and good outcomes: Group discussion often strengthens members' initial inclinations. The unfolding of this research on **group polarization** illustrates the process of inquiry—how an interesting discovery often leads researchers to hasty and erroneous conclusions, which ultimately are replaced with more accurate conclusions. This is a scientific mystery I can discuss firsthand, having been one of the detectives.

### group polarization

Group-produced enhancement of members' preexisting tendencies; a strengthening of the members' average tendency, not a split within the group.

## The Case of the "Risky Shift"

More than 300 studies began with a surprising finding by James Stoner (1961), then an MIT graduate student. For his master's thesis in management, Stoner tested the commonly held belief that groups are more cautious than individuals. He posed decision dilemmas in which the participant's task was to advise imagined characters how much risk to take. Put yourself in the participant's shoes: What advice would you give the character in this situation?<sup>1</sup>

Helen is a writer who is said to have considerable creative talent but who so far has been earning a comfortable living by writing cheap westerns. Recently she has come up with an idea for a potentially significant novel. If it could be written and accepted, it might have considerable literary impact and be a big boost to her career. On the other hand, if she cannot work out her idea or if the novel is a flop, she will have expended considerable time and energy without remuneration.

Imagine that you are advising Helen. Please check the *lowest* probability that you would consider acceptable for Helen to attempt to write the novel.

Helen should attempt to write the novel if the chances that the novel will be a success are at least

- 1 in 10
- 2 in 10
- 3 in 10
- 4 in 10
- 5 in 10
- 6 in 10
- 7 in 10
- 8 in 10
- 9 in 10

10 in 10 (Place a check here if you think Helen should attempt the novel only if it is certain that the novel will be a success.)

After making your decision, guess what this book's average reader would advise.

Having marked their advice on a dozen items, five or so individuals would then discuss and reach agreement on each item. How do you think the group decisions compared with the average decision before the discussions? Would the groups be likely to take greater risks, be more cautious, or stay the same?

To everyone's amazement, the group decisions were usually riskier. This "risky shift phenomenon" set off a wave of group risk-taking studies. These revealed that risky shift occurs not only when a group decides by consensus; after a brief discussion, individuals, too, will alter their decisions. What is more, researchers successfully repeated Stoner's finding with people of varying ages and occupations in a dozen nations.

During discussion, opinions converged. Curiously, however, the point toward which they converged was usually a lower (riskier) number than their initial average. Here was a delightful puzzle. The small risky shift effect was reliable, unexpected, and without any immediately obvious explanation. What group influences produce such an effect? And how widespread is it? Do discussions in juries,

<sup>1</sup> This item, constructed for my own research, illustrates the sort of decision dilemma posed by Stoner.

business committees, and military organizations also promote risk taking? Does this explain why teenage reckless driving, as measured by death rates, nearly doubles when a 16- or 17-year-old driver has two teenage passengers rather than none (Chen & others, 2000)? Does it explain stock bubbles, as people discuss why stocks are rising, thus creating an informational cascade that drives stocks even higher (Sunstein, 2009)?

After several years of study, we discovered that the risky shift was not universal. We could write decision dilemmas on which people became more *cautious* after discussion. One of these featured “Roger,” a young married man with two school-age children and a secure but low-paying job. Roger can afford life’s necessities but few of its luxuries. He hears that the stock of a relatively unknown company may soon triple in value if its new product is favorably received or decline considerably if it does not sell. Roger has no savings. To invest in the company, he is considering selling his life insurance policy.

Can you see a general principle that predicts both the tendency to give riskier advice after discussing Helen’s situation and more cautious advice after discussing Roger’s? If you are like most people, you would advise Helen to take a greater risk than Roger, even before talking with others. It turns out there is a strong tendency for discussion to accentuate these initial leanings; groups discussing the “Roger” dilemma became more risk-averse than they were before discussion.

## Do Groups Intensify Opinions?

Realizing that this group phenomenon was not a consistent shift toward increased risk, we reconceived the phenomenon as a tendency for group discussion to *enhance* group members’ initial leanings. This idea led investigators to propose what French researchers Serge Moscovici and Marisa Zavalloni (1969) called group polarization: *Discussion typically strengthens the average inclination of group members.*

### GROUP POLARIZATION EXPERIMENTS

This new view of the group-induced changes prompted experimenters to have people discuss attitude statements that most of them favored, or that most of them opposed. Would talking in groups enhance their shared initial inclinations? In groups, would risk takers take bigger risks, bigots become more hostile, and givers become more generous? That’s what the group polarization hypothesis predicts (Figure 8.8).

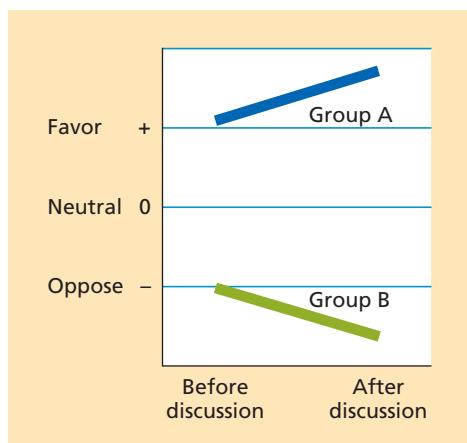
Dozens of studies confirm group polarization.

- Moscovici and Zavalloni (1969) observed that discussion enhanced French students’ initially positive attitude toward their president and negative attitude toward Americans.
- Mititoshi Isozaki (1984) found that Japanese university students gave more pronounced judgments of “guilty” after discussing a traffic case. When jury members are inclined to award damages, the group award similarly tends to exceed that preferred by the median jury member (Sunstein, 2007a).
- Markus Brauer and co-workers (2001) found that French students’ dislike for certain other people was exacerbated after discussing their shared negative impressions.

**FIGURE :: 8.8**

### Group Polarization

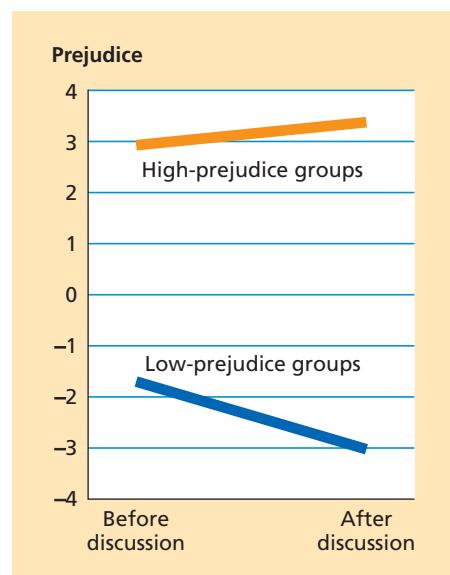
The group polarization hypothesis predicts that discussion will strengthen an attitude shared by group members.



Another research strategy has been to pick issues on which opinions are divided and then isolate people who hold the same view. Does discussion with like-minded people strengthen shared views? Does it magnify the attitude gap that separates the two sides?

George Bishop and I wondered. So we set up groups of relatively prejudiced and unprejudiced high school students and asked them to respond—before and after discussion—to issues involving racial attitudes, such as property rights versus open housing (Myers & Bishop, 1970). We found that the discussions among like-minded students did indeed increase the initial gap between the two groups (Figure 8.9).

Studies in Britain and Australia confirm that group discussion can magnify both negative and positive tendencies. When people share negative impressions of a group, such as an immigrant group, discussion supports their negativity and increases their willingness to discriminate (Smith & Postmes, 2011). And when people share concern about an injustice, discussion amplifies their moral concern (Thomas & McGarty, 2009).



**FIGURE 8.9**

Discussion increased polarization between homogeneous groups of high- and low-prejudice high school students. Talking over racial issues increased prejudice in a high-prejudice group and decreased it in a low-prejudice group.

*Source:* Data from Myers & Bishop (1970).

## GROUP POLARIZATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

In everyday life, people associate mostly with others whose attitudes are similar to their own. (See Chapter 11, or just look at your own circle of friends.) Does everyday group interaction with like-minded friends intensify shared attitudes? Do nerds become nerdier and jocks jockier?

It happens. The self-segregation of boys into all-male groups and of girls into all-female groups accentuates over time their initially modest gender differences, notes Eleanor Maccoby (2002). Boys with boys become gradually more competitive and action oriented in their play and fictional fare. Girls with girls become more relationally oriented.

On U.S. federal appellate court cases, “Republican-appointed judges tend to vote like Republicans and Democratic-appointed judges tend to vote like Democrats,” David Schkade and Cass Sunstein (2003) have observed. No surprise there. But such tendencies are accentuated when among like-minded judges. “A Republican appointee sitting with two other Republicans votes far more conservatively than when the same judge sits with at least one Democratic appointee. A Democratic appointee, meanwhile, shows the same tendency in the opposite ideological direction.”

**GROUP POLARIZATION IN SCHOOLS** Another real-life parallel to the laboratory phenomenon is what education researchers have called the “accentuation” effect: Over time, initial differences among groups of college students become accentuated. If the first-year students at college X are initially more intellectual than the students at college Y, that gap is likely to increase by the time they graduate. Likewise, compared with fraternity and sorority members, independents tend to have more liberal political attitudes, a difference that grows with time in college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Researchers believe this results partly from group members reinforcing shared inclinations.

**GROUP POLARIZATION IN COMMUNITIES** Polarization also occurs in communities, as people self-segregate. “Crunchy places . . . attract crunchy types and become crunchier,” observes David Brooks (2005). “Conservative places . . . attract

“WHAT EXPLAINS THE RISE OF FASCISM IN THE 1930s?  
THE EMERGENCE OF STUDENT RADICALISM IN THE 1960s? THE GROWTH OF ISLAMIC TERRORISM IN THE 1990s? . . . THE UNIFYING THEME IS SIMPLE: WHEN PEOPLE FIND THEMSELVES IN GROUPS OF LIKE-MINDED TYPES, THEY ARE ESPECIALLY LIKELY TO MOVE TO EXTREMES. [THIS] IS THE PHENOMENON OF GROUP POLARIZATION.”

—CASS SUNSTEIN, GOING TO EXTREMES, 2009



Animal gangs. The pack is more than the sum of the wolves.

conservatives and become more so.” Neighborhoods become echo chambers, with opinions ricocheting off kindred-spirited friends.

Show social psychologists a like-minded group that interacts mostly among themselves and they will show you a group that may become more extreme. One experiment assembled small groups of Coloradoans in liberal Boulder and conservative Colorado Springs. The discussions increased agreement within small groups about global warming, affirmative action, and same-sex unions. Nevertheless, those in Boulder generally converged further left and those in Colorado Springs further right (Schkade & others, 2007).

With communities serving as political echo chambers, the United States is increasingly polarized. Political clustering even appears in shopping options. One analysis found 89 percent of Whole Foods stores in counties that supported Obama in 2008 and 62 percent of Cracker Barrel restaurants in counties supporting his Republican opponent, John McCain (Stolberg, 2011). The end result has become a more divided country. The percentage of landslide counties—those voting 60 percent or more for one presidential candidate—nearly doubled between 1976 and 2008 (Bishop, 2008). The percentage of entering collegians declaring themselves as politically “middle of the road” dropped from 60 percent in 1983 to 46 in 2010, with corresponding increases in those declaring themselves on the right or the left (Pryor & others, 2005, 2010).

In laboratory studies, the competitive relationships and mistrust that individuals often display when playing games with one another often worsen when the players are groups (Winquist & Larson, 2004). During actual community conflicts, like-minded people associate increasingly with one another, amplifying their shared tendencies. Gang delinquency emerges from a process of mutual reinforcement within neighborhood gangs, whose members share attributes and hostilities (Cartwright, 1975). If “a second out-of-control 15-year-old moves in [on your block],” surmises David Lykken (1997), “the mischief they get into as a team is likely to be more than merely double what the first would do on his own. . . . A gang is more dangerous than the sum of its individual parts.” Indeed, “unsupervised peer groups” are “the strongest predictor” of a neighborhood’s crime victimization rate, report Bonita Veysey and Steven Messner (1999). Moreover, experimental interventions that take delinquent adolescents and group them with other delinquents actually—no surprise to any group polarization researcher—increase the rate of problem behavior (Dishion & others, 1999).

*In two trials, South African courts reduced sentences after learning how social psychological phenomena, including deindividuation and group polarization, led crowd members to commit murderous acts (Colman, 1991). What do you think: Should courts consider social psychological phenomena as possible extenuating circumstances?*

**GROUP POLARIZATION ON THE INTERNET** E-mail, blogs, and electronic chat rooms offer a potential new medium for like-minded people to find one another and for group interaction that increases social fragmentation and polarization. Facebook

offers tens of thousands of groups of kindred spirits discussing religion, politics, hobbies, cars, music, and you name it. The Internet's countless virtual groups enable peacemakers and neo-Nazis, geeks and goths, conspiracy schemers and cancer survivors to isolate themselves with like-minded others and find support for their shared concerns, interests, and suspicions (Gerstenfeld & others, 2003; McKenna & Bargh, 1998, 2000; Sunstein, 2001, 2009). Indeed, most of us read blogs that reinforce rather than challenge our views, and those blogs link mostly to like-minded blogs—connecting liberals with liberals, conservatives with conservatives—like having conversations with the bathroom mirror (Lazer & others, 2009). Will such discussions produce group polarization? Will socially networked birds of a feather find support for their shared beliefs, values, and suspicions? Will peacemakers become more pacifistic and militia members more terror prone? E-mail, Google, and chat rooms “make it much easier for small groups to rally like-minded people, crystallize diffuse hatreds, and mobilize lethal force,” observes Robert Wright (2003). As broadband spreads, Internet-spawned polarization will increase, he speculates. According to one University of Haifa analysis, terrorist websites—which grew from a dozen in 1997 to some 4,700 at the end of 2005—increased more than four times faster than the total number of websites (Ariza, 2006).

**GROUP POLARIZATION IN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS** From their analysis of terrorist organizations throughout the world, Clark McCauley and Mary Segal (1987; McCauley, 2002) note that terrorism does not erupt suddenly. Rather, it arises among people whose shared grievances bring them together and fans their fire. As they interact in isolation from moderating influences, they become progressively more extreme. The social amplifier brings the signal in more strongly. The result is violent acts that the individuals, apart from the group, would never have committed.

For example, the 9/11 terrorists were bred by a long process that engaged the polarizing effect of interaction among the like-minded. The process of becoming a



*“Before the Internet, I just assumed I was the only one, and kept more or less to myself.”*

© Erik Hilgerdt/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

## focus ON

### Group Polarization

Shakespeare portrayed the polarizing power of the like-minded group in this dialogue of Julius Caesar's followers:

**Antony:** Kind souls, what weep you when you but behold Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here. Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.

**First Citizen:** O piteous spectacle!

**Second Citizen:** O noble Caesar!

**Third Citizen:** O woeful day!

**Fourth Citizen:** O traitors, villains!

**First Citizen:** O most bloody sight!

**Second Citizen:** We will be revenged!

**All:** Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! Let not a traitor live!

Source: From *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare, Act III, Scene ii, lines 199–209.

terrorist, noted a National Research Council panel, isolates individuals from other belief systems, dehumanizes potential targets, and tolerates no dissent (Smelser & Mitchell, 2002). Group members come to categorize the world as “us” and “them” (Moghaddam, 2005; Qirko, 2004). Ariel Merari (2002), an investigator of Middle Eastern and Sri Lankan suicide terrorism, believes the key to creating a terrorist suicide is the group process. “To the best of my knowledge, there has not been a single case of suicide terrorism which was done on a personal whim.”

According to one analysis of terrorists who were members of the Salafi Jihad—an Islamic fundamentalist movement, including al Qaeda—70 percent joined while living as expatriates. After moving to foreign places in search of jobs or education, they became keenly mindful of their Muslim identity and often gravitated to mosques and moved in with other expatriate Muslims, who sometimes recruited them into cell groups that provided “mutual emotional and social support” and “development of a common identity” (Sageman, 2004).

Massacres, similarly, have been found to be group phenomena. The violence is enabled and escalated by the killers egging one another on, noted Robert Zajonc (2000), who knew violence as a survivor of a World War II Warsaw air raid that killed both his parents (Burnstein, 2009). It is difficult to influence someone once “in the pressure cooker of the terrorist group,” notes Jerrold Post (2005) after interviewing many accused terrorists. “In the long run, the most effective antiterrorist policy is one that inhibits potential recruits from joining in the first place.”

## Explaining Polarization

Why do groups adopt stances that are more exaggerated than that of their average individual member? Researchers hoped that solving the mystery of group polarization might provide some insights into group influence. Solving small puzzles sometimes provides clues for solving larger ones.

Among several proposed theories of group polarization, two have survived scientific scrutiny. One deals with the *arguments* presented during a discussion and is an example of what Chapter 6 called *informational influence* (influence that results from accepting evidence about reality). The other concerns how members of a group view themselves vis-à-vis the other members, an example of *normative influence* (influence based on a person’s desire to be accepted or admired by others).

### INFORMATIONAL INFLUENCE

According to the best-supported explanation, group discussion elicits a pooling of ideas, most of which favor the dominant viewpoint. Some discussed ideas are common knowledge to group members (Gigone & Hastie, 1993; Larson & others, 1994; Stasser, 1991). Other ideas may include persuasive arguments that some group members had not previously considered. When discussing Helen the writer, someone may say, “Helen should go for it, because she has little to lose. If her novel flops, she can always go back to writing cheap westerns.” Such statements often entangle information about the person’s *arguments* with cues concerning the person’s *position* on the issue. But when people hear relevant arguments without learning the specific stands other people assume, they still shift their positions (Burnstein & Vinokur, 1977; Hinsz & others, 1997). *Arguments*, in and of themselves, matter.

But there’s more to attitude change than merely hearing someone else’s arguments. *Active participation* in discussion produces more attitude change than does passive listening. Participants and observers hear the same ideas, but when participants express them in their own words, the verbal commitment magnifies the impact. The more group members repeat one another’s ideas, the more they rehearse and validate them (Brauer & others, 1995).

“IF YOU HAVE AN APPLE  
AND I HAVE AN APPLE AND  
WE EXCHANGE APPLES,  
THEN YOU AND I WILL STILL  
EACH HAVE ONE APPLE.  
BUT IF YOU HAVE AN IDEA  
AND I HAVE AN IDEA AND  
WE EXCHANGE THESE  
IDEAS, THEN EACH OF US  
WILL HAVE TWO IDEAS.”

—ATTRIBUTED TO GEORGE  
BERNARD SHAW (1856–1950)

This illustrates a point made in Chapter 7. People's minds are not just blank tablets for persuaders to write upon. With central route persuasion, what people think in response to a message is crucial. Indeed, just thinking about an issue for a couple of minutes can strengthen opinions (Tesser & others, 1995). (Perhaps you can recall your feelings becoming polarized as you merely ruminated about someone you disliked, or liked.) Even just *expecting* to discuss an issue with an equally expert person holding an opposing view can motivate people to marshal their arguments and thus to adopt a more extreme position (Fitzpatrick & Eagly, 1981).

## NORMATIVE INFLUENCE

A second explanation of polarization involves comparison with others. As Leon Festinger (1954) argued in his influential theory of **social comparison**, we humans want to evaluate our opinions and abilities by comparing our views with others'. We are most persuaded by people in our "reference groups"—groups we identify with (Abrams & others, 1990; Hogg & others, 1990). Moreover, wanting people to like us, we may express stronger opinions after discovering that others share our views.

When we ask people (as I asked you earlier) to predict how others would respond to items such as the "Helen" dilemma, they typically exhibit **pluralistic ignorance**: They don't realize how strongly others support the socially preferred tendency (in this case, writing the novel). A typical person will advise writing the novel even if its chance of success is only 4 in 10 but will estimate that most other people would require 5 or 6 in 10. (This finding is reminiscent of the self-serving bias: People tend to view themselves as better-than-average embodiments of socially desirable traits and attitudes.) When the discussion begins, most people discover they are not outshining the others as they had supposed. In fact, some others are ahead of them, having taken an even stronger position in favor of writing the novel. No longer restrained by a misperceived group norm, they are liberated to voice their preferences more strongly.

Perhaps you can recall a time when you and someone else wanted to go out with each other but each of you feared to make the first move, presuming the other probably did not have a reciprocal interest. Such pluralistic ignorance impedes the start-up of relationships (Vorauer & Ratner, 1996).

Or perhaps you can recall when you and others were guarded and reserved in a group, until someone broke the ice and said, "Well, to be perfectly honest, I think. . ." Soon you were all surprised to discover strong support for your shared views. Sometimes when a professor asks if anyone has any questions, no one will respond, leading each student to infer that he or she is the only one confused. All presume that fear of embarrassment explains their own silence but that everyone else's silence means they understand the material.

Dale Miller and Cathy McFarland (1987) bottled this familiar phenomenon in a laboratory experiment. They asked people to read an incomprehensible article and to seek help if they ran into "any really serious problems in understanding the paper." Although none of the individuals sought help, they presumed *other* people would not be similarly restrained by fear of embarrassment. Thus, they wrongly inferred that people who didn't seek help didn't need any. To overcome such pluralistic ignorance, someone must break the ice and enable others to reveal and reinforce their shared reactions.

Social comparison theory prompted experiments that exposed people to others' positions but not to their arguments. This is roughly the experience we have when reading the results of an opinion poll or of exit polling on election day. When people learn others' positions—without prior commitment and without discussion or sharing of arguments—will they adjust their responses to maintain a socially favorable position? As Figure 8.10 illustrates, they will. This comparison-based

### **social comparison**

Evaluating one's opinions and abilities by comparing oneself with others.

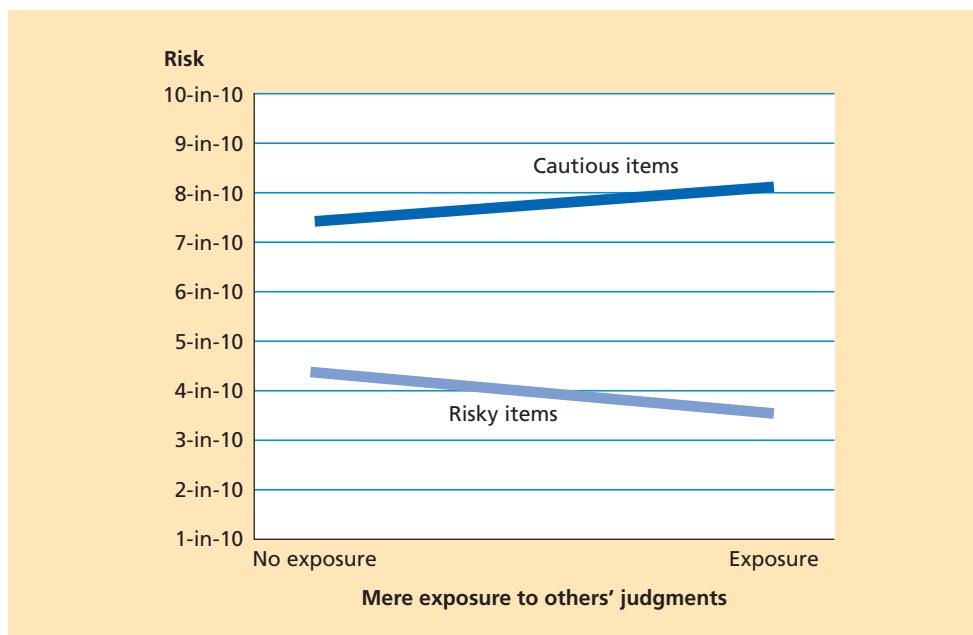
### **pluralistic ignorance**

A false impression of what most other people are thinking or feeling, or how they are responding.

**FIGURE :: 8.10**

On "risky" dilemma items (such as the case of Helen), mere exposure to others' judgments enhanced individuals' risk-prone tendencies. On "cautious" dilemma items (such as the case of Roger), exposure to others' judgments enhanced their cautiousness.

*Source:* Data from Myers (1978).



polarization is usually less than that produced by a lively discussion. Still, it's surprising that instead of simply conforming to the group average, people often go it one better.

Merely learning others' choices also contributes to the bandwagon effect that creates blockbuster songs, books, and movies. Sociologist Matthew Salganik and colleagues (2006) experimented with the phenomenon by engaging 14,341 Internet participants in listening to and, if they wished, downloading previously unknown songs. The researchers randomly assigned some participants to a condition that disclosed previous participants' download choices. Among those given that information, popular songs became more popular and unpopular songs became less popular.

Group polarization research illustrates the complexity of social-psychological inquiry. Much as we like our explanations of a phenomenon to be simple, one explanation seldom accounts for all the data. Because people are complex, more than one factor frequently influences an outcome. In group discussions, persuasive arguments predominate on issues that have a factual element ("Is she guilty of the crime?"). Social comparison sways responses on value-laden judgments ("How long a sentence should she serve?") (Kaplan, 1989). On the many issues that have both factual and value-laden aspects, the two factors work together. Discovering that others share one's feelings (social comparison) unleashes arguments (informational influence) supporting what everyone secretly favors.



An *Economist* cover about the 1987 stock market crash.  
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## SUMMING UP: Group Polarization: Do Groups Intensify Our Opinions?

- Potentially positive and negative results arise from group discussion. While trying to understand the curious finding that discussion increased risk taking, investigators discovered that discussion actually tends to strengthen whatever is the initially dominant point of view, whether risky or cautious.
- In everyday situations, too, group interaction tends to intensify opinions. This *group polarization*

phenomenon provided a window through which researchers could observe group influence.

- Experiments confirmed two group influences: informational and normative. The information gleaned from a discussion mostly favors the initially preferred alternative, thus reinforcing support for it.

## GROUPTHINK: DO GROUPS HINDER OR ASSIST GOOD DECISIONS?

Describe when and why group influences often hinder good decisions. Describe also when groups promote good decisions and how we can lead groups to make optimal decisions.

Do the social psychological phenomena we have been considering in these first eight chapters occur in sophisticated groups such as corporate boards or the president's cabinet? Is there likely to be self-justification? Self-serving bias? A cohesive "we feeling" promoting conformity and stifling dissent? Public commitment producing resistance to change? Group polarization? Social psychologist Irving Janis (1971, 1982) wondered whether such phenomena might help explain good and bad group decisions made by some twentieth-century American presidents and their advisers. To find out, he analyzed the decision-making procedures that led to several major fiascos:

- *Pearl Harbor.* In the weeks preceding the December 1941 Pearl Harbor attack that put the United States into World War II, military commanders in Hawaii received a steady stream of information about Japan's preparations for an attack on the United States somewhere in the Pacific. Then military intelligence lost radio contact with Japanese aircraft carriers, which had begun moving straight for Hawaii. Air reconnaissance could have spotted the carriers or at least provided a few minutes' warning. But complacent commanders decided against such precautions. The result: No alert was sounded until the attack on a virtually defenseless base was under way. The loss: 18 ships, 170 planes, and 2,400 lives.
- *The Bay of Pigs Invasion.* In 1961, President John Kennedy and his advisers tried to overthrow Fidel Castro by invading Cuba with 1,400 CIA-trained Cuban exiles. Nearly all the invaders were soon killed or captured, the United States was humiliated, and Cuba allied itself more closely with the former U.S.S.R. After learning the outcome, Kennedy wondered aloud, "How could we have been so stupid?"
- *The Vietnam War.* From 1964 to 1967, President Lyndon Johnson and his "Tuesday lunch group" of policy advisers escalated the war in Vietnam on the assumption that U.S. aerial bombardment, defoliation, and search-and-destroy missions would bring North Vietnam to the peace table with the appreciative support of the South Vietnamese populace. They continued the

escalation despite warnings from government intelligence experts and nearly all U.S. allies. The resulting disaster cost more than 58,000 American and 1 million Vietnamese lives, polarized Americans, drove the president from office, and created huge budget deficits that helped fuel inflation in the 1970s.

### groupthink

"The mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to override realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action."—Irving Janis (1971)

Janis believed those blunders were bred by the tendency of decision-making groups to suppress dissent in the interest of group harmony, a phenomenon he called **groupthink**. (See "The Inside Story: Irving Janis on Groupthink.") In work groups, team spirit is good for morale and boosts productivity (Mullen & Copper, 1994). But when making decisions, close-knit groups may pay a price. Janis believed that the soil from which groupthink sprouts includes

- an amiable, *cohesive* group.
- relative *isolation* of the group from dissenting viewpoints.
- a *directive leader* who signals what decision he or she favors.

When planning the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion, the newly elected President Kennedy and his advisers enjoyed a strong esprit de corps. Arguments critical of the plan were suppressed or excluded, and the president soon endorsed the invasion.

### Symptoms of Groupthink

From historical records and the memoirs of participants and observers, Janis identified eight groupthink symptoms. These symptoms are a collective form of dissonance reduction as group members try to maintain their positive group feeling when facing a threat (Turner & Pratkanis, 1994; Turner & others, 1992).

The first two groupthink symptoms lead group members to *overestimate their group's might and right*.

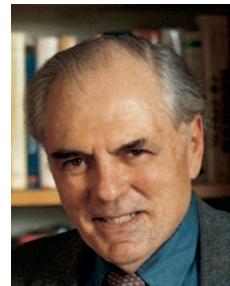
- *An illusion of invulnerability.* The groups Janis studied all developed an excessive optimism that blinded them to warnings of danger. Told that his forces had lost radio contact with the Japanese carriers, Admiral Kimmel, the chief naval officer at Pearl Harbor, joked that maybe the Japanese were about to round Honolulu's Diamond Head. They actually were, but Kimmel's laughing at the idea dismissed the very possibility of its being true.
- *Unquestioned belief in the group's morality.* Group members assume the inherent morality of their group and ignore ethical and moral issues. The Kennedy

## THE inside STORY

### Irving Janis on Groupthink

The idea of *groupthink* hit me while reading Arthur Schlesinger's account of how the Kennedy administration decided to invade the Bay of Pigs. At first, I was puzzled: How could bright, shrewd people like John F. Kennedy and his advisers be taken in by the CIA's stupid, patchwork plan? I began to wonder whether some kind of psychological contagion had interfered, such as social conformity or the concurrence-seeking that I had observed in cohesive small groups. Further study (initially aided by my daughter Charlotte's work on a high school term paper) convinced me that subtle group processes had hampered their carefully appraising the risks

and debating the issues. When I then analyzed other U.S. foreign policy fiascos and the Watergate cover-up, I found the same detrimental group processes at work.



Irving Janis (1918–1990)

group knew that adviser Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Senator J. William Fulbright had moral reservations about invading a small, neighboring country. But the group never entertained or discussed those moral qualms.

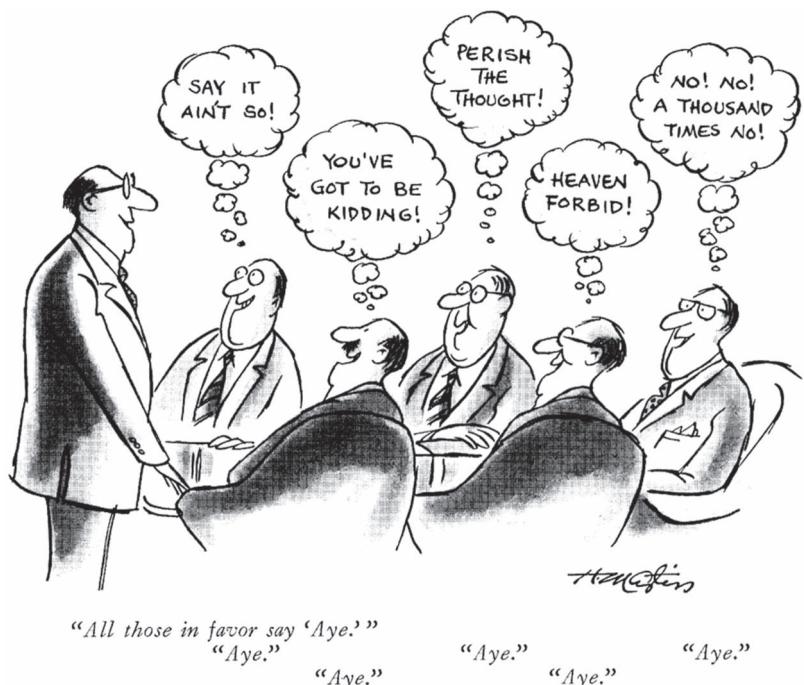
Group members also become *closed-minded*.

- *Rationalization*. The groups discount challenges by collectively justifying their decisions. President Johnson's Tuesday lunch group spent far more time rationalizing (explaining and justifying) than reflecting upon and rethinking prior decisions to escalate. Each initiative became an action to defend and justify.
- *Stereotyped view of opponent*. Participants in these groupthink tanks consider their enemies too evil to negotiate with or too weak and unintelligent to defend themselves against the planned initiative. The Kennedy group convinced itself that Castro's military was so weak and his popular support so shallow that a single brigade could easily overturn his regime.

Finally, the group suffers from pressures toward *uniformity*.

- *Conformity pressure*. Group members rebuffed those who raised doubts about the group's assumptions and plans, at times not by argument but by personal sarcasm. Once, when President Johnson's assistant Bill Moyers arrived at a meeting, the president derided him with, "Well, here comes Mr. Stop-the-Bombing." Faced with such ridicule, most people fall into line.
- *Self-censorship*. To avoid uncomfortable disagreements, members withheld or discounted their misgivings. In the months following the Bay of Pigs invasion, Arthur Schlesinger (1965, p. 255) reproached himself "for having kept so silent during those crucial discussions in the Cabinet Room, though my feelings of guilt were tempered by the knowledge that a course of objection would have accomplished little save to gain me a name as a nuisance."
- *Illusion of unanimity*. Self-censorship and pressure not to puncture the consensus create an illusion of unanimity. What is more, the apparent consensus confirms the group's decision. This appearance of consensus was evident in the Pearl Harbor, Bay of Pigs, and Vietnam fiascos and in other fiascos before and since. Albert Speer (1971), an adviser to Adolf Hitler, described the atmosphere around Hitler as one where pressure to conform suppressed all deviation. The absence of dissent created an illusion of unanimity:

In normal circumstances people who turn their backs on reality are soon set straight by the mockery and criticism of those around them, which makes them aware they have lost credibility. In the Third Reich there were no such correctives. . . . No external factors disturbed the uniformity of hundreds of unchanging faces, all mine. (p. 379)

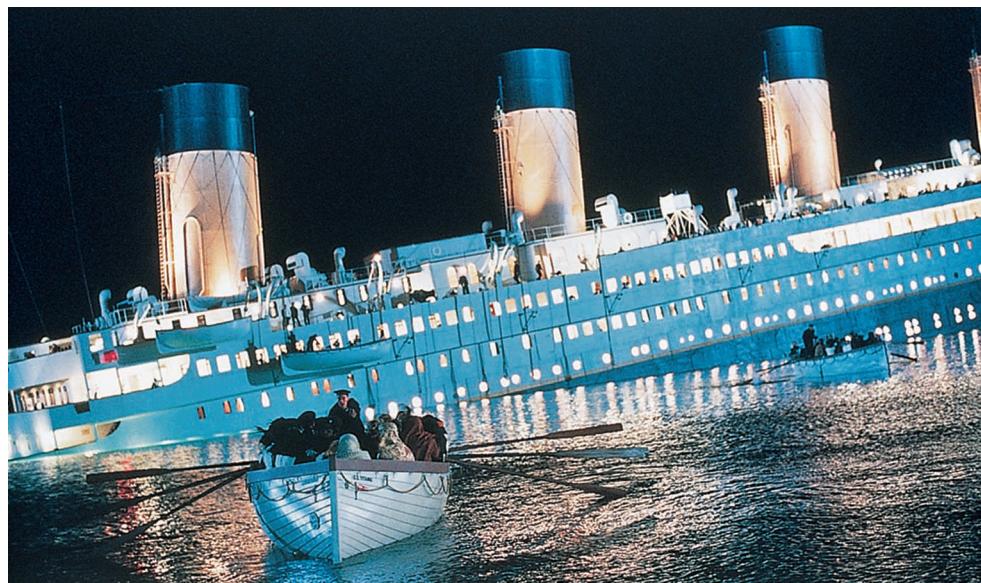


**Self-censorship contributes to an illusion of unanimity.**  
© Henry Martin/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

PEOPLE "ARE NEVER  
SO LIKELY TO SETTLE A  
QUESTION RIGHTLY AS  
WHEN THEY DISCUSS IT  
FREELY."

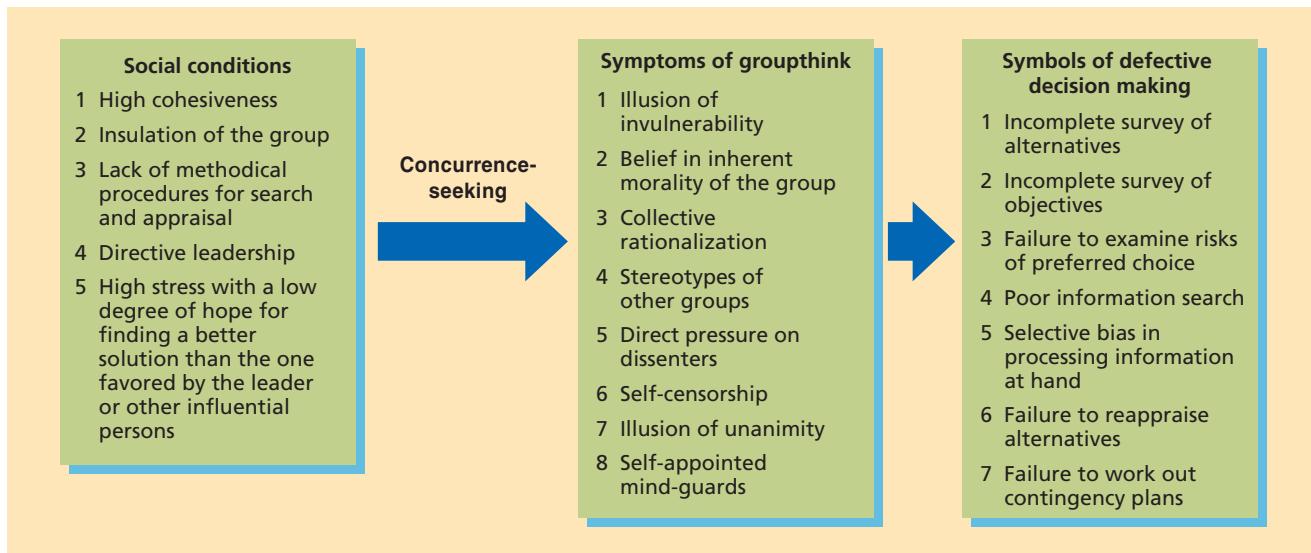
—JOHN STUART MILL, ON  
LIBERTY, 1859

Groupthink on a Titanic scale. Despite four messages of possible icebergs ahead, Captain Edward Smith—a directive and respected leader—kept his ship sailing at full speed into the night. There was an illusion of invulnerability (many believed the ship to be unsinkable). There was conformity pressure (crew mates chided the lookout for not being able to use his naked eye and dismissed his misgivings). And there was mindguarding (a *Titanic* telegraph operator failed to pass the last and most complete iceberg warning to Captain Smith).



- **Mindguards.** Some members protect the group from information that would call into question the effectiveness or morality of its decisions. Before the Bay of Pigs invasion, Robert Kennedy took Schlesinger aside and told him, “Don’t push it any further.” Secretary of State Dean Rusk withheld diplomatic and intelligence experts’ warnings against the invasion. They thus served as the president’s “mindguards,” protecting him from disagreeable facts rather than physical harm.

Groupthink symptoms can produce a failure to seek and discuss contrary information and alternative possibilities (Figure 8.11). When a leader promotes an idea and when a group insulates itself from dissenting views, groupthink may produce defective decisions (McCauley, 1989).



**FIGURE :: 8.11**  
**Theoretical Analysis of Groupthink**  
*Source: Janis & Mann (1977, p. 132).*

British psychologists Ben Newell and David Lagnado (2003) believe groupthink symptoms may have also contributed to the Iraq War. They and others contended that both Saddam Hussein and George W. Bush surrounded themselves with like-minded advisers and intimidated opposing voices into silence. Moreover, they each received filtered information that mostly supported their assumptions—Iraq's expressed assumption that the invading force could be resisted; and the United States' assumption that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, that its people would welcome invading soldiers as liberators, and that a short, peaceful occupation would soon lead to a thriving democracy.

## Critiquing Groupthink

Although Janis's ideas and observations have received enormous attention, some researchers are skeptical (Fuller & Aldag, 1998; t'Hart, 1998). The evidence was retrospective, so Janis could pick supporting cases. Follow-up experiments have, however, supported aspects of Janis's theory:

- Directive leadership is indeed associated with poorer decisions, because subordinates sometimes feel too weak or insecure to speak up (Granstrom & Stiwne, 1998; McCauley, 1998).
- Groups that make smart decisions have widely distributed conversation, with socially attuned members who take turns speaking (Woolley & others, 2010).
- Groups do prefer supporting over challenging information (Schulz-Hardt & others, 2000).
- When members look to a group for acceptance, approval, and social identity, they may suppress disagreeable thoughts (Hogg & Hains, 1998; Turner & Pratkanis, 1997).
- Groups with diverse perspectives outperform groups of like-minded experts (Nemeth & Ormiston, 2007; Page, 2007). Engaging people who think differently from you can make you feel uncomfortable. But compared with comfortably homogeneous groups, diverse groups tend to produce more ideas and greater creativity.
- In discussion, information that is shared by group members does tend to dominate and crowd out unshared information, meaning that groups often do not benefit from all that their members know (Sunstein & Hastie, 2008).

Yet friendships need not breed groupthink (Esser, 1998; Mullen & others, 1994). In a secure, highly cohesive group (say, a family), committed members will often care enough to voice disagreement (Packer, 2009). The norms of a cohesive group can favor either consensus, which can lead to groupthink, or critical analysis, which prevents it (Postmes & others, 2001). When academic colleagues in a close-knit department share their draft manuscripts with one another, they *want* critique: "Do what you can to save me from my own mistakes." In a free-spirited atmosphere, cohesion can enhance effective teamwork, too.

Moreover, when Philip Tetlock and colleagues (1992) looked at a broader sample of historical episodes, it became clear that even good group procedures sometimes yield ill-fated decisions. As President Carter and his advisers plotted their humiliating attempt to rescue American hostages in Iran in 1980, they welcomed different views and realistically considered the perils. Had it not been for a helicopter problem, the rescue might have succeeded. (Carter later reflected that had he sent in one more helicopter, he would have been reelected president.) To reword Mister Rogers, sometimes good groups do bad things.

## Preventing Groupthink

Flawed group dynamics help explain many failed decisions; sometimes too many cooks spoil the broth. However, given open leadership, a cohesive team spirit can improve decisions. Sometimes two or more heads are better than one.

"TRUTH SPRINGS FROM  
ARGUMENT AMONGST  
FRIENDS."

—PHILOSOPHER DAVID HUME,  
1711–1776

"ONE OF THE DANGERS IN THE WHITE HOUSE, BASED ON MY READING OF HISTORY, IS THAT YOU GET WRAPPED UP IN GROUP-THINK AND EVERYBODY AGREES WITH EVERYTHING AND THERE'S NO DISCUSSION AND THERE ARE NO DISSENTING VIEWS. SO I'M GOING TO BE WELCOMING A VIGOROUS DEBATE INSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE."

—BARACK OBAMA, AT A  
DECEMBER 1, 2008, PRESS  
CONFERENCE

"IRON SHARPENS IRON,  
AND ONE PERSON  
SHARPENS THE WITS OF  
ANOTHER."

—PROVERBS 27.17

In search of conditions that breed good decisions, Janis also analyzed two successful ventures: the Truman administration's formulation of the Marshall Plan for getting Europe back on its feet after World War II and the Kennedy administration's handling of the former U.S.S.R.'s attempts to install missile bases in Cuba in 1962. Janis's (1982) recommendations for preventing groupthink incorporate many of the effective group procedures used in both cases:

- Be impartial—do not endorse any position. Don't start group discussions by having people state their positions; doing so suppresses information sharing and degrades the quality of decisions (Mojzisch & Schulz-Hardt, 2010).
- Encourage critical evaluation; assign a "devil's advocate." Better yet, welcome the input of a genuine dissenter, which does even more to stimulate original thinking and to open a group to opposing views, report Charlan Nemeth and colleagues (2001a, 2001b).
- Occasionally subdivide the group, then reunite to air differences.
- Welcome critiques from outside experts and associates.
- Before implementing, call a "second-chance" meeting to air any lingering doubts.

When such steps are taken, group decisions may take longer to make, yet ultimately prove less defective and more effective.

## Group Problem Solving

Not every group decision is flawed by groupthink. Under some conditions, two or more heads really are better than one. In work settings such as operating rooms and executive boardrooms, team decisions surpass individual decisions when the discussion values each person's skills and knowledge and draws out their varied information (Mesmer-Magnus & DeChurch, 2009).

Patrick Laughlin and John Adamopoulos (1980; Laughlin, 1996; Laughlin & others, 2003) have shown the wisdom of groups with various intellectual tasks. Consider one of their analogy problems:

*Assertion is to disproved as action is to*

- a. hindered
- b. opposed
- c. illegal
- d. precipitate
- e. thwarted

Most college students miss this question when answering alone, but answer correctly (thwarted) after discussion. Moreover, Laughlin finds that if just two members of a six-person group are initially correct, two-thirds of the time they convince all the others. If only one person is correct, this "minority of one" almost three-fourths of the time fails to convince the group. And when given tricky logic problems, three, four, or five heads are better than two (Laughlin & others, 2006).

Dell Warnick and Glenn Sanders (1980) and Verlin Hinsz (1990) confirmed that several heads can be better than one when they studied the accuracy of eyewitness reports of a videotaped crime or job interview. Interacting groups of eyewitnesses gave accounts that were much more accurate than those provided by the average isolated individual. Two heads are better than one even for simple perceptual judgments made by similarly capable people (Bahrami & others, 2010; Ernst, 2010). When unsure of what they've seen, sports referees are smart to confer before making their call.

Several heads critiquing one another can also allow the group to avoid some forms of cognitive bias and produce some higher quality ideas (McGlynn & others, 1995; Wright & others, 1990). In science, the benefits of diverse minds collaborating has led to more and more "team science"—to an increasing proportion of scientific publication, especially highly cited publication, by multi-author teams (Cacioppo, 2007).

But contrary to the popular idea that face-to-face brainstorming generates more creative ideas than do the same people working alone, researchers agree it isn't so (Paulus & others, 1995, 2000, 2011; Stroebe & Diehl, 1994). And contrary to the popular idea that brainstorming is most productive when the brainstormers are admonished "not to criticize," encouraging people to debate ideas appears to stimulate ideas and to extend creative thinking beyond the brainstorming session (Nemeth & others, 2004).

People *feel* more productive when generating ideas in groups (partly because people disproportionately credit themselves for the ideas that come out). But time and again researchers have found that people working alone usually will generate *more* good ideas than will the same people in a group (Nijstad & others, 2006; Rietzschel & others, 2006). Large brainstorming groups are especially inefficient. In accord with social loafing theory, large groups cause some individuals to free-ride on others' efforts. In accord with normative influence theory, they cause others to feel apprehensive about voicing oddball ideas. And they cause "production blocking"—losing one's ideas while awaiting a turn to speak (Nijstad & Stroebe, 2006). As James Watson and Francis Crick demonstrated in discovering DNA, challenging two-person conversations can more effectively engage creative thinking. Watson later recalled that he and Crick benefited from *not* being the most brilliant people seeking to crack the genetic code. The most brilliant researcher "was so intelligent that she rarely sought advice" (quoted by Cialdini, 2005). If you are (and regard yourself as) the most gifted person, why seek others' input? Like Watson and Crick, psychologists Daniel Kahneman and the late Amos Tversky similarly collaborated in their exploration of intuition and its influence on economic decision making. (See Chapter 3 and also "The Inside Story: Behind a Nobel Prize" shown below.)

"IF YOU WANT TO GO  
QUICKLY, GO ALONE. IF  
YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO  
TOGETHER."

—AFRICAN PROVERB

## THE inside STORY

### Behind a Nobel Prize: Two Minds Are Better Than One

In the spring of 1969, Amos Tversky, my younger colleague at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and I met over lunch and shared our own recurrent errors of judgment. From there were born our studies of human intuition.

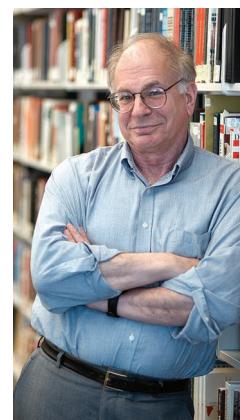
I had enjoyed collaboration before, but this was magical. Amos was very smart, and also very funny. We could spend hours of solid work in continuous mirth. His work was always characterized by confidence and by a crisp elegance, and it was a joy to find those characteristics now attached to my ideas as well. As we were writing our first paper, I was conscious of how much better it was than the more hesitant piece I would have written by myself.

All our ideas were jointly owned. We did almost all the work on our joint projects while physically together, including the drafting of questionnaires and papers. Our principle was to discuss every disagreement until it had been resolved to our mutual satisfaction.

Some of the greatest joys of our collaboration—and probably much of its success—came from our ability to

elaborate on each other's nascent thoughts: If I expressed a half-formed idea, I knew that Amos would be there to understand it, probably more clearly than I did, and that if it had merit, he would see it.

Amos and I shared the wonder of together owning a goose that could lay golden eggs—a joint mind that was better than our separate minds. We were a team, and we remained in that mode for well over a decade. The Nobel Prize was awarded for work that we produced during that period of intense collaboration.



Daniel Kahneman  
Princeton University,  
Nobel Laureate, 2002

However, Vincent Brown and Paul Paulus (2002) have identified three ways to enhance group brainstorming:

- *Combine group and solitary brainstorming.* Group brainstorming is most productive when it *precedes* solo brainstorming. With new categories primed by the group brainstorming, individuals' ideas can continue flowing without being impeded by the group context that allows only one person to speak at a time. Creative work teams also tend to be small and to alternate working alone, working in pairs, and meeting as a circle (Paulus & Coskun, 2012).
- *Have group members interact by writing.* Another way to take advantage of group priming, without being impeded by the one-at-a-time rule, is to have group members write and read, rather than speak and listen. Brown and Paulus describe this process of passing notes and adding ideas, which has everyone active at once, as "brainwriting" (see also Heslin, 2009; Kohn & others, 2011). Moreover, when leaders urge people to generate lots of ideas (rather than just good ideas), they generate both more ideas *and* more good ideas (Paulus & others, 2011). So whatever comes to mind, put it down.
- *Incorporate electronic brainstorming.* There is a potentially more efficient way to avoid the verbal traffic jams of traditional group brainstorming in larger groups: Let individuals produce and read ideas on networked computers.

So, when group members freely combine their creative ideas and varied insights, the frequent result is not groupthink but group problem solving. The wisdom of groups is evident in everyday life as well as in the laboratory:

- *Weather forecasting.* "Two forecasters will come up with a forecast that is more accurate than either would have come up with working alone," reports Joel Myers (1997), president of the largest private forecasting service. In 2010, scientists' predictions of the summer's minimum Arctic sea ice ranged from 2.5 million to 5.6 million square kilometers. The average—4.8 million—almost exactly matched the actual result (Wiltze, 2010).
- *Google.* Google has become a dominant search engine by harnessing what James Surowiecki (2004) calls *The Wisdom of Crowds*. Google interprets a link to Page X as a vote for Page X, and weights most heavily links from pages that are themselves highly ranked. Harnessing the democratic character of the Web, Google often takes less than one-tenth of a second to point you to what you want.
- *Game shows.* For a befuddled contestant on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, a valuable lifeline was to "ask the audience," which usually offered wisdom superior to the contestant's intuition. This is because the average judgment from a crowd of people typically errs less than does the average judgment by individuals.
- *The "crowd within."* Likewise, the average of different guesses from the same persons tends to surpass the person's individual guesses (Herzog & Hertwig, 2009). Edward Vul and Harold Pashler (2008) discovered this when asking people to guess the correct answers to factual questions such as "What percentage of the world's airports are in the United States?" Then the researchers asked their participants to make a second guess, either immediately or 3 weeks later. The result? "You can gain about 1/10th as much from asking yourself the same question twice as you can from getting a second opinion from someone else, but if you wait 3 weeks, the benefit of re-asking yourself the same question rises to 1/3 the value of a second opinion."
- *Prediction markets.* In U.S. presidential elections since 1988, the final public opinion polls have provided a good gauge to the election result. An even better predictor, however, has been the Iowa Election Market. Taking everything

(including polls) into account, people buy and sell shares in candidates. Other prediction markets have harnessed collective wisdom in gauging the likelihood of other events, such as an avian flu epidemic (Arrow & others, 2008; Stix, 2008).

Thus, we can conclude that when information from many, diverse people is combined, all of us together can become smarter than almost any of us alone. We're in some ways like a flock of geese, no one of which has a perfect navigational sense. Nevertheless, by staying close to one another, a group of geese can navigate accurately. The flock is smarter than the bird.

## SUMMING UP: Groupthink: Do Groups Hinder or Assist Good Decisions?

- Analysis of several international fiascos indicates that group cohesion can override realistic appraisal of a situation. This is especially true when group members strongly desire unity, when they are isolated from opposing ideas, and when the leader signals what he or she wants from the group.
- Symptomatic of this overriding concern for harmony, labeled *groupthink*, are (1) an illusion of invulnerability, (2) rationalization, (3) unquestioned belief in the group's morality, (4) stereotyped views of the opposition, (5) pressure to conform, (6) self-censorship of misgivings, (7) an illusion of unanimity, and (8) "mindguards" who protect the group from unpleasant information. Critics have noted that some aspects of Janis's groupthink model (such as directive leadership)
- seem more implicated in flawed decisions than others (such as cohesiveness).
- Both in experiments and in actual history, however, groups sometimes decide wisely. These cases suggest ways to prevent groupthink: upholding impartiality, encouraging "devil's advocate" positions, subdividing and then reuniting to discuss a decision, seeking outside input, and having a "second-chance" meeting before implementing a decision.
- Research on group problem solving suggests that groups can be more accurate than individuals; groups also generate more and better ideas if the group is small or if, in a large group, individual brainstorming follows the group session.

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE MINORITY: HOW DO INDIVIDUALS INFLUENCE THE GROUP?

Explain when—and how—individuals influence their groups. Identify what makes some individuals effective.

Each chapter in this social influence unit concludes with a reminder of our power as individuals. We have seen that

- cultural situations mold us, but we also help create and choose these situations.
- pressures to conform sometimes overwhelm our better judgment, but blatant pressure motivates reactance as we assert our individuality and freedom.
- persuasive forces are powerful, but we can resist persuasion by making public commitments and by anticipating persuasive appeals.

This chapter has emphasized group influences on the individual, so we conclude by seeing how individuals can influence their groups.

In the film *12 Angry Men*, a lone juror eventually wins over 11 others. In a jury room, that's a rare occurrence. Yet in most social movements, a small minority will sway, and then eventually become, the majority. "All history," wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson, "is a record of the power of minorities, and of minorities of one." Think of Copernicus and Galileo, of Martin Luther King, Jr., of Susan B. Anthony, of Nelson Mandela. The American civil rights movement was ignited by the refusal of one African American woman, Rosa Parks, to relinquish her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Technological history has also been made by innovative minorities. As Robert Fulton developed his steamboat—"Fulton's Folly"—he endured constant derision: "Never did a single encouraging remark, a bright hope, a warm wish, cross my path" (Cantril & Bumstead, 1960). Indeed, if minority viewpoints never prevailed, history would be static and nothing would ever change.

What makes a minority persuasive? What might Arthur Schlesinger have done to get the Kennedy group to consider his doubts about the Bay of Pigs invasion? Experiments initiated by Serge Moscovici in Paris have identified several determinants of minority influence: *consistency*, *self-confidence*, and *defection*.

Note: "Minority influence" refers to minority opinions, not to ethnic minorities.

"IF THE SINGLE MAN PLANT HIMSELF INDOMITABLY ON HIS INSTINCTS, AND THERE ABIDE, THE HUGE WORLD WILL COME ROUND TO HIM."

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON,  
NATURE, ADDRESS, AND  
LECTURES: THE AMERICAN  
SCHOLAR, 1849

## Consistency

More influential than a minority that wavers is a minority that sticks to its position. Moscovici and associates (1969; Moscovici, 1985) found that if a minority of participants consistently judges blue slides as green, members of the majority will occasionally agree. But if the minority wavers, saying "blue" to one-third of the blue slides and "green" to the rest, virtually no one in the majority will ever agree with "green."

Experiments show—and experience confirms—that nonconformity, especially persistent nonconformity, is often painful, and that being a minority in a group can be unpleasant (Levine, 1989; Lücken & Simon, 2005). That helps explain a *minority slowness effect*—a tendency for people with minority views to express them less quickly than do people in the majority (Bassili, 2003). If you set out to be Emerson's minority of one, prepare yourself for ridicule—especially when you argue an issue that's personally relevant to the majority and when the group wants to settle an issue by reaching consensus (Kameda & Sugimori, 1993; Kruglanski & Webster, 1991; Trost & others, 1992). Even when people in the majority know that the disagreeing person is factually or morally right, they may still, unless they change their position, dislike the person (Chan & others, 2010).

People may attribute your dissent to psychological peculiarities (Papastamou & Mugny, 1990). When Charlan Nemeth (1979, 2011) planted a minority of two within a simulated jury and had them oppose the majority's opinions, the duo was inevitably disliked. Nevertheless, the majority acknowledged that the persistence of the two did more than anything else to make them rethink their positions. Compared to majority influence that often triggers unthinking agreement, minority influence stimulates a deeper processing of arguments, often with increased creativity (Kenworthy & others, 2008; Martin & others, 2007, 2008).

University students who have racially diverse friends, or who are exposed to racial diversity in discussion groups, display less simplistic thinking (Antonio & others, 2004). With dissent from within one's own group, people take in more information, think about it in new ways, and often make better decisions (Page, 2007). Believing that one need not win friends to influence people, Nemeth quotes Oscar Wilde: "We dislike arguments of any kind; they are always vulgar, and often convincing."

Some successful companies have recognized the creativity and innovation sometimes stimulated by minority perspectives, which may contribute new ideas and stimulate colleagues to think in fresh ways. 3M, which has been famed for valuing "respect for individual initiative," has welcomed employees spending time on wild ideas. The Post-it note's adhesive was a failed attempt by Spencer Silver to develop a super-strong glue. Art Fry, after having trouble marking his church choir hymnal

with pieces of paper, thought, "What I need is a bookmark with Spence's adhesive along the edge." Even so, this was a minority view that eventually won over a skeptical marketing department (Nemeth, 1997).

## Self-Confidence

Consistency and persistence convey self-confidence. Furthermore, Nemeth and Joel Wachtler (1974) reported that any behavior by a minority that conveys self-confidence—for example, taking the head seat at the table—tends to raise self-doubts among the majority. By being firm and forceful, the minority's apparent self-assurance may prompt the majority to reconsider its position. This is especially so on matters of opinion rather than fact. Using their research at Italy's University of Padova, Anne Maass and colleagues (1996) report that minorities are less persuasive when answering a question of fact ("from which country does Italy import most of its raw oil?") than attitude ("from which country should Italy import most of its raw oil?").

## Defections from the Majority

A persistent minority punctures any illusion of unanimity. When a minority consistently doubts the majority wisdom, majority members become freer to express their own doubts and may even switch to the minority position. But what about a lone defector, someone who initially agreed with the majority but then reconsidered and dissented? In research with University of Pittsburgh students, John Levine (1989) found that a minority person who had defected from the majority was even more persuasive than a consistent minority voice. Nemeth's jury-simulation experiments found that—not unlike the *12 Angry Men* scenario—once defections begin, others often soon follow, initiating a snowball effect.

Are these factors that strengthen minority influence unique to minorities? Sharon Wolf and Bibb Latané (1985; Wolf, 1987) and Russell Clark (1995) have argued that the same social forces work for both majorities and minorities. Informational influence (via persuasive arguments) and normative influence (via social comparison) fuel both group polarization and minority influence. And if consistency, self-confidence, and defections from the other side strengthen the minority, such variables also strengthen a majority. The social impact of any position, majority or minority, depends on the strength, immediacy, and number of those who support it.

There is a delightful irony in this new emphasis on how individuals can influence the group. Until recently, the idea that the minority could sway the majority was itself a minority view in social psychology. Nevertheless, by arguing consistently and forcefully, Moscovici, Nemeth, Maass, Clark, and others convinced the majority of group influence researchers that minority influence is a phenomenon worthy of study. And the way that several of these minority influence researchers came by their interests should, perhaps, not surprise us. Anne Maass (1998) became interested in how minorities could effect social change after growing up in postwar Germany and hearing her grandmother's personal accounts of fascism. Charlan Nemeth (1999) developed her interest while she was a visiting professor in Europe "working with Henri Tajfel and Serge Moscovici. The three of us were 'outsiders'—I an American Roman Catholic female in Europe, they having survived World War II as Eastern European Jews. Sensitivity to the value and the struggles of the minority perspective came to dominate our work."

## Is Leadership Minority Influence?

In 1910, the Norwegians and the English engaged in an epic race to the South Pole. The Norwegians, effectively led by Roald Amundsen, made it. The English, ineptly led by Robert Falcon Scott, did not; Scott and three team members died. Amundsen illustrated the power of **leadership**, the process by which individuals mobilize and guide groups.

### leadership

The process by which certain group members motivate and guide the group.

Participative management, illustrated in this "quality circle," requires democratic rather than autocratic leaders.



### task leadership

Leadership that organizes work, sets standards, and focuses on goals.

### social leadership

Leadership that builds teamwork, mediates conflict, and offers support.

Some leaders are formally appointed or elected; others emerge informally as the group interacts. What makes for good leadership often depends on the situation. The best person to lead the engineering team may not make the best leader of the sales force. Some people excel at **task leadership**—at organizing work, setting standards, and focusing on goal attainment. Others excel at **social leadership**—at building teamwork, mediating conflicts, and being supportive.

*Task* leaders generally have a directive style—one that can work well if the leader is bright enough to give good orders (Fiedler, 1987). Being goal oriented, such leaders also keep the group's attention and effort focused on its mission. Experiments show that the combination of specific, challenging goals and periodic progress reports helps motivate high achievement (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002, 2009).

*Social* leaders generally have a democratic style—one that delegates authority, welcomes input from team members, and, as we have seen, helps prevent group-think. Many experiments reveal that social leadership is good for morale. Group members usually feel more satisfied when they participate in making decisions (Spector, 1986; Vanderslice & others, 1987). Given control over their tasks, workers also become more motivated to achieve (Burger, 1987).

People tend to respond more positively to a decision if they are given a chance to voice their opinions during the decision-making process (van den Bos & Spruijt, 2002). People who value good group feeling and take pride in achievement therefore thrive under democratic leadership and participative management. Women more often than men exhibit a democratic leadership style (Carli & Eagly, 2011; Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Data amassed from 118 studies reveal that women are much more egalitarian than men; they are more opposed to social hierarchies (Lee & others, 2011).

The once-popular "great person" theory of leadership—that all great leaders share certain traits—has fallen into disrepute. Effective leadership styles, we now know, are less about the big "I" than the big "we." Effective leaders represent, enhance, and champion a group's identity (Haslam & others, 2010). Effective leadership also varies with the situation. Subordinates who know what they are doing may resent working under task leadership, whereas those who don't may welcome it. Recently, however, social psychologists have again wondered if there might be qualities that mark a good leader in many situations (Hogan & others, 1994). British social psychologists Peter Smith and Monir Tayeb (1989) report that studies done in India, Taiwan, and Iran have found that the most effective supervisors in coal mines, banks, and government offices scored high on tests of *both* task and social leadership. They are actively concerned with how work is progressing *and* sensitive to the needs of their subordinates.

# focus ON

## Transformational Community Leadership

As a striking example of transformational (consistent, self-confident, inspirational) leadership, consider Walt and Mildred Woodward. During World War II and in the two decades after, they owned and edited the newspaper on Bainbridge Island, Washington. It was from Bainbridge that, on March 30, 1942, the first of nearly 120,000 West Coast people of Japanese descent were relocated to internment camps. With 6 days' notice and under armed guard, they boarded a ferry and were sent away, leaving behind on the dock tearful friends and neighbors (one of whom was their insurance agent, my father). "Where, in the face of their fine record since December 7 [Pearl Harbor Day], in the face of their rights of citizenship, in the face of their own relatives being drafted and enlisting in our Army, in the face of American decency, is there any excuse for this high-handed, much-too-short evacuation order?" editorialized the Woodwards (1942) in their *Bainbridge Review*. Throughout the war, the Woodwards, alone among West Coast newspaper editors, continued to voice opposition to the internment. They also recruited their former part-time employee, Paul Ohtaki, to write a weekly column bringing news of the displaced islanders. Stories by Ohtaki and others of "Pneumonia Hits 'Grandpa Koura'" and "First Island Baby at Manzanar Born" reminded those back home of their absent neighbors and prepared the way for their eventual welcome home—a contrast to the prejudice that greeted their return to other West Coast communities where newspapers supported the internment and fostered hostility toward the Japanese.

After enduring some vitriolic opposition, the Woodwards lived to be honored for their courage, which was dramatized in the book and movie *Snow Falling on Cedars*. At the March 30, 2004, groundbreaking for a national memorial on the ferry departure site, former internee and Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community president Frank Kitamoto declared that "this memorial is also for Walt and Millie Woodward, for Ken Myers, for Genevieve Williams . . . and the many others who supported us," and who challenged the forced removal at the risk of being called unpatriotic. "Walt Woodward said if we can suspend the Bill of Rights for Japanese Americans it can be suspended for fat Americans or blue-eyed



In March of 1942, 274 Bainbridge Islanders became the first of some 120,000 Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants interned during World War II. Sixty-two years later, ground was broken for a national memorial (*Nidoto Nai Yoni*—Let It Not Happen Again), remembering the internees and the transformational leaders who supported them and prepared for their welcome home.

Americans." Reflecting on the Woodwards' transformational leadership, cub reporter Ohtaki (1999) observed that "on Bainbridge Island there was none of the hostility to the returning Japanese that you saw in other places, and I think that's in large part because of the Woodwards." When, later, he asked the Woodwards, "Why did you do this, when you could have dropped it and not suffered the anger of some of your readers?" they would always answer, "It was the right thing to do."

Studies also reveal that many effective leaders of laboratory groups, work teams, and large corporations exhibit the behaviors that help make a minority view persuasive. Such leaders engender trust by *consistently* sticking to their goals. And they often exude a *self-confident* charisma that kindles the allegiance of their followers (Bennis, 1984; House & Singh, 1987). Effective leaders typically have a compelling

*vision* of some desired state of affairs, especially during times of collective stress (Halevy & others, 2011). They also have an ability to *communicate* that vision to others in clear and simple language, and enough optimism and faith in their group to *inspire* others to follow. Socially dominant, influential individuals also seem competent (whether they are or not) because they act as if they were—by talking a lot (Anderson & Kilduff, 2009).

In one analysis of 50 Dutch companies, the highest morale was at firms with chief executives who most inspired their colleagues “to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of the collective” (de Hoogh & others, 2004). Leadership of this kind—**transformational leadership**—motivates others to identify with and commit themselves to the group’s mission. Transformational leaders—many of whom are charismatic, energetic, self-confident extraverts—articulate high standards, inspire people to share their vision, and offer personal attention (Bono & Judge, 2004). In organizations, the frequent result of such leadership is a more engaged, trusting, and effective workforce (Turner & others, 2002).

To be sure, groups also influence their leaders. Sometimes those at the front of the herd have simply sensed where it is already heading. Political candidates know how to read the opinion polls. Someone who typifies the group’s views is more likely to be selected as a leader; a leader who deviates too radically from the group’s standards may be rejected (Hogg & others, 1998). Smart leaders usually remain with the majority and spend their influence prudently. In rare circumstances, the right traits matched with the right situation yield history-making greatness, notes Dean Keith Simonton (1994). To have a Winston Churchill or a Margaret Thatcher, a Thomas Jefferson or a Karl Marx, a Napoleon or an Adolf Hitler, an Abraham Lincoln or a Martin Luther King, Jr., takes the right person in the right place at the right time. When an apt combination of intelligence, skill, determination, self-confidence, and social charisma meets a rare opportunity, the result is sometimes a championship, a Nobel Prize, or a social revolution.

## SUMMING UP: The Influence of the Minority: How Do Individuals Influence the Group?

- Although a majority opinion often prevails, sometimes a minority can influence and even overturn a majority position. Even if the majority does not adopt the minority’s views, the minority’s speaking up can increase the majority’s self-doubts and prompt it to consider other alternatives, often leading to better, more creative decisions.
- In experiments, a minority is most influential when it is consistent and persistent in its views, when its actions convey self-confidence, and after it begins to elicit some defections from the majority.
- Through their *task* and *social leadership*, formal and informal group leaders exert disproportionate influence. Those who consistently press toward their goals and exude a self-confident charisma often engender trust and inspire others to follow.

## POSTSCRIPT: Are Groups Bad for Us?

A selective reading of this chapter could, I must admit, leave readers with the impression that, on balance, groups are bad. In groups we become more aroused, more stressed, more tense, more error-prone on complex tasks. Submerged in a group that gives us anonymity, we have a tendency to loaf or have our worst impulses unleashed by deindividuation. Police brutality, lynchings, gang destruction, and

terrorism are all group phenomena. Discussion in groups often polarizes our views, enhancing mutual racism or hostility. It may also suppress dissent, creating a homogenized groupthink that produces disastrous decisions. No wonder we celebrate those individuals—minorities of one—who, alone against a group, have stood up for truth and justice. Groups, it seems, are ba-a-a-d.

All that is true, but it's only half the truth. The other half is that, as social animals, we are group-dwelling creatures. Like our distant ancestors, we depend on one another for sustenance, support, and security. Moreover, when our individual tendencies are positive, group interaction accentuates our best. In groups, runners run faster, audiences laugh louder, and givers become more generous. In self-help groups, people strengthen their resolve to stop drinking, lose weight, and study harder. In kindred-spirited groups, people expand their spiritual consciousness. "A devout communing on spiritual things sometimes greatly helps the health of the soul," observed fifteenth-century cleric Thomas à Kempis, especially when people of faith "meet and speak and commune together."

Depending on which tendency a group is magnifying or disinhibiting, groups can be very, very bad or very, very good. So we had best choose our groups wisely and intentionally.

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## PART THREE

# Social Relations



Social psychology is the scientific study of how people think about, influence, and relate to one another. Having explored how we *think about* (Part One) and *influence* (Part Two) one another, we now consider how we *relate* to one another. Our feelings and actions toward people are sometimes negative, sometimes positive. Chapters 9, "Prejudice," and 10, "Aggression," examine the nastier aspects of human relations: Why do we dislike, even despise, one another? Why and when do we hurt one another? Then in Chapters 11, "Attraction and Intimacy," and 12, "Helping," we explore the nicer aspects: Why do we like or love particular people? When will we offer help to friends or strangers? Last, in Chapter 13, "Conflict and Peacemaking," we consider how social conflicts develop and how they can be justly and amicably resolved.

CHAPTER  
**9**

# Prejudice

DISLIKING OTHERS



**"Prejudice. A vagrant opinion without visible means of support."**

—Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*, 1911

**P**rejudice comes in many forms—for our own group and against some other group: against “northeastern liberals” or “southern rednecks,” against Arab “terrorists” or American “infidels,” and against people who are fat or homely or single.

Consider some striking examples:

- **Religion.** In the aftermath of 9/11 and the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, Americans with a strong national identity expressed the most disdain for Arab immigrants (Lyons & others, 2010). And if told a job applicant is Muslim, many managers are not inclined to hire or pay well (Park & others, 2009). “Muslims are one of the last minorities in the U.S. that it is still possible to demean openly,” observed columnist Nicholas Kristof (2010) as antagonism toward Islamic mosques flared. In Europe, most non-Muslims express concern about “Islamic extremism” and perceive poor Muslim-Western relations (Pew, 2011). Middle Eastern Muslims reciprocate the negativity toward “greedy” and “immoral” Westerners and frequently report not believing that Arabs carried out the 9/11 attacks (Wike & Grim, 2007; Pew, 2011).
- **Obesity.** When seeking love and employment, overweight people—especially White women—face slim prospects.

**What is the nature and power of prejudice?**

**What are the social sources of prejudice?**

**What are the motivational sources of prejudice?**

**What are the cognitive sources of prejudice?**

**What are the consequences of prejudice?**

**Postscript: Can we reduce prejudice?**

In correlational studies, overweight people marry less often, gain entry to less-desirable jobs, and make less money (Swami & others, 2008). In experiments where some people's photo images are widened to make them appear overweight, they are perceived as less attractive, intelligent, happy, self-disciplined, and successful (Gortmaker & others, 1993; Hebl & Heatherton, 1998; Pingitore & others, 1994). Weight discrimination, in fact, exceeds racial or gender discrimination and occurs at every employment stage—hiring, placement, promotion, compensation, discipline, and discharge (Roehling, 2000). Negative assumptions about and discrimination against overweight people help explain why overweight women and obese men seldom (relative to their numbers in the general population) become the CEOs of large corporations or get elected to office (Roehling & others, 2008, 2009, 2010). As children, the obese are more often bullied, and as adults, they are more often depressed (de Wit & others, 2010; Lumeng & others, 2010; Luppino & others, 2010; Mendes, 2010).

- *Sexual orientation.* Many gay youth—two-thirds of gay secondary school students in one national British survey—report experiencing homophobic bullying (Hunt & Jensen, 2007). The U.S. National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health revealed that gay and lesbian teens are much more likely to be harshly punished by schools and courts than are their straight peers, despite being less likely to engage in serious wrongdoing (Himmelstein & Brückner, 2011). Among adults, one in five British lesbians and gays report having been victimized by aggressive harassment, insults, or physical assaults (Dick, 2008). In a U.S. national survey, 20 percent of gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons reported having experienced a personal or property crime owing to their sexual orientation, and half reported experiencing verbal harassment (Herek, 2009).
- *Age.* People's perceptions of the elderly—as generally kind but frail, incompetent, and unproductive—predispose patronizing behavior, such as baby-talk speech that leads elderly people to feel less competent and act less capably (Bugental & Hehman, 2007).
- *Immigrants.* A fast-growing research literature documents anti-immigrant prejudice among Germans toward Turks, the French toward North Africans, the British toward West Indians and Pakistanis, and Americans toward Latin American immigrants (Pettigrew, 2006). As we will see, the same factors that feed racial and gender prejudice also feed dislike of immigrants (Pettigrew & others, 2008; Zick & others, 2008).

# WHAT IS THE NATURE AND POWER OF PREJUDICE?

Understand the nature of prejudice and the differences between prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination.

Prejudice is distinct from stereotyping and discrimination. Social psychologists explore these distinctions and the different forms that prejudice assumes today.

## Defining Prejudice

Prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, racism, sexism—the terms often overlap. Let's clarify them. Each of the situations just described involved a negative evaluation of some group. And that is the essence of **prejudice**: a preconceived negative judgment of a group and its individual members. (Some prejudice definitions include *positive* judgments, but nearly all uses of "prejudice" refer to *negative* ones—what Gordon Allport termed in his classic book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization" [1954, p. 9].)

Prejudice is an attitude. As we saw in Chapter 4, an attitude is a distinct combination of feelings, inclinations to act, and beliefs. It can be easily remembered as the ABCs of attitudes: *affect* (feelings), *behavior tendency* (inclination to act), and *cognition* (beliefs). A prejudiced person may *dislike* those different from self and *behave* in a discriminatory manner, *believing* them ignorant and dangerous.

The negative evaluations that mark prejudice often are supported by negative beliefs, called **stereotypes**. To stereotype is to generalize. To simplify the world, we generalize: The British are reserved. Americans are outgoing. Professors are absent-minded. Here are some widely shared stereotypes uncovered in research:

- During the 1980s, women who assumed the title of "Ms." were seen as more assertive and ambitious than those who called themselves "Miss" or "Mrs." (Dion, 1987; Dion & Cota, 1991; Dion & Schuller, 1991). After "Ms." became the standard female title, the stereotype shifted. It's married women who keep their own surnames that are seen as assertive and ambitious (Crawford & others, 1998; Etaugh & others, 1999).
- Public opinion surveys reveal that Europeans have had definite ideas about other Europeans. They have seen the Germans as relatively hardworking, the French as pleasure-loving, the British as cool and unexcitable, the Italians as amorous, and the Dutch as reliable. (One expects these findings to be reliable, considering that they come from Willem Koomen and Michiel Bähler, 1996, at the University of Amsterdam.)
- Europeans also view southern Europeans as more emotional and less efficient than northern Europeans (Linssen & Hagendoorn, 1994). The stereotype of the southerner as more expressive even holds within countries: James Pennebaker and his colleagues (1996) report that across 20 Northern Hemisphere countries (but not in 6 Southern Hemisphere countries), southerners within a country are perceived as more expressive than northerners.

Such generalizations can be more or less true (and are not always negative). The elderly *are* generally more frail. Southern countries in the Northern Hemisphere do have higher rates of violence. People living in the south in those countries do report being more expressive than those in the northern regions of their country. Teachers' stereotypes of achievement differences in students from different gender, ethnic, and class backgrounds tend to mirror reality (Madon & others, 1998). "Stereotypes," note Lee Jussim, Clark McCauley, and Yueh-Ting Lee (1995), "may be positive or negative, accurate or inaccurate." An accurate stereotype may even

### prejudice

A preconceived negative judgment of a group and its individual members.

### stereotype

A belief about the personal attributes of a group of people. Stereotypes are sometimes overgeneralized, inaccurate, and resistant to new information (and sometimes accurate).

### FAMILIAR STEREOTYPES:

"HEAVEN IS A PLACE WITH AN AMERICAN HOUSE, CHINESE FOOD, BRITISH POLICE, A GERMAN CAR, AND FRENCH ART. HELL IS A PLACE WITH A JAPANESE HOUSE, CHINESE POLICE, BRITISH FOOD, GERMAN ART, AND A FRENCH CAR."

—ANONYMOUS, AS REPORTED  
BY YUEH-TING LEE (1996)

be desirable. We call it “sensitivity to diversity” or “cultural awareness in a multicultural world.” To stereotype the British as more concerned about punctuality than Mexicans is to understand what to expect and how to get along with others in each culture. “Accuracy dominates bias,” notes Lee Jussim (2012). “The social perception glass (of people judging others) is about 90 percent full.”

The 10 percent problem with stereotypes arises when they are *overgeneralized* or just plain wrong. To presume that most American welfare clients are African American is to overgeneralize, because it just isn’t so. To presume that single people are less conscientious and more neurotic than partnered people, as did people in one German study, was wrong, because it just wasn’t so (Greitemeyer, 2009). To presume that people with disabilities are incompetent and asexual, as did Oregonians in another study, misrepresents reality (Nario-Redmond, 2010). To stigmatize the obese as slow, lazy, and undisciplined is inaccurate (Puhl & Heuer, 2009, 2010). To presume that Muslims are terrorists, priests are pedophiles, and evangelicals hate homosexuals overgeneralizes from the worst examples of each.

### discrimination

Unjustified negative behavior toward a group or its members.

*Prejudice* is a negative *attitude*; **discrimination** is negative *behavior*. Discriminatory behavior often has its source in prejudicial attitudes (Dovidio & others, 1996; Wagner & others, 2008). Such was evident when researchers analyzed the responses to 1,115 identically worded emails sent to Los Angeles area landlords regarding vacant apartments. Encouraging replies came back to 89 percent of notes signed “Patrick McDougall,” to 66 percent from “Said Al-Rahman,” and to 56 percent from “Tyrell Jackson” (Carpusor & Loges, 2006). Other researchers have followed suit. When 4,859 U.S. state legislators received emails shortly before the 2008 election asking how to register to vote, “Jake Mueller” received more replies than “DeShawn Jackson,” though fewer from minority legislators (Butler & Broockman, 2011). Likewise, Jewish Israeli students were less likely to alert the sender to a misaddressed email that came from an Arab name and town (“Muhammed Yunis of Ashdod”) rather than from one of their own group (“Yoav Marom of Tel Aviv”) (Tykocinski & Bareket-Bojmel, 2009).

As Chapter 4 emphasized, however, attitudes and behavior are often loosely linked. Prejudiced attitudes need not breed hostile acts, nor does all oppression spring from prejudice. **Racism** and **sexism** are institutional practices that discriminate, even when there is no prejudicial intent. If word-of-mouth hiring practices in an all-White business have the effect of excluding potential non-White employees, the practice could be called racist—even if an employer intended no discrimination. When job ads for male-dominated vocations feature words associated with male stereotypes (“We are a dominant engineering firm seeking individuals who can perform in a competitive environment”), and job ads for female-dominated vocations feature the opposite (“We seek people who will be sensitive to clients’ needs and can develop warm client relationships”), the result may be institutional sexism. Without intending any prejudice, the gendered wording helps sustain gender inequality (Gaucher & others, 2011).

### racism

(1) An individual’s prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior toward people of a given race, or (2) institutional practices (even if not motivated by prejudice) that subordinate people of a given race.

### sexism

(1) An individual’s prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior toward people of a given sex, or (2) institutional practices (even if not motivated by prejudice) that subordinate people of a given sex.

## Prejudice: Implicit and Explicit

Prejudice provides one of the best examples of our *dual attitude* system (Chapter 2). We can have different explicit (conscious) and implicit (automatic) attitudes toward the same target, as shown by 500 studies using the Implicit Association Test (Carpenter, 2008). The test, which has been taken online by some 6 million people, assesses “implicit cognition”—what you know without knowing that you know (Greenwald & others, 2008). It does so by measuring people’s speed of associations. Much as we more quickly associate a hammer with a nail than with a pail, so the test can measure how speedily we associate “White” with “good” versus “Black” with “good.” Thus, people may retain from childhood a habitual, automatic fear or dislike of people for whom they now express respect and admiration. Although explicit attitudes may change dramatically with education, implicit attitudes may linger, changing only as we form new habits through practice (Kawakami & others, 2000).

A raft of experiments—by researchers at Ohio State University and the University of Wisconsin (Devine & Sharp, 2008), Yale and Harvard universities (Banaji, 2004), Indiana University (Fazio, 2007), the University of Colorado (Wittenbrink, 2007; Wittenbrink & others, 1997), the University of Washington (Greenwald & others, 2000), the University of Virginia (Nosek & others, 2007), and New York University (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999)—have confirmed that prejudiced and stereotypic evaluations can occur outside people's awareness. Some of these studies briefly flash words or faces that “prime” (automatically activate) stereotypes for some racial, gender, or age group. Without their awareness, the participants’ activated stereotypes may then bias their behavior. Having been primed with images associated with African Americans, for example, they may then react with more hostility to an experimenter’s (intentionally) annoying request.

Critics contend that the Implicit Association Test lacks sufficient validity to assess or label individuals (Blanton & others, 2006, 2009). The test is more appropriate for research, which has shown, for example, that implicit biases predict behaviors ranging from acts of friendliness to work evaluations (Greenwald & others, 2009). In the 2008 U.S. presidential election, both implicit and explicit prejudice predicted voters' support for Barack Obama, and his election in turn led to some reduction in implicit prejudice (Bernstein & others, 2010; Payne & others, 2010).

Keeping in mind the distinction between conscious, explicit prejudice and unconscious, implicit prejudice, let's examine two common forms of prejudice: racial prejudice and gender prejudice.

## Racial Prejudice

In the context of the world, every race is a minority. Non-Hispanic Whites, for example, are only one-fifth of the world's people and will be one-eighth within another half-century. Thanks to mobility and migration over the past two centuries, the world's races now intermingle, in relations that are sometimes hostile, sometimes amiable.

To a molecular biologist, skin color is a trivial human characteristic, one controlled by a minuscule genetic difference. Moreover, nature doesn't cluster races in neatly defined categories. It is people, not nature, who label Barack Obama, the son of a White woman, as “Black.”

Most folks see prejudice—in other people. In one Gallup poll, White Americans estimated 44 percent of their peers to be high in prejudice (5 or higher on a 10-point scale). How many gave themselves a high score? Just 14 percent (Whitman, 1998).

### IS RACIAL PREJUDICE DISAPPEARING?

Which is right: people's perceptions of high prejudice in others, or their perceptions of low prejudice in themselves? And is racial prejudice becoming a thing of the past?

Explicit prejudicial attitudes can change very quickly.

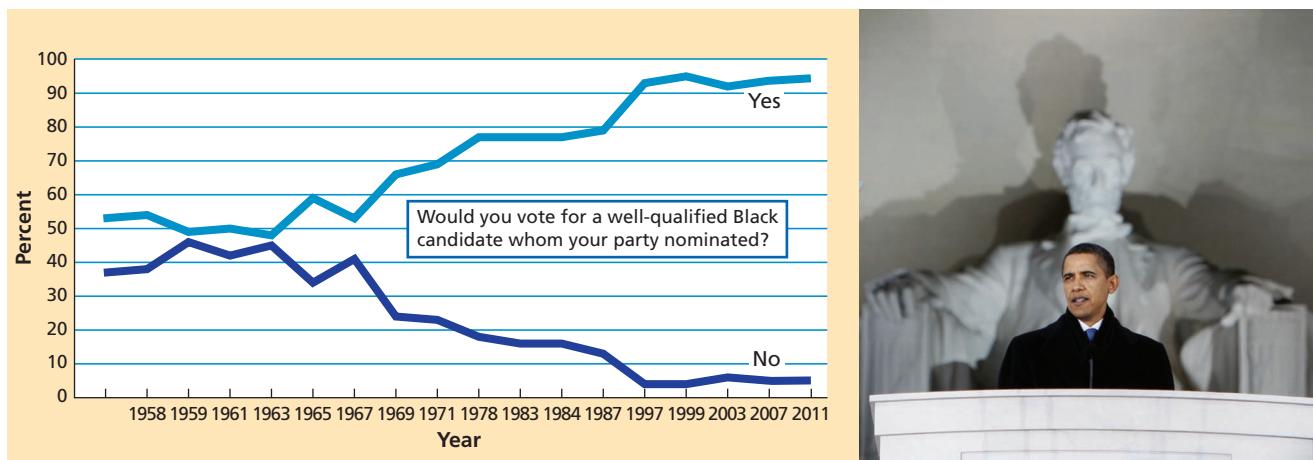
- In 1942, most Americans agreed, “There should be separate sections for Negroes on streetcars and buses” (Hyman & Sheatsley, 1956). Today the question would seem bizarre, because such blatant prejudice has nearly disappeared.
- In 1942, fewer than a third of all Whites (only 1 in 50 in the South) supported school integration; by 1980, support for it was 90 percent.
- In 1958, 4 percent of Americans of all races approved of Black-White marriages—as did 86 percent in 2011 (Jones, 2011).

Considering what a thin slice of history is covered by the years since 1942, or even since slavery was practiced, the changes are dramatic. In Britain, overt racial prejudice, as expressed in opposition to interracial marriage or having an ethnic minority boss, has similarly plummeted, especially among younger adults (Ford, 2008).

African Americans' attitudes also have changed since the 1940s, when Kenneth Clark and Mamie Clark (1947) demonstrated that many African Americans held anti-Black prejudices. In making its historic 1954 decision declaring segregated

"ALTHOUGH OUR [CONSCIOUS] MINDS ARE IN THE RIGHT PLACES, AND WE MAY TRULY BELIEVE WE ARE NOT PREJUDICED, OUR HEARTS AREN'T QUITE THERE YET."

PREJUDICE RESEARCHER,  
JOHN DOVIDIO, TIME, 2009

**FIGURE :: 9.1****Changing Racial Attitudes of White Americans from 1958 to 2011**

Abraham Lincoln's ghostly embrace of Barack Obama visualized the Obama mantra: "Change we can believe in." Two days later, Obama stood on steps built by the hands of slaves, placed his hand on a Bible last used in Lincoln's own inauguration, and spoke "a most sacred oath"—in a place, he reflected, where his "father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant."

Source: Data from Gallup Polls (brain.gallup.com).

"I CANNOT LET THE  
MOMENT OF REJOICING  
PASS WITHOUT ENTER-  
ING IN THE RECORD MY  
PROFOUND APPRECIATION  
OF YOUR PART IN SETTING  
STRAIGHT THE COURSE OF  
AMERICAN HISTORY."

—LETTER TO KENNETH CLARK,  
FROM CITY COLLEGE OF  
NEW YORK PRESIDENT BUELL  
GALLAGHER, AFTER THE 1954  
SUPREME COURT SCHOOL  
DESEGREGATION DECISION

Psychologists usually  
capitalize Black and White  
to emphasize that these are  
socially applied race labels,  
not literal color labels for  
persons of African and  
European ancestry.

schools unconstitutional, the Supreme Court found it noteworthy that when the Clarks gave African American children a choice between Black dolls and White dolls, most chose the White. In studies from the 1950s through the 1970s, Black children were increasingly likely to prefer Black dolls. And adult Blacks came to view Blacks and Whites as similar in such traits as intelligence, laziness, and dependability (Jackman & Senter, 1981; Smedley & Bayton, 1978).

People of different races also now share many of the same attitudes and aspirations, notes Amitai Etzioni (1999). More than 8 in 10 in both groups agree that "to graduate from high school, students should be required to understand the common history and ideas that tie all Americans together." Similar proportions in the two groups seek "fair treatment for all, without prejudice or discrimination." And about two-thirds of both groups agree that moral and ethical standards have been in decline. Thanks to such shared ideals, notes Etzioni, most Western democracies have been spared the ethnic tribalism that has torn apart places such as Kosovo and Rwanda.

Shall we conclude, then, that racial prejudice is extinct in countries such as the United States, Britain, and Canada? Not if we consider the 6,604 reported hate crime incidents during 2009 (FBI, 2008, 2009). Not if we consider the small proportion of Whites who, as Figure 9.1 shows, would not vote for a Black presidential candidate. Not if we consider the 6 percent greater support that Obama would likely have received in 2008, according to one statistical analysis of voter racial and political attitudes, if there had been no White racial prejudice (Fournier & Tompson, 2008).

So, how great is the progress toward racial equality? In the United States, Whites tend to contrast the present with the oppressive past, perceiving swift and radical progress. Blacks tend to contrast the present with their ideal world, which has not yet been realized, and perceive somewhat less progress (Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2006).

### SUBTLE FORMS OF PREJUDICE

Prejudice in subtle forms is even more widespread than blatant, overt prejudice. Modern prejudice often appears subtly, in our preferences for what is familiar, similar, and comfortable (Dovidio & others, 1992; Esses & others, 1993a; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005).

Some experiments have assessed people's *behavior* toward Blacks and Whites. As we will see in Chapter 12, Whites are equally helpful to any person in need—except when the needy person is remote (for instance, a wrong-number caller with





Although prejudice dies last in socially intimate contacts, interracial marriage has increased in most countries, and 77 percent of Americans now approve of "marriage between Blacks and Whites"—a sharp increase from the 4 percent who approved in 1958 (Carroll, 2007). Among 18- to 29-year-old Whites, 88 percent approve (Pew, 2010a). In 2008, 1 in 7 American marriages—six times the 1960 rate—were between people of differing race or ethnicity (Pew, 2010b).

an apparent Black accent who needs a message relayed). Likewise, when asked to use electric shocks to "teach" a task, White people have given no more (if anything, less) shock to a Black than to a White person—except when they were angered or when the recipient couldn't retaliate or know who did it (Crosby & others, 1980; Rogers & Prentice-Dunn, 1981).

Thus, prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behavior surface when they can hide behind the screen of some other motive. In Australia, Britain, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, blatant prejudice has been replaced by subtle prejudice (exaggerating ethnic differences, feeling less admiration and affection for immigrant minorities, rejecting them for supposedly nonracial reasons) (Pedersen & Walker, 1997; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005a). Some researchers call such subtle prejudice "modern racism" or "cultural racism."

On paper-and-pencil questionnaires, Janet Swim and her co-researchers (1995, 1997) have found a subtle ("modern") sexism that parallels subtle ("modern") racism. Both forms appear in denials of discrimination and in antagonism toward efforts to promote equality (as in agreeing with a statement such as "Women are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights").

We can also detect bias in behavior:

- To test for possible labor market discrimination, M.I.T. researchers sent 5,000 résumés out in response to 1,300 varied employment ads (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2003). Applicants who were randomly assigned White names (Emily, Greg) received one callback for every 10 résumés sent. Those given Black names (Lakisha, Jamal) received one callback for every 15 résumés sent.
- Other experiments have submitted fictitious pairs of women's resumes to 613 Austrian clerical openings, and pairs of men's resumes to 1,714 Athens, Greece, openings and 1,769 American job openings (Drydakis, 2009; Tilcsik, 2011; Weichselbaumer, 2003). By random assignment, one applicant in each pair acknowledged, among other activities, volunteering in a gay-lesbian organization. In response, callbacks were much less likely to the gay-involved applicants. In the American experiment, for example, 7.2 percent of applicants whose

In several American states, Black motorists have represented a minority of the drivers and speeders on interstate highways, yet they have been most often stopped and searched by state police (Lamberth, 1998; Staples, 1999a, 1999b). In one New Jersey Turnpike study, Blacks made up 13.5 percent of the car occupants, 15 percent of the speeders, and 35 percent of the drivers stopped.

activities included being “Treasurer, Gay and Lesbian Alliance,” received replies, as did 11.5 percent of those associated with a different left-seeming group (“Treasurer, Progressive and Socialist Alliance”).

- In one analysis of traffic stops, African Americans and Latinos were four times more likely than Whites to be searched, twice as likely to be arrested, and three times more likely to be handcuffed and to have excessive force used against them (Lichtblau, 2005).

Modern prejudice even appears as a race sensitivity that leads to exaggerated reactions to isolated minority persons—overpraising their accomplishments, overcriticizing their mistakes, and failing to warn Black students, as they would White students, about potential academic difficulty (Crosby & Monin, 2007; Fiske, 1989; Hart & Morry, 1997; Hass & others, 1991).

It also appears as patronization. For example, Kent Harber (1998) gave White students at Stanford University a poorly written essay to evaluate. When the students thought the writer was Black, they rated it *higher* than when they were led to think the author was White, and they rarely offered harsh criticisms. The evaluators, perhaps wanting to avoid the appearance of bias, patronized the Black essayists with lower standards. Such “inflated praise and insufficient criticism” may hinder minority student achievement, Harber noted. In follow-up research, Harber and his colleagues (2010) found that Whites concerned about appearing biased not only rate and comment more favorably on weak essays attributed to Black students, they also recommend less time for skill development. To protect their own self-image as unprejudiced, they bend over backward to give positive and unchallenging feedback.

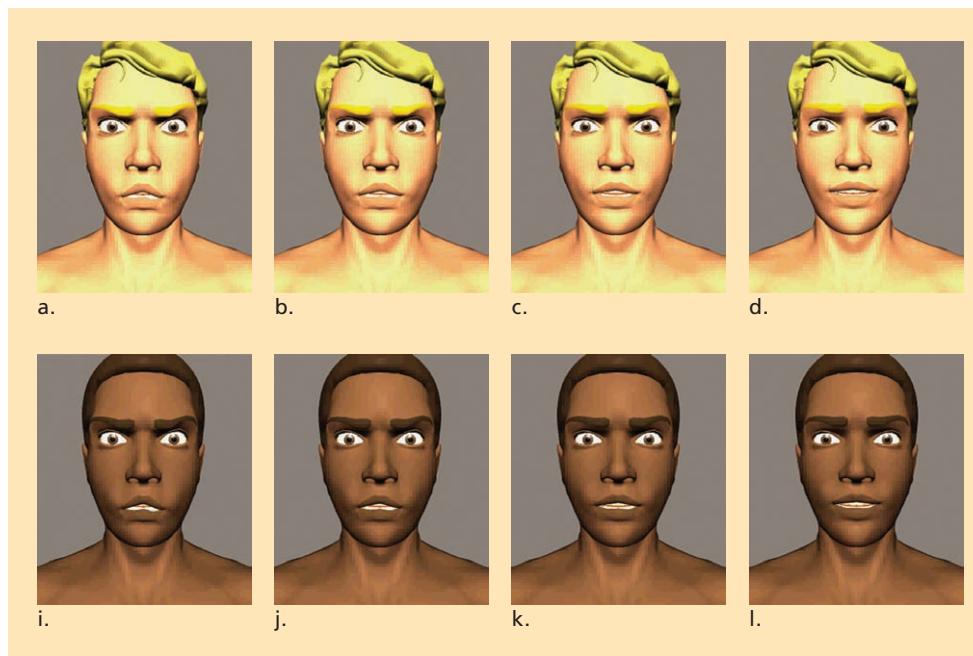
### AUTOMATIC PREJUDICE

How widespread are automatic prejudiced reactions to African Americans? Experiments have shown such reactions in varied contexts. For example, in clever experiments by Anthony Greenwald and his colleagues (1998, 2000), 9 in 10 White people took longer to identify pleasant words (such as *peace* and *paradise*) as “good” when associated with Black rather than White faces. The participants consciously expressed little or no prejudice; their bias was unconscious and unintended. Moreover, report Kurt Hugenberg and Galen Bodenhausen (2003), the more strongly people exhibit such implicit prejudice, the readier they are to perceive anger in Black faces (Figure 9.2).

**FIGURE :: 9.2**

#### Facing Prejudice

Where does the anger disappear?  
Kurt Hugenberg and Galen Bodenhausen showed university students a movie of faces morphing from angry to happy. Those who had scored as most prejudiced (on an implicit racial attitudes test) perceived anger lingering more in ambiguous Black than White faces.





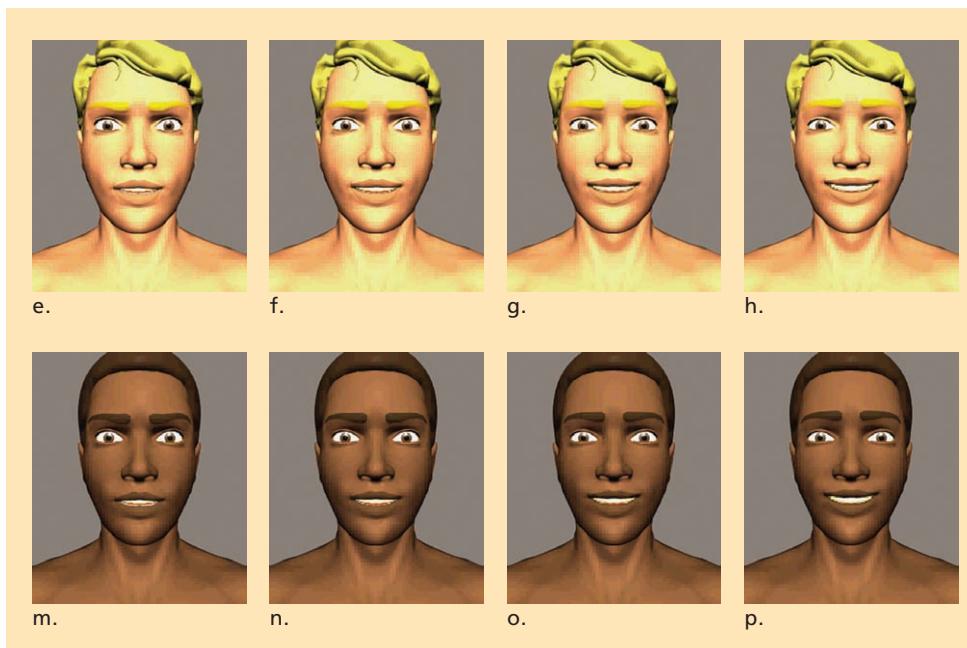
Automatic prejudice. When Joshua Correll and his colleagues invited people to react quickly to people holding either a gun or a harmless object, race influenced perceptions and reactions.

Critics note that unconscious *associations* may only indicate cultural assumptions, perhaps without *prejudice* (which involves negative feelings and action tendencies). But some studies find that implicit bias can leak into behavior:

- In a Swedish study, a measure of implicit biases against Arab-Muslims predicted the likelihood of 193 corporate employers not interviewing applicants with Muslim names (Rooth, 2007).
- In a medical study of 287 physicians, those exhibiting the most implicit racial bias were the least likely to recommend clot-busting drugs for a Black patient described as complaining of chest pain (Green & others, 2007).
- In a study of 44 Australian drug and alcohol nurses, those displaying the most implicit bias against drug users were also the most likely, when facing job stress, to want a different job (von Hippel & others, 2008).

In some situations, automatic, implicit prejudice can have life or death consequences. In separate experiments, Joshua Correll and his co-workers (2002, 2006, 2007)

*Some people more quickly learn positive associations (and more slowly learn negative associations) to neutral stimuli. Such people tend to exhibit little implicit racial bias (Livingston & Drwecki, 2007).*



"I CANNOT TOTALLY GRASP ALL THAT I AM. . . . FOR THAT DARKNESS IS LAMENTABLE IN WHICH THE POSSIBILITIES IN ME ARE HIDDEN FROM MYSELF."

—ST. AUGUSTINE,  
CONFESSIONS, 398 A.D.

and Anthony Greenwald and his co-workers (2003) invited people to press buttons quickly to “shoot” or “not shoot” men who suddenly appeared onscreen holding either a gun or a harmless object such as a flashlight or a bottle. The participants (both Blacks and Whites, in one of the studies) more often mistakenly shot harmless targets who were Black. (Follow-up computerized simulations revealed that it’s Black *male* suspects—not females, whether Black or White—that are more likely to be associated with threat and to be shot [Plant & others, 2011].)

In the aftermath of London police shooting dead a man who *looked* Muslim, researchers also found Australians more ready to shoot someone wearing Muslim headgear (Unkelbach & others, 2008). If we implicitly associate a particular ethnic group with danger, then faces from that group will tend to capture our attention and trigger arousal (Donders & others, 2008; Dotsch & Wigboldus, 2008; Trawalter & others, 2008).

In a related series of studies, Keith Payne (2001, 2006) and Charles Judd and colleagues (2004) found that when primed with a Black rather than a White face, people think guns: They more quickly recognize a gun and they more often mistake a tool, such as a wrench, for a gun. Even when race does not bias perception, it may bias reaction—as people require more or less evidence before firing (Klauer & Voss, 2008).

Jennifer Eberhardt and her colleagues (2004) demonstrated that the reverse effect can occur as well. Exposing people to weapons makes them pay more attention to faces of African Americans and even makes police officers more likely to judge stereotypical-looking African Americans as criminals. These studies help explain why in 1999, Amadou Diallo (a Black immigrant in New York City) was shot 41 times by police officers for removing his wallet from his pocket.

It also appears that different brain regions are involved in automatic and consciously controlled stereotyping (Correll & others, 2006; Cunningham & others, 2004; Eberhardt, 2005). Pictures of outgroups that elicit the most disgust (such as drug addicts and the homeless) elicit brain activity in areas associated with disgust and avoidance (Harris & Fiske, 2006). This suggests that automatic prejudices involve primitive regions of the brain associated with fear, such as the amygdala, whereas controlled processing is more closely associated with the frontal cortex, which enables conscious thinking. We also use different bits of our frontal lobes when thinking about ourselves or groups we identify with, versus when thinking about people that we perceive as dissimilar to us (Jenkins & others, 2008; Mitchell & others, 2006).

Even the social scientists who study prejudice seem vulnerable to automatic prejudice, note Anthony Greenwald and Eric Schuh (1994). They analyzed biases in authors’ citations of social science articles by people with selected non-Jewish names (Erickson, McBride, etc.) and Jewish names (Goldstein, Siegel, etc.). Their analysis of nearly 30,000 citations, including 17,000 citations of prejudice research, found something remarkable: Compared with Jewish authors, non-Jewish authors had 40 percent higher odds of citing non-Jewish names. (Greenwald and Schuh could not determine whether Jewish authors were overciting their Jewish colleagues or whether non-Jewish authors were overciting their non-Jewish colleagues, or both.)

## Gender Prejudice

How pervasive is prejudice against women? In Chapter 5 we examined gender-role norms—people’s ideas about how women and men *ought* to behave. Here we consider gender *stereotypes*—people’s beliefs about how women and men *do* behave. Norms are *prescriptive*; stereotypes are *descriptive*.

### GENDER STEREOTYPES

From research on stereotypes, two conclusions are indisputable: Strong gender stereotypes exist, and, as often happens, members of the stereotyped group accept the stereotypes. Men and women agree that you *can* judge the book by its sexual

cover. In one survey, Mary Jackman and Mary Senter (1981) found that gender stereotypes were much stronger than racial stereotypes. For example, only 22 percent of men thought the two sexes equally "emotional." Of the remaining 78 percent, those who believed females were more emotional outnumbered those who thought males were more emotional by 15 to 1. And what did the women believe? To within 1 percentage point, their responses were identical.

Remember that stereotypes are generalizations about a group of people and may be true, false, or overgeneralized from a kernel of truth. In Chapter 5 we noted that the average man and woman do differ somewhat in social connectedness, empathy, social power, aggressiveness, and sexual initiative (though not in intelligence). Do we then conclude that gender stereotypes are accurate? Sometimes stereotypes exaggerate differences. But not always, observed Janet Swim (1994). She found that Pennsylvania State University students' stereotypes of men's and women's restlessness, nonverbal sensitivity, aggressiveness, and so forth were reasonable approximations of actual gender differences.

Gender stereotypes have persisted across time and culture. Averaging data from 27 countries, John Williams and his colleagues (1999, 2000) found that people everywhere perceive women as more agreeable, and men as more outgoing. The persistence and omnipresence of gender stereotypes have led some evolutionary psychologists to believe they reflect innate, stable reality (Lueptow & others, 1995).

Stereotypes (beliefs) are not prejudices (attitudes). Stereotypes may support prejudice. Yet one might believe, without prejudice, that men and women are "different yet equal." Let us therefore see how researchers probe for gender prejudice.

### SEXISM: BENEVOLENT AND HOSTILE

Judging from what people tell survey researchers, attitudes toward women have changed as rapidly as racial attitudes have. As Figure 9.3 shows, the percentage of Americans willing to vote for a female presidential candidate has roughly paralleled the increased percentage willing to vote for a Black candidate. In 1967, 56 percent of first-year American college students agreed that "the activities of married women are best confined to the home and family"; by 2002, only 22 percent agreed (Astin & others, 1987; Sax & others, 2002). Thereafter, the home-family question no longer seemed worth asking.

Alice Eagly and her associates (1991) and Geoffrey Haddock and Mark Zanna (1994) also report that people don't respond to women with gut-level negative emotions as they do to certain other groups. Most people like women more than men.

"ALL THE PURSUITS OF  
MEN ARE THE PURSUITS  
OF WOMEN ALSO, AND IN  
ALL OF THEM A WOMAN IS  
ONLY A LESSER MAN."

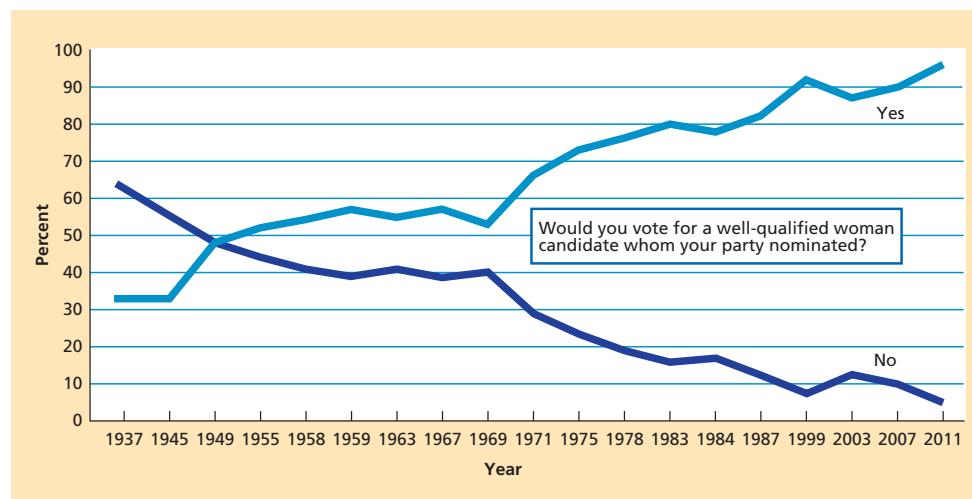
—PLATO, REPUBLIC, 360 B.C.

"WOMEN ARE WONDERFUL  
PRIMARILY BECAUSE  
THEY ARE [PERCEIVED  
AS] SO NICE. [MEN ARE]  
PERCEIVED AS SUPERIOR  
TO WOMEN IN AGENTIC  
[COMPETITIVE, DOMINANT]  
ATTRIBUTES THAT ARE  
VIEWED AS EQUIPPING  
PEOPLE FOR SUCCESS IN  
PAID WORK, ESPECIALLY  
IN MALE-DOMINATED  
OCCUPATIONS."

—ALICE EAGLY (1994)

**FIGURE :: 9.3**  
**Changing Gender Attitudes from 1958 to 2011**

*Source:* Data from Gallup Polls ([gallup.com/poll/4729/presidency.aspx](http://gallup.com/poll/4729/presidency.aspx)).



They perceive women as more understanding, kind, and helpful. A *favorable stereotype*, which Eagly (1994) dubs the *women-are-wonderful effect*, results in a favorable attitude.

But gender attitudes often are ambivalent, report Peter Glick, Susan Fiske, and their colleagues (1996, 2007) from their surveys of 15,000 people in 19 nations. Gender attitudes frequently mix a *benevolent sexism* ("Women have a superior moral sensibility") with *hostile sexism* ("Once a man commits, she puts him on a tight leash").

## GENDER DISCRIMINATION

Being male isn't all roses. Compared to women, men are three times more likely to commit suicide and be murdered. They are nearly all the battlefield and death row casualties. They die five years sooner. And males represent the majority with mental retardation or autism, as well as students in special education programs (Baumeister, 2007; S. Pinker, 2008).

One heavily publicized finding of discrimination against women came from a 1968 study in which Philip Goldberg gave women students at Connecticut College several short articles and asked them to judge the value of each. Sometimes a given article was attributed to a male author (for example, John T. McKay) and sometimes to a female author (for example, Joan T. McKay). In general, the articles received lower ratings when attributed to a female. That's right: Women discriminated against women.

Eager to demonstrate the subtle reality of gender discrimination, I obtained Goldberg's materials in 1980 and repeated the experiment with my own students. They (women and men) showed no such tendency to deprecate women's work. So Janet Swim, Eugene Borgida, Geoffrey Maruyama, and I (1989) searched the literature and corresponded with investigators to learn all we could about studies of gender bias in the evaluation of men's and women's work. To our surprise, the biases that occasionally surfaced were as often against men as women. But the most common result across 104 studies involving almost 20,000 people was *no difference*. On most comparisons, judgments of someone's work were unaffected by whether the work was attributed to a female or a male. Summarizing other studies of people's evaluations of women and men as leaders, professors, and so forth, Alice Eagly (1994) concluded, "Experiments have *not* demonstrated any *overall* tendency to devalue women's work."

Is gender bias fast becoming extinct in Western countries? Has the women's movement nearly completed its work? As with racial prejudice, blatant gender prejudice is dying, but subtle bias lives.

Violate gender stereotypes, and people may react. People take notice of a cigar-smoking woman and a tearful man, and denigrate a White rapper (Phelan & Rudman, 2010). A woman whom people see as power hungry suffers more voter backlash than does a similarly power-hungry man (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010).

In the world beyond democratic Western countries, gender discrimination is not subtle. Two-thirds of the world's unschooled children are girls (United Nations, 1991). In some countries, discrimination extends to violence, even prosecuting rape victims for adultery (UN, 2006).

But the biggest violence against women may occur prenatally. Around the world, people tend to prefer having baby boys. In the United States, in 1941, 38 percent of expectant parents said they preferred a boy if they could have only one child; 24 percent preferred a girl; and 23 percent said they had no preference. In 2011, the answers were virtually unchanged, with 40 percent still preferring a boy (Newport, 2011). With the widespread use of ultrasound to determine the sex of a fetus and the growing availability of abortion, these preferences are, in some countries, affecting the number of boys and girls. In China, where 95 percent of orphanage children are girls (Webley, 2009), the 118 boys born for every 100 girls has led to an excess of 32 million under-20 males. These are tomorrow's "bare branches,"

**Question:** "Misogyny" is the hatred of women. What is the corresponding word for the hatred of men?

**Answer:** In most dictionaries, no such word exists.

as the Chinese think of them—bachelors who will have trouble finding mates (Hvistendahl, 2009, 2010, 2011; Zhu & others, 2009). This “gender genocide” is not found only in China. Taiwan, Singapore, India, and South Korea likewise have millions of “missing women” (Abrevaya, 2009). In response, China has made sex-selective abortions a criminal offense.

To conclude, overt prejudice against people of color and against women is far less common today than it was in the mid-twentieth century. Nevertheless, techniques that are sensitive to subtle prejudice still detect widespread bias. And in parts of the world, gender prejudice makes for misery. Therefore, we need to look carefully and closely at the social, emotional, and cognitive sources of prejudice.

## SUMMING UP: What Is the Nature and Power of Prejudice?

- *Prejudice* is a preconceived negative attitude. *Stereotypes* are beliefs about another group—beliefs that may be accurate, inaccurate, or overgeneralized but based on a kernel of truth. *Discrimination* is unjustified negative behavior. *Racism* and *sexism* may refer to individuals’ prejudicial attitudes or discriminatory behavior, or to oppressive institutional practices (even if not intentionally prejudicial).
- Prejudice exists in subtle and unconscious guises as well as overt, conscious forms. Researchers have devised subtle survey questions and indirect methods for assessing people’s attitudes and behavior to detect unconscious prejudice.
- Racial prejudice against Blacks in the United States was widely accepted until the 1960s; since that time it has become far less prevalent, but it still exists.
- Similarly, prejudice against women has lessened in recent decades. Nevertheless, strong gender stereotypes and a fair amount of gender bias are still found in the United States and, to a greater degree, elsewhere around the world.

## WHAT ARE THE SOCIAL SOURCES OF PREJUDICE?

Understand and examine the influences that give rise to and maintain prejudice.

Prejudice springs from several sources. It may arise from differences in social status and people’s desires to justify and maintain those differences. It may also be learned from our parents as they socialize us about what differences they believe matter between people. Our social institutions, too, may maintain and support prejudice. Consider first how prejudice can function to defend self-esteem and social position.

### Social Inequalities: Unequal Status and Prejudice

A principle to remember: *Unequal status breeds prejudice*. Masters view slaves as lazy, irresponsible, lacking ambition—as having exactly those traits that justify the slavery. Historians debate the forces that create unequal status. But after those inequalities exist, prejudice helps justify the economic and social superiority of those who have wealth and power. Tell me the economic relationship between two groups, and I’ll predict the intergroup attitudes. Upper-class individuals are more likely than those in poverty to see people’s fortunes as the outcomes they have earned, thanks to skill and effort, and not as the result of having connections, money, and good luck (Kraus & others, 2011).

"PREJUDICE IS NEVER EASY  
UNLESS IT CAN PASS ITSELF  
OFF FOR REASON."

—WILLIAM HAZLITT  
(1778–1830), "ON PREJUDICE"

Historical examples abound. Where slavery was practiced, prejudice ran strong. Nineteenth-century politicians justified imperial expansion by describing exploited colonized people as "inferior," "requiring protection," and a "burden" to be borne (G. W. Allport, 1958, pp. 204–205). Six decades ago, sociologist Helen Mayer Hacker (1951) noted how stereotypes of Blacks and women helped rationalize the inferior status of each: Many people thought both groups were mentally slow, emotional and primitive, and "contented" with their subordinate role. Blacks were "inferior"; women were "weak." Blacks were all right in their place; women's place was in the home.

Theresa Vescio and her colleagues (2005) tested that reasoning. They found that powerful men who stereotype their female subordinates give them plenty of praise, but fewer resources, thus undermining their performance. This sort of patronizing allows the men to maintain their positions of power. In the laboratory, too, patronizing benevolent sexism (statements implying that women, as the weaker sex, need support) has undermined women's cognitive performance by planting intrusive thoughts—self-doubts, preoccupations, and decreased self-esteem (Dardenne & others, 2007).

Peter Glick and Susan Fiske's distinction between "hostile" and "benevolent" sexism extends to other prejudices. We see other groups as *competent* or as *likable*, but often not as both. These two culturally universal dimensions of social perception—likability (warmth) and competence—were illustrated by one European's comment that "Germans love Italians, but don't admire them. Italians admire Germans, but don't love them" (Cuddy & others, 2009). We typically *respect* the competence of those high in status and *like* those who agreeably accept a lower status. In the United States, report Fiske and her colleagues (1999), Asians, Jews, Germans, nontraditional women, and assertive African Americans and gay men tend to be respected but are not so well liked. Traditionally subordinate African Americans and Hispanics, traditional women, less-masculine gay men, and people with disabilities tend to be seen as less competent but liked for their emotional, spiritual, artistic, or athletic qualities.

### **social dominance orientation**

A motivation to have one's group dominate other social groups.

Some people, more than others, notice and justify status differences. Those high in **social dominance orientation** tend to view people in terms of hierarchies. They like their own social groups to be high status—they prefer being on the top. Being in a dominant, high-status position also tends to promote this orientation (Guimond & others, 2003). Jim Sidanius, Felicia Pratto, and their colleagues (Levin & others, 2011; Pratto & others, 1994; Sidanius & others, 2004) argue that this desire to be on top leads people high in social dominance to embrace prejudice and to support political positions that justify prejudice. Indeed, people high in social dominance orientation often support policies that maintain hierarchies, such as tax cuts for the well-off. They prefer professions, such as politics and business, that increase their status and maintain hierarchies. They avoid jobs, such as social work, that, by virtue of their aid to disadvantaged groups, undermine hierarchies. And they express more negative attitudes toward minority persons who exhibit strong racial identities (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009). Status may breed prejudice, but some people more than others seek to maintain status.

Social inequalities breed not only prejudice, but also mistrust. Experiments confirm that correlation: Groups receiving more unequal distributions exhibit less trust and cooperation (Cozzolino, 2011). Societies with the greatest income disparity tend also to exhibit less communal health and more anxiety, obesity, homicides, teen births, drug use, prisons, and police (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2011).

## **Socialization**

Prejudice springs from unequal status and from other social sources, including our acquired values and attitudes. The influence of family socialization appears in children's prejudices, which often mirror those perceived in their mothers (Castelli & others, 2007). Even children's implicit racial attitudes reflect their

parents' explicit prejudice (Sinclair & others, 2004). Our families and cultures pass on all kinds of information—how to find mates, drive cars, and divide the household labors, and whom to distrust and dislike.

## THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY

In the 1940s, University of California, Berkeley, researchers—two of whom had fled Nazi Germany—set out on an urgent research mission: to uncover the psychological roots of the poisonous right-wing anti-Semitism that caused the slaughter of millions of Jews in Nazi Germany. In studies of American adults, Theodor Adorno and his colleagues (1950) discovered that hostility toward Jews often coexisted with hostility toward other minorities. In those who were strongly prejudiced, prejudice appeared to be not specific to one group but an entire way of thinking about those who are "different." Moreover, these judgmental, **ethnocentric** people shared certain tendencies: an intolerance for weakness, a punitive attitude, and a submissive respect for their group's authorities, as reflected in their agreement with such statements as "Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn." From those findings, Adorno and his colleagues (1950) surmised that these tendencies define an **authoritarian personality** that is particularly prone to engage in prejudice and stereotyping.

More recent inquiry into authoritarian people's early lives has revealed that, as children, they often face harsh discipline. Militant extremism, on both the political left and the right, shares some common themes, such as catastrophizing, desiring vengeance, and dehumanizing the enemy (Saucier & others, 2009). This extremism supposedly leads the individuals affected to repress their hostilities and impulses, which they project onto outgroups. Research into authoritarianism also suggests that the insecurity of authoritarian individuals predisposes them toward an excessive concern with power and status and an inflexible right-wrong way of thinking that makes ambiguity difficult to tolerate. Such people therefore tend to be submissive to those with power over them and aggressive or punitive toward those whom they consider lower in status than themselves. In other words, "My way or the highway."

Scholars have criticized research into the authoritarian personality for focusing on right-wing authoritarianism and overlooking similarly dogmatic authoritarianism of the left. Still, contemporary studies of right-wing authoritarians by University of Manitoba psychologist Bob Altemeyer (1988, 1992) confirmed that there *are* individuals whose fears and hostilities surface as prejudice. Their feelings of moral superiority may go hand in hand with brutality toward perceived inferiors. Altemeyer also concludes that right-wing authoritarians tend to be "equal opportunity bigots." Different forms of prejudice—toward Blacks, gays and lesbians, women, Muslims, immigrants, the homeless—*do* tend to coexist in the same individuals (Zick & others, 2008). Moreover, authoritarian tendencies, sometimes reflected in ethnic tensions, surge during threatening times of economic recession and social upheaval (Cohrs & Ibler, 2009; Doty & others, 1991; Sales, 1973).

Particularly striking are people high in social dominance orientation and authoritarian personality. Altemeyer (2004) reports that these "Double Highs" are, not surprisingly, "among the most prejudiced persons in our society." What is perhaps most surprising and more troubling is that they seem to display the worst qualities of each type of personality, striving for status often in manipulative ways while being dogmatic and ethnocentric. Altemeyer argues that although these people are relatively rare, they are predisposed to be leaders of hate groups.

## RELIGION AND PREJUDICE

Those who benefit from social inequalities while avowing that "all are created equal" need to justify keeping things the way they are. What could be a more powerful justification than to believe that God has ordained the existing social order? For all sorts of cruel deeds, noted William James, "piety is the mask" (1902, p. 264).

### ethnocentric

Believing in the superiority of one's own ethnic and cultural group, and having a corresponding disdain for all other groups.

### authoritarian personality

A personality that is disposed to favor obedience to authority and intolerance of outgroups and those lower in status.

In almost every country, leaders invoke religion to sanctify the present order. The use of religion to support injustice helps explain a consistent pair of findings concerning North American Christianity: (1) White church members express more racial prejudice than nonmembers, and (2) those professing fundamentalist beliefs express more prejudice than those professing more progressive beliefs (Hall & others, 2010; Johnson & others, 2011).

Knowing the correlation between two variables—religion and prejudice—tells us nothing about their causal connection. Consider three possibilities:

- There may be *no connection*. Perhaps people with less education are both more fundamentalist and more prejudiced. (In one study of 7,070 Brits, those scoring high on IQ tests at age 10 expressed more nontraditional and antiracist views at age 30 [Deary & others, 2008].)
- Perhaps *prejudice causes religion*, by leading people to create religious ideas to support their prejudices. People who feel hatred may use religion, even God, to justify their contempt for the other.
- Or perhaps *religion causes prejudice*, such as by leading people to believe that because all individuals possess free will, impoverished minorities have themselves to blame for their status.

If indeed religion causes prejudice, then more religious church members should also be more prejudiced. But three other findings consistently indicate otherwise.

- Among church members, faithful church attenders were, in 24 out of 26 comparisons, less prejudiced than occasional attenders (Batson & Ventis, 1982).
- Gordon Allport and Michael Ross (1967) found that those for whom religion is an end in itself (those who agree, for example, with the statement "My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life") express less prejudice than those for whom religion is more a means to other ends (who agree "A primary reason for my interest in religion is that my church is a congenial social activity"). And those who score highest on Gallup's "spiritual commitment" index are more welcoming of a person of another race moving in next door (Gallup & Jones, 1992).
- Protestant ministers and Roman Catholic priests gave more support to the U.S. civil rights movement than did laypeople (Fichter, 1968; Hadden, 1969). In Germany, 45 percent of clergy in 1934 had aligned themselves with the Confessing Church, which was organized to oppose Nazi influence on the German Protestant Church (Reed, 1989).

What, then, is the relationship between religion and prejudice? The answer we get depends on *how* we ask the question. If we define religiousness as church membership or willingness to agree at least superficially with traditional religious beliefs, then the more religious people are the more racially prejudiced. Bigots often rationalize bigotry with religion. But if we assess depth of religious commitment in any of several other ways, then the very devout are less prejudiced—hence the religious roots of the modern civil rights movement, among whose leaders were many ministers and priests. It was Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce's faith-inspired values ("Love your neighbor as yourself") that, two centuries ago, motivated their successful campaign to end the British Empire's slave trade and the practice of slavery. As Gordon Allport concluded, "The role of religion is paradoxical. It makes prejudice and it unmakes prejudice" (1958, p. 413).

"WE HAVE JUST ENOUGH  
RELIGION TO MAKE US  
HATE, BUT NOT ENOUGH  
TO MAKE US LOVE ONE  
ANOTHER."

—JONATHAN SWIFT,  
THOUGHTS ON VARIOUS  
SUBJECTS, 1706

## CONFORMITY

Once established, prejudice is maintained largely by inertia. If prejudice is socially accepted, many people will follow the path of least resistance and conform to the fashion. They will act not so much out of a need to hate as out of

a need to be liked and accepted. Thus, people become more likely to favor (or oppose) discrimination after hearing someone else do so, and they are less supportive of women after hearing sexist humor (Ford & others, 2008; Zitek & Hebl, 2007).

During the 1950s, Thomas Pettigrew (1958) studied Whites in South Africa and the American South. His discovery: Those who conformed most to other social norms were also most prejudiced; those who were less conforming mirrored less of the surrounding prejudice.

The price of nonconformity was painfully clear to the ministers of Little Rock, Arkansas, where the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 school desegregation decision was implemented. Most ministers privately favored integration but feared that advocating it openly would decrease membership and financial contributions (Campbell & Pettigrew, 1959). Or consider the Indiana steelworkers and West Virginia coal miners of the same era. In the mills and the mines, the workers accepted integration. In the neighborhoods, the norm was rigid segregation (Minard, 1952; Reitzes, 1953). Prejudice was clearly not a manifestation of "sick" personalities but simply of the social norms.

Conformity also maintains gender prejudice. "If we have come to think that the nursery and the kitchen are the natural sphere of a woman," wrote George Bernard Shaw in an 1891 essay, "we have done so exactly as English children come to think that a cage is the natural sphere of a parrot—because they have never seen one anywhere else." Children who *have* seen women elsewhere—children of employed women—have expressed less stereotyped views of men and women (Hoffman, 1977). Women students exposed to female science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) experts likewise express more positive implicit attitudes toward STEM studies and display more effort on STEM tests (Stout & others, 2011).

In all this, there is a message of hope. If prejudice is not deeply ingrained in personality, then as fashions change and new norms evolve, prejudice can diminish. And so it has.

## Institutional Supports

Social institutions (schools, government, media) may bolster prejudice through overt policies such as segregation, or by passively reinforcing the status quo. Until the 1970s many banks routinely denied mortgages to unmarried women and to minority applicants, with the result that most homeowners were White married couples. Similarly, political leaders may both reflect and reinforce prevailing attitudes.

Schools are one of the institutions most prone to reinforce dominant cultural attitudes. An analysis of stories in 134 children's readers written before 1970 found that male characters outnumbered female characters three to one (Women on Words and Images, 1972). Who was portrayed as showing initiative, bravery, and competence? Note the answer in this excerpt from the classic *Dick and Jane* children's reader: Jane, sprawled out on the sidewalk, her roller skates beside her, listens as Mark explains to his mother:

"She cannot skate," said Mark.  
"I can help her.  
"I want to help her.  
"Look at her, Mother.  
"Just look at her.  
"She's just like a girl.  
"She gives up."

Institutional supports for prejudice, like that reader, are often unintended and unnoticed. Not until the 1970s, when changing ideas about males and females



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brought new perceptions of such portrayals, was this blatant (to us) stereotyping widely noticed and changed.

What contemporary examples of institutionalized biases still go unnoticed? Here is one that most of us failed to notice, although it was right before our eyes: By examining 1,750 photographs of people in magazines and newspapers, Dane Archer and his associates (1983) discovered that about two-thirds of the average male photo, but less than half of the average female photo, was devoted to the face. As Archer widened his search, he discovered that such "face-ism" is

common. He found it in the periodicals of 11 other countries, in 920 portraits gathered from the artwork of six centuries, and in the amateur drawings of students at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Georgia Nigro and her colleagues (1988) confirmed the face-ism phenomenon in more magazines, including *Ms.*, a feminist publication.

The researchers suspect that the visual prominence given the faces of men and the bodies of women both reflects and perpetuates gender bias. In research in Germany, Norbert Schwarz and Eva Kurz (1989) confirmed that people whose faces are prominent in photos seem more intelligent and ambitious.

Films and television programs also embody and reinforce prevailing cultural attitudes. The muddleheaded, wide-eyed African American butlers and maids in 1930s movies helped perpetuate the stereotypes they reflected. Today many people find such images offensive, yet even a modern TV comedy skit of a crime-prone African American can later make another African American who is accused of assault seem more guilty (Ford, 1997). Violent rap music from Black artists leads both Black and White listeners to stereotype Blacks as having violent dispositions (Johnson & others, 2000). Sexual rap music depictions of promiscuous Black females reduce listeners' support for Black pregnant women in need (Johnson & others, 2009). And frowning and other negative nonverbal



Unintended bias: Is lighter skin "normal"?



behaviors—which are more prevalent toward Black than White TV characters—likewise increase viewers' racial bias, without their awareness (Weisbuch & others, 2009).

Face-ism: Male photos in the media more often show just the face.

## SUMMING UP: What Are the Social Sources of Prejudice?

- The social situation breeds and maintains prejudice in several ways. A group that enjoys social and economic superiority will often use prejudicial beliefs to justify its privileged position.
- Children are also brought up in ways that foster or reduce prejudice. The family, religious communities,
- and the broader society can sustain or reduce prejudices.
- Social institutions (government, schools, media) also support prejudice, sometimes through overt policies and sometimes through unintentional inertia.

## WHAT ARE THE MOTIVATIONAL SOURCES OF PREJUDICE?

| Identify and examine the motivational sources of prejudice.

Various kinds of motivations underlie the hostilities of prejudice. Motivations can also lead people to avoid prejudice.

### Frustration and Aggression: The Scapegoat Theory

As we will see in Chapter 10, pain and frustration (the blocking of a goal) often evoke hostility. When the cause of our frustration is intimidating or unknown, we often redirect our hostility. This phenomenon of "displaced aggression" may have contributed to the lynchings of African Americans in the South after the Civil War. Between 1882 and 1930, more lynchings occurred in years when cotton prices were low and economic frustration was therefore presumably high (Hepworth & West, 1988; Hovland & Sears, 1940). Hate crimes seem not to have fluctuated with unemployment in recent decades (Falk & others, 2011; Green & others, 1998). However, when living standards are rising, societies tend to be more open to diversity and to the passage and enforcement of antidiscrimination laws (Frank, 1999). Ethnic peace is easier to maintain during prosperous times.

Targets for displaced aggression vary. Following their defeat in World War I and their country's subsequent economic chaos, many Germans saw Jews as villains. Long before Hitler came to power, one German leader explained: "The Jew is just convenient. . . . If there were no Jews, the anti-Semites would have to invent them"

(quoted by G. W. Allport, 1958, p. 325). In earlier centuries people vented their fear and hostility on witches, whom they sometimes burned or drowned in public. In our time, Americans who reacted to 9/11 with more anger than fear expressed greater intolerance toward immigrants and Middle Easterners (Skitka & others, 2004). Passions provoke prejudice. Special individuals who experience no negative emotional response to social threats—namely, children with the genetic disorder called Williams syndrome—display a notable lack of racial stereotypes and prejudice (Santos et al., 2010). No passion, no prejudice.

Competition is an important source of frustration that can fuel prejudice. When two groups compete for jobs, housing, or social prestige, one group's goal fulfillment can become the other group's frustration. Thus, the **realistic group conflict theory** suggests that prejudice arises when groups compete for scarce resources (Maddux & others, 2008; Pereira & others, 2010; Sassenberg & others, 2007). A corresponding ecological principle, Gause's law, states that maximum competition will exist between species with identical needs.

Consider how this has played out across the world:

- In Western Europe, economically frustrated people express relatively high levels of blatant prejudice toward ethnic minorities (Pettigrew & others, 2008, 2010).
- In Canada, opposition to immigration since 1975 has gone up and down with the unemployment rate (Palmer, 1996).
- In the United States, concerns about immigrants taking jobs are greatest among those with the lowest incomes (AP/Ipsos, 2006; Pew, 2006).
- In South Africa, dozens of African immigrants were killed by mobs and 35,000 people were hounded from squatter camps by poor South Africans who resented the economic competition. "These foreigners have no IDs, no papers, and yet they get the jobs," said one unemployed South African, noting that "They are willing to work for 15 rand [about \$2] a day" (Bearak, 2010). When interests clash, prejudice may be the result.

"WHOEVER IS DISSATISFIED WITH HIMSELF IS CONTINUALLY READY FOR REVENGE."

—NIETZSCHE, THE GAY SCIENCE, 1882–1887

### **social identity**

The "we" aspect of our self-concept; the part of our answer to "Who am I?" that comes from our group memberships.

## **Social Identity Theory: Feeling Superior to Others**

Humans are a group-bound species. Our ancestral history prepares us to feed and protect ourselves—to live—in groups. Humans cheer for their groups, kill for their groups, die for their groups. Evolution prepares us, when encountering strangers, to make a quick judgment: friend or foe? Those from our group, those who look like us, even those who *sound* like us—with accents like our own—we instantly tend to like (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Kinzler & others, 2009).

Not surprisingly, as noted by Australian social psychologists John Turner (1981, 2000), Michael Hogg (1992, 2008, 2010), and their colleagues, we also define ourselves by our groups. Self-concept—our sense of who we are—contains not just a *personal identity* (our sense of our personal attributes and attitudes) but also a **social identity** (Chen & others, 2006). Fiona identifies herself as a woman, an Aussie, a Labourite, a University of New South Wales student, a MacDonald family member. We carry such social identities like playing cards, playing them when appropriate. Prime American students to think of themselves as "Americans," and they will display heightened anger and disrespect toward Muslims; prime their "student" identity, and they will instead display heightened anger toward police (Ray & others, 2008).

Working with the late British social psychologist Henri Tajfel, a Polish native who lost family and friends in the Holocaust and then devoted much of his career to studying ethnic hatred, Turner (1947–2011) proposed *social identity theory*. Turner and Tajfel observed the following:

- **We categorize:** We find it useful to put people, ourselves included, into categories. To label someone as a Hindu, a Scot, or a bus driver is a shorthand way of saying some other things about the person.
- **We identify:** We associate ourselves with certain groups (our **ingroups**) and gain self-esteem by doing so.
- **We compare:** We contrast our groups with other groups (**outgroups**), with a favorable bias toward our own group.

We humans naturally divide others into those inside and those outside our group. We also evaluate ourselves partly by our group memberships. Having a sense of “we-ness” strengthens our self-concepts. It *feels* good. We seek not only *respect* for ourselves but also *pride* in our groups (Smith & Tyler, 1997). Moreover, seeing our groups as superior helps us feel even better. It’s as if we all think, “I am an X [name your group]. X is good. Therefore, I am good.”

Lacking a positive personal identity, people often seek self-esteem by identifying with a group. Thus, many disadvantaged youths find pride, power, security, and identity in gang affiliations. When people’s personal and social identities become fused—when the boundary between self and group blurs—they become more willing to fight or die for their group (Gómez & others, 2011; Swann & others, 2009). Many superpatriots, for example, define themselves by their national identities (Staub, 1997, 2005). And many people at loose ends find identity in their associations with new religious movements, self-help groups, or fraternal clubs (Figure 9.4).

Because of our social identifications, we conform to our group norms. We sacrifice ourselves for team, family, nation. And the more important our social identity and the more strongly attached we feel to a group, the more we react prejudicially to threats from another group (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Hinkle & others, 1992).

## INGROUP BIAS

The group definition of who you are—your gender, race, religion, marital status, academic major—implies a definition of who you are not. The circle that includes “us” (the ingroup) excludes “them” (the outgroup). The more that ethnic Turks



**FIGURE 9.4**

Personal identity and social identity together feed self-esteem.

### ingroup

“Us”—a group of people who share a sense of belonging, a feeling of common identity.

### outgroup

“Them”—a group that people perceive as distinctively different from or apart from their ingroup.

**ingroup bias**

The tendency to favor one's own group.

"**THERE IS A TENDENCY TO DEFINE ONE'S OWN GROUP POSITIVELY IN ORDER TO EVALUATE ONE-SELF POSITIVELY."**

—JOHN C. TURNER (1984)

in the Netherlands see themselves as Turks or as Muslims, the less they see themselves as Dutch (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007).

The mere experience of being formed into groups may promote **ingroup bias**. Ask children, "Which are better, the children in your school or the children at [another school nearby]?" Virtually all will say their own school has the better children.

For adults, too, the closer to home, the better things seem. More than 80 percent of both Whites and Blacks say race relations are generally good in their own neighborhoods, but fewer than 60 percent see relations as generally good in the country as a whole (Sack & Elder, 2000). Merely sharing a birthday with someone creates enough of a bond to evoke heightened cooperation in a laboratory experiment (Miller & others, 1998).

**INGROUP BIAS EXPRESSES AND SUPPORTS A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT**

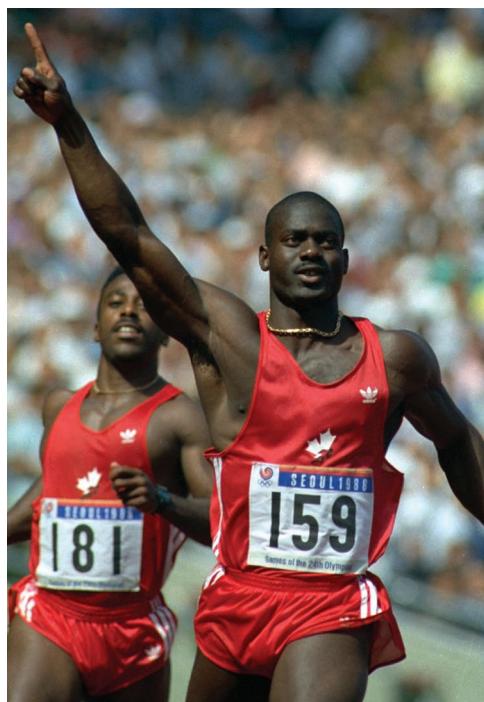
Ingroup bias is one more example of the human quest for a positive self-concept (Chapter 2). Most people have a positive self-image, which they project to their ingroups more than to outgroups (DiDonato & others, 2011). Their ingroup bias expresses their positive self-concept, but it also supports their self-concept. When our group has been successful, we can make ourselves feel better by identifying more strongly with it. College students whose team has just been victorious frequently report, "We won." After their team's defeat, students are more likely to say, "They lost." Basking in the reflected glory of a successful ingroup is strongest among those who have just experienced an ego blow, such as learning they did poorly on a "creativity test" (Cialdini & others, 1976). We can also bask in the reflected glory of a friend's achievement—except when the friend outperforms us on something pertinent to our identity (Tesser & others, 1988). If you think of yourself as an outstanding psychology student, you will likely take more pleasure in a friend's excellence in mathematics.

**INGROUP BIAS FEEDS FAVORITISM** We are so group conscious that, given any excuse to think of ourselves as a group, we will do so—and we will then exhibit ingroup bias. Even forming conspicuous groups on no logical basis—for instance, merely by composing groups X and Y with the flip of a coin—will produce some

ingroup bias (Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Brewer & Silver, 1978; Locksley & others, 1980). In Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Slapstick*, computers gave everyone a new middle name; all "Daffodil-11s" then felt unity with one another and distance from "Raspberry-13s." The self-serving bias (Chapter 2) rides again, enabling people to achieve a more positive social identity: "We" are better than "they," even when "we" and "they" are defined randomly!

In a series of experiments, Tajfel and Michael Billig (1974; Tajfel, 1970, 1981, 1982) further explored how little it takes to provoke favoritism toward *us* and unfairness toward *them*. In one study, Tajfel and Billig had individual British teenagers evaluate modern abstract paintings and then told them that they and some other teens had favored the art of Paul Klee over that of Wassily Kandinsky, while others

Basking in reflected glory. After Jamaican-Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson won the Olympic 100-meter race, Canadian media described his victory as that of a "Canadian." After Johnson's gold medal was taken away because of steroid use, Canadian media then emphasized his "Jamaican" identity (Stelz & others, 2008).



favored Kandinsky. Finally, without ever meeting the other members of their Klee-favoring group, each teen divided some money among members of the Klee- and Kandinsky-favoring groups. In this and other experiments, defining groups even in this trivial way produced ingroup favoritism. David Wilder (1981) summarized the typical result: "When given the opportunity to divide 15 points [worth money], subjects generally award 9 or 10 points to their own group and 5 or 6 points to the other group."

We are more prone to ingroup bias when our group is small and lower in status relative to the outgroup (Ellemers & others, 1997; Mullen & others, 1992). When we're part of a small group surrounded by a larger group, we are more conscious of our group membership. When our ingroup is the majority, we think less about it. To be a foreign student, to be gay or lesbian, or to be of a minority race or gender at some social gathering is to feel one's social identity more keenly and to react accordingly.

**MUST INGROUP LIKING FOSTER OUTGROUP DISLIKING?** Does ingroup bias reflect liking for the ingroup, dislike for the outgroup, or both? Does ethnic pride cause prejudice? Does a strong feminist identity lead feminists to dislike nonfeminists? Does loyalty to a particular fraternity or sorority lead its members to deprecate independents and members of other fraternities and sororities? Or do people merely favor their own group without any animosity toward others?

Experiments support both liking for the ingroup and dislike for the outgroup. Love and hate are sometimes opposite sides of the same coin. If you love the Boston Red Sox, you may hate the New York Yankees. A patriot's love of tribe or country motivates dying to defend it against enemies. To the extent that we see virtue in *us*, we likely see evil in *them*. Moreover, outgroup stereotypes prosper when people feel their ingroup identity most keenly (Wilder & Shapiro, 1991).

We also ascribe uniquely human emotions (love, hope, contempt, resentment) to ingroup members, and are more reluctant to see such human emotions in outgroup members (Demoulin & others, 2008; Leyens & others, 2003, 2007). There is a long history of denying human attributes to outgroups—a process called "infrahumanization." European explorers pictured many of the peoples they encountered as savages ruled by animal instinct. "Africans have been likened to apes, Jews to vermin, and immigrants to parasites," note Australian social psychologists Stephen Loughman and Nick Haslam (2007). We humanize pets and dehumanize outgroups.

Yet ingroup bias results at least as much from perceiving that one's own group is good (Brewer, 2007) as from a sense that other groups are bad (Rosenbaum & Holtz, 1985). Even when there is no "them" (imagine yourself bonding with a handful of fellow survivors on a deserted island), one can come to love "us" (Gaertner & others, 2006). So it seems that positive feelings for our own groups need not be mirrored by equally strong negative feelings for outgroups.



Something favored by an "ingroup" may be cast in a negative light.

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FATHER, MOTHER, AND ME,  
SISTER AND AUNTIE SAY  
ALL THE PEOPLE LIKE US  
ARE  
WE, AND EVERY ONE ELSE  
IS THEY.  
AND THEY LIVE OVER THE  
SEA, WHILE WE LIVE OVER  
THE WAY.  
BUT WOULD YOU BELIEVE  
IT?  
THEY LOOK UPON WE  
AS ONLY A SORT OF THEY!

—RUDYARD KIPLING, 1926

(QUOTED BY MULLEN, 1991)

"BY EXCITING EMULATION  
AND COMPARISONS OF  
SUPERIORITY, YOU LAY THE  
FOUNDATION OF LAST-  
ING MISCHIEF; YOU MAKE  
BROTHERS AND SISTERS  
HATE EACH OTHER."

—SAMUEL JOHNSON, QUOTED  
IN JAMES BOSWELL'S *LIFE OF*

SAMUEL JOHNSON, 1791

### terror management

According to "terror management theory," people's self-protective emotional and cognitive responses (including adhering more strongly to their cultural worldviews and prejudices) when confronted with reminders of their mortality.

### NEED FOR STATUS, SELF-REGARD, AND BELONGING

Status is relative: To perceive ourselves as having status, we need people below us. Thus, one psychological benefit of prejudice, or of any status system, is a feeling of superiority. Most of us can recall a time when we took secret satisfaction in another's failure—perhaps seeing a brother or sister punished or a classmate failing a test. In Europe and North America, prejudice is often greater among those low or slipping on the socioeconomic ladder and among those whose positive self-image is threatened (Lemyre & Smith, 1985; Pettigrew & others, 1998; Thompson & Crocker, 1985). In one study, members of lower-status sororities were more disparaging of competing sororities than were members of higher-status sororities (Crocker & others, 1987). If our status is secure, we have less need to feel superior.

In study after study, thinking about your own mortality—by writing a short essay on dying and the emotions aroused by thinking about death—provokes enough insecurity to intensify ingroup favoritism and outgroup prejudice (Greenberg & others, 1990, 2009; Harmon-Jones & others, 1996; Schimel & others 1999). One study found that among Whites, thinking about death can even promote liking for racists who argue for their group's superiority (Greenberg & others, 2001, 2008). With death on their minds, people exhibit **terror management**. They shield themselves from the threat of their own death by derogating those who further arouse their anxiety by challenging their worldviews. When people are already feeling vulnerable about their mortality, prejudice helps bolster a threatened belief system. Thinking about death can also heighten communal feelings, such as ingroup identification, togetherness, and altruism (McGregor & others, 2001; Sani & others, 2009).

Reminding people of their death can also affect support for important public policies. Before the 2004 presidential election, giving people cues related to death—including asking them to recall their emotions related to the 9/11 attack, or subliminally exposing them to 9/11 related pictures—increased support for President George W. Bush and his antiterrorism policies (Landau & others, 2004). In Iran, reminders of death increased college students' support for suicide attacks against the United States (Pyszczynski & others, 2006).

All this suggests that a man who doubts his own strength and independence might, by proclaiming women to be weak and dependent, boost his masculine image. Indeed, when Joel Grube, Randy Kleinhesselink, and Kathleen Kearney (1982) had Washington State University men view young women's videotaped job interviews, men with low self-acceptance disliked strong, nontraditional women. Men with high self-acceptance preferred them. Experiments confirm the connection between self-image and prejudice: Affirm people and they will evaluate an outgroup more positively; threaten their self-esteem and they will restore it by denigrating an outgroup (Fein & Spencer, 1997; Spencer & others, 1998).

Despising outgroups can also serve to strengthen the ingroup. As we will explore further in Chapter 13, the perception of a common enemy unites a group. School spirit is seldom so strong as when the game is with the archrival. The sense of comradeship among workers is often highest when they all feel a common antagonism toward management. To solidify the Nazi hold over the German people, Hitler threatened them with the "Jewish menace." But when the need to belong is met, people become more accepting of outgroups, report Mario Mikulincer and Phillip Shaver (2001). They subliminally primed some



*"It's not enough that we succeed. Cats must also fail."*

Israeli students with words that fostered a sense of belonging (*love, support, hug*) and others with neutral words. The students then read an essay that was supposedly written by a fellow Jewish student and another by an Arab student. When primed with neutral words, the Israeli students evaluated the supposed Israeli student's essay as superior to the supposed Arab student's essay. When the participants were primed with a sense of belonging, that bias disappeared.

## Motivation to Avoid Prejudice

Motivations not only lead people to be prejudiced but also lead people to avoid prejudice. Try as we might to suppress unwanted thoughts—thoughts about food, thoughts about romance with a friend's partner, judgmental thoughts about another group—they sometimes refuse to go away (Macrae & others, 1994; Wegner & Erber, 1992). This is especially so for older adults, and people under alcohol's influence who lose some of their ability to inhibit unwanted thoughts and therefore to suppress old stereotypes (Bartholow & others, 2006; von Hippel & others, 2000). Patricia Devine and her colleagues (1989, 2005; Amodio & Devine, 2010; Plant & others, 2010) report that people low and high in prejudice sometimes have similar automatic prejudicial responses. The result: Unwanted (dissonant) thoughts and feelings often persist. Breaking the prejudice habit is not easy.

In real life, a majority person's encountering a minority person may trigger a knee-jerk stereotype. Those with accepting and those with disapproving attitudes toward homosexuals may both feel uncomfortable sitting with a gay male on a bus seat (Monteith, 1993). Encountering an unfamiliar Black male, people—even those who pride themselves on not being prejudiced—may respond warily. Seeking not to appear prejudiced, they may divert their attention away from the person (Richeson & Trawalter, 2008).

In one experiment by E. J. Vanman and colleagues (1990), White people viewed slides of White and Black people, imagined themselves interacting with them, and rated their probable liking of the person. Although the participants saw themselves liking the Black more than the White persons, their facial muscles told a different story. Instruments revealed that when a Black face appeared, there tended to be more frowning muscular activity than smiling. An emotion processing center in the brain also becomes more active as a person views an unfamiliar person of another race (Hart & others, 2000).

Researchers who study stereotyping contend, however, that prejudicial reactions are not inevitable (Crandall & Eshelman, 2003; Kunda & Spencer, 2003). The motivation to avoid prejudice can lead people to modify their thoughts and actions. Aware of the gap between how they *should* feel and how they *do* feel, self-conscious people will feel guilt and try to inhibit their prejudicial response (Bodenhausen & Macrae, 1998; Dasgupta & Rivera, 2006; Zuwerink & others, 1996). Even automatic prejudices subside, note Devine and her colleagues (2005), when people's motivation to avoid prejudice is internal (because prejudice is wrong) rather than external (because they don't want others to think badly of them).

The moral: Overcoming what Devine calls "the prejudice habit" isn't easy. But it can be done, as Devine and her colleagues (2012) discovered, after raising the awareness and concern of willing volunteers and training them to replace biased with unbiased knee-jerk responses. Throughout the two-year study follow-up period, participants in the experimental intervention condition displayed reduced implicit prejudice. If you find yourself reacting with knee-jerk presumptions or feelings, don't despair; that's not unusual. It's what you do with that awareness that matters. Do you let those feelings hijack your behavior? Or do you compensate by monitoring and correcting your behavior in future situations?

## SUMMING UP: What Are the Motivational Sources of Prejudice?

- People's motivations affect prejudice. Frustration breeds hostility, which people sometimes vent on scapegoats and sometimes express more directly against competing groups.
- People also are motivated to view themselves and their groups as superior to other groups. Even

trivial group memberships lead people to favor their group over others. A threat to self-image heightens such *ingroup* favoritism, as does the need to belong.

- On a more positive note, if people are motivated to avoid prejudice, they can break the prejudice habit.

## WHAT ARE THE COGNITIVE SOURCES OF PREJUDICE?

| Describe the different cognitive sources of prejudice.

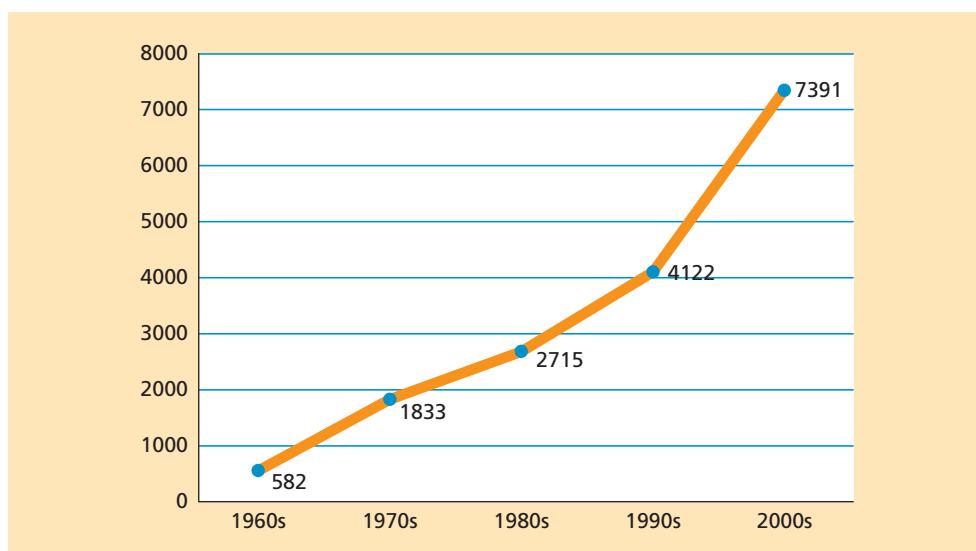
How does the way we think about the world influence our stereotypes? And how do our stereotypes affect our judgments? Fueled by a surge in studies of stereotyping (Figure 9.5), new approaches to prejudice apply new research on social thinking. Stereotyped beliefs and prejudiced attitudes exist not only because of social conditioning and because they enable people to displace hostilities, but also as by-products of normal thinking processes. Many stereotypes spring less from malice of the heart than from the machinery of the mind. Like perceptual illusions, by-products of our knack for interpreting the world, stereotypes can be by-products of how we simplify our complex worlds.

### Categorization: Classifying People into Groups

One way we simplify our environment is to *categorize*—to organize the world by clustering objects into groups (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, 2001). A biologist classifies plants and animals. A human classifies people. Having done so, we think about them more easily. If persons in a group share some similarities—if most MENSA members are smart, and most basketball players are tall—knowing their

FIGURE :: 9.5

Number of Psychological Articles Mentioning "Stereotypes" (or Derivative Word), by Decade  
Source: PsycINFO.



group memberships can provide useful information with minimal effort (Macrae & others, 1994). Stereotypes sometimes offer “a beneficial ratio of information gained to effort expended” (Sherman & others, 1998). Stereotypes represent cognitive efficiency. They are energy-saving schemes for making speedy judgments and predicting how others will think and act. Thus, stereotypes and outgroup bias may, as Carlos David Navarrete and others (2010) have noted, “serve ultimate, evolutionary functions,” by enabling our ancestors to cope and survive.

## SPONTANEOUS CATEGORIZATION

We find it especially easy and efficient to rely on stereotypes when we are

- pressed for time (Kaplan & others, 1993).
- preoccupied (Gilbert & Hixon, 1991).
- tired (Bodenhausen, 1990).
- emotionally aroused (Esses & others, 1993b; Stroessner & Mackie, 1993).
- too young to appreciate diversity (Biernat, 1991).

Ethnicity and sex are powerful ways of categorizing people. Imagine Tom, a 45-year-old African American real-estate agent in Atlanta. I suspect that your image of “Black male” predominates over the categories “middle-aged,” “businessperson,” and “American southerner.”

Experiments expose our spontaneous categorization of people by race. Much as we organize what is actually a color continuum into what we perceive as distinct colors, such as red, blue, and green, so our “discontinuous minds” (Dawkins, 1993) cannot resist categorizing people into groups. We label people of widely varying ancestry as simply “Black” or “White,” as if such categories were black and white. When individuals view different people making statements, they often forget who said what but remember the race of the person who made each statement (Hewstone & others, 1991; Stroessner & others, 1990; Taylor & others, 1978). By itself, such categorization is not prejudice, but it does provide a foundation for prejudice.

Indeed, categorization is necessary for prejudice. Those who feel their social identity keenly will concern themselves with correctly categorizing people as *us* or *them*. Jim Blascovich and his co-researchers (1997) compared racially prejudiced people (who feel their racial identity keenly) with nonprejudiced people. Both groups were equally speedy at classifying white, black, and gray ovals. But how much time did each group take to categorize *people* by race? Especially when shown faces whose race was somewhat ambiguous (Figure 9.6), prejudiced people took longer, with more apparent concern for classifying people as either “us” (one’s own race) or “them” (another race). Prejudice requires racial categorization.

## PERCEIVED SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Picture the following objects: apples, chairs, pencils.

There is a strong tendency to see objects within a group as being more uniform than they really are. Were your apples all red? Your chairs all straight-backed? Your pencils all yellow? Once we classify two days in the same month, they seem more alike, temperature-wise, than the same interval



**FIGURE :: 9.6**  
**Racial Categorization**  
Quickly: What race is this person? Less-prejudiced people respond more quickly, with less apparent concern with possibly misclassifying someone (as if thinking, “who cares?”).

across months. People guess the 8-day average temperature difference between, for instance, November 15 and 23 to be less than the 8-day difference between November 30 and December 8 (Krueger & Clement, 1994).

It's the same with people. When we assign people to groups—athletes, drama majors, math professors—we are likely to exaggerate the similarities within the groups and the differences between them (S. E. Taylor, 1981; Wilder, 1978). We assume that other groups are more homogeneous than our own. Mere division into groups can create an **outgroup homogeneity effect**—a sense that *they* are “all alike” and different from “us” and “our” group (Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992). We generally like people we perceive as similar to us and dislike those we perceive as different, so the result is ingroup bias (Byrne & Wong, 1962; Rokeach & Mezei, 1966; Stein & others, 1965).

The mere fact of a group decision can also lead outsiders to overestimate a group's unanimity. If a conservative wins a national election by a slim majority, observers infer that “the people have turned conservative.” If a liberal won by an equally slim margin, voter attitudes would barely differ, but observers would now attribute a “liberal mood” to the country. When the group is our own, we are more likely to see diversity:

- Many non-Europeans see the Swiss as a fairly homogeneous people. But to the people of Switzerland, the Swiss are diverse, encompassing French-, German-, Italian-, and Romansh-speaking groups.
- Many Anglo Americans lump “Latinos” together. Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans—among others—see important differences (Huddy & Virtanen, 1995).
- Sorority sisters perceive the members of any other sorority as less diverse than the members of their own (Park & Rothbart, 1982).

**"WOMEN ARE MORE LIKE EACH OTHER THAN MEN [ARE]"**

—LORD (NOT LADY)  
CHESTERFIELD

### own-race bias

The tendency for people to more accurately recognize faces of their own race. (Also called the *cross-race effect* or *other-race effect*.)

To a human cartoonist, all penguins look alike.  
© Shannon Miller/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com



*"It turns out I was having an affair and I didn't even know it."*

As Figure 9.7 illustrates, Blacks more easily recognize another Black than they do a White (Bothwell & others, 1989). Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians all recognize faces from their own races better than from one another's (Gross, 2009). Likewise, British South Asians are quicker than White Brits to recognize South Asian faces (Walker & Hewstone, 2008). And 10- to 15-year-old Turkish children are quicker than Austrian children to recognize Turkish faces

### outgroup homogeneity effect

Perception of outgroup members as more similar to one another than are ingroup members. Thus “they are alike; we are diverse.”

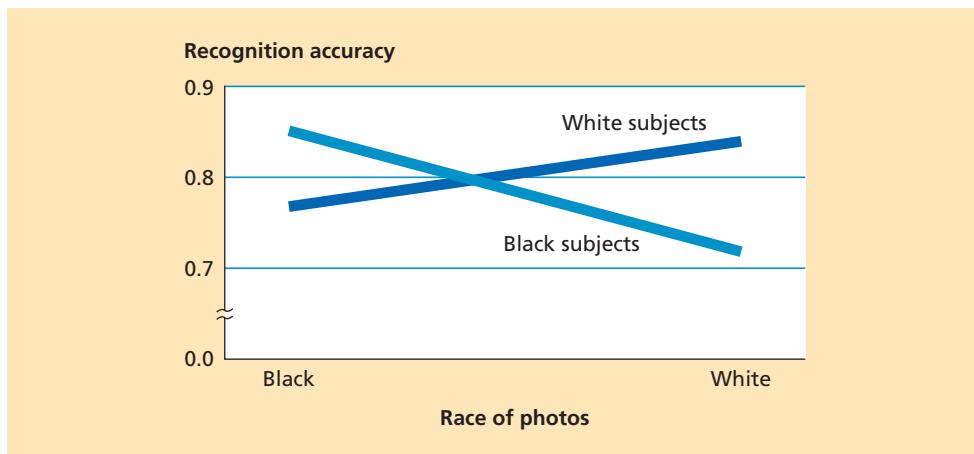
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### own-race bias

The tendency for people to more accurately recognize faces of their own race. (Also called the *cross-race effect* or *other-race effect*.)

To a human cartoonist, all penguins look alike.  
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**FIGURE :: 9.7****The Own-Race Bias**

White subjects more accurately recognize the faces of Whites than of Blacks; Black subjects more accurately recognize the faces of Blacks than of Whites.

*Source:* From P. G. Devine & R. S. Malpass, 1985.

(Sporer & others, 2007). Even infants as young as 9 months display better own-race recognition of faces (Kelly & others, 2005, 2007).

It's true outside the laboratory as well, as Daniel Wright and his colleagues (2001) found after either a Black or a White researcher approached Black and White people in South African and English shopping malls. When later asked to identify the researcher from lineups, people better recognized those of their own race. It's not that we cannot perceive differences among faces of another group. Rather, when looking at a face from another racial group we often attend, first, to group ("that man is Black") rather than to individual features. When viewing someone of our own group, we are less attentive to the race category and more attentive to individual details (Bernstein & others, 2007; Hugenberg & others, 2010; Shriver & others, 2008; Young & others, 2010).

Our attending to someone's being in a different social category may also be contributing to a parallel *own-age bias*—the tendency for both children and older adults to more accurately identify faces from their own age groups (Anastasi & Rhodes, 2005, 2006; Wright & Stroud, 2002; He & others, 2011). (Perhaps you have noticed that senior citizens look more alike than do your fellow students?)

## Distinctiveness: Perceiving People Who Stand Out

Other ways we perceive our worlds also breed stereotypes. Distinctive people and vivid or extreme occurrences often capture attention and distort judgments.

### DISTINCTIVE PEOPLE

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you were the only person of your gender, race, or nationality? If so, your difference from the others probably made you more noticeable and the object of more attention. A Black in an otherwise White group, a man in an otherwise female group, or a woman in an otherwise male group seems more prominent and influential and to have exaggerated good and bad qualities (Crocker & McGraw, 1984; S. E. Taylor & others, 1979). When someone in a group is made conspicuous, we tend to see that person as causing whatever happens (Taylor & Fiske, 1978). If we are positioned to look at Joe, even if Joe is merely an average group member, Joe will seem to have a greater-than-average influence on the group.

Have you noticed that people also define you by your most distinctive traits and behaviors? Tell people about someone who is a skydiver and a tennis player, report Lori Nelson and Dale Miller (1995), and they will think of the person as a skydiver. Asked to choose a gift book for the person, they will pick a skydiving



Distinctive people, such as Houston Rockets 7'6" former player Yao Ming, draw attention.

book over a tennis book. A person who has both a pet snake and a pet dog is seen more as a snake owner than a dog owner.

People also take note of those who violate expectations (Bettencourt & others, 1997). "Like a flower blooming in winter, intellect is more readily noticed where it is not expected," reflected Stephen Carter (1993, p. 54) on his own experience as an African American intellectual. Such perceived distinctiveness makes it easier for highly capable job applicants from low-status groups to get noticed, although they also must work harder to prove that their abilities are genuine (Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1997).

Ellen Langer and Lois Imber (1980) cleverly demonstrated the attention paid to distinctive people. They asked Harvard students to watch a video of a man reading. The students paid closer attention when they were led to think he was out of the ordinary—a cancer patient, a homosexual, or a millionaire. They noticed characteristics that other viewers ignored, and their evaluation of him was more extreme. Those who thought the man was a cancer patient noticed distinctive facial characteristics and bodily movements and thus perceived him to be much more "different from most people" than did the other viewers. The extra attention we pay to distinctive people creates an illusion that they differ from others more than they really do. If people thought you had the IQ of a genius, they would probably notice things about you that otherwise would pass unnoticed.

**DISTINCTIVENESS FEEDS SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS** When surrounded by Whites, Blacks sometimes detect people reacting to their distinctiveness. Many report being stared or glared at, being subject to insensitive comments, and receiving bad service (Swim & others, 1998). Sometimes, however, we misperceive others as reacting to our distinctiveness. Researchers Robert Kleck and Angelo Strenta (1980) discovered this when they led Dartmouth College women to feel disfigured. The women thought the purpose of the experiment was to assess how someone would react to a facial scar created with theatrical makeup; the scar was on the right cheek, running from the ear to the mouth. Actually, the purpose was to see how the women themselves, when made to feel deviant, would perceive others' behavior toward them. After applying the makeup, the experimenter gave each woman a small hand mirror so she could see the authentic-looking scar. When she put the mirror down, he then applied some "moisturizer" to "keep the makeup from cracking." What the "moisturizer" really did was remove the scar.

The scene that followed was poignant. A young woman, feeling terribly self-conscious about her supposedly disfigured face, talked with another woman who saw no such disfigurement and knew nothing of what had gone on before. If you have ever felt similarly self-conscious—perhaps about a physical handicap, acne, even just a bad hair day—then perhaps you can sympathize with the self-conscious woman. Compared with women who were led to believe their conversational partners merely thought they had an allergy, the "disfigured" women became acutely sensitive to how their partners were looking at them. They rated their partners as more tense, distant, and patronizing. Observers who later analyzed videotapes of how the partners treated "disfigured" persons could find no such differences in treatment. Self-conscious about being different, the "disfigured" women had misinterpreted mannerisms and comments they would otherwise not have noticed.

Self-conscious interactions between a majority and a minority person can therefore feel tense even when both are well intentioned (Devine & others, 1996). Tom,

who is known to be gay, meets tolerant Bill, who is straight and wants to respond without prejudice. But feeling unsure of himself, Bill holds back a bit. Tom, expecting negative attitudes from most people, misreads Bill's hesitancy as hostility and responds with a seeming chip on his shoulder.

Anyone can experience this phenomenon. Majority group members (in one study, White residents of Manitoba) often have beliefs—"meta-stereotypes"—about how minorities stereotype them (Vorauer & others, 1998). Even relatively unprejudiced Canadian Whites, Israeli Jews, or American Christians may sense that outgroup minorities stereotype them as prejudiced, arrogant, or patronizing. If George worries that Gamal perceives him as "your typical educated racist," he may be on guard when talking with Gamal.

**STIGMA CONSCIOUSNESS** People vary in **stigma consciousness**—in how much they expect others to stereotype them. Gays and lesbians, for example, differ in how much they suppose others "interpret all my behaviors" in terms of their homosexuality (Lewis & others, 2006; Pinel, 1999, 2004).

Seeing oneself as a victim of pervasive prejudice has its ups and downs (Branscombe & others, 1999; Dion, 1998). The downside is that those who perceive themselves as frequent victims live with the stress of presumed stereotypes and antagonism, and therefore experience lower well-being. While living in Europe, stigma-conscious Americans—Americans who perceive Europeans as resenting them—live more fretfully than those who feel accepted.

The upside is that perceptions of prejudice buffer individual self-esteem. If someone is nasty, "Well, it's not directed at me personally." Moreover, perceived prejudice and discrimination enhance our feelings of social identity and prepare us to join in collective social action.

### VIVID CASES

Our minds also use distinctive cases as a shortcut to judging groups. Are the Japanese good baseball players? "Well, there's Ichiro Suzuki and Hideki Matsui and Kosuke Fukudome. Yeah, I'd say so." Note the thought processes at work here: Given limited experience with a particular social group, we recall examples of it and generalize from those (Sherman, 1996). Moreover, encountering an example of a negative stereotype (for instance, a hostile Black) can prime the stereotype, leading us to minimize contact with the group (Henderson-King & Nisbett, 1996).

### stigma consciousness

A person's expectation of being victimized by prejudice or discrimination.



Self-consciousness about being different affects how we interpret others' behavior.  
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Such generalizing from a single case can cause problems. Vivid instances, though more available in memory, seldom represent the larger group. Exceptional athletes, though distinctive and memorable, are not the best basis for judging the distribution of athletic talent among an entire group.

Those in a numerical minority, being more distinctive, also may be numerically overestimated by the majority. What proportion of your country's population would you say is Muslim? People in non-Muslim countries often overestimate this proportion. (In the United States, a Pew Research Center [2011] study reported that 0.8 percent of the population were Muslim.)

Consider a 2011 Gallup survey, in which the average American guessed that 25 percent of people are exclusively homosexual (Morales, 2011). The best evidence suggests that about 3 percent of men and 1 or 2 percent of women have a same-sex orientation (Chandra & others, 2011; Herbenick & others, 2010).

Myron Rothbart and his colleagues (1978) showed how distinctive cases also fuel stereotypes. They had University of Oregon students view 50 slides, each of which stated a man's height. For one group of students, 10 of the men were slightly over 6 feet (up to 6 feet, 4 inches). For other students, these 10 men were well over 6 feet (up to 6 feet, 11 inches). When asked later how many of the men were over 6 feet, those given the moderately tall examples recalled 5 percent too many. Those given the extremely tall examples recalled 50 percent too many. In a follow-up experiment, students read descriptions of the actions of 50 men, 10 of whom had committed either nonviolent crimes, such as forgery, or violent crimes, such as rape. Of those shown the list with the violent crimes, most overestimated the number of criminal acts.

### DISTINCTIVE EVENTS FOSTER ILLUSORY CORRELATIONS

Stereotypes assume a correlation between group membership and individuals' presumed characteristics ("Italians are emotional," "Jews are shrewd," "Accountants are perfectionists"). Often, people's stereotypes are accurate (Jussim, 2012). But sometimes our attentiveness to unusual occurrences creates illusory correlations. Because we are sensitive to distinctive events, the co-occurrence of two such events is especially noticeable—more noticeable than each of the times the unusual events do *not* occur together.

David Hamilton and Robert Gifford (1976) demonstrated illusory correlation in a classic experiment. They showed students slides in which various people, members of "Group A" or "Group B," were said to have done something desirable or undesirable. For example, "John, a member of Group A, visited a sick friend in the hospital." Twice as many statements described members of Group A as Group B. But both groups did nine desirable acts for every four undesirable behaviors. Since both Group B and the undesirable acts were less frequent, their co-occurrence—for example, "Allen, a member of Group B, dented the fender of a parked car and didn't leave his name"—was an unusual combination that caught people's attention. The students therefore overestimated the frequency with which the "minority" group (B) acted undesirably, and they judged Group B more harshly.

Remember, Group A members outnumbered Group B members two to one, and Group B members committed undesirable acts in the same *proportion* as Group A members (thus, they committed only half as many). Moreover, the students had no preexisting biases for or against Group B, and they received the information more systematically than daily experience ever offers it. Although researchers debate why it happens, they agree that illusory correlation occurs and provides yet another source for the formation of racial stereotypes (Berndsen & others, 2002). Thus, the features that most distinguish a minority from a majority are those that become associated with it (Sherman & others, 2009). Your ethnic or social group may be like other groups in most ways, but people will notice how it differs.

In experiments, even single co-occurrences of an unusual act by someone in an atypical group—"Ben, a Jehovah's Witness, owns a pet sloth"—can embed illusory

correlations in people's minds (Risen & others, 2007). This enables the mass media to feed illusory correlations. When a self-described homosexual person murders or sexually abuses someone, homosexuality is often mentioned. When a heterosexual does the same, the person's sexual orientation is seldom mentioned. Likewise, when ex-mental patients Mark Chapman and John Hinckley, Jr., shot John Lennon and President Reagan, respectively, the assailants' mental histories commanded attention. Assassins and mental hospitalization are both relatively infrequent, making the combination especially newsworthy. Such reporting adds to the illusion of a large correlation between (1) violent tendencies and (2) homosexuality or mental hospitalization.

Unlike the students who judged Groups A and B, we often have preexisting biases. David Hamilton's further research with Terrence Rose (1980) revealed that our preexisting stereotypes can lead us to "see" correlations that aren't there. The researchers had University of California at Santa Barbara students read sentences in which various adjectives described the members of different occupational groups ("Juan, an accountant, is timid and thoughtful"). In actuality, each occupation was described equally often by each adjective; accountants, doctors, and salespeople were equally often timid, wealthy, and talkative. The students, however, *thought* they had more often read descriptions of timid accountants, wealthy doctors, and talkative salespeople. Their stereotyping led them to perceive correlations that weren't there, thus helping to perpetuate the stereotypes.

Likewise, guess what happened when Vaughn Becker and his colleagues (2010) invited university students to view a White and a Black face—one angry, one not—for one-tenth of a second. Then, as a brief distraction, they added two numbers that accompanied the faces (as in Figure 9.8). The participants' subsequent recollections of what they had viewed revealed racial bias. "White anger flowed to neutral Black faces (34 percent likelihood) more readily than Black anger flowed to neutral White faces (19 percent likelihood)."

## Attribution: Is It a Just World?

In explaining others' actions, we frequently commit the fundamental attribution error that was discussed in Chapter 3: We attribute others' behavior so much to their inner dispositions that we discount important situational forces. The error occurs partly because our attention focuses on the person, not on the situation. A person's race or sex is vivid and gets attention; the situational forces working upon that person are usually less visible. Slavery was often overlooked as an explanation for slave behavior; the behavior was instead attributed to the slaves' own nature. Until recently, the same was true of how we explained the perceived differences between women and men. Because gender-role constraints were hard to see, we



**FIGURE :: 9.8**

Ingroup biases influence perceptions. When briefly shown two faces, one neutral, one angry, people more often misrecalled the Black rather than the White face as angry (Becker & others, 2010).

attributed men's and women's behavior solely to their presumed innate dispositions. The more people assume that human traits are fixed dispositions, the stronger are their stereotypes and the greater their acceptance of racial inequities (Levy & others, 1998; Williams & Eberhardt, 2008).

### GROUP-SERVING BIAS

Thomas Pettigrew (1979, 1980) showed how attribution errors bias people's explanations of group members' behaviors. We grant members of our own group the benefit of the doubt: "She donated because she has a good heart; he refused because he's using every penny to help support his mother." When explaining acts by members of other groups, we more often assume the worst: "She donated to gain favor; he refused because he's selfish." In one classic study, the light shove that Whites perceived as mere "horsing around" when done by another White became a "violent gesture" when done by a Black (Duncan, 1976).

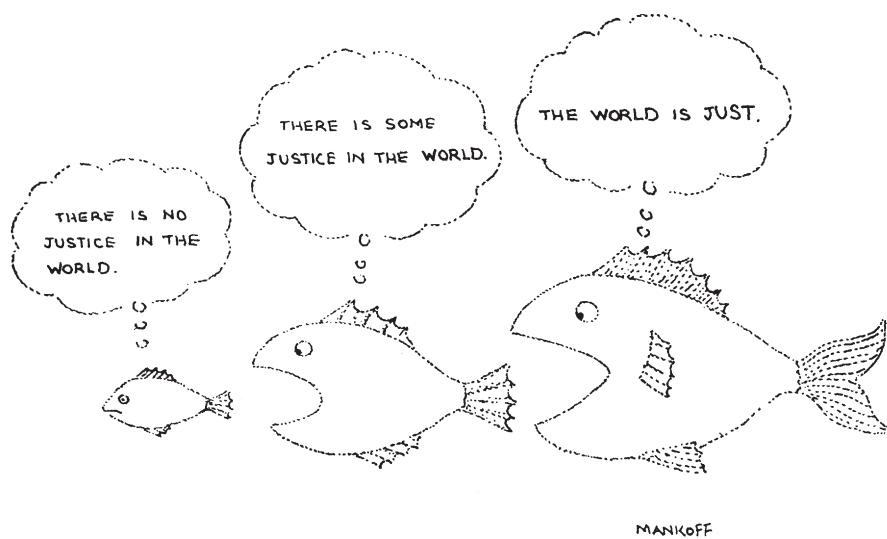
Positive behavior by outgroup members is more often dismissed. It may be seen as a "special case" ("He is certainly bright and hardworking—not at all like other . . ."), as owing to luck or some special advantage ("She probably got admitted just because her med school had to fill its quota for women applicants"), as demanded by the situation ("Under the circumstances, what could the cheap Scot do but pay the whole check?"), or as attributable to extra effort ("Asian students get better grades because they're so compulsive"). Disadvantaged groups and groups that stress modesty (such as the Chinese) exhibit less of this **group-serving bias** (Fletcher & Ward, 1989; Heine & Lehman, 1997; Jackson & others, 1993). Social psychologists Jacquie Vorauer and Stacey Sasaki (2010, 2011) note that multiculturalism's focus on differences, which can be positive in the absence of conflict (making intergroup exchanges seem interesting and stimulating), sometimes comes at a cost. When there is conflict or threat, a focus on differences can foster group-level attributions and increased hostility.

#### group-serving bias

Explaining away outgroup members' positive behaviors; also attributing negative behaviors to their dispositions (while excusing such behavior by one's own group).

Just-world thinking? Some people argued against giving legal rights to American prisoners in the Guantanamo Bay detention camp that housed alleged combatants from Afghanistan and Iraq. One argument was that these people would not be confined there if they had not done horrendous things, so why allow them to argue their innocence in U.S. courts?





The just-world phenomenon.  
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**TABLE :: 9.1 How Self-Enhancing Social Identities Support Stereotypes**

	Ingroup	Outgroup
Attitude	Favoritism	Denigration
Perceptions	Heterogeneity (we differ)	Homogeneity (they're alike)
Attributions for negative behavior	To situations	To dispositions

The group-serving bias can subtly color our language. A team of University of Padua (Italy) researchers led by Anne Maass (1995, 1999) has found that positive behaviors by another ingroup member are often described as general dispositions (for example, "Karen is helpful"). When performed by an outgroup member, the same behavior is often described as a specific, isolated act ("Carmen opened the door for the man with the cane"). With negative behavior, the specificity reverses: "Eric shoved her" (an isolated act by an ingroup member) but "Enrique was aggressive" (an outgroup member's general disposition). Maass calls this group-serving bias the *linguistic intergroup bias*.

Earlier we noted that blaming the victim can justify the blamer's own superior status (Table 9.1). Blaming occurs as people attribute an outgroup's failures to its members' flawed dispositions, notes Miles Hewstone (1990): "They fail because they're stupid; we fail because we didn't try." If women, Blacks, or Jews have been abused, they must somehow have brought it on themselves. When the British made a group of German civilians walk through the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp at the close of World War II, one German responded: "What terrible criminals these prisoners must have been to receive such treatment." (Such group-serving bias illustrates the motivations that underlie prejudice, as well as the cognition. Motivation and cognition, emotion and thinking, are inseparable.)

"FOR IF [PEOPLE WERE] TO  
CHOOSE OUT OF ALL THE  
CUSTOMS IN THE WORLD  
SUCH AS SEEMED TO THEM  
THE BEST, THEY WOULD  
EXAMINE THE WHOLE  
NUMBER, AND END BY PRE-  
FERRING THEIR OWN."

—GREEK HISTORIAN  
HERODOTUS, *THE HISTORIES*,  
BOOK III, 440 B.C.

## THE JUST-WORLD PHENOMENON

In a series of experiments conducted at the universities of Waterloo and Kentucky, Melvin Lerner and his colleagues (Lerner, 1980; Lerner & Miller, 1978) discovered that merely *observing* another innocent person being victimized is enough to make the victim seem less worthy.

Lerner (1980) noted that such disparaging of hapless victims results from the need to believe that "I am a just person living in a just world, a world where people

### just-world phenomenon

The tendency of people to believe that the world is just and that people therefore get what they deserve and deserve what they get.

*The classic illustration of "just-world thinking" comes from the Old Testament story of Job, a good person who suffers terrible misfortune. Job's friends surmise that, this being a just world, Job must have done something wicked to elicit such terrible suffering.*

"IF YOU DON'T HAVE A JOB  
AND YOU'RE NOT RICH,  
BLAME YOURSELF!"

—U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE  
HERMAN CAIN, 2011

get what they deserve." From early childhood, he argues, we are taught that good is rewarded and evil punished. Hard work and virtue pay dividends; laziness and immorality do not. From this it is but a short leap to assuming that those who flourish must be good and those who suffer must deserve their fate.

Numerous studies have confirmed this **just-world phenomenon** (Hafer & Bègue, 2005). Imagine that you, along with some others, are participating in one of Lerner's studies—supposedly on the perception of emotional cues (Lerner & Simmons, 1966). One of the participants, a confederate, is selected by lottery to perform a memory task. This person receives painful shocks whenever she gives a wrong answer. You and the others note her emotional responses.

After watching the victim receive these apparently painful shocks, the experimenter asks you to evaluate her. How would you respond? With compassionate sympathy? We might expect so. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "The martyr cannot be dishonored." On the contrary, in these experiments the martyrs *were* dishonored. When observers were powerless to alter the victim's fate, they often rejected and devalued the victim. Juvenal, the Roman satirist, anticipated these results: "The Roman mob follows after Fortune . . . and hates those who have been condemned." And the more ongoing the suffering, as with Jews even after the Holocaust, the greater the dislike of the victims (Imhoff & Banse, 2009).

Linda Carli and her colleagues (1989, 1999) report that the just-world phenomenon colors our impressions of rape victims. Carli had people read detailed descriptions of interactions between a man and a woman. In one scenario, a woman and her boss meet for dinner, go to his home, and each have a glass of wine. Some read this scenario with a happy ending: "Then he led me to the couch. He held my hand and asked me to marry him." In hindsight, people find the ending unsurprising and admire the man's and woman's character traits. Others read the same scenario with a terrible ending: "But then he became very rough and pushed me onto the couch. He held me down on the couch and raped me." Given this ending, people see the rape as inevitable and blame the woman for provocative behavior that seems faultless in the first scenario.

This line of research suggests that people are indifferent to social injustice not because they have no concern for justice but because they see no injustice. Those who assume a just world believe that rape victims must have behaved seductively (Borgida & Brekke, 1985), that battered spouses must have provoked their beatings (Summers & Feldman, 1984), that poor people don't deserve better (Furnham & Gunter, 1984), and that sick people are responsible for their illnesses (Gruman & Sloan, 1983). When researchers activate the concept of choice by having people record others' choices, participants (in the United States) display less empathy for disadvantaged individuals, engage in more victim-blaming, and show reduced support for social policies such as affirmative action (Savani & others, 2011).

Such beliefs enable successful people to reassure themselves that they, too, deserve what they have. The wealthy and healthy can see their own good fortune, and others' misfortune, as justly deserved. Linking good fortune with virtue and misfortune with moral failure enables the fortunate to feel pride and to avoid responsibility for the unfortunate.

People loathe a loser even when the loser's misfortune quite obviously stems substantially from bad luck. Children, for example, tend to view lucky others—such as someone who has found money on a sidewalk—as more likely than unlucky children to do good things and be a nice person (Olson & others, 2008). Adults know that gambling outcomes are just good or bad luck and should not affect their evaluations of the gambler. Still, they can't resist playing Monday-morning quarterback—judging people by their results. Ignoring the fact that reasonable decisions can bring bad results, they judge losers as less competent (Baron & Hershey, 1988). Lawyers and stock market investors may similarly judge themselves by their outcomes, becoming smug after successes and self-reproachful after failures. Talent and initiative matter. But the just-world assumption discounts the uncontrollable factors that can derail good efforts even by talented people.

Just-world thinking also leads people to justify their culture's familiar social systems (Jost & others, 2009; Kay & others, 2009). The way things are, we're inclined to think, is the way things ought to be. Such natural conservatism makes it difficult to pass new social policies, such as voting rights laws or tax or health care reform. But after a new policy is in place, our "system justification" works to sustain it. Thus, Canadians mostly approve of their government policies, such as national health care, strict gun control, and no capital punishment, whereas Americans likewise mostly support differing policies to which they are accustomed.

## SUMMING UP: What Are the Cognitive Sources of Prejudice?

- Recent research shows how the stereotyping that underlies prejudice is a by-product of our thinking—our ways of simplifying the world. Clustering people into categories exaggerates the uniformity within a group and the differences between groups.
- A distinctive individual, such as a lone minority person, has a compelling quality that makes us aware of differences that would otherwise go unnoticed. The occurrence of two distinctive events (for example, a minority person committing an unusual crime) helps create an illusory correlation between people and behavior. Attributing others' behavior to their dispositions can lead to the *group-serving bias*: assigning outgroup members' negative behavior to their natural character while explaining away their positive behaviors.
- Blaming the victim results from the common presumption that because this is a *just world*, people get what they deserve.

## WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF PREJUDICE?

### Identify and understand the consequences of prejudice.

How can stereotypes create their own reality? How can prejudice undermine people's performance? Prejudice has consequences as well as causes.

### Self-Perpetuating Prejudgments

Prejudice involves preconceived judgments. Prejudgments are inevitable: None of us is a dispassionate bookkeeper of social happenings, tallying evidence for and against our biases.

*Prejudgments guide our attention and our memories.* People who accept gender stereotypes often misrecall their own school grades in stereotype-consistent ways. For example, women often recall receiving worse math grades and better arts grades than were actually the case (Chatard & others, 2007).

Moreover, after we judge an item as belonging to a category such as a particular race or sex, our memory for it later shifts toward the features we associate with that category. Johanne Huart and his colleagues (2005) demonstrated this by showing Belgian university students a face that was a blend of 70 percent of the features of a typical male and 30 percent female (or vice versa). Later, those shown the 70 percent male face recalled seeing a male (as you might expect), but also misrecalled the face as being even more prototypically male (as, say, the 80 percent male face shown in Figure 9.9).

*Prejudgments are self-perpetuating.* Whenever a member of a group behaves as expected, we duly note the fact; our prior belief is confirmed. When a member of a group behaves inconsistently with our expectation, we may interpret or explain away the behavior as due to special circumstances (Crocker & others, 1983). The

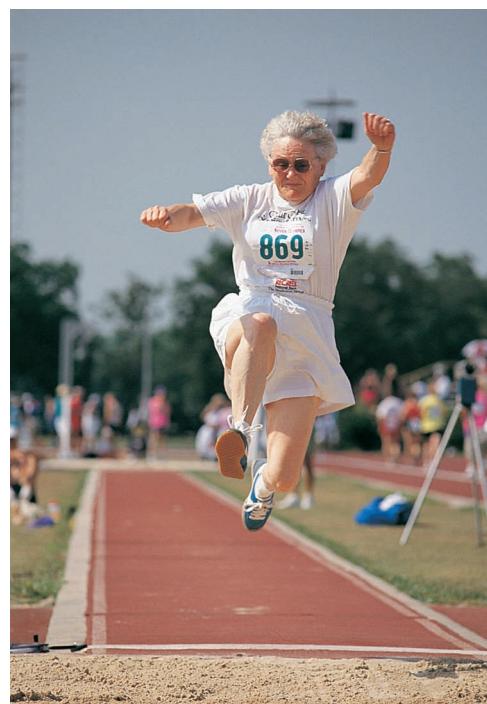
**FIGURE :: 9.9****Categorization Influences Memories**

Shown a face that was 70 percent male, people usually classified the person as a male, and then recollected the face as more male-typical than it was (Huart & others, 2005).

contrast to a stereotype can also make someone seem exceptional. Telling some people that “Maria played basketball” and others that “Mark played basketball” may make Maria seem more athletic than Mark (Biernat, 2003). Stereotypes therefore influence how we construe someone’s behavior. Prime White folks with negative media images of Black folks (for example, looting after Hurricane Katrina), and the activated stereotype may be poisonous. In one experiment, such images produced reduced empathy for other Black people in need (Johnson & others, 2008).

Perhaps you, too, can recall a time when, try as you might, you could not overcome someone’s opinion of you, when no matter what you did you were misinterpreted. Misinterpretations are likely when someone *expects* an unpleasant encounter with you (Wilder & Shapiro, 1989). William Ickes and his colleagues (1982) demonstrated this in an experiment with pairs of college-age men. As the men arrived, the experimenters falsely forewarned one member of each pair that the other person was “one of the unfriendliest people I’ve talked to lately.” The two were then introduced and left alone together for five minutes. Students in another condition of the experiment were led to think the other participant was exceptionally friendly.

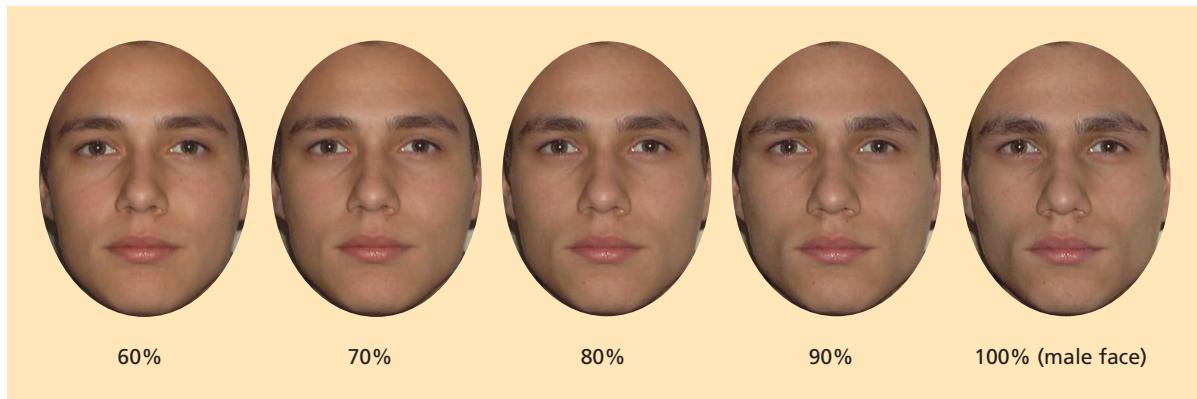
Those in both conditions were friendly to the new acquaintance. In fact, those who expected him to be *unfriendly* went out of their way to be friendly, and their friendly behavior elicited a warm response. But unlike the positively biased students, those expecting an unfriendly person attributed this reciprocal friendliness to their own “kid-gloves” treatment of him. They afterward expressed more mistrust and dislike for the person and rated his behavior as less friendly. Despite their partner’s actual friendliness, the negative bias induced these students to “see” hostilities lurking beneath his “forced smiles.” They would never have seen it if they hadn’t believed it.



**"LABELS ACT LIKE SHRIEKING SIRENS, DEAFENING US TO ALL FINER DISCRIMINATIONS THAT WE MIGHT OTHERWISE PERCEIVE."**

—GORDON ALLPORT, *THE NATURE OF PREJUDICE*, 1954

When people violate our stereotypes, we salvage the stereotype by splitting off a new subgroup stereotype, such as “senior Olympians.”



We do notice information that is strikingly inconsistent with a stereotype, but even that information has less impact than might be expected. When we focus on an atypical example, we can salvage the stereotype by splitting off a new category (Brewer & Gaertner, 2004; Hewstone, 1994; Kunda & Oleson, 1995, 1997). The positive image that British schoolchildren form of their friendly school police officers (whom they perceive as a special category) doesn't improve their image of police officers in general (Hewstone & others, 1992). This **subtyping**—seeing people who deviate as exceptions—helps maintain the stereotype that police officers are unfriendly and dangerous.

A different way to accommodate the inconsistent information is to form a new stereotype for those who don't fit. Recognizing that the stereotype does not apply for everyone in the category, homeowners who have "desirable" Black neighbors can form a new and different stereotype of "professional, middle-class Blacks." This **subgrouping**—forming a subgroup stereotype—tends to lead to modest change in the stereotype as the stereotype becomes more differentiated (Richards & Hewstone, 2001). Subtypes are *exceptions* to the group; subgroups are acknowledged as a *part* of the overall group.

### **subtyping**

Accommodating individuals who deviate from one's stereotype by thinking of them as "exceptions to the rule."

### **subgrouping**

Accommodating individuals who deviate from one's stereotype by forming a new stereotype about this subset of the group.

## Discrimination's Impact: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Attitudes may coincide with the social hierarchy not only as a rationalization for it but also because discrimination affects its victims. "One's reputation," wrote Gordon Allport, "cannot be hammered, hammered, hammered into one's head without doing something to one's character" (1958, p. 139). If we could snap our fingers and end all discrimination, it would be naive for the White majority to say to Blacks, "The tough times are over, folks! You can now all be attaché-carrying executives and professionals." When the oppression ends, its effects linger, like a societal hangover.

In *The Nature of Prejudice*, Allport catalogued 15 possible effects of victimization. Allport believed these reactions were reducible to two basic types—those that involve blaming oneself (withdrawal, self-hate, aggression against one's own group) and those that involve blaming external causes (fighting back, suspiciousness, increased group pride). If victimization takes a toll—for instance, higher rates of crime—people can use the result to justify the discrimination: "If we let those people in our nice neighborhood, property values will plummet."

Does discrimination indeed affect its victims? We must be careful not to overstate the point. The soul and style of Black culture is for many a proud heritage, not just a response to victimization (Jones, 2003). Nevertheless, social beliefs *can* be self-confirming, as demonstrated in a clever pair of experiments by Carl Word, Mark Zanna, and Joel Cooper (1974). In the first experiment, Princeton University White male volunteers interviewed White and Black research assistants posing as

"IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE  
THAT THE SUPPRESSED  
PEOPLE SHOULD DEVELOP  
AN INTENSE HOSTILITY  
TOWARDS A CULTURE  
WHOSE EXISTENCE THEY  
MAKE POSSIBLE BY THEIR  
WORK, BUT IN WHOSE  
WEALTH THEY HAVE TOO  
SMALL A SHARE."

—SIGMUND FREUD, THE  
FUTURE OF AN ILLUSION, 1927

job applicants. When the applicant was Black, the interviewers sat farther away, ended the interview 25 percent sooner, and made 50 percent more speech errors than when the applicant was White. Imagine being interviewed by someone who sat at a distance, stammered, and ended the interview rather quickly. Would it affect your performance or your feelings about the interviewer?

To find out, the researchers conducted a second experiment in which trained interviewers treated people as the interviewers in the first experiment had treated either the White or the Black applicants. When videotapes of the interviews were later rated, those who were treated like the Blacks in the first experiment seemed more nervous and less effective. Moreover, the interviewees could themselves sense a difference; those treated the way the Blacks had been treated judged their interviewers to be less adequate and less friendly. The experimenters concluded that part of “the ‘problem’ of Black performance resides . . . within the interaction setting itself.” As with other self-fulfilling prophecies (recall Chapter 3), prejudice affects its targets.

“IF WE FORESEE EVIL IN OUR FELLOW MAN, WE TEND TO PROVOKE IT; IF GOOD, WE ELICIT IT.”

—GORDON ALLPORT, THE NATURE OF PREJUDICE, 1958

### **stereotype threat**

A disruptive concern, when facing a negative stereotype, that one will be evaluated based on a negative stereotype. Unlike self-fulfilling prophecies that hammer one’s reputation into one’s self-concept, stereotype threat situations have immediate effects.

## **Stereotype Threat**

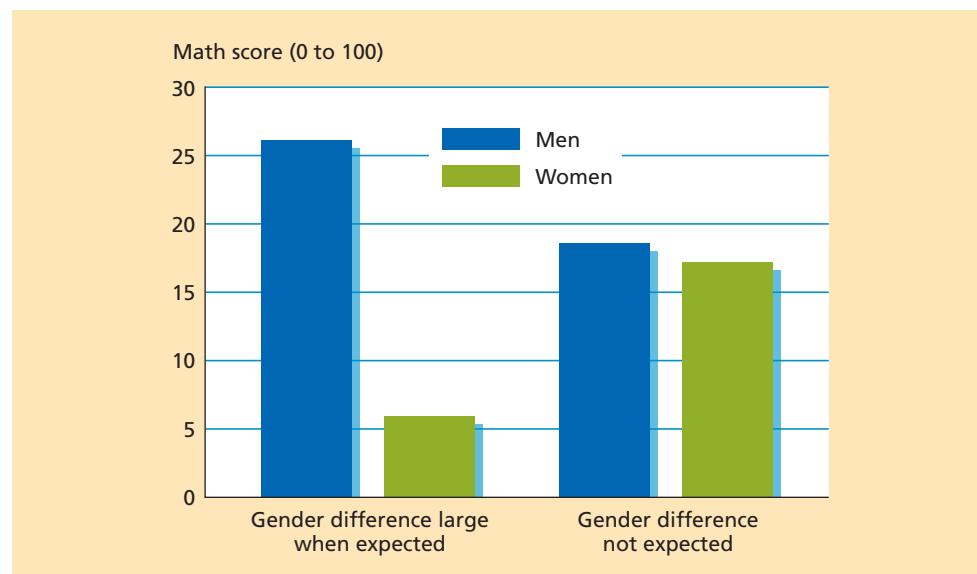
Just being sensitive to prejudice is enough to make us self-conscious when living as a numerical minority—perhaps as a Black person in a White community or as a White person in a Black community. As with other circumstances that siphon off our mental energy and attention, the result can be diminished mental and physical stamina (Inzlicht & others, 2006). Placed in a situation where others expect you to perform poorly, your anxiety may also cause you to confirm the belief. I am a short guy in my 60s. When I join a pickup basketball game with bigger, younger players, I presume that they expect me to be a detriment to their team, and that tends to undermine my confidence and performance. Claude Steele and his colleagues call this phenomenon **stereotype threat**—a self-confirming apprehension that one will be evaluated based on a negative stereotype (Steele, 2010; Steele & others, 2002; see also [reducingstereotypethreat.org](http://reducingstereotypethreat.org)).

In several experiments, Steven Spencer, Claude Steele, and Diane Quinn (1999) gave a very difficult math test to men and women students who had similar math backgrounds. When told that there were *no* gender differences on the test and no evaluation of any group stereotype, the women’s performance consistently equaled the men’s. Told that there *was* a gender difference, the women dramatically confirmed the stereotype (Figure 9.10). Frustrated by the extremely difficult test

**FIGURE :: 9.10**

### **Stereotype Vulnerability and Women’s Math Performance**

Steven Spencer, Claude Steele, and Diane Quinn (1999) gave equally capable men and women a difficult math test. When participants were led to believe there were gender differences on the test, women scored lower than men. When the threat of confirming the stereotype was removed (when gender differences were not expected), women did just as well as men.



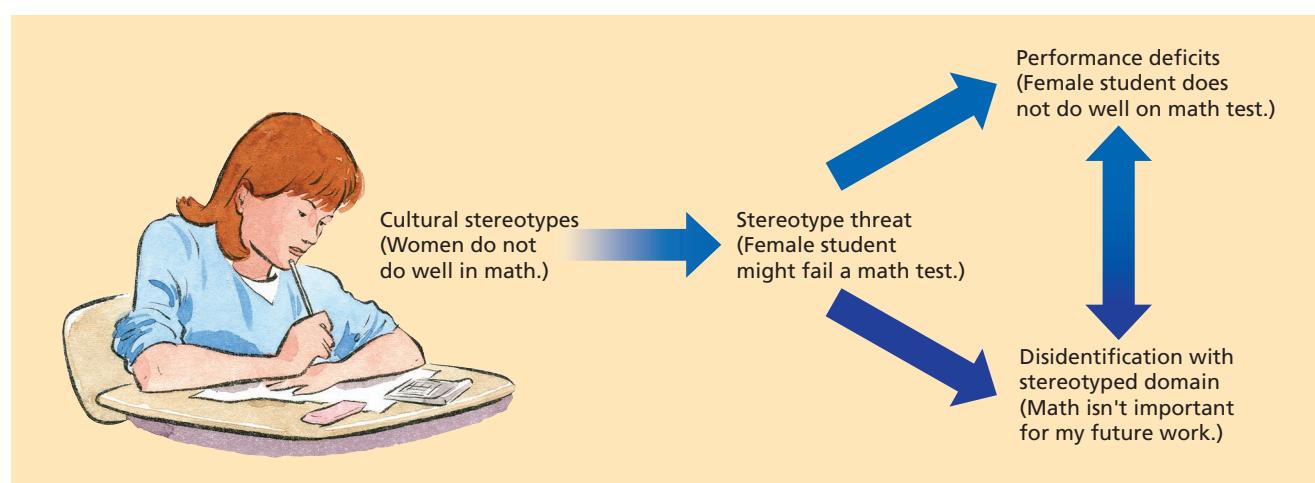
questions, they apparently felt added apprehension, which undermined their performances. For female engineering students, interacting with a sexist man likewise undermines test performance (Logel & others, 2009). Even before exams, stereotype threat can also hamper women's learning math rules and operations (Rydell & others, 2010).

The media can provoke stereotype threat. Paul Davies and his colleagues (2002, 2005) had women and men watch a series of commercials while expecting that they would be tested for their memory of details. For half the participants, the commercials contained only neutral stimuli; for the other half, some of the commercials contained images of "airheaded" women. After seeing the stereotypical images, women not only performed worse than men on a math test but also reported less interest in obtaining a math or science major or entering a math or science career.

Might racial stereotypes be similarly self-fulfilling? Steele and Joshua Aronson (1995) gave difficult verbal abilities tests to Whites and Blacks. Blacks underperformed Whites only when taking the tests under conditions high in stereotype threat. A similar stereotype threat effect has occurred with Hispanic Americans (Nadler & Clark, 2011).

Jeff Stone and his colleagues (1999) report that stereotype threat affects athletic performance, too. Blacks did worse than usual when a golf task was framed as a test of "sports intelligence," and Whites did worse when it was a test of "natural athletic ability." "When people are reminded of a negative stereotype about themselves—'White men can't jump' or 'Black men can't think'—it can adversely affect performance," Stone (2000) surmised.

If you tell students they are at risk of failure (as is often suggested by minority support programs), the stereotype may erode their performance, says Steele (1997). It may cause them to "disidentify" with school and seek self-esteem elsewhere (Figure 9.11, and see "The Inside Story, Claude Steele on Stereotype Threat"). Indeed, as African American students move from eighth to tenth grade, there has been a weakening connection between their school performance and self-esteem (Osborne, 1995). Moreover, students who are led to think they have benefited from gender- or race-based preferences in gaining admission to a college or an academic group tend to underperform those who are led to feel competent (Brown & others, 2000).



**FIGURE :: 9.11**

### Stereotype Threat

Threat from facing a negative stereotype can produce performance deficits and disidentification.

"MATH CLASS IS TOUGH!"

—"TEEN TALK" BARBIE DOLL  
(LATER REMOVED FROM THE  
MARKET)

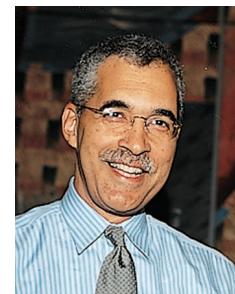
# THE inside STORY

## Claude Steele on Stereotype Threat

During a committee meeting on campus diversity at the University of Michigan in the late 1980s, I noticed an interesting fact: At every ability level (as assessed by SAT scores), minority students were getting lower college grades than their nonminority counterparts. Soon, Steven Spencer, Joshua Aronson, and I found that this was a national phenomenon; it happened at most colleges and it happened to other groups whose abilities were negatively stereotyped, such as women in advanced math classes. This underperformance wasn't caused by group differences in preparation. It happened at all levels of preparation (as measured by SATs).

Eventually, we produced this underperformance in the laboratory by simply having motivated people perform a difficult task in a domain where their group was negatively stereotyped. We also found that we could eliminate this

underperformance by making the same task irrelevant to the stereotype, by removing the "stereotype threat," as we had come to call it. This latter finding spawned more research: figuring out how to reduce stereotype threat and its ill effects. Through this work, we have gained an appreciation for two big things: first, the importance of life context in shaping psychological functioning, and second, the importance of social identities such as age, race, and gender in shaping that context.



Claude Steele  
Stanford University

Better, therefore, to challenge students to believe in their potential, observes Steele. In another of his research team's experiments, Black students responded well to criticism of their writing when also told, "I wouldn't go to the trouble of giving you this feedback if I didn't think, based on what I've read in your letter, that you are capable of meeting the higher standard that I mentioned" (Cohen & others, 1999).

*How does stereotype threat undermine performance?* It does so in three ways, contend Topni Schmader, Michael Johns, and Chad Forbes (2008):

1. *Stress.* fMRI brain scans suggest that the stress of stereotype threat impairs brain activity associated with mathematical processing and increases activity in areas associated with emotion processing (Derk & others, 2008; Krendl & others, 2008; Wrage & others, 2007).
2. *Self-monitoring.* Worrying about making mistakes disrupts focused attention (Keller & Dauenheimer, 2003; Seibt & Forster, 2004). In interracial interactions, Blacks and Latinos (concerned with stereotypes of their intelligence) seek respect and to be seen as competent, whereas Whites (concerned with their image as racist) seek to be liked and seen as moral (Bergsieker & others, 2010).
3. *Suppressing unwanted thoughts and emotions.* The effort required to regulate one's thinking takes energy and disrupts working memory (Bonnot & Croizet, 2007).

*If stereotype threats can disrupt performance, could positive stereotypes enhance it?* Margaret Shih, Todd Pittinsky, and Nalini Ambady (1999) confirmed that possibility. When Asian American females were asked biographical questions that reminded them of their gender identity before taking a math test, their performance plunged (compared with a control group). When similarly reminded of their Asian identity, their performance rose. Negative stereotypes disrupt performance, and positive stereotypes, it seems, facilitate performance (Rydell & others, 2009).

### Do Stereotypes Bias Judgments of Individuals?

Yes, stereotypes bias judgments, but here is some good news: First, *our stereotypes mostly reflect* (though sometimes distort) *reality*. As multiculturalism recognizes, people differ—and can perceive and appreciate those differences. "Stereotype

accuracy is one of the largest effects in all of social psychology," argues Lee Jussim (2012). Second, *people often evaluate individuals more positively than the groups they compose* (Miller & Felicio, 1990). Anne Locksley, Eugene Borgida, and Nancy Brekke found that after someone knows a person, "stereotypes may have minimal, if any, impact on judgments about that person" (Borgida & others, 1981; Locksley & others, 1980, 1982). They discovered this by giving University of Minnesota students anecdotal information about recent incidents in the life of "Nancy." In a supposed transcript of a telephone conversation, Nancy told a friend how she responded to three different situations (for example, being harassed by a seedy character while shopping). Some of the students read transcripts portraying Nancy responding assertively (telling the seedy character to leave); others read a report of passive responses (simply ignoring the character until he finally drifts away). Still other students received the same information, except that the person was named "Paul" instead of Nancy. A day later the students predicted how Nancy (or Paul) would respond to other situations.

Did knowing the person's gender have any effect on those predictions? None at all. Expectations of the person's assertiveness were influenced solely by what the students had learned about that individual the day before. Even their judgments of masculinity and femininity were unaffected by knowing the person's gender. Gender stereotypes had been left on the shelf; the students evaluated Nancy and Paul as individuals.

An important principle discussed in Chapter 3 explains this finding. Given (1) general (base-rate) information about a group and (2) trivial but vivid information about a particular group member, the vivid information usually overwhelms the effect of the general information. This is especially so when the person doesn't fit our image of the typical group member (Fein & Hilton, 1992; Lord & others, 1991). For example, imagine yourself being told how most people in a conformity experiment actually behaved and then viewing a brief interview with one of the supposed participants. Would you, like the typical viewer, guess the person's behavior solely from the interview? Would you ignore the base-rate information on how most people actually behaved?

People often believe stereotypes, yet ignore them when given personalized, anecdotal information. Thus, many people believe "politicians are crooks" but "our Senator Jones has integrity." No wonder many people have a low opinion of politicians yet usually vote to reelect their own representatives. These findings resolve a puzzling set of findings considered early in this chapter. We know that gender stereotypes are strong, yet they have little effect on people's judgments of work attributed to a man or a woman. Now we see why. People may have strong gender stereotypes, but ignore them when judging a particular individual.

## STRONG STEREOTYPES MATTER

However, stereotypes, when *strong*, do color our judgments of individuals (Krueger & Rothbart, 1988). When Thomas Nelson, Monica Biernat, and Melvin Manis (1990) had students estimate the heights of individually pictured men and women, they judged the individual men as taller than the women—even when their heights were equal, even when they were told that sex didn't predict height in this sample, and even when they were offered cash rewards for accuracy.



People sometimes maintain general prejudices (such as against gays and lesbians) without applying their prejudice to particular individuals whom they know and respect, such as Ellen DeGeneres.

In a follow-up study, Nelson, Michele Acker, and Manis (1996) showed University of Michigan students photos of other students from the university's engineering and nursing schools, along with descriptions of each student's interests. Even when informed that the sample contained an equal number of males and females from each school, the same description was judged more likely to come from a nursing student when attached to a female face. Thus, even when a strong gender stereotype is known to be irrelevant, it has an irresistible force.

### STEREOTYPES BIAS INTERPRETATION

Stereotypes also color how we interpret events, note David Dunning and David Sherman (1997). If people are told, "Some felt the politician's statements were untrue," they will infer that the politician was lying. If told, "Some felt the physicist's statements were untrue," they infer only that the physicist was mistaken. When told two people had an altercation, people perceive it as a fistfight if told it involved two lumberjacks, but as a verbal spat if told it involved two marriage counselors. A person concerned about her physical condition seems vain if she is a model but health conscious if she is a triathlete. As a prison guides and constrains its inmates, conclude Dunning and Sherman, the "cognitive prison" of our stereotypes guides and constrains our impressions.

Sometimes we make judgments or begin interacting with someone with little to go on but our stereotype. In such cases, stereotypes can strongly bias our interpretations and memories of people. For example, Charles Bond and his colleagues (1988) found that after getting to know their patients, White psychiatric nurses put Black and White patients in physical restraints equally often. But they restrained *incoming* Black patients more often than their White counterparts. With little else to go on, stereotypes mattered.

Such bias can also operate more subtly. In an experiment by John Darley and Paget Gross (1983), Princeton University students viewed a videotape of a fourth-grade girl, Hannah. The tape depicted her either in a depressed urban neighborhood, supposedly the child of lower-class parents, or in an affluent suburban setting, the child of professional parents. Asked to guess Hannah's ability level in various subjects, both groups of viewers refused to use Hannah's class background to prejudge her ability level; each group rated her ability level at her grade level.

Other students also viewed a second videotape, showing Hannah taking an oral achievement test in which she got some questions right and some wrong. Those who had previously been introduced to professional-class Hannah judged her answers as showing high ability and later recalled her getting most questions right; those who had met lower-class Hannah judged her ability as below grade level and recalled her missing almost half the questions. But remember: The second videotape was *identical* for the two groups. So we see that when stereotypes are strong and the information about someone is ambiguous (unlike the cases of Nancy and Paul), stereotypes can *subtly* bias our judgments of individuals.

Finally, we evaluate people more extremely when their behavior violates our stereotypes (Bettencourt & others, 1997). A woman who rebukes someone cutting in front of her in a movie line ("Shouldn't you go to the end of the line?") may seem more assertive than a man who reacts similarly (Manis & others, 1988). Aided by the testimony of social psychologist Susan Fiske and her colleagues (1991), the U.S. Supreme Court saw such stereotyping at work when Price Waterhouse, one of the nation's top accounting firms, denied Ann Hopkins's promotion to partner. Among the 88 candidates for promotion, Hopkins, the only woman, was number one in the amount of business she brought in to the company and, according to testimony, was hardworking and exacting. But others testified that Hopkins needed a "course at charm school," where she could learn to "walk more femininely, talk more femininely, dress more femininely...." After reflecting on the case and on stereotyping research, the Supreme Court in 1989 decided that encouraging men, but not women, to be aggressive, is to act "on the basis of gender":

We sit not to determine whether Ms. Hopkins is nice, but to decide whether the partners reacted negatively to her personality because she is a woman. . . . An employer who objects to aggressiveness in women but whose positions require this trait places women in an intolerable Catch 22: out of a job if they behave aggressively and out of a job if they don't.

## SUMMING UP: What Are the Consequences of Prejudice?

- Prejudice and stereotyping have important consequences, especially when strongly held, when judging unknown individuals, and when deciding policies regarding whole groups.
- Once formed, stereotypes tend to perpetuate themselves and resist change. They also create their own realities through self-fulfilling prophecies.
- Prejudice can also undermine people's performance through *stereotype threat*, by making people apprehensive that others will view them stereotypically.
- Stereotypes, especially when strong, can predispose how we perceive people and interpret events.

## POSTSCRIPT: Can We Reduce Prejudice?

Social psychologists have been more successful in explaining prejudice than in alleviating it. Because prejudice results from many interrelated factors, no simple remedy exists. Nevertheless, we can now anticipate techniques for reducing prejudice (discussed further in chapters to come): If unequal status breeds prejudice, we can seek to create cooperative, equal-status relationships. If prejudice rationalizes discriminatory behavior, we can mandate nondiscrimination. If social institutions support prejudice, we can pull out those supports (for example, with media that model interracial harmony). If outgroups seem more homogeneous than they really are, we can make efforts to personalize their members. If automatic prejudices lead us to engage in behaviors that make us feel guilty, we can use that guilt to motivate ourselves to break the prejudice habit.

Since the end of World War II in 1945, a number of those antidotes have been applied, and racial and gender prejudices have indeed diminished. Social-psychological research also has helped break down discriminatory barriers. The social psychologist Susan Fiske (1999), who testified on behalf of Ann Hopkins, the Price Waterhouse executive denied promotion to partner, later wrote:

We risked a lot by testifying on Ann Hopkins's behalf, no doubt about it . . . As far as we knew, no one had ever introduced the social psychology of stereotyping in a gender case before. . . . If we succeeded, we would get the latest stereotyping research out of the dusty journals and into the muddy trenches of legal debate, where it might be useful. If we failed, we might hurt the client, slander social psychology, and damage my reputation as a scientist. At the time I had no idea that the testimony would eventually make it successfully through the Supreme Court.

It now remains to be seen whether, during this century, progress will continue, or whether, as could easily happen in a time of increasing population and diminishing resources, antagonisms will again erupt into open hostility.

CHAPTER  
**10**

# Aggression\*

HURTING OTHERS



**"Our behavior toward each other is the strangest, most unpredictable, and most unaccountable of all the phenomena with which we are obliged to live. In all of nature, there is nothing so threatening to humanity as humanity itself."**

—Lewis Thomas (1981)

**D**uring the past century, some 250 wars killed 110 million people, enough to populate a "nation of the dead" with more than the combined population of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The tolls came not only from the two world wars but also from genocides, including the 1915 to 1923 genocide of 1 million Armenians by the Ottoman Empire, the slaughter of some 250,000 Chinese in Nanking after it had surrendered to Japanese troops in 1937, the 1971 Pakistani genocide of 3 million Bangladeshis, and the 1.5 million Cambodians murdered in a reign of terror starting in 1975 (Dutton & others, 2005; Sternberg, 2003). As Hitler's genocide of millions of Jews, Stalin's genocide of millions of Russians, Mao's genocide of millions of Chinese, and the genocide of millions of Native Americans from the time of Columbus through the nineteenth century make plain, the human potential for extraordinary cruelty crosses cultures.

Even outside of war, and in recent times, human beings have an extraordinary capacity for harming one another. Although violent crime declined since the 1990s, 15,241 people were murdered in the United States in 2009; 88,097 were forcibly raped; and an incredible 806,843—nearly a million—were shot, stabbed, or assaulted with

**What is aggression?**

**What are some theories of aggression?**

**What are some influences on aggression?**

**How can aggression be reduced?**

**Postscript: Reforming a violent culture**

\*This 11th edition chapter is co-authored by Jean Twenge, professor of psychology at San Diego State University. Professor Twenge's research on social rejection and on generational changes in personality and the self has been published in many articles and books, including *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before* (2006) and *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement* (with W. Keith Campbell, 2009).

"EVERY GUN THAT IS MADE, EVERY WARSHIP LAUNCHED, EVERY ROCKET FIRED SIGNIFIES, IN THE FINAL SENSE, A THEFT FROM THOSE WHO HUNGER AND ARE NOT FED, THOSE WHO ARE COLD AND ARE NOT CLOTHED."

—PRESIDENT DWIGHT EISENHOWER, SPEECH TO THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS, 1953

"IS THERE ANY WAY OF DELIVERING MANKIND FROM THE MENACE OF WAR?"

—ALBERT EINSTEIN, LETTER TO SIGMUND FREUD, 1932

### aggression

Physical or verbal behavior intended to hurt someone.

another weapon (FBI, 2011). In the decade after 9/11, the United States spent \$2.6 trillion on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars that claimed well over 100,000 lives.

Less severe, but still harmful, aggression is even more common. In a survey of children across 35 countries, more than 1 out of 10 reported being bullied at school (Craig & Harel, 2004). Among a sample of Canadian middle- and high-school students, half said they had been bullied online in the previous three months. Their experiences included being called names, having rumors spread about them, or having their private pictures distributed without their consent (Mishna & others, 2010).

Are we like the mythical Minotaur—half human, half beast? What explains that midsummer day in 1941 when the non-Jewish half of the Polish town of Jedwabne murdered the other half in a macabre frenzy of violence, leaving only a dozen or so survivors among the 1,600 Jews (Gross, 2001)? Why would a college student broadcast his gay roommate's sexual encounter, driving him to suicide, as happened at Rutgers University in 2010? Why, in 2011, would a gunman in peaceful Norway bomb government buildings and then shoot and kill 69 people, mostly teenagers? What explains such monstrous behavior? In this chapter we ask:

- Is aggression biologically predisposed, or do we learn it?
- What circumstances prompt hostile outbursts?
- Do the media influence aggression?
- How might we reduce aggression?

First, however, we need to clarify the term "aggression."

## WHAT IS AGGRESSION?

### Define aggression and describe its different forms.

The original Thugs, members of a sect in northern India, were aggressing when between 1550 and 1850 they strangled more than 2 million people and claimed to do so in the service of the goddess Kali. But people also use "aggressive" to describe a dynamic salesperson. Social psychologists distinguish such self-assured, energetic, go-getting behavior from behavior that hurts, harms, or destroys. The former is assertiveness, the latter aggression.

To a social psychologist, **aggression** is physical or verbal behavior intended to cause harm. This definition excludes unintentional harm, such as auto accidents or sidewalk collisions; it also excludes actions that may involve pain as an unavoidable side effect of helping someone, such as dental treatments or—in the extreme—assisted suicide. It includes kicks and slaps, threats and insults, even gossip or snide "digs" (as in online bullying). It includes decisions during experiments about how much to hurt someone, such as how much electric shock to impose. It also includes destroying property, lying, and other behavior whose goal is to hurt.

The definition covers two distinct types of aggression. Animals display *social aggression*, characterized by displays of rage, and *silent aggression*, as when a

predator stalks its prey. Social and silent aggression involve separate brain regions. In humans, psychologists label the two types “hostile” and “instrumental” aggression. **Hostile aggression** springs from anger; its goal is to injure. **Instrumental aggression** aims to injure, too—but only as a means to some other end.

Most terrorism is instrumental aggression. “What nearly all suicide terrorist campaigns have in common is a specific secular and strategic goal,” concludes Robert Pape (2003) after studying all suicide bombings from 1980 to 2001. That goal is “to compel liberal democracies to withdraw military forces from territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland.” Terrorism is rarely committed by someone with a psychological pathology, note Arie Kruglanski and his colleagues (2009); instead, terrorists seek personal significance through, for example, attaining hero or martyr status. Terrorism is also a strategic tool used during conflict. In explaining the aim of the 9/11 attacks, Osama bin Laden noted that for a cost of only \$500,000 they inflicted \$500 billion worth of damage to the American economy (Zakaria, 2008).

Most wars are instrumental aggression. In 2003, American and British leaders justified attacking Iraq not as a hostile effort to kill Iraqis but as an instrumental act of liberation and of self-defense against presumed weapons of mass destruction. Adolescents who bully others—either verbally or physically—are also engaged in instrumental aggression, because they often seek to demonstrate their dominance and high status. In the strange hierarchy of adolescence, being mean and disliked can sometimes make you popular and revered (Salmivalli, 2009).

Most murders are hostile aggression. Approximately half erupt from arguments, and others result from romantic triangles or from brawls that involve the influence of alcohol or drugs (Ash, 1999). Such murders are impulsive, emotional outbursts, which helps explain why data from 110 nations show that a death penalty has not resulted in fewer homicides (Costanzo, 1998; Wilkes, 1987). Some murders and many other violent acts of retribution and sexual coercion, however, are instrumental (Felson, 2000). Most of Chicago’s more than 1,000 murders carried out by organized crime during the prohibition era and the years following were cool and calculated.



*“Of course, we’ll never actually use it against a potential enemy, but it will allow us to negotiate from a position of strength.”*

© John Ruge

### hostile aggression

Aggression that springs from anger; its goal is to injure.

### instrumental aggression

Aggression that aims to injure, but only as a means to some other end.

Humanity has armed its capacity for destruction without comparably arming its capacity for the inhibition of aggression.

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## WHAT ARE SOME THEORIES OF AGGRESSION?

Understand and evaluate the important theories of aggression.

In analyzing the causes of aggression, social psychologists have focused on three big ideas: biological influences, frustration, and learned behavior.

### Aggression as a Biological Phenomenon

Philosophers have debated whether our human nature is fundamentally that of a benign, contented, “noble savage” or that of a brute. The first view, argued by the eighteenth-century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), blames society, not human nature, for social evils. The second idea, associated with the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), credits society for restraining the human brute. In the twentieth century, the “brutish” view—that aggressive

drive is inborn and thus inevitable—was argued by Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, in Vienna and Konrad Lorenz, an animal behavior expert, in Germany.

## INSTINCT THEORY AND EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

### instinctive behavior

An innate, unlearned behavior pattern exhibited by all members of a species.

Freud speculated that human aggression springs from a self-destructive impulse. It redirects toward others the energy of a primitive death urge (the “death instinct”). Lorenz, an animal behavior expert, saw aggression as adaptive rather than self-destructive. The two agreed that aggressive energy is **instinctive** (innate, unlearned, and universal). If not discharged, it supposedly builds up until it explodes or until an appropriate stimulus “releases” it, like a mouse releasing a mousetrap.

The idea that aggression is an instinct collapsed as the list of supposed human instincts grew to include nearly every conceivable human behavior. Nearly 6,000 supposed instincts were enumerated in one 1924 survey of social science books (Barash, 1979). The social scientists had tried to *explain* social behavior by *naming* it. It’s tempting to play this explaining-by-naming game: “Why do sheep stay together?” “Because of their herd instinct.” “How do you know they have a herd instinct?” “Just look at them: They’re always together!”

Instinct theory also fails to account for the variations in aggressiveness from person to person and culture to culture. How would a shared human instinct for aggression explain the difference between the peaceful Iroquois before White invaders came and the hostile Iroquois after the invasion (Hornstein, 1976)? Although aggression is biologically influenced, the human propensity to aggress does not qualify as instinctive behavior.

Throughout much of human history, men especially have found aggression adaptive, note evolutionary psychologists such as John Archer (2006) and Francis McAndrew (2009). Purposeful aggression improved the odds of survival and reproduction. The losers, notes McAndrew, “ran the risk of genetic annihilation.” Aggression often occurs when males are competing with other males, or when a man’s social status is challenged. “Violence committed against the right people at the right time was a ticket to social success,” McAndrew observes.

Consider professional basketball player Charles Barkley, who was drinking in a bar in 1997 when a man threw a glass of water at him. Barkley promptly hurled the man through a plate-glass window—even though Barkley was not hurt by the water, even though the man might have retaliated, and even though Barkley was arrested within minutes of the assault. Nevertheless, witnesses praised Barkley in news reports, seemingly impressed by his aggression. When Barkley was asked if he regretted throwing the man through the window, he replied, “I regret we weren’t on a higher floor” (Griskevicius & others, 2009).

Apparently, Barkley was not an isolated example. Across three experiments, college men motivated to increase their status were more aggressive toward others in face-to-face confrontations (Griskevicius & others, 2009). Status-based aggression also helps explain why aggression is highest during adolescence and early adulthood, when the competition for status and mates is the most intense. Although violence is less rewarded than it once was, young men scuffling for status and mates are still very much in evidence at many bars and campuses around the world.

## NEURAL INFLUENCES

Because aggression is a complex behavior, no one spot in the brain controls it. But researchers have found brain neural systems in both animals and humans that facilitate aggression. When the scientists activate these brain areas, hostility increases; when they deactivate them, hostility decreases. Docile animals can thus be provoked into rage, and raging animals into submission.

In one experiment, researchers placed an electrode in an aggression-inhibiting area of a domineering monkey’s brain. A smaller monkey, given a button that

activated the electrode, learned to push it every time the tyrant monkey became intimidating. Brain activation works with humans, too. After receiving painless electrical stimulation in her amygdala (a part of the brain core), one woman became enraged and smashed her guitar against the wall, barely missing her psychiatrist's head (Moyer, 1976, 1983).

Does this mean that violent people's brains are in some way abnormal? To find out, Adrian Raine and his colleagues (1998, 2000, 2005, 2008) used brain scans to measure brain activity in murderers and to measure the amount of gray matter in men with antisocial conduct disorder. They found that the prefrontal cortex, which acts like an emergency brake on deeper brain areas involved in aggressive behavior, was 14 percent less active than normal in murderers (excluding those who had been abused by their parents) and 15 percent smaller in the antisocial men. As other studies of murderers and death-row inmates confirm, abnormal brains can contribute to abnormally aggressive behavior (Davidson & others, 2000; Lewis, 1998; Pincus, 2001).

### GENETIC INFLUENCES

Heredity influences the neural system's sensitivity to aggressive cues. It has long been known that animals can be bred for aggressiveness. Sometimes this is done for practical purposes (the breeding of fighting cocks). Sometimes breeding is done for research. Finnish psychologist Kirsti Lagerspetz (1979) took normal albino mice and bred the most aggressive ones together; she did the same with the least aggressive ones. After repeating the procedure for 26 generations, she had one set of fierce mice and one set of placid mice.

Aggressiveness also varies among individuals (Asher, 1987; Bettencourt & others, 2006; Denson & others, 2006; Olweus, 1979). Our temperaments—how intense and reactive we are—are partly brought with us into the world, influenced by our sympathetic nervous system's reactivity (Kagan, 1989; Wilkowski & Robinson, 2008). A person's temperament, observed in infancy, usually endures (Larsen & Diener, 1987; Wilson & Matheny, 1986). A 3-year-old who exhibits little conscientiousness and self-control is more vulnerable to substance abuse and arrest by age 32 (Moffitt & others, 2011). A child who is nonaggressive at age 8 will very likely still be a nonaggressive person at age 48 (Huesmann & others, 2003). Thus, identical twins, when asked separately, are more likely than fraternal twins to agree on whether they have "a violent temper" or have gotten into fights (Rowe & others, 1999; Rushton & others, 1986). Of convicted criminals who are twins, fully half of their identical twins (but only one in five fraternal twins) also have criminal records (Raine, 1993, 2008).

In a study examining 12.5 million residents of Sweden, those with a genetic sibling convicted of a violent crime were 4 times as likely to be convicted themselves. Rates were much lower for adopted siblings, suggesting a strong genetic component and a more modest environmental influence (Frisell & others, 2011). Long-term studies following several hundred New Zealand children reveal that a recipe for aggressive behavior combines a gene that alters neurotransmitter balance with childhood



Genes predispose the pit bull's capacity for aggression.



Alcohol and sexual assault. "Ordinary men who drank too much," was the *New York Times* description of the mob that openly assaulted some 50 women attending a June 2000 parade in New York City. "Stoked with booze, they worked up from hooting at women, to grabbing them, to drenching them with water and pulling off their tops and pants" (Staples, 2000).

maltreatment (Caspi & others, 2002; Moffitt & others, 2003). Neither "bad" genes nor a "bad" environment alone predispose later aggressiveness and antisocial behavior; rather, genes predispose some children to be more sensitive and responsive to maltreatment. Nature and nurture interact.

## BIOCHEMICAL INFLUENCES

Blood chemistry also influences neural sensitivity to aggressive stimulation.

**ALCOHOL** Both laboratory experiments and police data indicate that alcohol unleashes aggression when people are provoked (Bushman, 1993; Taylor & Chermack, 1993; Testa, 2002). Consider the following:

- The Australian city of Melbourne saw a marked upswing in assaults during the 2000s, fueled primarily by alcohol consumption late at night (Eckersley & Reeder, 2008).
- When asked to think back on relationship conflicts, intoxicated people administer stronger shocks and feel angrier than do sober people during lab experiments (MacDonald & others, 2000).
- In 65 percent of homicides and 55 percent of in-home fights and assaults, the assailant and/or the victim had been drinking (American Psychological Association, 1993). Four in 10 prisoners convicted of a violent crime were drinking when they committed murder, assault, robbery, or sexual assault (Karberg & James, 2005).
- Heavy men who drank alcohol were significantly more aggressive after drinking alcohol, but alcohol had little effect on women's or smaller men's aggression. Alcohol, note the researchers, seemed to encourage "heavy men to 'throw their weight around' and intimidate others by behaving aggressively" (DeWall & others, 2010). Apparently people really are wise to avoid the "big, drunk guy" in the bar.

Alcohol enhances aggressiveness by reducing people's self-awareness, by focusing their attention on a provocation, and by people's mentally associating alcohol with aggression (Bartholow & Heinz, 2006; Giancola & Corman, 2007; Ito & others, 1996). Alcohol also predisposes people to interpret ambiguous acts (such as a bump in a crowd) as provocations (Begue & others, 2010). Alcohol deindividuates, and it disinhibits.

**TESTOSTERONE** Hormonal influences appear to be much stronger in lower animals than in humans. But human aggressiveness does correlate with the male sex hormone testosterone. Consider the following:

- Drugs that diminish testosterone levels in violent human males will subdue their aggressive tendencies.
- After men reach age 25, their testosterone levels and rates of violent crime decrease together.
- Testosterone levels tend to be higher among prisoners convicted of planned and unprovoked violent crimes than of nonviolent crimes (Dabbs, 1992; Dabbs & others, 1995, 1997, 2001).
- Among the normal range of teen boys and adult men, those with high testosterone levels are more prone to delinquency, hard drug use, and aggressive responses to provocation (Archer, 1991; Dabbs & Morris, 1990; Olweus & others, 1988).
- After handling a gun, men's testosterone levels rise; and the more their testosterone rises, the more aggressive they are toward others (Klinesmith & others, 2006).

"WE COULD AVOID TWO-  
THIRDS OF ALL CRIME  
SIMPLY BY PUTTING ALL  
ABLE-BODIED YOUNG  
MEN IN CRYOGENIC SLEEP  
FROM THE AGE OF 12  
THROUGH 28."

—DAVID LYKKEN, THE ANTISO-  
CIAL PERSONALITIES, 1995



Young, male, and restless. In the 2011 riots that swept English cities, those arrested overwhelmingly shared one genetic characteristic—a Y chromosome—and were testosterone-fueled teens or people in their early 20s (*The Guardian*, 2011).

- In men, testosterone increases the facial width-to-height ratio. Sure enough, in the laboratory, men with relatively wider faces display more aggression. The same is true in the hockey rink, where collegiate and professional hockey players with relatively wide faces spend more time in the penalty box (Carré & McCormick, 2008). Other people also correctly guessed that wide-faced men would be more aggressive, and they were less likely to trust them (Carré & others, 2009; Stirrat & Perrett, 2010).

Testosterone, said James Dabbs (2000), “is a small molecule with large effects.” Injecting a man with testosterone won’t automatically make him aggressive, yet men with low testosterone are somewhat less likely to react aggressively when provoked (Geen, 1998). Testosterone is roughly like battery power. Only if the battery levels are very low will things noticeably slow down.

**POOR DIET** When British researcher Bernard Gesch first tried to study the effect of diet on aggression, he stood in front of hundreds of inmates at an English prison—but no matter how loudly he talked, none of them would listen. Finally, he talked privately to the “daddy”—the inmates’ “tough guy” leader—and 231 inmates signed on to receive nutritional supplements or a placebo. Prisoners who got the



*Some violent sex offenders, wishing to free themselves of persistent, damaging impulses and to reduce their prison terms, have requested castration. Should their requests be granted? If so, and if they are deemed no longer at risk to commit sexual violence, should their prison terms be reduced or eliminated?*

British actor Jamie Waylett, best known for playing Draco Malfoy’s aggressive sidekick Vincent Crabbe in the Harry Potter movies, exemplifies the association between wide faces and aggressive behavior. The association held true in real life: In 2012, Waylett was sentenced to two years in jail for participating in the 2011 London riots.

extra nutrition were involved in 35 percent fewer violent incidents (Gesch & others, 2002). Such programs may eventually help people outside of prison as well, because many people have diets deficient in important nutrients, such as omega-3 fatty acids (found in fish and important for brain function) and calcium (which guards against impulsivity).

**BIOLOGY AND BEHAVIOR INTERACT** The traffic between biology and behavior flows both ways. Testosterone, for example, may facilitate dominance and aggressiveness, but dominating or defeating behavior also boosts testosterone levels (Mazur & Booth, 1998). After a World Cup soccer match or a big basketball game between archrivals, testosterone levels rise in the winning fans and fall in the losing fans (Bernhardt & others, 1998). Similar results occurred among men who voted for the winning U.S. presidential candidate in 2008 (Barack Obama) versus the losing candidate (John McCain) (Stanton & others, 2009). The phenomenon also occurs in the laboratory, where socially anxious men exhibit a pronounced drop in their testosterone level after losing a rigged face-to-face competition (Maner & others, 2008). Testosterone surges, plus celebration-related drinking, probably explain the finding of Cardiff University researchers that fans of *winning* rather than losing soccer and rugby teams commit more postgame assaults (Sivarajasingam & others, 2005).

So, neural, genetic, and biochemical influences predispose some people to react aggressively to conflict and provocation. But is aggression so much a part of human nature that it makes peace unattainable? The American Psychological Association and the International Council of Psychologists have joined other organizations in endorsing a statement on violence developed by scientists from a dozen nations (Adams, 1991): “It is scientifically incorrect [to say that] war or any other violent behavior is genetically programmed into our human nature [or that] war is caused by ‘instinct’ or any single motivation.” Thus, there are, as we will see, ways to reduce human aggression.

## Aggression as a Response to Frustration

It is a warm evening. Tired and thirsty after two hours of studying, you borrow some change from a friend and head for the nearest soft-drink machine. As the machine devours the change, you can almost taste the cold, refreshing cola. But when you push the button, nothing happens. You push it again. Then you flip the coin return button. Still nothing. Again, you hit the buttons. You slam the machine. Alas, no money and no drink. You stomp back to your studies, empty-handed and shortchanged. Should your roommate beware? Are you now more likely to say or do something hurtful?

One of the first psychological theories of aggression, the popular **frustration-aggression theory**, answered yes (Dollard, 1939). **Frustration** is anything (such as the malfunctioning vending machine) that blocks us from attaining a goal. Frustration grows when our motivation to achieve a goal is very strong, when we expected gratification, and when the blocking is complete. When Rupert Brown and his colleagues (2001) surveyed British ferry passengers heading to France, they found much higher than normal aggressive attitudes on a day when French fishing boats blockaded the port, preventing their travel. Blocked from obtaining their goal, the passengers became more likely (in responding to various vignettes) to agree with an insult toward a French person who had spilled coffee.

The aggressive energy need not explode directly against its source. Most people learn to inhibit direct retaliation, especially when others might disapprove or punish; instead, we *displace*, or redirect, our hostilities to safer targets. **Displacement** occurs in an old anecdote about a man who, humiliated by his boss, berates his wife, who yells at their son, who kicks the dog, which bites the mail

### frustration-aggression theory

The theory that frustration triggers a readiness to aggress.

### frustration

The blocking of goal-directed behavior.

### displacement

The redirection of aggression to a target other than the source of the frustration. Generally, the new target is a safer or more socially acceptable target.

carrier (who goes home and berates his wife . . .). In experiments and in real life, displaced aggression is most likely when the target shares some similarity to the instigator and does some minor irritating act that unleashes the displaced aggression (Marcus-Newhall & others, 2000; Miller & others, 2003; Pedersen & others, 2000, 2008). When someone is harboring anger from a prior provocation, even a trivial offense may elicit an explosive overreaction (as you may realize if you have ever yelled at your roommate after losing money in a malfunctioning vending machine).

In one experiment, Eduardo Vasquez and his co-researchers (2005) provoked some University of Southern California students (but not others) by having an experimenter insult their performance on an anagram-solving test. Shortly afterward, the students had to decide how long another supposed student should be required to immerse his or her hand in painful cold water while completing a task. When the supposed student committed a trivial offense—by giving a mild insult—the previously provoked participants responded punitively, by recommending a longer cold-water treatment than did the unprovoked participants. This phenomenon of displaced aggression helps us understand, notes Vasquez, why a previously provoked and still-angry person might respond to mild highway offenses with road rage, or react to spousal criticism with spouse abuse. It also helps explain why frustrated major league baseball pitchers, in one analysis of nearly 5 million at-bats from 74,197 games since 1960, were most likely to hit batters after the batter hit a home run the last time at bat, or after the previous batter did so (Timmerman, 2007).

Outgroup targets are especially vulnerable to displaced aggression (Pedersen & others, 2008). Opposites attack. Various commentators have observed that the understandably intense American anger over 9/11 contributed to the eagerness to attack Iraq. Americans were looking for an outlet for their rage and found one in an evil tyrant, Saddam Hussein, who was once their ally. “The ‘real reason’ for this war,” noted Thomas Friedman (2003), “was that after 9/11 America needed to hit someone in the Arab-Muslim world. . . . We hit Saddam for one simple reason: because we could, and because he deserved it, and because he was right in the heart of that world.” One of the war’s advocates, Vice President Richard Cheney (2003), seemed to concur. When asked why most others in the world disagreed with America’s war, he replied, “They didn’t experience 9/11.”

## FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION THEORY REVISED

Laboratory tests of the frustration-aggression theory have produced mixed results: Sometimes frustration increased aggressiveness, sometimes not. For example, if the frustration was understandable—if, as in one experiment, a confederate disrupted a group’s problem solving because his hearing aid malfunctioned (rather than just because he wasn’t paying attention)—frustration led to irritation, not aggression (Burnstein & Worchel, 1962).

Leonard Berkowitz (1978, 1989) realized that the original theory overstated the frustration-aggression connection, so he revised it. Berkowitz theorized that frustration produces *anger*, an emotional readiness to aggress. Anger arises when someone who frustrates us could have chosen to act otherwise (Averill, 1983; Weiner, 1981).

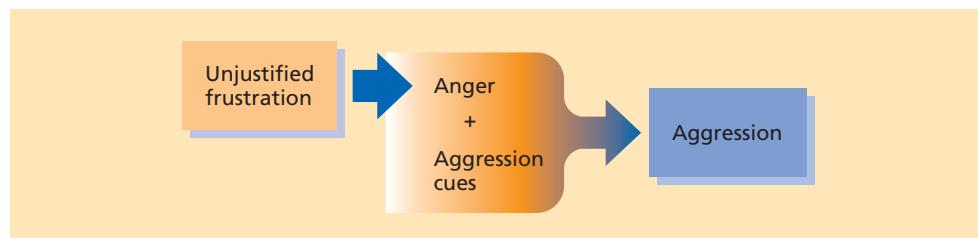
A frustrated person is especially likely to lash out when aggressive cues pull the cork, releasing bottled-up anger (Figure 10.1). Sometimes the cork will blow without such cues. But, as we will see, cues associated with aggression amplify aggression (Carlson & others, 1990).



Frustration-triggered aggression sometimes appears as road rage. Road rage is fed by perceptions of hostile intentions from other drivers, as when one is cut off in traffic (Britt & Garrity, 2006).

*Note that frustration-aggression theory is designed to explain hostile aggression, not instrumental aggression.*

**FIGURE :: 10.1**  
**A Simplified Synopsis**  
**of Leonard Berkowitz's**  
**Revised Frustration-**  
**Aggression Theory**



## RELATIVE DEPRIVATION

Frustration is not only caused by complete deprivation; more often, *frustration arises from the gap between expectations and attainments*. The most economically frustrated people may not be the impoverished residents of African shantytowns, who might know no other way of life, but middle-class Americans who aspire to be rich—or at least upper-middle class. When your expectations are fulfilled by your attainments, and when your desires are reachable at your income, you feel satisfied rather than frustrated (Solberg & others, 2002).

Frustration is often compounded when we compare ourselves with others. Workers' feelings of well-being depend on whether their compensation compares favorably with that of others in their line of work (Yuchtman, 1976). A raise in salary for a city's police officers, while temporarily lifting their morale, may deflate that of the firefighters.

Such feelings, called **relative deprivation**, explain why happiness tends to be lower and crime rates higher in communities and nations with large income inequality (Hagerty, 2000; Kawachi & others, 1999). And it explains why the former East Germans revolted against their communist regime: They had a higher standard of living than some Western European countries, but a frustratingly lower one than their West German neighbors (Baron & others, 1992).

The term *relative deprivation* was coined by researchers studying the satisfaction felt by American soldiers in World War II (Merton & Kitt, 1950; Stouffer & others, 1949). Ironically, those in the air corps felt *more* frustrated about their own rate of promotion than those in the military police, for whom promotions were actually slower. The air corps' promotion rate was rapid, and most air corps personnel probably perceived themselves as better than the average air corps member (the self-serving bias). Thus, their aspirations soared higher than their achievements. The result? Frustration.

One possible source of such frustration today is the affluence depicted in television programs and commercials. In cultures where television is a universal appliance, it helps turn absolute deprivation (lacking what others have) into relative deprivation (feeling deprived). Karen Hennigan and her co-workers (1982) analyzed crime rates in American cities around the time television was introduced. In 34 cities where television ownership became widespread in 1951, the 1951 larceny theft rate (for crimes such as shoplifting and bicycle stealing) took an observable jump. In 34 other cities, where a government freeze had delayed the introduction of television until 1955, a similar jump in the theft rate occurred—in 1955.

### relative deprivation

The perception that one is less well off than others with whom one compares oneself.

"A HOUSE MAY BE LARGE OR SMALL; AS LONG AS THE SURROUNDING HOUSES ARE EQUALLY SMALL, IT SATISFIES ALL SOCIAL DEMANDS FOR A DWELLING. BUT LET A PALACE ARISE BESIDE THE LITTLE HOUSE, AND IT SHRINKS FROM A LITTLE HOUSE INTO A HUT."

—KARL MARX, "WAGE LABOR

AND CAPITAL," 1847

## Aggression as Learned Social Behavior

Theories of aggression based on instinct and frustration assume that hostile urges erupt from inner emotions, which naturally "push" aggression from within. Social psychologists also contend that learning "pulls" aggression out of us.

## THE REWARDS OF AGGRESSION

By experience and by observing others, we learn that aggression often pays. Experiments have transformed animals from docile creatures into ferocious fighters. Severe defeats, on the other hand, create submissiveness (Ginsburg & Allee, 1942; Kahn, 1951; Scott & Marston, 1953).

People, too, can learn the rewards of aggression. A child whose aggressive acts successfully intimidate other children will likely become increasingly aggressive (Patterson & others, 1967). Aggressive hockey players—the ones sent most often to the penalty box for rough play—score more goals than nonaggressive players (McCarthy & Kelly, 1978a, 1978b). Canadian teenage hockey players whose fathers applaud physically aggressive play show the most aggressive attitudes and style of play (Ennis & Zanna, 1991). In the waters off Somalia, paying ransom to hijackers of ships—a reported \$150 million in 2008 (BBC, 2008)—rewarded the pirates, thus fueling further hijackings. In such cases, aggression is instrumental in achieving certain rewards.

The same is true of terrorist acts, which enable powerless people to garner widespread attention. “The primary targets of suicide-bombing attacks are not those who are injured but those who are made to witness it through media coverage,” note Paul Marsden and Sharon Attia (2005). Terrorism’s purpose is, with the help of media amplification, to terrorize. “Kill one, frighten ten thousand,” asserts an ancient Chinese proverb. Deprived of what Margaret Thatcher called “the oxygen of publicity,” terrorism would surely diminish, concluded Jeffrey Rubin (1986). It’s like the 1970s incidents of naked spectators “streaking” onto football fields for a few seconds of television exposure. After the networks decided to ignore the incidents, the phenomenon ended.

## OBSERVATIONAL LEARNING

Albert Bandura (1997) proposed a **social learning theory** of aggression. He believes that we learn aggression not only by experiencing its payoffs but also by observing others. As with most social behaviors, we acquire aggression by watching others act and noting the consequences.

Picture this scene from one of Bandura’s experiments (Bandura & others, 1961). A preschool child is put to work on an interesting art activity. An adult is in another part of the room, where there are Tinker Toys, a mallet, and a big, inflated “Bobo” doll. After a minute of working with the Tinker Toys, the adult gets up and for almost 10 minutes attacks the inflated doll. She pounds it with the mallet, kicks it, and throws it, while yelling, “Sock him in the nose. . . . Knock him down. . . . Kick him.”

After observing this outburst, the child is taken to a different room with many very attractive toys. But after two minutes the experimenter interrupts, saying these are her best toys and she must “save them for the other children.” The frustrated child now goes into yet another room with various toys designed for aggressive and nonaggressive play, two of which are a Bobo doll and a mallet.

Children who were not exposed to the aggressive adult model rarely displayed any aggressive play or talk. Although frustrated, they nevertheless played calmly. Those who had observed the aggressive adult were many times more likely to pick up the mallet and lash out at the doll. Watching the adult’s aggressive behavior lowered their inhibitions. Moreover, the children often reproduced the model’s

### **social learning theory**

The theory that we learn social behavior by observing and imitating and by being rewarded and punished.



In Bandura’s famous experiment, children exposed to an adult’s aggression against a Bobo doll became likely to reproduce the observed aggression.



A peaceable kingdom. In 2008, a man was convicted of murder in Scotland's Orkney Islands—only the second murder conviction since the 1800s.

specific acts and said her words. Observing aggressive behavior had both lowered their inhibitions and taught them ways to aggress.

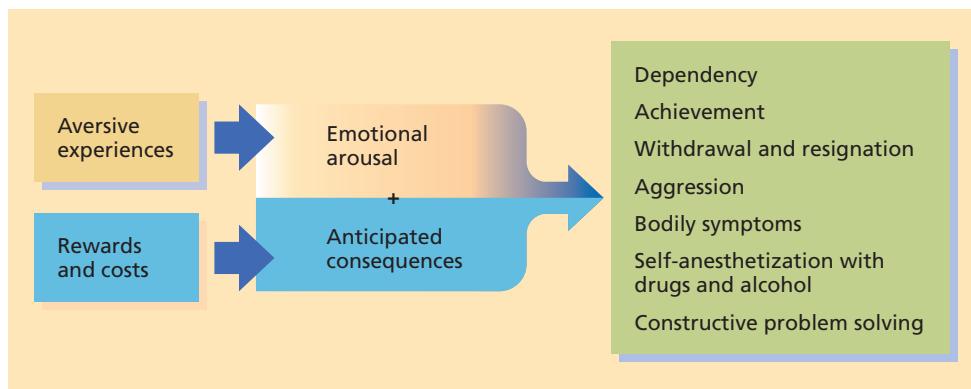
Bandura (1979) believes that everyday life exposes us to aggressive models in the family, in one's subculture, and, as we will see, in the mass media.

**THE FAMILY** Physically aggressive children tend to have had physically punitive parents, who disciplined them by modeling aggression with screaming, slapping, and beating (Patterson & others, 1982). These parents often had parents who were themselves physically punitive (Bandura & Walters, 1959; Straus & Gelles, 1980). Such punitive behavior may escalate into abuse, and although most abused children do not become criminals or abusive parents, 30 percent do later abuse their own children—four times the general population rate (Kaufman & Zigler, 1987; Widom, 1989). Even more mild physical punishment, such as spanking, is linked to later aggression (Gershoff, 2002). Violence often begets violence.

**THE CULTURE** The social environment outside the home also provides models. In communities where "macho" images are admired, aggression is readily transmitted to new generations (Cartwright, 1975; Short, 1969). The violent subculture of teenage gangs, for instance, provides its junior members with aggressive models. Among Chicago adolescents who are otherwise equally at risk for violence, those who have observed gun violence were twice as likely to be violent (Bingenheimer & others, 2005).

The broader culture also matters. Show social psychologists a man from a non-democratic culture that has great economic inequality, that prepares men to be warriors, and that has engaged in war, and they will show you someone who is predisposed to aggressive behavior (Bond, 2004).

Richard Nisbett (1990, 1993) and Dov Cohen (1996, 1998) have explored the effect of a subculture on attitudes toward violence. They report that the American South, settled by Scots-Irish sheep herders ever wary of threats to their flocks, has a "culture of honor," which maintains that insults deserve retaliation (Henry, 2009). After squeezing by another man in a hallway and hearing him mutter an insult, White Southern men expressed more aggressive thoughts and experienced a surge in testosterone. White Northern men were more likely to find the encounter funny (Cohen & others, 1996). To the present day, American cities populated by

**FIGURE :: 10.2****The Social Learning View of Aggression**

The emotional arousal stemming from an aversive experience motivates aggression. Whether aggression or some other response actually occurs depends on what consequences we have learned to expect.

*Source:* Based on Bandura, 1979, 1997.

southerners have higher than average White homicide rates (Vandello & others, 2008). More students in “culture of honor” states bring weapons to school, and these states have had three times as many school shootings as others (Brown & others, 2009).

People learn aggressive responses both by experience and by observing aggressive models. But when will aggressive responses actually occur? Bandura (1979) contended that aggressive acts are motivated by a variety of aversive experiences—frustration, pain, insults (Figure 10.2). Such experiences arouse us emotionally. But whether we act aggressively depends on the consequences we anticipate. Aggression is most likely when we are aroused and it seems safe and rewarding to aggress.

## SUMMING UP: What Are Some Theories of Aggression?

- Aggression (defined as verbal or physical behavior intended to cause harm) manifests itself in two forms: *hostile aggression*, which springs from emotions such as anger, and *instrumental aggression*, which aims to injure as a means to some other end.
- There are three broad theories of aggression. The first, the *instinct* view, most commonly associated with Sigmund Freud and Konrad Lorenz, contended that aggressive energy will accumulate from within, like water accumulating behind a dam. Although the available evidence offers little support for that view, aggression is biologically influenced by heredity, blood chemistry, and the brain.
- According to the second view, *frustration* causes anger and hostility. Given aggressive cues, that anger may provoke aggression. Frustration stems not from deprivation itself but from the gap between expectations and achievements.
- The *social learning* view presents aggression as learned behavior. By experience and by observing others’ success, we sometimes learn that aggression pays. Social learning enables family and subcultural influences on aggression, as well as media influences (which we will discuss in the next section).

## WHAT ARE SOME INFLUENCES ON AGGRESSION?

Identify the influences on aggression and describe how they work.

Consider some specific influences: aversive incidents, arousal, the media, and group context.

## Aversive Incidents

Recipes for aggression often include some type of aversive experience. These include pain, uncomfortable heat, an attack, or overcrowding.

### PAIN

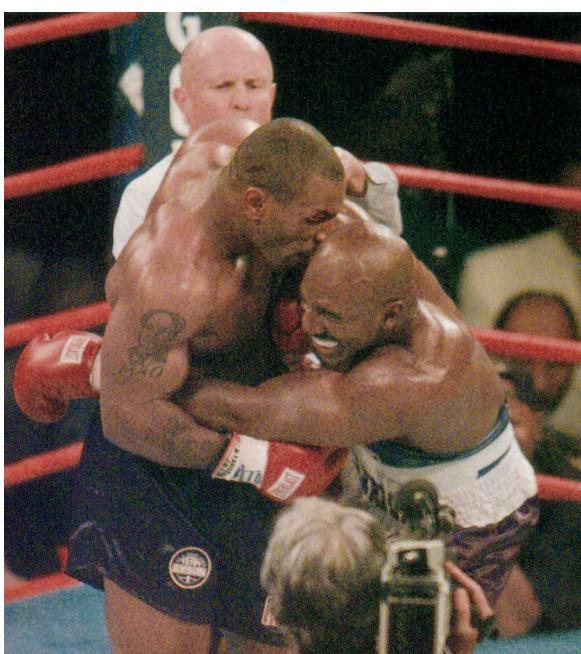
Researcher Nathan Azrin (1967) was doing experiments with laboratory rats in a cage wired to deliver electric shocks to the animals' feet. Azrin wanted to know if switching off the shocks would reinforce two rats' positive interactions with each other. He planned to turn on the shock and then, when the rats approached each other, cut off the pain. To his great surprise, the experiment proved impossible. As soon as the rats felt pain, they attacked each other, before the experimenter could switch off the shock. The greater the shock (and pain), the more violent the attack. The same effect occurred across a long list of species, including cats, turtles, and snakes. The animals were not selective about their targets. They would attack animals of their own species and those of a different species, or stuffed dolls, or even tennis balls.

The researchers also varied the source of pain. They found that not only shocks induced attack; intense heat and "psychological pain"—for example, suddenly not rewarding hungry pigeons that have been trained to expect a grain reward after pecking at a disk—brought the same reaction as shocks. This "psychological pain" is, of course, frustration.

Pain heightens aggressiveness in humans, too. Many of us can recall such a reaction after stubbing a toe or suffering a headache. Leonard Berkowitz and his associates demonstrated this by having University of Wisconsin students hold one hand in either lukewarm water or painfully cold water. Those whose hands were submerged in the cold water reported feeling more irritable and more annoyed, and they were more willing to blast another person with unpleasant noise. In view of such results, Berkowitz (1983, 1989, 1998) proposed that aversive stimulation rather than frustration is the basic trigger of hostile aggression. Frustration is certainly one important type of unpleasantness. But any aversive event, whether a dashed expectation, a personal insult, or physical pain, can incite an emotional outburst. Even the torment of a depressed state increases the likelihood of hostile, aggressive behavior.

*Today's ethical guidelines restrict researchers' use of painful stimuli.*

Pain attack. Frustrated after losing the first two rounds of his 1997 heavyweight championship fight with Evander Holyfield, and feeling pain from an accidental head butt, Mike Tyson reacted by biting off part of Holyfield's ear.



### HEAT

People have theorized for centuries about the effect of climate on human action. Hippocrates (ca. 460–377 B.C.) compared the civilized Greece of his day with the savagery in the region further north (what is now Germany and Switzerland) and decided that northern Europe's harsh climate was to blame. More than a millennium later, the English attributed their "superior" culture to England's ideal climate. French thinkers proclaimed the same for France. Because climate remains relatively steady while cultural traits change over time, the climate theory of culture has limited validity.

Temporary climate variations can, however, affect behavior. Offensive odors, cigarette smoke, and air pollution have all been linked with aggressive behavior (Rotton & Frey, 1985). But the most-studied environmental irritant is heat. William Griffitt (1970; Griffitt & Veitch, 1971) found that compared with students who answered questionnaires in a room with a normal temperature, those who did so in an uncomfortably hot room (over 90°F) reported feeling more tired and aggressive and expressed more hostility toward



Los Angeles, late April to early May, 1992. Riots are more likely during hot summer weather.

a stranger. Follow-up experiments revealed that heat also triggers retaliation in response to an attack or injury (Bell, 1980; Rule & others, 1987).

Does uncomfortable heat increase aggression in the real world as well as in the laboratory? Consider the following:

- In heat-stricken Phoenix, Arizona, the drivers of cars without air-conditioning were more likely to honk at a stalled car (Kenrick & MacFarlane, 1986).
- In an analysis of 57,293 Major League Baseball games since 1952, batters were more likely to be hit by a pitch during hot weather—nearly 50% more likely when the temperature was 90 degrees or above (versus 59 degrees or below) and when three of the pitcher's teammates had previously been hit (Larrick & others, 2011). Pitchers weren't wilder on hot days—they had no more walks or wild pitches. They just clobbered more batters.
- Studies in six cities have found that when the weather is hot, violent crimes are more likely (Anderson & Anderson, 1984; Cohn, 1993; Cotton, 1981, 1986; Harries & Stadler, 1988; Rotton & Cohn, 2004).
- Across the Northern Hemisphere, it is not only hotter days that have more violent crimes, but also hotter seasons of the year, hotter summers, hotter years, hotter cities, and hotter regions (Anderson & Delisi, 2010). Anderson and his colleagues project that if a 4-degree-Fahrenheit (about 2°C) global warming occurs, the United States alone will see at least 50,000 more serious assaults annually.

Do these real-world findings show that heat discomfort directly fuels aggressiveness? Although the conclusion appears plausible, these *correlations* between temperature and aggression don't prove it. People certainly could be more irritable in hot, sticky weather. And in the laboratory, hot temperatures do increase arousal and hostile thoughts and feelings (Anderson & others, 1999). Other factors may contribute, though. Perhaps hot summer evenings drive people into the streets, where other influences may well take over. Then again (researchers have debated this), there may come a point where stifling heat suppresses violence (Bell, 2005; Bushman & others, 2005a, 2005b; Cohn & Rotton, 2005).

## ATTACKS

Being attacked or insulted by another is especially conducive to aggression. Several experiments, including one at Osaka University by Kennichi Ohbuchi and Toshihiro Kambara (1985), confirm that intentional attacks breed retaliatory attacks.

"I PRAY THEE, GOOD  
MERCUTIO, LET'S RETIRE;  
THE DAY IS HOT, THE  
CAPULETS ABROAD,  
AND, IF WE MEET, WE  
SHALL NOT 'SCAPE A  
BRAWL,  
FOR NOW, THESE HOT  
DAYS, IS THE MAD  
BLOOD STIRRING."

—SHAKESPEARE, ROMEO  
AND JULIET

In most of these experiments, one person competes with another in a reaction-time contest. After each test trial, the winner chooses how much shock to give the loser. Actually, each person is playing a programmed opponent, who steadily escalates the amount of shock. Do the real participants respond charitably? Hardly. Extracting “an eye for an eye” is the more likely response.

## Arousal

So far, we have seen that various aversive stimulations can arouse anger. Do other types of arousal, such as those that accompany exercise or sexual excitement, have a similar effect? Imagine that Lourdes, having just finished a stimulating short run, comes home to discover that her date for the evening has called and left word that he has made other plans. Will Lourdes more likely explode in fury after her run than if she discovered the same message after awakening from a nap? Or, because she has just exercised, will her aggression be exorcised? To discover the answer, consider how we interpret and label our bodily states.

In a famous experiment, Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer (1962) found we can experience an aroused bodily state in different ways. They aroused University of Minnesota men by injecting them with adrenaline. The drug produced body flushing, heart palpitation, and more rapid breathing. When forewarned that the drug would produce those effects, the men felt little emotion, even when waiting with either a hostile or a euphoric person. Of course, they could readily attribute their bodily sensations to the drug. Schachter and Singer led another group of men to believe the drug produced no such side effects. Then they, too, were placed in the company of a hostile or a euphoric person. How did they feel and act? They were angered when with the hostile person and amused when with the person who was euphoric. The principle seemed to be: *A given state of bodily arousal feeds one emotion or another, depending on how the person interprets and labels the arousal.*

Other experiments indicate that arousal is not as emotionally undifferentiated as Schachter believed. Yet being physically stirred up does intensify just about any emotion (Reisenzein, 1983). For example, Paul Biner (1991) reports that people find radio static unpleasant, especially when they are aroused by bright lighting. And Dolf Zillmann (1988) and his collaborators found that people who have just pumped an exercise bike or watched a film of a rock concert find it easy to misattribute their arousal to a provocation. They then retaliate with heightened aggression. Although common sense might lead us to assume that Lourdes’s run would have drained her aggressive tensions, enabling her to accept bad news calmly, these studies show that *arousal fuels emotions*.

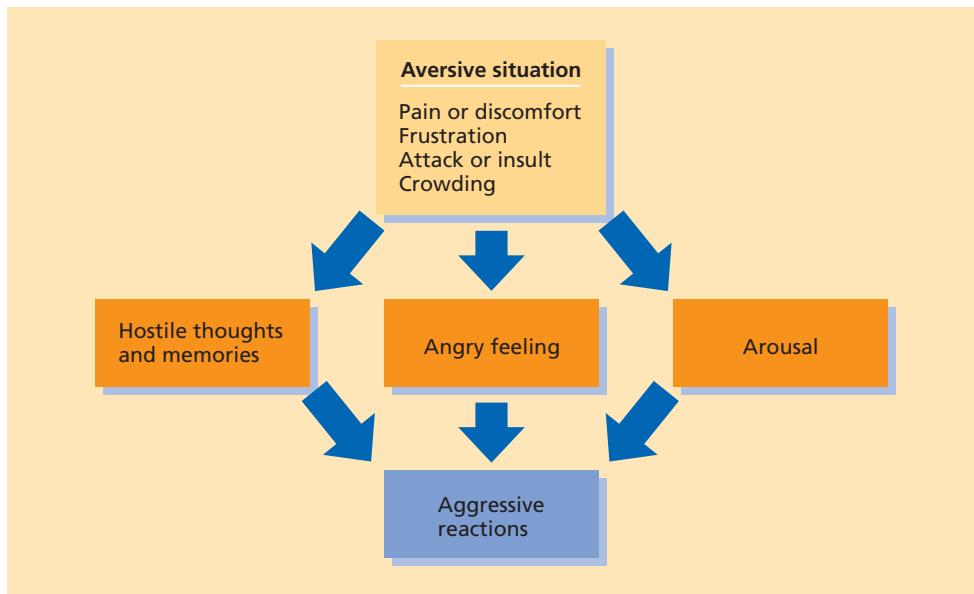
Sexual arousal and other forms of arousal, such as anger, can therefore amplify one another (Zillmann, 1989). Love is never so passionate as after a fight or a fright—one reason why it’s so popular to take a hot date to a horror movie. In the laboratory, erotic stimuli are more arousing to people who have just been frightened. Similarly, the arousal of a roller-coaster ride may spill over into romantic feeling for one’s partner.

Some people, called sensation seekers, crave being in a heightened state of arousal—they love to take risks and need the “rush” of constant stimulation. Consistent with the idea that aggression increases arousal and vice versa, sensation seekers are also more likely to be aggressive (Wilson & Scarpa, 2011).

A frustrating or insulting situation heightens arousal. When it does, the arousal, combined with hostile thoughts and feelings, may form a recipe for aggressive behavior (Figure 10.3).

## Aggression Cues

As we noted when considering the frustration-aggression hypothesis, violence is more likely when aggressive cues release pent-up anger. Leonard Berkowitz (1968, 1981, 1995) and others found that the sight of a weapon is such a cue. In one



**FIGURE :: 10.3**  
**Elements of Hostile Aggression**

An aversive situation can trigger aggression by provoking hostile cognitions, hostile feelings, and arousal. These reactions make us more likely to perceive harmful intent and to react aggressively.

*Source:* Simplified from Anderson, Deuser, & DeNeve, 1995.

experiment, children who had just played with toy guns became more willing to knock down another child's blocks. In another, angered University of Wisconsin men gave more electric shocks to their tormenter when a rifle and a revolver (supposedly left over from a previous experiment) were nearby than when badminton rackets had been left behind (Berkowitz & LePage, 1967). Guns prime hostile thoughts and punitive judgments (Anderson & others, 1998; Dienstbier & others, 1998). What's within sight is within mind. This is especially so when a weapon is perceived as an instrument of violence rather than a recreational item. For hunters, seeing a hunting rifle does not prime aggressive thoughts, though it does for nonhunters (Bartholow & others, 2004).

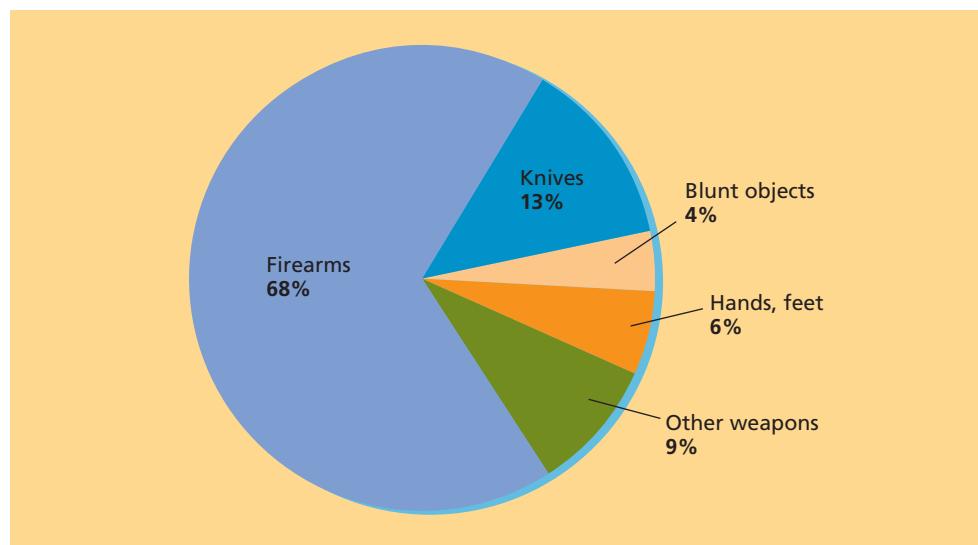
Berkowitz was not surprised that in the United States, a country with some 200 million privately owned guns, half of all murders are committed with handguns, or that handguns in homes are far more likely to kill household members than intruders. "Guns not only permit violence," he reported, "they can stimulate it as well. The finger pulls the trigger, but the trigger may also be pulling the finger."

Berkowitz was further unsurprised that countries that ban handguns have lower murder rates. Compared with the United States, Britain has one-fourth as many people and one-sixteenth as many murders. The United States has 10,000 handgun homicides a year; Australia has about a dozen, Britain two dozen, and Canada 100. When Washington, D.C., adopted a law restricting handgun possession, the numbers of gun-related murders and suicides each abruptly dropped about 25 percent. No changes occurred in other methods of murder and suicide, nor did adjacent areas outside the reach of this law experience any such declines (Loftin & others, 1991).

Researchers also have examined risks of violence in homes with and without guns. This is controversial research because such homes may differ in many ways. One study sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control compared gun owners and nonowners of the same gender, race, age, and neighborhood. The ironic and tragic result was that those who kept a gun in the home (often for protection) were 2.7 times as likely to be murdered—nearly always by a family member or a close acquaintance (Kellermann, 1997; Kellermann & others, 1993). Another study found that the risk of suicide in homes with guns was 5 times as high as in homes without them (Taubes, 1992). A newer national study found a slightly weaker, but still significant, link between guns and homicide or suicide. Compared with others

**FIGURE :: 10.4**  
**Weapons Used To Commit Murder in the United States in 2010**

Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports.



2006 Gallup survey of Americans: "Do you think having a gun in the house makes it a safer place to be or a more dangerous place to be?"

Safer: 47%  
 More dangerous: 43%  
 Depends, or no opinion: 10%

of the same gender, age, and race, people with guns at home were 41 percent as likely to be homicide victims and 3.4 times as likely to die of suicide (Wiebe, 2003). A gun in the home has often meant the difference between a fight and a funeral, or between suffering and suicide.

Guns not only serve as aggression cues but also put psychological distance between aggressor and victim. As Milgram's obedience studies taught us, remoteness from the victim facilitates cruelty. A knife can kill someone, but a knife attack requires a great deal more personal contact than pulling a trigger from a distance (Figure 10.4).

## Media Influences: Pornography and Sexual Violence

Pornography is now a bigger business in the United States than professional football, basketball, and baseball combined, thanks to some \$13 billion a year spent on the industry's cable and satellite networks, theaters and pay-per-view movies, and in-room hotel movies, phone sex, sex magazines, and Internet sites (D'Orlando, 2011; Richtel, 2007). The easy availability of pornography on the Internet has accelerated its popularity. In a recent survey of 18- to 26-year-old American men, 87 percent said they viewed pornography at least once a month, and nearly half used it at least once a week (Carroll & others, 2008). However, only 31 percent of women reported viewing pornography at all. Social psychological research on pornography has focused mostly on depictions of sexual violence, which is commonplace in popular recent adult videos (Sun & others, 2008). A typical sexually violent episode finds a man forcing himself upon a woman. She at first resists and tries to fight off her attacker. Gradually she becomes sexually aroused, and her resistance melts. By the end she is in ecstasy, pleading for more. We have all viewed or read nonpornographic versions of this sequence: She resists, he persists. Dashing man grabs and forcibly kisses protesting woman. Within moments, the arms that were pushing him away are clutching him tight, her resistance overwhelmed by her unleashed passion. The problem, of course, is that women do not actually respond this way to rape.

Social psychologists report that viewing such fictional scenes of a man overpowering and arousing a woman can (a) distort one's perceptions of how women actually respond to sexual coercion and (b) increase men's aggression against women.

## DISTORTED PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL REALITY

Does viewing sexual violence reinforce the “rape myth”—that some women would welcome sexual assault and that “no doesn’t really mean no”? Researchers have observed a correlation between the amount of TV viewing and rape myth acceptance (Kahlor & Morrison, 2007). To explore the relationship experimentally, Neil Malamuth and James Check (1981) showed University of Manitoba men either two nonsexual movies or two movies depicting a man sexually overcoming a woman. A week later, when surveyed by a different experimenter, those who saw the films with mild sexual violence were more accepting of violence against women.

Other studies confirm that exposure to pornography increases acceptance of the rape myth (Oddone-Paolucci & others, 2000). For example, while spending three evenings watching sexually violent movies, men became progressively less bothered by the raping and slashing (Mullin & Linz, 1995). Compared with men not exposed to the films, three days later they expressed less sympathy for domestic violence victims, and they rated the victims’ injuries as less severe. In fact, said researchers Edward Donnerstein, Daniel Linz, and Steven Penrod (1987), what better way for an evil character to get people to react calmly to the torture and mutilation of women than to show a gradually escalating series of such films?

Note that the sexual message (that many women enjoy being “taken”) was subtle and unlikely to elicit counterarguing. Given frequent media images of women’s resistance melting in the arms of a forceful man, we shouldn’t be surprised that even women often believe that some *other* woman might enjoy being sexually overpowered—though virtually none think it of themselves (Malamuth & others, 1980).

## AGGRESSION AGAINST WOMEN

Evidence also suggests that pornography contributes to men’s actual aggression toward women (Kingston & others, 2009). Nathaniel Lambert and his colleagues (2011) asked male and female college students, “Approximately how many times in the past 30 days have you viewed a pornographic website?” Even after taking gender into account, those who had viewed porn more frequently were also more likely to physically assault friends and romantic partners over the next three weeks, and were more aggressive toward another student in a lab experiment. When given the chance to stick pins into a doll representing their relationship partner, those who viewed more Internet porn symbolically stabbed their partner with more pins. Pornography also affects the children who see it. Among 1,000 10- to 15-year-old boys and girls, those who saw movies, magazines, or websites with violent sexual content were 6 times more likely to be sexually aggressive toward others (defined as “kissed, touched, or done anything sexual with another person when that person did not want you to do so”), even after adjusting for factors such as gender, aggressive traits, and family background (Ybarra & others, 2011).

Canadian and American sexual offenders commonly acknowledge pornography use. Among 155 men arrested for Internet-based child pornography, 85 percent admitted they had molested

“PORNOGRAPHY THAT  
PORTRAYS SEXUAL  
AGGRESSION AS PLEA-  
SURABLE FOR THE VICTIM  
INCREASES THE ACCEP-  
TANCE OF THE USE OF  
COERCION IN SEXUAL  
RELATIONS.”

—SOCIAL SCIENCE CONSEN-  
SUS AT SURGEON GENERAL’S  
WORKSHOP ON PORNOG-  
RAPHY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

(KOOP, 1987)

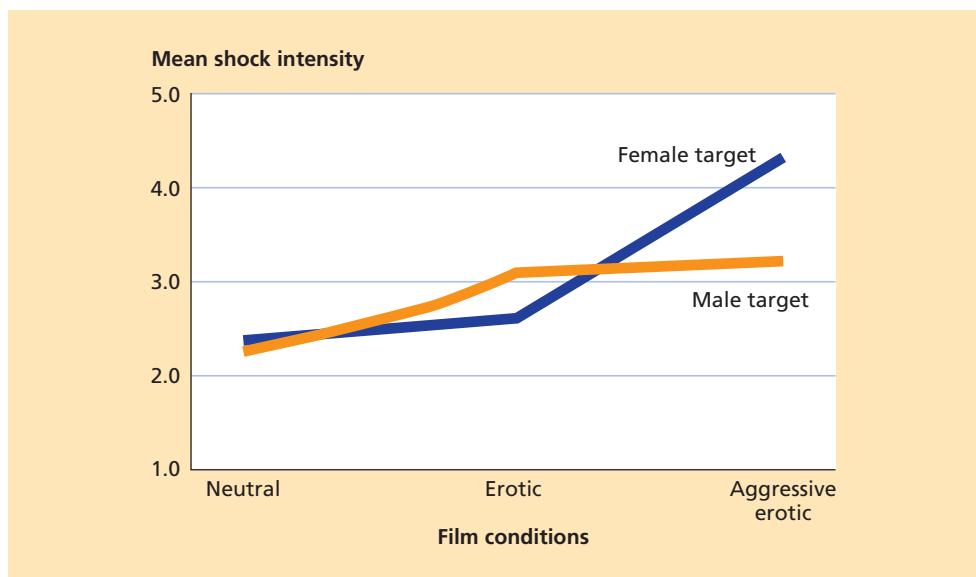


Did Ted Bundy’s (1989) comments on the eve of his execution for a series of rape-murders acknowledge pornography’s toll or make it a handy excuse? “The most damaging kinds of pornography [involve] sexual violence. Like an addiction, you keep craving something that is harder, harder, something which, which gives you a greater sense of excitement. Until you reach a point where the pornography only goes so far, you reach that jumping off point where you begin to wonder if maybe actually doing it would give you that which is beyond just reading it or looking at it.”

**FIGURE :: 10.5**

After viewing an aggressive-erotic film, college men delivered stronger shocks than before, especially to a woman.

*Source:* Data from Donnerstein, 1980.



*Repeated exposure to erotic films featuring quick, uncommitted sex also tends to*

- decrease attraction for one's partner
- increase acceptance of extramarital sex and of women's sexual submission to men
- increase men's perceiving women in sexual terms

(Source: Myers, 2000a)

a child at least once, and the average offender had 13 victims (Bourke & Hernandez, 2009). The reverse is also true: rapists, serial killers, and child molesters report using pornography at unusually high rates (Bennett, 1991; Kingston & others, 2008; Marshall, 1989; Ressler & others, 1988). Among university men, high pornography consumption has predicted sexual aggressiveness even after controlling for other predictors of antisocial behavior, such as general hostility (Vega & Malamuth, 2007).

But perhaps pornography doesn't actually cause violence but instead, violent men like violent pornography. To rule out this explanation, it is necessary to perform an experiment—for example, to randomly assign some people to watch pornography. In one such experiment, 120 University of Wisconsin men watched a neutral, erotic, or aggressive-erotic (rape) film. Then the men, supposedly as part of another experiment, "taught" a male or female confederate some nonsense syllables by choosing how much shock to administer for incorrect answers. The men who had watched the rape film administered markedly stronger shocks (Figure 10.5), especially when angered and with a female victim (Donnerstein, 1980). A consensus statement by 21 leading social scientists summed up the results of experiments in this area: "Exposure to violent pornography increases punitive behavior toward women" (Koop, 1987).

If the ethics of conducting such experiments trouble you, rest assured that these researchers appreciate the controversial and powerful experience they are giving participants. Only after giving their knowing consent do people participate. Moreover, after the experiment, researchers effectively debunk any myths the films communicated (Check & Malamuth, 1984). Another experiment avoided the ethical dilemma by asking college students who usually consumed pornography to abstain from consumption for a month. Compared with those who instead gave up a favorite food, those who had dialed back on their porn consumption were less aggressive (Lambert & others, 2011).

Justification for this experimentation is not only scientific but also humanitarian. In a nationally representative survey of 9,684 American adults, 11 percent of women reported experiencing forced sex at some time in their lives (Basile & others, 2007; CDC, 2008).

Surveys in other industrialized countries offer similar results (Table 10.1). Three in four stranger rapes and nearly all acquaintance rapes went unreported to police. Thus, the official rape rate greatly underestimates the actual rape rate.

Women are most at risk when encountering men who exhibit the promiscuous behavior and hostile attitudes pornography cultivates (Figure 10.6).

**TABLE :: 10.1** Percentage of Women Reporting Rape Experiences in Five Countries

Country	Sample of Women	Completed and Attempted Rape
Canada	Student sample at 95 colleges and universities	23% rape or sexual assault
Germany	Berlin late adolescents	17% criminal sexual violence
New Zealand	Sample of psychology students	25%
United Kingdom	Student sample at 22 universities	19%
United States	Representative sample at 32 colleges and universities	28%
Seoul, Korea	Adult women	22%

Source: Studies reported by Koss, Heise, and Russo (1994) and Krahé (1998).

## MEDIA AWARENESS EDUCATION

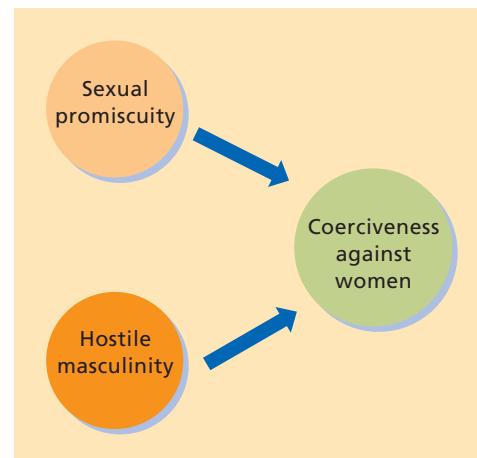
As most Germans in the 1930s and 1940s quietly tolerated the degrading anti-Semitic images that fed the Nazi Holocaust, so most people today tolerate media images of women that feed sexual harassment, abuse, and rape. Should such portrayals that demean or violate women be restrained by law?

In the contest of individual versus collective rights, most people in Western nations side with individual rights. As an alternative to censorship, many psychologists favor “media awareness training.” Pornography researchers have successfully resensitized and educated participants to women’s actual responses to sexual violence. Could educators similarly promote critical viewing skills? By sensitizing people to the portrayal of women that predominates in pornography and to issues of sexual harassment and violence, it should be possible to debunk the myth that women enjoy being coerced. “Our utopian and perhaps naive hope,” wrote Edward Donnerstein, Daniel Linz, and Steven Penrod (1987, p. 196), “is that in the end the truth revealed through good science will prevail and the public will be convinced that these images not only demean those portrayed but also those who view them.”

Is such a hope naive? Consider this: Without a ban on cigarettes, U.S. adult smokers dropped from 42 percent in 1965 to 19 percent in 2010 (CDC, 2012). Without censorship of racism, once-common media images of African Americans as childlike, superstitious buffoons have nearly disappeared. As public consciousness changed, scriptwriters, producers, and media executives shunned exploitative images of minorities. Will we one day look back with embarrassment on the time when movies entertained people with scenes of mayhem, mutilation, and sexual coercion?

## Media Influences: Television and the Internet

We have seen that watching an aggressive model attack a Bobo doll can unleash children’s aggressive urges and teach them new ways to aggress. And we have seen that after viewing movies depicting sexual violence, many angry men will



**FIGURE :: 10.6**  
**Sexually Aggressive Men**

Men who sexually coerce women often combine a history of impersonal sex with hostile masculinity, reports Neil Malamuth (1996, 2003; Jacques-Tiura & others, 2007).

“WHAT WE’RE TRYING TO DO IS RAISE THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND PORNOGRAPHY TO AT LEAST THE LEVEL OF AWARENESS OF RACIST AND KU KLUX KLAN LITERATURE.”

—FEMINIST GLORIA STEINEM (1988)

"THE AVERAGE U.S. HOUSEHOLD HAS MORE TELEVISIONS (2.73) THAN PEOPLE (2.6)."

—TIME, 2007

"ONE OF TELEVISION'S GREAT CONTRIBUTIONS IS THAT IT BROUGHT MURDER BACK INTO THE HOME WHERE IT BELONGS. SEEING A MURDER ON TELEVISION CAN BE GOOD THERAPY. IT CAN HELP WORK OFF ONE'S ANTAGONISMS."

—ALFRED HITCHCOCK

act more violently toward women. Does everyday television viewing have any similar effects?

Today, in much of the industrialized world, nearly all households (99.2 percent in Australia, for example) have a TV set, more than have telephones (Trewin, 2001). Most homes have more than one set, which helps explain why parents and children often give differing reports of what the children are watching (Donnerstein, 1998).

In the average U.S. home, the TV is on eight hours a day, with individual teens averaging about four hours and adults three hours (Robinson & Martin, 2009; Strasburger & others, 2010). Thanks to digital video recorders (DVRs) that allow people to "time shift" their TV watching, Americans in 2008 watched more TV than ever before (Nielsen, 2008a, 2008b).

During all those hours, what social behaviors are modeled? From 1994 to 1997, bleary-eyed employees of the National Television Violence Study (1997) analyzed some 10,000 programs from the major networks and cable channels. Their findings? Six in 10 programs contained violence ("physically compelling action that threatens to hurt or kill, or actual hurting or killing"). During fistfights, people who went down usually shook it off and came back stronger—unlike most real fistfights, where one punch often breaks a jaw or hand. In 73 percent of violent scenes, the aggressors went unpunished. In 58 percent, the victim was not shown to experience pain. In children's programs, only 5 percent of violence was shown to have any long-term consequences; two-thirds depicted violence as funny. To adults, violence seems less violent when humorous (Kirsh, 2006).

What does it add up to? All told, television beams its electromagnetic waves into children's eyeballs for more growing-up hours than they spend in school. More hours, in fact, than they spend in any other waking activity. By the end of elementary school, the average child has witnessed some 8,000 TV murders and 100,000 other violent acts (Huston & others, 1992). According to one content analysis, American prime-time violence increased 75 percent between 1998 and the 2005–2006 season, which averaged 4.41 violent events per hour (PTC, 2007). Reflecting on his 22 years of cruelty counting, media researcher George Gerbner (1994) lamented: "Humankind has had more bloodthirsty eras but none as filled with *images* of violence as the present. We are awash in a tide of violent representations the world has never before seen . . . drenching every home with graphic scenes of expertly choreographed brutality."

Studies of television viewing and aggression aim to identify effects more subtle and pervasive than the occasional "copycat" murders that capture public attention. They ask: How does television affect viewers' *behavior* and viewers' *thinking*?

## TELEVISION'S EFFECTS ON BEHAVIOR

Do viewers imitate violent models? Examples abound of actual criminals reenacting television crimes. In one survey of 208 prison convicts, 9 of 10 admitted learning new criminal tricks by watching crime programs. Four out of 10 said they had attempted specific crimes seen on television (*TV Guide*, 1977).

**CORRELATING TV VIEWING AND BEHAVIOR** Stories of TV-inspired crime are not scientific evidence. Researchers therefore use correlational and experimental studies to examine the effects of viewing violence. One technique, commonly used with schoolchildren, correlates their TV watching with their aggressiveness. The frequent result: The more violent the content of the child's TV viewing, the more aggressive the child (Eron, 1987; Turner & others, 1986). The relationship is modest but consistently found in North America, Europe, and Australia. And it extends to devious "indirect aggression." British girls who most often view programs that model gossiping, backbiting, and social exclusion also more often display such behavior (Coyne & Archer, 2005).

Can we conclude, then, that a diet of violent TV fuels aggression? Perhaps you are already thinking that because this is a correlational study, the cause-effect relation

could also work in the opposite direction. Maybe aggressive children prefer aggressive programs. Or maybe some underlying third factor, such as lower intelligence, predisposes some children to prefer both aggressive programs and aggressive behavior.

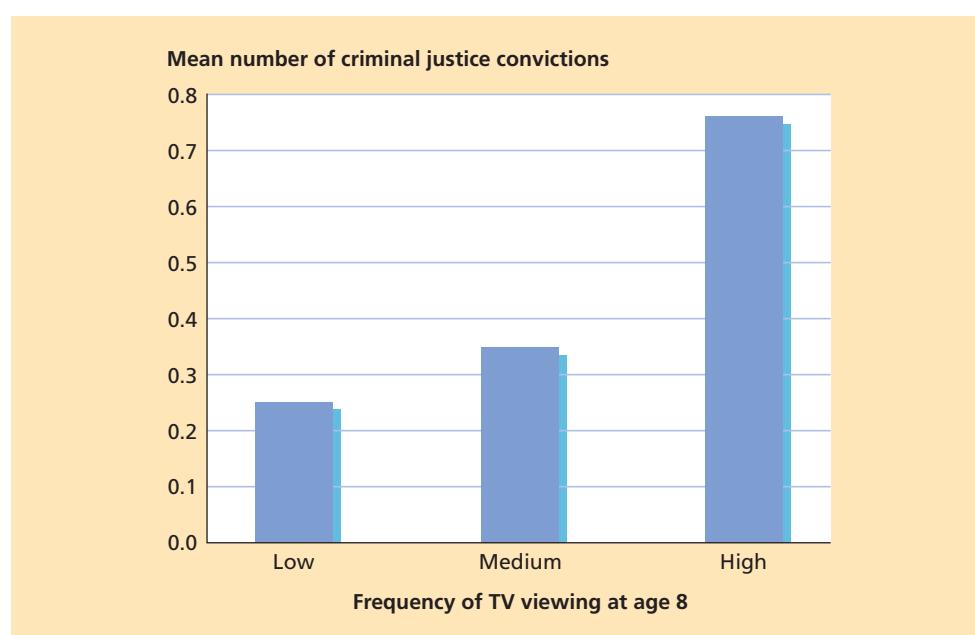
Researchers have developed two ways to test these alternative explanations. They test the “hidden third factor” explanation by statistically pulling out the influence of some of these possible factors. For example, William Belson (1978; Muson, 1978) studied 1,565 London boys. Compared with those who watched little violence, those who watched a great deal (especially realistic rather than cartoon violence) admitted to 50 percent more violent acts during the preceding six months (for example, vandalizing a public telephone). Belson also examined 22 likely third factors, such as family size. The “heavy violence” and “light violence” viewers still differed after the researchers equated them with respect to potential third factors. So Belson surmised that the heavy viewers were indeed more violent *because* of their TV exposure.

Similarly, Leonard Eron and Rowell Huesmann (1980, 1985) found that violence viewing among 875 8-year-olds correlated with aggressiveness even after statistically pulling out several obvious possible third factors. Moreover, when they restudied those individuals as 19-year-olds, they discovered that viewing violence at age 8 modestly predicted aggressiveness at age 19, but that aggressiveness at age 8 did *not* predict viewing violence at age 19. Aggression followed viewing, not the reverse. Moreover, by age 30, those who had watched the most violence in childhood were more likely than others to have been convicted of a crime (Figure 10.7).

Follow-up studies have confirmed these findings in various ways, including the following:

- Correlating 8-year-olds’ violence viewing with their later likelihood of adult spouse abuse (Huesmann & others, 1984, 2003)
- Correlating adolescents’ violence viewing with their later likelihood of assault, robbery, and threats of injury (Johnson & others, 2002)
- Correlating elementary schoolchildren’s violent media exposure with how often they got into fights when restudied 2 to 6 months later (Gentile & others, 2004)

In all these studies, the investigators were careful to adjust for likely “third factors,” such as preexisting lower intelligence or hostility.



**FIGURE :: 10.7**  
**Children’s Television Viewing and Later Criminal Activity**

Violence viewing at age 8 was a predictor of a serious criminal offense by age 30.

*Source:* Data from Eron and Huesmann (1984).

Many people now spend more screen time in front of their computers than in front of the television. In many ways, the Internet allows an even greater variety of options for viewing violence than television does, including violent videos, violent pictures, and hate-group websites (Donnerstein, 2011). It also allows people to create and distribute violent media themselves, and to bully others through email, instant messaging, or on social networking websites (Donnerstein, 2011). In a survey of European adolescents, one-third reported seeing violent or hateful content online (Livingstone & Haddon, 2009). Among U.S. youth, those who frequently visited violent websites were 5 times more likely to report engaging in violent behavior (Ybarra & others, 2008).

Notice that these studies illustrate how researchers are using correlational findings to *suggest* cause and effect. Yet an infinite number of possible third factors could be creating a merely coincidental relation between viewing violence and practicing aggression. Fortunately, the experimental method can control these extraneous factors. If we randomly assign some children to watch a violent film and others a non-violent film, any later aggression difference between the two groups will be due to the only factor that distinguishes them: what they watched.

**TV VIEWING EXPERIMENTS** The trailblazing Bobo-doll experiments by Albert Bandura and Richard Walters (1963) sometimes had young children view the adult pounding the inflated doll on film instead of observing it live—with much the same effect. Then Leonard Berkowitz and Russell Geen (1966) found that angered college students who viewed a violent film acted more aggressively than did similarly angered students who viewed nonaggressive films. These laboratory experiments, coupled with growing public concern, were sufficient to prompt the U.S. Surgeon General to commission 50 new research studies during the early 1970s. By and large, those studies, and more than 100 later ones, confirmed that viewing violence amplifies aggression (Anderson & others, 2003).

For example, research teams led by Ross Parke (1977) in the United States and Jacques Leyens (1975) in Belgium showed institutionalized American and Belgian delinquent boys a series of either aggressive or nonaggressive commercial films. Their consistent finding: “Exposure to movie violence . . . led to an increase in viewer aggression.” Compared with the week preceding the film series, physical attacks increased sharply in cottages where boys were viewing violent films. Dolf Zillmann and James Weaver (1999) similarly exposed men and women, on four consecutive days, to violent or nonviolent feature films. When participating in a different project on the fifth day, those exposed to the violent films were more hostile to the research assistant.

The aggression provoked in these experiments is not assault and battery; it’s more on the scale of a shove in the lunch line, a cruel comment, or a threatening gesture. Nevertheless, the convergence of evidence is striking. “The irrefutable conclusion,” said a 1993 American Psychological Association youth violence commission, is “that viewing violence increases violence.” This is especially so among people with aggressive tendencies and when an attractive person commits justified, realistic violence that goes unpunished and that shows no pain or harm (Comstock, 2008; Gentile & others, 2007; Zillmann & Weaver, 2007).

All in all, conclude researchers Brad Bushman and Craig Anderson (2001), the evidence for media effects on aggression is now “overwhelming.” The research base is large, the methods diverse, and the overall findings consistent, echo a National Institute of Mental Health task force of leading media violence researchers (Anderson & others, 2003). “Our in-depth review . . . reveals unequivocal evidence that exposure to media violence can increase the likelihood of aggressive and violent behavior in both immediate and long-term contexts.”

“THEN SHALL WE SIMPLY  
ALLOW OUR CHILDREN  
TO LISTEN TO ANY STORY  
ANYONE HAPPENS TO  
MAKE UP, AND SO RECEIVE  
INTO THEIR MINDS IDEAS  
OFTEN THE VERY OPPOSITE  
OF THOSE WE SHALL  
THINK THEY OUGHT TO  
HAVE WHEN THEY ARE  
GROWN UP?”

—PLATO, *THE REPUBLIC*,

360 B.C.

**WHY DOES TV VIEWING AFFECT BEHAVIOR?** Given the convergence of correlational and experimental evidence, researchers have explored *why* viewing violence has this effect. Consider three possibilities (Geen & Thomas, 1986).

One is the *arousal* it produces (Mueller & others, 1983; Zillmann, 1989). As we noted earlier, arousal tends to spill over: One type of arousal energizes other behaviors.

Other research shows that viewing violence *disinhibits*. In Bandura's experiment, the adult's punching of the Bobo doll seemed to make outbursts legitimate and to lower the children's inhibitions. Viewing violence primes the viewer for aggressive behavior by activating violence-related thoughts (Berkowitz, 1984; Bushman & Geen, 1990; Josephson, 1987). Listening to music with sexually violent lyrics seems to have a similar effect (Barongan & Hall, 1995; Johnson & others, 1995; Pritchard, 1998).

Media portrayals also evoke *imitation*. The children in Bandura's experiments reenacted the specific behaviors they had witnessed. The commercial television industry is hard-pressed to dispute that television leads viewers to imitate what they have seen: Its advertisers model consumption. Are media executives right, however, to argue that TV merely holds a mirror to a violent society, that art imitates life, and that the "reel" world therefore shows us the real world? Actually, on TV programs, acts of assault have outnumbered affectionate acts four to one. In other ways as well, television models an unreal world.

But there is good news here, too. If the ways of relating and problem solving modeled on television do trigger imitation, especially among young viewers, then TV modeling of **prosocial behavior** should be socially beneficial. In Chapter 12 we will explore how television's subtle influence can indeed teach children positive lessons in behavior.

## TELEVISION'S EFFECTS ON THINKING

We have focused on television's effect on behavior, but researchers have also examined the cognitive effects of viewing violence: Does prolonged viewing *desensitize* us to cruelty? Does prime time crime give us mental *scripts* for how to act? Does it distort our *perceptions* of reality? Does it *prime* aggressive thoughts?

**DESENSITIZATION** Repeat an emotion-arousing stimulus, such as an obscene word, over and over. What happens? The emotional response will "extinguish." After witnessing thousands of acts of cruelty, there is good reason to expect a similar emotional numbing. The most common response might well become, "Doesn't bother me at all." Such a response is precisely what Barbara Krahe and her colleagues (2010) observed when they measured the physiological arousal of 303 college students who watched a clip from a violent movie. Regular viewers of violence on TV and movies showed a lessened response, compared to infrequent viewers, reacting to violence with a shrug rather than concern.

In a clever experiment, Brad Bushman and Craig Anderson (2009) had a young woman with a taped-up ankle drop her crutches while outside a movie theater and then struggle to retrieve them. Moviegoers who had just seen a violent film (*The Ruins*) took longer to help than those who had just seen a nonviolent film (*Nim's Island*). When the woman dropped her crutches *before* the movie, however, there was no difference in helping—suggesting it was the violent film itself, and not the type of people who watch violent films, that desensitized moviegoers to her dilemma.

As television and movies have become more sexually explicit—the number of prime-time American TV scenes involving sexual talk or behavior nearly doubled between 1998 and 2005 (Kaiser, 2005)—teen concern about media sex depictions has similarly declined. Today's teens "appear to have become considerably more desensitized to graphic depictions of violence and sex than their parents were at their age," concludes Gallup researcher Josephine Mazzuca (2002). Media portrayals desensitize.

**SOCIAL SCRIPTS** When we find ourselves in new situations, uncertain how to act, we rely on **social scripts**—culturally provided mental instructions for how to

### prosocial behavior

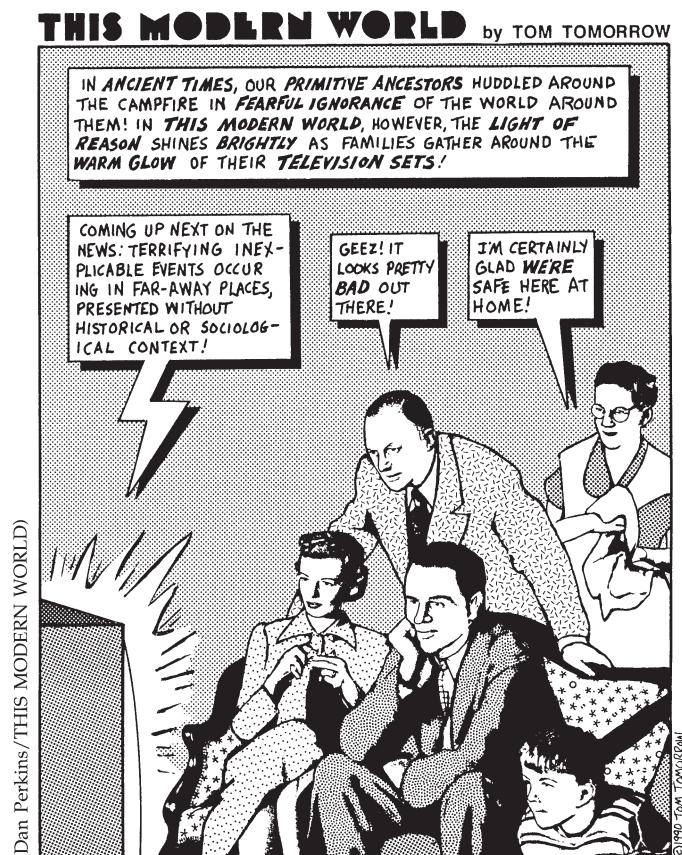
Positive, constructive, helpful social behavior; the opposite of antisocial behavior.

"FIFTY YEARS OF RESEARCH  
ON THE EFFECT OF TV  
VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN  
LEADS TO THE INESCAP-  
ABLE CONCLUSION THAT  
VIEWING MEDIA VIOLENCE  
IS RELATED TO INCREASES  
IN AGGRESSIVE ATTITUDES,  
VALUES, AND BEHAVIORS."

—JOHN P. MURRAY (2008)

### social scripts

Culturally provided mental instructions for how to act in various situations.



(Dan Perkins/THE MODERN WORLD)

People who watch many hours of television see the world as a dangerous place.

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**"THE MORE FULLY THAT ANY GIVEN GENERATION WAS EXPOSED TO TELEVISION IN ITS FORMATIVE YEARS, THE LOWER ITS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT [ITS RATE OF VOTING, JOINING, MEETING, GIVING, AND VOLUNTEERING]."**

—ROBERT PUTNAM, BOWLING

ALONE, 2000

act. After so many action films, youngsters may acquire a script that is played when they face real-life conflicts. Challenged, they may "act like a man" by intimidating or eliminating the threat. Likewise, after witnessing innumerable sexual innuendoes and acts on TV and in music lyrics—mostly involving impulsive or short-term relationships—youths may acquire sexual scripts they later enact in real-life relationships (Escobar-Chaves & Anderson, 2008; Fischer & Greitemeyer, 2006; Kunkel, 2001). Thus, the more sexual content that adolescents view (even when controlling for other predictors of early sexual activity), the more likely they are to perceive their peers as sexually active, to develop sexually permissive attitudes, and to experience early intercourse (Escobar-Chaves & others, 2005; Martino & others, 2005). Media portrayals implant social scripts.

**ALTERED PERCEPTIONS** Does television's fictional world also mold our conceptions of the real world? George Gerbner and his University of Pennsylvania associates (1979, 1994) suspected this is television's most potent effect. Their surveys of both adolescents and adults showed that heavy viewers (four hours a day or more) are more likely than light viewers (two hours or fewer) to exaggerate the frequency of violence in the world around them and to fear being personally assaulted. Similar feelings of vulnerability have been expressed by South African women

after viewing violence against women (Reid & Finchlescu, 1995). A national survey of American 7- to 11-year-old children found that heavy viewers were more likely than light viewers to admit fears "that somebody bad might get into your house" or that "when you go outside, somebody might hurt you" (Peterson & Zill, 1981). For those who watch much television, the world becomes a scary place. Media portrayals shape perceptions of reality.

**COGNITIVE PRIMING** New evidence also reveals that watching violent television primes aggressive-related ideas (Bushman, 1998). After viewing violence, people offer more hostile explanations for others' behavior (was the shove intentional?). They interpret spoken homonyms with the more aggressive meaning (interpreting "punch" as a hit rather than a drink). And they recognize aggressive words more quickly. Media portrayals prime thinking.

**TIME DRAIN** Perhaps television's biggest effect relates not to its quality but to its quantity. Compared with more active recreation, TV watching sucks people's energy and dampens their moods (Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Moreover, TV annually replaces in people's lives a thousand or more hours of other activities. If, like most others, you have spent a thousand-plus hours per year watching TV, think how you might have used that time if there were no television. What difference would that have made in who you are today? In seeking to explain the post-1960 decline in civic activities and organizational memberships, Robert Putnam (2000) reported that every added hour a day spent watching TV competes with civic participation. Television steals time from club meetings, volunteering, congregational activities, and political engagement.

## Media Influences: Video Games

The scientific debate over the effects of media violence "is basically over," contend Douglas Gentile and Craig Anderson (2003; Anderson & Gentile, 2008). Researchers are now shifting their attention to video games, which are extremely popular among teens and can be extremely violent. Educational research shows that "video games are excellent teaching tools," note Gentile and Anderson. "If health video games can successfully teach health behaviors, and flight simulator video games can teach people how to fly, then what should we expect violent murder-simulating games to teach?"

### THE GAMES KIDS PLAY

In 2012, the video-game industry celebrated its fortieth birthday. Since the first video game in 1972, we have moved from electronic Ping-Pong to splatter games (Anderson & others, 2007). In a 2008 poll, 97 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds said they play video games. Half had played a video game the day before. Many of these games were violent—half of the teens said they played first-person shooter games, such as *Halo* or *Counter-Strike*, and 2 out of 3 played action games that often involve violence, such as *Grand Theft Auto* (Pew Research Center, 2008). Younger children are also playing violent games: In one survey of fourth-graders, 59 percent of girls and 73 percent of boys reported that their favorite games were violent ones (Anderson, 2003, 2004). The Federal Trade Commission found that in four out of five attempts, underage children could easily purchase "M" (mature) games, supposedly intended for sale only to those 17 and older (Pereira, 2003).

In the popular *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, youth are invited to play the role of a psychopath, notes Gentile (2004). "You can run down pedestrians with the car, you can do carjackings, you can do drive-by shootings, you can run down to the red-light district, pick up a prostitute, have sex with her in your car, and then kill her to get your money back." In effective 3D graphics, you can knock people over, stomp on them until they cough up blood, and watch them die.

"WHAT SENSE DOES IT  
MAKE TO FORBID SELLING  
TO A 13-YEAR-OLD A  
MAGAZINE WITH AN IMAGE  
OF A NUDE WOMAN,  
WHILE PROTECTING THE  
SALE TO THAT 13-YEAR-  
OLD OF AN INTERACTIVE  
VIDEO GAME IN WHICH HE  
ACTIVELY, BUT VIRTUALLY,  
BINDS AND GAGS THE  
WOMAN, THEN TORTURES  
AND KILLS HER?"

U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE  
STEPHEN BREYER, IN DISSENT,  
2011.

### Effects of the Games Kids Play

Concerns about violent video games heightened after teen assassins in separate incidents in Kentucky, Arkansas, and Colorado enacted the horrific violence they had so often played onscreen; concerns emerged again after the 2011 slaughter of Norwegians by an avid World of Warcraft gamer. People wondered: What do youth learn from endless hours of role-playing attacking and dismembering people? And was anything accomplished when some Norwegian stores responded to the killings by pulling violent games from their shelves (Anderson, 2011)?

Most smokers don't die of lung cancer. Most abused children don't become abusive. And most people who spend hundreds of hours rehearsing human slaughter live gentle lives. This enables video-game defenders, like tobacco and TV interests, to say their products are harmless. "There is absolutely no evidence, none, that playing a violent game leads to aggressive behavior," contended Doug Lowenstein (2000), president of the Interactive Digital Software Association.

Gentile and Anderson offer some reasons why violent game playing *might* have a more toxic effect than watching violent television. With game playing, players

- identify with, and play the role of, a violent character.
- actively rehearse violence, instead of passively watching it.
- engage in the whole sequence of enacting violence—selecting victims, acquiring weapons and ammunition, stalking the victim, aiming the weapon, pulling the trigger.
- are engaged with continual violence and threats of attack.
- repeat violent behaviors over and over.
- are rewarded for violent acts.

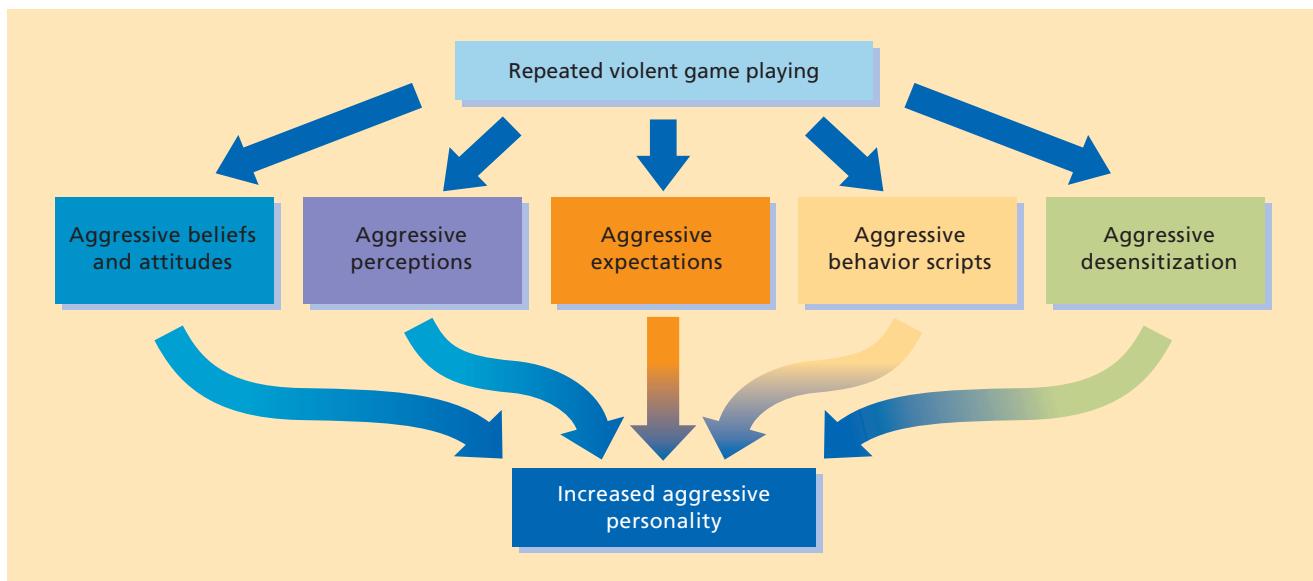
For such reasons, military organizations often prepare soldiers to fire in combat by engaging them with attack-simulation games.

But do people who play violent video games go on to behave aggressively outside the game? “I play violent video games,” some may protest, “And I’m not aggressive.” As columnist Roger Simon (2011) wrote about research showing that media violence leads to real-life aggression, “Such claims bewilder me. I grew up playing with toy guns and have never shot anybody (though I know plenty who deserve it).” The problem with this common argument is that one isolated example proves nothing—it’s not a scientific study. A better approach is to examine large samples of people to find out if, on average, violent video games increase aggression.

A large body of research shows that playing violent video games does, on average, increase aggressive behavior, thoughts, and feelings. Combining data from 381 studies with 130,296 participants, Craig Anderson and his colleagues (2010) found a clear effect: Violent video-game playing increased aggression—for children, adolescents, and young adults; in North America, Japan, and Western Europe; and across three research designs (correlational, experimental, and longitudinal). That means violent video games caused aggression even when participants were randomly assigned to play them (vs. a nonviolent game), which rules out the possibility that (for example) aggressive people like to play aggressive games. Longitudinal studies, which follow people over time, produce similar results: among German adolescents, today’s violent game playing predicted later aggression, but today’s aggression did not predict future violent game playing (Moller & Krahe, 2008).

Playing violent video games has an array of effects including the following:

- *Increases in aggressive behaviors:* After violent game play, children and youth play more aggressively with their peers, get into more arguments with their teachers, and participate in more fights. The effect occurs inside and outside the laboratory, across self-reports, teacher reports, and parent reports, and for the reasons illustrated in Figure 10.8. Even among young adolescents low in hostility, 10 times more of the heavy violent gamers got into fights compared with their nongaming counterparts. And after they started playing the violent games, previously nonhostile kids became more likely



**FIGURE :: 10.8**  
**Violent Video-Game Influences on Aggressive Tendencies**

Source: Adapted from Craig A. Anderson and Brad J. Bushman (2001).

to have fights (Gentile & others, 2004). In Japan, too, playing violent video games early in a school year predicts physical aggressiveness later in the year, even after controlling for gender and prior aggressiveness (Anderson & others, 2008).

- *Increases in aggressive thoughts.* After playing a violent game, students became more likely to guess that a man whose car was just rear-ended would respond aggressively by using abusive language, kicking out a window, or starting a fight (Bushman & Anderson, 2002).
- *Increases in aggressive feelings,* including hostility, anger, or revenge.
- *Decreases in helping others and in empathy for others.* Students randomly assigned to play a violent or nonviolent video game later overheard a loud fight that ended with one person writhing on the floor in pain from a sprained ankle. Students who had just played a violent game took more than 1 minute on average to come to the person's aid, almost 4 times as long as those who had played a nonviolent game (Bushman & Anderson, 2009).

After violent video-game playing, people become more likely to exploit rather than to trust and cooperate with a partner (Sheese & Graziano, 2005). They also become *desensitized* to violence, showing decreased brain activity associated with emotion (Bartholow & others, 2006; Carnagey & others, 2007). Tobias Greitemeyer and Neil McLatchie (2011) explored a specific kind of desensitization: Seeing other people as less human. Among British university students, those randomly assigned to play a violent game were more likely to describe in nonhuman terms someone who had insulted them. And the less human they saw the person, the more aggressive they were.

Moreover, the more violent the games that are played, the bigger the effects. The bloodier the game (for example, the higher the blood level setting in one experiment with *Mortal Combat* players) the greater the gamer's after-game hostility and arousal (Barlett & others, 2008). More-realistic games—showing violence more likely to happen in real life—also produced more aggressive feelings than less-realistic games (Bartlett & Rodeheffer, 2009). Video games *have* become more violent in the past few years, which helps explain why newer studies find the biggest effects. Although much remains to be learned, these studies challenge the **catharsis** hypothesis—the idea that violent games allow people to safely

### catharsis

Emotional release. The catharsis view of aggression is that the aggressive drive is reduced when one "releases" aggressive energy, either by acting aggressively or by fantasizing aggression.



Is violent video game-playing  
cathartic? toxic? or neutral?  
Experiments offer some  
answers.

express their aggressive tendencies and “get their anger out” (Kutner & Olson, 2008). Practicing violence breeds rather than releases violence, say catharsis critics. Yet the idea that games might relieve angry feelings is one of the main draws of violent video games for angry people (Bushman & Whitaker, 2010). Unfortunately, say critics, this strategy is likely to backfire, leading to more anger and aggression.

In 2005, California State Senator Leland Yee proposed a law banning the sale of violent video games to those under 18. The bill was signed into law, but video game manufacturers immediately sued, and it never went into effect. The U.S. Supreme Court heard the case in 2010, and more than 100 social scientists signed a statement in support of the law, writing that “Overall, the research data conclude that exposure to violent video games causes an increase in the likelihood of aggressive behavior.” In 2011, the Supreme Court struck down the law, primarily citing the First Amendment’s guarantee of free speech but also expressing doubts that the research showed “a direct causal link between playing violent video games and actual harm to minors” (Scalia, 2011).

Similarly, academic researchers are not unanimous in the view that violent video games have meaningful effects on real-world behavior. Christopher Ferguson and John Kilburn (2010), for example, signed a statement to the Supreme Court criticizing the California law. They point out that from 1996 to 2006, when violent video game sales were increasing, real-life youth violence was decreasing. Ferguson and Kilburn also argue that the effects of violent video games on aggression are small—only some people who play violent video games will act aggressively in real life. Their skepticism helped persuade the Australian Attorney General’s Department (2010) that research on violent video game effects “is contested and inconclusive.” Brad Bushman and his colleagues (2010) argue that the violent gaming effect is larger than the toxic effects of asbestos or the effect of secondhand smoke on lung cancer. Not everyone exposed to asbestos or secondhand smoke will develop cancer, they point out, but they are still considered public health dangers.

Of course, video games are not all bad—not all of them are violent, and even the violent games improve hand-eye coordination and reaction time (Dye & others, 2009). Moreover, game-playing is focused fun that helps satisfy basic needs for a sense of competence, control, and social connection (Przyblski et al., 2010). No wonder an experiment that randomly assigned 6- to 9-year-old boys to receive a game system found them spending an average of 40 minutes a day on it over the next few months. The downside: They spent less time on schoolwork, resulting in lower reading and writing scores than the control group that did not get a game system (Weis & Cerankosky, 2010).

What about playing prosocial games in which people help each other—the conceptual opposite of violent games? In three studies with children and adults in Singapore, Japan, and the United States, those who played prosocial video games helped others, shared, and cooperated more in real-life situations (Gentile & others, 2009). As Douglas Gentile and Craig Anderson (2011) conclude, “Video games are excellent teachers.” Educational games teach children reading and math, prosocial games teach prosocial behavior, and violent games teach violence, they note. We do what we’re taught to do, whether that’s to help or to hurt.

As a concerned scientist, Craig Anderson (2003, 2004) (See “The Inside Story, Craig Anderson on Video-Game Violence”) therefore encourages parents to discover what their kids are ingesting and to ensure that their media diet, as least in their own home, is healthy. Parents may not be able to control what their child watches, plays, and eats in someone else’s home. Nor can they control the media’s effect on their children’s peer culture. (That is why advising parents to “just say no” is naive.) But parents can oversee consumption in their own home and provide increased time for alternative activities. Networking with other parents can build a kid-friendly neighborhood. And schools can help by providing media-awareness education.

“IT IS HARD TO MEASURE  
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VIDEO GAMES OF KILLING  
THAT ARE A PRINCIPAL  
ENTERTAINMENT OF BOYS.”

—SUSAN SONTAG,  
REGARDING THE TORTURE OF  
OTHERS, 2004

# THE inside STORY

Craig Anderson on Video-Game Violence

Understanding the clearly harmful effects being documented by TV/film violence researchers, I was disturbed as I noticed the increasing violence in video games. With one of my graduate students, Karen Dill, I therefore began correlational and experimental investigations that intersected with growing public concern and led to my testifying before a U.S. Senate subcommittee and consulting for a wide array of government and public policy groups, including parent and child advocacy organizations.

Although it is gratifying to see one's research have a positive impact, the video-game industry has gone to great lengths to dismiss the research, much as 30 years ago cigarette manufacturers ridiculed basic medical research by asking how many Marlboros a lab rat had to smoke before contracting cancer. I also get some pretty nasty mail from gamers, and the volume of requests for information led me to offer resources and answers at [www.psychology.iastate.edu/faculty/caa](http://www.psychology.iastate.edu/faculty/caa).

Many people believe that the best way to enhance understanding of a complicated topic is to find people who will give opposite views and give each "side" equal time. Media violence news stories typically give equal time to industry representatives and their preferred "experts" along with reassuring words from a carefree 4-year-old, which can leave the impression that we know less than we do. If all the experts in a given area agree, does this idea of "fairness" and "balance" make sense? Or should we expect that legitimate experts will have published peer-reviewed original research articles on the issue at hand?



Craig A. Anderson  
Iowa State University

## Group Influences

We have considered what provokes *individuals* to aggress. If frustrations, insults, and aggressive models heighten the aggressive tendencies of isolated people, such factors are likely to prompt the same reaction in groups. As a riot begins, aggressive acts often spread rapidly after the "trigger" example of one antagonistic person. Seeing looters freely helping themselves to TV sets, normally law-abiding bystanders may drop their moral inhibitions and imitate.

Groups can amplify aggressive reactions partly by diffusing responsibility. Decisions to attack in war typically are made by strategists remote from the front lines. They give orders, but others carry them out. Does such distancing make it easier to recommend aggression?

Jacquelyn Gaebelein and Anthony Mander (1978) simulated that situation in the laboratory. They asked their University of North Carolina, Greensboro, students to either *shock* someone or simply to *advise* someone else how much shock to administer. When the recipient was innocent of any provocation, as are most victims of mass aggression, the advisers recommended more shock than given by the frontline participants, who felt more directly responsible for any hurt.

Diffusion of responsibility increases not only with distance but also with numbers. (Recall from Chapter 8 the phenomenon of deindividuation.) Brian Mullen (1986) analyzed information from 60 lynchings occurring between 1899 and 1946 and made an interesting discovery: The greater the number of people in a lynch mob, the more vicious the murder and mutilation.



**Social contagion.** When 17 juvenile, orphaned male bull elephants were relocated during the mid-1990s to a South African park, they became an out-of-control adolescent gang and killed 40 white rhinoceros. In 1998, concerned park officials relocated 6 older, stronger bull elephants into their midst. The result: The rampaging soon quieted down (Slotow & others, 2000). One of these dominant bulls, at left, faces down several of the juveniles.

Through social “contagion,” groups magnify aggressive tendencies, much as they polarize other tendencies. Examples are youth gangs, soccer fans, rapacious soldiers, urban rioters, and what Scandinavians call “mobbing”—schoolchildren in groups repeatedly harassing or attacking an insecure, weak schoolmate (Lagerspetz & others, 1982). Mobbing is a group activity.

Youths sharing antisocial tendencies and lacking close family bonds and expectations of academic success may find social identity in a gang. As group identity develops, conformity pressures and deindividuation increase (Staub, 1996). Self-identity diminishes as members give themselves over to the group, often feeling a satisfying oneness with the others. The frequent result is social contagion—group-fed arousal, disinhibition, and polarization. As gang expert Arnold Goldstein (1994) observed, until gang members marry out, age out, get a job, go to prison, or die, they hang out. They define their turf, display their colors, challenge rivals, and sometimes commit delinquent acts and fight over drugs, territory, honor, women, or insults.

The twentieth-century massacres that claimed over 150 million lives were “not the sums of individual actions,” noted Robert Zajonc (2000). “*Genocide is not the plural of homicide.*” Massacres are *social* phenomena fed by “moral imperatives”—a collective mentality (including images, rhetoric, and ideology) that mobilizes a group or a culture for extraordinary actions. The massacres of Rwanda’s Tutsis, of Europe’s Jews, and of America’s native population were collective phenomena requiring widespread support, organization, and participation. Before launching the genocidal initiative, Rwanda’s Hutu government and business leaders bought and distributed 2 million Chinese machetes. Over 3 months, the Hutu attackers reportedly would get up, eat a hearty breakfast, gather together, and then go hunt their former neighbors who had fled. They would hack to death anyone they found, then return home, wash, and socialize over a few beers (Dalrymple, 2007; Hatzfeld, 2007).

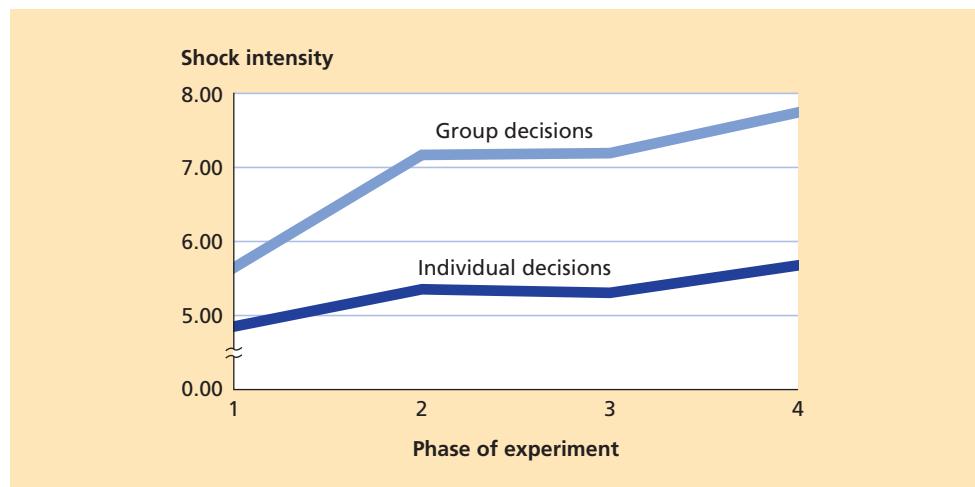
Experiments in Israel by Yoram Jaffe and Yoel Yinon (1983) confirm that groups can amplify aggressive tendencies. In one, university men angered by a supposed fellow participant retaliated with decisions to give much stronger shocks when in groups than when alone. In another experiment (Jaffe & others, 1981), people decided, either alone or in groups, how much punishing shock to give someone for incorrect answers on a task. As Figure 10.9 shows, individuals gave progressively more of the assumed shock as the experiment proceeded, and group decision making magnified this individual tendency. When circumstances provoke an individual’s aggressive reaction, the addition of group interaction will often amplify it. (See “Research Close-Up: When Provoked, Are Groups More Aggressive Than Individuals?”)

## FIGURE :: 10.9

### Group-Enhanced Aggression

When individuals chose how much shock to administer as punishment for wrong answers, they escalated the shock level as the experiment proceeded. Group decision making further polarized this tendency.

*Source:* Data from Jaffe & others, 1981.



Perhaps you can remember a time in middle school or high school when you or someone you knew was bullied—either verbally or physically. Much of the time, other students watch bullying as it happens. These bystanders can play an active role in the aggressive act of bullying—for example, by contributing to the humiliation by laughing or cheering (Salmivalli & others, 1999). Or they may defend the victim. An effective antibullying program used in Finland found that when bystanders stop rewarding bullies with positive feedback and status, bullying declined (Karna & others, 2011).

Aggression studies provide an apt opportunity to ask how well social psychology's laboratory findings generalize to everyday life. Do the circumstances that trigger someone to deliver electric shock or allocate hot sauce really tell us anything about the circumstances that trigger verbal abuse or a punch in the face? Craig Anderson and Brad Bushman (1997; Bushman & Anderson, 1998) note that social psychologists have studied aggression in both the laboratory and everyday

## research CLOSE-UP

### When Provoked, Are Groups More Aggressive Than Individuals?

Aggression researchers are noted for their creative methods for measuring aggression, which in various experiments has involved such tactics as administering shock, blasting sound, and hurting people's feelings. Holly McGregor and her colleagues (1998) took their cue from a cook's arrest for assault after lacing two police officers' food with Tabasco sauce, and from child abuse cases in which parents have force-fed hot sauce to their children. This inspired the idea of measuring aggression by having people decide how much hot sauce someone else must consume.

That is what Bruce Meier and Verlin Hinsz (2004) did when comparing aggressive behavior by groups and individuals. They told participants, either as individuals or in groups of three, that they were studying the relationship between personality and food preferences, and that they would be tasting and rating hot sauce. The experimenter explained that he needed to remain blind as to how much hot sauce each individual or group would be consuming and so needed the participants to choose the portion. After having the participants sample the intense hot sauce using a wooden

stick, the experimenter left to collect the hot sauce that another individual or group had supposedly selected. He returned with a cup filled with 48 grams of the sauce, which each participant expected later to consume. The participants, in turn, were now to spoon as much or as little hot sauce as they wished into a cup for the supposed other people to consume. (In reality, no participant was forced to consume anything.)

The striking result, seen in Table 10.2, was that groups retaliated by dishing out 24 percent more hot sauce than did individuals, and that group targets were given 24 percent more than were individuals. Thus, given toxic circumstances, interaction with a group (as a source or target) amplifies individual aggressive tendencies. This finding was particularly evident in the intergroup condition. Group members, after each receiving a nasty 48 grams of hot sauce, retaliated by dishing out 93 grams of hot sauce for each member of the group that had given them hot sauce. Apparently, surmised Meier and Hinsz, groups not only respond more aggressively to provocation but also perceive more hostility from other groups than they do from individuals.

**TABLE :: 10.2** Mean Amount of Hot Sauce Dished Out (grams)

SOURCE	TARGET	
	Individual	Group
Individual	58.2	71.0
Group	71.1	92.9

*Source:* Meier & Hinsz, 2004.

worlds, and the findings are strikingly consistent. In *both* contexts, increased aggression is predicted by the following:

- Male actors
- Aggressive or anger-prone personalities
- Alcohol use
- Violence viewing
- Anonymity
- Provocation
- The presence of weapons
- Group interaction

The laboratory allows us to test and revise theories under controlled conditions. Real-world events inspire ideas and provide the venue for applying our theories. Aggression research illustrates how the interplay between studies in the controlled lab and the complex real world advances psychology's contribution to human welfare. Hunches gained from everyday experience inspire theories, which stimulate laboratory research, which then deepens our understanding and our ability to apply psychology to real problems.

## SUMMING UP: What Are Some Influences on Aggression?

- Many factors exert influence on aggression. One factor is aversive experiences, which include not only frustrations but also discomfort, pain, and personal attacks, both physical and verbal.
- Arousal from almost any source, even physical exercise or sexual stimulation, can be transformed into other emotions, such as anger.
- Aggression cues, such as the presence of a gun, increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior.
- Viewing violence (1) breeds a modest increase in aggressive behavior, especially in people who are provoked, (2) desensitizes viewers to aggression, and (3) alters their perceptions of reality. These findings parallel the results of research on the effects of viewing violent pornography, which can increase men's aggression against women and distort their perceptions of women's responses to sexual coercion.
- Television permeates the daily life of millions of people and portrays considerable violence. Correlational and experimental studies converge on the conclusion that heavy exposure to televised violence correlates with aggressive behavior.
- Playing violent video games may increase aggressive thinking, feelings, and behavior even more than television or movies do, because the experience involves much more active participation than those other media.
- Much aggression is committed by groups. Circumstances that provoke individuals may also provoke groups. By diffusing responsibility and polarizing actions, group situations amplify aggressive reactions.

## HOW CAN AGGRESSION BE REDUCED?

Examine how we might counteract the factors that provoke aggression.

Can we reduce aggression? Here we look at how theory and research suggest ways to control it.

### Catharsis?

"Youngsters should be taught to vent their anger," surmised advice columnist Ann Landers (1969). If a person "bottles up his rage, we have to find an outlet. We have to give him an opportunity of letting off steam," asserted the once prominent

psychiatrist Fritz Perls (1973). "Some expression of prejudice . . . lets off steam . . . it can siphon off conflict through words, rather than actions," argued Andrew Sullivan (1999) in a *New York Times Magazine* article on hate crimes. Such statements assume the "hydraulic model," which implies accumulated aggressive energy, like dammed-up water, needs a release.

The concept of catharsis is usually credited to Aristotle. Although Aristotle actually said nothing about aggression, he did argue that we can purge emotions by experiencing them and that viewing the classic tragedies therefore enabled a catharsis (purging) of pity and fear. To have an emotion excited, he believed, is to have that emotion released (Butcher, 1951). The catharsis hypothesis has been extended to include the emotional release supposedly obtained not only by observing drama but also through our recalling and reliving past events, through our expressing emotions, and through our actions.

Assuming that aggressive action or fantasy drains pent-up aggression, some therapists and group leaders have encouraged people to ventilate suppressed aggression by acting it out—by whooping one another with foam bats or beating a bed with a tennis racket while screaming. If led to believe that catharsis effectively vents emotions, people will react more aggressively to an insult as a way to improve their mood (Bushman & others, 2001). Some psychologists, believing that catharsis is therapeutic, advise parents to encourage children's release of emotional tension through aggressive play.

Many laypeople have also bought the catharsis idea, as reflected in their nearly two-to-one agreement with the statement "Sexual materials provide an outlet for bottled-up impulses" (Niemi & others, 1989). But then other national surveys reveal that most Americans also agree, "Sexual materials lead people to commit rape." So is the catharsis approach valid or not?

Consider this: If viewing erotica provides an outlet for sexual impulses, people should experience diminished sexual desire afterward, and men should be less likely to view and treat women as sexual objects. But studies have shown the opposite (Kelley & others, 1989; McKenzie-Mohr & Zanna, 1990). Sexually explicit videos are an aphrodisiac; they feed sexual fantasies that fuel a variety of sexual behaviors.

Researcher Brad Bushman (2002) notes, "Venting to reduce anger is like using gasoline to put out a fire." For example, Robert Arms and his associates report that Canadian and American spectators of football, wrestling, and hockey games exhibit *more* hostility after viewing the event than before (Arms & others, 1979; Goldstein & Arms, 1971; Russell, 1983).

In laboratory tests of catharsis, Brad Bushman (2002) invited angered participants to hit a punching bag while either ruminating about someone who angered them or thinking about becoming physically fit. A third group did not hit the punching bag. When given a chance to administer loud blasts of noise to the person who angered them, people in the punching bag plus rumination condition felt angrier and were most aggressive. Moreover, doing nothing at all more effectively reduced aggression than did "blowing off steam" by hitting the bag.

In some real-life experiments, too, aggressing has led to heightened aggression. Ebbe Ebbesen and his co-researchers (1975) interviewed 100 engineers and technicians shortly after they were angered by layoff notices. Some were asked questions that gave them an opportunity to vent hostility against their employer or supervisors—for example, "What instances can you think of where the company has not been fair with you?" Did the opportunity to express their hostility reduce it? To the contrary, their hostility increased. Expressing hostility bred more hostility.

Sound familiar? Recall from Chapter 4 that cruel acts beget cruel attitudes. Furthermore, as we noted in analyzing Stanley Milgram's obedience experiments, little aggressive acts can breed their own justification. People derogate their victims, rationalizing further aggression.

Retaliation may, in the short run, reduce tension and even provide pleasure (Ramirez & others, 2005). But in the long run it fuels more negative feelings. When

"HE WHO GIVES WAY TO  
VIOLENT GESTURES WILL  
INCREASE HIS RAGE."

—CHARLES DARWIN, THE  
EXPRESSION OF EMOTION IN  
MAN AND ANIMALS

people who have been provoked hit a punching bag, even when they believe it will be cathartic, the effect is the opposite—leading them to exhibit *more* cruelty, report Bushman and his colleagues (1999, 2000, 2001). “It’s like the old joke,” reflected Bushman (1999). “How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice. How do you become a very angry person? The answer is the same. Practice, practice, practice.”

Should we therefore bottle up anger and aggressive urges? Silent sulking is hardly more effective, because it allows us to continue reciting our grievances as we conduct conversations in our heads. Bushman and his colleagues (2005) experimented with the toxic effect of such rumination. After being provoked by an obnoxious experimenter with insults such as, “Can’t you follow directions? Speak louder!” half were given a distraction (by being asked to write an essay about their campus landscape), and half were induced to ruminate (by writing an essay about their experiences as a research participant). Next, they were mildly insulted by a supposed fellow participant (actually a confederate), to whom they responded by prescribing a hot sauce dose this person would have to consume. The distracted participants, their anger now abated, prescribed only a mild dose. The still-seething ruminators displaced their aggressive urge and prescribed twice as much.

Fortunately, there are nonaggressive ways to express our feelings and to inform others how their behavior affects us. Across cultures, those who reframe accusatory “you” messages as “I” messages—“I feel angry about what you said,” or, “I get irritated when you leave dirty dishes”—communicate their feelings in a way that better enables the other person to make a positive response (Kubany & others, 1995). We can be assertive without being aggressive.

## A Social Learning Approach

If aggressive behavior is learned, then there is hope for its control. Let us briefly review factors that influence aggression and speculate how to counteract them.

Aversive experiences such as frustrated expectations and personal attacks predispose hostile aggression. So it is wise to refrain from planting false, unreachable expectations in people’s minds. Anticipated rewards and costs influence instrumental aggression. This suggests that we should reward cooperative, nonaggressive behavior.

In experiments, children become less aggressive when caregivers ignore their aggressive behavior and reinforce their nonaggressive behavior (Hamblin & others, 1969). Punishing the aggressor is less consistently effective. Threatened punishment deters aggression only under ideal conditions: when the punishment is strong, prompt, and sure; when it is combined with reward for the desired behavior; and when the recipient is not angry (R. A. Baron, 1977).

Moreover, there are limits to punishment’s effectiveness. Most homicides are impulsive, hot aggression—the result of an argument, an insult, or an attack. If mortal aggression were cool and instrumental, we could hope that waiting until it happens and severely punishing the criminal afterward would deter such acts. In that world, states that impose the death penalty might have a lower murder rate than states without the death penalty. But in our world of hot homicide, that is not so (Costanzo, 1998). As John Darley and Adam Alter (2009) note, “A remarkable amount of crime is committed by impulsive individuals, frequently young males, who are frequently drunk or high on drugs, and who often are in packs of similar and similarly mindless young men.” No wonder, they say, that trying to reduce crime by increasing sentences has proven so fruitless, whereas on-the-street policing that produces more arrests has produced encouraging results, such as a 50 percent drop in gun-related crimes in some cities.

Thus, we must *prevent* aggression before it happens. We must teach nonaggressive conflict-resolution strategies. When psychologists Sandra Jo Wilson and Mark Lipsey (2005) assembled data from 249 studies of school violence prevention

programs, they found encouraging results, especially for programs focused on selected “problem” students. After being taught problem-solving skills, emotion-control strategies, and conflict resolution techniques, the typical 20 percent of students engaging in some violent or disruptive behavior in a typical school year was reduced to 13 percent.

Physical punishment can also have negative side effects. Punishment is aversive stimulation; it models the behavior it seeks to prevent. And it is coercive (recall that we seldom internalize actions coerced with strong external justifications). These are reasons why violent teenagers and child-abusing parents so often come from homes where discipline took the form of harsh physical punishment.

To foster a gentler world, we could model and reward sensitivity and cooperation from an early age, perhaps by training parents how to discipline without violence. Training programs encourage parents to reinforce desirable behaviors and to frame statements positively (“When you finish cleaning your room, you can go play,” rather than, “If you don’t clean your room, you’re grounded”). One “aggression-replacement program” has kept many juvenile offenders and gang members from being arrested again by teaching the youths and their parents communication skills, training them to control anger, and raising their level of moral reasoning (Goldstein & others, 1998).

If observing aggressive models lowers inhibitions and elicits imitation, we might also reduce brutal, dehumanizing portrayals in films and on television—steps comparable to those already taken to reduce racist and sexist portrayals. We can also inoculate children against the effects of media violence. Wondering if the TV networks would ever “face the facts and change their programming,” Eron and Huesmann (1984) taught 170 Oak Park, Illinois, children that television portrays the world unrealistically, that aggression is less common and less effective than TV suggests, and that aggressive behavior is undesirable. (Drawing upon attitude research, Eron and Huesmann encouraged children to draw these inferences themselves and to attribute their expressed criticisms of television to their own convictions.) When restudied two years later, these children were less influenced by TV violence than were untrained children. In a more recent study, Stanford University used 18 classroom lessons to persuade children to simply reduce their TV watching and video game-playing (Robinson & others, 2001). They reduced their TV viewing by a third—and the children’s aggressive behavior at school dropped 25 percent compared with children in a control school. Even music can help reduce aggression when it models the right attitude: German students who were randomly assigned to hear prosocial music like “We Are the World” and “Help” behaved less aggressively than those who heard neutral music (Greitemeyer, 2011).

Suggestions such as these can help us minimize aggression. But given the complexity of aggression’s causes and the difficulty of controlling them, who can feel the optimism expressed by Andrew Carnegie’s forecast that in the twentieth century, “To kill a man will be considered as disgusting as we in this day consider it disgusting to eat one.” Since Carnegie uttered those words in 1900, some 200 million human beings have been killed. It is a sad irony that although today we understand human aggression better than ever before, humanity’s inhumanity endures.

## Culture Change and World Violence

Nevertheless, cultures can change. “The Vikings slaughtered and plundered,” notes science writer Natalie Angier. “Their descendants in Sweden haven’t fought a war in nearly 200 years.” Indeed, as psychologist Steven Pinker (2011) documents, across centuries, humans have become more civilized and all forms of violence—including wars, genocide, and murders—have declined. We’ve graduated from plundering neighboring tribes to economic interdependence, from a world in which Western European countries initiated two new wars per year over 600 years to, for the past seven decades, zero wars. Surprisingly, to those of us who love modern British

murder mysteries, “a contemporary Englishman has about a 50-fold less chance of being murdered than his compatriot in the Middle Ages,” notes Pinker. In all but one western democracy, the death penalty has been abolished. And the sole exception—the United States—no longer practices it for witchcraft, counterfeiting, and horse theft, and has seen declines in, or the disappearance of, lynchings, hate crimes, rapes, corporal punishment, and antigay attitudes and intimidation. We can, he concludes, be grateful “for the institutions of civilization and enlightenment [economic trade, education, government policing and justice] that have made it possible.”

## SUMMING UP: How Can Aggression Be Reduced?

- How can we minimize aggression? Contrary to the *catharsis* hypothesis, expressing aggression by catharsis tends to breed further aggression, not reduce it.
- The social learning approach suggests controlling aggression by counteracting the factors that provoke it: by reducing aversive stimulation, by rewarding and modeling nonaggression, and by eliciting reactions incompatible with aggression.

## POSTSCRIPT: Reforming a Violent Culture

In 1960, the United States (apologies to readers elsewhere, but we Americans do have a special problem with violence) had 3.3 police officers for every reported violent crime. In 1993 we had 3.5 crimes for every police officer (Walinsky, 1995). Since then, the crime rate has lessened, thanks partly to the incarceration of 6 times as many people today as in 1960. Still, on my small campus, which required no campus police in 1960, we now employ 6 full-time and 7 part-time officers, and we offer a nightly shuttle service to transport students around campus.

Americans’ ideas for protecting ourselves abound:

- Buy a gun for self-protection. (We have . . . nearly 300 million guns . . . which puts one at tripled risk of being murdered, often by a family member, and at fivefold increased risk of suicide [Taubes, 1992]. In assaults where someone had some chance to resist, those who had a gun were more than 5 times more likely to be shot (Branas & others, 2009). Safer nations, such as Canada and Britain, mandate domestic disarmament.)
- Build more prisons. (We have, but until recently crime continued to escalate. Moreover, the social and fiscal costs of incarcerating more than 2 million people, mostly men, are enormous.)
- Impose a “three strikes and you’re out” requirement of lifetime incarceration for those convicted of three violent crimes. (But are we really ready to pay for all the new prisons—and prison hospitals and nursing homes—we would need to house and care for aging former muggers? Prisons in cash-strapped California, where three strikes has been the law since the 1990s, are perpetually overcrowded.)
- Deter brutal crime and eliminate the worst offenders as some countries do—by executing the offenders. To show that killing people is wrong—kill people who kill people. (But nearly all the cities and states with the dozen highest violent-crime rates already have the death penalty. Because most homicide is impulsive or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, murderers rarely calculate consequences.)

What matters more than a punishment's severity is its certainty. The National Research Council (1993) reports that a 50 percent increase in the probability of apprehension and incarceration reduces subsequent crime twice as much as does doubling incarceration duration. Even so, former FBI director Louis Freeh (1993) was skeptical that tougher or swifter punishment is the ultimate answer: "The frightening level of lawlessness which has come upon us like a plague is more than a law enforcement problem. The crime and disorder which flow from hopeless poverty, unloved children, and drug abuse can't be solved merely by bottomless prisons, mandatory sentencing, and more police." Reacting to crime after it happens is the social equivalent of Band-Aids on bullet wounds.

An alternative approach is suggested by a story about the rescue of a drowning person from a rushing river. Having successfully administered first aid, the rescuer spots another struggling person and pulls her out, too. After a half dozen repetitions, the rescuer suddenly turns and starts running away while the river sweeps yet another floundering person into view. "Aren't you going to rescue that fellow?" asks a bystander. "Heck no," the rescuer shouts. "I'm going upstream to find out what's pushing all these people in."

To be sure, we need police, prisons, and social workers, all of whom help us deal with the social pathologies that plague us. It's fine to swat the mosquitoes, but better if we can drain the swamps—by infusing our culture with nonviolent ideals, challenging the social toxins that corrupt youth, and renewing the moral roots of character.

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CHAPTER  
**11**

# Attraction and Intimacy

LIKING AND  
LOVING OTHERS



**"I get by with a little help from my friends."**

—John Lennon and Paul McCartney, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, 1967

**What leads to friendship and attraction?**

**What is love?**

**What enables close relationships?**

**How do relationships end?**

**Postscript: Making love**

Our lifelong dependence on one another puts relationships at the core of our existence. In your beginning, there very likely was an attraction—the attraction between a particular man and a particular woman. Aristotle called humans “the social animal.” Indeed, we have what today’s social psychologists call a **need to belong**—to connect with others in enduring, close relationships.

Social psychologists Roy Baumeister and Mark Leary (1995; Leary, 2010) illustrate the power of social attachments:

- For our ancestors, mutual attachments enabled group survival. When hunting game or erecting shelter, 10 hands were better than 2.
- For heterosexual women and men, the bonds of love can lead to children, whose survival chances are boosted by the nurturing of two bonded parents who support each other.
- For children and their caregivers, social attachments enhance survival. Unexplainably separated from each other, parent and toddler may both panic until reunited in a tight embrace. Reared under extreme neglect or in institutions without belonging to anybody, children become pathetic, anxious creatures.

**need to belong**

A motivation to bond with others in relationships that provide ongoing, positive interactions.

- For university students, relationships consume much of life. How much of your waking life is spent talking with people? One sampling of 10,000 tape recordings of half-minute slices of students' waking hours (using belt-worn recorders) found them talking to someone 28 percent of the time—and that doesn't count the time they spent listening to someone (Mehl & Pennebaker, 2003).
- When not face-to-face, the world's 7 billion people connect by voice and texting through their more than 5 billion cell-phone subscriptions (International Telecommunication Union, 2010), or through social networks such as Facebook. In the United States, 9 in 10 college-bound high school seniors use social networking sites, with most visiting once or more a day (The College Board, 2011). Half of teens send 50 or more texts daily (Lenhart, 2010). Our need to belong motivates our investment in being continuously connected.
- For people everywhere (no matter their sexual orientation), actual and hoped-for close relationships can dominate thinking and emotions. Finding a supportive person in whom we can confide, we feel accepted and prized. Falling in love, we feel irrepressible joy. When relationships with partners, family, and friends are healthy, self-esteem—a barometer of our relationships—rides high (Denissen & others, 2008). Longing for acceptance and love, we spend billions on cosmetics, clothes, and diets. Even seemingly dismissive people relish being accepted (Carvallo & Gabriel, 2006).
- Exiled, imprisoned, or in solitary confinement, people ache for their own people and places. Rejected, we are at risk for depression (Nolan & others, 2003). Time passes more slowly and life seems less meaningful (Twenge & others, 2003). When queried 3 months after arriving on a large university campus, many international students, like some homesick domestic students, report declining feelings of well-being (Cemalcilar & Falbo, 2008).
- For the jilted, the widowed, and the sojourner in a strange place, the loss of social bonds triggers pain, loneliness, or withdrawal. Losing a close relationship, adults feel jealous, distraught, or bereaved, as well as mindful of death and life's fragility. After relocating, people—especially those with the strongest need to belong—typically feel homesick (Watt & Badger, 2009).
- Reminders of death in turn heighten our need to belong, to be with others, and to hold close those we love (Mikulincer & others, 2003; Wisman & Koole, 2003). Facing the terror of 9/11, millions of Americans called and connected with loved ones. Likewise, the shocking death of a classmate, a co-worker, or a family member brings people together, their differences no longer mattering.

"**THERE'S NO QUESTION  
IN MY MIND ABOUT WHAT  
STANDS AT THE HEART OF  
THE COMMUNICATION  
REVOLUTION—THE HUMAN  
DESIRE TO CONNECT.**"

—JOSH SILVERMAN,  
PRESIDENT OF SKYPE, 2009

We are, indeed, social animals. We need to belong. As with other motivations, thwarting the need to belong intensifies it; satisfying the need reduces the motivation (DeWall & others, 2009, 2011). And as Chapter 14 confirms, when we do belong—when we feel supported by close, intimate relationships—we tend to be healthier and happier. Satisfy the need to belong in balance with two other human needs—to feel *autonomy* and *competence*—and the typical result is a deep sense of well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Milyavskaya & others, 2009; Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006). Happiness is feeling connected, free, and capable.

Social psychologist Kipling Williams (2002, 2007, 2009, 2011) has explored what happens when our need to belong is thwarted by *ostracism* (acts of excluding or ignoring). Humans in all cultures, whether in schools, workplaces, or homes, use ostracism to regulate social behavior. Some of us know what it is like to be shunned—to be avoided, met with averted eyes, or given the silent treatment. Even just being among people speaking a language one doesn't know can leave one feeling excluded (Dotan-Eliaz & others, 2009).

People (women especially) respond to ostracism with depressed or numbed mood, anxiety, hurt feelings, efforts to restore relationships, and eventual withdrawal (Baumeister & others, 2009; Blackhart & others, 2009; Gerber & Wheeler, 2009a, 2009b). The silent treatment is “emotional abuse” and “a terrible, terrible weapon to use,” say those who have experienced it from a family member or a co-worker. In experiments, people who are left out of a simple game of ball tossing feel deflated and stressed. Ostracism hurts, and the social pain is keenly felt—more than those who are not ostracized ever know (Nordgren & others, 2011). If only we better empathized with those rejected, there might be less tolerance of emotional bullying.

Sometimes deflation turns nasty, as people lash out at the very people whose acceptance they desire (Reijntjes & others, 2011). In several studies, Jean Twenge and collaborators (2001, 2002, 2007; DeWall & others, 2009; Leary & others, 2006) gave some people an experience of being socially included. Others experienced temporary exclusion: They were told (based on a personality test) either that they “were likely to end up alone later in life” or that others whom they’d met didn’t want them in their group. Those led to feel excluded became not only more likely to engage in self-defeating behaviors, such as underperforming on an aptitude test, but also less able to regulate their behavior (they drank less of a healthy but bad-tasting drink and ate more unhealthy cookies). They also became more likely to disparage or deliver a blast of noise to someone who had insulted them. If a small laboratory experience of being “voted off the island” could produce such aggression, noted the researchers, one wonders what aggressive tendencies “might arise from a series of important rejections or chronic exclusion.”

Williams and Steve Nida (2011) were surprised to discover that even “cyber-ostracism” by faceless people whom one will never meet takes a toll. (Perhaps you have experienced this when feeling ignored in a chat room or when your e-mail is not answered.) The researchers have had more than 5,000 participants from dozens of countries play a Web-based game of throwing a flying disc with two others (actually computer-generated fellow players). Those ostracized by the other



A recipe for violence: an unstable disposition plus ostracism. Mark Leary, Robin Kowalski, and colleagues (2003) report that in all but 2 of 15 school shootings from 1995 to 2001, such as by Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold at Columbine High School, the assailants had experienced ostracism.

"A MAN'S SOCIAL SELF  
IS THE RECOGNITION HE  
GETS FROM HIS MATES. . . .  
IF NO ONE TURNED ROUND  
WHEN WE ENTERED,  
ANSWERED WHEN WE  
SPOKE, OR MINDED WHAT  
WE DID, BUT IF EVERY  
PERSON . . . ACTED AS IF  
WE WERE NON-EXISTING  
THINGS, A KIND OF RAGE  
AND IMPOTENT DESPAIR  
WOULD ERE LONG WELL  
UP IN US."

—WILLIAM JAMES, PRINCIPLES  
OF PSYCHOLOGY, 1890

players experienced poorer moods and became more likely to conform to others' wrong judgments on a subsequent perceptual task. Exclusion hurts longest for anxious people (Zadro & others, 2006). It hurts more for younger than older adults (Hawkley & others, 2011). And it hurts no less when it comes from a group that the rest of society spurns—Australian KKK members in one experiment (Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2006).

Williams and colleagues (2000) found ostracism stressful even when each of them was ignored for an agreed-upon day by the unresponsive four others. Contrary to their expectations that this would be a laughter-filled role-playing game, the simulated ostracism disrupted work, interfered with pleasant social functioning, and "caused temporary concern, anxiety, paranoia, and general fragility of spirit." To thwart our deep need to belong is to unsettle our life.

Ostracized people exhibit heightened activity in a brain cortex area that also activates in response to physical pain (Figure 11.1). Ostracism's social pain, much like physical pain, increases aggression (Riva & others, 2011). Hurt feelings are also embodied in a depressed heart rate (Moor & others, 2010). Heartbreak makes for heart brake.

Indeed, the pain of social rejection is so real that a pain-relieving Tylenol can reduce hurt feelings (DeWall & others, 2010, 2011). Ostracism's opposite—feeling love—activates brain reward systems. When looking at their beloved's picture, deeply in love university students feel markedly less thermal pain (Younger & others, 2010). Ostracism is a real pain. And love is a natural painkiller.

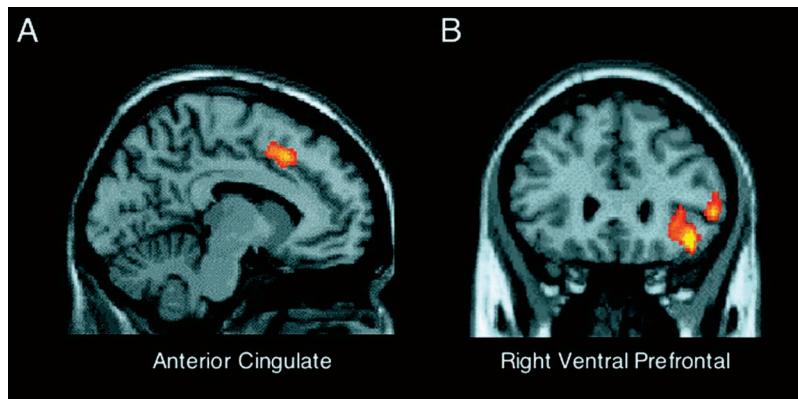
Asked to recall a time when they were socially excluded—perhaps left alone in the dorm when others went out—people in one experiment even perceived the room temperature as five degrees colder than did those asked to recall a social acceptance experience (Zhong & Leonardelli, 2008). Such recollections come easily: People remember and relive past social pain more easily than past physical pain (Chen & others, 2008).

Roy Baumeister (2005) finds a silver lining in the rejection research. When recently excluded people experience a safe opportunity to make a new friend, they "seem willing and even eager to take it." They become more attentive to smiling, accepting faces (DeWall & others, 2009). An exclusion experience also triggers increased mimicry of others' behavior as a nonconscious effort to build rapport (Lakin & others, 2008). And at a societal level, notes Baumeister, meeting the need to belong should pay dividends.

My colleagues in sociology have pointed out that minority groups who feel excluded show many of the same patterns that our laboratory manipulations elicit: high rates of aggression and antisocial behavior, decreased willingness to cooperate and obey rules, poorer intellectual performance, more self-destructive acts, short-term focus, and the like. If we could promote a more inclusive society, in which more people feel themselves accepted as valued members, some of these tragic patterns might be reduced.

## FIGURE :: 11.1 The Pain of Rejection

Naomi Eisenberger, Matthew Lieberman, and Kipling Williams (2003) reported that social ostracism evokes a brain response similar to that triggered by physical pain.



# WHAT LEADS TO FRIENDSHIP AND ATTRACTION?

**Explain how proximity, physical attractiveness, similarity, and feeling liked nurture liking and loving.**

What predisposes one person to like, or to love, another? Few questions about human nature arouse greater interest. The ways affections flourish and fade form the stuff and fluff of soap operas, popular music, novels, and much of our everyday conversation. Long before I knew there was a field such as social psychology, I had memorized Dale Carnegie's recipe for *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

So much has been written about liking and loving that almost every conceivable explanation—and its opposite—has already been proposed. For most people—and for you—what factors nurture liking and loving?

- Does absence make the heart grow fonder? Or is someone who is out of sight also out of mind?
- Is it likes that attract? Or opposites?
- How much do good looks matter?
- What has fostered your close relationships?

Let's start with those factors that lead to friendship and then consider those that sustain and deepen a relationship.

## Proximity

One powerful predictor of whether any two people are friends is sheer **proximity**. Proximity can also breed hostility; most assaults and murders involve people living close together. But much more often, proximity prompts liking. Mitja Back and his University of Leipzig colleagues (2008) confirmed this by randomly assigning students to seats at their first class meeting and then having each make a brief self-introduction to the whole class. One year after this one-time seating assignment, students reported greater friendship with those who just happened, during that first class gathering, to be seated next to or near them.

Though it may seem trivial to those pondering the mysterious origins of romantic love, sociologists long ago found that most people marry someone who lives in the same neighborhood, or works at the same company or job, or sits in the same class, or visits the same favorite place (Bossard, 1932; Burr, 1973; Clarke, 1952; McPherson & others, 2001). In a Pew survey (2006) of people married or in long-term relationships, 38 percent met at work or at school, and some of the rest met when their paths crossed in their neighborhood, church, or gym or while growing up. Look around. If you marry, it may well be to someone who has lived or worked or studied within walking distance.

## INTERACTION

Even more significant than geographic distance is "functional distance"—how often people's paths cross. We become

"I CANNOT TELL HOW  
MY ANKLES BEND, NOR  
WHENCE THE CAUSE OF  
MY FAINTEST WISH, NOR  
THE CAUSE OF THE FRIEND-  
SHIP I EMIT, NOR THE  
CAUSE OF THE FRIENDSHIP  
I TAKE AGAIN."

—WALT WHITMAN, SONG OF  
MYSELF, 1855

### proximity

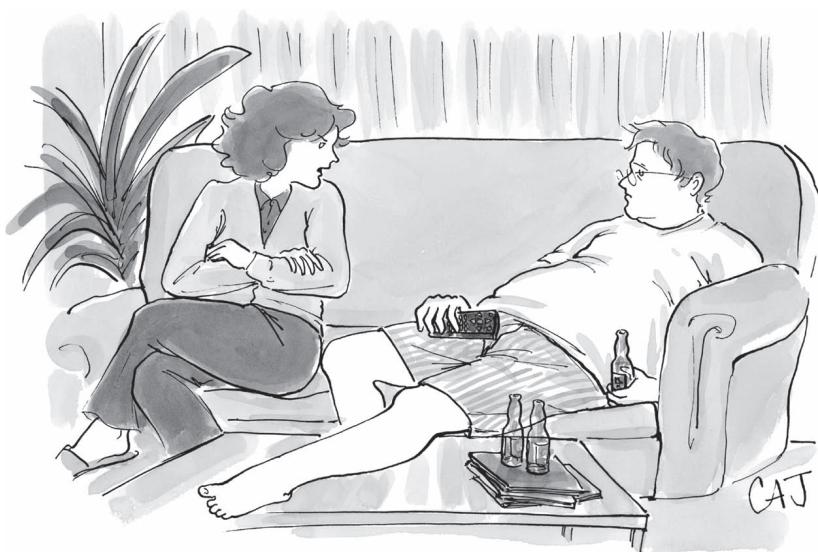
Geographical nearness. Proximity (more precisely, "functional distance") powerfully predicts liking.

"I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT  
FRIENDS ARE NECESSAR-  
ILY THE PEOPLE YOU LIKE  
BEST, THEY ARE MERELY  
THE PEOPLE WHO GOT  
THERE FIRST."

—SIR PETER USTINOV,  
DEAR ME, 1979



Close relationships with friends and family contribute to health and happiness.



*"Sometimes I think you only married me because I lived next door!"*

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**"WHEN I'M NOT NEAR THE  
ONE I LOVE, I LOVE THE  
ONE I'M NEAR."**

—E. Y. HARBURG, FINIAN'S  
RAINBOW, LONDON:  
CHAPPELL MUSIC, 1947

**Feeling close to those close by:** People often become attached to, and sometimes fall in love with, familiar co-workers.

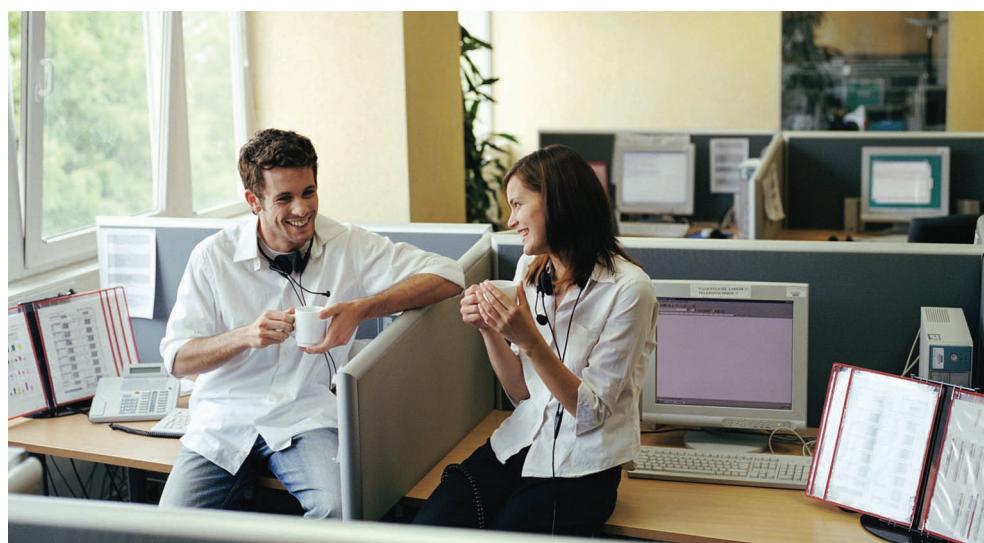
ment near the mailboxes, a desk near the coffeepot, a parking spot near the main buildings. Such is the architecture of friendship.

The chance nature of such contacts helps explain a surprising finding. Consider: If you had an identical twin who became engaged to someone, wouldn't you (being in so many ways similar to your twin) expect to share your twin's attraction to that person? But no, reported researchers David Lykken and Auke Tellegen (1993); only half of identical twins recall really liking their twin's selection, and only 5 percent said, "I could have fallen for my twin's fiancé." Romantic love is often rather like ducklings' imprinting, surmised Lykken and Tellegen. With repeated exposure to and interaction with someone, our infatuation may fix on almost anyone who has roughly similar characteristics and who reciprocates our affection.

Why does proximity breed liking? One factor is availability; obviously there are fewer opportunities to get to know someone who attends a different school or lives in another town. But there is more to it. Most people like their roommates, or those one door away, better than those two doors away. Those just

friends with those who use the same entrances, parking lots, and recreation areas. Randomly assigned college roommates, who interact frequently, are far more likely to become good friends than enemies (Newcomb, 1961). At the college where I teach, men and women once lived on opposite sides of the campus. They understandably bemoaned the lack of cross-sex friendships. Now that they live in gender-integrated residence halls and share common sidewalks, lounges, and laundry facilities, friendships between men and women are far more frequent. Interaction enables people to explore their similarities, to sense one another's liking, and to perceive themselves as part of a social unit (Arkin & Burger, 1980).

So if you're new in town and want to make friends, try to get an apart-



a few doors away, or even a floor below, hardly live at an inconvenient distance. Moreover, those close by are potential enemies as well as friends. So why does proximity encourage affection more often than animosity?

## ANTICIPATION OF INTERACTION

Proximity enables people to discover commonalities and exchange rewards. But merely *anticipating* interaction also boosts liking. John Darley and Ellen Berscheid (1967) discovered this when they gave University of Minnesota women ambiguous information about two other women, one of whom they expected to talk with intimately. Asked how much they liked each one, the women preferred the person they expected to meet. Expecting to date someone similarly boosts liking (Berscheid & others, 1976). Even voters on the losing side of an election will find their opinions of the winning candidate—whom they are now stuck with—rising (Gilbert & others, 1998).

The phenomenon is adaptive. Anticipatory liking—expecting that someone will be pleasant and compatible—increases the chance of forming a rewarding relationship (Klein & Kunda, 1992; Knight & Vallacher, 1981; Miller & Marks, 1982). How good that we are biased to like those we often see, for our lives are filled with relationships with people whom we may not have chosen but with whom we need to have continuing interactions—roommates, siblings, grandparents, teachers, classmates, co-workers. Liking such people is surely conducive to better relationships and to happier, more productive living.

## MERE EXPOSURE

Proximity leads to liking not only because it enables interaction and anticipatory liking but also for a simpler reason: More than 200 experiments reveal that, contrary to an old proverb, familiarity does not breed contempt. Rather, it fosters fondness (Bornstein, 1989, 1999). **Mere exposure** to all sorts of novel stimuli—nonsense syllables, Chinese calligraphy characters, musical selections, faces—boosts people's ratings of them. Do the supposed Turkish words *nansoma*, *saricik*, and *afworbu* mean something better or something worse than the words *iktitaf*, *biwojni*, and *kadirga*? University of Michigan students tested by Robert Zajonc (1968, 1970) preferred whichever of these words they had seen most frequently. The more times they had seen a meaningless word or a Chinese ideograph, the more likely they were to say it meant something good (Figure 11.2). I've tested this idea with my own students. Periodically flash certain nonsense words on a screen. By the end of the semester, students will rate those "words" more positively than other nonsense words they have never before seen.

Or consider: What are your favorite letters of the alphabet? People of differing nationalities, languages, and ages prefer the letters appearing in their own names and those that frequently appear in their own languages (Hoorens & Nuttin, 1993; Hoorens & others, 1990; Kitayama & Karasawa, 1997; Nuttin, 1987). French students rate capital W, the least frequent letter in French, as their least favorite letter. In an endowment management exercise, American business students preferred to buy stocks that shared the same first letter as their name (Knewtonson & Sias, 2010). Japanese students prefer not only letters from their names but also numbers corresponding to their birth dates. This "name letter effect" reflects more than mere exposure, however—see "Focus On: Liking Things Associated with Oneself" on page 401.



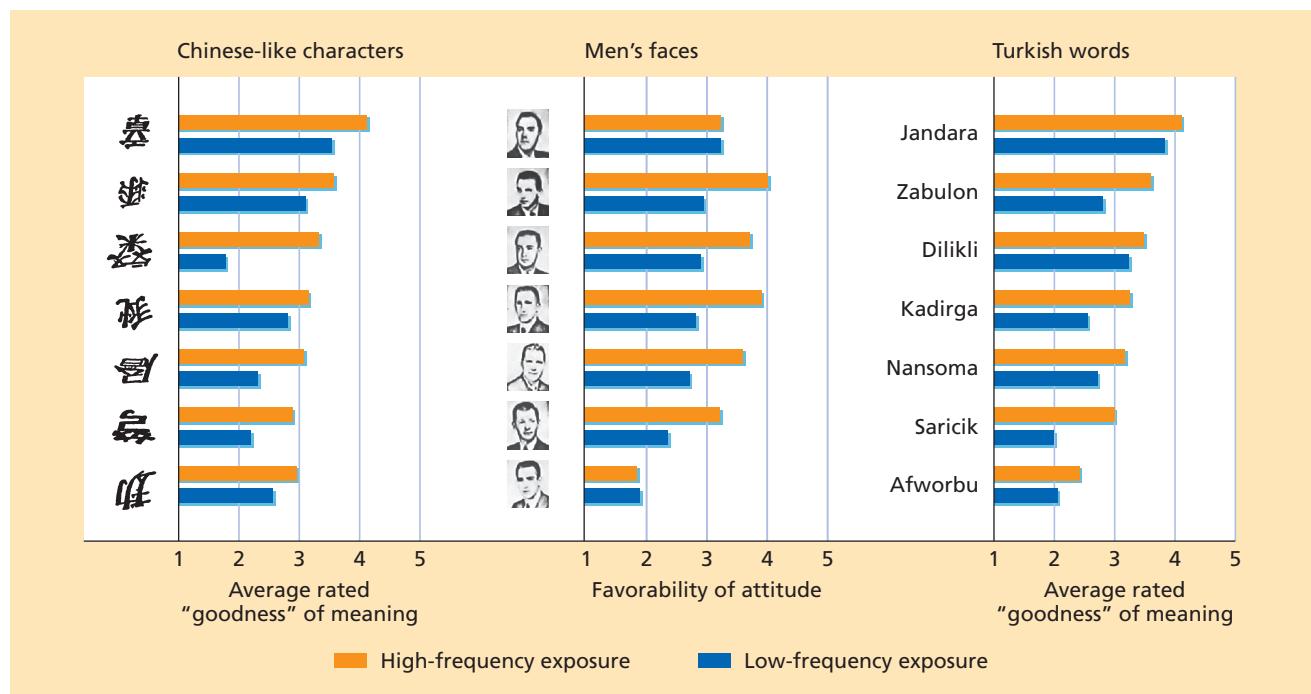
*"If I weren't so fond of you, I'd probably be really fond of someone else."*

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### mere-exposure effect

The tendency for novel stimuli to be liked more or rated more positively after the rater has been repeatedly exposed to them.

*How much do you like your name? In six studies, Jochen Gebauer and colleagues (2008) report that liking of one's own name is a reliable indicator of both implicit and explicit self-esteem.*

**FIGURE :: 11.2****The Mere-Exposure Effect**

Students rated stimuli—a sample of which is shown here—more positively after being shown them repeatedly.

*Source:* From Zajonc (1968).

The mere-exposure effect violates the commonsense prediction of boredom—*decreased interest*—regarding repeatedly heard music or tasted foods (Kahneman & Snell, 1992). Unless the repetitions are incessant (“Even the best song becomes tiresome if heard too often,” says a Korean proverb), familiarity usually doesn’t breed contempt, it increases liking. When completed in 1889, the Eiffel Tower in Paris was mocked as grotesque (Harrison, 1977). Today, it is the beloved symbol of Paris.

So, do visitors to the Louvre in Paris really adore the *Mona Lisa* for the artistry it displays, or are they simply delighted to find a familiar face? It might be both: To know her is to like her. Eddie Harmon-Jones and John Allen (2001) explored this phenomenon experimentally. When they showed people a woman’s face, their cheek (smiling) muscles typically became more active with repeated viewings. Mere exposure breeds pleasant feelings.

Zajonc and co-workers William Kunst-Wilson and Richard Moreland reported that even exposure *without awareness* leads to liking (Kunst-Wilson & Zajonc, 1980; Moreland & Zajonc, 1977; Wilson, 1979). In fact, mere exposure has an even stronger effect when people receive stimuli without awareness (Bornstein & D’Agostino, 1992; Hansen & Wänke, 2009; Willems & others, 2010). In one experiment, women students using headphones listened in one ear to a prose passage. They also repeated the words out loud and compared them with a written version to check for errors. Meanwhile, brief, novel melodies played in the other ear. This procedure focused attention on the verbal material and away from the tunes. Later, when the women heard the tunes interspersed among similar ones not previously played, they did not recognize them. Nevertheless, they *liked best* the tunes they had previously heard.

Note that conscious judgments about the stimuli in these experiments provided fewer clues to what people had heard or seen than did their instant feelings. You can probably recall immediately and intuitively liking or disliking something

# focus ON

## Liking Things Associated with Oneself

We humans love to feel good about ourselves, and generally we do. Not only are we prone to self-serving bias (Chapter 2), we also exhibit what Brett Pelham, Matthew Mirenberg, and John Jones (2002) call *implicit egotism*: We like what we associate with ourselves.

That includes the letters of our name, but also the people, places, and things that we unconsciously connect with ourselves (Jones & others, 2002; Koole & others, 2001). If a stranger's or politician's face is morphed to include features of our own, we like the new face better (Bailenson & others, 2009; DeBruine, 2004). Thanks to natural inbreeding avoidance, women with brothers tend to trust unfamiliar men whose faces are morphed with their own but do not feel attracted to them; they find self-resembling men's faces to be "trustworthy but not lust-worthy" (DeBruine & others, 2011). We are also more attracted to people whose arbitrary experimental code number resembles our birth date, and we are even disproportionately likely to marry someone whose first or last name resembles our own, such as by starting with the same letter (Jones & others, 2004).

Such preferences appear to subtly influence other major life decisions as well, including our locations and careers, report Pelham and colleagues. Philadelphia, being larger than Jacksonville, has 2.2 times as many men named Jack. But it has 10.4 times as many people named Philip. Likewise, Virginia Beach has a disproportionate number of people named Virginia.

Does this merely reflect the influence of one's place when naming one's baby? Are people in Georgia, for example, more likely to name their babies George or Georgia? That may be so, but it doesn't explain why states tend to have a relative excess of people whose last names are similar to the state names. California, for example, has a disproportionate number of people whose names begin with Cali (as in Califano). Likewise, major Canadian cities tend to have larger-than-expected numbers of people whose last names overlap with the city names. Toronto has a marked excess of people whose names begin with Tor.

Moreover, St. Louis has a 49 percent excess (relative to the national proportion) of men named Louis, and people named Hill, Park, Beach, Lake, or Rock are disproportionately likely to live in cities with names (such as Park City) that include their names. "People are attracted to places that resemble their names," surmise Pelham, Mirenberg, and Jones.

Weirder yet—I am not making this up—people seem to prefer careers related to their names. Across the United States, Jerry, Dennis, and Walter are equally popular names (0.42 percent of people carry each of these names). Yet America's dentists are almost twice as likely to be named Dennis as Jerry or Walter. There also are 2.5 times as many dentists named Denise as there are with the equally popular name Beverly or Tammy. People named George or Geoffrey are overrepresented among geoscientists (geologists, geophysicists, and geochemists). And in the 2000 presidential campaign, people with last names beginning with B and G were disproportionately likely to contribute to the campaigns of Bush and Gore, respectively.

The implicit egotism phenomenon does have its skeptics. Uri Simonsohn (2011a, 2011b) acknowledges that implicit egotism occurs in the laboratory, and he was able to replicate the associations between people's names, occupations, and places. But he argues that "reverse causality" sometimes is the explanation. For example, streets are often named after their residents, and towns are often named after their founders (Williams founded Williamsburg). And founders' descendants may stick around. In reply, Pelham and Mauricio Carvallo (2011) grant that some of the effects—especially for career choice—are modest. But they contend that implicit egotism is a real, though subtle, unconscious judgmental bias.

Reading about implicit egotism-based preferences gives me pause: Has this anything to do with why I enjoyed that trip to Fort Myers? Why I've written about moods, the media, and marriage? Why I collaborated with Professor Murdoch? If so, does this also explain why it was Suzie who sold seashells by the seashore?

or someone without consciously knowing why. Zajonc (1980) argues that *emotions are often more instantaneous than thinking*. Zajonc's rather astonishing idea—that emotions are semi-independent of thinking ("affect may precede cognition")—has found support in recent brain research. Emotion and cognition are enabled by distinct brain regions. Lesion a monkey's amygdala (the emotion-related brain structure) and its emotional responses will be impaired, but its cognitive functions

will be intact. Lesion its hippocampus (a memory-related structure) and its cognition will be impaired, but its emotional responses remain intact (Zola-Morgan & others, 1991).

The mere-exposure effect has “enormous adaptive significance,” notes Zajonc (1998). It is a “hardwired” phenomenon that predisposes our attractions and attachments. It helped our ancestors categorize things and people as either familiar and safe or unfamiliar and possibly dangerous. The more two strangers interact, the more attractive they tend to find each other (Reis & others, 2011). The mere-exposure effect colors our evaluations of others: We like familiar people (Swap, 1977). “If it’s familiar, it has not eaten you yet,” Zajonc reportedly would say (Bennett, 2010). It works the other way around, too: People we like (for example, smiling rather than unsmiling strangers) seem more familiar (Garcia-Marques & others, 2004).

The phenomenon’s negative side, as we noted in Chapter 9, is our wariness of the unfamiliar—which may explain the automatic, unconscious prejudice people often feel when confronting those who are different. Infants as young as 3 months exhibit an own-race preference: If surrounded by others of their race, they prefer to gaze at faces of their own familiar race (Bar-Haim & others, 2006; Kelly & others, 2005, 2007).

We even like ourselves better the way we’re used to seeing ourselves. In a delightful experiment, Theodore Mita, Marshall Dermer, and Jeffrey Knight (1977) photographed women students at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, and later showed each one her actual picture along with its mirror image. Asked which picture they liked better, most preferred their mirror image—the image they were used to seeing. (No wonder our photographs never look quite right.) When close friends of the women were shown the same two pictures, they preferred the true picture—the image *they* were used to seeing.

Advertisers and politicians exploit this phenomenon. When people have no strong feelings about a product or a candidate, repetition alone can increase sales or votes (McCullough & Ostrom, 1974; Winter, 1973). After endless repetition of a commercial, shoppers often have an unthinking, automatic, favorable response to the product. If candidates are relatively unknown, those with the most media exposure usually win (Patterson, 1980; Schaffner & others, 1981). Political strategists who understand the mere-exposure effect have replaced reasoned argument with brief ads that hammer home a candidate’s name and sound-bite message.

The respected chief of the Washington State Supreme Court, Keith Callow, learned this lesson when in 1990 he lost to a seemingly hopeless opponent, Charles Johnson. Johnson, an unknown attorney who handled minor criminal cases and divorces, filed for the seat on the principle that judges “need to be challenged.” Neither man campaigned, and the media ignored the race. On election day, the two candidates’ names appeared without any identification—just one name next to the other. The result: a 53 percent to 47 percent Johnson victory. “There are a lot more

The mere-exposure effect. If she is like most of us, German chancellor Angela Merkel may prefer her familiar mirror-image (left), which she sees each morning while brushing her teeth, to her actual image (right).



Johnsons out there than Callows," offered the ousted judge afterward to a stunned legal community. Indeed, the state's largest newspaper counted 27 Charles Johnsons in its local phone book. There was Charles Johnson, the local judge. And, in a nearby city, there was television anchorman Charles Johnson, whose broadcasts were seen on statewide cable TV. Forced to choose between two unknown names, many voters preferred the comfortable, familiar name of Charles Johnson.

## Physical Attractiveness

What do (or did) you seek in a potential date? Sincerity? Character? Humor? Good looks? Sophisticated, intelligent people are unconcerned with such superficial qualities as good looks; they know "beauty is only skin deep" and "you can't judge a book by its cover." At least, they know that's how they *ought* to feel. As Cicero counseled, "Resist appearance."

The belief that looks are unimportant may be another instance of how we deny real influences upon us, for there is now a file cabinet full of research studies showing that appearance matters. The consistency and pervasiveness of this effect is astonishing. Good looks are an asset.

### ATTRACTIVENESS AND DATING

Like it or not, a young woman's physical attractiveness is a moderately good predictor of how frequently she dates, and a young man's attractiveness is a modestly good predictor of how frequently he dates (Berscheid & others, 1971; Krebs & Adinolfi, 1975; Reis & others, 1980, 1982; Walster & others, 1966). However, women more than men say they would prefer a mate who's homely and warm over one who's attractive and cold (Fletcher & others, 2004). In a worldwide BBC Internet survey of nearly 220,000 people, men more than women ranked attractiveness as important in a mate, whereas women more than men assigned importance to honesty, humor, kindness, and dependability (Lippa, 2007).

Do such self-reports imply, as many have surmised, that women are better at following Cicero's advice? Or that nothing has changed since 1930, when the English philosopher Bertrand Russell (1930, p. 139) wrote, "On the whole women tend to love men for their character while men tend to love women for their appearance"? Or does it merely reflect the fact that men more often do the inviting? If women were to indicate their preferences among various men, would looks be as important to them as to men?

To determine whether men are indeed more influenced by looks, researchers have provided heterosexual male and female students with information about someone of the other sex, including the person's picture. Or they have briefly introduced a man and a woman and later asked each about their interest in dating the other. In such experiments, men have put somewhat more value on opposite-sex physical attractiveness, as they do in opinion polls (Figure 11.3) (Feingold, 1990, 1991; Sprecher & others, 1994). Perhaps sensing this, women worry more about their appearance and constitute 92 percent of American cosmetic surgery patients (American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2011). Women also better recall



Attractiveness and dating. For Internet dating customers, looks are part of what is offered and sought.

"WE SHOULD LOOK TO THE MIND, AND NOT TO THE OUTWARD APPEARANCES."

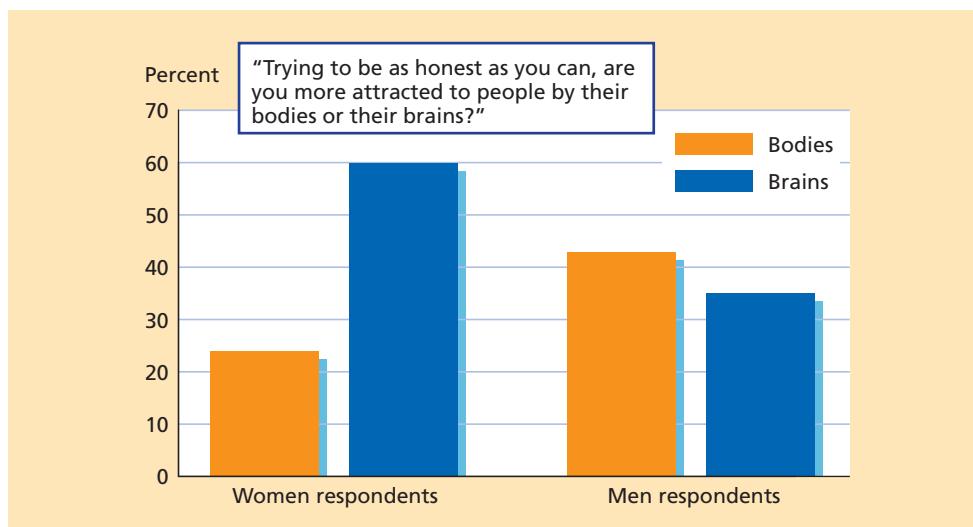
—AESOP, FABLES

"PERSONAL BEAUTY IS A GREATER RECOMMENDATION THAN ANY LETTER OF INTRODUCTION."

—ARISTOTLE, DIOGENES  
LAERTIUS

**FIGURE :: 11.3**  
**What Women and Men Report Finding Most Attractive**

Source: Fox News/Opinion Dynamics Poll of registered voters, 1999.



others' appearance, as when asked "Was the person on the right wearing black shoes?" or when asked to recall someone's clothing or hair (Mast & Hall, 2006).

Do women respond to men's looks? In one ambitious study, Elaine Hatfield and co-workers (1966) matched 752 University of Minnesota first-year students for a "Welcome Week" matching dance. The researchers gave each student personality and aptitude tests but then matched the couples randomly. On the night of the dance, the couples danced and talked for 2½ hours and then took a brief intermission to evaluate their dates. How well did the personality and aptitude tests predict attraction? Did people like someone better who was high in self-esteem, or low in anxiety, or different from themselves in outgoingness? The researchers examined a long list of possibilities. But so far as they could determine, only one thing mattered: how physically attractive the person was (as previously rated by the researchers). The more attractive a woman was, the more the man liked her and wanted to date her again. And the more attractive the man was, the more the woman liked him and wanted to date him again. Pretty pleases.

Recent studies have gathered data from speed-dating evenings, during which people interact with a succession of potential dates for only a few minutes each and later indicate which ones they would like to see again (mutual "yes's" are given contact information). The procedure is rooted in research showing that we can form durable impressions of others based on seconds-long "thin slices" of their social behavior (Ambady & others, 2000). In speed-dating research by Paul Eastwick and Eli Finkel (2008a, 2008b), men more than women presumed the importance of a potential date's physical attractiveness; but in reality, a prospect's attractiveness was similarly important to both men and women. The attractiveness effect also occurs among German speed-daters (Asendorpf & others, 2011).

Looks even influence voting, or so it seems from a study by Alexander Todorov and colleagues (2005; Todorov, 2011). They showed Princeton University students photographs of the two major candidates in 95 U.S. Senate races since 2000 and in 600 U.S. House of Representatives races. Based on looks alone, the students (by preferring competent-looking over more baby-faced candidates) correctly guessed the winners of 72 percent of the Senate and 67 percent of the House races. Follow-up studies have confirmed the finding that voters prefer competent-looking candidates (Antonakis & Dalgas, 2009; Chiao & others, 2008). But gender also mattered: Men were more likely to vote for physically attractive female candidates, and women were more likely to vote for approachable-looking male candidates. Likewise, heterosexual people display a positive bias toward attractive job candidates and university applicants—if they are of the other sex (Agthe & others, 2011).

## THE MATCHING PHENOMENON

Not everyone can end up paired with someone stunningly attractive. So how do people pair off? Judging from research by Bernard Murstein (1986) and others, they get real. They pair off with people who are about as attractive as they are. Studies have found a strong correspondence between the rated attractiveness of husbands and wives, of dating partners, and even of those within particular fraternities (Feingold, 1988; Montoya, 2008). People tend to select as friends, and especially to marry, those who are a “good match” not only to their level of intelligence, popularity, and self-worth but also to their level of attractiveness (Taylor & others, 2011).

Experiments confirm this **matching phenomenon**. When choosing whom to approach, knowing the other is free to say yes or no, people often approach and invest more in pursuing someone whose attractiveness roughly matches (or not too greatly exceeds) their own (Berscheid & others, 1971; Huston, 1973; Van Straaten & others, 2009). They seek out someone who seems desirable, but they are mindful of the limits of their own desirability. Good physical matches may be conducive to good relationships, reported Gregory White (1980) from a study of UCLA dating couples. Those who were most similar in physical attractiveness were most likely, 9 months later, to have fallen more deeply in love.

Perhaps this research prompts you to think of happy couples who differ in perceived “hotness.” In such cases, the less attractive person often has compensating qualities. Each partner brings assets to the social marketplace, and the value of the respective assets creates an equitable match. Personal advertisements and self-presentations to online dating services exhibit this exchange of assets (Cicerello & Sheehan, 1995; Hitsch & others, 2006; Koestner & Wheeler, 1988; Rajecki & others, 1991). Men typically offer wealth or status and seek youth and attractiveness; women more often do the reverse: “Attractive, bright woman, 26, slender, seeks warm, professional male.” Men who advertise their income and education, and women who advertise their youth and looks, receive more responses to their ads (Baize & Schroeder, 1995). The asset-matching process helps explain why beautiful young women often marry older men of higher social status (Elder, 1969; Kanazawa & Kovar, 2004). The richer the man, the younger and more beautiful the woman.

“IF YOU WOULD MARRY  
WISELY, MARRY YOUR  
EQUAL.”

—OVID, 43 B.C.–A.D. 17

### matching phenomenon

The tendency for men and women to choose as partners those who are a “good match” in attractiveness and other traits.

“LOVE IS OFTEN NOTHING  
BUT A FAVORABLE  
EXCHANGE BETWEEN TWO  
PEOPLE WHO GET THE  
MOST OF WHAT THEY CAN  
EXPECT, CONSIDERING  
THEIR VALUE ON THE  
PERSONALITY MARKET.”

—ERICH FROMM, *THE SANE SOCIETY*, 1955



Asset matching. High-status Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards has been married to supermodel Patti Hansen, 19 years his junior, since 1983.

Of course, given the combination of self-serving bias (Chapter 2), repeated exposure to one's own face, and strategic self-presentation, we can expect most people to report positive self-images. And so it was for participants in one study of approximately 22,000 people who completed self-descriptions for one online dating service (Hitsch & others, 2006). Sixty-seven percent of men and 72 percent of women rated themselves as having "above average" or "very good" looks. Only 1 percent estimated their looks as "less than average."

### THE PHYSICAL-ATTRACTIVENESS STEREOTYPE

Does the attractiveness effect spring entirely from sexual attractiveness? Clearly not, as Vicky Houston and Ray Bull (1994) discovered when they used a makeup artist to give an otherwise attractive accomplice an apparently scarred, bruised, or birthmarked face. When riding on a Glasgow commuter rail line, people of both sexes avoided sitting next to the accomplice when she appeared facially disfigured. Moreover, much as adults are biased toward attractive adults, young children are biased toward attractive children (Dion, 1973; Dion & Berscheid, 1974; Langlois & others, 2000). To judge from how long they gaze at someone, even 3-month-old infants prefer attractive faces (Langlois & others, 1987).

Adults show a similar bias when judging children. Margaret Clifford and Elaine Hatfield (Clifford & Walster, 1973) gave Missouri fifth-grade teachers identical information about a boy or a girl but with the photograph of an attractive or an unattractive child attached. The teachers perceived the attractive child as more intelligent and successful in school. Think of yourself as a playground supervisor having to discipline an unruly child. Might you, like the women studied by Karen Dion (1972), show less warmth and tact to an unattractive child? The sad truth is that most of us assume what we might call a "Bart Simpson effect"—that homely children are less able and socially competent than their beautiful peers.

What is more, we assume that beautiful people possess certain desirable traits. Other things being equal, we guess beautiful people are happier, sexually warmer, and more outgoing, intelligent, and successful—though not more honest or concerned for others (Eagly & others, 1991; Feingold, 1992b; Jackson & others, 1995). We are more eager to bond with attractive people, which motivates our projecting desirable attributes such as kindness and reciprocal interest into them (Lemay & others, 2010).

Added together, the findings define a **physical-attractiveness stereotype**: What is beautiful is good. Children learn the stereotype quite early—and one of the ways they learn it is through stories told to them by adults. "Disney movies promote the stereotype that what is beautiful is good," report Doris Bazzini and colleagues (2010) from an analysis of human characters in 21 animated films. Snow White and Cinderella are beautiful—and kind. The witch and the stepsisters are ugly—and wicked. "If you want to be loved by somebody who isn't already in your family, it doesn't hurt to be beautiful," surmised one 8-year-old girl. Or as one kindergarten girl put it when asked what it means to be pretty, "It's like to be a princess. Everybody loves you" (Dion, 1979).

If physical attractiveness is that important, then permanently changing people's attractiveness should change the way others react to them. But is it ethical to alter someone's looks? Such manipulations are performed millions of times a year by cosmetic surgeons and orthodontists. With teeth straightened and whitened, hair replaced and dyed, face lifted, fat liposuctioned, and breasts enlarged, lifted, or reduced, most self-dissatisfied people do express satisfaction with the results of their procedures, though some unhappy patients seek out repeat procedures (Honigman & others, 2004).

To examine the effect of such alterations on others, Michael Kalick (1977) had Harvard students rate their impressions of eight women based on profile photographs taken before or after cosmetic surgery. Not only did they judge the women as more physically attractive after the surgery but also as kinder, more sensitive, more sexually warm and responsive, more likable, and so on.

#### physical- attractiveness stereotype

The presumption that physically attractive people possess other socially desirable traits as well: What is beautiful is good.

"EVEN VIRTUE IS FAIRER IN A FAIR BODY."

—VIRGIL, AENEID, 1ST

CENTURY B.C.

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS** To say that attractiveness is important, other things being equal, is not to say that physical appearance always outranks other qualities. Some people more than others judge people by their looks (Livingston, 2001). Moreover, attractiveness most affects first impressions. But first impressions are important—and have become more so as societies become increasingly mobile and urbanized and as contacts with people become more fleeting (Berscheid, 1981). Your Facebook self-presentation starts with . . . your face. In speed-dating experiments, the attractiveness effect is strongest when people's choices are superficially made—when meeting lots of people quickly (Lenton & Francesconi, 2010). That helps explain why attractiveness better predicts happiness and social connections for those in urban rather than rural settings (Plaut & others, 2009).

Though interviewers may deny it, attractiveness and grooming affect first impressions in job interviews—especially when the evaluator is of the other sex (Agthe & others, 2011; Cash & Janda, 1984; Mack & Rainey, 1990; Maruelle & Green, 1980). People rate new products more favorably when they are associated with attractive inventors (Baron & others, 2006). Such impressions help explain why attractive people and tall people have more prestigious jobs and make more money (Engemann & Owyang, 2003; Persico & others, 2004).

Patricia Roszell and colleagues (1990) looked at the incomes of a national sample of Canadians whom interviewers had rated on a 1 (homely) to 5 (strikingly attractive) scale. They found that for each additional scale unit of rated attractiveness, people earned, on average, an additional \$1,988 annually. Irene Hanson Frieze and associates (1991) did the same analysis with 737 MBA graduates after rating them on a similar 1-to-5 scale using student yearbook photos. For each additional scale unit of rated attractiveness, men earned an added \$2,600 and women earned an added \$2,150. In *Beauty Pays*, economist Daniel Hamermesh (2011) argues that, for a man, good looks have the earnings effect of another year and a half of schooling.

The speed with which first impressions form, and their influence on thinking, helps explain why pretty prospers. Even a .013-second exposure—too brief to discern a face—is enough to enable people to guess a face's attractiveness (Olson & Marshuetz, 2005). Moreover, when categorizing subsequent words as either good or bad, an attractive flashed face predisposes people to categorize good words faster. Pretty is perceived promptly and primes positive processing.

## THE inside STORY

Ellen Berscheid on Attractiveness

I vividly remember the afternoon I began to appreciate the far-reaching implications of physical attractiveness. Graduate student Karen Dion (now a professor at the University of Toronto) learned that some researchers at our Institute of Child Development had collected popularity ratings from nursery school children and taken a photo of each child. Although teachers and caregivers of children had persuaded us that "all children are beautiful" and no physical-attractiveness discriminations could be made, Dion suggested we instruct some people to rate each child's looks and that we correlate these with popularity. After doing so, we realized our long shot had hit

home: Attractive children were popular children. Indeed, the effect was far more potent than we and others had assumed, with a host of implications that investigators are still tracing.



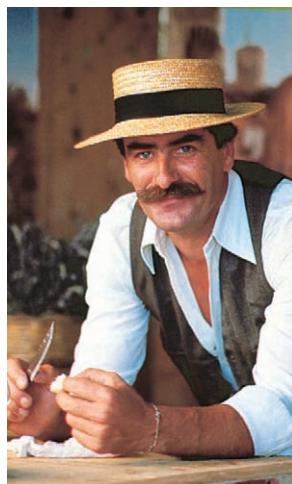
Ellen Berscheid  
University of Minnesota

**IS THE “BEAUTIFUL IS GOOD” STEREOTYPE ACCURATE?** Do beautiful people indeed have desirable traits? For centuries, those who considered themselves serious scientists thought so when they sought to identify physical traits (shifty eyes, a weak chin) that would predict criminal behavior. Or, on the other hand, was Leo Tolstoy correct when he wrote that it’s “a strange illusion . . . to suppose that beauty is goodness”? There is some truth to the stereotype. Attractive children and young adults are somewhat more relaxed, outgoing, and socially polished (Feingold, 1992b; Langlois & others, 2000). William Goldman and Philip Lewis (1977) demonstrated this by having 60 University of Georgia men call and talk for 5 minutes with each of three women students. Afterward, the men and women rated the most attractive of their unseen telephone partners as somewhat more socially skillful and likable. Physically attractive individuals tend also to be more popular, more outgoing, and more gender typed—more traditionally masculine if male, more feminine if female (Langlois & others, 1996).

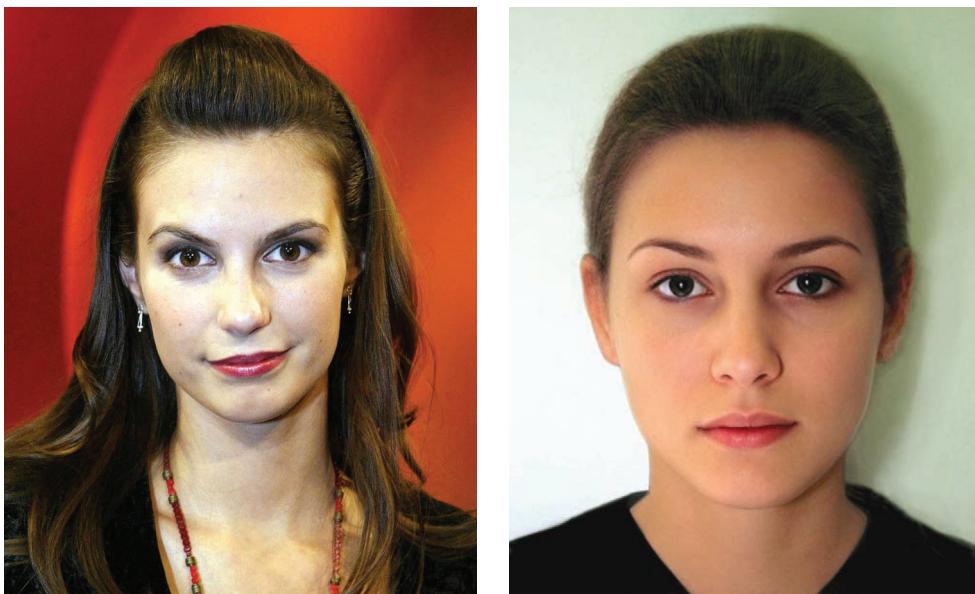
These small average differences between attractive and unattractive people probably result from self-fulfilling prophecies. Attractive people are valued and favored, so many develop more social self-confidence. (Recall from Chapter 2 an experiment in which men evoked a warm response from unseen women they *thought* were attractive.) By that analysis, what’s crucial to your social skill is not how you look but how people treat you and how you feel about yourself—whether you accept yourself, like yourself, and feel comfortable with yourself.

### WHO IS ATTRACTIVE?

I have described attractiveness as if it were an objective quality like height, which some people have more of, some less. Strictly speaking, attractiveness is whatever the people of any given place and time find attractive. This, of course, varies. The beauty standards by which Miss Universe is judged hardly apply even to the whole planet. People in various places and times have pierced noses, lengthened necks, dyed hair, whitened teeth, painted skin, gorged themselves to become voluptuous, starved to become thin, and bound themselves with leather corsets to make their breasts seem small—or used silicone and padded bras to make them seem big. For cultures with scarce resources and for poor or hungry people, plumpness seems attractive; for cultures and individuals with abundant resources, beauty more often equals slimness (Nelson & Morrison, 2005). Moreover, attractiveness influences life outcomes less in cultures where relationships are based more on kinship or social arrangement than on personal choice (Anderson & others, 2008). Despite such variations, there remains “strong agreement both within and across cultures about who is and who is not attractive,” note Judith Langlois and colleagues (2000).



Standards of beauty differ from culture to culture. Yet some people are considered attractive throughout most of the world.



To be really attractive is, ironically, to be *perfectly average* (Rhodes, 2006). Research teams led by Langlois and Lorri Roggman (Langlois & Roggman, 1990; Langlois & others, 1994) at the University of Texas and David Perrett (2010) at the University of St. Andrews have digitized multiple faces and averaged them using a computer. Inevitably, people find the composite faces more appealing than almost all the actual faces (Figure 11.4). Across 27 nations, even an average leg-length-to-body ratio looks more attractive than very short or long legs (Sorokowski & others, 2011). With both humans and animals, averaged looks best embody prototypes (for your typical man, woman, dog, or whatever) and thus are easy for the brain to process and categorize, notes Jamin Halberstadt (2006). Let's face it: Perfectly average is easy on the eyes (and brain).

Computer-averaged faces and bodies also tend to be perfectly *symmetrical*—another characteristic of strikingly attractive (and reproductively successful) people (Brown & others, 2008; Gangestad & Thornhill, 1997). Research teams led by Gillian Rhodes (Rhodes, 2006; Rhodes & others, 1999) and by Ian Penton-Voak (2001) have shown that if you could merge either half of your face with its mirror image—thus forming a perfectly symmetrical new face—you would boost your looks. With a few facial features excepted (Said & Todorov, 2011), averaging a number of such attractive, symmetrical faces produces an even better looking face.

**EVOLUTION AND ATTRACTION** Psychologists working from the evolutionary perspective explain the human preference for attractive partners in terms of reproductive strategy (Chapter 5). They assume that beauty signals biologically important information: health, youth, and fertility. And so it does, report Gordon Gallup and colleagues (2008). Men with attractive faces have higher quality sperm. Women with hourglass figures have more regular menstrual cycles and are more fertile. Over time, men who preferred fertile-looking women outreproduced those who were as happy to mate with postmenopausal females. That biological outcome of human history, David Buss (1989) believes, explains why the males he studied in 37 cultures—from Australia to Zambia—did indeed prefer youthful female characteristics that signify reproductive capacity.

Evolutionary psychologists also assume that evolution predisposes women to favor male traits that signify an ability to provide and protect resources. No wonder physically attractive females tend to marry high-status males, and men compete with such determination to display status by achieving fame and fortune. In screening potential mates, report Norman Li and fellow researchers (2002), men

### FIGURE :: 11.4

#### Who's the Fairest of Them All?

Each year's selection of "Miss Germany" provides one country's answer. A University of Regensburg student research team, working with a German television channel, offered an alternative. Christoph Braun and his compatriots (Gruendl, 2005) photographed the twenty-two 2002 "Queen of Beauty" finalists, without makeup and with hair tied back, and then created a "Virtual Miss Germany" that was the blended composite of them all. When adults in a local shopping mall were shown the finalists and the Virtual Miss Germany, they easily rated Virtual Miss Germany as the most attractive of them all. Although the winning real Miss Germany may have been disappointed by the news that everyone preferred her virtual competitor to herself, she can reassure herself that she will never meet her virtual competitor.

"POWER IS THE GREATEST APHRODISIAC."

—HENRY KISSINGER, 1971

require a modicum of physical attractiveness, women require status and resources, and both welcome kindness and intelligence.

Evolutionary psychologists have also explored men's and women's response to other cues to reproductive success. Judging from glamour models and beauty pageant winners, men everywhere have felt most attracted to women whose waists are 30 percent narrower than their hips—a shape associated with peak sexual fertility (Karremans & others, 2010; Perilloux & others, 2010; Platek & Singh, 2010; Singh, 1993, 1995). Circumstances that reduce a woman's fertility—malnutrition, pregnancy, menopause—also change her shape.

When judging males as potential marriage partners, women, too, prefer a male waist-to-hip ratio suggesting health and vigor. They rate muscular men as sexier, and muscular men do feel sexier and report more lifetime sex partners (Frederick & Haselton, 2007). This makes evolutionary sense, notes Jared Diamond (1996): A muscular hunk was more likely than a scrawny fellow to gather food, build houses, and defeat rivals. But today's women prefer men with high incomes even more (Singh, 1995).

During ovulation, women show heightened preference for men with masculinized faces, voices, and bodies (Gallup & Frederick, 2010; Gangestad & others, 2004; Macrae & others, 2002). They show increased accuracy in judging male sexual orientation (Rule & others, 2011). And they show increased wariness of out-group men (McDonald & others, 2011). One study found that, when ovulating, young women tend to wear and prefer more revealing outfits than when infertile (Durante & others, 2008). In another study, ovulating lap dancers averaged \$70 in tips per hour—double the \$35 of those who were menstruating (Miller & others, 2007).

We are, evolutionary psychologists suggest, driven by primal attractions. Like eating and breathing, attraction and mating are too important to leave to the whims of culture.

**SOCIAL COMPARISON** Although our mating psychology has biological wisdom, attraction is not all hardwired. What's attractive to you also depends on your comparison standards.

Douglas Kenrick and Sara Gutierrez (1980) had male confederates interrupt Montana State University men in their dormitory rooms and explain, "We have a friend coming to town this week and we want to fix him up with a date, but we can't decide whether to fix him up with her or not, so we decided to conduct a survey.... We want you to give us your vote on how attractive you think she is... on a scale of 1 to 7." Shown a picture of an average young woman, those who had just been watching *Charlie's Angels* (a television show featuring three beautiful women) rated her less attractive than those who hadn't.

## MAXINE by Marian Henley



Laboratory experiments confirm this “contrast effect.” To men who have recently been gazing at centerfolds, average women or even their own wives tend to seem less attractive (Kenrick & others, 1989). Viewing pornographic films simulating passionate sex similarly decreases satisfaction with one’s own partner (Zillmann, 1989). Being sexually aroused may *temporarily* make a person of the other sex seem more attractive. But the lingering effect of exposure to perfect “10s,” or of unrealistic sexual depictions, is to make one’s own partner seem less appealing—more like a “6” than an “8.”

It works the same way with our self-perceptions. After viewing a superattractive person of the same gender, people rate themselves as being *less* attractive than after viewing a homely person (Brown & others, 1992; Thornton & Maurice, 1997). Men’s self-rated desirability is also deflated by exposure to more dominant, successful men. Thanks to modern media, we may see in an hour “dozens of individuals who are more attractive and more successful than any of our ancestors would have seen in a year, or even a lifetime,” noted Sara Gutierrez and her co-researchers (1999). Moreover, we often see slim, wrinkle-free photoshopped people who don’t exist. Such extraordinary comparison standards trick us into devaluing our potential mates and ourselves and spending billions on cosmetics, diet aids, and plastic surgery. But even after another 9.5 million annual cosmetic procedures, there may be no net gain in human satisfaction. If others get their teeth straightened, capped, and whitened and you don’t, the social comparison may leave you more dissatisfied with your normal, natural teeth than you would have been if you were surrounded by peers whose teeth were also natural.

**THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THOSE WE LOVE** Let’s conclude our discussion of attractiveness on an upbeat note. First, a 17-year-old girl’s facial attractiveness is a surprisingly weak predictor of her attractiveness at ages 30 and 50. Sometimes an average-looking adolescent, especially one with a warm, attractive personality, becomes a quite attractive middle-aged adult (Zebrowitz & others, 1993, 1998).

Second, not only do we perceive attractive people as likable but also we perceive likable people as attractive. Perhaps you can recall individuals who, as you grew to like them, became more attractive. Their physical imperfections were no longer so noticeable. Alan Gross and Christine Crofton (1977; see also Lewandowski & others, 2007) had students view someone’s photograph after reading a favorable or an unfavorable description of the person’s personality. Those portrayed as warm, helpful, and considerate also *looked* more attractive. It may be true, then, that “handsome is as handsome does.” Discovering someone’s similarities to us also makes the person seem more attractive (Beaman & Klentz, 1983; Klentz & others, 1987).

Moreover, love sees loveliness: The more in love a woman is with a man, the more physically attractive she finds him (Price & others, 1974). And the more in love people are, the less attractive they find all others of the opposite sex (Johnson & Rusbult, 1989; Simpson & others, 1990). “The grass may be greener on the other side,” note Rowland Miller and Jeffry Simpson (1990), “but happy gardeners are less likely to notice.” Beauty really *is*, to some extent, in the eye of the beholder.

## Similarity Versus Complementarity

From our discussion so far, one might surmise Leo Tolstoy was entirely correct: “Love depends . . . on frequent meetings, and on the style in which the hair is done up, and on the color and cut of the dress.” Given time, however, other factors influence whether acquaintance develops into friendship.

“LOVE IS ONLY A DIRTY TRICK PLAYED ON US TO ACHIEVE A CONTINUATION OF THE SPECIES.”

—NOVELIST W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM, 1874–1965

“DO I LOVE YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL, OR ARE YOU BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE I LOVE YOU?”

—PRINCE CHARMING, IN RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN’S CINDERELLA



Henry James’s description of novelist George Eliot (the pen name of Mary Ann Evans): “She is magnificently ugly—deliciously hideous. She has a low forehead, a dull grey eye, a vast pendulous nose, a huge mouth, full of uneven teeth. . . . Now in this vast ugliness resides a most powerful beauty which, in a very few minutes, steals forth and charms the mind, so that you end as I ended, in falling in love with her.”

"CAN TWO WALK  
TOGETHER EXCEPT THEY  
BE AGREED?"

—AMOS 3:3

"AND THEY ARE FRIENDS  
WHO HAVE COME TO  
REGARD THE SAME THINGS  
AS GOOD AND THE SAME  
THINGS AS EVIL, THEY WHO  
ARE FRIENDS OF THE SAME  
PEOPLE, AND THEY WHO  
ARE THE ENEMIES OF THE  
SAME PEOPLE. . . WE LIKE  
THESE WHO RESEMBLE US,  
AND ARE ENGAGED IN THE  
SAME PURSUITS."

—ARISTOTLE, RHETORIC, 4TH  
CENTURY B.C.



"Actually, Lou, I think it was more than just my being in the right place at the right time. I think it was my being the right race, the right religion, the right sex, the right socioeconomic group, having the right accent, the right clothes, going to the right schools. . ."

The most appealing people are those most like us.  
© Warren Miller/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

## DO BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER?

Of this much we may be sure: Birds that flock together are of a feather. Friends, engaged couples, and spouses are far more likely than randomly paired people to share common attitudes, beliefs, and values. Furthermore, the greater the similarity between husband and wife, the happier they are and the less likely they are to divorce (Byrne, 1971; Caspi & Herbener, 1990). Such correlational findings are intriguing. But cause and effect remain an enigma. Does similarity lead to liking? Or does liking lead to similarity?

**LIKENESS BEGETS LIKING** To discern cause and effect, we experiment. Imagine that at a campus party Lakesha gets involved in a long discussion of politics, religion, and personal likes and dislikes with Les and Lon. She and Les discover they agree on almost everything, she and Lon on few things. Afterward, she reflects: "Les is really intelligent . . . and so likable. I hope we meet again." In experiments, Donn Byrne (1971) and his colleagues captured the essence of Lakesha's experience. Over and over again, they found that the more similar someone's attitudes are to your own, the more you will like the person. Likeness produces liking not only for college students but also for children and the elderly, for people of various occupations, and for those in various cultures.

The likeness-leads-to-liking effect has been tested in real-life situations:

- At the University of Michigan, Theodore Newcomb (1961) studied two groups of 17 unacquainted male transfer students. After 13 weeks of boardinghouse life, those whose agreement was initially highest were most likely to have formed close friendships. One group of friends was composed of 5 liberal arts students, each a political liberal with strong intellectual interests. Another was made up of 3 conservative veterans who were all enrolled in the engineering college.
- At two of Hong Kong's universities, Royce Lee and Michael Bond (1996) found that roommate friendships flourished when roommates shared values and personality traits, but more so when they *perceived* their roommates as similar. Reality matters, but perception matters more.
- In various settings, people entering a room of strangers sit closer to those like themselves (Mackinnon & others, 2011). People with glasses sit closer to others with glasses. Long-haired people sit closer to people with long hair. Dark-haired people sit closer to people with dark hair (even after controlling for race and sex).
- People like not only those who think as they do but also those who act as they do. Subtle mimicry fosters fondness. Have you noticed that when someone nods his or her head as you do and echoes your thoughts, you feel a certain rapport and liking? That's a common experience, report Rick van Baaren and colleagues (2003a, 2003b), and one result is higher tips for Dutch restaurant servers who mimic their customers by merely repeating their order. Natural mimicry increases rapport, note Jessica Lakin and Tanya Chartrand (2003), and desire for rapport increases mimicry.
- Whether in China or the Western world, similar attitudes, traits, and values help bring couples together and predict their satisfaction (Chen & others, 2009; Gaunt, 2006; Gonzaga & others, 2007). Speed-daters are drawn to those who share their speaking style (Ireland & others, 2011). Even morning and evening types tend to find one another

(Randler & Kretz, 2011). One psychologist-founded Internet dating site claims to match singles using the similarities that mark happy couples (Carter & Snow, 2004; Warren, 2005).

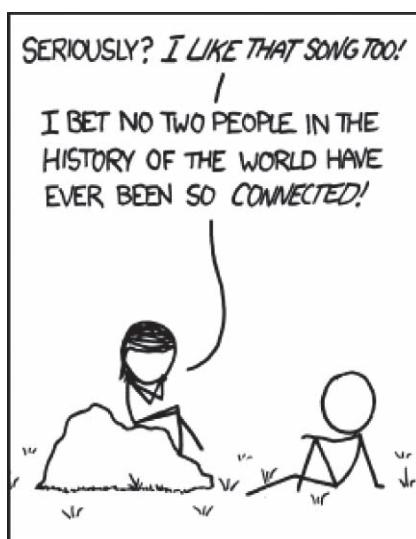
So similarity breeds content. Birds of a feather *do* flock together. Surely you have noticed this upon discovering a person who shares your ideas, values, and desires; a special someone who likes the same foods, the same activities, the same music you do. (When liking the same music as another, people infer similar values as well [Boer & others, 2011].)

**DISSIMILARITY BREEDS DISLIKE** We have a bias—the false consensus bias—toward assuming that others share our attitudes. We also tend to see those we like as being like us (Castelli & others, 2009). Getting to know someone—and discovering that the person is actually dissimilar—tends to decrease liking (Norton & others, 2007). If those dissimilar attitudes pertain to our strong moral convictions, we dislike and distance ourselves from them all the more (Skitka & others, 2005). People in one political party often are not so much fond of fellow party members as they are disdainful of the opposition (Hoyle, 1993; Rosenbaum, 1986). Straight men often disdain gay men, who are doubly dissimilar to themselves—in perceived gender traits and sexuality (Lehavot & Lambert, 2007).

In general, dissimilar attitudes depress liking more than similar attitudes enhance it (Singh & Ho, 2000; Singh & Teob, 1999). Within their own groups, where they expect similarity, people find it especially difficult to like someone with dissimilar views (Chen & Kenrick, 2002). That perhaps explains why dating partners and roommates become more similar over time in their emotional responses to events and in their attitudes (Anderson & others, 2003; Davis & Rusbult, 2001). “Attitude alignment” helps promote and sustain close relationships, a phenomenon that can also lead partners to overestimate their attitude similarities (Kenny & Acitelli, 2001; Murray & others, 2002).

Whether people perceive those of another race as similar or dissimilar influences their racial attitudes. Whenever one group regards another as “other”—as creatures that speak differently, live differently, think differently—the potential for conflict is high. In fact, except for intimate relationships such as dating, the perception of like minds is more important for attraction than like skins. Most Whites have expressed more liking for, and willingness to work with, a like-minded Black than a dissimilarly minded White (Insko & others, 1983; Rokeach, 1968). The more that Whites presume that Blacks support their values, the more positive their racial attitudes (Biernat & others, 1996).

“Cultural racism” persists, argues social psychologist James Jones (1988,



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*“We’ve learned so much from each other that you remind me of me.”*

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# THE inside STORY

James Jones on Cultural Diversity

As a Yale graduate student, I was invited to write a book on prejudice. Wanting to take readers past the individual blame aspect of prejudice, I entitled the volume *Prejudice and Racism* and explained how race problems are embedded in society. Prejudice is ultimately not a race problem but a culture problem. European- and African-heritage cultures differ, and their differences are the soil from which springs cultural racism—the intolerance of those whose culture differs. In today's world of ethnic mixing, we must learn

to accept our cultural diversity even as we seek unifying ideals.



James Jones  
University of Delaware

2003, 2004), because cultural differences are a fact of life. Black culture tends to be present-oriented, spontaneously expressive, spiritual, and emotionally driven. White culture tends to be more future-oriented, materialistic, and achievement-driven. Rather than trying to eliminate such differences, says Jones, we might better appreciate what they "contribute to the cultural fabric of a multicultural society." There are situations in which expressiveness is advantageous and situations in which future orientation is advantageous. Each culture has much to learn from the other. In countries such as Canada, Britain, and the United States, where migration and differing birthrates make for growing diversity, educating people to respect and enjoy those who differ is a major challenge. Given increasing cultural diversity and given our natural wariness of differences, this may be the major social challenge of our time. (See "The Inside Story: James Jones on Cultural Diversity.")

## DO OPPOSITES ATTRACT?

Are we not also attracted to people who in some ways *differ* from ourselves? We are attracted to people whose scent suggests dissimilar enough genes to prevent inbreeding (Garver-Apgar & others, 2006). But what about attitudes and behavioral traits? Researchers have explored that question by comparing not only friends' and spouses' attitudes and beliefs but also their ages, religions, races, smoking behaviors, economic levels, educations, height, intelligence, and appearance. In all these ways and more, similarity still prevails (Buss, 1985; Kandel, 1978). Smart birds flock together. So do rich birds, Protestant birds, tall birds, pretty birds.

Still we resist: Are we not attracted to people whose needs and personalities complement our own? Would a sadist and a masochist find true love? The *Reader's Digest* has told us that "opposites attract. . . . Socializers pair with loners, novelty-lovers with those who dislike change, free spenders with scrimpers, risk-takers with the very cautious" (Jacoby, 1986). Sociologist Robert Winch (1958) reasoned that the needs of an outgoing and domineering person would naturally complement those of someone who is shy and submissive. The logic seems compelling, and most of us can think of couples who view their differences as complementary: "My husband and I are perfect for each other. I'm Aquarius—a decisive person. He's Libra—can't make decisions. But he's always happy to go along with arrangements I make."

Given the idea's persuasiveness, the inability of researchers to confirm it is astonishing. For example, most people feel attracted to expressive, outgoing people

(Friedman & others, 1988). Would this be especially so when one is down in the dumps? Do depressed people seek those whose gaiety will cheer them up? To the contrary, it is nondepressed people who most prefer the company of happy people (Locke & Horowitz, 1990; Rosenblatt & Greenberg, 1988, 1991; Wenzlaff & Prohaska, 1989). When you're feeling blue, another's bubbly personality can be aggravating. The contrast effect that makes average people feel homely in the company of beautiful people also makes sad people more conscious of their misery in the company of cheerful people.

Some **complementarity** may evolve as a relationship progresses (even a relationship between identical twins). Yet people seem slightly more prone to like and to marry those whose needs and personalities are *similar* (Botwin & others, 1997; Buss, 1984; Fishbein & Thelen, 1981a, 1981b; Nias, 1979). Perhaps one day we will discover some ways (other than heterosexuality) in which differences commonly breed liking. Dominance/submissiveness may be one such way (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997; Markey & Kurtz, 2006). But as a general rule, opposites do not attract.

### complementarity

The popularly supposed tendency, in a relationship between two people, for each to complete what is missing in the other.

## Liking Those Who Like Us

Liking is usually mutual. Proximity and attractiveness influence our initial attraction to someone, and similarity influences longer term attraction as well. If we have a deep need to belong and to feel liked and accepted, would we not also take a liking to those who like us? Are the best friendships mutual admiration societies? Indeed, one person's liking for another does predict the other's liking in return (Kenny & Nasby, 1980; Montoya & Insko, 2008).

But does one person's liking another *cause* the other to return the appreciation? People's reports of how they fell in love suggest so (Aron & others, 1989). Discovering that an appealing someone really likes you seems to awaken romantic feelings. Experiments confirm it: Those told that certain others like or admire them usually feel a reciprocal affection (Berscheid & Walster, 1978). And all the better, one speed-dating experiment suggests, when someone likes *you* especially (Eastwick & others, 2007). A dash of uncertainty can also fuel desire. Thinking that someone probably likes you—but you aren't sure—tends to increase your thinking about, and feeling attracted to, another (Whitechurch & others, 2011).

And consider this finding by Ellen Berscheid and colleagues (1969): Students like another student who says eight positive things about them better than one who says seven positive things and one negative thing. We are sensitive to the slightest hint of criticism. Writer Larry L. King speaks for many in noting, "I have discovered over the years that good reviews strangely fail to make the author feel as good as bad reviews make him feel bad."

Whether we are judging ourselves or others, negative information carries more weight because, being less usual, it grabs more attention (Yzerbyt & Leyens, 1991). People's votes are more influenced by their impressions of presidential candidates' weaknesses than by their impressions of strengths (Klein, 1991), a phenomenon quickly grasped by those who design negative campaigns. It's a general rule of life, note Roy Baumeister and colleagues (2001): Bad is stronger than good. (See "Focus On: Bad Is Stronger Than Good.")

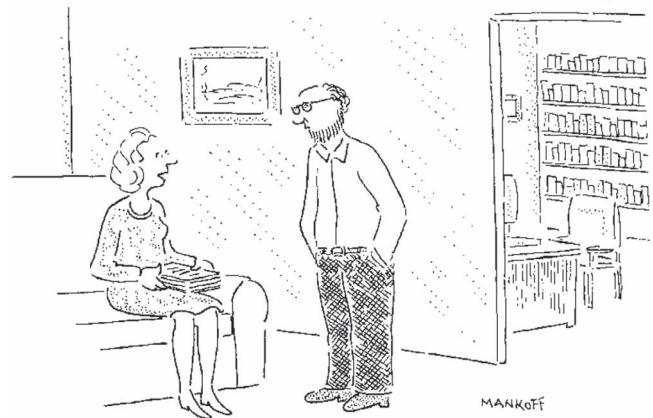
Our liking for those we perceive as liking us was recognized long ago. Observers from the ancient philosopher Hecato ("If you wish to be loved, love") to Ralph Waldo Emerson ("The only way to have a friend is to be one") to Dale Carnegie ("Dole out

"THE AVERAGE MAN  
IS MORE INTERESTED  
IN A WOMAN WHO IS  
INTERESTED IN HIM THAN  
HE IS IN A WOMAN WITH  
BEAUTIFUL LEGS."

—ACTRESS MARLENE DIETRICH  
(1901–1992)

"IF 60,000 PEOPLE TELL ME  
THEY LOVED A SHOW, THEN  
ONE WALKS PAST AND  
SAYS IT SUCKED, THAT'S  
THE COMMENT I'LL HEAR."

—MUSICIAN DAVE MATTHEWS,  
2000



*"Well—and I'm not just saying this  
because you're my husband—it stinks."*

# focus ON

## Bad Is Stronger Than Good

Dissimilar attitudes, we have noted, turn us off to others more than similar attitudes turn us on. And others' criticism captures our attention and affects our emotions more than does their praise. Roy Baumeister, Ellen Bratlavsky, Catrin Finkenauer, and Kathleen Vohs (2001) say this is just the tip of an iceberg: "In everyday life, bad events have stronger and more lasting consequences than comparable good events." Consider:

- Destructive acts harm close relationships more than constructive acts build them. (Cruel words linger after kind ones have been forgotten.)
- Bad moods affect our thinking and memory more than do good moods. (Despite our natural optimism, it's easier to recall past bad emotional events than good ones.)
- There are more words for negative than positive emotions, and people asked to think of emotion words mostly come up with negative words. (Sadness, anger, and fear are the three most common.)
- Bad events tend to evoke more misery than good events evoke joy. (In one analysis by Randy Larsen [2009], negative emotional experiences exceeded the intensity of positive emotional experiences by a factor that, coincidentally, equaled pi: 3.14.)
- Single bad events (traumas) have more lasting effects than single very good events. (A death triggers more search for meaning than does a birth.)
- Routine bad events receive more attention and trigger more rumination than do routine good events.

(Losing money upsets people more than gaining the same amount of money makes them happy.)

- Very bad family environments override the genetic influence on intelligence more than do very good family environments. (Bad parents can make their genetically bright children less intelligent; good parents are less able to make their unintelligent children smarter.)
- A bad reputation is easier to acquire, and harder to shed, than a good one. (A single act of lying can destroy one's reputation for integrity.)
- Poor health decreases happiness more than good health increases it. (Pain produces misery far more than comfort produces joy.)

The power of the bad prepares us to deal with threats and protects us from death and disability. For survival, bad can be badder than good is good. The importance of the bad is one likely reason why the first century of psychology focused so much more on the bad than on the good. From its start through 2011, PsycINFO (a guide to psychology's literature) had 21,045 articles mentioning anger, 151,115 mentioning anxiety, and 184,583 mentioning depression. There were 10 articles on these topics for every 1 dealing with the positive emotions of joy (6,238), life satisfaction (20,650), or happiness (9,846). Similarly, "fear" (48,884 articles) has triumphed over "courage" (2,489). The strength of the bad is "perhaps the best reason for a positive psychology movement," Baumeister and colleagues surmise. To overcome the strength of individual bad events, "human life needs far more good than bad."

praise lavishly") anticipated the findings. What they did not anticipate was the precise conditions under which the principle works.

### ATTRIBUTION

As we've seen, flattery *will* get you somewhere. But not everywhere. If praise clearly violates what we know is true—if someone says, "Your hair looks great," when we haven't washed it in 3 days—we may lose respect for the flatterer and wonder whether the compliment springs from ulterior motives (Shrauger, 1975). Thus, we often perceive criticism to be more sincere than praise (Coleman & others, 1987). In fact, when someone prefaces a statement with "To be honest," we know we are about to hear a criticism.

Laboratory experiments reveal something we've noted in previous chapters: Our reactions depend on our attributions. Do we attribute the flattery to **ingratiation**—to a self-serving strategy? Is the person trying to get us to buy something, to acquiesce sexually, to do a favor? If so, both the flatterer and the praise lose appeal (Gordon, 1996; Jones, 1964). But if there is no apparent ulterior motive, then we warmly receive both flattery and flatterer.

### ingratiation

The use of strategies, such as flattery, by which people seek to gain another's favor.

## SELF-ESTEEM AND ATTRACTION

Elaine Hatfield (Walster, 1965) wondered if another's approval is especially rewarding after we have been deprived of approval, much as eating is most rewarding when we're hungry. To test that idea, she gave some Stanford University women either very favorable or very unfavorable analyses of their personalities, affirming some and wounding others. Then she asked them to evaluate several people, including an attractive male confederate who just before the experiment had struck up a warm conversation with each woman and had asked each for a date. (Not one turned him down.) Which women do you suppose most liked the man? It was those whose self-esteem had been temporarily shattered and who were presumably hungry for social approval. This helps explain why people sometimes fall passionately in love on the rebound, after an ego-bruising rejection.

## GAINING ANOTHER'S ESTEEM

If approval that comes after disapproval is powerfully rewarding, then would we most like someone who liked us after initially disliking us? Or would we most like someone who liked us from the start (and therefore gave us more total approval)? Ray is in a small discussion class with his roommate's cousin, Sophia. After the first week of classes, Ray learns via his "pipeline" that Sophia thinks him rather shallow. As the semester progresses, he learns that Sophia's opinion of him is steadily rising; gradually she comes to view him as bright, thoughtful, and charming. Would Ray like Sophia more if she had thought well of him from the beginning? If Ray is simply counting the number of approving comments he receives, then the answer will be yes. But if, after her initial disapproval, Sophia's rewards become more potent, Ray then might like her better than if she had been consistently affirming.

To see which is more often true, Elliot Aronson and Darwyn Linder (1965) captured the essence of Ray's experience in a clever experiment. They "allowed" 80 University of Minnesota women to overhear a sequence of evaluations of themselves by another woman. Some women heard consistently positive things about themselves, some consistently negative. Others heard evaluations that changed either from negative to positive (like Sophia's evaluations of Ray) or from positive to negative. In this and other experiments, the target person was especially well liked when the individual experienced a gain in the other's esteem, especially when the gain occurred gradually and reversed the earlier criticism (Aronson & Mettee, 1974; Clore & others, 1975). Perhaps Sophia's nice words have more credibility coming after her not-so-nice words. Or perhaps after being withheld, they are especially gratifying.

Aronson speculated that constant approval can lose value. When a husband says for the five-hundredth time, "Gee, honey, you look great," the words carry far less impact than were he now to say, "Gee, honey, you look awful in that dress." A loved one you've doted on is hard to reward but easy to hurt. This suggests that an open, honest relationship—one where people enjoy one another's esteem and acceptance yet are honest—is more likely to offer continuing rewards than one dulled by the suppression of unpleasant emotions, one in which people try only, as Dale Carnegie advised, to "lavish praise." Aronson (1988) put it this way:

As a relationship ripens toward greater intimacy, what becomes increasingly important is authenticity—our ability to give up trying to make a good impression and begin to reveal things about ourselves that are honest even if unsavory. . . . If two people are genuinely fond of each other, they will have a more satisfying and exciting relationship over a longer period of time if they are able to express both positive and negative feelings than if they are completely "nice" to each other at all times. (p. 323)

In most social interactions, we self-censor our negative feelings. Thus, note William Swann and colleagues (1991), some people receive no corrective feedback. Living in a world of pleasant illusion, they continue to act in ways that alienate their would-be friends. A true friend is one who can let us in on bad news.

*After this experiment, Hatfield spent almost an hour talking with each woman and explaining the experiment. She reports that, in the end, none remained disturbed by the temporary ego blow or the broken date.*

"HATRED WHICH IS  
ENTIRELY CONQUERED  
BY LOVE PASSES INTO  
LOVE, AND LOVE ON THAT  
ACCOUNT IS GREATER  
THAN IF IT HAD NOT BEEN  
PRECEDED BY HATRED."

—BENEDICT SPINOZA, ETHICS,

1677

"IT TAKES YOUR ENEMY  
AND YOUR FRIEND, WORK-  
ING TOGETHER, TO HURT  
YOU TO THE HEART; THE  
ENEMY TO SLANDER YOU  
AND THE FRIEND TO GET  
THE NEWS TO YOU."

—MARK TWAIN, PUDD'NHEAD  
WILSON'S NEW CALENDAR,

1897

"NO ONE IS PERFECT UNTIL  
YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH  
THEM."

—ANDY ROONEY

Someone who really loves us will be honest with us but will also tend to see us through rose-colored glasses. When Sandra Murray and co-workers (Murray & Holmes, 1997; Murray & others, 1996a, 1996b) studied dating and married couples, they found that the happiest (and those who became happier with time) were those who idealized each other, who even saw their partners more positively than their partners saw themselves. When we're in love, we're biased to find those we love not only physically attractive but also socially attractive, and we're happy to have our partners view us with a similar positive bias (Boyes & Fletcher, 2007). Moreover, the most satisfied married couples tend to have idealized one another as newlyweds and to approach problems without immediately criticizing their partners and finding fault (Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Miller & others, 2006; Murray & others, 2011). Honesty has its place in a good relationship, but so does a presumption of the other's basic goodness.

## Relationship Rewards

Asked why they are friends with someone or why they were attracted to their partners, most people can readily answer. "I like Carol because she's warm, witty, and well-read." What that explanation leaves out—and what social psychologists believe is most important—is ourselves. Attraction involves the one who is attracted as well as the attractor. Thus, a more psychologically accurate answer might be, "I like Carol because of how I feel when I'm with her." We are attracted to those we find it satisfying and gratifying to be with. Attraction is in the eye (and brain) of the beholder.

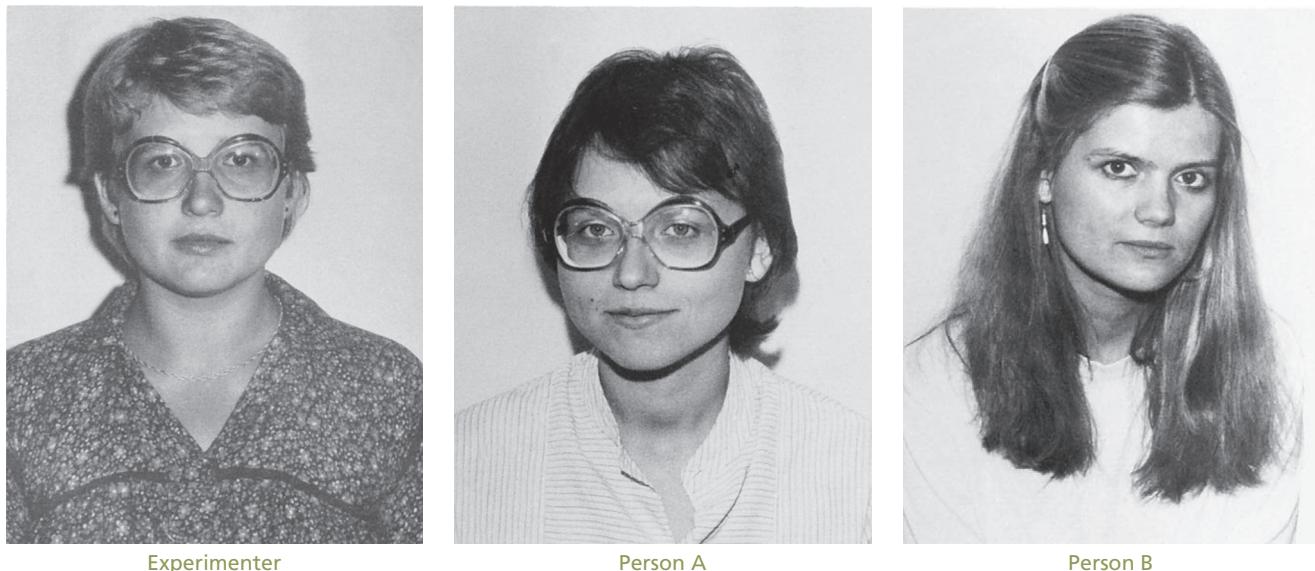
The point can be expressed as a simple **reward theory of attraction**: Those who reward us, or whom we associate with rewards, we like. If a relationship gives us more rewards than costs, we will like it and will wish it to continue. This will be especially true if the relationship is more profitable than alternative relationships (Rusbult, 1980). Mutual attraction flourishes when each meets the other's unmet needs (Byers & Wang, 2004). In his 1665 book of *Maxims*, La Rochefoucauld conjectured, "Friendship is a scheme for the mutual exchange of personal advantages and favors whereby self-esteem may profit."

We not only like people who are rewarding to be with but also, according to the second version of the reward principle, like those we *associate* with good feelings. Conditioning creates positive feelings toward things and people linked with rewarding events (Byrne & Clore, 1970; De Houwer & others, 2001; Lott & Lott, 1974). When, after a strenuous week, we relax in front of a fire, enjoying good food, drink, and music, we will likely feel a special warmth toward those around us. We are less likely to take a liking to someone we meet while suffering a splitting headache.

Pawel Lewicki (1985) tested this liking-by-association principle. In one experiment, University of Warsaw students were virtually 50–50 in choosing which of two pictured women (A or B in Figure 11.5) looked friendlier. Other students, having interacted with a warm, friendly experimenter who resembled woman A, chose woman A by a 6-to-1 margin. In a follow-up study, the experimenter acted *unfriendly* toward half the participants. When these individuals later had to turn in their data to one of two women, they nearly always *avoided* the one who resembled the experimenter. (Perhaps you can recall a time when you reacted positively or negatively to someone who reminded you of someone else.)

Other experiments confirm this phenomenon of liking—and disliking—by association (Hofmann & others, 2010). Elaine Hatfield and William Walster (1978) found a practical tip in these research studies: "Romantic dinners, trips to the theatre, evenings at home together, and vacations never stop being important. . . . If your relationship is to survive, it's important that you *both* continue to associate your relationship with good things."

This simple theory of attraction—we like those who reward us and those we associate with rewards—helps us understand why people everywhere feel attracted to those who are warm, trustworthy, and responsive (Fletcher & others, 1999; Regan,



**FIGURE :: 11.5**

### Liking by Association

After interacting with a friendly experimenter, people preferred someone who looked like her (Person A) to one who didn't (Person B). After interacting with an unfriendly experimenter, people avoided the woman who resembled her (Lewicki, 1985).

1998; Wojciszke & others, 1998). The reward theory also helps explain some of the influences on attraction:

- *Proximity* is rewarding. It costs less time and effort to receive friendship's benefits with someone who lives or works close by.
- We like *attractive* people because we perceive that they offer other desirable traits and because we benefit by associating with them.
- If others have *similar* opinions, we feel rewarded because we presume that they like us in return. Moreover, those who share our views help validate them. We especially like people if we have successfully converted them to our way of thinking (Lombardo & others, 1972; Riordan, 1980; Sigall, 1970).
- We like to be liked and love to be loved. Thus, liking is usually *mutual*. We like those who like us.

## SUMMING UP: What Leads to Friendship and Attraction?

- The best predictor of whether any two people are friends is their sheer *proximity* to each other. Proximity is conducive to repeated *exposure* and interaction, which enables us to discover similarities and to feel each other's liking.
- A second determinant of initial attraction is physical attractiveness. Both in laboratory studies and in field experiments involving blind dates, college students tend to prefer attractive people. In everyday life, however, people tend to choose someone whose attractiveness roughly *matches* their own (or who, if less attractive, has other compensating qualities). Positive attributions about attractive people define a *physical-attractiveness stereotype*—an assumption that what is beautiful is good.
- Liking is greatly aided by similarity of attitudes, beliefs, and values. Likeness leads to liking; opposites rarely attract.
- We are also likely to develop friendships with people who like us.
- According to the *reward theory of attraction*, we like people whose behavior we find rewarding, or whom we associate with rewarding events.

# WHAT IS LOVE?

## Describe the varieties and components of love.

"LOVE IS NATURE'S WAY OF GIVING A REASON TO BE LIVING."

—PAUL WEBSTER, "LOVE IS A MANY SPLENDORED THING,"

1955

Loving is more complex than liking and thus more difficult to measure, more perplexing to study. People yearn for it, live for it, die for it.

Most attraction researchers have studied what is most easily studied—responses during brief encounters between strangers. The influences on our initial liking of another—proximity, attractiveness, similarity, being liked, and other rewarding traits—also influence our long-term, close relationships. The impressions that dating couples quickly form of each other therefore provide a clue to their long-term future (Berg, 1984; Berg & McQuinn, 1986). Indeed, if North American romances flourished *randomly*, without regard to proximity and similarity, then most Catholics (being a minority) would marry Protestants, most Blacks would marry Whites, and college graduates would be as apt to marry high school dropouts as fellow graduates.

So first impressions are important. Nevertheless, long-term loving is not merely an intensification of initial liking. Social psychologists therefore study enduring, close relationships.

## Passionate Love

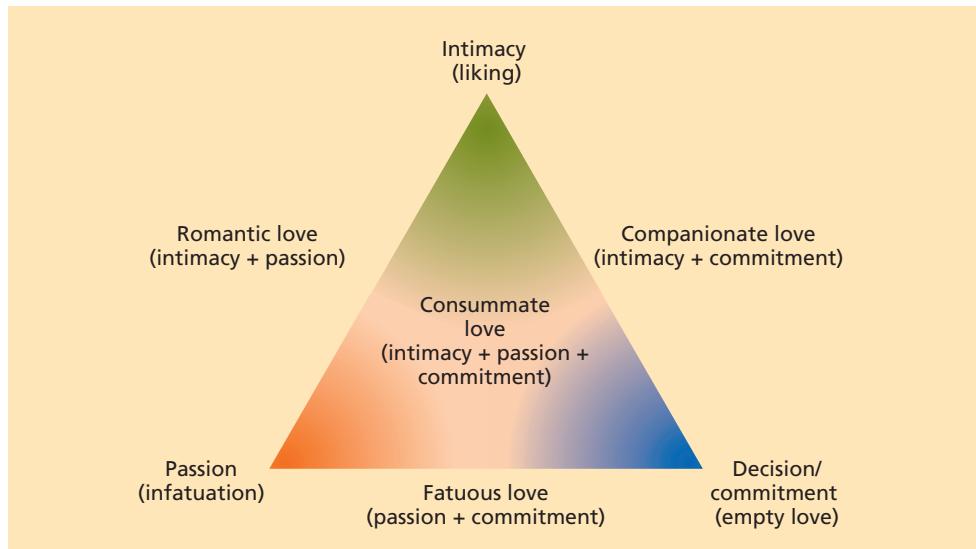
The first step in scientifically studying romantic love, as in studying any variable, is to decide how to define and measure it. We have ways to measure aggression, altruism, prejudice, and liking—but how do we measure love?

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways," wrote Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Social scientists have counted various ways. Psychologist Robert Sternberg (1998) views love as a triangle consisting of three components: passion, intimacy, and commitment (Figure 11.6).

Some elements of love are common to all loving relationships: mutual understanding, giving and receiving support, enjoying the loved one's company. Some elements are distinctive. If we experience passionate love, we express it physically, we expect the relationship to be exclusive, and we are intensely fascinated with our partner. You can see it in our eyes.

Zick Rubin (1973) confirmed this. He administered a love scale to hundreds of University of Michigan dating couples. Later, from behind a one-way mirror in a laboratory waiting room, he clocked eye contact among "weak-love" and "strong-love"

**FIGURE :: 11.6**  
Robert Sternberg's (1988) Conception of Kinds of Loving as Combinations of Three Basic Components of Love



couples. Other research indicates that mutual gaze conveys liking and averted eye gaze conveys ostracism (Wirth & others, 2010). So Rubin's result will not surprise you: The strong-love couples gave themselves away by gazing long into each other's eyes. When talking, they also nod their head, smile naturally, and lean forward (Gonzaga & others, 2001). When observing speed-daters, it takes but a few seconds to make a reasonably accurate guess as to whether one person is interested in another (Place & others, 2009).

**Passionate love** is emotional, exciting, intense. Elaine Hatfield (1988) defined it as "*a state of intense longing for union with another*" (p. 193). If reciprocated, one feels fulfilled and joyous; if not, one feels empty or despairing. Like other forms of emotional excitement, passionate love involves a roller coaster of elation and gloom, tingling exhilaration and dejected misery. "We are never so defenseless against suffering as when we love," observed Freud. Passionate love preoccupies the lover with thoughts of the other—as Robert Graves put it in his poem "Symptoms of Love": "Listening for a knock; waiting for a sign."

Passionate love is what you feel when you not only love someone but also are "in love" with him or her. As Sarah Meyers and Ellen Berscheid (1997) note, we understand that someone who says, "I love you, but I'm not in love with you" means to say, "I like you. I care about you. I think you're marvelous. But I don't feel sexually attracted to you." I feel friendship but not passion.

## A THEORY OF PASSIONATE LOVE

To explain passionate love, Hatfield notes that a given state of arousal can be steered into any of several emotions, depending on how we attribute the arousal. An emotion involves both body and mind—both arousal and the way we interpret and label that arousal. Imagine yourself with pounding heart and trembling hands: Are you experiencing fear, anxiety, joy? Physiologically, one emotion is quite similar to another. You may therefore experience the arousal as joy if you are in a euphoric situation, anger if your environment is hostile, and passionate love if the situation is romantic. In this view, passionate love is the psychological experience of being biologically aroused by someone we find attractive.

If indeed passion is a revved-up state that's labeled "love," then whatever revs one up should intensify feelings of love. In several experiments, college men aroused sexually by reading or viewing erotic materials had a heightened response to a woman—for example, by scoring much higher on a love scale when describing their girlfriend (Carducci & others, 1978; Dermer & Pyszczynski, 1978; Stephan & others, 1971). Proponents of the **two-factor theory of emotion**, developed by Stanley Schachter and Jerome Singer (1962), argue that when the revved-up men responded to a woman, they easily misattributed some of their own arousal to her.

According to this theory, being aroused by *any* source should intensify passionate feelings—provided that the mind is free to attribute some of the arousal to a romantic stimulus. In a dramatic and famous demonstration of this phenomenon, Donald



Researchers report that sustained eye contact, nodding, and smiling are indicators of passionate love.

### passionate love

A state of intense longing for union with another. Passionate lovers are absorbed in each other, feel ecstatic at attaining their partner's love, and are disconsolate on losing it.

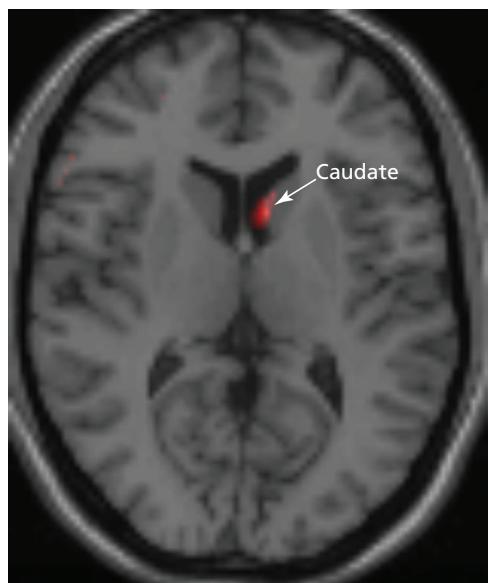
### two-factor theory of emotion

Arousal 3 its label 5 emotion.

**FIGURE :: 11.7****This Is Your Brain  
on Love**

MRI scans from young adults intensely in love revealed areas, such as the caudate nucleus, that became more active when gazing at the loved-one's photo (but not when gazing at the photo of another acquaintance).

*Source: Aron & others (2005).*



"THE 'ADRENALINE' ASSOCIATED WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF HIGHS CAN SPILL OVER AND MAKE PASSION MORE PASSIONATE. (SORT OF A 'BETTER LOVING THROUGH CHEMISTRY' PHENOMENON.)"

—ELAINE HATFIELD AND RICHARD RAPSON (1987)

Dutton and Arthur Aron (1974) had an attractive young woman approach individual young men as they crossed a narrow, wobbly, 450-foot-long suspension walkway hanging 230 feet above British Columbia's rocky Capilano River. The woman asked each man to help her fill out a class questionnaire. When he had finished, she scribbled her name and phone number and invited him to call if he wanted to hear more about the project. Most accepted the phone number, and half who did so called. By contrast, men approached by the woman on a low, solid bridge, rarely called. Once again, physical arousal accentuated romantic responses.

Scary movies, roller-coaster rides, and physical exercise have the same effect, especially to those we find attractive (Foster & others, 1998; White & Kight, 1984). The effect holds true with married couples, too. Those who do exciting activities together report the best relationships. And after doing an arousing rather than a mundane laboratory task (roughly the equivalent of a three-legged race on their hands and knees), couples also reported higher satisfaction with their overall relationship (Aron & others, 2000). Adrenaline makes the heart grow fonder.

As this suggests, passionate love is a biological as well as a psychological phenomenon. Research by social psychologist Arthur Aron and colleagues (2005) indicates that passionate love engages dopamine-rich brain areas associated with reward (Figure 11.7).

Love is also a social phenomenon. Love is more than lust, notes Ellen Berscheid (2010). Supplement sexual desire with a deepening friendship and the result is romantic love. Passionate love  $\leq$  lust  $\leq$  attachment.

### VARIATIONS IN LOVE: CULTURE AND GENDER

There is always a temptation to assume that most others share our feelings and ideas. We assume, for example, that love is a precondition for marriage. Most cultures—89 percent in one analysis of 166 cultures—do have a concept of romantic love, as reflected in flirtation or couples running off together (Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992). But in some cultures, notably those practicing arranged marriages, love tends to follow rather than to precede marriage. Even in the individualistic United States as recently as the 1960s, only 24 percent of college women and 65 percent of college men considered (as do nearly all collegians today) love to be the basis of marriage (Reis & Aron, 2008).

Do males and females differ in how they experience passionate love? Studies of men and women falling in and out of love reveal some surprises. Most people, including the writer of the following letter to a newspaper advice columnist, suppose that women fall in love more readily:

Dear Dr. Brothers:

Do you think it's effeminate for a 19-year-old guy to fall in love so hard it's like the whole world's turned around? I think I'm really crazy because this has happened several times now and love just seems to hit me on the head from nowhere. . . . My father says this is the way girls fall in love and that it doesn't happen this way with guys—at least it's not supposed to. I can't change how I am in this way but it kind of worries me.—P.T. (quoted by Dion & Dion, 1985)

P.T. would be reassured by the repeated finding that it is actually men who tend to fall in love more readily (Ackerman & others, 2011; Dion & Dion, 1985). Men also seem to fall out of love more slowly and are less likely than women to break up a premarital romance. Surprisingly to most people, in heterosexual relationships, it's men, not women, who most often are first to say "I love you" (Ackerman & others, 2011).

Once in love, however, women are typically as emotionally involved as their partners, or more so. They are more likely to report feeling euphoric and "giddy and carefree," as if they were "floating on a cloud." Women are also somewhat more likely than men to focus on the intimacy of the friendship and on their concern for their partner. Men are more likely than women to think about the playful and physical aspects of the relationship (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1995).

## Companionate Love

Although passionate love burns hot, like a relationship booster rocket, it eventually simmers down once the relationship reaches a stable orbit. The high of romance may be sustained for a few months, even a couple of years. But no high lasts forever. "When you're in love it's the most glorious two-and-a-half days of your life," jested comedian Richard Lewis. The novelty, the intense absorption in the other, the tingly thrill of the romance, the giddy "floating on a cloud" feeling, fades. After 2 years of marriage, spouses express affection about half as often as when they were newlyweds (Huston & Chorost, 1994). About 4 years after marriage, the divorce rate peaks in cultures worldwide (Fisher, 1994). If a close relationship is to endure, it will settle to a steadier but still warm afterglow that Hatfield calls **companionate love**. The passion-facilitating hormones (testosterone, dopamine, adrenaline) subside, while the hormone oxytocin supports feelings of attachment and trust (Taylor & others, 2010).

Unlike the wild emotions of passionate love, companionate love is lower key; it's a deep, affectionate attachment. It activates different parts of the brain (Aron & others, 2005). And it is just as real. Nisa, a !Kung San woman of the African Kalahari Desert, explains: "When two people are first together, their hearts are on fire and their passion is very great. After a while, the fire cools and that's how it stays. They continue to love each other, but it's in a different way—warm and dependable" (Shostak, 1981).

It won't surprise those who know the rock song "Addicted to Love" to find out that the flow and ebb of romantic love follows the pattern of addictions to coffee, alcohol, and other drugs. At first, a drug gives a big kick, a high. With repetition, opponent emotions gain strength and tolerance develops. An amount that once was highly stimulating no longer gives a thrill. Stopping the substance, however, does not return you to where you started. Rather, it triggers withdrawal



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### companionate love

The affection we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply intertwined.

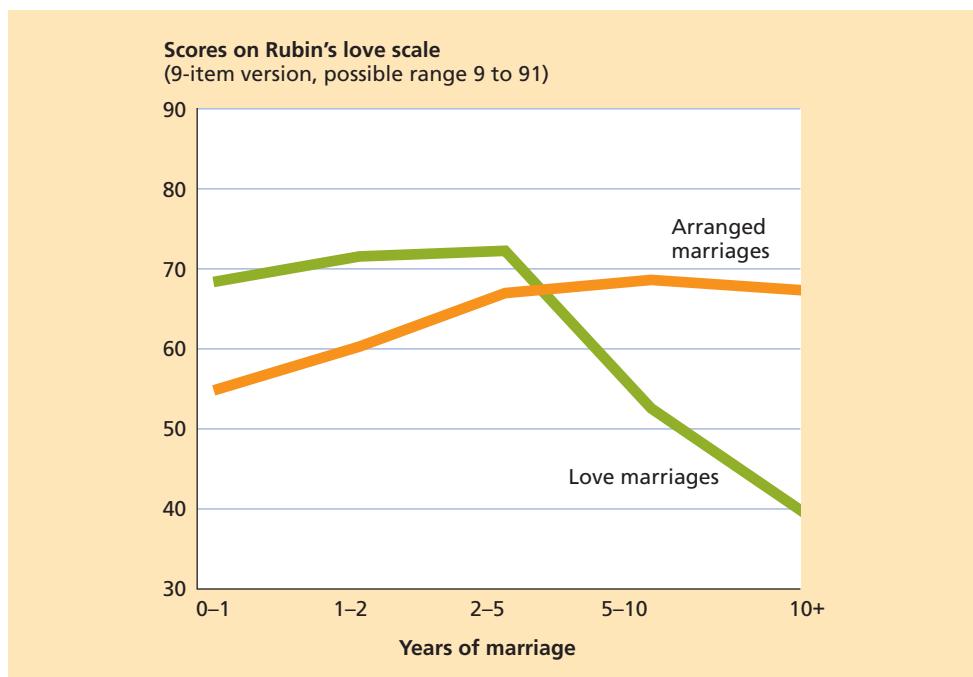


Unlike passionate love, companionate love can last a lifetime.

**FIGURE :: 11.8**

**Romantic Love  
Between Partners  
in Arranged or Love  
Marriages in Jaipur,  
India**

Source: Data from Gupta & Singh (1982).



"DON'T IT ALWAYS SEEM  
TO GO THAT YOU DON'T  
KNOW WHAT YOU'VE GOT  
'TIL IT'S GONE."

—JONI MITCHELL, "BIG  
YELLOW TAXI," 1970

symptoms—malaise, depression, the blahs. The same often happens in love. The passionate high is fated to become lukewarm. The no-longer-romantic relationship becomes taken for granted—until it ends. Then the jilted lover, the widower, the divorcé, are surprised at how empty life now seems without the person they long ago stopped feeling passionately attached to. Having focused on what was not working, they stopped noticing what was (Carlson & Hatfield, 1992).

The cooling of passionate love over time and the growing importance of other factors, such as shared values, can be seen in the feelings of those who enter arranged versus love-based marriages in India. Usha Gupta and Pushpa Singh (1982) asked 50 couples in Jaipur, India, to complete a love scale. They found that those who married for love reported diminishing feelings of love after a 5-year newlywed period. By contrast, those in arranged marriages reported *more* love if their marriage was 5 or more years old (Figure 11.8; for other data on the seeming success of arranged marriages, see J. E. Myers & others [2005], Thakar & Epstein [2011], and Yelsma & Athappilly [1988]).

The cooling of intense romantic love often triggers a period of disillusion, especially among those who believe that romantic love is essential both for a marriage and for its continuation. Compared with North Americans, Asians tend to focus less on personal feelings and more on the practical aspects of social attachments (Dion & Dion, 1988; Sprecher & Toro-Morn, 2002; Sprecher & others, 1994). Thus, they are less vulnerable to disillusionment. Asians are also less prone to the self-focused individualism that in the long run can undermine a relationship and lead to divorce (Dion & Dion, 1991, 1996; Triandis & others, 1988).

The decline in intense mutual fascination may be natural and adaptive for species survival. The result of passionate love frequently is children, whose survival is aided by the parents' waning obsession with each other (Kenrick & Trost, 1987). Nevertheless, for those married more than 20 years, some of the lost romantic feeling is often renewed as the family nest empties and the parents are once again free to focus their attention on each other (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986; White & Edwards, 1990). "No man or woman really knows what love is until they have been married a quarter of a century," said Mark Twain. If the relationship has been intimate, mutually rewarding, and rooted in a shared life history, companionate love deepens.

"GROW OLD ALONG WITH  
ME! THE BEST IS YET TO BE."

—ROBERT BROWNING

## SUMMING UP: What Is Love?

- Researchers have characterized love as having components of intimacy, passion, and commitment. *Passionate love* is experienced as a bewildering confusion of ecstasy and anxiety, elation and pain. The *two-factor theory of emotion* suggests that in a romantic context, arousal from any source, even painful experiences, can be steered into passion.
- In the best of relationships, the initial passionate high settles to a steadier, more affectionate relationship called *companionate love*.

## WHAT ENABLES CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS?

Explain how attachment styles, equity, and self-disclosure influence the ups and downs of our close relationships.

### Attachment

Love is a biological imperative. We are social creatures, destined to bond with others. Our need to belong is adaptive. Cooperation promotes survival. In solo combat, our early ancestors were not the toughest predators; but as hunter-gatherers, and in fending off predators, they gained strength from numbers. Because group dwellers survived and reproduced, we today carry genes that predispose us to form such bonds.

Researchers have found that different forms of a particular gene predict mammalian pair bonding. In the mouse-like prairie vole, and in humans, injections of hormones such as oxytocin (which is released in females during nursing and during mating) and vasopressin produce good feelings that trigger male-female bonding (Donaldson & Young, 2008; Young, 2009). In humans, genes associated with vasopressin activity predict marital stability (Walum & others, 2008). Such is the biology of enduring love.

Our infant dependency strengthens our human bonds. Soon after birth we exhibit various social responses—love, fear, anger. But the first and greatest of these is love. As babies, we almost immediately prefer familiar faces and voices. We coo and smile when our parents give us attention. By approximately 8 months, we crawl toward mother or father and typically let out a wail when separated from them. Reunited, we cling. By keeping infants close to their caregivers, strong social attachment serves as a powerful survival impulse.

Deprived of familiar attachments, sometimes under conditions of extreme neglect, children may become withdrawn, frightened, silent. After studying the mental health of homeless children for the World Health Organization, psychiatrist John Bowlby (1980, p. 442) reflected, “Intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub around which a person’s life revolves. . . . From these intimate attachments [people draw] strength and enjoyment of life.”

Researchers have compared attachment and love in various close relationships—between parents and children, between friends, and between spouses or lovers (Davis, 1985; Maxwell, 1985; Sternberg & Grajek, 1984). Some elements are common to all loving attachments: mutual understanding, giving and receiving support, valuing and enjoying being with the loved one. Passionate love is, however, spiced with some added features: physical affection, an expectation of exclusiveness, and an intense fascination with the loved one.

Passionate love is not just for lovers. The intense love of parent and infant for each other qualifies as a form of passionate love, even to the point of engaging brain areas akin to those enabling passionate romantic love. Phillip Shaver and Mario Mikulincer (2011) note that year-old infants, like young adult lovers, welcome

physical affection, feel distress when separated, express intense affection when reunited, and take great pleasure in the significant other's attention and approval. Infants vary in their styles of relating to caregivers. Likewise, adults display varying attachment styles in their relationships. These two facts made Shaver and Cindy Hazan (1993, 1994) wonder whether infant attachment styles might carry over to adult relationships.

## ATTACHMENT STYLES

### secure attachment

Attachments rooted in trust and marked by intimacy.

Approximately 7 in 10 infants, and nearly that many adults, exhibit **secure attachment** (Baldwin & others, 1996; Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Mickelson & others, 1997). When placed as infants in a strange situation (usually a laboratory playroom), they play comfortably in their mother's presence, happily exploring this strange environment. If she leaves, they become distressed; when she returns, they run to her, hold her, then relax and return to exploring and playing (Ainsworth, 1973, 1979). This trusting attachment style, many researchers believe, forms a working model of intimacy—a blueprint for one's adult intimate relationships, in which underlying trust sustains relationships through times of conflict (Miller & Rempel, 2004; Oriña & others, 2011; Salvatore & others, 2011). Secure adults find it easy to get close to others and don't fret about getting too dependent or being abandoned. As lovers, they enjoy sexuality within the context of a secure, committed relationship. And their relationships tend to be satisfying and enduring (Feeney, 1996; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Simpson & others, 1992).

### avoidant attachment

Attachments marked by discomfort over, or resistance to, being close to others.

Approximately 2 in 10 infants and adults exhibit **avoidant attachment**. Although internally aroused, avoidant infants reveal little distress during separation, or clinging upon reunion. Avoiding closeness, avoidant adults tend to be less invested in relationships and more likely to leave them. They also are more likely to engage in one-night stands of sex without love. Kim Bartholomew and Leonard Horowitz (1991) note that avoidant individuals may be either *fearful* ("I am uncomfortable getting close to others") or *dismissing* ("It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient").

Approximately 1 in 10 infants and adults exhibit the anxiousness and ambivalence that mark **insecure attachment**. In the strange situation, infants are more likely to cling anxiously to their mother. If she leaves, they cry; when she returns, they may be indifferent or hostile. As adults, insecure individuals are less trusting, more fretful of a partner's becoming interested in someone else, and therefore



Attachment, especially to caretakers, is a powerful survival impulse.

more possessive and jealous. They may break up repeatedly with the same person. When discussing conflicts, they get emotional and often angry (Cassidy, 2000; Simpson & others, 1996).

Some researchers attribute these varying attachment styles, which have been studied across 62 cultures (Schmitt & others, 2004), to parental responsiveness. Cindy Hazan (2004) sums up the idea: "Early attachment experiences form the basis of *internal working models* or characteristic ways of thinking about relationships." Thus, sensitive, responsive mothers—mothers who engender a sense of basic trust in the world's reliability—typically have securely attached infants, observed Mary Ainsworth (1979) and Erik Erikson (1963). In fact, one study of 100 Israeli grandmother-daughter-granddaughter threesomes found intergenerational consistency of attachment styles (Besser & Priel, 2005). And youths who have experienced nurturant and involved parenting tend later to have warm and supportive relationships with their romantic partners (Conger & others, 2000).

Other researchers believe attachment styles may reflect inherited temperament (Gillath & others, 2008; Harris, 1998). A gene that predisposes prairie voles to cuddle and mate for life (and has the same effect on laboratory mice genetically engineered to have the gene) has varying human forms. One is more commonly found in faithful, married men, another in those who are unmarried or unfaithful (Caldwell & others, 2008; Walum & others, 2008). Moreover, teens who are prone to anger and anxiety tend to have, as young adults, more fragile relationships (Donnellan & others, 2005). For better or for worse, early attachment styles do seem to lay a foundation for future relationships.

## Equity

If each partner pursues his or her personal desires willy-nilly, the relationship will die. Therefore, our society teaches us to exchange rewards by what Elaine Hatfield, William Walster, and Ellen Berscheid (1978) have called an **equity** principle of attraction: What you and your partner get out of a relationship should be proportional to what you each put into it. If two people receive equal outcomes, they should contribute equally; otherwise one or the other will feel it is unfair. If both feel their outcomes correspond to the assets and efforts each contributes, then both perceive equity.

Strangers and casual acquaintances maintain equity by exchanging benefits: You lend me your class notes; later, I'll lend you mine. I invite you to my party; you invite me to yours. Those in an enduring relationship, including roommates and those in love, do not feel bound to trade similar benefits—notes for notes, parties for parties (Berg, 1984). They feel freer to maintain equity by exchanging a variety of benefits ("When you drop by to lend me your notes, why don't you stay for dinner?") and eventually to stop keeping track of who owes whom.

### LONG-TERM EQUITY

Is it crass to suppose that friendship and love are rooted in an equitable exchange of rewards? Don't we sometimes give in response to a loved one's need, without expecting anything in return? Indeed, those involved in an equitable, long-term relationship are unconcerned with short-term equity. Margaret Clark and Judson



"My preference is for someone who's afraid of closeness, like me."

© Robert Weber/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

### equity

A condition in which the outcomes people receive from a relationship are proportional to what they contribute to it. Note:

Equitable outcomes needn't always be equal outcomes.

"LOVE IS THE MOST SUBTLE KIND OF SELF-INTEREST."

—HOLBROOK JOHNSON

Mills (1979, 1993; Clark, 1984, 1986) have argued that people even take pains to *avoid* calculating any exchange benefits. When we help a good friend, we do not want instant repayment. If someone invites us for dinner, we wait before reciprocating, lest the person attribute the motive for our return invitation to be merely paying off a social debt. True friends tune into one another's needs even when reciprocation is impossible (Clark & others, 1986, 1989). Similarly, happily married people tend not to keep score of how much they are giving and getting (Buunk & Van Yperen, 1991; Clark & others, 2010). As people observe their partners being self-giving, their sense of trust grows (Wieselquist & others, 1999).

In experiments with University of Maryland students, Clark and Mills confirmed that not being calculating is a mark of friendship. Tit-for-tat exchanges boosted people's liking when the relationship was relatively formal but diminished liking when the two sought friendship. Clark and Mills surmise that marriage contracts, in which each partner specifies what is expected from the other, would more likely undermine than enhance love. Only when the other's positive behavior is voluntary can we attribute it to love.

Previously we noted an equity principle at work in the matching phenomenon: People usually bring equal assets to romantic relationships. Often, they are matched for attractiveness, status, and so forth. If they are mismatched in one area, such as attractiveness, they tend to be mismatched in some other area, such as status. But in total assets, they are an equitable match. No one says, and few even think, "I'll trade you my good looks for your big income." But especially in relationships that last, equity is the rule.

### PERCEIVED EQUITY AND SATISFACTION

In one Pew Research Center (2007b) survey, "sharing household chores" ranked third (after "faithfulness" and a "happy sexual relationship") among nine things that people saw as marks of successful marriages. Indeed, those in an equitable relationship are typically content (Fletcher & others, 1987; Hatfield & others, 1985; Van Yperen & Buunk, 1990). Those who perceive their relationship as inequitable feel discomfort: The one who has the better deal may feel guilty and the one who senses a raw deal may feel strong irritation. (Given the self-serving bias—most husbands perceive themselves as contributing more housework than their wives credit them for—the person who is "overbenefited" is less sensitive to the inequity.)

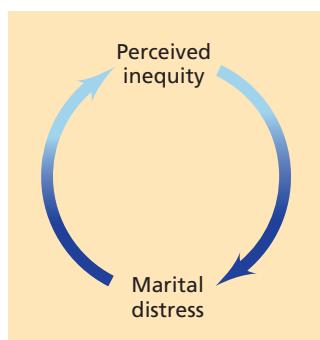
Robert Schafer and Patricia Keith (1980) surveyed several hundred married couples of all ages, noting those who felt their marriages were somewhat unfair because one spouse contributed too little to the cooking, housekeeping, parenting, or providing. Inequity took its toll: Those who perceived inequity also felt more distressed and depressed. During the child-rearing years, when wives often feel underbenefited and husbands overbenefited, marital satisfaction tends to dip. During the honeymoon and empty-nest stages, spouses are more likely to perceive equity and to feel satisfaction with their marriages (Feeney & others, 1994). When both partners freely give and receive, and make decisions together, the odds of sustained, satisfying love are good.

Perceived inequity triggers marital distress, agree Nancy Grote and Margaret Clark (2001) from their tracking of married couples over time. But they also report that the traffic between inequity and distress runs both ways: Marital distress exacerbates the perception of unfairness (Figure 11.9).

**FIGURE :: 11.9**

Perceived inequities trigger marital distress, which fosters the perception of inequities.

*Source:* Adapted from Grote & Clark (2001).



### Self-Disclosure

Deep, companionate relationships are intimate. They enable us to be known as we truly are and to feel accepted. We discover this delicious experience in a

good marriage or a close friendship—a relationship where trust displaces anxiety and where we are free to open ourselves without fear of losing the other's affection (Holmes & Rempel, 1989). Such relationships are characterized by what the late Sidney Jourard called **self-disclosure** (Derlega & others, 1993). As a relationship grows, self-disclosing partners reveal more and more of themselves to each other; their knowledge of each other penetrates to deeper levels. In relationships that flourish, much of this self-disclosure shares successes and triumphs, and mutual delight over good happenings (Gable & others, 2006). When a friend rejoices with us over good news, it not only increases our joy about the happy event but also helps us feel better about the friendship (Reis & others, 2010).

Research studies find that most of us enjoy intimacy. It's gratifying to be singled out for another's disclosure. We feel pleased when a normally reserved person says that something about us "made me feel like opening up" and shares confidential information (Archer & Cook, 1986; D. Taylor & others, 1981). Not only do we like those who disclose, we also disclose to those whom we like. And after disclosing to them, we like them more (Collins & Miller, 1994). Lacking opportunities for intimate disclosure or concealing distressing information, we experience the pain of loneliness (Berg & Peplau, 1982; Solano & others, 1982; Uysal & others, 2010).

Experiments have probed both the *causes* and the *effects* of self-disclosure. When are people most willing to disclose intimate information concerning "what you like and don't like about yourself" or "what you're most ashamed and most proud of"? And what effects do such revelations have on those who reveal and receive them?

The most reliable finding is the **disclosure reciprocity** effect: Disclosure begets disclosure (Berg, 1987; Miller, 1990; Reis & Shaver, 1988). We reveal more to those who have been open with us. But intimate disclosure is seldom instant. (If it is, the person may seem indiscreet and unstable.) Appropriate intimacy progresses like a dance: I reveal a little, you reveal a little—but not too much. You then reveal more, and I reciprocate.

For those in love, deepening intimacy is exciting. "Rising intimacy will create a strong sense of passion," note Roy Baumeister and Ellen Bratslavsky (1999). This helps explain why those who remarry after the loss of a spouse tend to begin the new marriage with an increased frequency of sex, and why passion often rides highest when intimacy is restored following severe conflict.

Some people—most of them women—are especially skilled "openers"; they easily elicit intimate disclosures from others, even from those who normally don't reveal very much of themselves (Miller & others, 1983; Pegalis & others, 1994; Shaffer & others, 1996). Such people tend to be good listeners. During conversation, they maintain attentive facial expressions and appear to be comfortably enjoying themselves (Purvis & others, 1984). They may also express interest by uttering supportive phrases while their conversational partner is speaking. They are what psychologist Carl Rogers (1980) called "growth-promoting" listeners—people who are genuine in revealing their own feelings, who are accepting of others' feelings, and who are empathic, sensitive, reflective listeners.

What are the effects of such self-disclosure? Humanistic psychologist Sidney Jourard (1964) argued that dropping our masks, letting ourselves be known as we are, nurtures love. He presumed that it is gratifying to open up to another and then to receive the trust another implies by being open with us. People feel better on days when they have disclosed something significant about themselves, such as their being lesbian or gay, and feel worse when concealing their identity (Beals & others, 2009). Those whose days include more deep or substantive discussions, rather than just small talk, tend to be happier. That's what Mathias Mehl and co-researchers (2010) found after equipping 70 undergraduates with recording devices that snatched 30-second conversational snippets five times each hour over 4 days.

Having an intimate friend with whom we can discuss threats to our self-image seems to help us survive stress (Swann & Predmore, 1985). A true friendship is a

### self-disclosure

Revealing intimate aspects of oneself to others.

### disclosure reciprocity

The tendency for one person's intimacy of self-disclosure to match that of a conversational partner.

"WHAT IS A FRIEND? I WILL  
TELL YOU. IT IS A PERSON  
WITH WHOM YOU DARE TO  
BE YOURSELF."

—FRANK CRANE, A DEFINITION OF FRIENDSHIP

special relationship that helps us cope with our other relationships. "When I am with my friend," reflected the Roman playwright Seneca, "methinks I am alone, and as much at liberty to speak anything as to think it." At its best, marriage is such a friendship, sealed by commitment.

Intimate self-disclosure is also one of companionate love's delights. The most self-revealing dating and married couples tend to enjoy the most satisfying and enduring relationships (Berg & McQuinn, 1986; Hendrick & others, 1988; Sprecher, 1987). For example, in a study of newlywed couples who were all equally in love, those who most deeply and accurately knew each other were most likely to enjoy enduring love (Neff & Karney, 2005). Married partners who most strongly agree that "I try to share my most intimate thoughts and feelings with my partner" tend to have the most satisfying marriages (Sanderson & Cantor, 2001). For very reticent people, marriage may not be as satisfying as it is for those more willing to share their feelings (Baker & McNulty, 2010).

In a Gallup national marriage survey, 75 percent of those who prayed with their spouses (and 57 percent of those who didn't) reported their marriages as very happy (Greeley, 1991). Among believers, shared prayer from the heart is a humbling, intimate, soulful exposure (Beach & others, 2011). Those who pray together also more often say they discuss their marriages together, respect their spouses, and rate their spouses as skilled lovers.

Researchers have also found that women are often more willing to disclose their fears and weaknesses than are men (Cunningham, 1981). As feminist writer Kate Millett (1975) put it, "Women express, men repress." Small wonder that, as we noted in Chapter 5, both men and women report friendships with women to be more intimate, enjoyable, and nurturing, and that on social networks, both males and females seem to prefer female friends (Thelwall, 2008).

Nevertheless, men today, particularly men with egalitarian gender-role attitudes, seem increasingly willing to reveal intimate feelings and to enjoy the satisfactions that accompany a relationship of mutual trust and self-disclosure. And that, say Arthur Aron and Elaine Aron (1994), is the essence of love—two selves connecting, disclosing, and identifying with each other; two selves, each retaining their individuality, yet sharing activities, delighting in similarities, and mutually supporting. The result for many romantic partners is "self-other integration": intertwined self-concepts (Slotter & Gardner, 2009; Figure 11.10).

That being so, might we cultivate closeness by experiences that mirror the escalating closeness of budding friendships? The Arons and their collaborators (1997) wondered. They paired volunteer students who were strangers to each other for 45 minutes. For the first 15 minutes, they shared thoughts on a list of personal but low-intimacy topics such as "When did you last sing to yourself?" The next 15 minutes were spent on more intimate topics such as "What is your most treasured memory?" The last 15 minutes invited even more self-disclosure, with questions such as "Complete this sentence: 'I wish I had someone with whom I could share . . .' and "When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?"

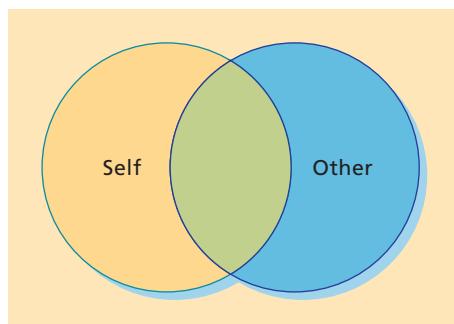
Compared with control participants who spent the 45 minutes in small talk ("What

was your high school like?" "What is your favorite holiday?"), those who experienced the escalating self-disclosure ended the hour feeling remarkably close to their conversation partners—in fact, "closer than the closest relationship in the lives of 30 percent of similar students," reported the researchers. These relationships surely were not yet marked by the loyalty and commitment of true friendship. Nevertheless, the experiment provides a striking

## FIGURE :: 11.10

### Love: An Overlapping of Selves—You Become Part of Me, I Part of You

*Source:* From A. L. Weber and J. Harvey, *Perspective on Close Relationships*. Published by Allyn & Bacon, Boston, MA. Copyright © 1994 by Pearson Education. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.



# focus ON

## Does the Internet Create Intimacy or Isolation?

As a reader of this college text, you are almost surely one of the world's 2.3 billion (as of 2012) Internet users. It took the telephone seven decades to go from 1 percent to 75 percent penetration of North American households. Internet access reached 75 percent penetration in approximately 7 years (Putnam, 2000). You enjoy social networking, Web surfing, texting, and perhaps participating in listservs, news groups, or chat rooms ([Internetworldstats.com](http://Internetworldstats.com)).

What do you think: Is computer-mediated communication within virtual communities a poor substitute for in-person relationships? Or is it a wonderful way to widen our social circles? Does the Internet do more to connect people or to drain time from face-to-face relationships? Consider the emerging debate.

**Point:** The Internet, like the printing press and the telephone, expands communication, and communication enables relationships. Printing reduced face-to-face storytelling and the telephone reduced face-to-face chats, but both enable us to reach and be reached by people without limitations of time and distance. Social relations involve networking, and the Net is the ultimate network. It enables efficient networking with family, friends, and kindred spirits—including people we otherwise never would have found, be they fellow MS patients, St. Nicholas collectors, or Harry Potter fans.

**Counterpoint:** True, but computer communication is impoverished. It lacks the nuances of eye-to-eye contact punctuated with nonverbal cues and physical touches. Except for simple emoticons—such as a :-) for an unnuanced smile—electronic messages are devoid of gestures, facial expressions, and tones of voice. No wonder it's so easy to misread them. The absence of expressive e-motion makes for ambiguous emotion.

For example, vocal nuances can signal whether a statement is serious, kidding, or sarcastic. Research by Justin Kruger and colleagues (2006) shows that communicators often think their "just kidding" intent is equally clear, whether e-mailed or spoken. Actually, when e-mailed, the intent often isn't clear. Thanks also to one's anonymity in virtual discussions, the result is sometimes a hostile "flame war."

A Stanford University survey found that 25 percent of more than 4,000 adults surveyed reported that their time online had reduced time spent in person and on the phone with family and friends (Nie & Erbring, 2000). The Internet, like television, diverts time from real relationships. Internet romances are not the developmental equivalent of real dating. Cybersex is artificial intimacy. Individualized web-based entertainment displaces

getting together for bridge. Such artificiality and isolation is regrettable because our ancestral history predisposes our needing real-time relationships, replete with smirks and smiles.

**Point:** But most folks don't perceive the Internet to be isolating. Another national survey found that "Internet users in general—and online women in particular—believe that their use of e-mail has strengthened their relationships and increased their contact with relatives and friends" (Pew Research Center, 2000). Internet use may displace in-person intimacy, but it also displaces television watching. If one-click cyber-shopping is bad for your local bookstore, it frees time for relationships. Telecommuting does the same, enabling people to work from home and thereby spend more time with their families.

And why say that computer-formed relationships are unreal? On the Internet, your looks and location cease to matter. Your appearance, age, and race don't deter people from relating to you based on what's more genuinely important—your shared interests and values. In workplace and professional networks, computer-mediated discussions are less influenced by status and are therefore more candid and equally participatory. Computer-mediated communication fosters more spontaneous self-disclosure than face-to-face conversation (Joinson, 2001).

Most Internet flirtations go nowhere. "Everyone I know who has tried online dating . . . agrees that we loathe spending (wasting?) hours gabbing to someone and then meeting him and realizing that he is a creep," observed one Toronto woman (Dicum, 2003). This experience would not surprise Eli Finkel and his fellow social psychologists (2012). Nearly a century of research on romantic compatibility leads them to conclude that the formulas of online matchmaking sites are unlikely to do what they claim. The best predictors of relationship success, such as communication patterns and other indications of compatibility, emerge only after people meet and get to know one another.

Nevertheless, friendships and romantic relationships that form on the Internet are more likely than in-person relationships to last for at least 2 years, report Katelyn McKenna and John Bargh and their colleagues (Bargh & others, 2002; Bargh & McKenna, 2004; McKenna & Bargh, 1998, 2000; McKenna & others, 2002). In one experiment, they found that people disclosed more, with greater honesty and less posturing, when they met people online. They also felt more liking for people with whom they conversed online for 20 minutes than for those met for the same time face-to-face. This was true even when they unknowingly met the very same person

in both contexts. People surveyed similarly feel that Internet friendships are as real, important, and close as offline relationships.

**Counterpoint:** The Internet allows people to be who they really are, but also to feign who they really aren't, sometimes in the interests of sexual exploitation. Internet sexual media, like other forms of pornography, likely serve to distort people's perceptions of sexual reality, decrease the attractiveness of their real-life partner, prime men to perceive women in sexual terms, make sexual coercion seem more trivial, provide mental scripts for how to act in sexual situations, increase arousal, and lead to disinhibition and imitation of loveless sexual behaviors.

Finally, suggests Robert Putnam (2000), the social benefits of computer-mediated communication are constrained by "cyberbalkanization." The Internet enables those of us with hearing loss to network, but it also enables White supremacists to find one another and thus contributes to social and political polarization.

As the debate over the Internet's social consequences continues, "the most important question," says Putnam (p. 180), will be "not what the Internet will do to us, but what we will do with it? . . . How can we harness this promising technology for thickening community ties? How can we develop the technology to enhance social presence, social feedback, and social cues? How can we use the prospect of fast, cheap



*"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."*

The Internet allows people to feign who they really aren't.  
© Peter Steiner/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

communication to enhance the now fraying fabric of our real communities?"

demonstration of how readily a sense of closeness to others can grow, given open self-disclosure—which can also occur via the Internet. (See "Focus On: Does the Internet Create Intimacy or Isolation?" on page 431.)

To promote self-disclosure in ongoing dating relationships, Richard Slatcher and James Pennebaker (2006) invited one member of 86 couples to spend 20 minutes on each of 3 days writing their deepest thoughts and feelings about the relationship (or, in a control condition, writing merely about their daily activities). Those who pondered and journaled their feelings expressed more emotion to their partners in the days following. Three months later, 77 percent were still dating (compared with 52 percent in the control group).

## SUMMING UP: What Enables Close Relationships?

- From infancy to old age, attachments are central to human life. *Secure attachments*, as in an enduring marriage, mark happy lives.
- Companionate love is most likely to endure when both partners feel the partnership is *equitable*, with both perceiving themselves receiving from the

relationship in proportion to what they contribute to it.

- One reward of companionate love is the opportunity for *intimate self-disclosure*, a state achieved gradually as each partner reciprocates the other's increasing openness.

# HOW DO RELATIONSHIPS END?

**Summarize the factors that predict marital dissolution and describe the detachment process.**

In 1971, a man wrote a love poem to his bride, slipped it into a bottle, and dropped it into the Pacific Ocean between Seattle and Hawaii. A decade later, a jogger found it on a Guam beach:

If, by the time this letter reaches you, I am old and gray, I know that our love will be as fresh as it is today.

It may take a week or it may take years for this note to find you. . . . If this should never reach you, it will still be written in my heart that I will go to extreme means to prove my love for you. Your husband, Bob.

The woman to whom the love note was addressed was reached by phone. When the note was read to her, she burst out laughing. And the more she heard, the harder she laughed. "We're divorced," she finally said, and slammed down the phone.

So it often goes. Smart brains can make dumb decisions. Comparing their unsatisfying relationship with the support and affection they imagine are available elsewhere, many relationships end. Each year, Canada and the United States record one divorce for every two marriages. As economic and social barriers to divorce weakened during the 1960s and 1970s, thanks partly to women's increasing employment, divorce rates rose. "We are living longer, but loving more briefly," quipped Os Guiness (1993, p. 309).

Britain's royal House of Windsor knows well the hazards of modern marriage. The fairy-tale marriages of Princess Margaret, Princess Anne, Prince Charles, and Prince Andrew all crumbled, smiles replaced with stony stares. Soon after her 1986 marriage to Prince Andrew, Sarah Ferguson gushed, "I love his wit, his charm, his looks. I worship him." Andrew reciprocated her euphoria: "She is the best thing in my life." Six years later, Andrew, having decided her friends were "philistines," and Sarah, having derided Andrew's boorish behavior as "terribly gauche," called it quits (*Time*, 1992).

## Divorce

To predict a culture's divorce rates, it helps to know its values (Triandis, 1994). Individualistic cultures (where love is a feeling and people ask, "What does my heart say?") have more divorce than do communal cultures (where love entails obligation and people ask, "What will other people say?"). Individualists marry "for as long as we both shall love," collectivists more often for life. Individualists expect more passion and personal fulfillment in a marriage, which puts greater pressure on the relationship (Dion & Dion, 1993). In one pair of surveys, "keeping romance alive" was rated as important to a good marriage by 78 percent of American women and 29 percent of Japanese women (*American Enterprise*, 1992).

Even in Western society, however, those who enter relationships with a long-term orientation and an intention to persist do experience healthier, less turbulent, and more durable partnerships (Arriaga, 2001; Arriaga & Agnew, 2001). Enduring relationships are

"WHEN I WAS A YOUNG  
MAN, I VOWED NEVER TO  
MARRY UNTIL I FOUND  
THE IDEAL WOMAN. WELL  
I FOUND HER—BUT ALAS,  
SHE WAS WAITING FOR THE  
IDEAL MAN."

—FRENCH STATESMAN

ROBERT SCHUMAN (1886–1963)



*"Don't you understand? I love you! I need you!  
I want to spend the rest of my vacation with you!"*

© Mike Twohy/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

rooted in enduring love and satisfaction, but also in fear of the termination cost, a sense of moral obligation, and inattention to possible alternative partners (Adams & Jones, 1997; Maner & others, 2009; Miller, 1997). For those determined that their marriage last, it usually does.

Those whose commitment to a union outlasts the desires that gave birth to it will endure times of conflict and unhappiness. One national survey found that 86 percent of those who were unhappily married but who stayed with the marriage were, when reinterviewed 5 years later, now mostly "very" or "quite" happy with their marriages (Popenoe, 2002). By contrast, "narcissists"—those more focused on their own desires and image—enter relationships with less commitment and less likelihood of long-term relational success (Campbell & Foster, 2002).

Risk of divorce also depends on who marries whom (Fergusson & others, 1984; Myers, 2000a; Tzeng, 1992). People usually stay married if they

- married after age 20.
- both grew up in stable, two-parent homes.
- dated for a long while before marriage.
- are well and similarly educated.
- enjoy a stable income from a good job.
- live in a small town or on a farm.
- did not cohabit or become pregnant before marriage.
- are religiously committed.
- are of similar age, faith, and education.

None of those predictors, by itself, is essential to a stable marriage. Moreover, they are correlates of enduring marriages, not necessarily causes. But if none of those things is true for someone, marital breakdown is an almost sure bet. If all are true, they are very likely to stay together until death. The English perhaps had it right when, several centuries ago, they presumed that the temporary intoxication of passionate love was a foolish basis for permanent marital decisions. Better, they felt, to choose a mate based on stable friendship and compatible backgrounds, interests, habits, and values (Stone, 1977).

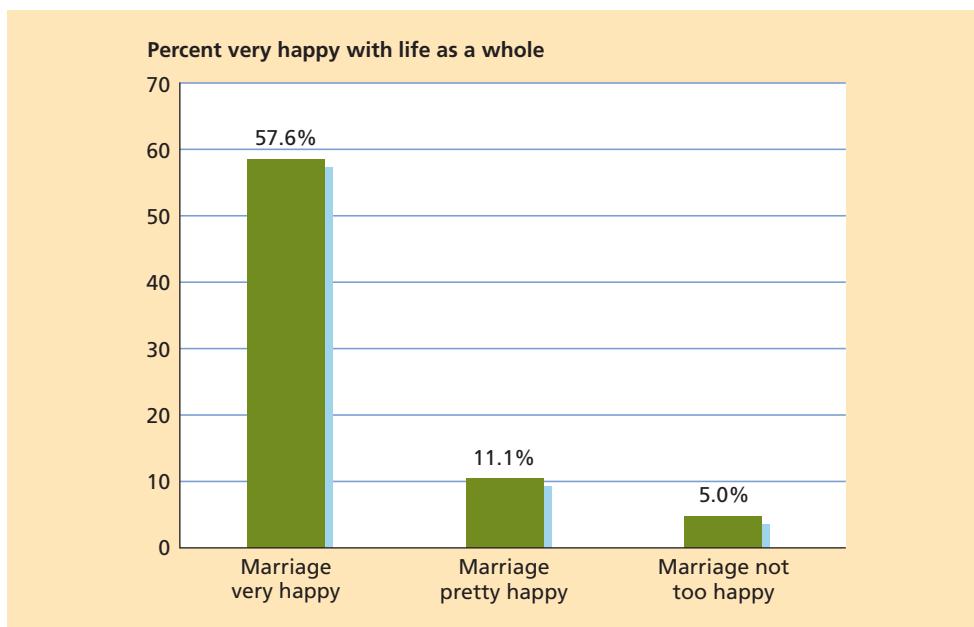
"PASSIONATE LOVE IS IN MANY WAYS AN ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS. . . . IN MANY STATES TODAY, THERE ARE LAWS THAT A PERSON MUST NOT BE IN AN INTOXICATED CONDITION WHEN MARRYING. BUT PASSIONATE LOVE IS A KIND OF INTOXICATION."

—ROY BAUMEISTER, MEANINGS OF LIFE, 1991

## The Detachment Process

Our close relationships help define the social identity that shapes our self-concept (Slotter & others, 2010). Thus, much as we experience life's best moments when relationships begin—when having a baby, making a friend, falling in love—so we experience life's worst moments when relationships end, with death or a broken bond (Jaremka & others, 2011). Severing bonds produces a predictable sequence of agitated preoccupation with the lost partner, followed by deep sadness and, eventually, the beginnings of emotional detachment, a letting go of the old while focusing on someone new, and a renewed sense of self (Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Lewandowski & Bizzoco, 2007; Spielmann & others, 2009). Even newly separated couples who have long ago ceased feeling affection are often surprised at their desire to be near the former partner. Deep and long-standing attachments seldom break quickly; detaching is a process, not an event.

Among dating couples, the closer and longer the relationship and the fewer the available alternatives, the more painful the breakup (Simpson, 1987). Surprisingly, Roy Baumeister and Sara Wotman (1992) report that, months or years later, people recall more pain over spurning someone's love than over having been spurned. Their distress arises from guilt over hurting someone, from upset over the heartbroken lover's persistence, or from uncertainty over how to respond. Among married couples, breakup has additional costs: shocked parents and friends, guilt over broken vows, anguish over reduced household income, and

**FIGURE :: 11.11**

National Opinion Research Center Surveys of 23,076 Married Americans, 1972–2004

possibly restricted parental rights. Still, each year millions of couples are willing to pay such costs to extricate themselves from what they perceive as the greater costs of continuing a painful, unrewarding relationship. Such costs include, in one study of 328 married couples, a 10-fold increase in depression symptoms when a marriage is marked by discord rather than satisfaction (O'Leary & others, 1994). When, however, a marriage is “very happy,” life as a whole usually seems “very happy” (Figure 11.11).

When relationships suffer, those without better alternatives or who feel invested in a relationship (through time, energy, mutual friends, possessions, and perhaps children) will seek alternatives to exiting the relationship. Caryl Russel and colleagues (1986, 1987, 1998) explored three ways of coping with a failing relationship (Table 11.1). Some people exhibit *loyalty*—by waiting for conditions to improve. The problems are too painful to confront and the risks of separation are too great, so the loyal partner perseveres, hoping the good old days will return. Others (especially men) exhibit *neglect*; they ignore the partner and allow the relationship to deteriorate. With painful dissatisfactions ignored, an insidious emotional uncoupling ensues as the partners talk less and begin redefining their lives without each other. Still others will *voice* their concerns and take active steps to improve the relationship by discussing problems, seeking advice, and attempting to change.

Study after study—in fact, 115 studies of 45,000 couples—reveal that unhappy couples disagree, command, criticize, and put down. Happy couples more often agree, approve, assent, and laugh (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990). After observing 2,000 couples, John Gottman (1994, 1998, 2005) noted that healthy marriages were not necessarily devoid of conflict. Rather, they were marked by an ability to reconcile differences and to overbalance criticism with affection.

**TABLE :: 11.1 Responses to Relationship Distress**

	<b>Passive</b>	<b>Active</b>
<b>Constructive</b>	<i>Loyalty</i> : Await improvement	<i>Voice</i> : Seek to improve relationships
<b>Destructive</b>	<i>Neglect</i> : Ignore the partner	<i>Exit</i> : End the relationship

Source: Russel & others (1986, 1987, 1998, 2001).

In successful marriages, positive interactions (smiling, touching, complimenting, laughing) outnumbered negative interactions (sarcasm, disapproval, insults) by at least a five-to-one ratio.

It's not distress and arguments that predict divorce, add Ted Huston and colleagues (2001) from their following of newlyweds through time. (Most newlyweds experience conflict.) Rather, it's coldness, disillusionment, and hopelessness that predict a dim marital future. This is especially so, observed William Swann and associates (2003, 2006), when inhibited men are coupled with critical women.

Successful couples have learned, sometimes aided by communication training, to restrain the poisonous put-downs and gut-level reactions and to think and behave more positively (McNulty, 2010). They fight fairly (by stating feelings without insulting). They depersonalize conflict with comments such as "I know it's not your fault" (Markman & others, 1988; Notarius & Markman, 1993; Yovetich & Rusbult, 1994). Would unhappy relationships get better if the partners agreed to act more as happy couples do—by complaining and criticizing less? By affirming and agreeing more? By setting aside times to voice their concerns? By praying or playing together daily? As attitudes trail behaviors, do affections trail actions?

Joan Kellerman, James Lewis, and James Laird (1989) wondered. They knew that among couples passionately in love, eye gazing is typically prolonged and mutual (Rubin, 1973). Would intimate eye gazing similarly stir feelings between those not in love (much as 45 minutes of escalating self-disclosure evoked feelings of closeness among those unacquainted students)? To find out, they asked unacquainted male-female pairs to gaze intently for 2 minutes either at each other's hands or into each other's eyes. When they separated, the eye gazers reported a tingle of attraction and affection toward each other. Simulating love had begun to stir it.

By enacting and expressing love, researcher Robert Sternberg (1988) believes the passion of initial romance can evolve into enduring love:

"Living happily ever after" need not be a myth, but if it is to be a reality, the happiness must be based upon different configurations of mutual feelings at various times in a relationship. Couples who expect their passion to last forever, or their intimacy to remain unchallenged, are in for disappointment.... We must constantly work at understanding, building, and rebuilding our loving relationships. Relationships are constructions, and they decay over time if they are not maintained and improved. We cannot expect a relationship simply to take care of itself, any more than we can expect that of a building. Rather, we must take responsibility for making our relationships the best they can be.

## SUMMING UP: How Do Relationships End?

- Often love does not endure. As divorce rates rose in the twentieth century, researchers discerned predictors of marital dissolution. One predictor is an individualistic culture that values feelings over commitment; other factors include the couple's age, education, values, and similarity.
- Researchers are also identifying the process through which couples either detach or rebuild their relationships. And they are identifying the positive and nondefensive communication styles that mark healthy, stable marriages.

### POSTSCRIPT: Making Love

Two facts of contemporary life seem beyond dispute: First, *close, enduring relationships are hallmarks of a happy life*. One example of a close relationship is marriage. In National Opinion Research Center surveys of 43,295 Americans since 1972, 40 percent of married adults, 23 percent of those never married, 20 percent of the

divorced, and 16 percent of the separated declared their lives “very happy.” Similar results come from national surveys in Canada and Europe (Inglehart, 1990).

Second, *close, enduring relationships are in decline*. Increased migration and mobility mean that more people are disconnected from extended family and childhood relationships. Compared with a half century ago, people today more often move, live alone, divorce, and have a succession of relationships.

Given the psychological ingredients of marital happiness—kindred minds, social and sexual intimacy, equitable giving and receiving of emotional and material resources—it becomes possible to contest the French saying “Love makes the time pass and time makes love pass.” But it takes effort to stem love’s decay. It takes effort to carve out time each day to talk over the day’s happenings. It takes effort to forgo nagging and bickering and instead to disclose and hear each other’s hurts, concerns, and dreams. It takes effort to make a relationship into “a classless utopia of social equality” (Sarnoff & Sarnoff, 1989), in which both partners freely give and receive, share decision making, and enjoy life together.

By minding our close relationships, sustained satisfaction is possible, note John Harvey and Julia Omarzu (1997). Australian relationships researcher Patricia Noller (1996) concurs: “Mature love . . . love that sustains marriage and family as it creates an environment in which individual family members can grow . . . is sustained by beliefs that love involves acknowledging and accepting differences and weaknesses; that love involves an internal decision to love another person and a long-term commitment to maintain that love; and finally that love is controllable and needs to be nurtured and nourished by the lovers.”

For those who commit themselves to creating an equitable, intimate, mutually supportive relationship, there may come the security, and the joy, of enduring, companionate love. When someone “loves you for a long, long time,” explained the wise, old Skin Horse to the Velveteen Rabbit, “not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real. . . .”

“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” [the rabbit] asked, “or bit by bit?”

“It doesn’t happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”

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CHAPTER  
**12**

# Helping



**"Love cures people—both the ones who give it and the ones who receive it."**

—Psychiatrist Karl Meninger, 1893–1990

**Why do we help?**

**When will we help?**

**Who will help?**

**How can we increase helping?**

**Postscript: Taking social psychology into life**

**O**n a hillside in Jerusalem, hundreds of trees form the Garden of the Righteous. Beneath each tree is a plaque with the name of a European Christian who gave refuge to one or more Jews during the Nazi Holocaust. These "righteous Gentiles" knew that if the refugees were discovered, Nazi policy dictated that host and refugee would suffer a common fate. Many did (Hellman, 1980; Wiesel, 1985). Countless more rescuers remain nameless. For every Jew who survived the war in Nazi territory, dozens of people often acted heroically. Orchestra conductor Konrad Latte, one of 2,000 Jews who lived out the war in Berlin, was saved by the heroism of 50 Germans who served as his protectors (Schneider, 2000).

One hero who did not survive was Jane Haining, a Church of Scotland missionary who was matron at a school for 400 mostly Jewish girls. On the eve of war, the church, fearing her safety, ordered her to return home. She refused, saying, "If these children need me in days of sunshine, how much more do they need me in days of darkness?" (Barnes, 2008; Brown, 2008). She reportedly cut up her leather luggage to make soles for her girls' shoes. In April 1944, Haining accused a cook of eating sparse food rations intended for her girls. The cook, a Nazi party member, denounced her to the Gestapo, who arrested her for having worked among the Jews and having wept to see her girls

The Wall of Honor in the Garden of the Righteous, Jerusalem, honors more than 16,000 rescuers as "Righteous Among the Nations." Most were humble people who saw their own behavior as mere common decency (Rochat & Modigliani, 1995).



forced to wear yellow stars. A few weeks later, she was sent to Auschwitz, where she suffered the same fate as millions of Jews.

In 2010, Victor Perez was standing outside his Fresno, California, house, talking with his cousin about the abduction of an 8-year-old girl the previous evening. As an older model, reddish-brown, white-striped Chevrolet truck drove by, Perez realized that it matched the abduction vehicle's description. "I decided to go after it while my cousin was dialing 911." Perez jumped into his own pickup and raced after the suspect truck. "He kept getting away. He kept going round my truck." The second time he caught up with him, "I saw the little girl and all fear was out the window. . . . I was just thinking we need to get that little girl to safety." On his fourth attempt, he forced the vehicle to stop, and the abductor, who was later apprehended, forced the traumatized and sexually abused girl out of the car. Afterward, the Fresno police chief reflected that, "If not for [Victor Perez] being as brave as he is, we may never have recovered her" (MSNBC, 2010).

Less dramatic acts of comforting, caring, and compassion abound: Without asking anything in return, people offer directions, donate money, give blood, volunteer time.

- Why, and when, will people help?
- Who will help?
- What can be done to lessen indifference and increase helping?

These are this chapter's primary questions.

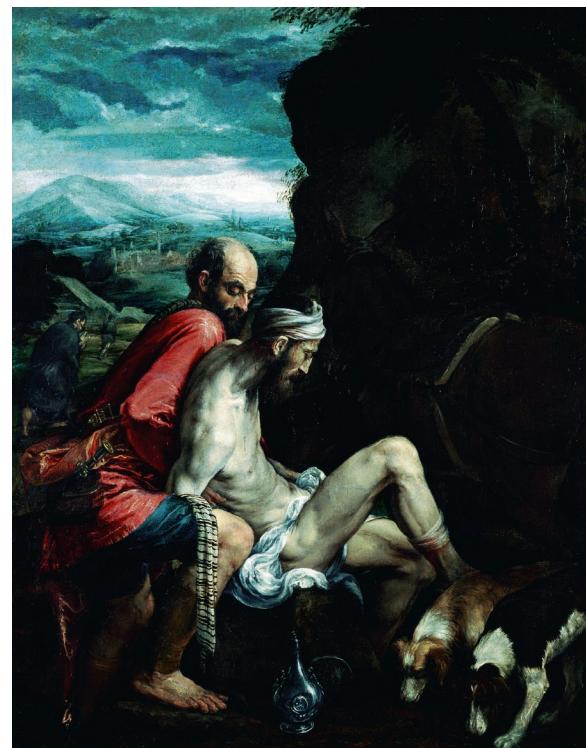
### altruism

A motive to increase another's welfare without conscious regard for one's self-interests.

**Altruism** is selfishness in reverse. An altruistic person is concerned and helpful even when no benefits are offered or expected in return. Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan provides the classic illustration:

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." (Luke 10:30–35, NRSV)

The Samaritan story illustrates altruism. Filled with compassion, he is motivated to give a stranger time, energy, and money while expecting neither repayment nor appreciation.



Good Samaritan, *Fernand Schultz-Wettel*

## WHY DO WE HELP?

Explain psychology's theories of what motivates helping—and the type of helping each theory seeks to explain.

### Social Exchange and Social Norms

Several theories of helping agree that, in the long run, helping behavior benefits the giver as well as the receiver. One explanation assumes that human interactions are guided by "social economics." We exchange not only material goods and money but also social goods—love, services, information, status (Foa & Foa, 1975). In doing so, we aim to minimize costs and maximize rewards. **Social-exchange theory** does not contend that we consciously monitor costs and rewards, only that such considerations predict our behavior.

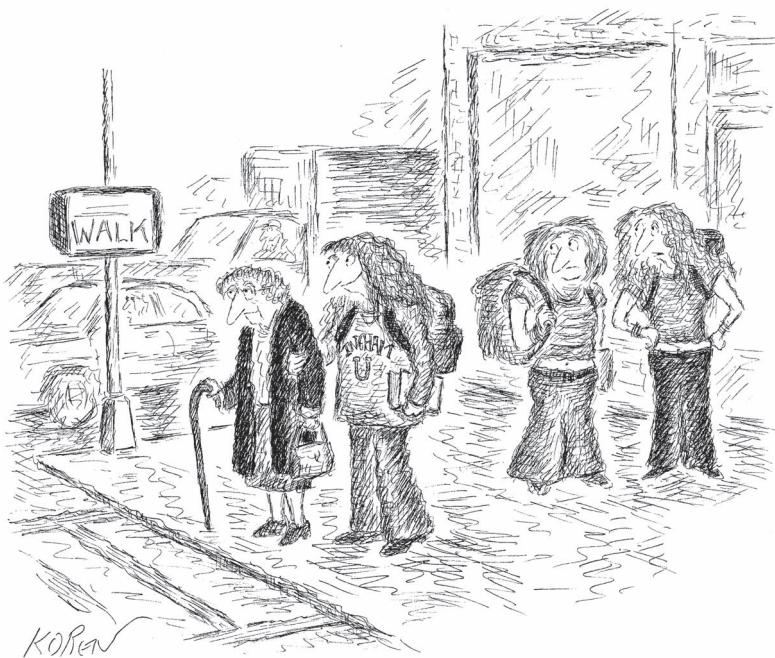
Suppose your campus is having a blood drive and someone asks you to participate. Might you not implicitly weigh the *costs* of donating (needle prick, time, fatigue) against those of not donating (guilt, disapproval)? Might you not also weigh the *benefits* of donating (feeling good about helping someone, free refreshments) against those of not donating (saving the time, discomfort, and anxiety)? According to social-exchange theory—supported by studies of Wisconsin blood donors by Jane Allyn Piliavin and her research team (Piliavin, 2003; Piliavin & others, 1982)—such subtle calculations precede decisions to help or not.

#### **social-exchange theory**

The theory that human interactions are transactions that aim to maximize one's rewards and minimize one's costs.

### REWARDS

Rewards that motivate helping may be external or internal. The New Yorker who, to prevent a train delay, jumped onto subway tracks to save a man who had fainted ("I was thinking, if he gets hit, I can't go to work"), was motivated by the external



*"Hey, there's Sara, padding her college-entrance résumé!"*

© Edward Koren/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

month-long study of 85 couples found that giving emotional support to one's partner was positive for the *giver*; giving support boosted the giver's mood (Gleason & others, 2003). Piliavin (2003) and Susan Andersen (1998) reviewed studies that showed that youth who engaged in community service projects, school-based "service learning," or tutoring children develop social skills and positive social values. Such youth are at markedly less risk for delinquency, pregnancy, and school dropout and are more likely to become engaged citizens. Volunteering likewise benefits morale and health, especially when self-initiated rather than pressured (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). Bereaved spouses recover from their depressed feelings faster when they are engaged in helping others (Brown & others, 2008, 2009). Those who do good tend to do well.

Ditto for giving money. Making donations activates brain areas linked with reward (Harbaugh & others, 2007). Generous people are happier than those whose spending is self-focused. In one experiment, people received an envelope with cash that some were instructed to spend on themselves, while others were directed to spend on other people. At the day's end, the happiest people were those assigned to the spend-it-on-others condition (Dunn & others, 2008). Other research confirms that *giving increases happiness* (Anik & others, 2010).

This cost-benefit analysis can seem demeaning. In defense of the theory, however, is it not a credit to humanity that helping can be inherently rewarding? That much of our behavior is not antisocial but "prosocial"? That we can find fulfillment in the giving of love? How much worse if we gained pleasure only by serving ourselves.

"True," some readers may reply. "Still, reward theories imply that a helpful act is never truly altruistic—that we merely call it 'altruistic' when its rewards are inconspicuous. If we help the distressed woman so we can gain social approval, relieve our distress, prevent guilt, or boost our self-image, is it really altruistic?" That argument is reminiscent of B. F. Skinner's (1971) analysis of helping. We credit people for their good deeds, said Skinner, only when we can't explain them. We attribute their behavior to their inner dispositions only when we lack

**"MEN DO NOT VALUE A GOOD DEED UNLESS IT BRINGS A REWARD."**

—OVID, *EPISTULAE EX PONTO*,

10 A.D.

rewards of his time-and-a-half Sunday pay (Weischelbaum & others, 2010). When businesses donate money to improve their corporate images or when someone offers a ride hoping to receive appreciation or friendship, the reward is external. We give to get. Thus, we are most eager to help someone attractive to us, someone whose approval we desire (Krebs, 1970; Unger, 1979). In experiments, and in everyday life, public generosity boosts one's status, while selfish behavior can lead to punishment (Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006; Henrich and others, 2006).

Rewards may also be internal. Nearly all blood donors in Jane Piliavin's research agreed that giving blood "makes you feel good about yourself" and "gives you a feeling of self-satisfaction." Indeed, "Give blood," advises an old Red Cross poster. "All you'll feel is good." Feeling good helps explain why people far from home will do kindnesses for strangers whom they will never see again.

Helping's boost to self-worth explains this do-good/feel-good effect. One

# THE inside STORY

Dennis Krebs on Life Experience and the Study of Altruism

At age 14, I was traumatized when my family moved from Vancouver, B.C., to California. I fell from president of my junior high school to an object of social ridicule because of my clothes, accent, and behavior. The fighting skills I had acquired boxing soon generated a quite different reputation from the one I enjoyed in Canada. I sank lower and lower until, after several visits to juvenile detention homes, I was arrested and convicted for driving under the influence of drugs. I escaped from jail, hitchhiked to a logging camp in Oregon, and eventually made my way back to British Columbia. I was admitted to university on probation, graduated at the top of my class, won a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, and was accepted to a psychology doctoral program at Harvard.

Attending Harvard required moving back to the United States. Concerned about my escapee record in California, I turned myself in and suffered through the ensuing publicity. I was pardoned, in large part because of the tremendous support I received from many people.

After 3 years at Harvard, I was hired as an assistant professor. Eventually I returned to British Columbia to chair the Psychology Department at Simon Fraser University.

Though it makes me somewhat uncomfortable, I disclose this history as a way of encouraging people with two strikes against them to remain in the game. A great deal of the energy I have invested in understanding morality has stemmed from a need to understand why I went wrong, and my interest in altruism has been fueled by the generosity of those who helped me overcome my past.



Dennis Krebs  
Simon Fraser University

external explanations. When the external causes are obvious, we credit the causes, not the person.

There is, however, a weakness in reward theory. It easily degenerates into explaining-by-naming. If someone volunteers for the Big Sister tutor program, it is tempting to “explain” her compassionate action by the satisfaction it brings her. But such after-the-fact naming of rewards creates a circular explanation: “Why did she volunteer?” “Because of the inner rewards.” “How do you know there are inner rewards?” “Why else would she have volunteered?” Because of this circular reasoning, **egoism**—the idea that self-interest motivates all behavior—has fallen into disrepute.

To escape the circularity, we must define the rewards and the costs independently of the helping behavior. If social approval motivates helping, then in experiments we should find that when approval follows helping, helping increases. And it does (Staub, 1978).

## INTERNAL REWARDS

So far, we have considered external rewards that motivate helping. We also need to consider internal factors, such as the helper’s emotional state or personal traits.

The benefits of helping include internal self-rewards. Near someone in distress, we may feel distress. A woman’s scream outside your window arouses and distresses you. If you cannot reduce your arousal by interpreting the scream as a playful shriek, then you may investigate or give aid, thereby reducing your distress (Piliavin & Piliavin, 1973). Altruism researcher Dennis Krebs (1975) found that Harvard University men whose physiological responses and self-reports revealed the most arousal in response to another’s distress also gave the most help to the person.

**“FOR IT IS IN GIVING THAT WE RECEIVE.”**

—SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI,  
1181–1226

## egoism

A motive (supposedly underlying all behavior) to increase one’s own welfare. The opposite of altruism, which aims to increase another’s welfare.

**GUILT** Distress is not the only negative emotion we act to reduce. Throughout recorded history, guilt has been a painful emotion that people avoid and seek to relieve. As Everett Sanderson remarked after heroically saving a child who had fallen onto subway tracks in front of an approaching train, "If I hadn't tried to save that little girl, if I had just stood there like the others, I would have died inside. I would have been no good to myself from then on."

Cultures have institutionalized ways to relieve guilt: animal and human sacrifices, offerings of grain and money, penitent behavior, confession, denial. In ancient Israel, the sins of the people were periodically laid on a "scapegoat" animal that was then led into the wilderness to carry away the people's guilt.

To examine the consequences of guilt, social psychologists have induced people to transgress: to lie, to deliver shock, to knock over a table loaded with alphabetized cards, to break a machine, to cheat. Afterward, the guilt-laden participants may be offered a way to relieve their guilt: by confessing, by disparaging the one harmed, or by doing a good deed to offset the bad one. The results are remarkably consistent: People will do whatever can be done to expunge the guilt, relieve their bad feelings, and restore their self-image.

Picture yourself as a participant in one such experiment conducted with Mississippi State University students by David McMillen and James Austin (1971). You and another student, each seeking to earn credit toward a course requirement, arrive for the experiment. Soon after, a confederate enters, portraying himself as a previous participant looking for a lost book. He strikes up a conversation in which he mentions that the experiment involves taking a multiple-choice test, for which most of the correct answers are "B." After the accomplice departs, the experimenter arrives, explains the experiment, and then asks, "Have either of you been in this experiment before or heard anything about it?"

Would you lie? The behavior of those who have gone before you in this experiment—100 percent of whom told the little lie—suggests that you would. After you have taken the test (without receiving any feedback on it), the experimenter says: "You are free to leave. However, if you have some spare time, I could use your help in scoring some questionnaires." Assuming you have told the lie, do you think you would now be more or less willing to volunteer some time? On average, those who had not been induced to lie volunteered only 2 minutes of time. Those who had lied were apparently eager to redeem their self-images; on average they offered a whopping 63 minutes. One moral of this experiment was well expressed by a 7-year-old girl, who, in one of our own experiments, wrote: "Don't Lie or you'll Live with guilt" (and you will feel a need to relieve it).

Our eagerness to do good after doing bad reflects our need to reduce *private* guilt and restore a shaken self-image. It also reflects our desire to reclaim a positive *public* image. We are more likely to redeem ourselves with helpful behavior when other people know about our misdeeds (Carlsmith & Gross, 1969).

All in all, guilt leads to much good. By motivating people to confess, apologize, help, and avoid repeated harm, guilt boosts sensitivity and sustains close relationships.

**EXCEPTIONS TO THE FEEL-BAD/DO-GOOD SCENARIO** Among well-socialized adults, should we always expect to find the "feel-bad/do-good" phenomenon? No. In Chapter 10, we saw that one negative mood, anger, produces anything but compassion. Another exception is profound grief. People who suffer the loss of a spouse or a child, whether through death or separation, often undergo a period of intense self-preoccupation, which restrains giving to others (Aderman & Berkowitz, 1983; Gibbons & Wicklund, 1982).

In a powerful laboratory simulation of self-focused grief, William Thompson, Claudia Cowan, and David Rosenhan (1980) had Stanford University students listen privately to a taped description of a person (whom they were to imagine was

their best friend of the other sex) dying of cancer. The experiment focused some students' attention on their own worry and grief:

He (she) could die and you would lose him, never be able to talk to him again. Or worse, he could die slowly. You would know every minute could be your last time together. For months you would have to be cheerful for him while you were sad. You would have to watch him die in pieces, until the last piece finally went, and you would be alone.

For others, it focused their attention on the friend:

He spends his time lying in bed, waiting those interminable hours, just waiting and hoping for something to happen. Anything. He tells you that it's not knowing that is the hardest.

The researchers report that regardless of which tape the participants heard, they were profoundly moved and sobered by the experience, yet not the least regretful of participating (although some participants who in a control condition listened to a boring tape were regretful). Did their moods affect their helpfulness? When immediately thereafter they were given a chance to help a graduate student with her research anonymously, 25 percent of those whose attention had been self-focused helped. Of those whose attention was other-focused, 83 percent helped. The two groups were equally touched, but only the other-focused participants found helping someone especially rewarding. In short, the feel-bad/do-good effect occurs with people whose attention is on others, people for whom altruism is therefore rewarding (Barnett & others, 1980; McMillen & others, 1977). If they are not self-preoccupied by depression or grief, sad people are sensitive, helpful people.

**FEEL GOOD, DO GOOD** Are happy people unhelpful? Quite the contrary. There are few more consistent findings in psychology: Happy people are helpful people. This effect occurs with both children and adults, regardless of whether the good mood comes from a success, from thinking happy thoughts, or from any of several other positive experiences (Salovey & others, 1991). One woman recalled her experience after falling in love:

At the office, I could hardly keep from shouting out how deliriously happy I felt. The work was easy; things that had annoyed me on previous occasions were taken in stride. And I had strong impulses to help others; I wanted to share my joy. When Mary's typewriter broke down, I virtually sprang to my feet to assist. Mary! My former "enemy"! (Tennov, 1979, p. 22)

In experiments on happiness and helpfulness, the person who is helped may be someone seeking a donation, an experimenter seeking help with paperwork, or a woman who drops papers. Here are three examples.

In Sydney, Australia, Joseph Forgas and colleagues (2008) had a confederate offer either a mood-boosting compliment to a Target department store salesperson or a neutral or mood-deflating comment. Moments later, a second confederate, who was "blind" to the mood-induction condition, sought the employee's help in



Schoolchildren packing toy donations for the needy. As children mature, they usually come to take pleasure in helping others.

"IT'S CURIOUS HOW,  
WHEN YOU'RE IN LOVE,  
YOU YEARN TO GO ABOUT  
DOING ACTS OF KINDNESS  
TO EVERYBODY."

—P. G. WODEHOUSE, THE  
MATING SEASON, 1949

locating a nonexistent item. Among less-experienced staff (who lacked a practiced routine for answering such requests), those receiving the mood boost made the greatest effort to help.

In Opole, Poland, Dariusz Dolinski and Richard Nawrat (1998) found that a positive mood of relief can dramatically boost helping. Imagine yourself as one of their unwitting subjects. After illegally parking your car for a few moments, you return to discover what looks like a ticket under your windshield wiper (where parking tickets are placed). Groaning inwardly, you pick up the apparent ticket and then are much relieved to discover it is only an ad (or a blood drive appeal). Moments later, a university student approaches you and asks you to spend 15 minutes answering questions—to “help me complete my M.A. thesis.” Would your positive, relieved mood make you more likely to help? Indeed, 62 percent of people whose fear had just turned to relief agreed willingly. That was nearly double the number who did so when no ticketlike paper was left or when it was left on the car door (not a place for a ticket).

In the United States, Alice Isen, Margaret Clark, and Mark Schwartz (1976) had a confederate call people who had received a free sample of stationery 0 to 20 minutes earlier. The confederate said she had used her last dime to dial this (supposedly wrong) number and asked each person to relay a message by phone. As Figure 12.1 shows, the individuals’ willingness to relay the phone message rose during the 5 minutes afterward. Then, as the good mood wore off, helpfulness dropped.

If sad people are sometimes extra helpful, how can it be that happy people are also helpful? Experiments reveal several factors at work (Carlson & others, 1988). Helping softens a bad mood and sustains a good mood. (Perhaps you can recall feeling good after giving someone directions.) A positive mood is, in turn, conducive to positive thoughts and positive self-esteem, which predispose us to positive behavior (Berkowitz, 1987; Cunningham & others, 1990; Isen & others, 1978). In a good mood—after being given a gift or while feeling the warm glow of success—people are more likely to have positive thoughts. And positive thinkers are likely to be positive actors.

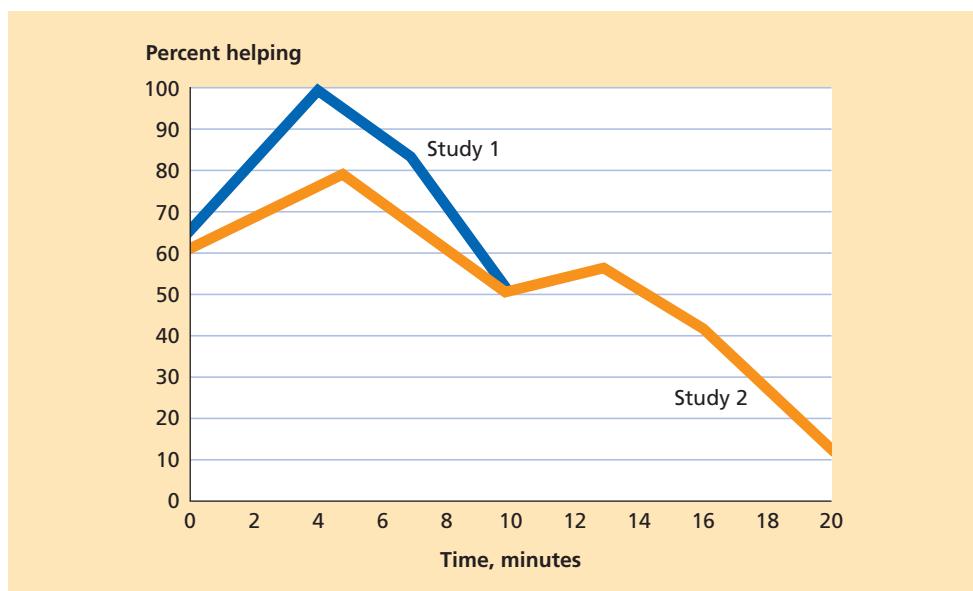
### SOCIAL NORMS

Often, we help others not because we have calculated consciously that such behavior is in our self-interest but because of a subtler form of self-interest: because something tells us we *ought* to. We ought to help a new neighbor move in. We ought to

**FIGURE :: 12.1**  
Percentage of Those Willing to Relay a Phone Message 0 to 20 Minutes after Receiving a Free Sample

Of control subjects who did not receive a gift, only 10 percent helped.

Source: Data from Isen & others (1976).



return the wallet we found. We ought to protect our combat buddies from harm. Norms, the *oughts* of our lives, are social expectations. They prescribe proper behavior. Researchers who study helping behavior have identified two social norms that motivate altruism: the reciprocity norm and the social-responsibility norm.

**THE RECIPROCITY NORM** One universal moral code is a **reciprocity norm**: *To those who help us, we should return help, not harm* (Gouldner, 1960). This norm is as universal as the incest taboo. We “invest” in others and expect dividends. Politicians know that the one who gives a favor can later expect a favor. Mail surveys and solicitations sometimes include a little gift of money or personalized address labels, assuming some people will reciprocate the favor. Even 21-month-old infants display reciprocity, by being more willing to help those who have tried to give them a toy (Dunfield & Kuhlmeier, 2010). The reciprocity norm also applies in marriage. At times, one may give more than one receives, but in the long run, the exchange should balance out. In all such interactions, to receive without giving in return violates the reciprocity norm.

Reciprocity within social networks helps define the **social capital**—the supportive connections, information flow, trust, and cooperative actions—that keep a community healthy. Neighbors keeping an eye on one another’s homes is social capital in action.

The norm operates most effectively as people respond publicly to deeds earlier done to them. In laboratory games as in everyday life, fleeting one-shot encounters produce greater selfishness than sustained relationships. But even when people respond anonymously, they sometimes do the right thing and repay the good done to them (Burger & others, 2009). In one experiment, Mark Whatley and colleagues (1999) found that university students more willingly made a charity pledge when it was the charity of someone who had previously bought them some candy (Figure 12.2).

When people cannot reciprocate, they may feel threatened and demeaned by accepting aid. Thus, proud, high-self-esteem people are often reluctant to seek help (Nadler & Fisher, 1986). Receiving unsolicited help can take one’s self-esteem down a notch (Schneider & others, 1996; Shell & Eisenberg, 1992). Studies have found this can happen to beneficiaries of affirmative action, especially when affirmative action fails to affirm the person’s competence and chances for future success (Pratkanis & Turner, 1996). Asians, for whom social ties and the reciprocity norm are stronger than for North Americans, are therefore more likely to refuse a gift from a casual acquaintance to avoid the felt need to reciprocate (Shen & others, 2011).

**THE SOCIAL-RESPONSIBILITY NORM** The reciprocity norm reminds us to balance giving and receiving. If the only norm were reciprocity, however, the Samaritan would not have been the Good Samaritan. In the parable, Jesus obviously had something more humanitarian in mind, something made explicit in another of his teachings: “If you love those who love you [the reciprocity norm], what right have you to claim any credit? . . . I say to you, love your enemies” (Matthew 5:46, 44).

With people who clearly are dependent and unable to reciprocate, such as children, the severely impoverished, and those with disabilities, another social norm motivates

### reciprocity norm

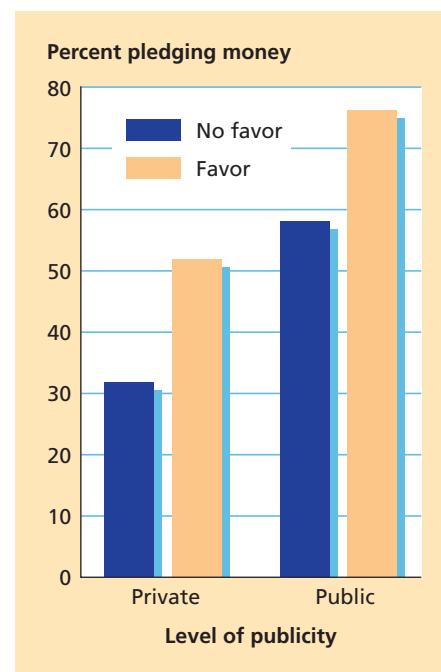
An expectation that people will help, not hurt, those who have helped them.

### social capital

The mutual support and cooperation enabled by a social network.

“IF YOU DON’T GO TO  
SOMEBODY’S FUNERAL,  
THEY WON’T COME TO  
YOURS.”

—YOGI BERRA



**FIGURE 12.2**  
**Private and Public Reciprocation of a Favor**

People were more willing to pledge to an experimental confederate’s charity if the confederate had done a small favor for them earlier, especially when their reciprocation was made known to the confederate.

*Source:* From Whatley & others (1999).



Following Pakistan's devastating 2005 earthquake, the social-responsibility norm engaged helping behaviors.

### **social-responsibility norm**

An expectation that people will help those needing help.

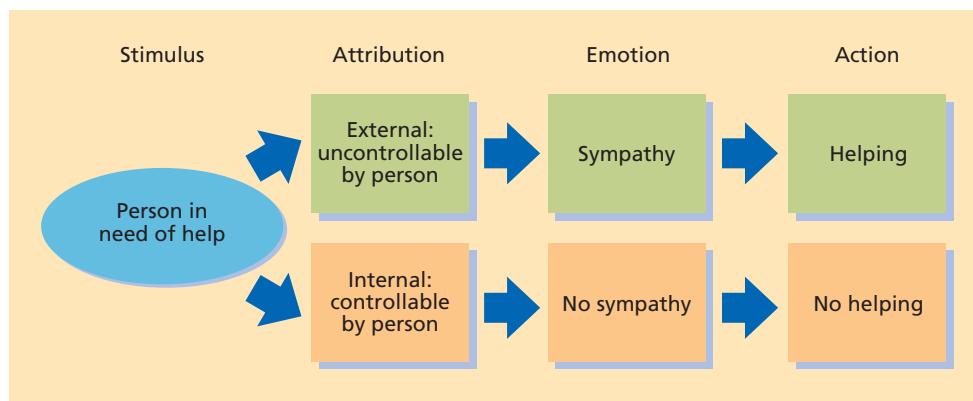
our helping. The **social-responsibility norm** decrees that people should help those who need help, without regard to future exchanges (Berkowitz, 1972; Schwartz, 1975). If a person on crutches drops a book, you honor the social responsibility norm as you pick it up. In India, a relatively collectivist culture, people support the social-responsibility norm more strongly than in the individualist West (Baron & Miller, 2000). They voice an obligation to help even when the need is not life threatening or the needy person—perhaps a stranger needing a bone marrow transplant—is outside their family circle.

Even when helpers in Western countries remain anonymous and have no expectation of any reward, they often help needy people (Shotland & Stebbins, 1983). However, they usually apply the social-responsibility norm selectively to those whose need appears not to be due to their own negligence. Especially among political conservatives (Skitka & Tetlock, 1993), the norm seems to be: Give people what they deserve. If they are victims of circumstance, such as natural disaster, then by all means be compassionate (Goetz & others, 2010; Zagefka & others, 2011). If they seem to have created their own problems (by laziness, immorality, or lack of foresight, for example), then, the norm suggests, they don't deserve help.

Responses are thus closely tied to *attributions*. If we attribute the need to an uncontrollable predicament, we help. If we attribute the need to the person's choices, fairness does not require us to help; we say it's the person's own fault (Weiner, 1980). Attributions affect public policy as well as individual helping decisions.

The key, say Udo Rudolph and colleagues (2004) from their review of more than three dozen pertinent studies, is whether your attributions evoke sympathy, which in turn motivates helping (Figure 12.3).

Imagine yourself as one of the University of Wisconsin students in a study by Richard Barnes, William Ickes, and Robert Kidd (1979). You receive a call from



**FIGURE :: 12.3**  
**Attributions and Helping**

In this model, proposed by German researcher Udo Rudolph and colleagues (2004), helping is mediated by people's explanations of the predicament and their resulting degree of sympathy.

"Tony Freeman," who explains that he is in your introductory psychology class. He says that he needs help for the upcoming exam and that he has gotten your name from the class roster. "I don't know. I just don't seem to take good notes in there," Tony explains. "I know I can, but sometimes I just don't feel like it, so most of the notes I have aren't very good to study with." How sympathetic would you feel toward Tony? How much of a sacrifice would you make to lend him your notes? If you are like the students in this experiment, you would probably be much less inclined to help than if Tony had explained that his troubles were beyond his control. Thus, the social-responsibility norm compels us to help those most in need and those most deserving.

**GENDER AND RECEIVING HELP** If, indeed, perception of another's need strongly determines one's willingness to help, will women, if perceived as less competent and more dependent, receive more help than men? That is indeed the case. Alice Eagly and Maureen Crowley (1986) located 35 studies that compared help received by male or female victims. (Virtually all the studies involved short-term encounters with strangers in need—the very situations in which people expect males to be chivalrous, note Eagly and Crowley.)



When the *Titanic* sank, 70 percent of the females and 20 percent of the males survived. The chances of survival were 2.5 times better for a first- than a third-class passenger. Yet, thanks to gender norms for altruism, the survival odds were better for third-class passengers who were women (47 percent) than for first-class passengers who were men (31 percent).

Women offered help equally to males and females, whereas men offered more help when the persons in need were females. Several experiments in the 1970s found that women with disabled cars (for example, with a flat tire) got many more offers of help than did men (Penner & others, 1973; Pomazal & Clore, 1973; West & others, 1975). Similarly, solo female hitchhikers received far more offers of help than solo males or couples (Pomazal & Clore, 1973; M. Snyder & others, 1974). Of course, men's chivalry toward lone women may have been motivated by something other than altruism. Mating motives not only increase men's spending on conspicuous luxuries but also motivate displays of heroism (Griskevicius & others, 2007). Not surprisingly, men more frequently helped attractive than unattractive women (Mims & others, 1975; Stroufe & others, 1977; West & Brown, 1975).

Women not only receive more offers of help in certain situations but also seek more help (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). They are twice as likely to seek medical and psychiatric help. They are the majority of callers to radio counseling programs and clients of college counseling centers. They more often welcome help from friends. Arie Nadler (1991), a Tel Aviv University expert on help seeking, attributes this to gender differences in independence versus interdependence (see Chapter 5).

## Evolutionary Psychology

Another explanation of helping comes from evolutionary theory. As you may recall from Chapters 5 and 11, evolutionary psychology contends that life's essence is gene survival. Our genes drive us in adaptive ways that have maximized their chance of survival. When our ancestors died, their genes lived on, predisposing us to behave in ways that will spread them into the future.

As suggested by the title of Richard Dawkins's (1976) popular book *The Selfish Gene*, evolutionary psychology offers a humbling human image—one that psychologist Donald Campbell (1975a, 1975b) called a biological reaffirmation of a deep, self-serving "original sin." Genes that predispose individuals to self-sacrifice in the interests of strangers' welfare would not survive in the evolutionary competition. Evolutionary success does, however, come from cooperation. And humans, say Martin Nowak and Roger Highfield (2011), are the animal kingdom's super-cooperators because we exhibit multiple mechanisms for overcoming selfishness, including the following:

- *Kin selection*: If you carry my genes, I'll favor you.
- *Direct reciprocity*: We scratch each other's backs.
- *Indirect reciprocity*: I'll scratch your back, you scratch someone's, and someone will scratch mine.
- *Group selection*: Back-scratching groups survive.

### KIN SELECTION

Our genes dispose us to care for relatives. Thus, one form of self-sacrifice that would increase gene survival is devotion to one's children. Compared with neglectful parents, parents who prioritize their children's welfare are more likely to pass their genes on. As evolutionary psychologist David Barash (1979, p. 153) wrote, "Genes help themselves by being nice to themselves, even if they are enclosed in different bodies." Genetic egoism (at the biological level) fosters parental altruism (at the psychological level). Although evolution favors self-sacrifice for one's children, children have less at stake in the survival of their parents' genes. Thus, parents will generally be more devoted to their children than their children are to them.

Other relatives share genes in proportion to their biological closeness. You share one-half your genes with your brothers and sisters, one-eighth with your cousins. **Kin selection**—favoritism toward those who share our genes—led the

"FALLEN HEROES DO NOT HAVE CHILDREN. IF SELF-SACRIFICE RESULTS IN FEWER DESCENDANTS, THE GENES THAT ALLOW HEROES TO BE CREATED CAN BE EXPECTED TO DISAPPEAR GRADUALLY FROM THE POPULATION."

—E. O. WILSON, ON HUMAN

NATURE (1978)

### kin selection

The idea that evolution has selected altruism toward one's close relatives to enhance the survival of mutually shared genes.

evolutionary biologist J. B. S. Haldane to jest that although he would not give up his life for his brother, he would sacrifice himself for *three* brothers—or for nine cousins. Haldane would not have been surprised that genetic relatedness predicts helping and that genetically identical twins are noticeably more mutually supportive than fraternal twins (Segal, 1984; Stewart-Williams, 2007). In one laboratory game experiment, identical twins were half again as likely as fraternal twins to cooperate with their twin for a shared gain when playing for money (Segal & Hershberger, 1999).

The point is not that we calculate genetic relatedness before helping but that nature (as well as culture) programs us to care about close relatives. When Carlos Rogers of the Toronto Raptors NBA basketball team volunteered to end his career and donate a kidney to his sister (who died before she could receive it), people applauded his self-sacrificial love. But such acts for close kin are not totally unexpected. What we do not expect (and therefore honor) is the altruism of those who risk themselves to save a stranger.

We share common genes with many besides our relatives. Blue-eyed people share particular genes with other blue-eyed people. How do we detect the people in which copies of our genes occur most abundantly? As the blue-eyes example suggests, one clue lies in physical similarities. Also, in evolutionary history, genes were shared more with neighbors than with foreigners. Are we therefore biologically biased to be more helpful to those who look similar to us and those who live near us? In the aftermath of natural disasters and other life-and-death situations, the order of who gets helped would not surprise an evolutionary psychologist: the children before the old, family members before friends, neighbors before strangers (Burnstein & others, 1994; Form & Nosow, 1958). We feel more empathy for a distressed or tortured person in our ingroup, and even *Schadenfreude* (secret pleasure at their misfortune) for rival or outgroup members, (Batson & others, 2009; Cikara & others, 2011; Tarrant & others, 2009). Helping stays close to home.

Some evolutionary psychologists note that kin selection predisposes ethnic ingroup favoritism—the root of countless historical and contemporary conflicts (Rushton, 1991). E. O. Wilson (1978) noted that kin selection is “the enemy of civilization. If human beings are to a large extent guided . . . to favor their own relatives and tribe, only a limited amount of global harmony is possible” (p. 167).

## RECIPROCITY

Genetic self-interest also predicts reciprocity. An organism helps another, biologist Robert Trivers argued, because it expects help in return (Binham, 1980). The giver expects later to be the getter. Failure to reciprocate gets punished. The cheat, the turncoat, and the traitor are universally despised.

Reciprocity works best in small, isolated groups, groups in which one will often see the people for whom one does favors. Sociable female baboons—those who groom and stay in close contact with their peers—gain a reproductive advantage: Their infants more often live to see a first birthday (Silk & others, 2003). If a vampire bat has gone a day or two without food, it asks a well-fed nestmate to regurgitate food for a meal (Wilkinson, 1990). The donor bat does so willingly, losing fewer hours till starvation than the recipient gains. But such favors occur only among familiar nestmates who share in the give-and-take. Those who always take and never give, and those who have no relationship with the donor bat, go hungry. It pays to have friends.

For similar reasons, reciprocity among humans is stronger in rural villages than in big cities. Small schools, towns, churches, work teams, and dorms are all conducive to a community spirit in which people care for one another. Compared with people in small-town or rural environments, those in big cities are less willing to relay a phone message, less likely to mail “lost” letters, less cooperative with survey interviewers, less helpful to a lost child, and less willing to do small favors (Hedge & Yousif, 1992; Steblay, 1987).

"LET'S SAY YOU'RE  
WALKING BY A POND AND  
THERE'S A DROWNING  
BABY. IF YOU SAID, 'I'VE  
JUST PAID \$200 FOR THESE  
SHOES AND THE WATER  
WOULD RUIN THEM, SO I  
WON'T SAVE THE BABY,'  
YOU'D BE AN AWFUL,  
HORRIBLE PERSON. BUT  
THERE ARE MILLIONS OF  
CHILDREN AROUND THE  
WORLD IN THE SAME  
SITUATION, WHERE JUST  
A LITTLE MONEY FOR  
MEDICINE OR FOOD  
COULD SAVE THEIR LIVES.  
AND YET WE DON'T  
CONSIDER OURSELVES  
MONSTERS FOR HAVING  
THIS DINNER RATHER THAN  
GIVING THE MONEY TO  
OXFAM. WHY IS THAT?"

—PHILOSOPHER-  
PSYCHOLOGIST JOSHUA  
GREENE (QUOTED BY ZIMMER,  
2005).

## GROUP SELECTION

If individual self-interest inevitably wins in genetic competition, then why will we help strangers? Why will we help those whose limited resources or abilities preclude their reciprocating? And what causes soldiers to throw themselves on grenades? One answer, initially favored by Darwin (then discounted by selfish-gene theorists, but now back again), is *group selection*: When groups are in competition, groups of mutually supportive altruists outlast groups of nonaltruists (Krebs, 1998; McAndrew, 2002; Wilson & Wilson, 2008). This is most dramatically evident with the social insects, which function like cells in a body. Bees and ants will labor sacrificially for their colony's survival.

To a much lesser extent, humans exhibit ingroup loyalty by sacrificing to support "us," sometimes against "them." Natural selection is therefore "multilevel," say some researchers (Mirsky, 2009). It operates at *both* individual and group levels.

Donald Campbell (1975a, 1975b) offered another basis for unreciprocated altruism: Human societies evolved ethical and religious rules that serve as brakes on the biological bias toward self-interest. Commandments such as "love your neighbor as yourself" admonish us to balance self-concern with concern for the group, and so contribute to the survival of the group. Richard Dawkins (1976) offered a similar conclusion: "Let us try to *teach* generosity and altruism, because we are born selfish. Let us understand what our selfish genes are up to, because we may then at least have the chance to upset their designs, something no other species has ever aspired to" (p. 3).

"JUST AS NATURE IS SAID  
TO ABHOR A VACUUM, SO  
IT ABHORS TRUE ALTRUISM.  
SOCIETY, ON THE OTHER  
HAND, ADORES IT."

—EVOLUTIONARY  
PSYCHOLOGIST DAVID  
BARASH, "THE CONFLICTING  
PRESSURES OF SELFISHNESS  
AND ALTRUISM," 2003

## Comparing and Evaluating Theories of Helping

By now, you perhaps have noticed similarities among the social-exchange, social norm, and evolutionary views of altruism. As Table 12.1 shows, each proposes two types of prosocial behavior: a tit-for-tat reciprocal exchange and a more unconditional helpfulness. They do so at three complementary levels of explanation. If the evolutionary view is correct, then our genetic predispositions *should* manifest themselves in psychological and sociological phenomena.

Each theory appeals to logic. Yet each is vulnerable to charges of being speculative and after the fact. When we start with a known effect (the give-and-take of everyday life) and explain it by conjecturing a social-exchange process, a "reciprocity norm," or an evolutionary origin, we might merely be explaining-by-naming. The argument that a behavior occurs because of its survival function is hard to disprove. With hindsight it's easy to think it had to be that way. If we can explain *any* conceivable behavior after the fact as the result of a social exchange, a norm, or natural selection, then we cannot disprove the theories. Each theory's task is therefore to generate predictions that enable us to test it.

An effective theory also provides a coherent scheme for summarizing a variety of observations. With this criterion, our three altruism theories get higher marks. Each offers us a broad perspective that illuminates both enduring commitments and spontaneous help.

**TABLE :: 12.1 Comparing Theories of Altruism**

How Is Altruism Explained?

Theory	Level of Explanation	Externally Rewarded Helping	Intrinsic Helping
Social-exchange	Psychological	External rewards for helping	Distress → inner rewards for helping
Social norms	Sociological	Reciprocity norm	Social-responsibility norm
Evolutionary	Biological	Reciprocity	Kin selection

## Genuine Altruism

My town, Holland, Michigan, has a corporation with several thousand employees that, for most of the last half-century, annually gave away 10 percent of its pretax profits with one stipulation: The gift was always anonymous. In nearby Kalamazoo, anonymous donors in 2005 pledged to provide Michigan public university or community college costs—ranging from 65 to 100 percent depending on length of residence—for *all* the city's public school graduates. Are such anonymous benefactors—along with lifesaving heroes, everyday blood donors, and Peace Corps volunteers—ever motivated by an ultimate goal of selfless concern for others? Or is their ultimate goal some form of self-benefit, such as gaining a reward, avoiding punishment and guilt, or relieving distress?

Abraham Lincoln illustrated the philosophical issue in a conversation with another passenger in a horse-drawn coach. After Lincoln argued that selfishness prompts all good deeds, he noticed a sow making a terrible noise. Her piglets had gotten into a marshy pond and were in danger of drowning. Lincoln called the coach to a halt, jumped out, ran back, and lifted the little pigs to safety. Upon his return, his companion remarked, "Now, Abe, where does selfishness come in on this little episode?" "Why, bless your soul, Ed, that was the very essence of selfishness. I should have had no peace of mind all day had I gone and left that suffering old sow worrying over those pigs. I did it to get peace of mind, don't you see?" (Sharp, cited by Batson & others, 1986). Until recently, psychologists would have sided with Lincoln.

Helpfulness so reliably makes helpers feel better that Daniel Batson (2011) has devoted much of his career to discerning whether helpfulness also contains a streak of genuine altruism. Batson theorizes that our willingness to help is influenced by both self-serving and selfless considerations (Figure 12.4). Distress over someone's suffering motivates us to relieve our upset, either by escaping the distressing situation (like the priest and the Levite) or by helping (like the Samaritan). But especially when we feel securely attached to someone, report both Batson and a team

"WHEN PEOPLE ASK ME  
HOW I'M DOING, I SAY,  
'I'M ONLY AS GOOD AS MY  
MOST SAD CHILD.'"

—MICHELLE OBAMA,  
OCTOBER 24, 2008

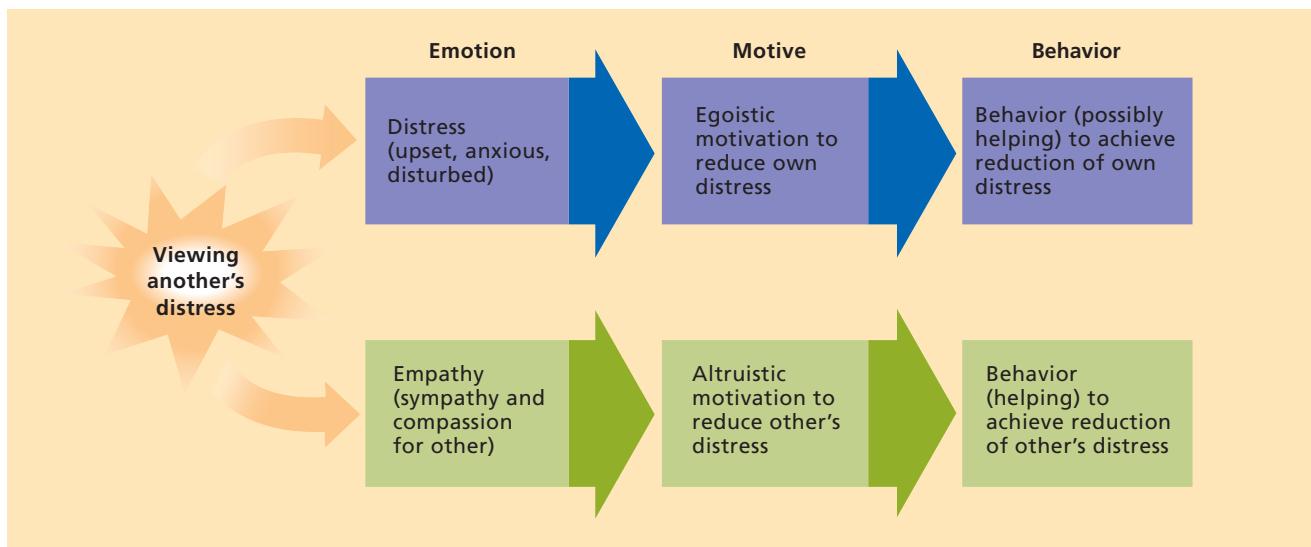


*"Are you all right, Mister? Is there anything I can do?"*

*"Young man, you're the only one who bothered to stop! I'm a millionaire and I'm going to give you five thousand dollars!"*

We never know what benefits may come from helping someone in distress.

© Barney Tobey/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com



**FIGURE :: 12.4**  
**Egoistic and Altruistic Routes to Helping**

Viewing another's distress can evoke a mixture of self-focused distress and other-focused empathy. Researchers agree that distress triggers egoistic motives. But they debate whether empathy can trigger a pure altruistic motive.  
*Source:* Adapted from Batson, Fultz, & Schoenrade (1987).

### empathy

The vicarious experience of another's feelings; putting oneself in another's shoes.

of attachment researchers led by Mario Mikulincer (2005), we also feel **empathy**. Loving parents suffer when their children suffer and rejoice over their children's joys—an empathy lacking in child abusers and other perpetrators of cruelty (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988).

We also feel empathy for those with whom we identify. In September 1997, millions of people who never came within miles of England's Princess Diana (but who felt as if they knew her after hundreds of tabloid stories and 44 *People* magazine cover articles) wept for her and her motherless sons—but shed no tears for the nearly 1 million faceless Rwandans murdered or having died in squalid refugee camps since 1994. We feel more empathy for a real person than a suffering aggregate, more sadness over the death of a Diana than over a mass "statistic." This "collapse of compassion"—decreasing concern as the number of suffering people increases—also occurs as people regulate their painful emotional responses to large tragedies (Cameron & Payne, 2011).

We social psychologists are not immune to the phenomena we discover and describe. In the hours before I wrote the previous two sentences, I felt anguish while watching a TV documentary on the lifelong Chicago Cubs fan who, with other fans, instinctively reached for a foul ball near the end of what looked to be a Cubs victory, enabling their going to the World Series for the first time since 1945. Alas, his touching the ball disrupted its being caught and was followed by the Cubs' collapse and his being doused with beer, his life threatened, and needing—still years later—to live anonymously. What, I later wondered, does it say about me that images of this innocent, abused person haunted my sleep afterwards, while a nearly simultaneous report of chaos and mass starvation in Somalia did not?

When we feel empathy, we focus not so much on our own distress as on the sufferer. Genuine sympathy and compassion motivate us to help others for their own sakes. When we value another's welfare, perceive the person as in need, and take the person's perspective, we feel empathic concern (Batson & others, 2007).

To increase empathy, it helps to get a small dose of what another feels. A specific torture technique becomes less acceptable when people experience even a



Might genuine altruism motivate an international health educator leading exercise with children in Uganda? Daniel Batson believes it might.

small dose of it. For example, when moderately sleep-deprived, people become more likely to say that, yes, extreme sleep deprivation is torture (Nordgren & others, 2011).

In humans, empathy comes naturally. Even day-old infants cry more when they hear another infant cry (Hoffman, 1981). In hospital nurseries, one baby's crying sometimes evokes a chorus of crying. Most 18-month-old infants, after observing an unfamiliar adult accidentally drop a marker or clothespin and have trouble reaching it, will readily help (Tomasello, 2009). To some, this suggests that humans are hardwired for empathy. Primates, elephants, dogs, and even mice also display empathy, indicating that the building blocks of altruism predate humanity (de Waal, 2009; Langford & others, 2006). Chimpanzees will choose a token that gives both themselves and another chimp a food treat over a token that gratifies only themselves (Horner & others, 2011).

Often, distress and empathy together motivate responses to a crisis. In 1983, people watched on television as an Australian bushfire wiped out hundreds of homes near Melbourne. Afterward, Paul Amato (1986) studied donations of money and goods. He found that those who felt angry or indifferent gave less than those who felt either distressed (shocked and sickened) or empathic (sympathetic and worried for the victims).

To separate egoistic distress reduction from empathy-based altruism, Batson's research group conducted studies that aroused feelings of empathy. Then the researchers noted whether the aroused people would reduce their own distress by escaping the situation or whether they would go out of their way to aid the person. The results were consistent: With their empathy aroused, people usually helped.

In one of these experiments, Batson and associates (1981) had University of Kansas women observe a young woman suffering while she supposedly received electric shocks. During a pause in the experiment, the obviously upset victim explained to the experimenter that a childhood fall against an electric fence left her acutely sensitive to shocks. The experimenter suggested that perhaps the observer (the actual participant in this experiment) might trade places and take the remaining

shocks for her. Previously, half of these actual participants had been led to believe the suffering person was a kindred spirit on matters of values and interests (thus arousing their empathy). Some also were led to believe that their part in the experiment was completed, so that in any case they were done observing the woman's suffering. Nevertheless, their empathy aroused, virtually all willingly offered to substitute for the victim.

Is this genuine altruism? Mark Schaller and Robert Cialdini (1988) doubted it. Feeling empathy for a sufferer makes one sad, they noted. In one of their experiments, they led people to believe that their sadness was going to be relieved by a different sort of mood-boosting experience—listening to a comedy tape. Under such conditions, people who felt empathy were not especially helpful. Schaller and Cialdini concluded that if we feel empathy but know that something else will make us feel better, we aren't as likely to help.

Everyone agrees that some helpful acts are either obviously egoistic (done to gain external rewards or avoid punishment) or subtly egoistic (done to gain internal rewards or relieve inner distress). Is there a third type of helpfulness—a genuine

## focus ON

### The Benefits—and the Costs—of Empathy-Induced Altruism

People do most of what they do, including much of what they do for others, for their own benefit, acknowledges University of Kansas altruism researcher Daniel Batson (2011). But egoism is not the whole story of helping, he believes; there is also a genuine altruism rooted in empathy, in feelings of sympathy and compassion for others' welfare. We are supremely social creatures. Consider:

#### Empathy-induced altruism

- *produces sensitive helping.* Where there is empathy, it's not just the thought that counts—it's alleviating the other's suffering.
- *inhibits aggression.* Show Batson someone who feels empathy for a target of potential aggression and he'll show you someone who's unlikely to favor attack—someone who's as likely to forgive as to harbor anger. In general, women report more empathic feelings than men, and they are less likely to support war and other forms of aggression (Jones, 2003).
- *increases cooperation.* In laboratory experiments, Batson and Nadia Ahmad found that people in potential conflict are more trusting and cooperative when they feel empathy for the other. Personalizing an outgroup, by getting to know people in it, helps people understand their perspective.
- *improves attitudes toward stigmatized groups.* Take others' perspective, allow yourself to feel what they feel, and you may become more supportive of others like them (the homeless, those with AIDS, or even convicted criminals).

#### But empathy-induced altruism comes with liabilities, notes Batson and colleagues.

- *It can be harmful.* People who risk their lives on behalf of others sometimes lose them. People who seek to do good can also do harm, sometimes by unintentionally humiliating or demotivating the recipient.
- *It can't address all needs.* It's easier to feel empathy for a needy individual than, say, for Mother Earth, whose environment is being stripped and warmed at the peril of our descendants.
- *It burns out.* Feeling others' pain is painful, which may cause us to avoid situations that evoke our empathy, or to experience "burnout" or "compassion fatigue."
- *It can feed favoritism, injustice, and indifference to the larger common good.* Empathy, being particular, produces partiality—toward a single child or family or pet. Moral principles, being universal, produce concern for unseen others as well. Empathy-based estate planning assigns inheritances to particular loved ones. Morality-based estate planning is more inclusive. When their empathy for someone is aroused, people will violate their own standards of fairness and justice by giving that person favored treatment (Batson & others, 1997; Oceja, 2008). Ironically, note Batson and colleagues (1999), empathy-induced altruism can therefore "pose a powerful threat to the common good [by leading] me to narrow my focus of concern to those for whom I especially care—the needing friend—and in so doing to lose sight of the bleeding crowd." No wonder charity so often stays close to home.

altruism that aims simply to increase another's welfare (producing happiness for oneself merely as a by-product)? Is empathy-based helping a source of such altruism? Cialdini (1991) and his colleagues Mark Schaller and Jim Fultz have doubted it. They note that no experiment rules out all possible egoistic explanations for helpfulness.

But other findings suggest that genuine altruism does exist: With their empathy aroused, people will help even when they believe no one will know about their helping. Their concern continues until someone *has* been helped (Fultz & others, 1986). If their efforts to help are unsuccessful, they feel bad even if the failure is not their fault (Batson & Weeks, 1996). And people will sometimes persist in wanting to help a suffering person even when they believe their own distressed mood arises from a "mood-fixing" drug (Schroeder & others, 1988).

After 25 such experiments testing egoism versus altruistic empathy, Batson (2001, 2006, 2011) and others (Dovidio, 1991; Staub, 1991; Stocks & others, 2009) believe that sometimes people do focus on others' welfare, not on their own. Batson, a former philosophy and theology student, had begun his research feeling "excited to think that if we could ascertain whether people's concerned reactions were genuine, and not simply a subtle form of selfishness, then we could shed new light on a basic issue regarding human nature" (1999a). Two decades later, he believes he has his answer. Genuine "empathy-induced altruism is part of human nature" (1999b). And that, says Batson, raises the hope—confirmed by research—that inducing empathy might improve attitudes toward stigmatized people: people with AIDS, the homeless, the imprisoned, and other minorities. (See "Focus On: The Benefits—and the Costs—of Empathy-Induced Altruism.")

During the Vietnam War, 63 soldiers received Medals of Honor for using their bodies to shield their buddies from exploding devices (Hunt, 1990). Most were in close-knit combat groups. Most threw themselves on live hand grenades. In doing so, 59 sacrificed their lives. So did several Iraq War soldiers. These soldiers had no time to reflect on the shame of cowardice or the eternal rewards of self-sacrifice. Yet something drove them to act.

"THE MEASURE OF OUR CHARACTER IS WHAT WE WOULD DO IF WE WERE NEVER FOUND OUT."

—PARAPHRASED FROM THOMAS MACAULAY

"AS I SEE IT, THERE ARE TWO GREAT FORCES OF HUMAN NATURE: SELF-INTEREST, AND CARING FOR OTHERS."

—BILL GATES, "A NEW APPROACH TO CAPITALISM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY,"

2008

## SUMMING UP: Why Do We Help?

- Three theories explain helping behavior. The *social-exchange theory* assumes that helping, like other social behaviors, is motivated by a desire to maximize rewards, which may be external or internal. Thus, after wrongdoing, people often become more willing to offer help. Sad people also tend to be helpful. Finally, there is a striking feel-good/do-good effect: Happy people are helpful people. Social norms also mandate helping. The *reciprocity norm* stimulates us to help those who have helped us. The *social-responsibility norm* beckons us to help needy people, even if they cannot reciprocate, as long as they are deserving. Women in crisis, partly because they may be seen as more needy, receive more offers of help than men, especially from men.
- Evolutionary psychology assumes two types of helping: devotion to kin and reciprocity. Most evolutionary psychologists, however, believe that the genes of selfish individuals are more likely to survive than the genes of self-sacrificing individuals. Thus, selfishness is our natural tendency and society must therefore teach helping.
- We can evaluate these three theories according to the ways in which they characterize prosocial behavior as based on tit-for-tat exchange and/or unconditional helpfulness. Each can be criticized for using speculative or after-the-fact reasoning, but they do provide a coherent scheme for summarizing observations of prosocial behavior.
- In addition to helping that is motivated by external and internal rewards, and the evading of punishment or distress, there appears also to be a genuine, *empathy-based altruism*. With their empathy aroused, many people are motivated to assist others in need or distress, even when their helping is anonymous or their own mood will be unaffected.

## WHEN WILL WE HELP?

Identify circumstances that prompt people to help, or not to help. Explain how and why helping is influenced by the number and behavior of other bystanders, by mood states, and by traits and values.

On March 13, 1964, 28-year-old bar manager Kitty Genovese was set upon by a knife-wielding attacker as she returned from work to her Queens, New York, apartment house at 3:00 A.M. Her screams of terror and pleas for help—"Oh my God, he stabbed me! Please help me! Please help me!"—aroused some of her neighbors (38 of them, according to an initial *New York Times* report). Some supposedly came to their windows and caught fleeting glimpses as the attacker left and returned to attack again. Not until her attacker finally departed did anyone call the police. Soon after, Kitty Genovese died.

A later analysis disputed the initial report that 38 witnesses observed the murder yet remained inactive (Manning & others, 2007). Nevertheless, the initial story helped inspire research on bystander inaction, which was illustrated in other incidents:

- Seventeen-year-old Andrew Mormille was knifed in the stomach as he rode the subway home. After his attackers left the car, 11 other riders watched the young man bleed to death.
- Eleanor Bradley tripped and broke her leg while shopping. Dazed and in pain, she pleaded for help. For 40 minutes, the stream of sidewalk pedestrians simply parted and flowed around her. Finally, a cab driver helped her to a doctor (Darley & Latané, 1968).
- As more than a million locals and tourists mingled in the warm sun during and after a June 2000 parade alongside New York's Central Park, a pack of alcohol-fueled young men became sexually aggressive—groping, and in some cases stripping, 60 women. In the days that followed, media attention focused on the mob psychology behind this sexual aggression and on police inaction (at least two victims had approached nearby police, who failed to respond). But what about the thousands of milling people? Why did they tolerate this? Among the many bystanders with cell phones, why did not one person call 911 (*Dateline*, 2000)?



Bystander inaction. What influences our interpretations of a scene such as this and our decisions to help or not to help?

What is shocking is not that in these cases some people failed to help, but that in each of these groups (of 11, hundreds, and thousands) almost 100 percent of onlookers failed to respond. Why? In the same or similar situations, would you or I react as they did?

Social psychologists were curious and concerned about the bystanders' inaction. So they undertook experiments to identify when people will help in an emergency. Then they broadened the question to "Who is likely to help in non-emergencies—by such deeds as giving money, donating blood, or contributing time?" Let's see what they have learned, looking first at the *circumstances* that enhance helpfulness and then at the *people* who help.

### Number of Bystanders

Bystander passivity during emergencies prompted social commentators to lament people's "alienation," "apathy," "indifference," and "unconscious sadistic impulses." By

attributing the nonintervention to the bystanders' dispositions, we can reassure ourselves that, as caring people, we would have helped. But were the bystanders such inhuman characters?

Social psychologists Bibb Latané and John Darley (1970) were unconvinced. They staged ingenious emergencies and found that a single situational factor—the presence of other bystanders—greatly decreased intervention. By 1980, they had conducted four dozen experiments that compared help given by bystanders who perceived themselves to be either alone or with others. Given unrestricted communication among the bystanders, a person was at least as likely to be helped by a lone bystander as when observed by several bystanders (Latané & Nida, 1981; Stalder, 2008). In Internet communication, too, people are more likely to respond helpfully to a request for help (such as from someone seeking the link to the campus library) if they believe the request has come to them alone, and not to several others as well (Blair & others, 2005).

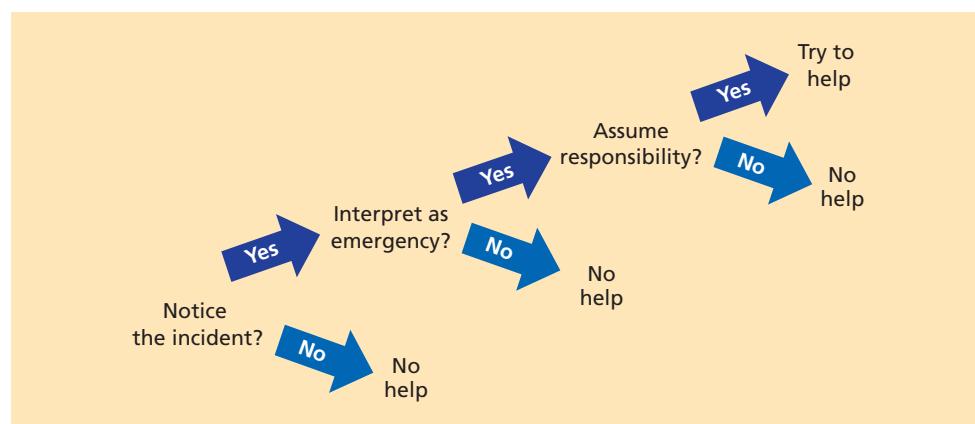
Sometimes the victim was actually less likely to get help when many people were around. When Latané, James Dabbs (1975), and 145 collaborators "accidentally" dropped coins or pencils during 1,497 elevator rides, they were helped 40 percent of the time when one other person was on the elevator and less than 20 percent of the time when there were six passengers.

Why does the presence of other bystanders sometimes inhibit helping? Latané and Darley surmised that as the number of bystanders increases, any given bystander is less likely to *notice* the incident, less likely to *interpret* the incident as a problem or an emergency, and less likely to *assume responsibility* for taking action (Figure 12.5).

### NOTICING

Twenty minutes after Eleanor Bradley has fallen and broken her leg on a crowded city sidewalk, you come along. Your eyes are on the backs of the pedestrians in front of you (it is bad manners to stare at those you pass) and your private thoughts are on the day's events. Would you therefore be less likely to notice the injured woman than if the sidewalk were virtually deserted?

To find out, Latané and Darley (1968) had Columbia University men fill out a questionnaire in a room, either by themselves or with two strangers. While they were working (and being observed through a one-way mirror), there was a staged emergency: Smoke poured into the room through a wall vent. Solitary students, who often glanced idly about the room while working, noticed the smoke almost immediately—usually in less than 5 seconds. Those in groups kept their eyes on their work. It typically took them about 20 seconds to notice the smoke.



**FIGURE 12.5**  
Latané and Darley's  
Decision Tree

Only one path up the tree leads to helping. At each fork of the path, the presence of other bystanders may divert a person down a branch toward not helping.

*Source:* Adapted from Darley & Latané (1968).

## INTERPRETING

Once we notice an ambiguous event, we must interpret it. Put yourself in the room filling with smoke. Though worried, you don't want to embarrass yourself by appearing flustered. You glance at the others. They look calm, indifferent. Assuming everything must be okay, you shrug it off and go back to work. Then one of the others notices the smoke and, noting your apparent unconcern, reacts similarly. This is yet another example of informational influence (Chapter 6). Each person uses others' behavior as clues to reality. Such misinterpretations can contribute to a delayed response to actual fires in offices, restaurants, and other multiple-occupancy settings (Canter & others, 1980).

The misinterpretations are fed by what Thomas Gilovich, Kenneth Savitsky, and Victoria Husted Medvec (1998) call an *illusion of transparency*—a tendency to overestimate others' ability to “read” our internal states. (See the Research Close-Up in Chapter 2.) In their experiments, people facing an emergency presumed their concern was more visible than it was. More than we usually suppose, our concern or alarm is opaque. Keenly aware of our emotions, we presume they leak out and that others see right through us. Sometimes others do read our emotions, but often we keep our cool quite effectively. The result is what Chapter 8 called “pluralistic ignorance”—ignorance that others are thinking and feeling what we are. In emergencies, each person may think, “I'm very concerned,” but perceive others as calm—“so maybe it's not an emergency.”

So it happened in Latané and Darley's experiment. When those working alone noticed the smoke, they usually hesitated a moment, then got up, walked over to the vent, felt, sniffed, and waved at the smoke, hesitated again, and then went to report it. In dramatic contrast, those in groups of 3 did not move. Among the 24 men in eight groups, only 1 person reported the smoke within the first 4 minutes (Figure 12.6). By the end of the 6-minute experiment, the smoke was so thick it was obscuring the men's vision and they were rubbing their eyes and coughing. Still, in only three of the eight groups did even a single person leave to report the problem.

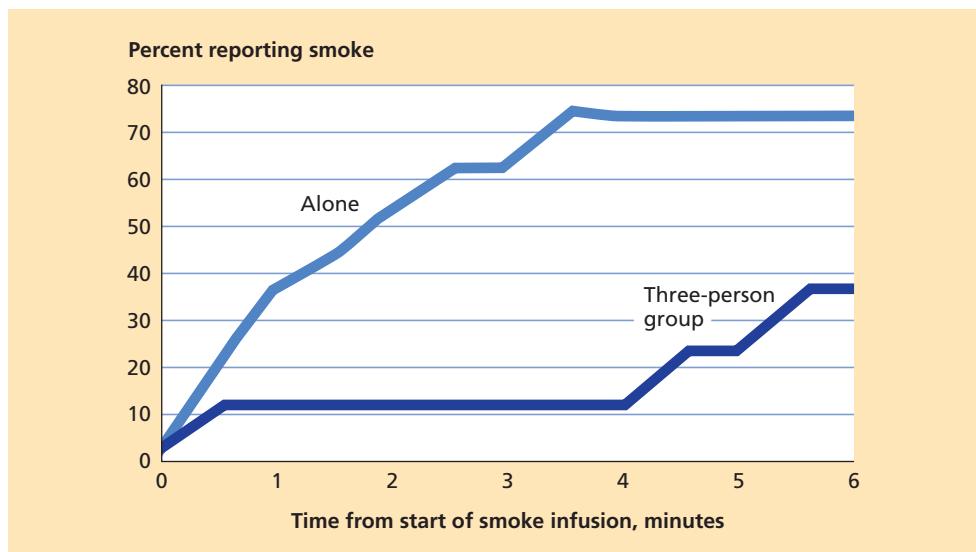
Equally interesting, the group's passivity affected its members' interpretations. What caused the smoke? “A leak in the air conditioning.” “Chemistry labs in the building.” “Steam pipes.” “Truth gas.” Not one said, “Fire.” The group members, by serving as nonresponsive models, influenced one another's interpretation of the situation.

That experimental dilemma parallels real-life dilemmas we all face. Are the shrieks outside merely playful antics or the desperate screams of someone being

**FIGURE :: 12.6**  
**The Smoke-Filled-Room Experiment**

Smoke pouring into the testing room was much more likely to be reported by individuals working alone than by three-person groups.

Source: Data from Darley & Latané (1968).



# THE inside STORY

John M. Darley on Bystander Reactions

assaulted? Is the boys' scuffling a friendly tussle or a vicious fight? Is the person slumped in the doorway sleeping, high on drugs, or seriously ill, perhaps in a diabetic coma? That surely was the question confronting those who passed by Hugo Alfredo Tale-Yax as he lay on a Queens, New York, sidewalk, facedown and bleeding to death from multiple stab wounds. A surveillance video showed that for more than an hour, people walked by the homeless man, until finally one passerby shook him and then turned him over to reveal his wounds (*New York Times*, 2010).

Unlike the smoke-filled-room experiment, each of these everyday situations involves another person in desperate need. To see if the same **bystander effect** occurs in such situations, Latané and Judith Rodin (1969) staged an experiment around a woman in distress. A female researcher set Columbia University men to work on a questionnaire and then left through a curtained doorway to work in an adjacent office. Four minutes later, she could be heard (from a tape recorder) climbing on a chair to reach some papers. This was followed by a scream and a loud crash as the chair collapsed and she fell to the floor. "Oh, my God, my foot . . . I . . . I . . . can't move it," she sobbed. "Oh . . . my ankle . . . I . . . can't get this . . . thing . . . off me." Only after 2 minutes of moaning did she manage to make it out her office door.

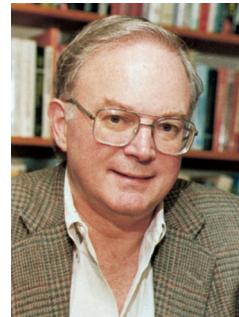
Seventy percent of those who were alone when they overheard the "accident" came into the room or called out to offer help. Among pairs of strangers confronting the emergency, only 40 percent of the time did either person offer help. Those who did nothing apparently interpreted the situation as a nonemergency. "A mild sprain," said some. "I didn't want to embarrass her," explained others. This again demonstrates the bystander effect. As the number of people known to be aware of an emergency increases, any given person becomes less likely to help. For the victim, there is no safety in numbers.

People's interpretations also affect their reactions to street crimes. In staging physical fights between a man and a woman, Lance Shotland and Margaret Straw (1976) found that bystanders intervened 65 percent of the time when the woman shouted, "Get away from me; I don't know you," but only 19 percent of the time when she shouted, "Get away from me; I don't know why I ever married you." Assumed spouse abuse, it seems, triggers less intervention than stranger abuse.

In such dangerous situations with a perpetrator present and intervention requiring physical risk, the bystander

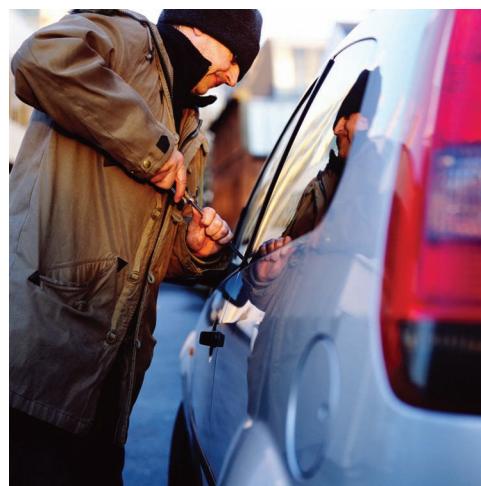
Shocked by the Kitty Genovese murder, Bibb Latané and I met over dinner and began to analyze the bystanders' reactions. Being social psychologists, we thought not about the personality flaws of the "apathetic" individuals but rather about how anyone in that situation might react as did these people. By the time we finished our dinner, we had formulated several factors that together could lead to the surprising result: no one helping. Then we set about conducting experiments that isolated each factor and demonstrated its importance in an emergency situation.

John M. Darley  
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## bystander effect

The finding that a person is less likely to provide help when there are other bystanders.



Interpretations matter. Is this man locked out of his car or is he a burglar? Our interpretation affects our response.

effect is less (Fischer & others, 2011). Indeed, sometimes bystanders provide physical support in intervening. This was dramatically evident on 9/11 as passengers, led by Todd Beamer ("Let's roll!"), collectively intervened as four al Qaeda hijackers headed United Flight 93 toward its presumed target of the U.S. Capitol.

### ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY

*In Thirty-Eight Witnesses, A. M. Rosenthal reflects on the Kitty Genovese murder and asks how far away one must be from a known murder to be absolved of responsibility. A block? A mile? A thousand miles?*

Failing to notice and misinterpretation are not the bystander effect's only causes. Sometimes an emergency is obvious. According to initial reports, those who saw and heard Kitty Genovese's pleas for help correctly interpreted what was happening. But the lights and silhouetted figures in neighboring windows told them that others were also watching. That diffused the responsibility for action.

Few of us have observed a murder. But all of us have at times been slower to react to a need when others were present. Passing a stranded motorist on a busy highway, we are less likely to offer help than on a country road. To explore bystander inaction in clear emergencies, Darley and Latané (1968) simulated the Genovese drama. They placed people in separate rooms from which the participants would hear a victim crying for help. To create that situation, Darley and Latané asked some New York University students to discuss their problems with university life over a laboratory intercom. The researchers told the students that to guarantee their anonymity, no one would be visible, nor would the experimenter eavesdrop. During the ensuing discussion, when the experimenter turned his microphone on, the participants heard one person lapse into a seizure. With increasing intensity and speech difficulty, he pleaded for someone to help.

Of those led to believe there were no other listeners, 85 percent left their room to seek help. Of those who believed four others also overheard the victim, only 31 percent went for help. Were those who didn't respond apathetic and indifferent? When the experimenter came in to end the experiment, most immediately expressed concern. Many had trembling hands and sweating palms. They believed an emergency had occurred but were undecided whether to act.

After the smoke-filled room, the woman-in-distress, and the seizure experiments, Latané and Darley asked the participants whether the presence of others had influenced them. We know the others had a dramatic effect. Yet the participants almost invariably denied the influence. They typically replied, "I was aware of the others, but I would have reacted just the same if they weren't there." That response reinforces a familiar point: *We often do not know why we do what we do.* That is why experiments are revealing. A survey of uninvolved bystanders following a real emergency would have left the bystander effect hidden.

Urban dwellers are seldom alone in public places, which helps account for why city people often are less helpful than country people. "Compassion fatigue" and "sensory overload" from encountering so many needy people further restrain helping in large cities across the world (Levine & others, 1994; Yousif & Korte, 1995). In large cities, bystanders are also more often strangers—whose increasing numbers depress helping. When bystanders are friends or people who share a group identity, increased numbers may, instead, increase helping (Levine & Crowther, 2008).

Nations, too, have often been bystanders to catastrophes, even to genocide. As 800,000 people were murdered in Rwanda, we all stood by. "With many potential



Responsibility diffusion. The nine paparazzi photographers on the scene immediately after the Princess Diana car accident all had cell phones. With one exception, none called for help. Their almost unanimous explanation was that they assumed "someone else" had already called (Sancton, 1997).

actors, each feels less responsible,” notes Ervin Staub (1997). “It’s not our responsibility,” say the leaders of unaffected nations. Psychologist Peter Suedfeld (2000)—like Staub, a Holocaust survivor—notes that the diffusion of responsibility also helps explain “why the vast majority of European citizens stood idly by during the persecution, removal, and killing of their Jewish compatriots.”

### REVISITING RESEARCH ETHICS

These experiments raise an ethical issue. Is it right to force unwitting people to overhear someone’s apparent collapse? Were the researchers in the seizure experiment ethical when they forced people to decide whether to interrupt their discussion to report the problem? Would you object to being in such a study? Note that it would have been impossible to get your “informed consent”; doing so would have destroyed the experiment’s cover.

The researchers were always careful to debrief the laboratory participants. After explaining the seizure experiment, probably the most stressful, the experimenter gave the participants a questionnaire. One hundred percent said the deception was justified and that they would be willing to take part in similar experiments in the future. None reported feeling angry at the experimenter. Other researchers confirm that the overwhelming majority of participants in such experiments say that their participation was both instructive and ethically justified (Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1981). In field experiments, an accomplice assisted the victim if no one else did, thus reassuring bystanders that the problem was being dealt with.

Remember that the social psychologist has a twofold ethical obligation: to protect the participants and to enhance human welfare by discovering influences upon human behavior. Such discoveries can alert us to unwanted influences and show us how we might exert positive influences. The ethical principle seems to be: After protecting participants’ welfare, social psychologists fulfill their responsibility to society by giving us insight into our behavior.

## Helping When Someone Else Does

If observing aggressive models can heighten aggression (Chapter 10) and if unresponsive models can heighten nonresponding, then will helpful models promote helping? Imagine hearing a crash followed by sobs and moans. If another bystander said, “Uh-oh. This is an emergency! We’ve got to do something,” would it stimulate others to help?

The evidence is clear: Prosocial models do promote altruism. Some examples:

- James Bryan and Mary Ann Test (1967) found that Los Angeles drivers were more likely to offer help to a female driver with a flat tire if a quarter mile earlier they had witnessed someone helping another woman change a tire. Bryan and Test also observed that New Jersey Christmas shoppers were more likely to drop money in a Salvation Army kettle if they had just seen someone else do the same.
- Philippe Rushton and Anne Campbell (1977) found British adults more willing to donate blood if they were approached after observing a confederate consent to donating.
- A glimpse of extraordinary human kindness and charity—such as I gave you in the examples of heroic altruism at this chapter’s outset—often triggers what Jonathan Haidt (2003) calls *elevation*, “a distinctive feeling in the chest of warmth and expansion” that may provoke chills, tears, and throat clenching. Such elevation often inspires people to become more self-giving (Schnall & others, 2010).

Models sometimes, however, contradict in practice what they preach. Parents may tell their children, “Do as I say, not as I do.” Experiments show that children

“WE ARE, IN TRUTH, MORE  
THAN HALF WHAT WE ARE  
BY IMITATION. THE GREAT  
POINT IS, TO CHOOSE  
GOOD MODELS AND TO  
STUDY THEM WITH CARE.”

—LORD CHESTERFIELD,  
LETTERS, JANUARY 18, 1750

learn moral judgments both from what they hear preached and from what they see practiced (Rice & Grusec, 1975; Rushton, 1975). When exposed to hypocrites, they imitate: They say what the model says and do what the model does.

## Time Pressures

Darley and Batson (1973) discerned another determinant of helping in the Good Samaritan parable. The priest and the Levite were both busy, important people, probably hurrying to their duties. The lowly Samaritan surely was less pressed for time. To see whether people in a hurry would behave as the priest and the Levite did, Darley and Batson cleverly staged the situation described in the parable.

After collecting their thoughts before recording a brief extemporaneous talk (which, for half the participants, was actually on the Good Samaritan parable), Princeton Theological Seminary students were directed to a recording studio in an adjacent building. En route, they passed a man sitting slumped in a doorway, head down, coughing and groaning. Some of the students had been sent off nonchalantly: "It will be a few minutes before they're ready for you, but you might as well head on over." Of those, almost two-thirds stopped to offer help. Others were told, "Oh, you're late. They were expecting you a few minutes ago . . . so you'd better hurry." Of these, only 10 percent offered help.

Reflecting on these findings, Darley and Batson noted that the hurried participants passed on by the person in distress even when en route "to speak on the parable of the Good Samaritan, thus inadvertently confirming the point of the parable. (Indeed, on several occasions, a seminary student going to give his talk on the parable of the Good Samaritan literally stepped over the victim as he hurried on his way!)"

Are we being unfair to the seminary students, who were, after all, hurrying to *help* the experimenter? Perhaps they keenly felt the social-responsibility norm but found it pulling them two ways—toward the experimenter and toward the victim. In another enactment of the Good Samaritan situation, Batson and associates (1978) directed 40 University of Kansas students to an experiment in another building. Half were told they were late, half that they had plenty of time. Half of each of these groups thought their participation was vitally important to the experimenter; half thought it was not essential. The results: Those leisurely on their way to an unimportant appointment usually stopped to help. But people seldom stopped to help if, like the White Rabbit in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, they were late for a very important date.

Can we conclude that those who were rushed were callous? Did the seminarians notice the victim's distress and then consciously choose to ignore it? No. Harried, preoccupied, rushing to help the experimenter, they simply did not take time to tune in to the person in need. As social psychologists have so often observed, their behavior was influenced more by context than by conviction.

## Similarity

Because similarity is conducive to liking (Chapter 11), and liking is conducive to helping, we are more empathic and helpful toward those *similar* to us (Miller & others, 2001). The similarity bias applies to both dress and beliefs. Tim Emswiller and his fellow researchers (1971) had confederates, dressed either conservatively or in counterculture garb, approach "conservative" and "hip" Purdue University students seeking a dime for a phone call. Fewer than half the students did the favor for those dressed differently from themselves. Two-thirds did so for those dressed similarly. See "Research Close-Up: Ingroup Similarity and Helping."

No face is more familiar than one's own. That explains why, when Lisa DeBruine (2002) had McMaster University students play an interactive game

# research CLOSE-UP

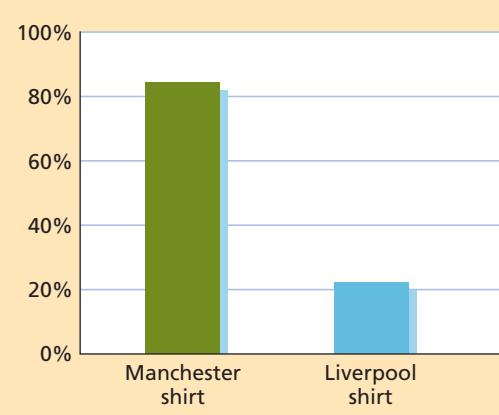
## Ingroup Similarity and Helping

Likeness breeds liking, and liking elicits helping. So, do people offer more help to others who display similarities to themselves? To explore the similarity-helping relationship, Mark Levine, Amy Prosser, and David Evans at Lancaster University joined with Stephen Reicher at St. Andrews University (2005) to study the behavior of some Lancaster student fans of the nearby Manchester United soccer football team. Taking their cue from John Darley and Daniel Batson's (1973) famous Good Samaritan experiment, they directed each newly arrived participant to the laboratory in an adjacent building. En route, a confederate jogger—wearing a shirt from either Manchester United or rival Liverpool—seemingly slipped on a grass bank just in front of them, grasped his ankle, and groaned in apparent pain. As Figure 12.7 shows, the Manchester fans routinely paused to offer help to their fellow Manchester supporter but usually did not offer such help to a supposed Liverpool supporter.

But, the researchers wondered, what if we remind Manchester fans of the identity they share with Liverpool supporters—as football fans rather than as detractors

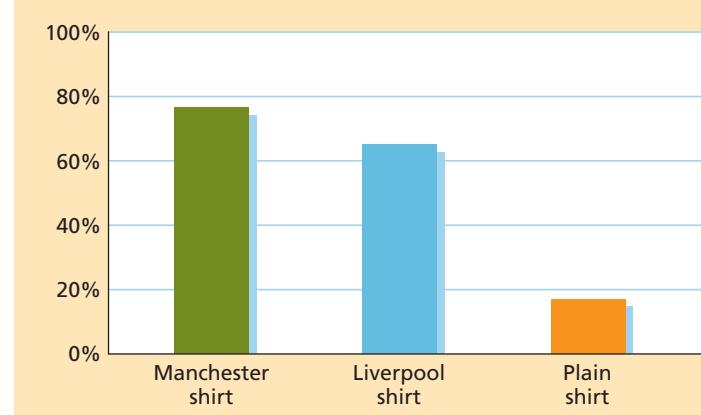
who scorn football fans as violent hooligans? So they repeated the experiment, but with one difference: Before participants witnessed the jogger's fall, the researcher explained that the study concerned the positive aspects of being a football fan. Given that only a small minority of fans are troublemakers, this research aimed to explore what fans get out of their love for "the beautiful game." Now a jogger wearing a football club shirt, whether for Manchester or Liverpool, became one of "us fans." And as Figure 12.8 shows, the grimacing jogger was helped regardless of which team he supported—and more so than if wearing a plain shirt.

The principle in the two cases is the same, notes the Lancaster research team: People are predisposed to help their fellow group members, whether those are defined more narrowly (as "us Manchester fans") or more inclusively (as "us football fans"). If even rival fans can be persuaded to help one another if they think about what unites them, then surely other antagonists can as well. One way to increase people's willingness to help others is to promote social identities that are inclusive rather than exclusive.



**FIGURE :: 12.7**

Percentage of Manchester United Fans Who Helped Victim Wearing Manchester or Liverpool Shirt



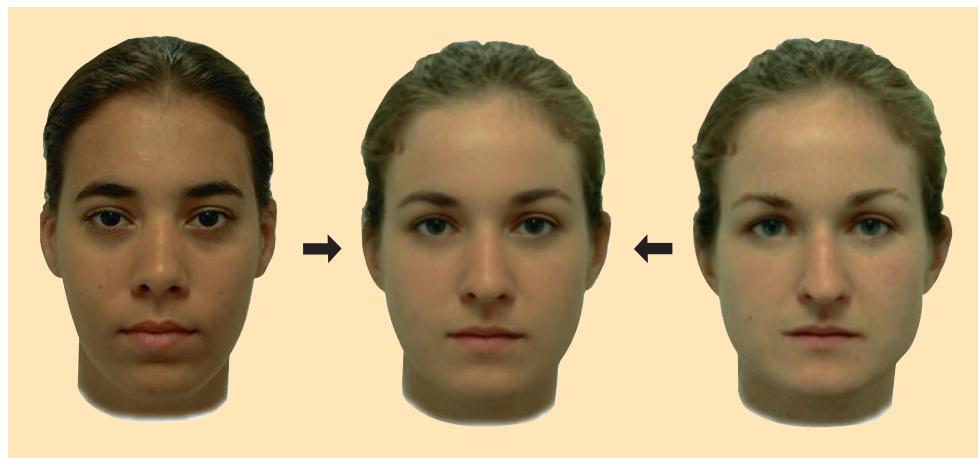
**FIGURE :: 12.8**

Common Fan Identity Condition: Percentage of Manchester United Fans Who Helped Victim Wearing Manchester or Liverpool Shirt

with a supposed other player, they were more trusting and generous when the other person's pictured face had some features of their own face morphed into it (Figure 12.9). In me I trust. Even just sharing a birthday, a first name, or a

**FIGURE :: 12.9****Similarity Breeds Cooperation**

Lisa DeBruine (2002) morphed participants' faces (left) with strangers' faces (right) to make the composite center faces—toward whom the participants were more generous than toward the stranger.



fingerprint pattern leads people to respond more to a request for help (Burger & others, 2004).

Does the similarity bias extend to race? During the 1970s, researchers explored that question with confusing results:

- Some studies found a *same-race bias* (Benson & others, 1976; Clark, 1974; Franklin, 1974; Gaertner, 1973; Gaertner & Bickman, 1971; Sissons, 1981).
- Others found *no bias* (Gaertner, 1975; Lerner & Frank, 1974; Wilson & Donnerstein, 1979; Wispe & Freshley, 1971).
- Still others—especially those involving face-to-face situations—found a bias toward helping those of a *different race* (Dutton, 1971, 1973; Dutton & Lake, 1973; Katz & others, 1975).

Is there a general rule that resolves these seemingly contradictory findings?

Few people want to appear prejudiced. Perhaps, then, people favor their own race but keep that bias secret to preserve a positive image. If so, the same-race bias should appear only when people can attribute failure to help to nonrace factors. That is what happened in experiments by Samuel Gaertner and John Dovidio (1977, 1986). For example, University of Delaware White women were less willing to help a Black than a White woman in distress *if* their responsibility could be diffused among the bystanders ("I didn't help the Black woman because there were others who could"). When there were no other bystanders, the women were equally helpful to the Black and the White women. The rule seems to be: When norms for appropriate behavior are well-defined, Whites don't discriminate; when norms are ambiguous or conflicting, racial similarity may bias responses (Saucier & others, 2005).

For me, the laboratory came to life one night as I walked from a dinner meeting in Washington, D.C., to my hotel. On a deserted sidewalk, a well-dressed, distraught-seeming man about my age approached me and begged for a dollar. He explained that he had just come over from London and, after visiting the Holocaust Museum, had accidentally left his wallet in a taxi. So here he was, stranded and needing a \$24 taxi fare to a friend's home in suburban D.C.

"So how's one dollar going to get you there?" I asked.

"I asked people for more, but no one would help me," he nearly sobbed, "so I thought maybe if I asked for less I could collect taxi fare."

"But why not take the Metro?" I challenged.

"It stops about 5 miles from Greenbriar, where I need to go," he explained. "Oh my, how am I ever going to get there? If you could help me out, I will mail you back the money on Monday."

Here I was, as if a participant in an on-the-street altruism experiment. Having grown up in a city, and as a frequent visitor to New York and Chicago, I am accustomed to panhandling and have never rewarded it. But I also consider myself a caring person. Moreover, this fellow was unlike any panhandler I had ever met. He was dressed sharply. He was intelligent. He had a convincing story. And he looked like me! If he's lying, he's a slimeball, I said to myself, and giving him money would be stupid, naive, and rewarding slimeballism. If he's a truth-teller and I turn my back on him, then *I'm* a slimeball.

He had asked for \$1. I gave him \$30, along with my name and address, which he took gratefully, and disappeared into the night.

As I walked on, I began to suspect—correctly as it turned out—that I had been a patsy. Having lived in Britain, why had I not tested his knowledge of England? Why had I not taken him to a phone booth to call his friend? Why had I at least not offered to pay a taxi driver and send him on his way, rather than give him the money? And why, after a lifetime of resisting scams, had I succumbed to this one?

Sheepishly, because I like to think myself not influenced by ethnic stereotypes, I had to admit that it was not only his socially skilled, personal approach but also the mere fact of his similarity to me.

## SUMMING UP: When Will We Help?

- Several situational influences work to inhibit or to encourage altruism. As the number of bystanders at an emergency increases, any given bystander is (1) less likely to notice the incident, (2) less likely to interpret it as an emergency, and (3) less likely to assume responsibility. Experiments on helping behavior pose an ethical dilemma but fulfill the researcher's mandate to enhance human life by uncovering important influences on behavior.
- When are people most likely to help? One circumstance is when they have just observed someone else helping.
- Another circumstance that promotes helping is having at least a little spare time; those in a hurry are less likely to help.
- We tend to help those whom we perceive as being similar to us.

## WHO WILL HELP?

### Identify some traits and values that predict helping.

We have considered internal influences on the decision to help (such as guilt and mood) and external influences as well (such as social norms, number of bystanders, time pressures, and similarity). We also need to consider the helpers' dispositions, including, for example, their personality traits and religious values.

### Personality Traits

Surely some traits must distinguish the Mother Teresa types from others. Faced with identical situations, some people will respond helpfully, while others won't bother. Who are the likely helpers?

For many years, social psychologists were unable to discover a single personality trait that predicted helping with anything close to the predictive power of situational, guilt, and mood factors. Modest relationships were found between helping and certain personality variables, such as a need for social approval. But by and large, personality tests were unable to identify the helpers. Studies of rescuers of

"**THERE ARE . . . REASONS WHY PERSONALITY SHOULD BE RATHER UNIMPORTANT IN DETERMINING PEOPLE'S REACTIONS TO THE EMERGENCY. FOR ONE THING, THE SITUATIONAL FORCES AFFECTING A PERSON'S DECISION ARE SO STRONG.**"

—BIBB LATANÉ AND JOHN DARLEY (1970, P. 115)

Jews in Nazi Europe reveal a similar conclusion: Although the social context clearly influenced willingness to help, there was no definable set of altruistic personality traits (Darley, 1995).

If that finding has a familiar ring, it could be from a similar conclusion by conformity researchers (Chapter 6): Conformity, too, seemed more influenced by the situation than by measurable personality traits. Perhaps, though, you recall from Chapter 4 that who we are does affect what we do. Attitude and trait measures seldom predict a *specific* act, which is what most experiments on altruism measure (in contrast with the lifelong altruism of a Mother Teresa). But they predict average behavior across many situations more accurately.

Personality researchers have responded to the challenge. First, they have found *individual differences* in helpfulness and shown that those differences persist over time and are noticed by one's peers (Hampson, 1984; Penner, 2002; Rushton & others, 1981). Some people *are* reliably more helpful.

Second, researchers are gathering clues to the *network of traits* that predispose a person to helpfulness. Those high in positive emotionality, empathy, and self-efficacy are most likely to be concerned and helpful (Eisenberg & others, 1991; Krueger & others, 2001; Walker & Frimer, 2007).

Third, personality influences how particular people react to *particular situations* (Carlo & others, 1991; Romer & others, 1986; Wilson & Petruska, 1984). Those high in self-monitoring are attuned to others' expectations and are therefore helpful *if* they think helpfulness will be socially rewarded (White & Gerstein, 1987). Others' opinions matter less to internally guided, low-self-monitoring people.

## Gender

The interaction of person and situation also appears in 172 studies that have compared the helpfulness of nearly 50,000 male and female individuals. After analyzing these results, Alice Eagly and Maureen Crowley (1986) reported that when faced with potentially dangerous situations in which strangers need help (such as with a flat tire or a fall in a subway), men more often help. Eagly (2009) also reports that among recipients of the Carnegie medal for heroism in saving human life, 91 percent have been men.

Would gender norms—"women and children first"—more likely come into play in situations when people have time to reflect on social norms (as opposed to acting instinctively, on impulse)? To explore this possibility, some fiendish experimenter might wish to assign passengers to fast- or slow-sinking ships and observe behavior. Actually, note Zurich researcher Bruno Frey and his colleagues (2010), the course of human events has conducted this experiment. In 1915, a German U-boat sank the passenger liner, the *Lusitania*, in a panicked 18 minutes, with women on board being 1 percent less likely to survive than men. In 1912, the *Titanic*, carrying a similar mix of passengers, hit an iceberg and took nearly 3 hours to sink—and women were 53 percent more likely to survive than men. In this natural experiment, time enabled prosocial behavior and the activation of gender norms.

In safer situations, such as volunteering to help with an experiment or spend time with children with developmental disabilities, women are slightly more likely to help. In a UCLA survey of 201,818 entering American collegians, 62 percent of men—and 75 percent of women—rated "helping others in difficulty" as "very important" or "essential" (Pryor & others, 2010). Women also have been as likely as, or more likely than, men to risk death as Holocaust rescuers, to donate a kidney, and to volunteer with the Peace Corps and Doctors of the World (Becker & Eagly, 2004). Thus, the gender difference interacts with (depends on) the situation. Faced with a friend's problems, women respond with greater empathy and spend more time helping (George & others, 1998).



The four chaplains' ultimate selflessness inspired this painting, which hangs in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania's Chapel of the Four Chaplains.

## Religious Faith

In 1943, with Nazi submarines sinking ships faster than the Allied forces could replace them, the troop ship *SS Dorchester* steamed out of New York harbor with 902 men headed for Greenland (Elliott, 1989; Kurzman, 2004; Parachin, 1992). Among those leaving anxious families behind were four chaplains: Methodist preacher George Fox, Rabbi Alexander Goode, Catholic priest John Washington, and Reformed Church minister Clark Poling. Some 150 miles from their destination, on a moonless night, *U-boat 456* caught the *Dorchester* in its crosshairs. Within moments of the torpedo's impact, stunned men were pouring out of their bunks as the ship began listing. With power cut off, the ship's radio was useless; its escort vessels, unaware of the unfolding tragedy, pushed on in the darkness. On board, chaos reigned as panicky men came up from the hold without life jackets and leapt into overcrowded lifeboats.

As the four chaplains arrived on the steeply sloping deck, they began guiding the men to their boat stations. They opened a storage locker, distributed life jackets, and coaxed the men over the side. When Petty Officer John Mahoney turned back to retrieve his gloves, Rabbi Goode responded, "Never mind. I have two pairs." Only later did Mahoney realize that the Rabbi was not conveniently carrying an extra pair; he was giving up his own.

In the icy, oil-smeared water, as Private William Bednar heard the chaplains preaching courage he found the strength to swim out from under the ship until reaching a life raft. Still on board, Grady Clark watched in awe as the chaplains handed out the last life jacket and then, with ultimate selflessness, gave away their own. As Clark slipped into the waters, he looked back at an unforgettable sight: The four chaplains were standing—their arms linked—praying, in Latin, Hebrew, and English. Other men joined them in a huddle as the *Dorchester* slid beneath the sea. "It was the finest thing I have ever seen or hope to see this side of heaven," said John Ladd, another of the 230 survivors.

Does the chaplains' heroic example rightly imply that faith promotes courage and caring? The world's four largest religions—Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism—all teach compassion and charity (Steffen & Masters, 2005). But do their followers walk the talk? Religiosity is a mixed bag, report Ariel Malka and colleagues (2011). It is often associated with conservative opposition to government initiatives, including support for the poor, yet it also promotes prosocial values.

Consider what happens when people are subtly “primed” with either materialistic or spiritual thoughts. With money on their minds—after unscrambling text that included words such as *salary* or after seeing a poster with currency on it—people were less helpful to a confused person and less generous when asked to donate to help needy students (Vohs & others, 2006, 2008). With God on their minds—after unscrambling sentences with words such as *spirit, divine, God, and sacred*—people become much more generous in their donations (Pichon & others, 2007; Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007). Follow-up studies have found that religious priming increases other “good” behaviors, such as persistence on an assigned task and actions consistent with one’s moral beliefs (Carpenter & Marshall, 2009; Toburen & Meier, 2010).

Consider also the many studies of spontaneous helping. Confronted with a minor emergency, intrinsically religious people are only slightly more responsive (Trimble, 1993). More recently, researchers are also exploring planned helping—the sort of sustained helping provided by AIDS volunteers, Big Brother and Big Sister helpers, and supporters of campus service organizations. It is when making intentional choices about long-term helping that religious faith better predicts altruism. (Remember how the *Titanic*'s slow sinking gave time for social norms and intentions to operate.)

From their analyses of why people volunteer, as when befriending AIDS patients, Mark Snyder, Allen Omoto, and Gil Clary (Clary & Snyder, 1993, 1995, 1999; Clary & others, 1998) have discerned multiple motivations. Some motivations are rooted in rewards—seeking to join a group, gain approval, enhance job prospects, reduce guilt, learn skills, or boost self-esteem. Others act upon their religious or humanitarian values and concern for others.

In studies of college students and the general public, those religiously committed have reported volunteering more hours—as tutors, relief workers, and campaigners for social justice—than have the religiously uncommitted (Benson & others, 1980; Hansen & others, 1995; Penner, 2002). Among Americans whom the Gallup Poll classifies as “engaged” with a faith community, the median person reports volunteering 2 hours per week; the median disengaged person reports volunteering 0 hours per week (Winseman, 2005). Worldwide surveys confirm the correlation between faith engagement and volunteering. One analysis of 117,007 people responding to World Values Surveys in 53 countries reported that twice-weekly religious attenders “are more than five times more likely to volunteer” than non-attenders (Ruiter & De Graaf, 2006).

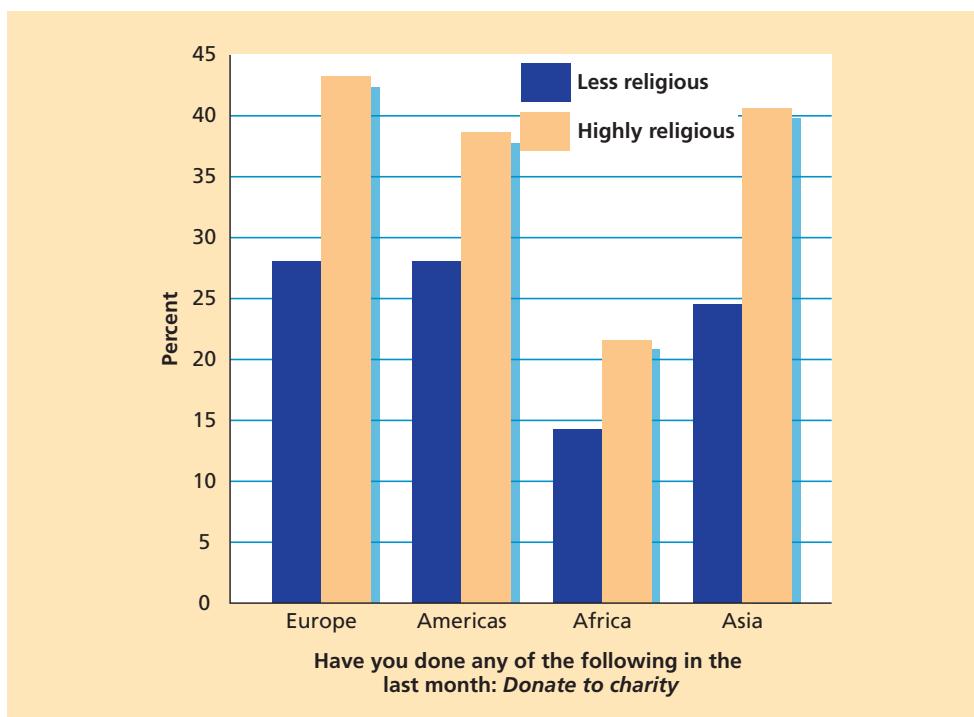
Moreover, Sam Levenson’s jest—“When it comes to giving, some people stop at nothing”—is seldom true of those who are most actively religious. A massive Gallup World Poll surveyed 2,000 or more people in each of 140 countries. Despite having lower incomes, highly religious people (who reported that religion is important to their daily lives and that they had attended a religious service in the prior week) reported markedly higher than average rates of charitable giving, volunteerism, and helping a stranger in the previous month (Figure 12.10).

Do the religious links with planned helping extend similarly to other communal organizations? Robert Putnam (2000) analyzed national survey data from 22 types of organizations, including hobby clubs, professional associations, self-help groups, and service clubs. “It was membership in religious groups,” he reports, “that was most closely associated with other forms of civic involvement, like voting, jury service, community projects, talking with neighbors, and giving to charity” (p. 67).

**"RELIGION IS THE MOTHER OF PHILANTHROPY."**

—FRANK EMERSON ANDREWS,  
ATTITUDES TOWARD GIVING,  
1953

Ironically, lower income households are proportionately more generous. In the U.S., those with income below \$50,000 give, on average, 4.2 percent of their income. Those with income above \$100,000 give, on average, 2.2 percent (Center on Philanthropy, 2008; see also Piff & others, 2010).



**FIGURE :: 12.10**  
Helping and Religious Engagement

Worldwide, report Gallup researchers Brett Pelham and Steve Crabtree (2008), highly religious people are—despite averaging lower incomes—more likely to report having given away money in the last month and also to report having volunteered and helped a stranger. The highly religious said religion is important in their daily life and attended a service in the last week. Less religious are all others.

## SUMMING UP: Who Will Help?

- In contrast with altruism's potent situational and mood determinants, personality test scores have served as only modest predictors of helping. However, new evidence indicates that some people are consistently more helpful than others.
- The effect of personality or gender may depend on the situation. Men, for example, have been observed to help more in dangerous situations, women as volunteers.
- Religious faith predicts long-term altruism, as reflected in volunteerism and charitable contributions.

## HOW CAN WE INCREASE HELPING?

Suggest how helping might be increased by reversing the factors that inhibit helping, by teaching norms of helping, and by socializing people to see themselves as helpful.

As social scientists, our goal is to understand human behavior, thus also suggesting ways to improve it. One way to promote altruism is to reverse those factors that inhibit it. Given that hurried, preoccupied people are less likely to help, can we think of ways to slow people down and turn their attention outward? If the presence of others diminishes each bystander's sense of responsibility, how can we enhance responsibility?

### Reduce Ambiguity, Increase Responsibility

If Latané and Darley's decision tree (see Figure 12.5) describes the dilemmas bystanders face, then helping should increase if we can prompt people to correctly *interpret an incident* and to *assume responsibility*. Leonard Bickman and colleagues (Bickman, 1975, 1979; Bickman & Green, 1977) tested that presumption in a series of experiments on crime reporting. In each, they staged a shoplifting incident in a

supermarket or bookstore. In some of the stores, they placed signs aimed at sensitizing bystanders to shoplifting and informing them how to report it. The researchers found that the signs had little effect. In other cases, witnesses heard a bystander interpret the incident: "Say, look at her. She's shoplifting. She put that into her purse." (The bystander then left to look for a lost child.) Still others heard this person add, "We saw it. We should report it. It's our responsibility." Both comments substantially boosted reporting of the crime.

The potency of personal influence is no longer in doubt. New donors, unlike veterans, were usually there at someone's personal invitation (Foss, 1978). Leonard Jason and collaborators (1984) confirmed that personal appeals for blood donation are much more effective than posters and media announcements—if the personal appeals come from friends.

### PERSONALIZED APPEAL

Personalized nonverbal appeals can also be effective. Mark Snyder and co-workers (1974; Omoto & Snyder, 2002) found that hitchhikers doubled their number of ride offers by looking drivers straight in the eye, and that most AIDS volunteers got involved through someone's personal influence. A personal approach, as my panhandler knew, makes one feel less anonymous, more responsible.

Henry Solomon and Linda Solomon (1978; Solomon & others, 1981) explored ways to reduce anonymity. They found that bystanders who had identified themselves to one another—by name, age, and so forth—were more likely to offer aid to a sick person than were anonymous bystanders. Similarly, when a female experimenter caught the eye of another shopper and gave her a warm smile before stepping on an elevator, that shopper was far more likely than other shoppers to offer help when the experimenter later said, "Damn. I've left my glasses. Can anyone tell me what floor the umbrellas are on?" Even a trivial momentary conversation with someone ("Excuse me, aren't you Suzie Spear's sister?" "No, I'm not") dramatically increased the person's later helpfulness.

Helpfulness also increases when one expects to meet the victim and other witnesses again. Using a laboratory intercom system, Jody Gottlieb and Charles Carver (1980) led University of Miami students to believe they were discussing problems of college living with other students. (Actually, the other discussants were tape-recorded.) When one of the supposed fellow discussants had a choking fit and cried out for help, she was helped most quickly by those who believed they would soon be meeting the discussants face-to-face. In short, anything that personalizes bystanders—a personal request, eye contact, stating one's name, anticipation of interaction—increases willingness to help. In experiments, restaurant patrons have tipped more when their servers introduced themselves by name, wrote friendly messages on checks, touched guests on the arm or shoulder, and sat or squatted at the table during the service encounter (Leodoro & Lynn, 2007; Schirmer & others, 2011).

Personal treatment makes bystanders more self-aware and therefore more attuned to their own altruistic ideals. Recall from earlier chapters that people made self-aware by acting in front of a mirror or a TV camera exhibit increased consistency between attitudes and actions. By contrast, "deindividuated" people are less responsible. Thus, circumstances that promote self-awareness—name tags, being watched and evaluated, undistracted quiet—should also increase helping.

Shelley Duval, Virginia Duval, and Robert Neely (1979) confirmed this. They showed some University of Southern California women their own images on a TV screen or had them complete biographical questionnaires just before giving them a chance to contribute time and money to people in need. Those made self-aware contributed more. Similarly, pedestrians who have just had their pictures taken by someone became more likely to help another pedestrian pick up dropped envelopes (Hoover & others, 1983). And among those who had just seen themselves in a mirror, 70 percent of Italian pedestrians helped a stranger by mailing a postcard, as did 13 percent of others approached (Abbate & others, 2006). Self-aware people more often put their ideals into practice.

## Guilt and Concern for Self-Image

Previously, we noted that people who feel guilty will act to reduce guilt and restore their self-worth. Can awakening people's guilt therefore increase their desire to help? Have university students think about their past transgressions and they become more likely to agree to volunteer to help with a school project.

A Reed College research team led by Richard Katzev (1978) experimented with guilt-induced helping in everyday contexts. When visitors to the Portland Art Museum disobeyed a "Please do not touch" sign, experimenters reprimanded some of them: "Please don't touch the objects. If everyone touches them, they will deteriorate." Likewise, when visitors to the Portland Zoo fed unauthorized food to the bears, some of them were admonished with, "Hey, don't feed unauthorized food to the animals. Don't you know it could hurt them?" In both cases, 58 percent of the now guilt-laden individuals shortly thereafter offered help to another experimenter who had "accidentally" dropped something. Of those not reprimanded, only one-third helped. Guilt-laden people are helpful people.

That was my experience recently, after passing a man struggling to get up from a busy city sidewalk as I raced to catch a train. His glazed eyes brought to mind the many drunken people I had assisted during my college days as an emergency room attendant. Or . . . I wondered after walking by . . . was he actually experiencing a health crisis? Plagued by guilt, I picked up sidewalk litter, offered my train seat to an elderly couple looking for seats together, and vowed that the next time I faced uncertainty in an unfamiliar city I would think to call 911.

People also care about their public images. When Robert Cialdini and colleagues (1975) asked some of their Arizona State University students to chaperone delinquent children on a zoo trip, only 32 percent agreed to do so. With other students the questioner first made a very large request—that the students commit 2 years as volunteer counselors to delinquent children. After getting the **door-in-the-face** in response to this request (all refused), the questioner then counteroffered with the chaperoning request, saying, in effect, "OK, if you won't do that, would you do just this much?" With this technique, nearly twice as many—56 percent—agreed to help.

Cialdini and David Schroeder (1976) offer another practical way to trigger concern for self-image: Ask for a contribution so small that it's hard to say no without feeling like a Scrooge. Cialdini (1995) discovered this when a United Way canvasser came to his door. As she solicited his contribution, he was mentally preparing his refusal—until she said magic words that demolished his financial excuse: "Even a penny will help." "I had been neatly finessed into compliance," recalled Cialdini. "And there was another interesting feature of our exchange as well. When I stopped coughing (I really had choked on my attempted rejection), I gave her not the penny she had mentioned but the amount I usually allot to legitimate charity solicitors. At that, she thanked me, smiled innocently, and moved on."

Was Cialdini's response atypical? To find out, he and Schroeder had a solicitor approach suburbanites. When the solicitor said, "I'm collecting money for the American Cancer Society," 29 percent contributed an average of \$1.44 each. When the solicitor added, "Even a penny will help," 50 percent contributed an average of \$1.54 each. When James Weyant (1984) repeated this experiment, he found similar

### door-in-the-face technique

A strategy for gaining a concession. After someone first turns down a large request (the door-in-the-face), the same requester counteroffers with a more reasonable request.



Door-in-the-face technique.  
HI & LOIS © King Features Syndicate.

results: The “even a penny will help” boosted the number contributing from 39 to 57 percent. And when 6,000 people were solicited by mail for the American Cancer Society, those asked for small amounts were more likely to give—and gave no less on average—than those asked for larger amounts (Weyant & Smith, 1987). When previous donors are approached, bigger requests (within reason) do elicit bigger donations (Doob & McLaughlin, 1989). But with door-to-door solicitation, there is more success with requests for small contributions, which are difficult to turn down and still allow the person to maintain an altruistic self-image.

Labeling people as helpful can also strengthen a helpful self-image. After they had made charitable contributions, Robert Kraut (1973) told some Connecticut women, “You are a generous person.” Two weeks later, these women were more willing than those not so labeled to contribute to a different charity.

## Socializing Altruism

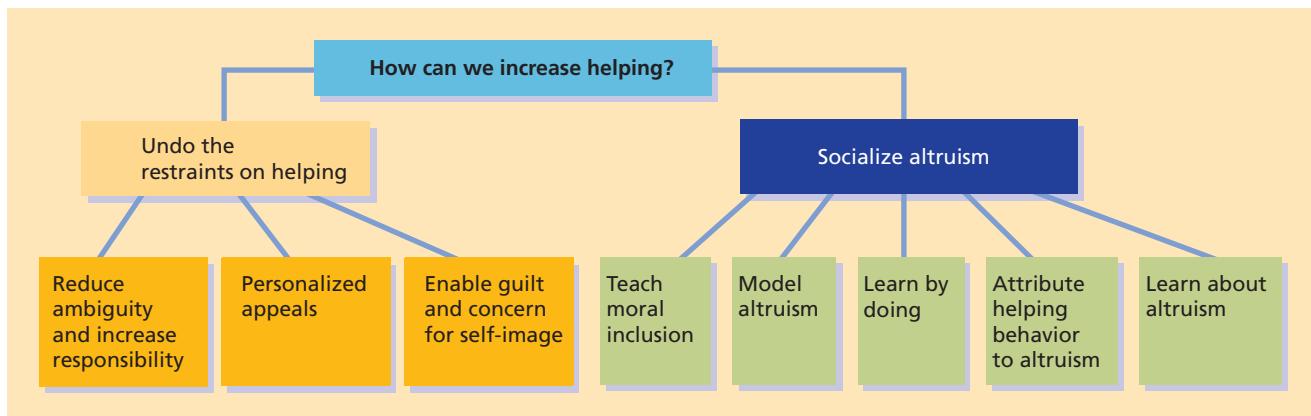
How might we socialize altruism? Here are five ways (Figure 12.11).

### TEACHING MORAL INCLUSION

Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe, leaders of the antislavery movement, and medical missionaries shared at least one common trait: They were *morally inclusive*. Their moral concern encircled diverse people. One rescuer faked a pregnancy on behalf of a pregnant hidden Jew—thus including the soon-to-be-born child within the circle of her own children’s identities (Fogelman, 1994).

**Moral exclusion**—omitting certain people from one’s circle of moral concern—has the opposite effect. It justifies all sorts of harm, from discrimination to genocide (Opotow, 1990; Staub, 2005a; Tyler & Lind, 1990). Exploitation or cruelty becomes acceptable, even appropriate, toward those whom we regard as undeserving or as nonpersons. The Nazis excluded Jews from their moral community. Anyone who participates in enslavement, death squads, or torture practices a similar exclusion. To a lesser extent, moral exclusion describes those of us who concentrate our concerns, favors, and financial inheritance upon “our people” (for example, our children) to the exclusion of others.

It also describes restrictions in the public empathy for the human costs of war. Reported war deaths are typically “our deaths.” Many Americans, for example, know that some 58,000 Americans died in the Vietnam War (their 58,248 names are inscribed on the Vietnam War Memorial). But few Americans know that the war also left some 2 million Vietnamese dead. During the Iraq War, news of American fatalities—nearly 4,500 by the end of 2011—caused much more concern than the



**FIGURE :: 12.11**  
Practical Ways to Increase Helping

little-known number of Iraqi deaths, for which a low range of estimates published by leading medical journals was more than 150,000 (Alkhuzai & others, 2008).

We easily become numbed by impersonal big numbers of outgroup fatalities, note Paul Slovic (2007) and Elizabeth Dunn and Claire Ashton-James (2008). People presume that they would be more upset about a hurricane that killed 5,000 rather than 50 people. But whether Dunn and Ashton-James told people that Hurricane Katrina claimed 50, 500, 1,000, or 5,000 lives, their sadness was unaffected by the number. Ditto for the scale of other tragedies, including a forest fire in Spain and the war in Iraq. "If I look at the mass I will never act," said Mother Teresa. "If I look at the one, I will." Shown a single victim, a 7-year-old girl named Rokia, people responded with more money for a hunger charity than when told the organization was working to save millions (Slovic & Västfjäll, 2010).

A first step toward socializing altruism is therefore to counter the natural ingroup bias favoring kin and tribe by personalizing and broadening the range of people whose well-being should concern us. Daniel Batson (1983) notes how religious teachings do this. They extend the reach of kin-linked altruism by urging "brotherly and sisterly" love toward all "children of God" in the whole human "family." If everyone is part of our family, then everyone has a moral claim on us. The boundaries between "we" and "they" fade. Inviting advantaged people to put themselves in others' shoes, to imagine how they feel, also helps (Batson & others, 2003). To "do unto others as you would have them do unto you," one must take the others' perspective.

## MODELING ALTRUISM

Previously, we noted that seeing unresponsive bystanders makes us less likely to help. People reared by extremely punitive parents, as were many delinquents and chronic criminals, also show much less of the empathy and principled caring that typify altruists.

**REAL-LIFE MODELING** If, however, we see or read about someone helping, we become more likely to offer assistance. It's better, noted Robert Cialdini and co-workers (2003), *not* to publicize rampant tax cheating, littering, and teen drinking, and instead to emphasize—to define a norm of—people's widespread honesty, cleanliness, and abstinence. In one experiment, they asked visitors not to remove petrified wood from along the paths of the Petrified Forest National Park. Some were also told that "past visitors have removed the petrified wood." Other people who were told that "past visitors have left the petrified wood" to preserve the park were much less likely to pick up samples placed along a path.

Modeling effects were also apparent within the families of European Christians who risked their lives to rescue Jews and of American civil rights activists. These exceptional altruists typically reported having warm and close relationships with at least one parent who was, similarly, a strong "moralist" or committed to humanitarian causes (London, 1970; Oliner & Oliner, 1988; Rosenhan, 1970). Their families—and often their friends and churches—had taught them the norm of helping and caring for others. This "prosocial value orientation" led them to include people from other groups in their circle of moral concern and to feel responsible for others' welfare, reported altruism researcher Ervin Staub (1989, 1991, 1992).

Staub (1999) knows of what he speaks: "As a young Jewish child in Budapest I survived the Holocaust, the destruction of most European Jews by Nazi Germany and its allies. My life was saved by a Christian woman who repeatedly endangered her life to help me and my family, and by Raoul Wallenberg, the Swede who came to Budapest and with courage, brilliance, and complete commitment saved the lives of tens of thousands of Jews destined for the gas chambers. These two heroes were not passive bystanders, and my work is one of the ways for me not to be one." (See "Focus On: Behavior and Attitudes Among Rescuers of Jews.")

**MEDIA MODELING** Do television's positive models promote helping, much as its aggressive portrayals promote aggression? Prosocial TV models have actually

"WE CONSIDER HUMAN-KIND OUR FAMILY."

—PARLIAMENT OF THE WORLD  
RELIGIONS, TOWARDS A  
GLOBAL ETHIC, 1993

"CHILDREN CAN LEARN TO BE ALTRUISTIC, FRIENDLY, AND SELF-CONTROLLED BY LOOKING AT TELEVISION PROGRAMS DEPICTING SUCH BEHAVIOR PATTERNS."

—NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH, TELEVISION

AND BEHAVIOR, 1982

had even greater effects than antisocial models. Susan Hearold (1986) statistically combined 108 comparisons of prosocial programs with neutral programs or no program. She found that, on average, "If the viewer watched prosocial programs instead of neutral programs, he would [at least temporarily] be elevated from the 50th to the 74th percentile in prosocial behavior—typically altruism."

In one such study, researchers Lynette Friedrich and Aletha Stein (1973; Stein & Friedrich, 1972) showed preschool children *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* episodes each day for 4 weeks as part of their nursery school program. (*Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* aimed to enhance young children's social and emotional development.) During the viewing period, children from less-educated homes became more cooperative, helpful, and likely to state their feelings. In a follow-up study, kindergartners who viewed four *Mister Rogers'* programs were able to state the show's prosocial content, both on a test and in puppet play (Friedrich & Stein, 1975; also Coates & others, 1976).

Other media also effectively model prosocial behavior. Recent studies show positive effects on attitudes or behavior from playing prosocial video games and listening to prosocial music lyrics (Gentile & others, 2009; Greitemeyer, 2009; Greitemeyer & others, 2010). For example, playing *Lemmings*, where the goal is to help others, increases later real-life empathy and helping in response to another's misfortune (Greitemeyer & Osswald, 2010; Greitemeyer & others, 2010). Listening to prosocial songs, such as Michael Jackson's "Heal the World," made listeners more likely to help someone pick up dropped pencils and less likely to say harsh things about a job candidate or give someone a large dose of disliked chili sauce (Greitemeyer, 2009, 2011).

## focus ON

### Behavior and Attitudes Among Rescuers of Jews

Goodness, like evil, often evolves in small steps. The Gentiles who saved Jews often began with a small commitment—to hide someone for a day or two. Having taken that step, they began to see themselves differently, as people who help. Then they became more intensely involved. Given control of a confiscated Jewish-owned factory, Oskar Schindler began by doing small favors for his Jewish workers, who were earning him handsome profits. Gradually, he took greater and greater risks to protect them. He got permission to set up workers' housing next to the factory. He rescued individuals separated from their families and reunited loved ones. Finally, as the Russians advanced, he saved some 1,200 Jews by setting up a fake factory in his hometown and taking along his entire group of "skilled workers" to staff it.

Others, such as Raoul Wallenberg, began by agreeing to a personal request for help and ended up repeatedly risking their lives. Wallenberg became Swedish ambassador to Hungary, where he saved tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews from extermination at Auschwitz. One of those given protective identity papers was 6-year-old Ervin Staub, now a University of Massachusetts social psychologist whose experience set him on a lifelong

mission to understand why some people perpetrate evil, some stand by, and some help.



Munich, 1948. Oskar Schindler with some of the Jews he saved from the Nazis during World War II.

*Source:* Rappoport & Kren (1993).

## LEARNING BY DOING

Ervin Staub (2005b) has shown that just as immoral behavior fuels immoral attitudes, so helping increases future helping. Children and adults learn by doing. In a series of studies with children near age 12, Staub and his students found that after children were induced to make toys for hospitalized children or for an art teacher, they became more helpful. So were children after teaching younger children to make puzzles or use first aid.

When children act helpfully, they develop helping-related values, beliefs, and skills, notes Staub. Helping also helps satisfy their needs for a positive self-concept. On a larger scale, “service learning” and volunteer programs woven into a school curriculum have been shown to increase later citizen involvement, social responsibility, cooperation, and leadership (Andersen, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Attitudes follow behavior. Helpful actions therefore promote the self-perception that one is caring and helpful, which in turn promotes further helping.

## ATTRIBUTING HELPFUL BEHAVIOR TO ALTRUISTIC MOTIVES

Another clue to socializing altruism comes from research on what Chapter 4 called the **overjustification effect**: When the justification for an act is more than sufficient, the person may attribute the act to the extrinsic justification rather than to an inner motive. Rewarding people for doing what they would do anyway therefore undermines intrinsic motivation. We can state the principle positively: By providing people with just enough justification to prompt a good deed (weaning them from bribes and threats), we may increase their pleasure in doing such deeds on their own.

Daniel Batson and associates (1978, 1979) put the overjustification phenomenon to work. In several experiments, they found that University of Kansas students felt most altruistic after they agreed to help someone without payment or implied social pressure. When pay had been offered or social pressures were present, people felt less altruistic after helping.

In another experiment, the researchers led students to attribute a helpful act to compliance (“I guess we really don’t have a choice”) or to compassion (“The guy really needs help”). Later, when the students were asked to volunteer their time to a local service agency, 25 percent of those who had been led to perceive their previous helpfulness as mere compliance now volunteered; of those led to see themselves as compassionate, 60 percent volunteered. The moral? When people wonder, “Why am I helping?” it’s best if the circumstances enable them to answer, “Because help was needed, and I am a caring, giving, helpful person.”

To predispose more people to help in situations in which most don’t, it can also pay to induce a tentative positive commitment, from which people may infer their own helpfulness. Delia Cioffi and Randy Garner (1998) observed that only about 5 percent of students responded to a campus blood drive after receiving an e-mail announcement a week ahead. They asked other students to reply to the announcement with a yes “if you think you probably will donate.” Of those, 29 percent did reply and the actual donation rate was 8 percent. They asked a third group to reply with a no if they did *not* anticipate donating. Now 71 percent implied they might give (by not replying). Imagine yourself in this third group. Might you have decided not to say no because, after all, you *are* a caring person so there’s a chance you might give? And might that thought have opened you to persuasion as you encountered campus posters and flyers during the ensuing week? That apparently is what happened, because 12 percent of these students—more than twice the normal rate—showed up to offer their blood.

Inferring that one is a helpful person seems also to have happened when Dariusz Dolinski (2000) stopped pedestrians on the streets of Wroclaw, Poland, and asked them for directions to a nonexistent “Zubrzyckiego Street” or to an illegible address. Everyone tried unsuccessfully to help. After doing so, about two-thirds

### overjustification effect

The result of bribing people to do what they already like doing; they may then see their actions as externally controlled rather than intrinsically appealing.

(twice the number of those not given the opportunity to try to help) agreed when asked by someone 100 meters farther down the road to watch their heavy bag or bicycle for 5 minutes.

### LEARNING ABOUT ALTRUISM

Researchers have found another way to boost altruism, one that provides a happy conclusion to this chapter. Some social psychologists worry that as people become more aware of social psychology's findings, their behavior may change, thus invalidating the findings (Gergen, 1982). Will learning about the factors that inhibit altruism reduce their influence? Philip Zimbardo, whose "Heroism Project" aims to strengthen people's courage and compassion, contends that the first step to becoming a hero is recognizing social pressures that might deter your bystander action (Miller, 2011).

Experiments with University of Montana students by Arthur Beaman and colleagues (1978) revealed that once people understand why the presence of bystanders inhibits helping, they become more likely to help in group situations. The researchers used a lecture to inform some students how bystander inaction can affect the interpretation of an emergency and feelings of responsibility. Other students heard either a different lecture or no lecture at all. Two weeks later, as part of a different experiment in a different location, the participants found themselves walking (with an unresponsive confederate) past someone slumped over or past a person sprawled beneath a bicycle. Of those who had not heard the helping lecture, one-fourth paused to offer help; twice as many of those "enlightened" did so.

Having read this chapter, perhaps you, too, have changed. As you come to understand what influences people's responses, will your attitudes and your behavior be the same?

## SUMMING UP: How Can We Increase Helping?

Research suggests that we can enhance helpfulness in three ways.

- First, we can reverse those factors that inhibit helping. We can take steps to reduce the ambiguity of an emergency, to make a personal appeal, and to increase feelings of responsibility.
- Second, we can even use reprimands or the *door-in-the-face technique* to evoke guilt feelings or a concern for self-image.
- Third, we can teach altruism. Research into television's portrayals of prosocial models shows the

medium's power to teach positive behavior. Children who view helpful behavior tend to act helpfully. If we want to promote altruistic behavior, we should remember the *overjustification effect*: When we coerce good deeds, intrinsic love of the activity often diminishes. If we provide people with enough justification for them to decide to do good, but not much more, they will attribute their behavior to their own altruistic motivation and henceforth be more willing to help. Learning about altruism, as you have just done, can also prepare people to perceive and respond to others' needs.

## POSTSCRIPT: Taking Social Psychology Into Life

Those of us who research, teach, and write about social psychology do so believing that our work matters. It engages humanly significant phenomena. Studying social psychology can therefore expand our thinking and prepare us to live and act with greater awareness and compassion, or so we presume.

How good it feels, then, when students and former students confirm our presumptions with stories of how they have related social psychology to their

lives. Shortly before I wrote the last paragraph, a former student, now living in Washington, D.C., stopped by. She mentioned that she recently found herself part of a stream of pedestrians striding past a man lying unconscious on the sidewalk. “It took my mind back to our social psych class and the accounts of why people fail to help in such situations. Then I thought, ‘Well, if I just walk by, too, who’s going to help him?’” So she made a call to an emergency help number and waited with the victim—and other bystanders who now joined her—until help arrived.

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CHAPTER  
**13**

# Conflict and Peacemaking



**"If you want peace, work for justice."**

—Pope Paul VI

**What creates conflict?**

**How can peace be achieved?**

**Postscript: The conflict between individual and communal rights**

There is a speech that has been spoken in many languages by the leaders of many countries. It goes like this: "The intentions of our country are entirely peaceful. Yet, we are also aware that other nations, with their new weapons, threaten us. Thus we must defend ourselves against attack. By so doing, we shall protect our way of life and preserve the peace" (Richardson, 1960). Almost every nation claims concern only for peace but, mistrusting other nations, arms itself in self-defense. The result is a world that has been spending \$5 billion per day on arms and armies while hundreds of millions die of malnutrition and untreated disease (SIPRI, 2011).

The elements of such **conflict** (a perceived incompatibility of actions or goals) are similar at many levels: conflict between nations in an arms race, between religious factions disputing points of doctrine, between corporate executives and workers disputing salaries, and between bickering spouses. People in conflict perceive that one side's gain is the other's loss:

- "We want peace and security." "So do we, but you threaten us."
- "I'd like the music off." "I'd like it on."
- "We want more pay." "We can't afford it."

A relationship or an organization without conflict is probably apathetic. Conflict signifies involvement, commitment, and caring. If conflict

As civil rights leaders know, creatively managed conflicts can have constructive outcomes.

### conflict

A perceived incompatibility of actions or goals.

### peace

A condition marked by low levels of hostility and aggression and by mutually beneficial relationships.



is understood and recognized, it can end oppression and stimulate renewed and improved human relations. Harmony occurs when justice and mutual respect prevail but also when “everyone knows their place” in an unjust world (Dixon & others, 2010). Without conflict, people seldom face and resolve their problems.

Genuine **peace** is more than the suppression of open conflict, more than a fragile, superficial calm. Peace is the outcome of a creatively managed conflict. Peace is the parties reconciling their perceived differences and reaching genuine accord. “We got our increased

pay. You got your increased profit. Now each of us is helping the other achieve the organization’s goals.” Peace, says peace researcher Royce Anderson (2004), “is a condition in which individuals, families, groups, communities, and/or nations experience low levels of violence and engage in mutually harmonious relationships.”

In this chapter we explore conflict and peacemaking by asking what factors create or exacerbate conflict, and what factors contribute to peace:

- What social situations feed conflict?
- How do misperceptions fuel conflict?
- Does contact with the other side reduce conflict?
- When do cooperation, communication, and mediation enable reconciliation?

## WHAT CREATES CONFLICT?

### Explain what feeds conflict.

Social-psychological studies have identified several ingredients of conflict. What’s striking (and what simplifies our task) is that these ingredients are common to all levels of social conflict, whether international, intergroup, or interpersonal.

### Social Dilemmas

Several of the problems that most threaten our human future—nuclear arms, climate change, overpopulation, natural-resource depletion—arise as various parties pursue their self-interests, ironically, to their collective detriment. One individual may think, “It would cost me a lot to buy expensive greenhouse emission controls. Besides, the greenhouse gases I personally generate are trivial.” Many others reason

similarly, and the result is a warming climate, melting ice cover, rising seas, and more extreme weather.

In some societies, parents benefit by having many children who can assist with the family tasks and provide security in their old age. But when most families have many children generation after generation, the result is the collective devastation of overpopulation. Choices that are individually rewarding become collectively punishing. We therefore have a dilemma: How can we reconcile individual self-interest with communal well-being?

To isolate and study that dilemma, social psychologists have used laboratory games that expose the heart of many real social conflicts. "Social psychologists who study conflict are in much the same position as the astronomers," noted conflict researcher Morton Deutsch (1999). "We cannot conduct true experiments with large-scale social events. But we can identify the conceptual similarities between the large scale and the small, as the astronomers have between the planets and Newton's apple. That is why the games people play as subjects in our laboratory may advance our understanding of war, peace, and social justice."

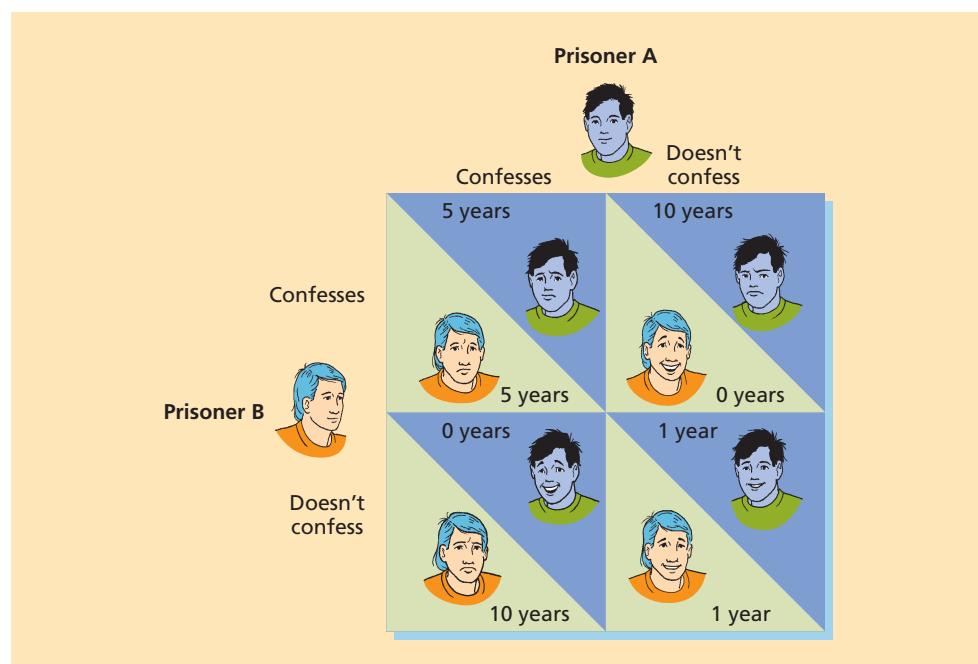
Let's consider two laboratory games that are each an example of a **social trap**: the Prisoner's Dilemma and the Tragedy of the Commons.

### THE PRISONER'S DILEMMA

This dilemma derives from an anecdote concerning two suspects being questioned separately by the district attorney (DA) (Rapoport, 1960). The DA knows they are jointly guilty but has only enough evidence to convict them of a lesser offense. So the DA creates an incentive for each one to confess privately:

- If Prisoner A confesses and Prisoner B doesn't, the DA will grant immunity to A and will use A's confession to convict B of a maximum offense (and vice versa if B confesses and A doesn't).
- If both confess, each will receive a moderate sentence.
- If neither prisoner confesses, each will be convicted of a lesser crime and receive a light sentence.

The matrix of Figure 13.1 summarizes the choices. If you were a prisoner faced with such a dilemma, with no chance to talk to the other prisoner, would you confess?



### **social trap**

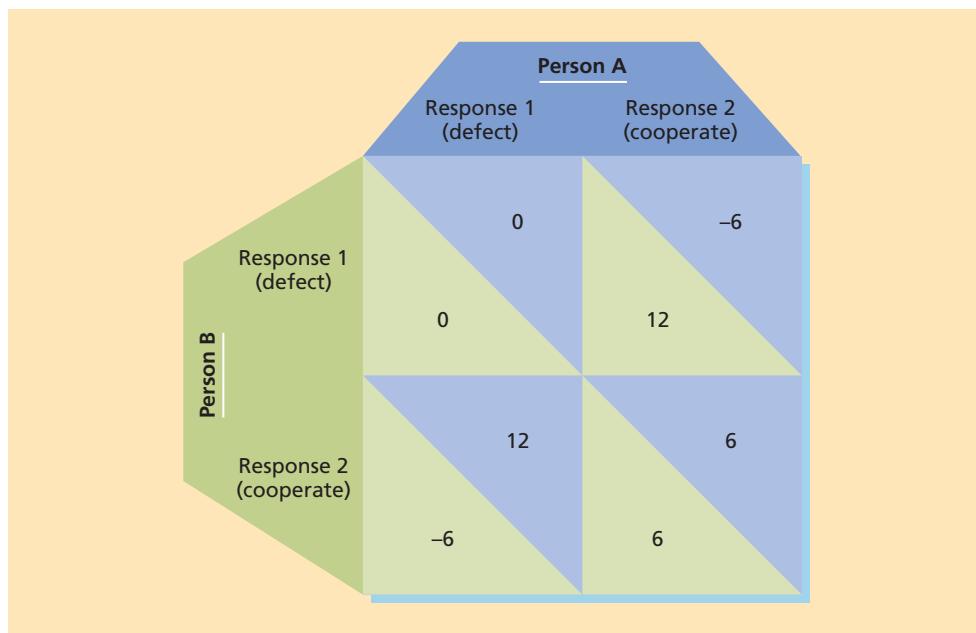
A situation in which the conflicting parties, by each rationally pursuing its self-interest, become caught in mutually destructive behavior. Examples include the Prisoner's Dilemma and the Tragedy of the Commons.

**FIGURE :: 13.1**  
**The Classic Prisoner's Dilemma**

In each box, the number above the diagonal is prisoner A's outcome. Thus, if both prisoners confess, both get five years. If neither confesses, each gets a year. If one confesses, that prisoner is set free in exchange for evidence used to convict the other of a crime bringing a 10-year sentence. If you were one of the prisoners, unable to communicate with your fellow prisoner, would you confess?

**FIGURE :: 13.2**  
**Laboratory Version of**  
**the Prisoner's Dilemma**

The numbers represent some reward, such as money. In each box, the number above the diagonal lines is the outcome for person A. Unlike the classic Prisoner's Dilemma (a one-shot decision), most laboratory versions involve repeated plays.



Many people say they would confess to be granted immunity, even though mutual *nonconfession* elicits lighter sentences than mutual confession. Perhaps this is because (as shown in the Figure 13.1 matrix) no matter what the other prisoner decides, each is better off confessing than being convicted individually. If the other also confesses, the sentence is moderate rather than severe. If the other does not confess, one goes free.

University students have faced variations of the Prisoner's Dilemma, with the choices being to defect or to cooperate, and the outcomes not being prison terms but chips, money, or course points. As Figure 13.2 illustrates, on any given decision, a person is better off defecting (because such behavior exploits the other's cooperation or protects against the other's exploitation). However—and here's the rub—by not cooperating, both parties end up far worse off than if they had trusted each other and thus had gained a joint profit. This dilemma often traps each one in a maddening predicament in which both realize they *could* mutually profit. But unable to communicate, and mistrusting each other, they often become "locked in" to not cooperating. Outside the university, examples abound: seemingly intractable and costly conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians over borders, U.S. Republicans and Democrats over taxation and deficits, and professional athletes and team owners over pay.

Punishing another's lack of cooperation might seem like a smart strategy, but in the laboratory it can have counterproductive effects (Dreber & others, 2008). Punishment typically triggers retaliation, which means that those who punish tend to escalate conflict, worsening their outcomes, while nice guys finish first. What punishers see as a defensive reaction, recipients see as an aggressive escalation (Anderson & others, 2008). When hitting back, they may hit harder while seeing themselves as merely returning tit for tat. In one experiment, London volunteers used a mechanical device to press back on another's finger after receiving pressure on their own. While seeking to reciprocate with the same degree of pressure, they typically responded with 40 percent more force. Thus, touches soon escalated to hard presses, much like a child saying "I just touched him, and then he hit me!" (Shergill & others, 2003).

### THE TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS

Many social dilemmas involve more than two parties. Climate change stems from deforestation and from the carbon dioxide emitted by vehicles, furnaces, and coal-fired power plants. Each gas-guzzling SUV contributes infinitesimally to the problem, and

the harm each does is diffused over many people. To model such social predicaments, researchers have developed laboratory dilemmas that involve multiple people.

A metaphor for the insidious nature of social dilemmas is what ecologist Garrett Hardin (1968) called the **Tragedy of the Commons**. He derived the name from the centrally located grassy pasture in old English towns.

In today's world the "commons" can be air, water, fish, cookies, or any shared and limited resource. If all use the resource in moderation, it may replenish itself as rapidly as it's harvested. The grass will grow, the fish will reproduce, and the cookie jar will be restocked. If not, there occurs a tragedy of the commons. Imagine 100 farmers surrounding a commons capable of sustaining 100 cows. When each grazes one cow, the common feeding ground is optimally used. But then a farmer reasons, "If I put a second cow in the pasture, I'll double my output, minus the mere 1 percent overgrazing" and adds a second cow. So does each of the other farmers. The inevitable result? The Tragedy of the Commons—a mud field and famished cows.

Likewise, environmental pollution is the sum of many minor pollutions, each of which benefits the individual polluters much more than they could benefit themselves (and the environment) if they stopped polluting. We litter public places—dorm lounges, parks, zoos—while keeping our personal spaces clean. We deplete our natural resources because the immediate personal benefits of, for instance, taking a long, hot shower outweigh the seemingly inconsequential costs. Whalers knew others would exploit the whales if they didn't, and that taking a few whales would hardly diminish the species. Therein lies the tragedy. *Everybody's business (conservation) becomes nobody's business.*

Is such individualism uniquely American? Kaori Sato (1987) gave students in a more collective culture, Japan, opportunities to harvest—for actual money—trees from a simulated forest. The students shared equally the costs of planting the forest. The result was like those in Western cultures. More than half the trees were harvested before they had grown to the most profitable size.

Sato's forest reminds me of our home's cookie jar, which was restocked once a week. What we *should* have done was conserve cookies so that each day we could each enjoy two or three. But lacking regulation and fearing that other family members would soon deplete the resource, what we actually did was maximize our individual cookie consumption by downing one after the other. The result: Within 24 hours the cookie glut would often end, the jar sitting empty for the rest of the week.

When resources are not partitioned, people often consume more than they realize (Herlocker & others, 1997). As a bowl of mashed potatoes is passed around a table of 10, the first few diners are more likely to scoop out a disproportionate share than when a platter of 10 chicken drumsticks is passed.

The Prisoner's Dilemma and the Tragedy of the Commons games have several similar features.

## THE FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR

First, both games tempt people to *explain their own behavior situationally* ("I had to protect myself against exploitation by my opponent") and to explain their partners' behavior dispositionally ("she was greedy," "he was untrustworthy"). Most never realize that their counterparts are viewing them with the same fundamental attribution error (Gifford & Hine, 1997; Hine & Gifford, 1996). People with self-inflating, self-focused narcissistic tendencies are especially unlikely to empathize with others' perspectives (Campbell & others, 2005).

## EVOLVING MOTIVES

Second, *motives often change*. At first, people are eager to make some easy money, then to minimize their losses, and finally to save face and avoid defeat (Brockner & others, 1982; Teger, 1980). These shifting motives are strikingly similar to the shifting motives during the buildup of the 1960s Vietnam War. At first, President Johnson's speeches expressed concern for democracy, freedom, and justice. As the conflict escalated, his

## Tragedy of the Commons

The "commons" is any shared resource, including air, water, energy sources, and food supplies. The tragedy occurs when individuals consume more than their share, with the cost of their doing so dispersed among all, causing the ultimate collapse—the tragedy—of the commons.

concern became protecting America's honor and avoiding the national humiliation of losing a war. A similar shift occurred during the war in Iraq, which was initially proposed as a response to Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction.

### OUTCOMES NEED NOT SUM TO ZERO

**non-zero-sum games**  
Games in which outcomes need not sum to zero. With cooperation, both can win; with competition, both can lose (also called *mixed-motive situations*).

Third, most real-life conflicts, like the Prisoner's Dilemma and the Tragedy of the Commons, are **non-zero-sum games**. The two sides' profits and losses need not add up to zero. Both can win; both can lose. Each game pits the immediate interests of individuals against the well-being of the group. Each is a diabolical social trap that shows how, even when each individual behaves "rationally," harm can result. No malicious person planned for the earth's atmosphere to be warmed by a carbon dioxide blanket.

Not all self-serving behavior leads to collective doom. In a plentiful commons—as in the world of the eighteenth-century capitalist economist Adam Smith (1776, p. 18)—individuals who seek to maximize their own profit may also give the community what it needs: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner," he observed, "but from their regard to their own interest."

### RESOLVING SOCIAL DILEMMAS

Faced with social traps, how can we induce people to cooperate for their mutual betterment? Research with the laboratory dilemmas reveals several ways (Gifford & Hine, 1997).

**REGULATION** If taxes were entirely voluntary, how many would pay their full share? Modern societies do not depend on charity to pay for schools, parks, and social and military security. We also develop rules to safeguard our common good. Fishing and hunting have long been regulated by local seasons and limits; at the global level, an International Whaling Commission sets an agreed-upon "harvest" that enables whales to regenerate. Likewise, where fishing industries, such as the Alaskan halibut fishery, have implemented "catch shares"—guaranteeing each fisher a percentage of each year's allowable catch—competition and overfishing have been greatly reduced (Costello & others, 2008).

In everyday life, however, regulation has costs—costs of administering and enforcing the regulations, costs of diminished personal freedom. A volatile political question thus arises: At what point does a regulation's cost exceed its benefits?

**SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL** There is another way to resolve social dilemmas: Make the group small. In a small commons, each person feels more responsible and effective (Kerr, 1989). As a group grows larger, people become more likely to think, "I couldn't have made a difference anyway"—a common excuse for noncooperation (Kerr & Kaufman-Gilliland, 1997).

Small is cooperative. On the Isle of Muck, off Scotland's west coast, Constable Lawrence MacEwan has had an easy time policing the island's residents, recently numbering 33. Over his 40 years on the job, there was never a crime (*Scottish Life*, 2001). In 2010, a row between two friends who had been drinking at a wedding became the first recorded crime in 50 years, but the next morning, they shook hands and all was well (Cameron, 2010).



In small groups, people also feel more identified with a group's success. Residential stability also strengthens communal identity and procommunity behavior (Oishi & others, 2007).

In small groups—in contrast to large ones—individuals are less likely to take more than their equal share of available resources (Allison & others, 1992). On the Pacific Northwest island where I grew up, our small neighborhood shared a communal water supply. On hot summer days when the reservoir ran low, a light came on, signaling our 15 families to conserve. Recognizing our responsibility to one another, and feeling that our conservation really mattered, each of us conserved. Never did the reservoir run dry.

In a much larger commons—say, a city—voluntary conservation is less successful. Because the harm one does diffuses across many others, each individual can rationalize away personal accountability. Some political theorists and social psychologists therefore argue that, where feasible, the commons should be divided into smaller territories (Edney, 1980). In his 1902 *Mutual Aid*, the Russian revolutionary Pyotr Kropotkin set down a vision of small communities rather than central government making consensus decisions for the benefit of all (Gould, 1988).

Evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar (1992, 2010) notes that hunter-gatherer societies often travel together as groups of 30 to 35 people, that tribal villages and clans often have averaged about 150 people—enough to afford mutual support and protection but not more people than one can monitor. He suspects it's not a coincidence that the average number of Facebook friends—about 125—echoes the size of our ancestral tribal villages, which reflect the number of people with whom we can have meaningful, supportive relationships. This seemingly natural group size is also, he believes, the optimum size for business organizations, religious congregations, and military fighting units.

**COMMUNICATION** To resolve a social dilemma, people must communicate. In the laboratory as in real life, group communication sometimes degenerates into threats and name-calling (Deutsch & Krauss, 1960). More often, communication enables cooperation (Bornstein & others, 1988, 1989). Discussing the dilemma forges a group identity, which enhances concern for everyone's welfare. It devises group norms and expectations and pressures members to follow them. Especially when people are face-to-face, it enables them to commit themselves to cooperation (Bouas & Komorita, 1996; Drolet & Morris, 2000; Kerr & others, 1994, 1997; Pruitt, 1998).

A clever experiment by Robyn Dawes (1980, 1994) illustrates the importance of communication. Imagine that an experimenter offered you and six strangers a choice: You can each have \$6, or you can donate your \$6 to the others. If you give away your money, the experimenter will double your gift. No one will be told whether you chose to give or keep your \$6. Thus, if all seven give, everyone pockets \$12. If you alone keep your \$6 and all the others give theirs, you pocket \$18. If you give and the others keep, you pocket nothing. In this experiment, cooperation is mutually advantageous, but it requires risk. Dawes found that, without discussion, about 30 percent of people gave. With discussion, in which they could establish trust and cooperation, about 80 percent gave.

Open, clear, forthright communication between two parties reduces mistrust. Without communication, those who expect others not to cooperate will usually refuse to cooperate themselves (Messé & Sivacek, 1979; Pruitt & Kimmel, 1977). One who mistrusts is almost sure to be uncooperative (to protect against exploitation). Noncooperation, in turn, feeds further mistrust ("What else could I do? It's a dog-eat-dog world"). In experiments, communication reduces mistrust, enabling people to reach agreements that lead to their common betterment.

**CHANGING THE PAYOFFS** Laboratory cooperation rises when experimenters change the payoff matrix to reward cooperation and punish exploitation (Balliet & others, 2011). Changing payoffs also helps resolve actual dilemmas. In some cities, freeways clog and skies collect smog because people prefer the convenience

"FOR THAT WHICH  
IS COMMON TO THE  
GREATEST NUMBER  
HAS THE LEAST CARE  
BESTOWED UPON IT."

—ARISTOTLE

"MY OWN BELIEF IS THAT  
RUSSIAN AND CHINESE  
BEHAVIOR IS AS MUCH  
INFLUENCED BY SUSPICION  
OF OUR INTENTIONS AS  
OURS IS BY SUSPICION  
OF THEIRS. THIS WOULD  
MEAN THAT WE HAVE  
GREAT INFLUENCE ON  
THEIR BEHAVIOR—THAT,  
BY TREATING THEM AS  
HOSTILE, WE ASSURE THEIR  
HOSTILITY."

—U.S. SENATOR J. WILLIAM  
FULBRIGHT (1971)



To change behavior, many cities have changed the payoff matrix. Fast carpool-only lanes increase the benefits of carpooling and the costs of driving alone.

of driving themselves directly to work. Each knows that one more car does not add noticeably to the congestion and pollution. To alter the personal cost-benefit calculations, many cities now give carpoolers incentives, such as designated freeway lanes or reduced tolls.

**APPEALING TO ALTRUISTIC NORMS** In Chapter 12 we saw how increasing bystanders' feelings of responsibility for others boosts altruism. Will appeals to altruistic motives similarly prompt people to act for the common good?

The evidence is mixed. On the one hand, just *knowing* the dire consequences of noncooperation has little effect. In laboratory games, people realize that their self-serving choices are mutually destructive, yet they continue to make them. Outside the laboratory, warnings of doom and appeals to conserve have brought little response. Shortly after taking office in 1976, President Carter declared that America's response to the energy crisis should be "the moral equivalent of war" and urged conservation. The following summer, Americans consumed more gasoline than ever before. At the beginning of this new century, people knew that global warming was under way—and were buying gas-slurping SUVs in record numbers. As we have seen many times in this book, attitudes sometimes fail to influence behavior. *Knowing* what is good does not necessarily lead to *doing* what is good.

Still, most people do adhere to norms of social responsibility, reciprocity, equity, and keeping one's commitments (Kerr, 1992). The problem is how to tap such feelings. One way is through the influence of a charismatic leader who inspires others to cooperate (De Cremer, 2002). Another way is by defining situations in ways that invoke cooperative norms. In one experiment, only a third of participants cooperated in a simulation labeled the "Wall Street Game." Two-thirds did so when the same social dilemma was labeled the "Community Game" (Liberman & others, 2004).

Communication can also activate altruistic norms. When permitted to communicate, participants in laboratory games frequently appeal to the social-responsibility norm: "If you defect on the rest of us, you're going to have to live with it for the rest of your life" (Dawes & others, 1977). So researcher Robyn Dawes (1980) and his associates gave participants a short sermon about group benefits, exploitation, and ethics. Then the participants played a dilemma game. The sermon worked: People chose to forgo immediate personal gain for the common good. (Recall, too, from Chapter 12, the disproportionate volunteerism and charitable contributions by people who regularly hear religious sermons.)

Could such appeals work in large-scale dilemmas? In the 1960s struggle for civil rights, many marchers willingly agreed, for the sake of the larger group, to suffer harassment, beatings, and jail. In wartime, people make great personal sacrifices for the good of their group. As Winston Churchill said of the Battle of Britain, the actions of the Royal Air Force pilots were genuinely altruistic: A great many people owed a great deal to those who flew into battle knowing there was a high probability—70 percent for those on a standard tour of duty—that they would not return (Levinson, 1950).

To summarize, we can minimize destructive entrapment in social dilemmas by establishing rules that regulate self-serving behavior, by keeping groups small, by enabling people to communicate, by changing payoffs to make cooperation more rewarding, and by invoking compelling altruistic norms.

## Competition

Hostilities often arise when groups compete for scarce jobs, housing, or resources. When interests clash, conflict erupts—a phenomenon Chapter 9 identified as *realistic group conflict*. As one Algerian immigrant to France explained after Muslim youth rioted in

"NEVER IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN CONFLICT WAS SO MUCH OWED BY SO MANY TO SO FEW."

—SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL,  
HOUSE OF COMMONS,  
AUGUST 20, 1940

dozens of French cities in the autumn of 2005, "There is no exit, no factories, no jobs for them. They see too much injustice" (Sciolino, 2005). "We are the 99 percent. Economic justice is overdue," declared the Occupy Wall Street protestors in 2011, expressing their displeasure with 1 percent of Americans controlling 40 percent of the nation's wealth.

To experiment on competition's effect, we could randomly divide people into two groups, have the groups compete for a scarce resource, and note what happens. That is precisely what Muzafer Sherif (1966) and his colleagues did in a dramatic series of experiments with typical 11- and 12-year-old boys. The inspiration for those experiments dated back to Sherif's witnessing, as a teenager, Greek troops invading his Turkish province in 1919.

They started killing people right and left. [That] made a great impression on me. There and then I became interested in understanding why these things were happening among human beings. . . . I wanted to learn whatever science or specialization was needed to understand this intergroup savagery. (quoted by Aron & Aron, 1989, p. 131)

After studying the social roots of savagery, Sherif introduced the seeming essentials into several three-week summer camping experiences. In one study, he divided 22 unacquainted Oklahoma City boys into two groups, took them to a Boy Scout camp in separate buses, and settled them in bunkhouses about a half-mile apart at Oklahoma's Robber's Cave State Park. For most of the first week, each group was unaware of the other's existence. By cooperating in various activities—preparing meals, camping out, fixing up a swimming hole, building a rope bridge—each group soon became close-knit. They gave themselves names: "Rattlers" and "Eagles." Typifying the good feeling, a sign appeared in one cabin: "Home Sweet Home."

Group identity thus established, the stage was set for the conflict. Near the first week's end, the Rattlers discovered the Eagles "on 'our' baseball field." When the camp staff then proposed a tournament of competitive activities between the two groups (baseball games, tugs-of-war, cabin inspections, treasure hunts, and so forth), both groups responded enthusiastically. This was win-lose competition. The spoils (medals, knives) would all go to the tournament victor.

The result? The camp degenerated into open warfare. It was like a scene from William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies*, which depicts the social disintegration of boys marooned on an island. In Sherif's study, the conflict began with each side calling the other names during the competitive activities. Soon it escalated to dining hall "garbage wars," flag burnings, cabin ransackings, even fistfights. Asked to describe the other group, the boys said they were "sneaky," "smart alecks," "stinkers," but referring to their own group as "brave," "tough," "friendly."

The win-lose competition had produced intense conflict, negative images of the outgroup, and strong ingroup cohesiveness and pride. Group polarization no doubt exacerbated the conflict. In competition-fostering situations, groups behave more competitively than do individuals (Wildschut & others, 2003, 2007). Even

*Little-known fact: How did Sherif unobtrusively observe the boys without inhibiting their behavior? He became the camp maintenance man (Williams, 2002).*



Competition kindles conflict. Here, in Sherif's Robber's Cave experiment, one group of boys raids the bunkhouse of another.

after hearing tolerance-advocating messages, ingroup discussion often exacerbates dislike of the conflicting group (Paluck, 2010). All of this occurred without any cultural, physical, or economic differences between the two groups, and with boys who were their communities' "cream of the crop." Sherif noted that, had we visited the camp at that point, we would have concluded these "were wicked, disturbed, and vicious bunches of youngsters" (1966, p. 85). Actually, their evil behavior was triggered by an evil situation.

Competition breeds such conflict, later research has shown, especially when (a) people perceive that resources such as money, jobs, or power are limited and available on a zero-sum basis (others' gain is one's loss), and (b) a distinct outgroup stands out as a potential competitor (Esses & others, 2005). Thus, those who see immigrants as competing for their own jobs will tend to express negative attitudes toward immigrants and immigration.

Fortunately, as we will see, Sherif not only made strangers into enemies; he then also made the enemies into friends.

"DO UNTO OTHERS 20%  
BETTER THAN YOU WOULD  
EXPECT THEM TO DO  
UNTO YOU, TO CORRECT  
FOR SUBJECTIVE ERROR."

—LINUS PAULING (1962)

## Perceived Injustice

"That's unfair!" "What a ripoff!" "We deserve better!" Such comments typify conflicts bred by perceived injustice. But what is "justice"? According to some social-psychological theorists, people perceive justice as equity—the distribution of rewards in proportion to individuals' contributions (Walster & others, 1978). If you and I have a relationship (employer-employee, teacher-student, husband-wife, colleague-colleague), it is equitable if

$$\frac{\text{My outcomes}}{\text{My inputs}} \leq \frac{\text{Your outcomes}}{\text{Your inputs}}$$

If you contribute more and benefit less than I do, you will feel exploited and irritated; I may feel exploitative and guilty. Chances are, though, that you will be more sensitive to the inequity than I will be (Greenberg, 1986; Messick & Sentis, 1979).

We may agree with the equity principle's definition of justice yet disagree on whether our relationship is equitable. If two people are colleagues, what will each consider a relevant input? The older person may favor basing pay on seniority, the other on current productivity. Given such a disagreement, whose definition is likely to prevail? Those with social power usually convince themselves and others that they deserve what they're getting (Mikula, 1984). This has been called a "golden" rule: Whoever has the gold makes the rules.

Critics argue that equity is not the only conceivable definition of justice. (Pause a moment: Can you imagine any other?) Edward Sampson (1975) argued that equity theorists wrongly assume that the economic principles that guide Western, capitalist nations are universal. Some noncapitalist cultures define justice not as equity but as *equality* or even *fulfillment of need*: "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" (Karl Marx). Compared with individualistic Americans, people socialized under the influence of collectivist cultures, such as China and India, define justice more as equality or need fulfillment (Hui & others, 1991; Leung & Bond, 1984; Murphy-Berman & others, 1984).

On what basis *should* rewards be distributed? Merit? Equality? Need? Some combination of those? Political philosopher John Rawls (1971) invited us to consider a future in which our own place on the economic ladder is unknown. Which standard of justice would we prefer?

## Misperception

Recall that conflict is a *perceived* incompatibility of actions or goals. Many conflicts contain but a small core of truly incompatible goals; the bigger problem is the misperceptions of the other's motives and goals. The Eagles and the Rattlers did indeed

have some genuinely incompatible aims. But their perceptions subjectively magnified their differences (Figure 13.3).

In earlier chapters we considered the seeds of such misperception:

- The *self-serving bias* leads individuals and groups to accept credit for their good deeds and shirk responsibility for bad deeds.
- A tendency to *self-justify* inclines people to deny the wrong of their evil acts. (“You call that hitting? I hardly touched him!”)
- Thanks to the *fundamental attribution error*, each side sees the other’s hostility as reflecting an evil disposition.
- One then filters the information and interprets it to fit one’s *preconceptions*.
- Groups frequently *polarize* these self-serving, self-justifying, biasing tendencies.
- One symptom of *groupthink* is the tendency to perceive one’s own group as moral and strong, and the opposition as evil and weak. Acts of terrorism that in most people’s eyes are despicable brutality are seen by others as “holy war.”
- Indeed, the mere fact of being in a group triggers an *ingroup bias*.
- Negative *stereotypes* of the outgroup, once formed, are often resistant to contradictory evidence.

So it should not surprise us, though it should sober us, to discover that people in conflict—people everywhere—form distorted images of one another. Wherever in the world you live, was it not true that when your country was last at war it clothed itself in moral virtue? that it prepared for war by demonizing the enemy? that most of its people accepted their government’s case for war and rallied ‘round its flag? Show social psychologists Ervin Staub and Daniel Bar-Tal (2003) a group in intratable conflict and they will show you a group that

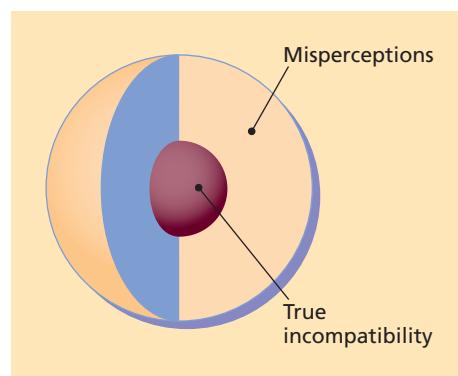
- sees its own goals as supremely important.
- takes pride in “us” and devalues “them.”
- believes itself victimized.
- elevates patriotism, solidarity, and loyalty to their group’s needs.
- celebrates self-sacrifice and suppresses criticism.

Although one side to a conflict may indeed be acting with greater moral virtue, the point is that enemy images are fairly predictable. Even the types of misperception are intriguingly predictable.

## MIRROR-IMAGE PERCEPTIONS

To a striking degree, the misperceptions of those in conflict are mutual. People in conflict attribute similar virtues to themselves and vices to the other. When the American psychologist Uriel Bronfenbrenner (1961) visited the Soviet Union in 1960 and conversed with many ordinary citizens in Russia, he was astonished to hear them saying the same things about America that Americans were saying about Russia. The Russians said that the U.S. government was militarily aggressive; that it exploited and deluded the American people; that in diplomacy, it was not to be trusted. “Slowly and painfully, it forced itself upon one that the Russians’ distorted picture of us was curiously similar to our view of them—a mirror image.”

Analyses of American and Russian perceptions by psychologists (Tobin & Eagles, 1992; White, 1984) and political scientists (Jervis, 1985) revealed that mirror-image



**FIGURE :: 13.3**

Many conflicts contain a core of truly incompatible goals surrounded by a larger exterior of misperceptions.

“AGGRESSION BREEDS  
PATRIOTISM, AND  
PATRIOTISM CURBS  
DISSENT.”

—MAUREEN DOWD, 2003

Self-confirming, mirror-image perceptions are a hallmark of intense conflict.



perceptions persisted into the 1980s. The same action (patrolling the other's coast with submarines, selling arms to smaller nations) seemed more hostile when *they* did it.

When two sides have clashing perceptions, at least one of the two is misperceiving the other. And when such misperceptions exist, noted Bronfenbrenner, "It is a psychological phenomenon without parallel in the gravity of its consequences . . . for *it is characteristic of such images that they are self-confirming*." If A expects B to be hostile, A may treat B in such a way that B fulfills A's expectations, thus beginning a vicious circle (Kennedy & Pronin, 2008). Morton Deutsch (1986) explained:

You hear the false rumor that a friend is saying nasty things about you; you snub him; he then badmouths you, confirming your expectation. Similarly, if the policymakers of East and West believe that war is likely and either attempts to increase its military security vis-à-vis the other, the other's response will justify the initial move.

Negative **mirror-image perceptions** have been an obstacle to peace in many places:

- Both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict insisted that "we" are motivated by our need to protect our security and our territory, whereas "they" want to obliterate us and gobble up our land. "We" are the indigenous people here, "they" are the invaders. "We" are the victims; "they" are the aggressors" (Bar-Tal, 2004; Heradstveit, 1979; Kelman, 2007). Given such intense mistrust, negotiation is difficult.
- At Northern Ireland's University of Ulster, Catholic and Protestant students viewed videos of a Protestant attack at a Catholic funeral and a Catholic attack at a Protestant funeral (Hunter & others, 1991). Most students attributed the other side's attack to "bloodthirsty" motives but its own side's attack to retaliation or self-defense.
- Terrorism is in the eye of the beholder. In the Middle East, a public opinion survey found 98 percent of Palestinians agreeing that the killing of 29 Palestinians by an assault-rifle-bearing Israeli at a mosque constituted terrorism, and 82 percent disagreed that the killing of 21 Israeli youths by a Palestinian suicide-bombing constituted terrorism (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2006). Israelis likewise have responded to violence with intensified perceptions of Palestinian evil intent (Bar-Tal, 2004).

Such conflicts, notes Philip Zimbardo (2004a), engage "a two-category world—of good people, like US, and of bad people, like THEM." "In fact," note Daniel Kahneman and Jonathan Renshon (2007), all the biases uncovered in 40 years of psychological research are conducive to war. They "incline national leaders to exaggerate

the evil intentions of adversaries, to misjudge how adversaries perceive them, to be overly sanguine when hostilities start, and overly reluctant to make necessary concessions in negotiations."

Opposing sides in a conflict tend to exaggerate their differences. On issues such as immigration and affirmative action, proponents aren't as liberal and opponents aren't as conservative as their adversaries suppose (Sherman & others, 2003). Opposing sides also tend to have a "bias blind spot," notes Cynthia McPherson Frantz (2006). They see their own understandings as not biased by their liking or disliking for others; but those who disagree with them seem unfair and biased.

John Chambers, Robert Baron, and Mary Inman (2006) confirmed misperceptions on issues related to abortion and politics. Partisans perceived exaggerated differences from their adversaries (who actually agreed with them more often than they supposed). From exaggerated perceptions of the other's position arise culture wars. Ralph White (1996, 1998) reports that the Serbs started the war in Bosnia partly out of an exaggerated fear of the relatively secularized Bosnian Muslims, whose beliefs they wrongly associated with Middle Eastern Islamic fundamentalism and fanatical terrorism. Resolving conflict involves abandoning such exaggerated perceptions and coming to understand the other's mind. But that isn't easy, notes Robert Wright (2003): "Putting yourself in the shoes of people who do things you find abhorrent may be the hardest moral exercise there is."

Destructive mirror-image perceptions also operate in conflicts between small groups and between individuals. As we saw in the dilemma games, both parties may say, "We want to cooperate. But *their* refusal to cooperate forces *us* to react defensively." When Kenneth Thomas and Louis Ponds (1977) asked executives to describe a significant recent conflict, only 12 percent felt the other party was cooperative; 74 percent perceived themselves as cooperative. The typical executive explained that he or she had "suggested," "informed," and "recommended," whereas the antagonist had "demanded," "disagreed with everything I said," and "refused."

Group conflicts are often fueled by an illusion that the enemy's top leaders are evil but their people, though controlled and manipulated, are pro-us. This *evil-leader-good people* perception characterized Americans' and Russians' views of each other during the Cold War. The United States entered the Vietnam War believing that in areas dominated by the Communist Vietcong "terrorists," many of the people were allies-in-waiting. As suppressed information later revealed, those beliefs were mere wishful thinking. In 2003 the United States began the Iraq War presuming the existence of "a vast underground network that would rise in support of coalition forces to assist security and law enforcement" (Phillips, 2003). Alas, the network didn't materialize, and the resulting postwar security vacuum enabled looting, sabotage, persistent attacks on American forces, and increasing attacks from an insurgency determined to drive Western interests from the country.

## SIMPLISTIC THINKING

When tension rises—as happens during an international crisis—rational thinking becomes more difficult (Janis, 1989). Views of the enemy become more simplistic and stereotyped, and seat-of-the-pants judgments become more likely. Even the mere expectation of conflict can serve to freeze thinking and impede creative problem solving (Carnevale & Probst, 1998). Social psychologist Philip Tetlock (1988) observed inflexible thinking when he analyzed the complexity of Russian and American rhetoric since 1945. During the Berlin blockade, the Korean War, and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, political statements became simplified into stark, good-versus-bad terms. At other times—notably after Mikhail Gorbachev became the Soviet general secretary (Figure 13.4)—political statements acknowledged that each country's motives are complex.

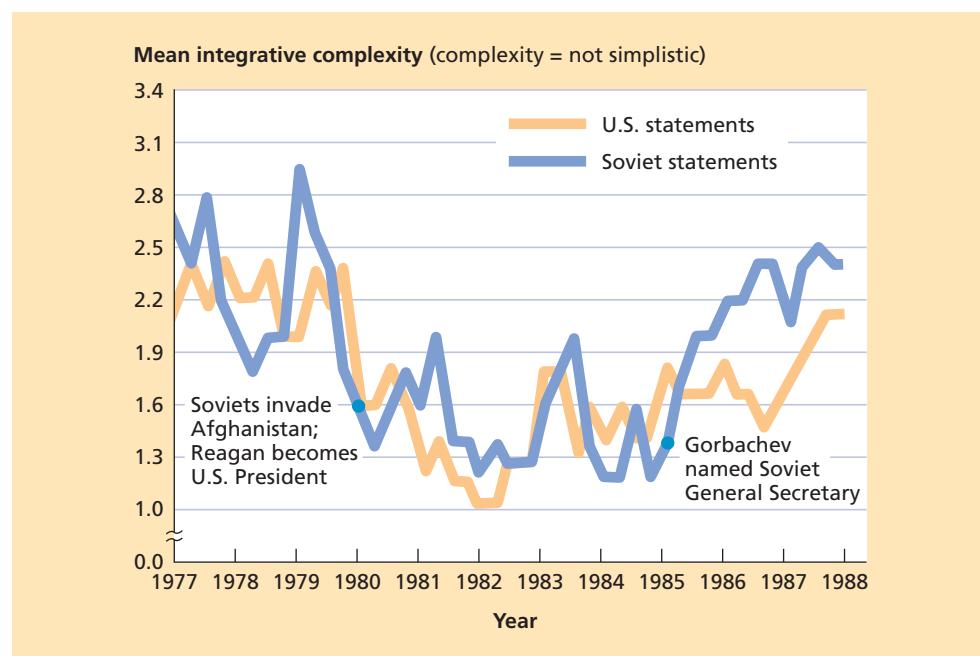
Researchers have also analyzed political rhetoric preceding the outset of major wars, surprise military attacks, Middle Eastern conflicts, and revolutions (Conway & others, 2001). In nearly every case, attacking leaders displayed

"THE AMERICAN PEOPLE  
ARE GOOD, BUT THE  
LEADERS ARE BAD."

—BAGHDAD GROCER ADUL  
GESAN AFTER 1998 AMERICAN  
BOMBING OF IRAQ

**FIGURE :: 13.4**  
**Complexity of Official U.S. and Soviet Policy Statements, 1977–1986**

Source: From Tetlock, 1988.



increasingly simplistic we-are-good/they-are-bad thinking immediately prior to their aggressive action. But shifts *away* from simplistic rhetoric typically preceded new U.S.-Russian agreements, reported Tetlock. His optimism was confirmed when President Reagan in 1988 traveled to Moscow to sign the American-Russian intermediate-range nuclear force (INF) treaty, and then Gorbachev visited

## research CLOSE-UP

### Misperception and War

Most research that I report in this book offers numerical data drawn from observations of people's behavior, cognitions, and attitudes as exhibited in laboratory experiments or in surveys. But there are other ways to do research. Some social psychologists, especially in Europe, analyze natural human discourse; they study written texts or spoken conversation to glimpse how people interpret and construct the events of their lives (Edwards & Potter, 2005). Others have analyzed human behavior in historical contexts, as did Irving Janis (1972) in exploring groupthink in historical fiascoes and Philip Tetlock (2005) in exploring the judgment failures of supposed political experts.

In what was arguably social psychology's longest career, Ralph K. White, legendary for his late 1930s studies of democratic versus autocratic leadership (with pioneering social psychologists Kurt Lewin and Ronald Lippitt), published in 2004—at age 97—a capstone article summarizing his earlier analyses (1968, 1984, 1986) of how misperceptions feed war. In reviewing 10 wars from the past century, White reported that each was marked by at least one of three misperceptions: *underestimating* the strength of one's enemy,

rationalizing one's own motives and behavior, and, especially, *demonizing* the enemy.

Underestimating one's adversary, he observed, emboldened Hitler to attack Russia, Japan to attack the United States, and the United States to enter the Korean and Vietnam wars. And rationalization of one's own actions and demonization of the adversary are the hallmark of war. In the early twenty-first century, as the United States and Iraq talked of war, each said the other was "evil." To George W. Bush, Saddam Hussein was a "murderous tyrant" and a "madman" who threatened the civilized world with weapons of mass destruction. To Iraq's government, the Bush government was a "gang of evil" (Preston, 2002).

The truth need not lie midway between such clashing perceptions. Yet "valid perception is an antidote to hate," concluded White as he reflected on his lifetime as a peace psychologist. Empathy—accurately perceiving the other's thoughts and feelings—is "one of the most important factors for preventing war. . . . Empathy can help two or more nations avoid the dangers of misperception that lead to the wars most would prefer not to fight."

New York and told the United Nations that he would remove 500,000 Soviet troops from Eastern Europe:

I would like to believe that our hopes will be matched by our joint effort to put an end to an era of wars, confrontation and regional conflicts, to aggressions against nature, to the terror of hunger and poverty as well as to political terrorism. This is our common goal and we can only reach it together.

## SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS

If misperceptions accompany conflict, they should appear and disappear as conflicts wax and wane. And they do, with startling regularity. The same processes that create the enemy's image can reverse that image when the enemy becomes an ally. Thus, the "bloodthirsty, cruel, treacherous, buck-toothed little Japs" of World War II soon became—in North American minds (Gallup, 1972) and in the media—our "intelligent, hard-working, self-disciplined, resourceful allies."

The Germans, who after two world wars were hated, then admired, and then again hated, were once again admired—apparently no longer plagued by what earlier was presumed to be cruelty in their national character. So long as Iraq was attacking unpopular Iran, even while using chemical weapons to massacre its own Kurds, many nations supported it. Our enemy's enemy is our friend. When Iraq ended its war with Iran and invaded oil-rich Kuwait, Iraq's behavior suddenly became "barbaric." Images of our enemies change with amazing ease.

The extent of misperceptions during conflict provides a chilling reminder that people need not be insane or abnormally malicious to form distorted images of their antagonists. When we experience conflict with another nation, another group, or simply a roommate or a parent, we readily misperceive our own motives as good and the other's as evil. And just as readily, our antagonists form a mirror-image perception of us.

So, with antagonists trapped in a social dilemma, competing for scarce resources, or perceiving injustice, the conflict continues until something enables both parties to peel away their misperceptions and work at reconciling their actual differences. Good advice, then, is this: When in conflict, do not assume that the other fails to share your values and morality. Rather, compare perceptions, assuming that the other is likely perceiving the situation differently.

## SUMMING UP: What Creates Conflict?

- Whenever two or more people, groups, or nations interact, their perceived needs and goals may conflict. Many social dilemmas arise as people pursue individual self-interest to their collective detriment. Two laboratory games, the Prisoner's Dilemma and the *Tragedy of the Commons*, exemplify such dilemmas. In real life we can avoid such traps by establishing rules that regulate self-serving behavior; by keeping social groups small so people feel responsibility for one another; by enabling communication, thus reducing mistrust; by changing payoffs to make cooperation more rewarding; and by invoking altruistic norms.
- When people compete for scarce resources, human relations often sink into prejudice and hostility. In his famous experiments, Muzafer Sherif found that win-lose competition quickly made strangers into enemies, triggering outright warfare even among normally upstanding boys.
- Conflicts also arise when people feel unjustly treated. According to equity theory, people define justice as the distribution of rewards in proportion to one's contributions. Conflicts occur when people disagree on the extent of their contributions and thus on the equity of their outcomes.
- Conflicts frequently contain a small core of truly incompatible goals, surrounded by a thick layer of misperceptions of the adversary's motives and goals. Often, conflicting parties have *mirror-image perceptions*. When both sides believe "We are peace-loving—they are hostile," each may treat the other in ways that provoke confirmation of its expectations. International conflicts are sometimes also fed by an evil leader—good people illusion.

## HOW CAN PEACE BE ACHIEVED?

Explain the processes that enable the achievement of peace.

"WE KNOW MORE ABOUT WAR THAN WE DO ABOUT PEACE—MORE ABOUT KILLING THAN WE KNOW ABOUT LIVING."

—GENERAL OMAR BRADLEY,

1893–1981, FORMER U.S. ARMY  
CHIEF OF STAFF

Although toxic forces can breed destructive conflict, we can harness other forces to bring conflict to a constructive resolution. What are these ingredients of peace and harmony?

We have seen how conflicts are ignited by social traps, competition, perceived injustices, and misperceptions. Although the picture is grim, it is not hopeless. Sometimes closed fists become open arms as hostilities evolve into friendship. Social psychologists have focused on four strategies for helping enemies become comrades. We can remember these as the four Cs of peacemaking: contact, cooperation, communication, and conciliation.

### Contact

Might putting two conflicting individuals or groups into close contact enable them to know and like each other? Perhaps not: In Chapter 3, we saw how negative expectations can bias judgments and create self-fulfilling prophecies. When tensions run high, contact may fuel a fight.

But we also saw, in Chapter 11, that proximity—and the accompanying interaction, anticipation of interaction, and mere exposure—boosts liking. In Chapter 4, we noted how blatant racial prejudice declined following desegregation, showing that *attitudes follow behavior*. If this social-psychological principle now seems obvious, remember: That's how things usually seem after you know them. To the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896, the idea that desegregated behavior might reduce prejudicial attitudes was anything but obvious. What seemed obvious at the time was "that legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts" (*Plessy v. Ferguson*).

### DOES CONTACT PREDICT ATTITUDES?

In general, contact predicts tolerance. In a painstakingly complete analysis, Linda Tropp and Thomas Pettigrew (2005a; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008, 2011) assembled data from 516 studies of 250,555 people in 38 nations. In 94 percent of studies, *increased contact predicted decreased prejudice*. This is especially so for majority group attitudes toward minorities (Gibson & Claassen, 2010; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005b).

Newer studies confirm the correlation between contact and positive attitudes:

- The more interracial contact South African Blacks and Whites have, the less prejudice they feel, and the more sympathetic their policy attitudes are to those of the other group (Dixon & others, 2007; Tredoux & Finchilescu, 2010).
- The more friendly contact Blacks and Whites have with one another, the better their attitudes toward one another—and toward other outgroups, such as Hispanics (Tausch & others, 2010).
- The more contact straight people have with gays and lesbians, the more accepting they become (Smith & others, 2009).
- The more contact Dutch adolescents have with Muslims, the more accepting of Muslims they are (González & others, 2008).
- Even vicarious indirect contact, via story reading or imagination, or through a friend's having an outgroup friend, tends to reduce prejudice (Cameron & Rutland, 2006; Crisp & others, 2011; Turner & others, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2010). This indirect contact effect, also called "the extended-contact effect," can spread more positive attitudes through a peer group (Christ & others, 2010).

In the United States, segregation and expressed prejudice have diminished together since the 1960s. But was interracial contact the *cause* of these improved attitudes? Were those who actually experienced desegregation affected by it?

## DOES DESEGREGATION IMPROVE RACIAL ATTITUDES?

School desegregation has produced measurable benefits, such as leading more Blacks to attend and succeed in college (Stephan, 1988). Does desegregation of schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces also produce favorable *social* results? The evidence is mixed.

On the one hand, many studies conducted during and shortly after desegregation found Whites' attitudes toward Blacks improving markedly. Whether the people were department store clerks and customers, merchant marines, government workers, police officers, neighbors, or students, racial contact led to diminished prejudice (Amir, 1969; Pettigrew, 1969). For example, near the end of World War II, the U.S. Army partially desegregated some of its rifle companies (Stouffer & others, 1949). When asked their opinions of such desegregation, 11 percent of the White soldiers in segregated companies approved. Of those in desegregated companies, 60 percent approved. They exhibited "system justification"—the human tendency to approve the way things are.

When Morton Deutsch and Mary Collins (1951) took advantage of a made-to-order natural experiment, they observed similar results. In accord with state law, New York City desegregated its public housing units; it assigned families to apartments without regard to race. In a similar development across the river in Newark, New Jersey, Blacks and Whites were assigned to separate buildings. When surveyed, White women in the desegregated development were far more likely to favor interracial housing and to say their attitudes toward Blacks had improved. Exaggerated stereotypes had wilted in the face of reality. As one woman put it, "I've really come to like it. I see they're just as human as we are."

Such findings influenced the Supreme Court's 1954 decision to desegregate schools and helped fuel the 1960s civil rights movement (Pettigrew, 1986, 2004). Yet initial studies of the effects of school desegregation were less encouraging. After reviewing all the available studies, Walter Stephan (1986) concluded that racial attitudes had been little affected by desegregation. For Blacks, the noticeable effect of desegregated schooling was less on attitudes than on their increased likelihood of attending integrated (or predominantly White) colleges, living in integrated neighborhoods, and working in integrated settings.

Thus, we can see that sometimes desegregation improves racial attitudes, and sometimes—especially when there is anxiety or perceived threat (Pettigrew, 2004)—it doesn't. Such disagreements excite the scientist's detective spirit. What explains the difference? So far, we've been lumping all kinds of desegregation together. Actual desegregation occurs in many ways and under vastly different conditions.

## WHEN DOES DESEGREGATION IMPROVE RACIAL ATTITUDES?

Given that "mere exposure" can produce liking (Chapter 11), might exposure to other-race faces produce increased liking for other-race strangers? Indeed yes, Leslie Zebrowitz and her colleagues (2008) discovered, when exposing White participants to Asian and Black faces. Might the frequency of interracial contact also be a factor? Indeed it seems to be. Researchers have gone into dozens of desegregated schools and observed with whom children of a given race eat, talk, and loiter. Race influences contact. Whites disproportionately associate with Whites, Blacks with Blacks (Schofield, 1982, 1986). In one study of Dartmouth University e-mail exchanges, Black students, though only 7 percent of students, sent 44 percent of their e-mails to other Black students (Sacerdote & Marmaros, 2005).

The same self-imposed segregation was evident in a South African desegregated beach, as John Dixon and Kevin Durrheim (2003) discovered when they recorded the location of Black, White, and Indian beachgoers one midsummer (December 30th) afternoon (Figure 13.5). Desegregated neighborhoods, cafeterias, and

### FIGURE :: 13.5 Desegregation Needn't Mean Contact

After this Scottburgh, South Africa, beach became "open" and desegregated in the new South Africa, Blacks (represented by red dots), Whites (blue dots), and Indians (yellow dots) tended to cluster with their own race.

Source: From Dixon & Durrheim, 2003.



restaurants, too, may fail to produce integrated interactions (Clack & others, 2005; Dixon & others, 2005a, 2005b). "Why are all the Black kids sitting together?" people may wonder (a question that could as easily be asked of the White kids). One naturalistic study observed 119 class sessions of 26 University of Cape Town tutorial groups, which averaged 6 Black and 10 White students per group (Alexander & Tredoux, 2010). On average, the researchers calculated, 71 percent of Black students would have needed to change seats to achieve a fully integrated seating pattern.

In one study that tracked the attitudes of more than 1,600 European students, over time, contact did serve to reduce prejudice. But prejudice also minimized contact (Binder & others, 2009). Anxiety as well as prejudice helps explain why participants in interracial relationships (when students are paired as roommates or as partners in an experiment) may engage in less intimate self-disclosure than those in same-race relationships (Johnson & others, 2009; Trail & others, 2009).

Efforts to facilitate contact sometimes help, but sometimes fall flat. "We had one day when some of the Protestant schools came over," explained one Catholic youngster after a Northern Ireland school exchange (Cairns & Hewstone, 2002). "It was supposed to be like . . . mixing, but there was very little mixing. It wasn't because we didn't want to; it was just really awkward." The lack of mixing stems partly from "pluralistic ignorance." Many Whites and Blacks say they would like more contact but misperceive that the other does not reciprocate their feelings. (See "Research Close-Up: Relationships That Might Have Been.")

**FRIENDSHIP** The encouraging older studies of store clerks, soldiers, and housing project neighbors involved considerable interracial contact, more than enough to reduce the anxiety that marks initial intergroup contact. Other studies show similar benefits when they involve prolonged, personal contact—between Black and White prison inmates, between Black and White girls in an interracial summer camp, between Black and White university roommates, and between Black, Colored, and White South Africans (Clore & others, 1978; Foley, 1976; Holtman & others, 2005; Van Laar & others, 2005). Among American students who have

# research CLOSE UP

## Relationships That Might Have Been

Perhaps you can recall a time when you really would have liked to reach out to someone. Maybe it was someone to whom you felt attracted. But doubting that your feelings were reciprocated, you didn't risk rebuff. Or maybe it was someone of another race whom you wanted to welcome to the open seat at your dining hall or library table. But you worried that the person might be wary of sitting with you. It's likely that on some such occasions the other person actually reciprocated your wish to connect but assumed that your distance signified indifference or even prejudice. Alas, thanks to what Chapter 8 called "pluralistic ignorance"—shared false impressions of another's feelings—you passed like ships in the night.

Studies by University of Manitoba psychologist Jacquie Vorauer (2001, 2005; Vorauer & Sakamoto, 2006) illuminate this phenomenon. In their new relationships, people often overestimate the transparency of their feelings, Vorauer reports. Presuming that their feelings are leaking out, they experience the "illusion of transparency" (Chapter 2). Thus, they may assume that their body language conveys their romantic interest, when actually the intended recipient never gets the message. If the other person shares the positive feelings, and is similarly overestimating his or her own transparency, then the possibility of a relationship is quenched.

The same phenomenon, Vorauer reports, often occurs with low-prejudice people who would love more friendships with those outside their racial or social group. If Whites presume that Blacks think them prejudiced, and if Blacks presume that Whites stereotype them, both will feel anxious about making the first move. Such anxiety is "a central factor" in South Africa's "continuing informal segregation," reports Gillian Finchilescu (2005). Seeking to replicate and extend Vorauer's work, Nicole Shelton and Jennifer Richeson (2005; Richeson & Shelton, 2012) undertook a coordinated series of surveys and behavioral tests.

In their first study, University of Massachusetts White students viewed themselves as having more-than-average interest in cross-racial contacts and friendships, and they perceived White students in general as more eager for such than were Black students. Black students had mirror-image views—seeing themselves as more eager for such than were White students. "I want to have friendships across racial lines," thought the typical student. "But those in the other racial group don't share my desire."

Would this pluralistic ignorance generalize to a specific setting? To find out, Shelton and Richeson's second study asked White Princeton students to imagine how they would react upon entering their dining hall and

noticing several Black (or White) "students who live near you sitting together." How interested would you be in joining them? And how likely is it that one of them would beckon you to join them? Again, Whites believed that they more than those of the other race would be interested in the contact.

And how do people explain failures to make interracial contact? In their third study, Shelton and Richeson invited Princeton White and Black students to contemplate a dining hall situation in which they notice a table with familiar-looking students of the other race, but neither they nor the seated students reach out to the other. The study participants, regardless of race, attributed their own inaction in such a situation primarily to fear of rejection, and more often attributed the seated students' inaction to lack of interest. In a fourth study at Dartmouth University, Shelton and Richeson replicated this study with different instructions but similar results.

Would this pluralistic ignorance phenomenon extend to other real-life settings, and to contact with a single other person? In Study 5, Shelton and Richeson invited Princeton students, both Black and White, to a study of "friendship formation." After participants had filled out some background information, the experimenter took their picture, attached it to background information, ostensibly took it to the room of a supposed fellow participant, and then returned with the other person's sheet and photo—showing a person of the same sex but the other race. The participants were then asked, "To what extent are you concerned about being accepted by the other participant?" and "How likely is it that the other person won't want you as a friend?" Regardless of their race, the participants guessed that they, more than the other-race fellow participant, were interested in friendship but worried about rejection.

Do these social misperceptions constrain actual interracial contact? In a sixth study, Shelton and Richeson confirmed that White Princeton students who were most prone to pluralistic ignorance—to presuming that they feared interracial rejection more than did Black students—were also the most likely to experience diminishing cross-racial contacts in the ensuing seven weeks.

Vorauer, Shelton, and Richeson are not contending that misperceptions alone impede romances and cross-racial friendships. But misperceptions do restrain people from risking an overtire. Understanding this phenomenon—recognizing that others' coolness may actually reflect motives and feelings similar to our own—may help us reach out to others, and sometimes to transform potential friendships into real ones.

# THE inside STORY

Nicole Shelton and Jennifer Richeson on Cross-Racial Friendships

During the initial stages of our collaboration, we spent time simply listening to each other talk about the stress associated with being assistant professors. We noticed that both White and ethnic minority students in our classes often indicated that they genuinely wanted to interact with people outside of their ethnic group but were afraid that they would not be accepted. However, they did not think people of other ethnic groups had the same fears; they assumed that members of other groups simply did not want to connect. This sounded very much like Dale Miller's work on pluralistic ignorance. Over the course of a few weeks, we designed a series of studies to explore pluralistic ignorance in the context of interracial interactions.

Since the publication of our article, we have had researchers tell us that we should use our work in new student orientation sessions in order to reduce students'

fears about reaching across racial lines. We are delighted that when we present this work in our courses, students of all racial backgrounds tell us that it indeed has opened their eyes about making the first move to develop inter-racial friendships.



Nicole Shelton  
Princeton University



Jennifer Richeson  
Northwestern University

studied in Germany or in Britain, the more their contact with host country people, the more positive their attitudes (Stangor & others, 1996). Exchange students' hosts also are changed by the experience; they become more likely to see things from the other visitor culture's perspective (Vollhardt, 2010).

In experiments, contact with someone of another race who acts positively (warm and relaxed) makes their race less salient—less likely to be noted and commented on than when their behavior is distant and tense (Paolini & others, 2010). Those who form *friendships* with outgroup members develop more positive attitudes toward the outgroup (Page-Gould & others, 2010; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). It's not just head knowledge of other people that matters; it's also the *emotional* ties that form with intimate friendships and interracial roommate pairings that serve to reduce anxiety and increase empathy (Barlow & others, 2009; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000, 2011; Shook & Fazio, 2008). For initially intolerant people, the anxiety-reducing effect of contact is especially strong (Hodson, 2011).

The diminishing anxiety that accompanies friendly outgroup interactions is a biological event: It is measurable as decreased stress hormone reactivity in cross-ethnic contexts (Page-Gould & others, 2008).

"Group salience" (visibility) also helps bridge divides between people. If you forever think of that friend solely as an individual, your affective ties may not generalize to other members of the friend's group (Miller, 2002). Ideally, then, we should form trusting friendships across group lines but also recognize that the friend represents those in another group—with whom we turn out to have much in common (Brown & others, 2007).

We are especially likely to befriend dissimilar people when their outgroup identity is initially minimized. If our liking for our new friends is then to generalize to others, their group identity must at some point become salient. So, to reduce prejudice and conflict, we had best initially minimize group diversity, then acknowledge it, then transcend it.

Surveys of nearly 4,000 Europeans reveal that friendship is a key to successful contact: If you have a minority group friend, you become much more likely to express sympathy and support for the friend's group, and even somewhat more

support for immigration by that group. It's true of West Germans' attitudes toward Turks, French people's attitudes toward Asians and North Africans, Netherlanders' attitudes toward Surinamers and Turks, British attitudes toward West Indians and Asians, and Northern Ireland Protestants' and Catholics' attitudes toward each other (Brown & others, 1999; Hamberger & Hewstone, 1997; Paolini & others, 2004; Pettigrew, 1997).

**EQUAL-STATUS CONTACT** The social psychologists who advocated desegregation never claimed that all contact would improve attitudes. They expected poor results when contacts were competitive, unsupported by authorities, and unequal (Pettigrew, 1988; Stephan, 1987). Before 1954 many prejudiced Whites had frequent contacts with Blacks—as shoeshine men and domestic workers. As we saw in Chapter 9, such unequal contacts breed attitudes that merely justify the continuation of inequality. So it's important that the contact be **equal-status contact**, like that between the store clerks, the soldiers, the neighbors, the prisoners, and the summer campers.

In colleges and universities, informal interactions enabled by classroom ethnic diversity pay dividends for all students, report University of Michigan researcher Patricia Gurin and colleagues from national collegiate surveys (2002). Such interactions tend to be intellectually growth-promoting and to foster greater acceptance of difference. Such findings informed a U.S. Supreme Court 2003 decision that racial diversity is a compelling interest of higher education and may be a criterion in admissions.

## Cooperation

Although equal-status contact can help, it is sometimes not enough. It didn't help when Muzafer Sherif stopped the Eagles versus Rattlers competition and brought the groups together for noncompetitive activities, such as watching movies, shooting off fireworks, and eating. By that time, their hostility was so strong that mere contact only provided opportunities for taunts and attacks. When an Eagle was bumped by a Rattler, his fellow Eagles urged him to "brush off the dirt." Desegregating the two groups hardly promoted their social integration.

Given entrenched hostility, what can a peacemaker do? Think back to the successful and the unsuccessful desegregation efforts. The army's racial mixing of rifle companies didn't just bring Blacks and Whites into equal-status contact, it made them interdependent. Together, they were fighting a common enemy, striving toward a shared goal.

Does that suggest a second factor that predicts whether the effect of desegregation will be favorable? Does competitive contact divide and *cooperative* contact unite? Consider what happens to people who together face a common predicament. In conflicts at all levels, from couples to rival teams to nations, shared threats and common goals breed unity.

## COMMON EXTERNAL THREATS BUILD COHESIVENESS

Together with others, have you ever been caught in a blizzard, punished by a teacher, or persecuted and ridiculed because of your social, racial, or religious identity? If so, you may recall feeling close to those with whom you shared the predicament. Perhaps previous social barriers were dropped as you helped one another dig out of the snow or struggled to cope with your common enemy. Survivors of more extreme crises, such as a bombing, also often report a spirit of cooperation and solidarity rather than all-for-themselves panic (Drury & others, 2009).

Such friendliness is common among those who experience a shared threat. John Lanzetta (1955) observed this when he put four-man groups of naval ROTC cadets to work on problem-solving tasks and then began informing them over a loudspeaker that their answers were wrong, their productivity inexcusably low, their thinking stupid. Other groups did not receive this harassment. Lanzetta observed that the group

### equal-status contact

Contact on an equal basis. Just as a relationship between people of unequal status breeds attitudes consistent with their relationship, so do relationships between those of equal status. Thus, to reduce prejudice, interracial contact should ideally be between persons equal in status.

"I COULDN'T HELP BUT SAY  
TO [MR. GORBACHEV], JUST  
THINK HOW EASY HIS TASK  
AND MINE MIGHT BE IN  
THESE MEETINGS THAT WE  
HELD IF SUDDENLY THERE  
WAS A THREAT TO THIS  
WORLD FROM SOME OTHER  
SPECIES FROM ANOTHER  
PLANET. [WE'D] FIND OUT  
ONCE AND FOR ALL THAT  
WE REALLY ARE ALL HUMAN  
BEINGS HERE ON THIS  
EARTH TOGETHER."

—RONALD REAGAN,  
DECEMBER 4, 1985, SPEECH



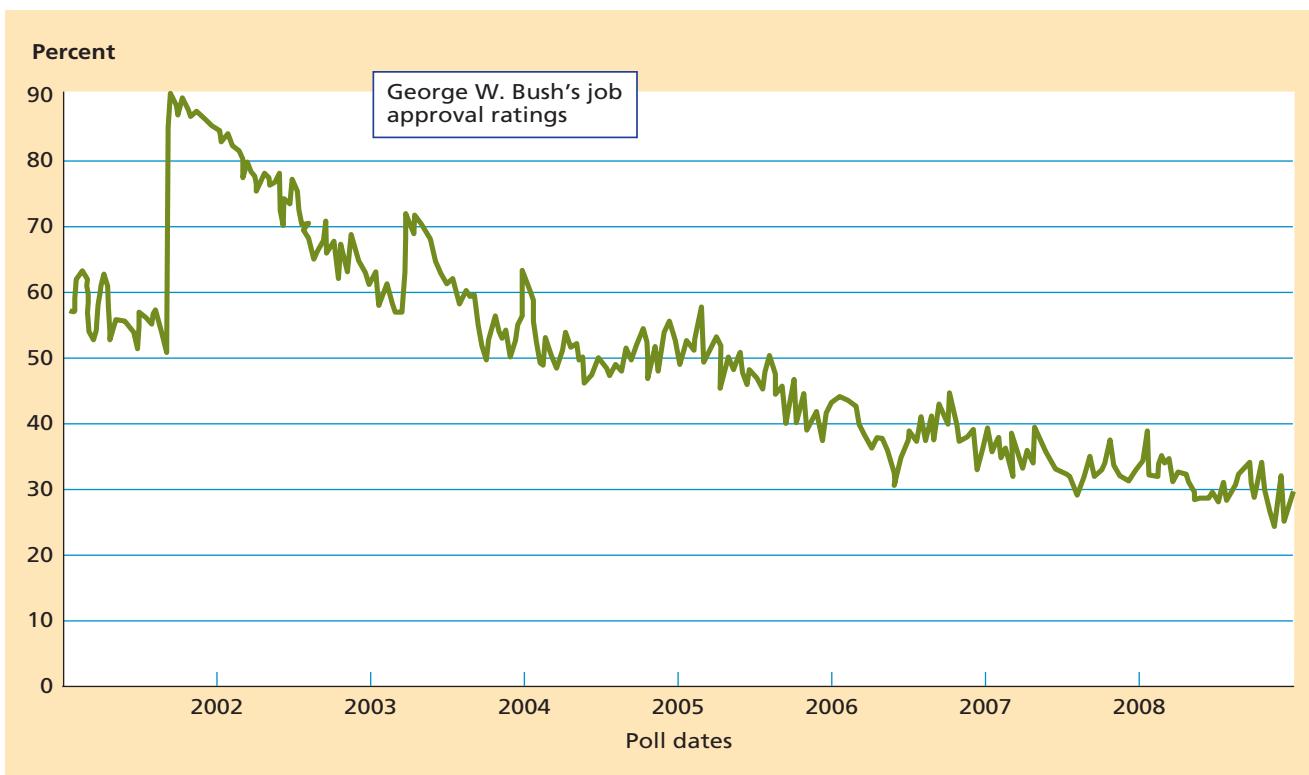
Shared predicaments trigger cooperation, as these Walmart workers on strike in Germany demonstrate.

members under duress became friendlier to one another, more cooperative, less argumentative, less competitive. They were in it together. And the result was a cohesive spirit.

Having a common enemy unified the groups of competing boys in Sherif's camping experiments—and in many subsequent experiments (Dion, 1979). Just being reminded of an out-group (say, a rival school) heightens people's responsiveness to their own group (Wilder & Shapiro, 1984). When keenly conscious of who "they" are, we also know who "we" are.

When facing a well-defined external threat during wartime, we-feeling soars. The membership of civic organizations mushrooms (Putnam, 2000). Shared threats also produce a political "rally 'round the flag" effect (Lambert & others, 2010). After 9/11, "old racial antagonisms . . . dissolved," reported the *New York Times* (Sengupta, 2001). "I just thought of myself as Black," said 18-year-old Louis Johnson, reflecting on life before 9/11. "But now I feel like I'm an American, more than ever." In New York City, even divorce rates dropped in the aftermath of 9/11 (Hansel & others, 2011). One sampling of conversation on 9/11, and another of New York Mayor Giuliani's press conferences before and after 9/11, found a doubled rate of the word "we" (Liehr & others, 2004; Pennebaker & Lay, 2002).

George W. Bush's job performance ratings reflected this threat-bred spirit of unity. In the public eye, the mediocre president of 9/10 had become the exalted president of 9/12—"our leader" in the fight against "those who hate us." Thereafter, his ratings gradually declined but then jumped again as the war in Iraq began (Figure 13.6).



**FIGURE :: 13.6**

### External Threats Breed Internal Unity

As the ups and downs of President George Bush's approval ratings illustrate, national conflicts mold public attitudes (Gallup, 2006).

Even just imagining or fearing the extinction of one's group often serves to strengthen ingroup solidarity (Wohl & others, 2010). Leaders may therefore *create* a threatening external enemy as a technique for building group cohesiveness. George Orwell's novel *1984* illustrates the tactic: The leader of the protagonist nation uses border conflicts with the other two major powers to lessen internal strife. From time to time the enemy shifts, but there is always an enemy. Indeed, the nation seems to *need* an enemy. For the world, for a nation, for a group, having a common enemy is powerfully unifying. Thus, we can expect that Protestant-Catholic religious differences that feel great in Northern Ireland or South America will feel more negligible to those living under Islamic regimes. Likewise, Sunni and Shia Islamic differences that feel great in Iraq will not seem so great to Muslims in countries where both must cope with anti-Muslim attitudes.

Might the world likewise find unity if facing a common enemy? On September 21, 1987, President Ronald Reagan observed, "In our obsession with antagonisms of the moment, we often forget how much unites all the members of humanity. Perhaps we need some outside, universal threat to recognize this common bond." Two decades later, Al Gore (2007) agreed, suggesting that, with the specter of climate change, "We—all of us—now face a universal threat. Though it is not from outside this world, it is nevertheless cosmic in scale."

"THERE'S AN ENEMY OUT THERE."

—GEORGE W. BUSH, 2005

## focus ON

### Why Do We Care Who Wins?

Why, for sports fans everywhere, does it matter who wins? Why does it matter to Bostonians whether two dozen multimillionaire temporary Red Sox employees, most born in other states or countries, win the World Series? During the annual NCAA basketball "March Madness," why do perfectly normal adults become insanely supportive of their team, and depressed when it loses? And why for that ultimate sporting event, World Cup Football, do soccer fans worldwide dream of their country victorious?

Theory and evidence indicate that the roots of rivalry run deep. There's something primal at work when the crowd erupts as the two rivals take the floor for a basketball game. There's something tribal at work during the ensuing two hours of passion, all in response to the ups and downs of a mere orange leather sphere. Our ancestors, living in a world where neighboring tribes occasionally raided and pillaged one another's camps, knew that there was safety in solidarity. (Those who didn't band together left fewer descendants.) Whether hunting, defending, or attacking, more hands were better than two. Dividing the world into "us" and "them" entails significant costs, such as racism and war, but also provides the benefits of communal solidarity. To identify us and them, our ancestors—not so far removed from today's rabid fans—dressed or painted themselves in group-specific costumes and colors. Sports and warfare, notes evolutionary psychologist Benjamin Winegard (2010), are mostly done by males associated with geographical areas and wearing group-identifying uniforms. Both use war-relevant skills (running, tackling, throwing). And both offer rewards to the victors.

As social animals, we live in groups, cheer on our groups, kill for our groups, die for our groups. We also define ourselves by our groups. Our self-concept—our sense of who we are—consists not only of our personal attributes and attitudes but also of our social identity. Our social identities—our knowing who "we" are—strengthens self-concept and pride, especially when perceiving that "we" are superior. Lacking a positive individual identity, many youths find pride, power, and identity in gangs. Many patriots define themselves by their national identities.

The group definition of who we are also implies who we are *not*. Many social-psychological experiments reveal that being formed into groups—even arbitrary groups—promotes ingroup bias. Cluster people into groups defined by nothing more than their birth date or even the last digit of their driver's license and they'll feel a certain kinship with their number mates, and will show them favoritism. So strong is our group consciousness that "we" seem better than "they" even when "we" and "they" are defined randomly.

As post-9/11 America illustrates, group solidarity soars when people face a common enemy. As Muzafer Sherif's Robber's Camp experiment vividly demonstrated, competition creates enemies. Fueled by competition and unleashed by the anonymity of a crowd, passions can culminate in sport's worst moments—fans taunting opponents, screaming at umpires, even pelting referees with beer bottles.

Group identification soars further with success. Fans find self-respect by their personal achievements but

(continued)

also, in at least small measure, by their association with the victorious athletes when their team wins. Queried after a big football victory, university students commonly report that "we won" (Cialdini & others, 1976). As we noted in Chapter 9, they bask in reflected glory. Asked the outcome after a defeat, students more often distance themselves from the team by saying, "They lost."

Ironically, we often reserve our most intense passions for rivals most similar to us. Freud long ago recognized that animosities formed around small differences: "Of two neighbouring towns, each is the other's most jealous rival; every little canton looks down upon the others with contempt. Closely related races keep one another at arm's length; the South German cannot endure the North German, the Englishman casts every kind of aspersion upon the Scot, the Spaniard despises the Portuguese."

As an occasional resident of Scotland, I've witnessed many examples of the *Xenophobe's Guide to the Scots* observation—that Scots divide non-Scots "into two main groups: (1) The English; (2) The Rest." As rabid Chicago Cubs fans are happy if either the Cubs win or the White Sox lose, so ardent New Zealand soccer fans root for New Zealand and whoever is playing Australia (Halberstadt & others, 2006). Rabid fans of Scottish soccer likewise rejoice in either a Scotland victory or an England defeat. "Phew! They Lost," rejoiced one Scottish tabloid front-page headline after England's 1996 Euro Cup defeat—by Germany, no less. To a sports fan, few things are so sweet as an archrival's misfortune. Both a rival's failure and a

favored team's success activate pleasure-associated brain areas (Cikara & others, 2011).

Numerical minorities, such as the Scots in Britain, are especially conscious of their social identities. The 5 million Scots are more conscious of their national identity vis-à-vis the neighboring 51 million English than vice versa. Likewise, the 4 million New Zealanders are more conscious of their identity vis-à-vis the 23 million Australians, and they are more likely to root for Australia's sports opponents (Halberstadt & others, 2006).



Group identity feeds, and is fed by, competition.

## SUPERORDINATE GOALS FOSTER COOPERATION

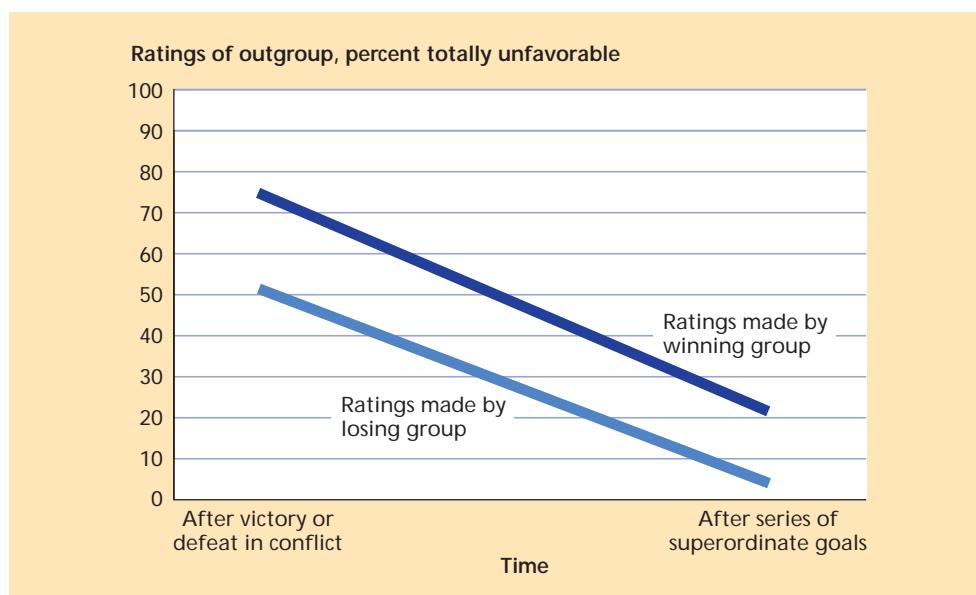
Closely related to the unifying power of an external threat is the unifying power of **superordinate goals**, goals that unite all in a group and require cooperative effort. To promote harmony among his warring campers, Sherif introduced such goals. He created a problem with the camp water supply, necessitating both groups' cooperation to restore the water. Given an opportunity to rent a movie, one expensive enough to require the joint resources of the two groups, they again cooperated. When a truck "broke down" on a camp excursion, a staff member casually left the tug-of-war rope nearby, prompting one boy to suggest that they all pull the truck to get it started. When it started, a backslapping celebration ensued over their victorious "tug-of-war against the truck."

After working together to achieve such superordinate goals, the boys ate together and enjoyed themselves around a campfire. Friendships sprouted across group lines. Hostilities plummeted (Figure 13.7). On the last day, the boys decided to travel home together on one bus. During the trip they no longer sat by groups. As the bus approached Oklahoma City and home, they, as one, spontaneously sang "Oklahoma" and then bade their friends farewell. With isolation and competition, Sherif made strangers into bitter enemies. With superordinate goals, he made enemies into friends.

Are Sherif's experiments mere child's play? Or can pulling together to achieve superordinate goals be similarly beneficial with adults in conflict? Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (1979) wondered. So in a series of two-week experiments involving more than 1,000 executives in 150 different groups, they re-created the essential features of the situation experienced by the Rattlers and the Eagles. Each group first

### superordinate goal

A shared goal that necessitates cooperative effort; a goal that overrides people's differences from one another.

**FIGURE :: 13.7**

After competition, the Eagles and the Rattlers rated each other unfavorably. After they worked cooperatively to achieve superordinate goals, hostility dropped sharply.

*Source:* Data from Sherif, 1966, p. 84.

engaged in activities by itself, then competed with another group, and then cooperated with the other group in working toward jointly chosen superordinate goals. Their results provided “unequivocal evidence that adult reactions parallel those of Sherif’s younger subjects.”

Extending those findings, John Dovidio, Samuel Gaertner, and their collaborators (2005, 2009) report that working cooperatively has especially favorable effects under conditions that lead people to define a new, inclusive group that dissolves their former subgroups. Old feelings of bias against another group diminish when members of the two groups sit alternately around a table (rather than on opposite sides), give their new group a single name, and then work together under conditions that foster a good mood. “Us” and “them” become “we.” To combat Germany, Italy, and Japan during World War II, the United States and the former USSR, along with other nations, formed one united group named the Allies. So long as the superordinate goal of defeating a common enemy lasted, so did supportive U.S. attitudes toward the Russians. Economic interdependence through international trade also motivates peace. “Where goods cross frontiers, armies won’t,” notes Michael Shermer (2006). With so much of China’s economy now interwoven with Western economies, their economic interdependence diminishes the likelihood of war between China and the West.

The cooperative efforts by the Rattlers and the Eagles ended in success. Would the same harmony have emerged if the water had remained off, the movie unaffordable, the truck still stalled? Likely not. In experiments with University of Virginia students, Stephen Worchel and his associates (1977, 1978, 1980) confirmed that *successful* cooperation between two groups boosts their attraction for each other. If previously conflicting groups *fail* in a cooperative effort, however, and if conditions allow them to attribute their failure to each other, the conflict may worsen. Sherif’s groups were already feeling hostile to each other. Thus, failure to raise sufficient funds for the movie might have been attributed to one group’s “stinginess” and “selfishness.” That would have exacerbated rather than alleviated their conflict. Unity is fed by striving for and reaching superordinate goals.



Promoting “common ingroup identity.” The banning of gang colors and the common European practice of school uniforms—an increasing trend in the United States, as well—aim to change “us” and “them” to “we.”

## COOPERATIVE LEARNING IMPROVES RACIAL ATTITUDES

So far we have noted the modest social benefits of desegregation if unaccompanied by the emotional bonds of friendship and by equal-status relationships. And we have noted the dramatic social benefits of successful, cooperative contacts between members of rival groups. Several research teams therefore wondered: Without compromising academic achievement, could we promote interracial friendships by replacing competitive learning situations with cooperative ones? Given the diversity of their methods—all involving students on integrated study teams, sometimes in competition with other teams—the results are striking and heartening.

Are students who participate in existing cooperative activities, such as interracial athletic teams and class projects, less prejudiced? In one experiment, White youth on two- to three-week Outward Bound expeditions (involving intimate contact and cooperation) expressed improved attitudes toward Blacks a month after the expedition *if they had been randomly assigned to an interracial expedition group* (Green & Wong, 2008).

Robert Slavin and Nancy Madden (1979) analyzed survey data from 2,400 students in 71 American high schools and found similarly encouraging results. Those of different races who play and work together are more likely to report having friends of another race and to express positive racial attitudes. Charles Green and his colleagues (1988) confirmed this in a study of 3,200 Florida middle-school students. Compared with students at traditional, competitive schools, those at schools with interracial “learning teams” had more positive racial attitudes.

From such correlational findings, can we conclude that cooperative interracial activity improves racial attitudes? The way to find out is to experiment. Randomly designate some students, but not others, to work together in racially mixed groups. Slavin (1985; Slavin & others, 2003, 2009) and his colleagues divided classes into interracial teams, each composed of four or five students from all achievement levels. Team members sat together, studied a variety of subjects together, and at the end of each week competed with the other teams in a class tournament. All members contributed to their team’s score by doing well, sometimes by competing with other students whose recent achievements were similar to their own, sometimes by competing with their own previous scores. Everyone had a chance to succeed. Moreover, team members were motivated to help one another prepare for the weekly tournament—by drilling each other on fractions, spelling, or historical events—whatever was the next event. Rather than isolating students from one another, team competition brought them into closer contact and drew out mutual support.

Interracial cooperation—on athletic teams, in class projects and extracurricular activities—melts differences and improves racial attitudes. White teen athletes who play cooperative team sports (such as basketball) with Black teammates express more liking and support for Blacks than do their counterparts involved in individual sports (such as wrestling) (Brown & others, 2003).





Cooperation and peace. Researchers have identified more than 40 peaceful societies—societies where people live with no, or virtually no, recorded instances of violence. An analysis of 25 of these societies, including the Amish shown here, reveals that most base their worldviews on cooperation rather than competition (Bonta, 1997).

Another research team, led by Elliot Aronson (2004; Aronson & Gonzalez, 1988), elicited similar group cooperation with a “jigsaw” technique. In experiments in Texas and California elementary schools, the researchers assigned children to racially and academically diverse 6-member groups. The subject was then divided into six parts, with each student becoming the expert on his or her part. In a unit on Chile, one student might be the expert on Chile’s history, another on its geography, another on its culture. First, the various “historians,” “geographers,” and so forth got together to master their material. Then they returned to the home groups to teach it to their classmates. Each group member held, so to speak, a piece of the jigsaw.

Self-confident students therefore had to listen to and learn from reticent students who, in turn, soon realized they had something important to offer their peers. Other research teams—led by David Johnson and Roger Johnson (1987, 2003, 2004, 2010) at the University of Minnesota, Elizabeth Cohen (1980) at Stanford University, Shlomo Sharan and Yael Sharan (1976, 1994) at Tel Aviv University, and Stuart Cook (1985) at the University of Colorado—devised additional methods for cooperative learning. Studies (148 of them across eleven countries) show that adolescents, too, have more positive peer relationships and may even achieve more when working cooperatively rather than competitively (Roseth & others, 2008).

What can we conclude from all this research? With cooperative learning, students learn not only the material but other lessons. Cooperative learning, said Slavin and Cooper (1999), promotes “the academic achievement of all students while simultaneously improving intergroup relations.” Aronson reported that “children in the interdependent, jigsaw classrooms grow to like each other better, develop a greater liking for school, and develop greater self-esteem than children in traditional classrooms” (1980, p. 232).

Cross-racial friendships also begin to blossom. The exam scores of minority students improve (perhaps because academic achievement is now peer supported). After the experiments are over, many teachers continue using cooperative learning (D. W. Johnson & others, 1981; Slavin, 1990). “It is clear,” wrote race-relations expert John McConahay (1981), that cooperative learning “is the most effective practice for improving race relations in desegregated schools that we know of to date.”

Should we have “known it all along”? At the time of the 1954 Supreme Court decision, Gordon Allport spoke for many social psychologists in predicting that “Prejudice . . . may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority

“THIS WAS TRULY AN  
EXCITING EVENT. MY  
STUDENTS AND I HAD  
FOUND A WAY TO MAKE  
DESEGREGATION WORK  
THE WAY IT WAS INTENDED  
TO WORK!”

—ELLIOT ARONSON, “DRIFTING  
MY OWN WAY,” 2003

groups in the pursuit of common goals" (1954, p. 281). Cooperative learning experiments confirmed Allport's insight, making Robert Slavin and his colleagues (1985, 2003) optimistic: "Thirty years after Allport laid out the basic principles operationalized in cooperative learning methods, we finally have practical, proven methods for implementing contact theory in the desegregated classroom. . . . Research on cooperative learning is one of the greatest success stories in the history of educational research."

## focus ON

### Branch Rickey, Jackie Robinson, and the Integration of Baseball

On April 10, 1947, a nineteen-word announcement forever changed the face of baseball and put social-psychological principles to the test: "The Brooklyn Dodgers today purchased the contract of Jackie Roosevelt Robinson from the Montreal Royals. He will report immediately." Five days later, Robinson became the first African American since 1887 to play major league baseball. In the fall, Dodger fans realized their dreams of going to the World Series. Robinson, after enduring racial taunts, beanballs, and spikes, was voted *Sporting News* rookie of the year, and in a poll finished second to Bing Crosby as the most popular man in America. Baseball's racial barrier was forever broken.

Motivated by both his Methodist morality and a drive for baseball success, Major League baseball executive Branch Rickey had been planning the move for some time, report social psychologists Anthony Pratkanis and Marlene Turner (1994a, 1994b). Three years earlier, Rickey had been asked by the sociologist-chair of the Mayor's Committee on Unity to desegregate his team. His response was to ask for time (so the hiring would not be attributed to pressure) and for advice on how best to do it. In 1945 Rickey was the only owner voting against keeping Blacks out of baseball. In 1947 he made his move using these principles identified by Pratkanis and Turner:

- *Create a perception that change is inevitable.* Leave little possibility that protest or resistance can turn back the clock. The team's radio announcer, Red Barber, a traditional southerner, recalled that in 1945 Rickey took him to lunch and explained very slowly and strongly that his scouts were searching for "the first black player I can put on the white Dodgers. I don't know who he is or where he is, but, he is coming." An angered Barber at first intended to quit, but in time decided to accept the inevitable and keep the world's "best sports announcing job." Rickey was equally matter-of-fact with the players in 1947, offering to trade any player who didn't want to play with Robinson.
- *Establish equal-status contact with a superordinate goal.* One sociologist explained to Rickey that when relationships focus on an overarching goal, such as winning the pennant, "the people involved would

adjust appropriately." One of the players who had been initially opposed later helped Robinson with his hitting, explaining, "When you're on a team, you got to pull together to win."

- *Puncture the norm of prejudice.* Rickey led the way, but others helped. Team leader, shortstop Pee Wee Reese, a southerner, set a pattern of sitting and eating with Robinson. One day in Cincinnati, as the crowd was hurling slurs—"get the nigger off the field"—Reese left his shortstop position, walked over to Robinson at first base, smiled and spoke to him, and then—with a hushed crowd watching—put his arm around Robinson's shoulder.
- *Cut short the spiral of violence by practicing nonviolence.* Rickey, wanting "a ballplayer with guts enough not to fight back," role-played for Robinson the kind of insults and dirty play he would experience and gained Robinson's commitment not to return violence with violence. When Robinson was taunted and spiked, he left the responses to his teammates. Team cohesion was thereby increased.

Robinson and Bob Feller later became the first players in baseball history elected to the Hall of Fame in their first year of eligibility. As he received the award, Robinson asked three persons to stand beside him: his mother, his wife, and his friend Branch Rickey.



Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey

To sum up, cooperative, equal-status contacts exert a positive influence on boy campers, industrial executives, college students, and schoolchildren. Does the principle extend to all levels of human relations? Are families unified by pulling together to farm the land, restore an old house, or sail a sloop? Are communal identities forged by barn raisings, group singing, or cheering on the football team? Is international understanding bred by international collaboration in science and space, by joint efforts to feed the world and conserve resources, by friendly personal contacts between people of different nations? Indications are that the answer to all of those questions is *yes* (Brewer & Miller, 1988; Desforges & others, 1991, 1997; Deutsch, 1985, 1994). Thus, an important challenge facing our divided world is to identify and agree on our superordinate goals and to structure cooperative efforts to achieve them.

### GROUP AND SUPERORDINATE IDENTITIES

In everyday life, we often reconcile multiple identities (Gaertner & others, 2000, 2001). We acknowledge our subgroup identity (as parent or child) and then transcend it (sensing our superordinate identity as a family). Pride in our ethnic heritage can complement our larger communal or national identity. Being mindful of our *multiple* social identities that we partially share with anyone else enables social cohesion (Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Crisp & Hewstone, 1999, 2000). “I am many things, some of which you are, too.”

But in ethnically diverse cultures, how do people balance their ethnic identities with their national identities? They may have a “bicultural” or “omnicultural” identity, one that identifies with both the larger culture and one’s own ethnic and religious culture (Moghaddam, 2009, 2010; Phinney, 1990). “In many ways, I am like everyone around me, but I also affirm my own cultural heritage.” Thus, ethnically conscious Asians living in England may also feel strongly British (Hutnik, 1985). French Canadians who identify with their ethnic roots may or may not also feel strongly Canadian (Driedger, 1975). Hispanic Americans who retain a strong sense of their “Cubanness” (or of their Mexican or Puerto Rican heritage) may feel strongly American (Roger & others, 1991). As W. E. B. DuBois (1903, p. 17) explained in *The Souls of Black Folk*, “The American Negro [longs] . . . to be both a Negro and an American.”

Over time, identification with a new culture often grows. Former East and West Germans come to see themselves as “German” (Kessler & Mummendey, 2001). The children of Chinese immigrants to Australia and the United States feel their Chinese identity somewhat less keenly, and their new national identity more strongly, than do immigrants who were born in China (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992). Often, however, the grandchildren of immigrants feel more comfortable identifying with their ethnicity (Triandis, 1994).

Researchers have wondered whether pride in one’s group competes with identification with the larger culture. As we noted in Chapter 9, we evaluate ourselves partly in terms of our social identities. Seeing our own group (our school, our employer, our family, our race, our nation) as good helps us feel good about ourselves. A positive ethnic identity can therefore contribute to positive self-esteem. So can a positive mainstream culture identity. “Marginal” people, who have neither a strong ethnic nor a strong mainstream cultural identity (Table 13.1), often have low self-esteem. Bicultural people, who affirm both identities, typically

"MOST OF US HAVE  
 OVERLAPPING IDENTITIES  
 WHICH UNITE US WITH  
 VERY DIFFERENT GROUPS.  
 WE CAN LOVE WHAT WE  
 ARE, WITHOUT HATING  
 WHAT—AND WHO—WE  
 ARE NOT. WE CAN THRIVE  
 IN OUR OWN TRADITION,  
 EVEN AS WE LEARN  
 FROM OTHERS, AND  
 COME TO RESPECT THEIR  
 TEACHINGS."  
 —KOFI ANNAN, NOBEL PEACE  
 PRIZE LECTURE, 2001

**TABLE :: 13.1** Ethnic and Cultural Identity

	Identification with Ethnic Group	
Identification with Majority Group	Strong	Weak
Strong	Bicultural	Assimilated
Weak	Separated	Marginal



A difficult balancing act. These ethnically conscious French Canadians—supporting Bill 101 “live French in Quebec”—may or may not also feel strongly Canadian. As countries become more ethnically diverse, people debate how we can build societies that are both plural and unified.

differences enhanced hostility. Focusing on differences prompted people to attend and attach meaning to outgroup members’ threatening behaviors. An alternative common values view inspired the Rwandan government to declare “there is no ethnicity here. We are all Rwandan.” In the aftermath of Rwanda’s ethnic bloodbath, government documents and government-controlled radio and newspapers have ceased mentioning Hutu and Tutsi (Lacey, 2004).

In the space between multiculturalism and assimilation lies “diversity within unity,” an omnicultural perspective advocated by cultural psychologist Fathali Moghaddam (2009, 2010) and by sociologist Amitai Etzioni and others (2005): “It presumes that all members of a given society will fully respect and adhere to those basic values and institutions that are considered part of the basic shared framework of the society. At the same time, every group in society is free to maintain its distinct subculture—those policies, habits, and institutions that do not conflict with the shared core.”

By forging unifying ideals, immigrant countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia have avoided ethnic wars. In these countries, Irish and Italians, Swedes and Scots, Asians and Africans seldom kill in defense of their ethnic identities. Nevertheless, even the immigrant nations struggle between separation and wholeness, between people’s pride in their distinct heritage and unity as one nation, between acknowledging the reality of diversity and questing for shared values. The ideal of diversity within unity forms the United States motto: *E pluribus unum*. Out of many, one.

### bargaining

Seeking an agreement to a conflict through direct negotiation between parties.

### mediation

An attempt by a neutral third party to resolve a conflict by facilitating communication and offering suggestions.

### arbitration

Resolution of a conflict by a neutral third party who studies both sides and imposes a settlement.

have a strongly positive self-concept (Phinney, 1990; see also Sam & Berry, 2010). Often, they alternate between their two cultures, adapting their language and behavior to whichever group they are with (LaFromboise & others, 1993).

Debate continues over the ideals of multiculturalism (celebrating differences) versus assimilation (meshing one’s values and habits with the prevailing culture). On one side are those who believe, as the Department of Canadian Heritage (2006) has declared, that “multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them open to and accepting of diverse cultures.” On the other side are those who concur with Britain’s Commission for Racial Equality chair, Trevor Phillips (2004), in worrying that multiculturalism separates people. Experiments by Jacquie Vorauer and Stacey Sasaki (2011) showed that in threatening situations, highlighting multicultural dif-

## Communication

Conflicting parties have other ways to resolve their differences. When husband and wife, or labor and management, or nation X and nation Y disagree, they can **bargain** with each other directly. They can ask a third party to **mediate** by making suggestions and facilitating their negotiations. Or they can **arbitrate** by submitting their disagreement to someone who will study the issues and impose a settlement.

## BARGAINING

If you want to buy or sell a new car, are you better off adopting a tough bargaining stance—opening with an extreme offer so that splitting the difference will yield a favorable result? Or are you better off beginning with a sincere “good-faith” offer?

Experiments suggest no simple answer. On the one hand, those who demand more will often get more. Robert Cialdini, Leonard Bickman, and John Cacioppo (1979) provide a typical result: In a control condition, they approached various Chevrolet dealers and asked the price of a new Monte Carlo sports coupe with designated options. In an experimental condition, they approached other dealers and first struck a tougher bargaining stance, asking for and rejecting a price on a *different* car (“I need a lower price than that. That’s a lot”). When they then asked the price of the Monte Carlo, exactly as in the control condition, they received offers that averaged some \$200 lower.

Tough bargaining may lower the other party’s expectations, making the other side willing to settle for less (Yukl, 1974). But toughness can sometimes backfire. Many a conflict is not over a pie of fixed size but over a pie that shrinks if the conflict continues. A time delay is often a lose-lose scenario. When a strike is prolonged, both labor and management lose. Being tough is another potential lose-lose scenario. If the other party responds with an equally tough stance, both may be locked into positions from which neither can back down without losing face. In the weeks before the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the first President Bush threatened, in the full glare of publicity, to “kick Saddam’s ass.” Saddam Hussein, no less macho, threatened to make “infidel” Americans “swim in their own blood.” After such belligerent statements, it was difficult for each side to evade war and save face.

## MEDIATION

A third-party mediator may offer suggestions that enable conflicting parties to make concessions and still save face (Pruitt, 1998). If my concession can be attributed to a mediator, who is gaining an equal concession from my antagonist, neither of us will be viewed as weakly caving in.

**TURNING WIN-LOSE INTO WIN-WIN** Mediators also help resolve conflicts by facilitating constructive communication. Their first task is to help the parties rethink the conflict and gain information about the others’ interests. Typically, people on both sides have a competitive “win-lose” orientation: They are successful if their opponent is unhappy with the result, and unsuccessful if their opponent is pleased (Thompson & others, 1995). The mediator aims to replace this win-lose orientation with a cooperative “win-win” orientation, by prodding both sides to set aside their conflicting demands and instead to think about each other’s underlying needs, interests, and goals. In experiments, Leigh Thompson (1990a, 1990b) found that, with experience, negotiators become better able to make mutually beneficial trade-offs and thus to achieve win-win resolutions.

A classic story of such a resolution concerns the two sisters who quarreled over an orange (Follett, 1940). Finally they compromised and split the orange in half, whereupon one sister squeezed her half for juice while the other used the peel on her half to make a cake. If the sisters had each explained *why* they wanted the orange, they very likely would have agreed to share it, giving one sister all the juice and the other all the peel. This is an example of an **integrative agreement** (Pruitt & Lewis, 1975, 1977). Compared with compromises, in which each party sacrifices something important, integrative agreements are more enduring. Because they are mutually rewarding, they also lead to better ongoing relationships (Pruitt, 1986).

**UNRAVELING MISPERCEPTIONS WITH CONTROLLED COMMUNICATIONS** Communication often helps reduce self-fulfilling misperceptions. Perhaps you can recall experiences similar to that of this college student:

### integrative agreements

Win-win agreements that reconcile both parties’ interests to their mutual benefit.

Often, after a prolonged period of little communication, I perceive Martha's silence as a sign of her dislike for me. She, in turn, thinks that my quietness is a result of my being mad at her. My silence induces her silence, which makes me even more silent . . . until this snowballing effect is broken by some occurrence that makes it necessary for us to interact. And the communication then unravels all the misinterpretations we had made about one another.

The outcome of such conflicts often depends on *how* people communicate their feelings to one another. Roger Knudson and his colleagues (1980) invited married couples to come to the University of Illinois psychology laboratory and relive, through role playing, one of their past conflicts. Before, during, and after their conversation (which often generated as much emotion as the actual previous conflict), the couples were observed closely and questioned. Couples who evaded the issue—by failing to make their positions clear or failing to acknowledge their spouse's position—left with the illusion that they were more in harmony and agreement than they really were. Often, they came to believe they now agreed more when actually they agreed less. In contrast, those who engaged the issue—by making their positions clear and by taking one another's views into account—achieved more actual agreement and gained more accurate information about one another's perceptions. That helps explain why couples who communicate their concerns directly and openly are usually happily married (Grush & Glidden, 1987).

Such findings have triggered programs that train couples and children how to manage conflicts constructively (Horowitz and Boardman, 1994). If managed constructively, conflict provides opportunities for reconciliation and more genuine harmony. Psychologists Ian Gotlib and Catherine Colby (1988) offer advice on how to avoid destructive quarrels and how to have good quarrels (Table 13.2). Children, for example, learn that conflict is normal, that people can learn to get along with those who are different, that most disputes can be resolved with two winners, and that nonviolent communication strategies are an alternative to a world of bullies and victims. This "violence prevention curriculum . . . is not about passivity," noted Deborah Prothrow-Stith (1991, p. 183). "It is about using anger not to hurt oneself or one's peers, but to change the world."

David Johnson and Roger Johnson (1995, 2000, 2003) put first-grade through ninth-grade children through about a dozen hours of conflict resolution training in six schools, with very heartening results. Before the training, most students

**TABLE :: 13.2 How Couples Can Fight Constructively**

Do Not	Do
• evade the argument, give the silent treatment, or walk out on it	• clearly define the issue and repeat the other's arguments in your own words
• use your intimate knowledge of the other person to hit below the belt and humiliate	• divulge your positive and negative feelings
• bring in unrelated issues	• welcome feedback about your behavior
• feign agreement while harboring resentment	• clarify where you agree and disagree and what matters most to each of you
• tell the other party how she or he is feeling	• ask questions that help the other find words to express the concern
• attack indirectly by criticizing someone or something the other person values	• wait for spontaneous explosions to subside, without retaliating
• undermine the other by intensifying his or her insecurity or threatening disaster	• offer positive suggestions for mutual improvement



Communication facilitators work to break down barriers, as in this diversity training exercise for teenagers.

were involved in daily conflicts—put-downs and teasing, playground turn-taking conflicts, conflicts over possessions—conflicts that nearly always also resulted in a winner and a loser. After training, the children more often found win-win solutions, better mediated friends' conflicts, and retained and applied their new skills in and out of school throughout the school year. When implemented with a whole student body, the result is a more peaceful student community and increased academic achievement.

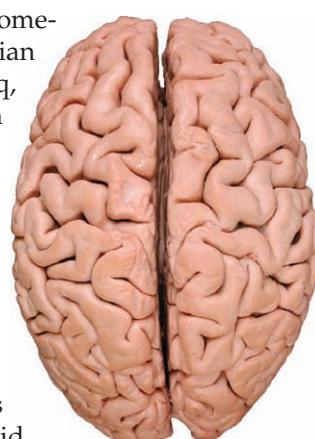
Conflict researchers report that a key factor is *trust* (Noor & others, 2008; Ross & Ward, 1995). If you believe the other person is well intentioned, you are more likely to divulge your needs and concerns. Lacking trust, you may fear that being open will give the other party information that might be used against you. Even simple behaviors can enhance trust. In experiments, negotiators who were instructed to mimic the others' mannerisms, as naturally empathic people in close relationships often do, elicited more trust and greater discovery of compatible interests and mutually satisfying deals (Maddux & others, 2008).

When the two parties mistrust each other and communicate unproductively, a third-party mediator—a marriage counselor, a labor mediator, a diplomat—sometimes helps. Often the mediator is someone trusted by both sides. In the 1980s it took an Algerian Muslim to mediate the conflict between Iran and Iraq, and the pope to resolve a geographical dispute between Argentina and Chile (Carnevale & Choi, 2000).

After coaxing the conflicting parties to rethink their perceived win-lose conflict, the mediator often has each party identify and rank its goals. When goals are compatible, the ranking procedure makes it easier for each to concede on less-important goals so that both achieve their chief goals (Erickson & others, 1974; Schulz & Pruitt, 1978). South Africa achieved internal peace when Black and White South Africans granted each other's top priorities—replacing apartheid

"[THERE IS] A PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIER BETWEEN US, A BARRIER OF SUSPICION, A BARRIER OF REJECTION; A BARRIER OF FEAR, OF DECEPTION, A BARRIER OF HALLUCINATION. . . ."

—EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT ANWAR AL-SADAT, TO THE ISRAELI KNESSET, 1977



Trust, like other social behaviors, is also a biological phenomenon. Social neuroscientists have found that individuals with lowered levels of serotonin, the brain neurotransmitter, become more likely to see a low offer in a laboratory game as unfair, and to reject it (Crockett & others, 2008). Infusions of the hormone oxytocin have something of an opposite effect, increasing people's trust of strangers in laboratory games (Zak, 2008).

with majority rule and safeguarding the security, welfare, and rights of Whites (Kelman, 1998).

When labor and management both believe that management's goal of higher productivity and profit is compatible with labor's goal of better wages and working conditions, they can begin to work for an integrative win-win solution. If workers will forgo benefits that are moderately beneficial to them but very costly to management (perhaps company-provided dental care), and if management will forgo moderately valuable arrangements that workers very much resent (perhaps inflexibility of working hours), both sides may gain (Ross & Ward, 1995). Rather than seeing itself as making a concession, each side can see the negotiation as an effort to exchange bargaining chips for things more valued.

When the parties then convene to communicate directly, they are usually not set loose in the hope that, eyeball-to-eyeball, the conflict will resolve itself. In the midst of a threatening, stressful conflict, emotions often disrupt the ability to understand the other party's point of view. Although happiness and gratitude can increase trust, anger decreases it (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005). Communication may thus become most difficult just when it is most needed (Tetlock, 1985).

The mediator will often structure the encounter to help each party understand and feel understood by the other. The mediator may ask the conflicting parties to restrict their arguments to statements of fact, including statements of how they feel and how they respond when the other acts in a given way: "I enjoy music. But when you play it loud, I find it hard to concentrate. That makes me crabby." Also, the mediator may ask people to reverse roles and argue the other's position or to imagine and explain what the other person is experiencing. The mediator may have them restate one another's positions before replying with their own: "It annoys you when I play my music and you're trying to study."

Experiments show that taking the other's perspective and inducing empathy decreases stereotyping and increases cooperation (Batson & Moran, 1999; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Todd & others, 2011). It helps to humanize rather than demonize the other. Older people often find that easier to do, by having the wisdom to appreciate multiple perspectives and the limits of knowledge (Grossmann & others, 2010). Sometimes our elders are older, wiser, and better able to navigate social conflicts.

Neutral third parties may also suggest mutually agreeable proposals that would be dismissed—"reactively devalued"—if offered by either side. Constance Stillinger and her colleagues (1991) found that a nuclear disarmament proposal that Americans dismissed when attributed to the former Soviet Union seemed more acceptable when attributed to a neutral third party. Likewise, people will often reactively devalue a concession offered by an adversary ("they must not value it"); the same concession may seem more than a token gesture when suggested by a third party.

These peacemaking principles—based partly on laboratory experiments, partly on practical experience—have helped mediate both international and industrial conflicts (Blake & Mouton, 1962, 1979; Fisher, 1994; Wehr, 1979). One small team of Arab and Jewish Americans, led by social psychologist Herbert Kelman (1997, 2007, 2008), has conducted workshops bringing together influential Arabs and Israelis. Kelman and colleagues counter misperceptions and have participants seek creative solutions for their common good. Isolated, the participants are free to speak



Building trust, enabling communication. When President Obama and his political antagonist, House Republican leader John Boehner, played golf, they were each attempting to enhance their relationship and enhance their ability to communicate.

directly to their adversaries without fear that their constituents are second-guessing what they are saying. The result? Those from both sides typically come to understand the other's perspective and how the other side responds to their own group's actions.

## ARBITRATION

Some conflicts are so intractable, the underlying interests so divergent, that a mutually satisfactory resolution is unattainable. Conflicting claims to Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestine versus a secure Israel have, so far, proven intractable. In a divorce dispute over custody of a child, both parents cannot enjoy full custody. In those and many other cases (disputes over tenants' repair bills, athletes' wages, and national territories), a third-party mediator may—or may not—help resolve the conflict.

If not, the parties may turn to *arbitration* by having the mediator or another third party *impose* a settlement. Disputants usually prefer to settle their differences without arbitration so that they retain control over the outcome. Neil McGillicuddy and others (1987) observed this preference in an experiment involving disputants coming to a dispute settlement center. When people knew they would face an arbitrated settlement if mediation failed, they tried harder to resolve the problem, exhibited less hostility, and thus were more likely to reach agreement.

In cases where differences seem large and irreconcilable, the prospect of arbitration may cause the disputants to freeze their positions, hoping to gain an advantage when the arbitrator chooses a compromise. To combat that tendency, some disputes, such as those involving salaries of individual baseball players, are settled with "final-offer arbitration," in which the third party chooses one of the two final offers. Final-offer arbitration motivates each party to make a reasonable proposal.

Typically, however, the final offer is not as reasonable as it would be if each party, free of self-serving bias, saw its own proposal through others' eyes. Negotiation researchers report that most disputants are made stubborn by "optimistic overconfidence" (Kahneman & Tversky, 1995). Successful mediation is hindered when, as often happens, both parties believe they have a two-thirds chance of winning a final-offer arbitration (Bazerman, 1986, 1990).

## Conciliation

Sometimes tension and suspicion run so high that even communication, let alone resolution, becomes all but impossible. Each party may threaten, coerce, or retaliate against the other. Unfortunately, such acts tend to be reciprocated, escalating the conflict. So, would a strategy of appeasing the other party by being unconditionally cooperative produce a satisfying result? Often not. In laboratory games, those who are 100 percent cooperative often are exploited. Politically, a one-sided pacifism is usually out of the question.

## GRIT

Social psychologist Charles Osgood (1962, 1980) advocated a third alternative, one that is conciliatory yet strong enough to discourage exploitation. Osgood called it "graduated and reciprocated initiatives in tension reduction." He nicknamed it **GRIT**, a label that suggests the determination it requires. GRIT aims to reverse the "conflict spiral" by triggering reciprocal de-escalation. To do so, it draws upon social-psychological concepts, such as the norm of reciprocity and the attribution of motives.

GRIT requires one side to initiate a few small de-escalatory actions, after *announcing a conciliatory intent*. The initiator states its desire to reduce tension, declares each conciliatory act before making it, and invites the adversary to reciprocate. Such announcements create a framework that helps the adversary correctly interpret what otherwise might be seen as weak or tricky actions. They also bring public pressure to bear on the adversary to follow the reciprocity norm.

## GRIT

Acronym for "graduated and reciprocated initiatives in tension reduction"—a strategy designed to de-escalate international tensions.

Next, the initiator establishes credibility and genuineness by carrying out, exactly as announced, several verifiable *conciliatory acts*. This intensifies the pressure to reciprocate. Making conciliatory acts diverse—perhaps offering medical help, closing a military base, and lifting a trade ban—keeps the initiator from making a significant sacrifice in any one area and leaves the adversary freer to choose its own means of reciprocation. If the adversary reciprocates voluntarily, its own conciliatory behavior may soften its attitudes.

GRIT is conciliatory. But it is not “surrender on the installment plan.” The remaining aspects of the plan protect each side’s self-interest by *maintaining retaliatory capability*. The initial conciliatory steps entail some small risk but do not jeopardize either one’s security; rather, they are calculated to begin edging both sides down the tension ladder. If one side takes an aggressive action, the other side reciprocates in kind, making clear it will not tolerate exploitation. Yet the reciprocal act is not an overresponse that would re-escalate the conflict. If the adversary offers its own conciliatory acts, these, too, are matched or even slightly exceeded. Morton Deutsch (1993) captured the spirit of GRIT in advising negotiators to be “firm, fair, and friendly”: *firm* in resisting intimidation, exploitation, and dirty tricks; *fair* in holding to one’s moral principles and not reciprocating the other’s immoral behavior despite his or her provocations; and *friendly* in the sense that one is willing to initiate and reciprocate cooperation.”

Does GRIT really work? In a lengthy series of experiments at Ohio University, Svenn Lindskold and his associates (1976 to 1988) found “strong support for the various steps in the GRIT proposal.” In laboratory games, announcing cooperative intent *does* boost cooperation. Repeated conciliatory or generous acts *do* breed greater trust (Klapwijk & Van Lange, 2009; Shapiro, 2010). Maintaining an equality of power *does* protect against exploitation.

Lindskold was not contending that the world of the laboratory experiment mirrors the more complex world of everyday life. Rather, experiments enable us to formulate and verify powerful theoretical principles, such as the reciprocity norm and the self-serving bias. As Lindskold (1981) noted, “It is the theories, not the individual experiments, that are used to interpret the world.”

### REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS

GRIT-like strategies have occasionally been tried outside the laboratory, with promising results. During the Berlin crisis of the early 1960s, U.S. and Russian tanks faced each other barrel to barrel. The crisis was defused when the Americans pulled back their tanks step-by-step. At each step, the Russians reciprocated. Similarly, in the 1970s, small concessions by Israel and Egypt (for example, Israel allowing Egypt to open up the Suez Canal, Egypt allowing ships bound for Israel to pass through) helped reduce tension to a point where the negotiations became possible (Rubin, 1981).

To many, the most significant attempt at GRIT was the so-called Kennedy experiment (Etzioni, 1967). On June 10, 1963, President Kennedy gave a major speech, “A Strategy for Peace.” He noted that “Our problems are man-made . . . and can be solved by man,” and then announced his first conciliatory act: The United States was stopping all atmospheric nuclear tests and would not resume them unless another country did. Kennedy’s entire speech was published in the Soviet press. Five days later Premier Khrushchev reciprocated, announcing he had halted production of strategic bombers. There soon followed further reciprocal gestures: The United States agreed to sell wheat to Russia, the Russians agreed to a “hot line” between the two countries, and the two countries soon achieved a test-ban treaty. For a time, these conciliatory initiatives eased relations between the two countries.

Might conciliatory efforts also help reduce tension between individuals? There is every reason to expect so. When a relationship is strained and communication nonexistent, it sometimes takes only a conciliatory gesture—a soft answer, a warm smile, a gentle touch—for both parties to begin easing down the tension ladder, to a rung where contact, cooperation, and communication again become possible.

“I AM NOT SUGGESTING THAT PRINCIPLES OF INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR CAN BE APPLIED TO THE BEHAVIOR OF NATIONS IN ANY DIRECT, SIMPLEMINDED FASHION. WHAT I AM TRYING TO SUGGEST IS THAT SUCH PRINCIPLES MAY PROVIDE US WITH HUNCHES ABOUT INTERNATIONAL BEHAVIOR THAT CAN BE TESTED AGAINST EXPERIENCE IN THE LARGER ARENA.”

—CHARLES E. OSGOOD (1966)

## SUMMING UP: How Can Peace Be Achieved?

- Although conflicts are readily kindled and fueled by social dilemmas, competition, and misperceptions, some equally powerful forces, such as contact, cooperation, communication, and conciliation, can transform hostility into harmony. Despite some encouraging early studies, other studies show that mere contact (such as mere desegregation in schools) has little effect upon racial attitudes. But when contact encourages emotional ties with individuals identified with an outgroup, and when it is structured to convey *equal status*, hostilities often lessen.
- Contacts are especially beneficial when people work together to overcome a common threat or to achieve a *superordinate goal*. Taking their cue from experiments on *cooperative contact*, several research teams have replaced competitive classroom learning situations with opportunities for cooperative learning, with heartening results.
- Conflicting parties often have difficulty communicating. A third-party mediator can promote communication by prodding the antagonists to replace their competitive win-lose view of their conflict with a more cooperative win-win orientation. Mediators can also structure communications that will peel away misperceptions and increase mutual understanding and trust. When a negotiated settlement is not reached, the conflicting parties may defer the outcome to an *arbitrator*, who either dictates a settlement or selects one of the two final offers.
- Sometimes tensions run so high that genuine communication is impossible. In such cases, small conciliatory gestures by one party may elicit reciprocal conciliatory acts by the other party. One such conciliatory strategy, graduated and reciprocated initiatives in tension reduction (*GRIT*), aims to alleviate tense international situations. Those who mediate tense labor-management and international conflicts sometimes use another peacemaking strategy. They instruct the participants, as this chapter instructed you, in the dynamics of conflict and peacemaking in the hope that understanding can help former adversaries establish and enjoy peaceful, rewarding relationships.

### POSTSCRIPT:

#### The Conflict Between Individual and Communal Rights

Many social conflicts are a contest between individual and collective rights. One person's right to own handguns conflicts with a neighborhood's right to safe streets. One person's right to smoke conflicts with others' rights to a smoke-free environment. One industrialist's right to do unregulated business conflicts with a community's right to clean air.

Hoping to blend the best of individualist and collectivist values, some social scientists—myself included—have advocated a communitarian synthesis that aims to balance individual rights with the collective right to communal well-being. Communitarians welcome incentives for individual initiative and appreciate why Marxist economies have crumbled. “If I were, let’s say, in Albania at this moment,” said communitarian sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1991), “I probably would argue that there’s too much community and not enough individual rights.” But communitarians also question the other extreme—the rugged individualism and self-indulgence of the 1960s (“Do your own thing”), the 1970s (the “Me decade”), the 1980s (“Greed is good”), and the 1990s (“Follow your bliss”). Unrestrained personal freedom, they say, destroys a culture’s social fabric; unregulated commercial freedom, they add, has plundered our shared environment and produced the recent economic collapse.

During the last half-century, Western individualism has intensified. Parents have become more likely to prize independence and self-reliance in their children and are less concerned with obedience (Alwin, 1990; Remley, 1988). Children more often have uncommon names (Twenge & others, 2010). Clothing and grooming styles have become more diverse, personal freedoms have increased, and common values have waned (Putnam, 2000; Schlesinger, 1991).

“THIS IS THE AGE OF THE INDIVIDUAL.”

—PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN, ADDRESS ON WALL STREET, 1982

Communitarians are not advocating a nostalgia trip—a return, for example, to the more restrictive and unequal gender roles of the 1950s. Rather, they propose a middle ground between the individualism of the West and the collectivism of the East, between the macho independence traditionally associated with males and the caregiving connectedness traditionally associated with females, between concerns for individual rights and for communal well-being, between liberty and fraternity, between me-thinking and we-thinking.

As with luggage searches at airports, smoking bans on planes, and sobriety checkpoints and speed limits on highways, societies are accepting some adjustments to individual rights in order to protect the public good. Environmental restraints on individual freedoms (to pollute, to whale, to deforest) similarly exchange certain short-term liberties for long-term communal gain. Some individualists warn that such constraints on individual liberties may plunge us down a slippery slope leading to the loss of more important liberties. If today we let them search our luggage, tomorrow they'll be knocking down the doors of our houses. If today we censor cigarette ads or pornography on television, tomorrow they'll be removing books from our libraries. If today we ban handguns, tomorrow they'll take our hunting rifles. In protecting the interests of the majority, do we risk suppressing the basic rights of minorities? Communitarians reply that if we don't balance concern for individual rights with concern for our collective well-being, we risk worse civic disorder, which in turn *will* fuel cries for an autocratic crackdown.

This much is sure: As the conflict between individual and collective rights continues, cross-cultural and gender scholarship can illuminate alternative cultural values and make visible our own assumed values.

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## PART FOUR

# Applying Social Psychology



Throughout this book, I have linked laboratory and life by relating social psychology's principles and findings to everyday happenings. Now, in three short, concluding chapters, we will recall many of these principles and apply them in practical contexts. Chapter 14, "Social Psychology in the Clinic," applies social psychology to evaluating and promoting mental and physical health. Chapter 15, "Social Psychology in Court," explores the social thinking of, and social influences on, jurors and juries. Chapter 16, "Social Psychology and the Sustainable Future," explores how social-psychological principles might help avert the ecological crisis that threatens to engulf us as a result of increasing population, consumption, and climate change.

CHAPTER

# 14

# Social Psychology in the Clinic



**"Life does not consist mainly, or even largely, of facts and happenings. It consists mainly of the storm of thoughts that are forever blowing through one's mind."**

—Mark Twain, 1835–1910

**What influences the accuracy of clinical judgments?**

**What cognitive processes accompany behavior problems?**

**What are some social-psychological approaches to treatment?**

**How do social relationships support health and well-being?**

**Postscript: Enhancing happiness**

If you are a typical college student, you may occasionally feel mildly depressed. Perhaps you have at times felt dissatisfied with life, discouraged about the future, sad, lacking appetite and energy, unable to concentrate, perhaps even wondering if life is worth living. Maybe disappointing grades have seemed to jeopardize your career goals. Perhaps the breakup of a relationship has left you in despair. At such times, you may fall into self-focused brooding that only worsens your feelings. In one survey of American collegians, 31 percent reported that during the last school year they had at some point felt "so depressed it was difficult to function" (ACHA, 2009). For 13 percent of adult American men and 22 percent of women, life's down times are not just temporary blue moods in response to bad events; rather, they define a major depressive episode that lasts for weeks without any obvious cause—and thus, at some point, a diagnosis of depression (Pelham, 2009).

Among the many thriving areas of applied social psychology is one that relates social psychology's concepts to depression; to other problems, such as loneliness, anxiety, and physical illness; and to happiness and well-being. This bridge-building research between social psychology and **clinical psychology** seeks answers to four important questions:

### clinical psychology

The study, assessment, and treatment of people with psychological difficulties.

- As laypeople or as professional psychologists, how can we improve our judgments and predictions about others?
- How do the ways in which we think about self and others fuel problems such as depression, loneliness, anxiety, and ill health?
- How might people reverse these maladaptive thought patterns?
- What part do close, supportive relationships play in health and happiness?

## WHAT INFLUENCES THE ACCURACY OF CLINICAL JUDGMENTS?

Identify influences on social judgment (discussed in Chapters 2 through 4) that affect clinicians' judgments of clients. Describe biases that clinicians and their clients should be wary of.

A parole board talks with a convicted rapist and ponders whether to release him. A clinical psychologist ponders whether her patient is seriously suicidal. A physician notes a patient's symptoms and decides whether to recommend an invasive test. A school social worker ponders whether a child's overheard threat was a macho joke, a onetime outburst, or a signal indicating a potential school assassin.

All these professionals must decide whether to make their judgments subjectively or objectively. Should they listen to their gut instincts, their hunches, their inner wisdom? Or should they rely on the wisdom embedded in formulas, statistical analyses, and computerized predictions?

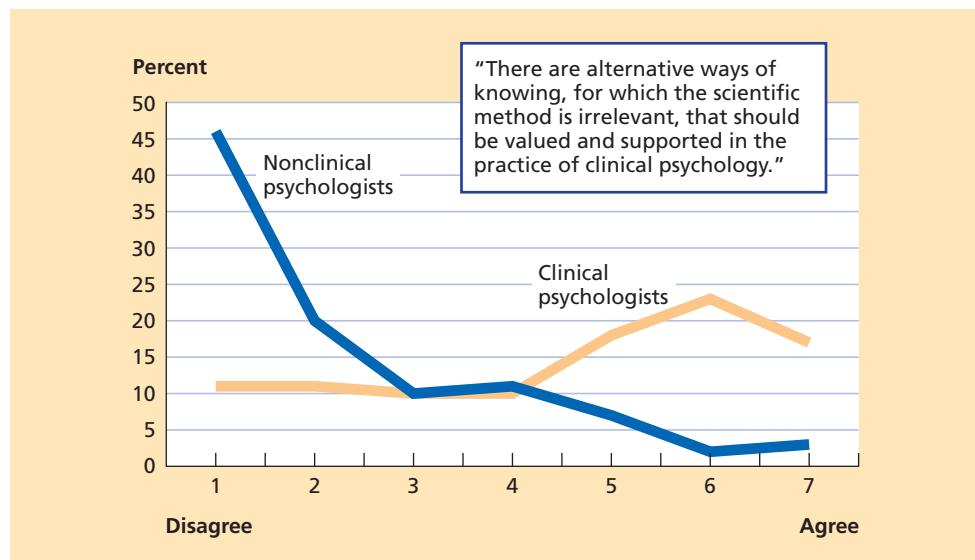
In the contest between heart and head, most psychological clinicians vote with their hearts. They listen to the whispers from their experience, a still small voice that clues them. They prefer not to let cold calculations decide the futures of warm human beings. As Figure 14.1 indicates, they are far more likely than nonclinical (and more research-oriented) psychologists to welcome nonscientific "ways of knowing." Feelings trump formulas.

**FIGURE :: 14.1**

#### Clinical Intuition

When Narina Nunez, Debra Ann Poole, and Amina Memon (2003) surveyed a national sample of clinical and nonclinical psychologists, they discovered "two cultures"—one mostly skeptical of "alternative ways of knowing," the other mostly accepting.

*Source:* From Nunez, Poole, & Memon, 2003.



Clinical judgments are also *social* judgments, notes social-clinical psychologist James Maddux (2008). The social construction of mental illness works like this, he says: Someone observes a pattern of atypical or unwanted thinking and acting. A powerful group sees the desirability or profitability of diagnosing and treating this problem, and thus gives it a name. News about this “disease” spreads, and people begin seeing it in themselves or family members. And thus is born Body Dysmorphic Disorder (for those preoccupied with an appearance defect), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (for toddlers throwing tantrums), Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder (for those not wanting sex often enough), or Orgasmic Disorder (for those having orgasms too late or too soon). “The science of medicine is not diminished by acknowledging that the notions of *health* and *illness* are socially constructed,” notes Maddux, “nor is the science of economics diminished by acknowledging that the notions of *poverty* and *wealth* are socially constructed.”

As social phenomena, clinical judgments are vulnerable to illusory correlations, overconfidence bred by hindsight, and self-confirming diagnoses (Garb, 2005; Maddux, 1993). Let’s see why alerting mental health workers to how people form impressions (and misimpressions) might help avert serious misjudgments (McFall, 1991, 2000).

## Illusory Correlations

As we noted in Chapter 3, it’s tempting to see correlations where none exist. If we expect two things to be associated—if, for example, we believe that premonitions predict events—it’s easy to perceive illusory correlations. Even when shown random data, we may notice and remember instances when premonitions and events are coincidentally related and soon forget all the instances when premonitions aren’t borne out and when events happen without a prior premonition.

Clinicians, like all of us, may perceive illusory correlations. Imagine that Mary, a mental health worker, expects particular responses to Rorschach inkblots to be more common among people with a sexual disorder. Might she, in reflecting on her experience, believe she has witnessed such associations?

To discover when such a perception is an illusory correlation, psychological science offers a simple method: Have one clinician administer and interpret the test. Have another clinician assess the same person’s traits or symptoms. Repeat this process with many people. Are test outcomes in fact correlated with reported symptoms? Some tests are indeed predictive. Others, such as the Rorschach inkblots and the Draw-a-Person test, have correlations far weaker than their users suppose (Lilienfeld & others, 2000, 2005).

Why, then, do clinicians continue to express confidence in uninformative or ambiguous tests? Pioneering experiments by Loren Chapman and Jean Chapman (1969, 1971) helped us see why. They invited college students and professional clinicians to study some test performances and diagnoses. If the students or clinicians *expected* a particular association, they generally *perceived* it, regardless of whether the data were supportive. For example, clinicians who believed that only suspicious people draw peculiar eyes on the Draw-a-Person test perceived such a relationship—even when shown cases in which suspicious people drew peculiar eyes less often than nonsuspicious people. If they believed in a connection, they were more likely to notice confirming instances.

In fairness to clinicians, illusory thinking also occurs among political analysts, historians, sportscasters, personnel directors, stockbrokers, and many other professionals, including research psychologists. As a researcher, I have often been unaware of the shortcomings of my theoretical analyses. I so eagerly presume that my idea of truth is *the* truth that, no matter how hard I try, I cannot see my own error. During the past 40 years, I have read dozens of reviews of my own manuscripts and have been a reviewer for dozens of others. My experience is that it is far easier to spot someone else’s sloppy thinking than to perceive my own.

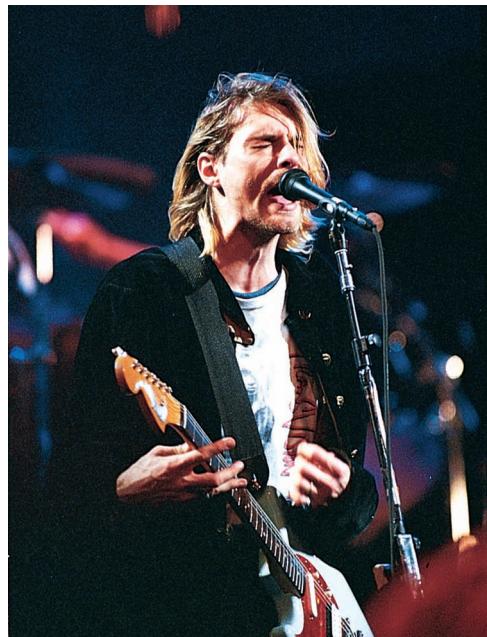
“TO FREE A MAN OF ERROR  
IS TO GIVE, NOT TO TAKE  
AWAY. KNOWLEDGE THAT  
A THING IS FALSE IS A  
TRUTH.”

—ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER,  
1788–1860

“NO ONE CAN SEE HIS  
OWN ERRORS.”

—PSALM 19:12

20/20 hindsight. Kurt Cobain, member of the rock group Nirvana, whose songs often expressed depressed, suicidal thinking. Should others have used such signs to predict or prevent his suicide?



## Hindsight and Overconfidence

If someone we know commits suicide, how do we react? One common reaction is to think that we, or those close to the person, should have been able to predict and therefore to prevent the suicide: "We should have known!" In hindsight, we can see the suicidal signs and the pleas for help. One experiment gave participants a description of a depressed person. Some participants were told that the person subsequently committed suicide; other participants were not told this. Compared with those not informed of the suicide, those who had been informed became more likely to say they "would have expected" it (Goggin & Range, 1985). Moreover, they viewed the victim's family more negatively.

After a tragedy, an I-should-have-known-it-all-along phenomenon can leave family, friends, and therapists feeling guilty.

David Rosenhan (1973) and seven associates provided a striking example of error-prone after-the-fact explanations. To test mental health workers' clinical insights, they each made an appointment with a different mental hospital admissions office and complained of "hearing voices." Apart from giving false names and vocations, they reported their life histories and emotional states honestly and exhibited no further symptoms. Most were diagnosed with schizophrenia and remained hospitalized for two to three weeks. Hospital clinicians then searched for early incidents in the pseudopatients' life histories and hospital behavior that "confirmed" and "explained" the diagnosis. Rosenhan tells of one pseudopatient who truthfully explained to the interviewer that he had a close childhood relationship with his mother but was rather remote from his father. During adolescence and beyond, however, his father became a close friend while his relationship with his mother cooled. His present relationship with his wife was characteristically close and warm. Apart from occasional angry exchanges, friction was minimal. The children had rarely been spanked.

The interviewer, "knowing" the person suffered schizophrenia, explained the problem this way:

This white 39-year-old male . . . manifests a long history of considerable ambivalence in close relationships, which begins in early childhood. A warm relationship with his mother cools during his adolescence. A distant relationship to his father is described as becoming very intense. Affective stability is absent. His attempts to control emotionality with his wife and children are punctuated by angry outbursts and, in the case of the children, spankings. And while he says that he has several good friends, one senses considerable ambivalence embedded in those relationships also.

Rosenhan later told some staff members (who had heard about his controversial experiment but doubted such mistakes could occur in their hospital) that during the next three months one or more pseudopatients would seek admission to their hospital. After the three months, he asked the staff to guess which of the 193 patients admitted during that time were really pseudopatients. Of the 193 new patients, 41 were believed by at least one staff member to be pseudopatients. Actually, there were none.

## Self-Confirming Diagnoses

So far we've seen that mental health clinicians sometimes perceive illusory correlations and that hindsight explanations can err. A third possible problem with clinical judgment is that patients may supply information that fulfills clinicians' expectations. To get a feel for how this phenomenon might be tested experimentally, imagine yourself on a blind date with someone who has been told that you are an uninhibited, outgoing person. To see whether this is true, your date slips questions into the conversation, such as "Have you ever done anything crazy in front of other people?" As you answer such questions, will you reveal a different "you" than if your date had been told you were shy and reserved?

In a clever series of experiments, Mark Snyder (1984), in collaboration with William Swann and others, gave University of Minnesota students some hypotheses to test concerning individuals' traits. Their finding: People often test for a trait by looking for information that confirms it. As in the blind-date example, if people are trying to find out if someone is an extravert, they often solicit instances of extraversion ("What would you do if you wanted to liven things up at a party?"). Testing for introversion, they are more likely to ask, "What factors make it hard for you to really open up to people?" In response, those probed for extraversion *seem* more sociable, and those probed for introversion seem more shy. Our assumptions about another help elicit the behavior we expect.

At Indiana University, Russell Fazio and his colleagues (1981) reproduced this finding and also discovered that those asked the "extraverted" questions later perceived themselves as actually more outgoing than those asked the introverted questions. Moreover, they really became noticeably more outgoing. An accomplice of the experimenter later met each participant in a waiting room and 70 percent of the time guessed correctly from the person's behavior which condition the person had come from.

Given such experiments, can you see why the behaviors of people undergoing psychotherapy come to fit their therapists' theories (Whitman & others, 1963)? When Harold Renaud and Floyd Estess (1961) conducted life-history interviews of 100 healthy, successful adult men, they were startled to discover that their subjects' childhood experiences were loaded with "traumatic events," tense relations with certain people, and bad decisions by their parents—the very factors usually used to explain psychiatric problems. If therapists go fishing for traumas in early childhood experiences, they will often find them. Thus, surmised Snyder (1981):

The psychiatrist who believes (erroneously) that adult gay males had bad childhood relationships with their mothers may meticulously probe for recalled (or fabricated) signs of tension between their gay clients and their mothers, but neglect to so carefully interrogate their heterosexual clients about their maternal relationships. No doubt, any individual could recall some friction with his or her mother, however minor or isolated the incidents.

"AS IS YOUR SORT OF  
MIND, SO IS YOUR SORT  
OF SEARCH: YOU'LL FIND  
WHAT YOU DESIRE."

—ROBERT BROWNING,  
1812–1889

## Clinical Versus Statistical Prediction

Not surprisingly, given these hindsight- and diagnosis-confirming tendencies, most clinicians and interviewers express more confidence in their intuitive assessments than in statistical data (such as using past grades and aptitude scores to predict success in graduate or professional school). Yet when researchers pit statistical prediction against intuitive prediction, the statistics usually win. Statistical predictions are indeed unreliable. But human intuition—even expert intuition—is even more unreliable (Faust & Ziskin, 1988; Meehl, 1954; Swets & others, 2000).

Three decades after demonstrating the superiority of statistical over intuitive prediction, Paul Meehl (1986) found the evidence stronger than ever:

"A VERY BRIGHT YOUNG MAN WHO IS LIKELY TO SUCCEED IN LIFE. HE IS INTELLIGENT ENOUGH TO ACHIEVE LOFTY GOALS AS LONG AS HE STAYS ON TASK AND REMAINS MOTIVATED."

—PROBATION OFFICER'S CLINICAL INTUITION IN RESPONSE TO ERIC HARRIS'S "HOMICIDAL THOUGHTS"—2½ MONTHS BEFORE HE COMMITTED THE COLUMBINE HIGH SCHOOL MASSACRE.

"THE EFFECT OF MEEHL'S WORK ON CLINICAL PRACTICE IN THE MENTAL HEALTH AREA CAN BE SUMMED UP IN A SINGLE WORD: ZILCH. HE WAS HONORED, ELECTED TO THE PRESIDENCY OF [THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION] AT A VERY YOUNG AGE IN 1962, RECENTLY ELECTED TO THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, AND IGNORED."

—ROBYN M. DAWES (1989)

There is no controversy in social science which shows [so many] studies coming out so uniformly in the same direction as this one . . . When you are pushing 90 investigations, predicting everything from the outcome of football games to the diagnosis of liver disease and when you can hardly come up with a half dozen studies showing even a weak tendency in favor of the clinician, it is time to draw a practical conclusion.

One University of Minnesota research team conducted an all-encompassing digest ("meta-analysis") of 134 studies predicting human behavior or making psychological or medical diagnoses and prognoses (Grove & others, 2000). In only 8 of the studies did clinical prediction surpass "mechanical" (statistical) prediction. In 8 times as many (63 studies), statistical prediction fared better. (The rest were a virtual draw.) Ah, but would clinicians fare differently when given the opportunity for a firsthand clinical interview? Yes, report the researchers: Allowed interviews, the clinicians fared substantially *worse*. "It is fair to say that 'the ball is in the clinicians' court,'" the researchers concluded. "Given the overall deficit in clinicians' accuracy relative to mechanical prediction, the burden falls on advocates of clinical prediction to show that clinicians' predictions are more [accurate or cost-effective]."

What if we combined statistical prediction with clinical intuition? What if we gave professional clinicians the statistical prediction of someone's future academic performance or risk of parole violation or suicide and asked them to refine or improve on the prediction? Alas, in the few studies where that has been done, prediction was better if the "improvements" were ignored (Dawes, 1994).

Why then do so many clinicians continue to interpret Rorschach inkblot tests and offer intuitive predictions about parolees, suicide risks, and likelihood of child abuse? Partly out of sheer ignorance, said Meehl, but also partly out of "mistaken conceptions of ethics":

If I try to forecast something important about a college student, or a criminal, or a depressed patient by inefficient rather than efficient means, meanwhile charging this person or the taxpayer 10 times as much money as I would need to achieve greater predictive accuracy, that is not a sound ethical practice. That it feels better, warmer, and cuddlier to me as predictor is a shabby excuse indeed.

Such words are shocking. Did Meehl (who did not completely dismiss clinical expertise) underestimate experts' intuitions? To see why his findings are apparently valid, consider the assessment of human potential by graduate admissions interviewers. Dawes (1976) explained why statistical prediction is so often superior to an interviewer's intuition when predicting certain outcomes such as graduate school success:

What makes us think that we can do a better job of selection by interviewing (students) for a half hour, than we can by adding together relevant (standardized) variables, such as undergraduate GPA, GRE score, and perhaps ratings of letters of recommendation? The most reasonable explanation to me lies in our overvaluation of our cognitive capacity. And it is really cognitive conceit. Consider, for example, what goes into a GPA. Because for most graduate applicants it is based on at least 3½ years of undergraduate study, it is a composite measure arising from a minimum of 28 courses and possibly, with the popularity of the quarter system, as many as 50 . . . Yet you and I, looking at a folder or interviewing someone for a half hour, are supposed to be able to form a better impression than one based on 3½ years of the cumulative evaluations of 20–40 different professors. . . . Finally, if we do wish to ignore GPA, it appears that the only reason for doing so is believing that the candidate is particularly brilliant even though his or her record may not show it. What better evidence for such brilliance can we have than a score on a carefully devised aptitude test? Do we really think we are better equipped to assess such aptitude than is the Educational Testing Service, whatever its faults?

# focus ON

## A Physician's View: The Social Psychology of Medicine

Reading this book helps me understand the human behaviors I observe in my work as a cancer specialist and as medical director of a large staff of physicians. A few examples:

Reviews of medical records illustrate the "I-knew-it-all-along phenomenon." Physician reviewers who assess the medical records of their colleagues often believe, in hindsight, that problems such as cancer or appendicitis should clearly have been recognized and treated much more quickly. Once you know the correct diagnosis, it's easy to look back and interpret the early symptoms accordingly.

For many physicians I have known, the intrinsic motives behind their entering the profession—to help people, to be scientifically stimulated—soon become "overjustified" by the high pay. Before long, the joy is lost. The extrinsic rewards become the reason to practice, and the physician, having lost the altruistic motives, works to increase "success," measured in income.

"Self-serving bias" is ever present. We physicians gladly accept personal credit when things go well. When they don't—when the patient is misdiagnosed or doesn't get well or dies—we attribute the failure elsewhere. We

were given inadequate information or the case was ill-fated from the beginning.

I also observe many examples of "belief perseverance." Even when presented with the documented facts about, say, how AIDS is transmitted, people will strangely persist in wrongly believing that it is just a "gay" disease or that they should fear catching it from mosquito bites. It makes me wonder: How can I more effectively persuade people of what they need to know and act upon?

Indeed, as I observe medical attitudes and decision making I feel myself submerged in a giant practical laboratory of social psychology. To understand the goings-on around me, I find social psychological insights invaluable and would strongly advise premed students to study the field.



Burton F. VanderLaan  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

The bottom line, contends Dawes (2005) after three decades pressing his point, is that, lacking evidence, using clinical intuition rather than statistical prediction "is simply unethical."

When considering valid behavioral predictors, psychologists can offer useful predictions. Such was the case when psychologists Melissa Dannelet and Carl Redick assessed Maurice Clemon, who was in a Tacoma, Washington, jail on rape and assault charges. Based partly on "previous violence, young age at first violent incident, relationship instability and prior supervision failure," Dannelet and Redick predicted that Clemons was at "risk for future dangerous behavior and for committing future criminal acts jeopardizing public safety and security due to past illicit



When evaluating clients, mental health workers, like all of us, are vulnerable to cognitive illusions.

“I BESEECH YE IN THE  
BOWELS OF CHRIST, THINK  
THAT YE MAY BE MISTAKEN.’  
I SHALL LIKE TO HAVE THAT  
WRITTEN OVER THE PORTALS  
OF EVERY CHURCH, EVERY  
SCHOOL, AND EVERY  
COURTHOUSE, AND, MAY  
I SAY, OF EVERY LEGISLATIVE  
BODY IN THE UNITED STATES.”

—JUDGE LEARNED HAND,  
1951, ECHOING OLIVER  
CROMWELL’S 1650 PLEA TO  
THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

behaviors” (AP, 2009). Six weeks later, after being released on bond, Clemons came upon four police officers working on their laptops in a coffee shop, and shot and killed them.

## Implications for Better Clinical Practice

Professional clinicians are human; they are “vulnerable to insidious errors and biases,” concluded James Maddux (1993). They are, as we have seen,

- frequently the victims of illusory correlation.
- too readily convinced of their own after-the-fact analyses.
- unaware that erroneous diagnoses can be self-confirming.
- likely to overestimate their clinical intuition.

The implications for mental health workers are easily stated: Be mindful that clients’ verbal agreement with what you say does not prove its validity. Beware of the tendency to see relationships that you expect to see or that are supported by striking examples readily available in your memory. Rely on your notes more than on your memory. Recognize that hindsight is seductive: It can lead you to feel overconfident and sometimes to judge yourself too harshly for not having foreseen outcomes. Guard against the tendency to ask questions that assume your preconceptions are correct; consider opposing ideas and test them, too (Garb, 1994).

## SUMMING UP: What Influences the Accuracy of Clinical Judgments?

- As psychiatrists and *clinical psychologists* diagnose and treat their clients, they may perceive illusory correlations.
- Hindsight explanations of people’s difficulties are sometimes too easy. Indeed, after-the-fact explaining can breed overconfidence in clinical judgment.
- In interaction with clients, erroneous diagnoses are sometimes self-confirming because interviewers tend to seek and recall information that verifies what they are looking for.
- Research on the errors that so easily creep into intuitive judgments illustrates the need for rigorous testing of intuitive conclusions and the use of statistics to make predictions.
- The scientific method cannot answer all questions and is itself vulnerable to bias. Thankfully, however, it can help us sift truth from falsehood if we are aware of the biases that tend to cloud judgments that are made “from the heart.”

## WHAT COGNITIVE PROCESSES ACCOMPANY BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS?

Describe the cognitive processes that accompany psychological disorders.

Let’s next consider how people’s thinking affects their feelings. What are the memories, attributions, and expectations of depressed, lonely, shy, or illness-prone people?

### Depression

People who feel depressed tend to think in negative terms. They view life through dark-colored glasses. With seriously depressed people—those who are feeling worthless, lethargic, indifferent toward friends and family, and unable to sleep or eat normally—the negative thinking is self-defeating. Their intensely pessimistic outlook leads them to magnify every bad experience and minimize every

good one. They may view advice to “count your blessings” or “look on the bright side” as hopelessly unrealistic. As one depressed young woman reported, “The real me is worthless and inadequate. I can’t move forward with my work because I become frozen with doubt” (Burns, 1980, p. 29).

### DISTORTION OR REALISM?

Are all depressed people unrealistically negative? To find out, Lauren Alloy and Lyn Abramson (1979; Alloy & others, 2004) studied college students who were either mildly depressed or not depressed. They had the students press a button and observe whether the button controlled a light coming on. Surprisingly, the depressed students were quite accurate in estimating their degree of control. It was the nondepressives whose judgments were distorted; they exaggerated their control. Despite their self-preoccupation, mildly depressed people also are more attuned to others’ feelings (Harkness & others, 2005).

This surprising phenomenon of **depressive realism**, nicknamed the “sadder-but-wiser effect,” shows up in various judgments of one’s control or skill (Ackermann & DeRubeis, 1991; Alloy & others, 1990). Shelley Taylor (1989, p. 214) explains:

Normal people exaggerate how competent and well liked they are. Depressed people do not. Normal people remember their past behavior with a rosy glow. Depressed people [unless severely depressed] are more evenhanded in recalling their successes and failures. Normal people describe themselves primarily positively. Depressed people describe both their positive and their negative qualities. Normal people take credit for successful outcomes and tend to deny responsibility for failure. Depressed people accept responsibility for both success and failure. Normal people exaggerate the control they have over what goes on around them. Depressed people are less vulnerable to the illusion of control. Normal people believe to an unrealistic degree that the future holds a bounty of good things and few bad things. Depressed people are more realistic in their perceptions of the future. In fact, on virtually every point on which normal people show enhanced self-regard, illusions of control, and unrealistic visions of the future, depressed people fail to show the same biases. “Sadder but wiser” does indeed appear to apply to depression.

Underlying the thinking of depressed people are their attributions of responsibility. Consider: If you fail an exam and blame yourself, you may conclude that you are stupid or lazy; consequently, you may feel depressed. If you attribute the failure to an unfair exam or to other circumstances beyond your control, you may feel angry. In over 100 studies involving 15,000 subjects, depressed people have been more likely than nondepressed people to exhibit a negative **explanatory style** (Haeffel & others, 2008; Peterson & Steen, 2002; Sweeney & others, 1986). As shown in Figure 14.2, this explanatory style attributes failure and setbacks to causes that

#### depressive realism

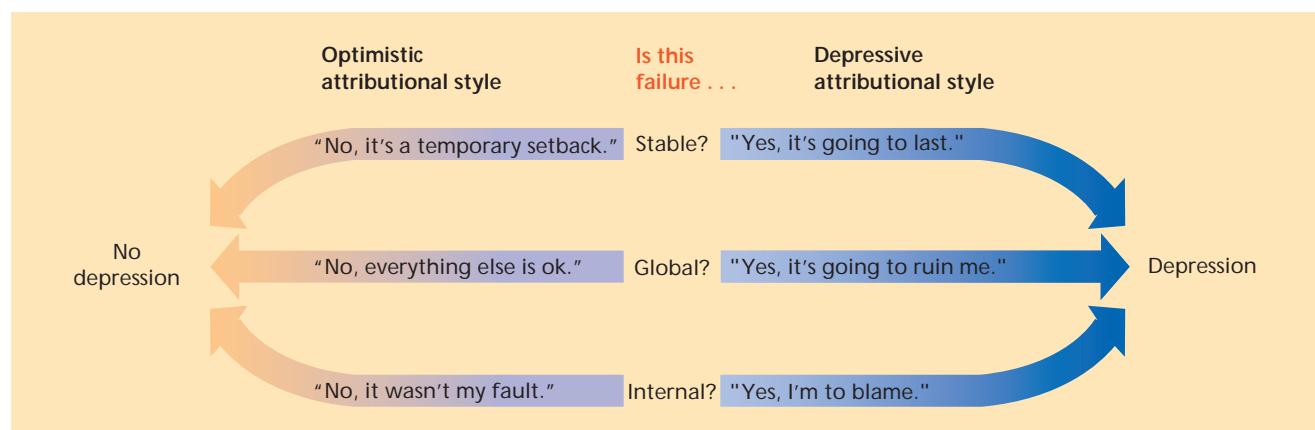
The tendency of mildly depressed people to make accurate rather than self-serving judgments, attributions, and predictions.

“LIFE IS THE ART OF BEING WELL DECEIVED.”

—WILLIAM HAZLITT, 1778–1830

#### explanatory style

One’s habitual way of explaining life events. A negative, pessimistic, depressive explanatory style attributes failure to stable, global, and internal causes.



**FIGURE :: 14.2**

### Depressive Explanatory Style

Depression is linked with a negative, pessimistic way of explaining and interpreting failures.

are *stable* ("It's going to last forever"), *global* ("It's going to affect everything I do"), and *internal* ("It's all my fault"). The result of this pessimistic, overgeneralized, self-blaming thinking, say Abramson and her colleagues (1989), is a depressing sense of hopelessness.

### IS NEGATIVE THINKING A CAUSE OR A RESULT OF DEPRESSION?

The cognitive accompaniments of depression raise a chicken-and-egg question: Do depressed moods cause negative thinking, or does negative thinking cause depression?

**DEPRESSED MOODS CAUSE NEGATIVE THINKING** As we saw in Chapter 3, our moods color our thinking. When we *feel* happy, we *think* happy. We see and recall a good world. But let our mood turn gloomy, and our thoughts switch to a different track. Off come the rose-colored glasses; on come the dark glasses. Now the bad mood primes our recollections of negative events (Bower, 1987; Johnson & Magaro, 1987). Our relationships seem to sour, our self-images tarnish, our hopes dim, others seem more sinister (Brown & Taylor, 1986; Mayer & Salovey, 1987). As depression increases, memories and expectations plummet; when depression lifts, thinking brightens (Barnett & Gotlib, 1988; Kuiper & Higgins, 1985). Thus, *currently* depressed people recall their parents as having been rejecting and punitive. But *formerly* depressed people recall their parents in the same positive terms as do never-depressed people (Lewinsohn & Rosenbaum, 1987). Thus, when you hear depressed people trashing their parents, remember: *Moods modify memories*.

By studying Indiana University basketball fans, Edward Hirt and his colleagues (1992) demonstrated that even a temporary bad mood can darken our thinking. After the fans were either depressed by watching their team lose or elated by a victory, the researchers asked them to predict the team's future performance, and their own. After a loss, people offered bleaker assessments not only of the team's future

"TO THE MAN WHO IS ENTHUSIASTIC AND OPTIMISTIC, IF WHAT IS TO COME SHOULD BE PLEASANT, IT SEEMS BOTH LIKELY TO COME ABOUT AND LIKELY TO BE GOOD, WHILE TO THE INDIFFERENT OR DEPRESSED MAN IT SEEMS THE OPPOSITE."

—ARISTOTLE, *THE ART OF RHETORIC*, 4TH CENTURY B.C.

## THE inside STORY

### Shelley Taylor on Positive Illusions

Some years ago, I was conducting interviews with people who had cancer for a study on adjustment to intensely stressful events. I was surprised to learn that, for some people, the cancer experience actually seemed to have brought benefits, as well as the expected liabilities. Many people told me that they thought they were better people for the experience, they felt they were better adjusted to cancer than other people, they believed that they could exert control over their cancer in the future, and they believed their futures would be cancer-free, even when we knew from their medical histories that their cancers were likely to recur.

As a result, I became fascinated by how people can construe even the worst of situations as good, and I've studied these "positive illusions" ever since. Through our research, we learned quickly that you don't have to experience a trauma to demonstrate positive illusions. Most

people, including the majority of college students, think of themselves as somewhat better than average, as more in control of the circumstances around them than may actually be true, and as likely to experience more positive future outcomes in life than may be realistic. These illusions are not a sign of maladjustment—quite the contrary. Good mental health may depend on the ability to see things as somewhat better than they are and to find benefits even when things seem most bleak.



Shelley Taylor  
UCLA

but also of their own likely performance at throwing darts, solving anagrams, and getting a date. When things aren't going our way, it may seem as though they never will.

A depressed mood also affects behavior. When depressed, we tend to be withdrawn, glum, and quick to complain. Stephen Strack and James Coyne (1983) found that depressed people were realistic in thinking that others didn't appreciate their behavior; their pessimism and bad moods can even trigger social rejection (Carver & others, 1994). Depressed behavior can also trigger reciprocal depression in others. College students who have depressed roommates tend to become a little depressed themselves (Burchill & Stiles, 1988; Joiner, 1994; Sanislow & others, 1989). In dating couples, too, depression is often contagious (Katz & others, 1999). (Better news comes from a study that followed nearly 5,000 residents of one Massachusetts city for 20 years. Happiness also is contagious. When surrounded by happy people, people become more likely to be happy in the future [Fowler & Christakis, 2008].)

We can see, then, that being depressed has cognitive and behavioral effects. Does it also work the other way around: Does depression have cognitive *origins*?

**NEGATIVE THINKING CAUSES DEPRESSED MOODS** Depression is natural when experiencing severe stress—losing a job, getting divorced or rejected, or suffering any experience that disrupts our sense of who we are and why we are worthy human beings. The brooding that comes with this short-term depression can be adaptive. Much as nausea and pain protect the body from toxins, so depression protects us, by slowing us down, causing us to reassess, and then redirecting our energy in new ways (Andrews & Thomson, 2009, 2010; Watkins, 2008). Insights gained during times of depressed inactivity may later result in better strategies for interacting with the world. But depression-prone people respond to bad events with intense rumination and self-blame (Mor & Winquist, 2002; Pyszczynski & others, 1991). Their self-esteem fluctuates more rapidly up with boosts and down with threats (Butler & others, 1994).

Why are some people so affected by *minor* stresses? Evidence suggests that when stress-induced rumination is filtered through a negative explanatory style, the frequent outcome is depression (Robinson & Alloy, 2003). Colin Sacks and Daphne Bugental (1987) asked some young women to get acquainted with a stranger who sometimes acted cold and unfriendly, creating an awkward social situation. Unlike optimistic women, those with a pessimistic explanatory style—who characteristically offer stable, global, and internal attributions for bad events—reacted to the social failure by feeling depressed. Moreover, they then behaved more antagonistically toward the next people they met. Their negative thinking led to a negative mood, which led to negative behavior.

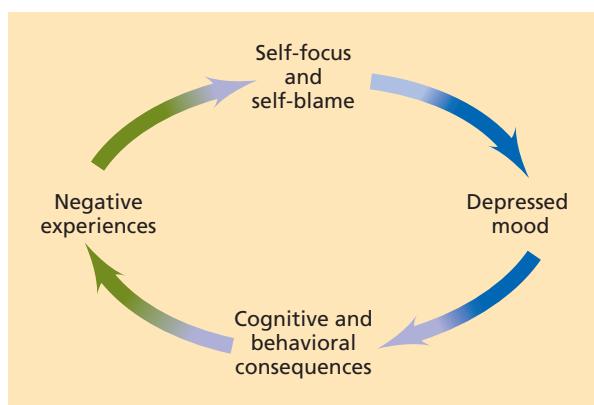
Such depressing rumination is more common among women, reports Susan Nolen-Hoeksema (2003). When trouble strikes, men tend to act, women tend to think—and often to “overthink,” she reports. And that helps explain why, beginning in adolescence, women have, compared with men, a doubled risk of depression (Hyde & others, 2008).

Outside the laboratory, studies of children, teenagers, and adults confirm that those with the pessimistic explanatory style more often become depressed when bad things happen. One study monitored university students every six weeks for



Stresses challenge some people and defeat others. Researchers have sought to understand the “explanatory style” that makes some people more vulnerable to depression.

**FIGURE :: 14.3**  
The Vicious Circle of Depression



a coherent psychological understanding of depression. The negative self-image, attributions, and expectations of a depressed person are, they report, an essential link in a vicious circle that is triggered by negative experience—perhaps academic or vocational failure, family conflict, or social rejection (Figure 14.3). Such ruminations create a depressed mood that alters how a person thinks and acts, which then fuels further negative experiences, self-blame, and depressed mood. In experiments, mildly depressed people's moods brighten when a task diverts their attention to something external (Nix & others, 1995). Depression is therefore *both* a cause and a result of negative cognitions.

Martin Seligman (1991, 1998, 2002) believes that self-focus and self-blame help explain the near-epidemic levels of depression in the Western world today. In North America, for example, young adults today are three times as likely as their grandparents to have suffered depression—despite their grandparents' experiencing a lower standard of living and greater hardship (Cross-National Collaborative Group, 1992; Swindle & others, 2000). Seligman believes that the decline of religion and family, plus the growth of individualism, breeds hopelessness and self-blame when things don't go well. Failed courses, careers, and marriages produce despair when we stand alone, with nothing and no one to fall back on. If, as a macho *Fortune* ad declared, you can "make it on your own," on "your own drive, your own guts, your own energy, your own ambition," then whose fault is it if you *don't* make it? In non-Western cultures, where close-knit relationships and cooperation are the norm, major depression is less common and less tied to guilt and self-blame over perceived personal failure. In Japan, for example, depressed people instead tend to report feeling shame over letting down their family or co-workers (Draguns, 1990).

These insights into the thinking style linked with depression have prompted social psychologists to study thinking patterns associated with other problems. How do those who are plagued with excessive loneliness, shyness, or substance abuse view themselves? How well do they recall their successes and their failures? And to what do they attribute their ups and downs?

## Loneliness

If depression is the common cold of psychological disorders, then loneliness is the headache. Loneliness, whether chronic or temporary, is a painful awareness that our social relationships are less numerous or meaningful than we desire. In modern cultures, close social relationships *are* less numerous. One national survey revealed a one-third drop, over two decades, in the number of people with whom Americans can discuss "important matters." Moreover, the number of Americans living alone is up 30 percent since 1980 (Miller, 2011). Reflecting on such findings, Robert Putnam (2006) reported that his data likewise reveal "sharp generational differences—baby boomers are more socially marooned than their parents, and the

two-and-a-half years (Alloy & others, 1999). One percent of those who began college with optimistic thinking styles had a first depressive episode, as did 17 percent of those with pessimistic thinking styles. "A recipe for severe depression is preexisting pessimism encountering failure," notes Martin Seligman (1991, p. 78).

Researcher Peter Lewinsohn and his colleagues (1985) have assembled these findings into

boomers' kids are lonelier still. Is it because of two-career families? Ethnic diversity? The Internet? Suburban sprawl? Everyone has a favorite culprit. Mine is TV, but the jury is still out."

In a study of Dutch adults, Jenny de Jong-Gierveld (1987) documented the loneliness that unmarried and unattached people are likely to experience. She speculated that the modern emphasis on individual fulfillment and the depreciation of marriage and family life may be "loneliness-provoking" (as well as depression-provoking). Job-related mobility also makes for fewer long-term family and social ties, and increased loneliness (Dill & Anderson, 1999).

Like depression, loneliness is also genetically influenced; identical twins are much more likely than fraternal twins to share moderate to extreme loneliness (Bartels & others, 2008; Boomsma & others, 2006).

### FEELING LONELY AND EXCLUDED

But loneliness need not coincide with aloneness. One can feel lonely in the middle of a party. "In America, there is loneliness but no solitude," lamented Mary Pipher (2002). "There are crowds but no community." In Los Angeles, observed her daughter, "There are 10 million people around me but nobody knows my name." Lacking social connections, and feeling lonely (or when made to feel so in an experiment), people may compensate by seeing humanlike qualities in things, animals, and supernatural beings, with which they find companionship (Epley & others, 2008).

One can be utterly alone—as I am while writing these words in the solitude of an isolated turret office at a British university 5,000 miles from home—without feeling lonely. To feel lonely is to feel excluded from a group, unloved by those around you, unable to share your private concerns, different and alienated from those in your surroundings (Beck & Young, 1978; Davis & Franzoi, 1986). Having lonely acquaintances increases the chance that you feel lonely (Cacioppo & others, 2009). Loneliness tends to run in social clusters, as its negative thoughts and behaviors spread.

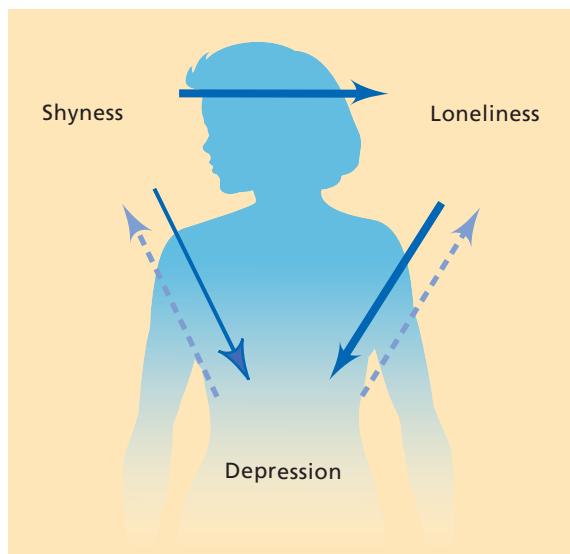
Loneliness also increases the risk of health problems. In *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection*, John Cacioppo and William Patrick (2008) explain that loneliness affects stress hormones and immune activity. Loneliness therefore puts people at increased risk not only for depression and suicide, but also high blood pressure, heart disease, cognitive decline, and sleep impairment (Hawley & Cacioppo, 2010; Shankar & others, 2011; VanderWeele & others, 2011). A digest of data from more than 300,000 people in 148 studies showed that social isolation increased the risk of death about as much as smoking, and more than obesity or inactivity (Holt-Lunstad & others, 2010).

Loneliness—which may be evoked by an icy stare or a cold shoulder—even feels, quite literally, cold. When recalling an experience of exclusion, people estimate a lower room temperature than when thinking of being included. After being excluded in a little ball game, people show a heightened preference for warm foods and drinks (Zhong & Leonardelli, 2008).

Adolescents more than adults experience loneliness (Heinrich & Gullone, 2006). When beeped by an electronic pager at various times during a week and asked to record what they were doing and how they felt, adolescents more often than adults reported feeling lonely when alone (Larsen & others, 1982). Males and females feel lonely under somewhat different circumstances—males when isolated from group interaction, females when deprived of close one-to-one relationships (Berg & McQuinn, 1988; Stokes & Levin, 1986). Men's relationships, it is said, tend to be side-by-side; women's relationships tend to be face-to-face. One exception: After divorce, men tend to feel lonelier than do women (Dykstra & Fokkema, 2007). But for all people, including those recently widowed, the loss of a person to whom one has been attached can produce unavoidable pangs of loneliness (Stroebe & others, 1996).

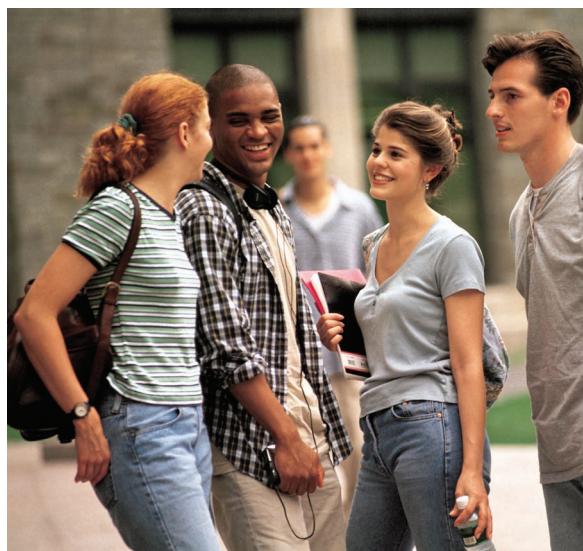
**FIGURE :: 14.4****The Interplay of Chronic Shyness, Loneliness, and Depression**

Solid arrows indicate primary cause-effect direction, as summarized by Jody Dill and Craig Anderson (1999). Dotted lines indicate additional effects.



depressed; they perceive their interactions as making a poor impression, blame themselves for their poor social relationships, and see most things as beyond their control (Anderson & others, 1994; Christensen & Kashy, 1998; Snodgrass, 1987). Moreover, they perceive others in negative ways. When paired with a stranger of the same gender or with a first-year college roommate, lonely students are more likely to perceive the other person negatively (Jones & others, 1981; Wittenberg & Reis, 1986). Ironically, report Danu Stinson and her co-researchers (2011), socially insecure people therefore often behave in ways that produce the very social rejection they fear. As Figure 14.4 illustrates, loneliness, depression, and shyness sometimes feed one another.

These negative views may both reflect and color the lonely person's experience. Believing in their social unworthiness and feeling pessimistic about others inhibit lonely people from acting to reduce their loneliness. Lonely people often find it hard to introduce themselves, make phone calls, and participate in groups (Nurmi & others, 1996, 1997; Rook, 1984; Spitzberg & Hurt, 1987). Yet, like mildly depressed people, they are attuned to others and skilled at recognizing emotional expression (Gardner & others, 2005).



Self-disclosure in relationships, and a positive explanatory style help protect people from feelings of loneliness.

Such feelings can be adaptive. The path of loneliness signals people to seek social connections, which facilitate survival. Even when loneliness triggers nostalgia—a longing for the past—it serves to remind people of their social connections (Zhou & others, 2008).

### PERCEIVING OTHERS NEGATIVELY

Like depressed people, chronically lonely people seem caught in a vicious circle of self-defeating social thinking and social behaviors. They have some of the negative explanatory style of the

### Anxiety and Shyness

Shyness is a form of social anxiety characterized by self-consciousness and worry about what others think (Anderson & Harvey, 1988; Asendorpf, 1987; Carver & Scheier, 1986). Being interviewed for a much-wanted job, dating someone for the first time, stepping into a roomful of strangers, performing before an important audience, or giving a speech (one of the most common phobias) can make almost anyone feel anxious. But some people feel anxious in almost any situation in which they may feel they are being evaluated, even having lunch with a co-worker. For these people, anxiety is more a personality trait than a temporary state.

### DOUBTING OUR ABILITY IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS

What causes us to feel anxious in social situations? Why are some people shackled in the prison of their own social anxiety? Barry Schlenker and Mark Leary (1982, 1985; Leary &

Kowalski, 1995) answer those questions by applying self-presentation theory. As you may recall from Chapters 2 and 4, self-presentation theory assumes that we are eager to present ourselves in ways that make a good impression. The implications for social anxiety are straightforward: *We feel anxious when we are motivated to impress others but have self-doubts.* This simple principle helps explain a variety of research findings, each of which may ring true in your own experience. We feel most anxious when we are

- with powerful, high-status people—people whose impressions of us matter.
- in an evaluative context, such as when making a first impression on the parents of one's fiancé.
- self-conscious (as shy people often are), with our attention focused on ourselves and how we are coming across.
- focused on something central to our self-image, as when a college professor presents ideas before peers at a professional convention.
- in novel or unstructured situations, such as a first school dance or first formal dinner, where we are unsure of the social rules.

For most people, the tendency in all such situations is to be cautiously self-protective: to talk less; to avoid topics that reveal one's ignorance; to be guarded about oneself; to be unassertive, agreeable, and smiling. Ironically, such anxious concern with making a good impression often makes a bad impression (Broome & Wegner, 1994; Meleshko & Alden, 1993). With time, however, shy people often become well liked. Their lack of egotism, their modesty, sensitivity, and discretion wear well (Gough & Thorne, 1986; Paulhus & Morgan, 1997; Shepperd & others, 1995).



When a person is eager to impress important people, social anxiety is natural.

## OVERPERSONALIZING SITUATIONS

Compared with unshy people, shy, self-conscious people (whose numbers include many adolescents) see incidental events as somehow relevant to themselves (Fenigstein, 1984; Fenigstein & Venable, 1992). Shy, anxious people overpersonalize situations, a tendency that breeds anxious concern and, in extreme cases, paranoia. They also overestimate the extent to which other people are watching and evaluating them. If their hair won't comb right or they have a facial blemish, they assume everyone else notices and judges them accordingly. Shy people may even be conscious of their self-consciousness. They wish they could stop worrying about blushing, about what others are thinking, or about what to say next.

To reduce social anxiety, some people turn to alcohol. Alcohol lowers anxiety and reduces self-consciousness (Hull & Young, 1983). Thus, chronically self-conscious people are especially likely to drink following a failure. If recovering from alcoholism, they are more likely than those low in self-consciousness to relapse when they again experience stress or failure.

Symptoms as diverse as anxiety and alcohol abuse can serve a self-handicapping function. Labeling oneself as anxious, shy, depressed, or under the influence of alcohol can provide an excuse for failure (Snyder & Smith, 1986). Behind a barricade of

symptoms, the person's ego stands secure. "Why don't I date? Because I'm shy, so people don't easily get to know the real me." The symptom is an unconscious strategic ploy to explain away negative outcomes.

What if we were to remove the need for such a ploy by providing people with a handy alternative explanation for their anxiety and therefore for possible failure? Would a shy person no longer need to be shy? That is precisely what Susan Brodt and Philip Zimbardo (1981) found when they brought shy and not-shy college women to the laboratory and had them converse with a handsome male who posed as another participant. Before the conversation, the women were cooped up in a small chamber and blasted with loud noise. Some of the shy women (but not others) were told that the noise would leave them with a pounding heart, a common symptom of social anxiety. Thus, when these women later talked with the man, they could attribute their pounding hearts and any conversational difficulties to the noise, not to their shyness or social inadequacy. Compared with the shy women who were not given this handy explanation for their pounding hearts, these women were no longer so shy. They talked fluently once the conversation got going and asked questions of the man. In fact, unlike the other shy women (whom the man could easily spot as shy), these women were to him indistinguishable from the not-shy women.

## Health, Illness, and Death

In the industrialized world, at least half of all deaths are linked with behavior—with consuming cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, and harmful foods; with reactions to stress; with lack of exercise and not following a doctor's advice. A new interdisciplinary field called **behavioral medicine** studies these behavioral contributions to illness. Psychology's contribution to this interdisciplinary science is its subfield, **health psychology**. Health psychologists study how people respond to illness symptoms and how emotions and explanations influence health.

### behavioral medicine

An interdisciplinary field that integrates and applies behavioral and medical knowledge about health and disease.

### health psychology

The study of the psychological roots of health and illness. Offers psychology's contribution to behavioral medicine.

### REACTIONS TO ILLNESS

How do people decide whether they are ill? How do they explain their symptoms? What influences their willingness to seek and follow treatment?

**NOTICING SYMPTOMS** Chances are you have recently experienced at least one of these physical complaints: headache, stomachache, nasal congestion, sore muscles, ringing in the ears, excess perspiration, cold hands, racing heart, dizziness, stiff joints, and diarrhea or constipation (Pennebaker, 1982). Are such symptoms meaningless? Or are you coming down with something that requires medical attention? Hardly a week goes by without our playing doctor by self-diagnosing some symptom.

Noticing and interpreting our body's signals is like noticing and interpreting how a car is running. Unless the signals are loud and clear, we often miss them. Most of us cannot tell whether a car needs an oil change merely by listening to its engine. Similarly, most of us are not astute judges of our heart rate, blood-sugar level, or blood pressure. People guess their blood pressure based on how they feel, which often is unrelated to their actual blood pressure (Baumann & Leventhal, 1985). Furthermore, the early signs of many illnesses, including cancer and heart disease, are subtle and easy to miss.

**EXPLAINING SYMPTOMS: AM I SICK?** With more serious aches and pains, the questions become more specific—and more critical. Does the small cyst match our idea of a malignant lump? Is the stomachache bad enough to be appendicitis? Is the pain in the chest area merely—as many heart attack victims suppose—a muscle spasm? Indeed, reports the National Institutes of Health, most heart attack victims wait too long before seeking medical help. What factors influence how we explain symptoms?

After we notice symptoms, we interpret them using familiar disease schemas (Bishop, 1991). In medical schools, this can have amusing results. As part of their training, medical students learn the symptoms associated with various diseases. Because they also experience various symptoms, they sometimes attribute their symptoms to recently learned disease schemas. (“Maybe this wheeze is the beginning of pneumonia.”) As you may have discovered, psychology students are prone to this effect as they read about psychological disorders.

**DO I NEED TREATMENT?** When people notice a symptom and interpret it as possibly serious, several factors influence their decision to seek medical care. People more often seek treatment if they believe their symptoms have a physical rather than a psychological cause (Bishop, 1987). They may delay seeking help, however, if they feel embarrassed, if they think the likely benefits of medical attention won’t justify the cost and inconvenience, or if they want to avoid a possibly devastating diagnosis.

The U.S. National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) reports a gender difference in decisions to seek medical treatment: Compared with men, women report more symptoms, use more prescription and nonprescription drugs, and visit physicians twice as often for preventive care (NCHS, 2008). Women also visit psychotherapists 50 percent more often (Olfson & Pincus, 1994).

So, are women more often sick? Apparently not. In fact, men may be more disease prone. Among other problems, men have higher rates of hypertension, ulcers, and cancer, as well as shorter life expectancies. So why are women more likely to see a doctor? Perhaps women are more attentive to their internal states. Perhaps they are less reluctant to admit “weakness” and seek help (Bishop, 1984).

Patients are more willing to follow treatment instructions when they have warm relationships with their doctors, when they help plan their treatment, and when options are framed attractively. People are more likely to elect an operation when given “a 40 percent chance of surviving” than when given “a 60 percent chance of not surviving” (Rothman & Salovey, 1997; Wilson & others, 1987). Such “gain-framed” messages also persuade more people to use sunscreen, eschew cigarettes, and get HIV tests (Detweiler & others, 1999; Salovey & others, 2002; Schneider & others, 2000). Better to tell people that “sunscreen maintains healthy, young-looking skin” than to tell them that “not using sunscreen decreases your chances of healthy, young-looking skin.” Framing a desired exercise program as minutes per day, rather than hours per week, similarly increases people’s willingness to commit to it (Peetz & others, 2011).

## EMOTIONS AND ILLNESS

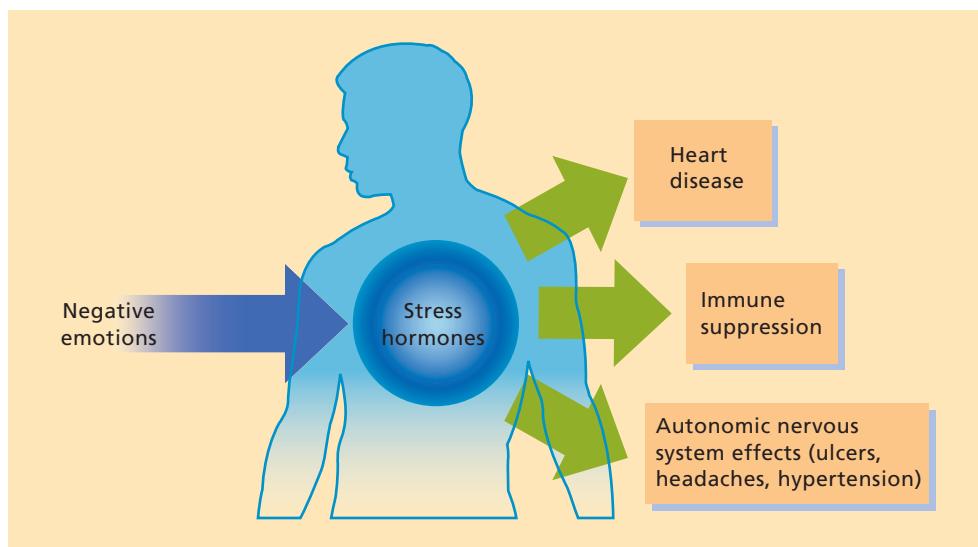
Do our emotions predict our susceptibility to heart disease, stroke, cancer, and other ailments (Figure 14.5)? Consider the following.

Heart disease has been linked with a competitive, impatient, and—the aspect that matters most—*anger-prone* personality (Chida & Steptoe, 2009; Kupper & Denollet, 2007). Under stress, reactive, anger-prone “Type A” people secrete more of the stress hormones believed to accelerate the buildup of plaque in the heart’s arteries.

Depression also increases the risk of various ailments. Mildly depressed people are more vulnerable to heart disease, even after controlling for differences in smoking and other disease-related factors (Anda & others, 1993; Boehm & others, 2011). The year after a heart attack, depressed people have a doubled risk of further heart problems (Frasure-Smith & others, 1995, 1999, 2005). The toxicity of negative emotions contributes to the high rate of depression and anxiety among chronically ill people (Cohen & Rodriguez, 1995). The association between depression and heart disease may result from stress-related inflammation of the arteries (Matthews, 2005; Miller & Blackwell, 2006). Stress hormones enhance protein production that contributes to inflammation, which helps fight infections. But inflammation also can exacerbate asthma, clogged arteries, and depression.

**FIGURE :: 14.5**

Stress-caused negative emotions may have various effects on health. This is especially so for depressed or anger-prone people.



George Vaillant (1997) witnessed the effect of distress when he followed a group of male Harvard alumni from midlife into old age. Of those whom at age 52 he classified as "squares" (having never abused alcohol, used tranquilizers, or seen a psychiatrist), only 5 percent had died by age 75. Of those classified as "distressed" (who had abused alcohol and either used tranquilizers or seen a psychiatrist), 38 percent had died.

### OPTIMISM AND HEALTH

Stories abound of people who take a sudden turn for the worse when something makes them lose hope, or who suddenly improve when hope is renewed. As cancer attacks the liver of 9-year-old Jeff, his doctors fear the worst. But Jeff remains optimistic. He is determined to grow up to be a cancer research scientist. One day Jeff is elated. A specialist who has taken a long-distance interest in his case is planning to stop off while on a cross-country trip. There is so much Jeff wants to tell the doctor and to show him from the diary he has kept since he got sick. On the anticipated day, fog blankets his city. The doctor's plane is diverted to another city, from which the doctor flies on to his final destination. Hearing the news, Jeff cries quietly. The next morning, pneumonia and fever have developed, and Jeff lies listless. By evening he is in a coma. The next afternoon he dies (Visintainer & Seligman, 1983).

Understanding the links between attitudes and disease requires more than dramatic true stories. If hopelessness coincides with cancer, we are left to wonder: Does cancer breed hopelessness, or does hopelessness also hinder resistance to cancer? To resolve this chicken-and-egg riddle, researchers have (1) experimentally created hopelessness by subjecting organisms to uncontrollable stresses and (2) correlated the hopeless explanatory style with future illnesses.

**STRESS AND ILLNESS** The clearest indication of the effects of hopelessness—what Chapter 2 labels *learned helplessness*—comes from experiments that subject animals to mild but uncontrollable electric shocks, loud noises, or crowding. Such experiences do not cause diseases such as cancer, but they do lower the body's resistance. Rats injected with live cancer cells more often develop and die of tumors if they also receive inescapable shocks than if they receive escapable shocks or no shocks. Moreover, compared with juvenile rats given controllable shocks, those given uncontrollable shocks are twice as likely in adulthood to develop tumors if given cancer cells and another round of shocks (Visintainer & Seligman, 1985). Animals that have learned helplessness react more passively, and blood tests reveal a weakened immune response.

It's a big leap from rats to humans. But a growing body of evidence reveals that people who undergo highly stressful experiences become more vulnerable to disease (Segerstrom & Miller, 2004). Stress doesn't make us sick, but it does divert energy from our disease-fighting immune system, leaving us more vulnerable to infections and malignancy (Cohen, 2002, 2004). The death of a spouse, the stress of a space flight landing, even the strain of an exam week have all been associated with depressed immune defenses (Jemmott & Locke, 1984).

Consider the following:

- Stress magnifies the severity of respiratory infections and of symptoms experienced by volunteers who are knowingly infected with a cold virus (Cohen & others, 2003, 2006; Pedersen & others, 2010).
- Newlywed couples who became angry while discussing problems suffered more immune system suppression the next day (Kiecolt-Glaser & others, 1993). When people are stressed by marital conflict, laboratory puncture wounds take a day or two longer to heal (Kiecolt-Glaser & others, 2005). Studies in eleven countries following 6.5 million lives through time reveal that, among men and younger adults, divorce increases the ensuing risk of early death (Sbarra & others, 2011).
- Work stress can literally be disheartening. In one study that followed 17,415 middle-aged American women, researchers found that significant work stress predicted an 88 percent increased risk of heart attacks (Slopen & others, 2010). In Denmark, a study of 12,116 female nurses found that those reporting "much too high" work pressures had a 40 percent increased risk of heart disease (Allesøe et al., 2010).
- Stress increases the production of inflammation-producing proteins. Those who experience social stress, including children reared in abusive families, are therefore more prone to inflammation responses (Dickerson & others, 2009; Miller & others, 2011). Inflammation fights infections, but persistent inflammation contributes to asthma, clogged arteries, and depression. Researchers have even discovered molecular, "epigenetic" mechanisms by which stress, in some people, activates genes that control inflammation (Cole & others, 2010).

**EXPLANATORY STYLE AND ILLNESS** If uncontrollable stress affects health, depresses immune functioning, and generates a passive, hopeless resignation, then will people who exhibit such pessimism be more vulnerable to illness? Several studies have confirmed that a pessimistic style of explaining bad events (saying, "It's going to last, it's going to undermine everything, and it's my fault") makes illness more likely (Carver & others, 2010). Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman (1987) studied the press quotations of 94 members of baseball's Hall of Fame and gauged how often they offered pessimistic (stable, global, internal) explanations for bad events, such as losing big games. Those who routinely did so tended to die at somewhat younger ages. Optimists—who offered stable, global, and internal explanations for *good* events—usually outlived the pessimists.

Other studies have followed lives through time:

- Harvard graduates who expressed the most optimism in 1946 were the healthiest when restudied 34 years later (Peterson & others, 1988).
- One Dutch research team followed 941 older adults for nearly a decade (Giltay & others, 2004, 2007). Among those in the upper optimism quartile only 30 percent died, compared with 57 percent of those in the lower optimism quartile.
- Catholic nuns who expressed the most positive feelings at an average age of 22 outlived their more dour counterparts by an average 7 years over the ensuing half-century and more (Danner & others, 2001).

The Delany sisters, who lived to 104 and 106, attributed their longevity to a positive outlook on life.



Note, however, that healthy behaviors—exercise, good nutrition, not smoking, not drinking to excess—are essential contributors to the longevity of many optimists (Peterson & Bossio, 2000; Whitley & others, 2008).

From their own studies, researchers Howard Tennen and Glenn Affleck (1987) agree that a positive, hopeful explanatory style is generally good medicine. The healing power of positive belief is evident in the well-known *placebo effect*, referring to the healing power of *believing* that one is getting an effective treatment. (If you *think* a treatment is going to be effective, it just may be—even if it's actually inert.) Tennen and Affleck also remind us that every silver lining has a cloud. Optimists may see themselves as invulnerable and thus fail to take sensible precautions; for example, those who smoke cigarettes optimistically underestimate the risks involved (Segerstrom & others, 1993). And when things go wrong in a big way—when the optimist encounters a devastating illness—adversity can be shattering. Optimism is good for health. But remember: Even optimists have a mortality rate of 100 percent.

## SUMMING UP: What Cognitive Processes Accompany Behavior Problems?

- Social psychologists are actively exploring the attributions and expectations of depressed, lonely, socially anxious, and physically ill people. Depressed people have a negative *explanatory style*, interpreting negative events as being stable, global, and internally caused. Despite their more negative judgments, mildly depressed people in laboratory tests tend to be surprisingly realistic. Depression can be a vicious circle in which negative thoughts elicit self-defeating behaviors, and vice versa.
- Loneliness involves feelings of isolation or not fitting in, and is common in individualistic societies. Like depression, it can be a vicious circle in which feelings of aloofness lead to socially undesirable behaviors.
- Most people experience anxiety in situations where they are being evaluated, but shy individuals are extremely prone to anxiety even in friendly, casual situations. This can be another vicious circle in which anxious feelings elicit awkward, off-putting behavior.
- The mushrooming field of *health psychology* is exploring how people decide they are ill, how they explain their symptoms, and when they seek and follow treatment. It also is exploring the effects of negative emotions and the links among illness, stress, and a pessimistic explanatory style.

# WHAT ARE SOME SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO TREATMENT?

Describe treatments that aim to undo the maladaptive thought patterns we have considered to be linked with problems ranging from serious depression to extreme shyness to physical illness.

There is no social-psychological therapy. But therapy is a social encounter, and social psychologists have suggested how their principles might be integrated into existing treatment techniques (Forsyth & Leary, 1997; Strong & others, 1992). Consider three approaches: Use of external behavior for internal change, breaking vicious cycles, and attributing improvement to factors under one's own control.

## Inducing Internal Change Through External Behavior

In Chapter 4 we reviewed a broad range of evidence for a simple but powerful principle: Our actions affect our attitudes. The roles we play, the things we say and do, and the decisions we make influence who we are.

Consistent with this attitudes-follow-behavior principle, several psychotherapy techniques prescribe action:

- Behavior therapists try to shape behavior on the theory that the client's inner disposition will also change after the behavior changes.
- In assertiveness training, the individual may first role-play assertiveness in a supportive context, then gradually implement assertive behaviors in everyday life.
- Rational-emotive therapy assumes that we generate our own emotions; clients receive "homework" assignments to talk and act in new ways that will generate new emotions: Challenge that overbearing relative. Stop telling yourself you're an unattractive person and ask someone out.
- Self-help groups subtly induce participants to behave in new ways in front of the group—to express anger, cry, act with high self-esteem, express positive feelings.

All these techniques share a common assumption: If we cannot directly control our feelings by sheer willpower, we can influence them indirectly through our behavior.

Experiments confirm that what we say about ourselves can affect how we feel. In one experiment, students were induced to write self-laudatory essays (Mirels & McPeek, 1977). These students, more than others who wrote essays about a current social issue, later expressed higher self-esteem when rating themselves privately for a different experimenter. In several more experiments, Edward Jones and his associates (1981; Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir, 1986) influenced students to present themselves to an interviewer in either self-enhancing or self-deprecating ways. Again, the public displays—whether upbeat or downbeat—carried over to later self-esteem. Saying is believing, even when we talk about ourselves.

In this experiment and many others, people internalized their behavior most when they perceive some choice. For example, Pamela Mendonca and Sharon Brehm (1983) invited one group of overweight children who were about to begin a weight-loss program to choose the treatment they preferred. Then they reminded them periodically that they had chosen their treatment. Other children who simultaneously experienced the

same 8-week program were given no choice. Those who felt responsible for their treatment had lost more weight both at the end of the 8-week program and 3 months later.

## Breaking Vicious Circles

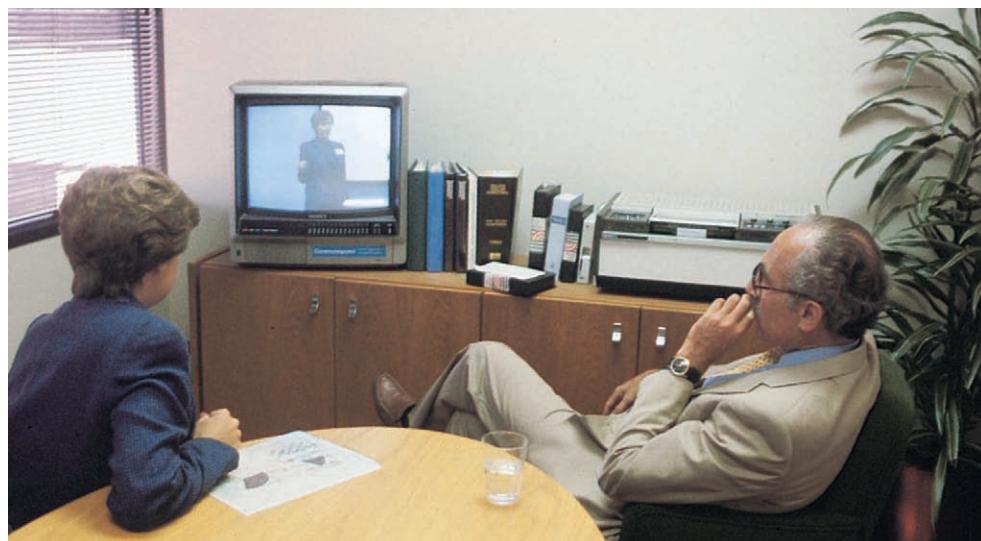
If depression, loneliness, and social anxiety maintain themselves through a vicious circle of negative experiences, negative thinking, and self-defeating behavior, it should be possible to break the circle at any of several points—by changing the environment, by training the person to behave more constructively, or by reversing negative thinking. And it is. Several therapy methods help free people from depression's vicious circle.

### SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

Depression, loneliness, and shyness are not just problems in someone's mind. To be around a depressed person for any length of time can be irritating and depressing. As lonely and shy people suspect, they may indeed come across poorly in social situations. How ironic that the more self-preoccupied people seek to make a good impression, the more their effort may backfire (Lun & others, 2011). Those who instead focus on supporting others more often enjoy others' regard in return. In these cases, social skills training may help. By observing and then practicing new behaviors in safe situations, the person may develop the confidence to behave more effectively in other situations. As the person begins to enjoy the rewards of behaving more skillfully, a more positive self-perception develops. Frances Haemmerlie and Robert Montgomery (1982, 1984, 1986) demonstrated this in several heart-warming studies with shy, anxious college students. Those who are inexperienced and nervous around those of the other sex may say to themselves, "I don't date much, so I must be socially inadequate, so I shouldn't try reaching out to anyone." To reverse this negative sequence, Haemmerlie and Montgomery enticed such students into pleasant interactions with people of the other sex.

In one experiment, college men completed social anxiety questionnaires and then came to the laboratory on two different days. Each day they enjoyed 12-minute conversations with each of six young women. The men thought the women were also participants. Actually, the women were confederates who had been asked to carry on a natural, positive, friendly conversation with each of the men.

The effect of these two-and-a-half hours of conversation was remarkable. As one participant wrote afterward, "I had never met so many girls that I could have a good conversation with. After a few girls, my confidence grew to the point where I didn't notice being nervous like I once did." Such comments were supported by a variety of measures. Unlike men in a control condition, those who experienced



Social skills training: When shy, anxious people first observe, then rehearse, then try out more assertive behaviors in real situations, their social skills often improve.

the conversations reported considerably less female-related anxiety when retested one week and six months later. Placed alone in a room with an attractive female stranger, they also became much more likely to start a conversation. Outside the laboratory they actually began occasional dating.

Haemmerlie and Montgomery note that not only did all this occur without any counseling, it may very well have occurred *because* there was no counseling. Having behaved successfully on their own, the men could now perceive themselves as socially competent. Although seven months later the researchers did debrief the participants, by that time the men had presumably enjoyed enough social success to maintain their internal attributions for success. "Nothing succeeds like success," concluded Haemmerlie (1987)—"as long as there are no external factors present that the client can use as an excuse for that success!"

### EXPLANATORY STYLE THERAPY

The vicious circles that maintain depression, loneliness, and shyness can be broken by social skills training, by positive experiences that alter self-perceptions, *and* by changing negative thought patterns. Some people have good social skills, but their experiences with hypercritical friends and family have convinced them otherwise. For such people it may be enough to help them reverse their negative beliefs about themselves and their futures. Among the cognitive therapies with this aim is an *explanatory style therapy* proposed by social psychologists (Abramson, 1988; Gillham & others, 2000; Masi & others, 2011).

One such program taught depressed college students to change their typical attributions. Mary Anne Layden (1982) first explained the advantages of making attributions more like those of the typical nondepressed person (by accepting credit for successes and seeing how circumstances can make things go wrong). After assigning a variety of tasks, she helped the students see how they typically interpreted success and failure. Then came the treatment phase: Layden instructed them to keep a diary of daily successes and failures, noting how they contributed to their own successes and noting external reasons for their failures. When retested after a month of this attributional retraining and compared with an untreated control group, their self-esteem had risen and their attributional style had become more positive. The more their explanatory style improved, the more their depression lifted. By changing their attributions, they had changed their emotions.

## Maintaining Change Through Internal Attributions for Success

Two of the principles considered so far—that internal change may follow behavior change and that changed self-perceptions and self-attributions can help break a vicious circle—converge on a corollary principle: After improvement is achieved, it endures best if people attribute it to factors under their own control rather than to a treatment program.

As a rule, coercive techniques trigger the most dramatic and immediate behavior changes (Brehm & Smith, 1986). By making the unwanted behavior extremely costly or embarrassing and the healthier behavior extremely rewarding, a therapist may achieve impressive results. The problem, as 50 years of social-psychological research reminds us, is that coerced changes in behavior soon wane.

Consider the experience of Marta, who is concerned with her mild obesity and frustrated with her inability to do anything about it. Marta is considering several commercial weight-control programs. Each claims it achieves the best results. She chooses one and is ordered onto a strict 1,200-calorie-a-day diet. Moreover, she is required to record and report her calorie intake each day and to come in once a week and be weighed so she and her instructor can know precisely how she is doing. Confident of the program's value and not wanting to embarrass herself, Marta adheres to the program and is delighted to find the unwanted pounds gradually disappearing. "This unique program really does work!" Marta tells herself as she reaches her target weight.

Sadly, however, after graduating from the program, Marta experiences the fate of most weight-control graduates (Jeffery & others, 2000): She regains the lost weight. On the street, she sees her instructor approaching. Embarrassed, she moves to the other side of the sidewalk and looks away. Alas, she is recognized by the instructor, who warmly invites her back into “the program.” Admitting that the program achieved good results for her the first time, Marta grants her need of it and agrees to return, beginning a second round of yo-yo dieting.

Marta’s experience typifies that of the participants in several weight-control experiments, including one by Janet Sonne and Dean Janoff (1979). Half the participants were led, like Marta, to attribute their changed eating behavior to the program. The others were led to credit their own efforts. Both groups lost weight during the program. But when reweighed 11 weeks later, those in the self-control condition had maintained the weight loss better. These people, like those in the shy-man-meets-women study described earlier, illustrate the benefits of self-efficacy. Having learned to cope successfully and believing that *they did it*, they felt more confident and were more effective.

Having emphasized what changed behavior and thought patterns can accomplish, we do well to remind ourselves of their limits. Social skills training and positive thinking cannot transform us into consistent winners who are loved and admired by everyone. Furthermore, temporary depression, loneliness, and shyness are perfectly appropriate responses to profoundly bad events. It is when such feelings exist chronically and without any discernible cause that there is reason for concern and a need to change the self-defeating thoughts and behaviors.

## Using Therapy as Social Influence

Psychologists more and more accept the idea that social influence—one person affecting another—is at the heart of therapy. Stanley Strong (1991) offers a prototypical example: A thirtyish woman comes to a therapist complaining of depression. The therapist gently probes her feelings and her situation. She explains her helplessness and her husband’s demands. Although admiring her devotion, the therapist helps her see how she takes responsibility for her husband’s problems. She protests. But the therapist persists. In time, she realizes that her husband may not be as fragile as she presumed. She begins to see how she can respect both her husband and herself. With the therapist, she plans strategies for each new week. At the end of a long stream of reciprocal influences between therapist and client, she emerges no longer depressed and equipped with new ways of behaving.

Early analyses of psychotherapeutic influence focused on how therapists establish credible expertise and trustworthiness and how their credibility enhances their influence (Strong, 1968). Later analyses focused less on the therapist than on how the interaction affects the client’s thinking (Cacioppo & others, 1991; McNeill & Stoltzenberg, 1988; Neimeyer & others, 1991). Peripheral cues, such as therapist credibility, may open the door for ideas that the therapist can now get the client to think about. But the thoughtful central route to persuasion provides the most enduring attitude and behavior change. Therapists should therefore aim not to elicit a client’s superficial agreement with their expert judgment but to change the client’s own thinking.

Fortunately, most clients entering therapy are motivated to take the central route—to think deeply about their problems under the therapist’s guidance. The therapist’s task is to offer arguments and raise questions calculated to elicit favorable thoughts. The therapist’s insights matter less than the thoughts they evoke in the client. The therapist needs to put things in ways that a client can hear and understand, comments that will prompt agreement rather than counterargument, and that will allow time and space for the client to reflect. Questions such as “How do you respond to what I just said?” can stimulate the client’s thinking.

Martin Heesacker (1989) illustrated how a therapist can help a client reflect with the case of Dave, a 35-year-old male graduate student. Having seen what Dave denied—an underlying substance abuse problem—the counselor drew on his knowledge of Dave, an intellectual person who liked hard evidence, in persuading him to accept the diagnosis and join a treatment-support group. The counselor said, “OK, if my diagnosis is wrong, I’ll be glad to change it. But let’s go through a list of the characteristics of a substance abuser to check out my accuracy.” The counselor then went through each criterion slowly, giving Dave time to think about each point. As he finished, Dave sat back and exclaimed, “I don’t believe it: I’m a damned alcoholic.”

In his 1620 *Pensées*, the philosopher Pascal foresaw this principle: “People are usually more convinced by reasons they discover themselves than by those found by others.” It’s a principle worth remembering.

## SUMMING UP: What Are Some Social-Psychological Approaches to Treatment?

- Changes in external behavior can trigger internal change.
- A self-defeating cycle of negative attitudes and behaviors can be broken by training more skillful behavior, by positive experiences that alter self-perceptions, and by changing negative thought patterns.
- Improved states are best maintained after treatment if people attribute their improvement to internal factors under their continued control rather than to the treatment program itself.
- Mental health workers also are recognizing that changing clients’ attitudes and behaviors requires persuasion. Therapists, aided by their image as expert, trustworthy communicators, aim to stimulate healthier thinking by offering cogent arguments and raising questions.

## HOW DO SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS SUPPORT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING?

Identify evidence suggesting that supportive, close relationships—feeling liked, affirmed, and encouraged by intimate friends and family—predict both health and happiness.

Our relationships are fraught with stress. “Hell is others,” wrote Jean-Paul Sartre. When Peter Warr and Roy Payne (1982) asked a representative sample of British adults what, if anything, had emotionally strained them the day before, “family” was their most frequent answer. And stress, as we have seen, aggravates health problems such as coronary heart disease, hypertension, and suppression of our disease-fighting immune system.

Still, on balance, close relationships contribute less to illness than to health and happiness. Asked what prompted yesterday’s times of pleasure, the same British sample, by an even larger margin, again answered “family.” Close relationships provide our greatest heartaches, but also our greatest joys.

### Close Relationships and Health

Eight extensive investigations, each interviewing thousands of people across several years, have reached a common conclusion: Close relationships predict health (Berkman, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 2000). Health risks are greater among

lonely people, who often experience more stress, sleep less well, and commit suicide more often (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). Compared with those who have few social ties, those who have close relationships with friends, kin, or other members of close-knit religious or community organizations are less likely to die prematurely. Outgoing, affectionate, relationship-oriented people not only have more friends, but also are less susceptible to cold viruses (Figure 14.6; Cohen & others, 1997, 2003).

Married people also tend to live healthier, longer lives than their unmarried counterparts. The National Center for Health Statistics (2004) reports that people, regardless of age, sex, race, and income, tend to be healthier if married. Married folks experience less pain from headaches and backaches, suffer less stress, and drink and smoke less. One experiment subjected married women to the threat of electric ankle shocks as they lay in an fMRI brain scanning machine (Coan & others, 2006). Meanwhile, some of the women held their husband's hand, some held an anonymous person's hand, and some held no hand at all. While awaiting the shocks, the threat-responsive areas of the women's brains were less active if they held their husband's hand. Consistent with findings that it's happy and supportive marriages that are conducive to health (De Vogli & others, 2007), the soothing hand-holding benefit was greatest for those reporting the happiest marriages.

*Giving* social support also matters. In one five-year study of 423 elderly married couples, those who gave the most social support (from rides and errands for friends and neighbors to emotional support of their spouse) enjoyed greater longevity, even after controlling for age, sex, initial health, and economic status (Brown & others, 2003). Especially among women, suggests a Finnish study that tracked more than 700 people's illnesses, it is better to give than only to receive (Väänänen & others, 2005).

Moreover, losing social ties heightens the risk of disease:

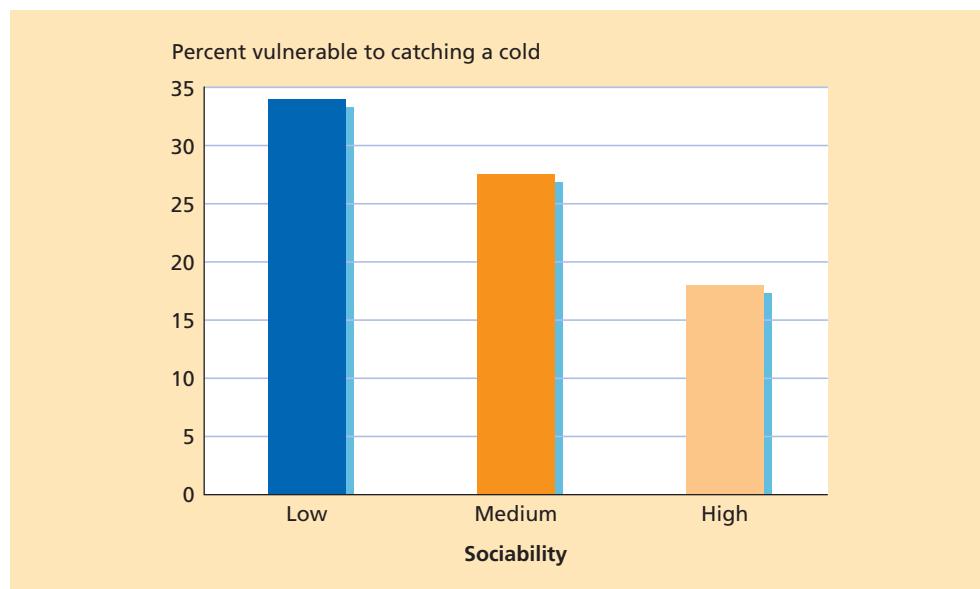
- A Finnish study of 96,000 newly widowed people found their risk of death doubled in the week following their partner's death (Kaprio & others, 1987).
- A National Academy of Sciences study revealed that recently widowed people become more vulnerable to disease and death (Dohrenwend & others, 1982).
- A study of 30,000 men revealed that when a marriage ends, men drink and smoke more and eat fewer vegetables and more fried foods (Eng & others, 2001).

## FIGURE :: 14.6

### Rate of Colds by Sociability

After a cold virus injection, highly sociable people were less vulnerable to catching colds.

Source: From Cohen & others, 2003.



## CONFIDING AND HEALTH

So there is a link between social support and health. Why? Perhaps those who enjoy close relationships eat better, exercise more, and smoke and drink less. Perhaps friends and family help bolster our self-esteem. Perhaps a supportive network helps us evaluate and overcome stressful events (Taylor & others, 1997). In more than 80 studies, social support has been linked with better-functioning cardiovascular and immune systems (Uchino & others, 1996). Thus, when we are wounded by someone's dislike or the loss of a job, a friend's advice, help, and reassurance may indeed be good medicine (Cutrona, 1986; Rook, 1987). Even when the problem isn't mentioned, friends provide us with distraction and a sense that, come what may, we're accepted, liked, and respected.

With someone we consider a close friend, we also may confide painful feelings. In one study, James Pennebaker and Robin O'Heeron (1984) contacted the surviving spouses of suicide or car accident victims. Those who bore their grief alone had more health problems than those who expressed it openly. When Pennebaker (1990) surveyed more than 700 college women, he found 1 in 12 reported a traumatic sexual experience in childhood. Compared with women who had experienced nonsexual traumas, such as parental death or divorce, the sexually abused women reported more headaches, stomach ailments, and other health problems, *especially if they had kept their history of abuse secret.*

To isolate the confiding, confessional side of close relationships, Pennebaker asked the bereaved spouses to relate the upsetting events that had been preying on their minds. Those they first asked to describe a trivial event were physically tense. They stayed tense until they confided their troubles. Then they relaxed. Writing about personal traumas in a diary also seems to help. When volunteers in another experiment did so, they had fewer health problems during the next six months. One participant explained, "Although I have not talked with anyone about what I wrote, I was finally able to deal with it, work through the pain instead of trying to block it out. Now it doesn't hurt to think about it." Even if it's only "talking to my diary," and even if the writing is about one's future dreams and life goals, it helps to be able to confide (Burton & King, 2008; King, 2001; Lyubomirsky & others, 2006).

Other experiments confirm the benefits of engaging with others rather than suppressing stressful experiences. In one, Stephen Lepore and his colleagues (2000) had students view a stressful slide show and video on the Holocaust and either talk about it immediately afterward or not. Two days later, those who talked were experiencing less stress and fewer intrusive thoughts.

## POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND HEALTH

We have seen connections between health and the feelings of control that accompany a positive explanatory style. And we have seen connections between health and social support. Feelings of control and support together with health care and nutritional factors help explain why economic status correlates with longevity. Recall from Chapter 1 the study of old grave markers in Glasgow, Scotland: The costliest, highest pillars (indicating affluence) marked the grave sites of individuals who tended to have lived the longest (Carroll & others, 1994). Still today, in Scotland, the United States, Canada, and elsewhere, poorer people are at greater risk for premature death (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Poverty predicts perishing. Wealthy predicts healthy.

The correlation between poverty and ill health could run either way. Bad health isn't good for one's income. But most evidence indicates that the arrow runs from poverty toward ill health (Sapolsky, 2005). So how does poverty "get under the skin"? The answers include (a) reduced access to quality health care, (b) unhealthier lifestyles (smoking is much more common among less-educated and lower-income people), and, to a striking extent, (c) increased stress. To be poor is to be at risk for increased stress, negative emotions, and a toxic environment

"FRIENDSHIP IS A SOVER-EIGN ANTIDOTE AGAINST ALL CALAMITIES."

—SENECA, 5 B.C.–A.D.65



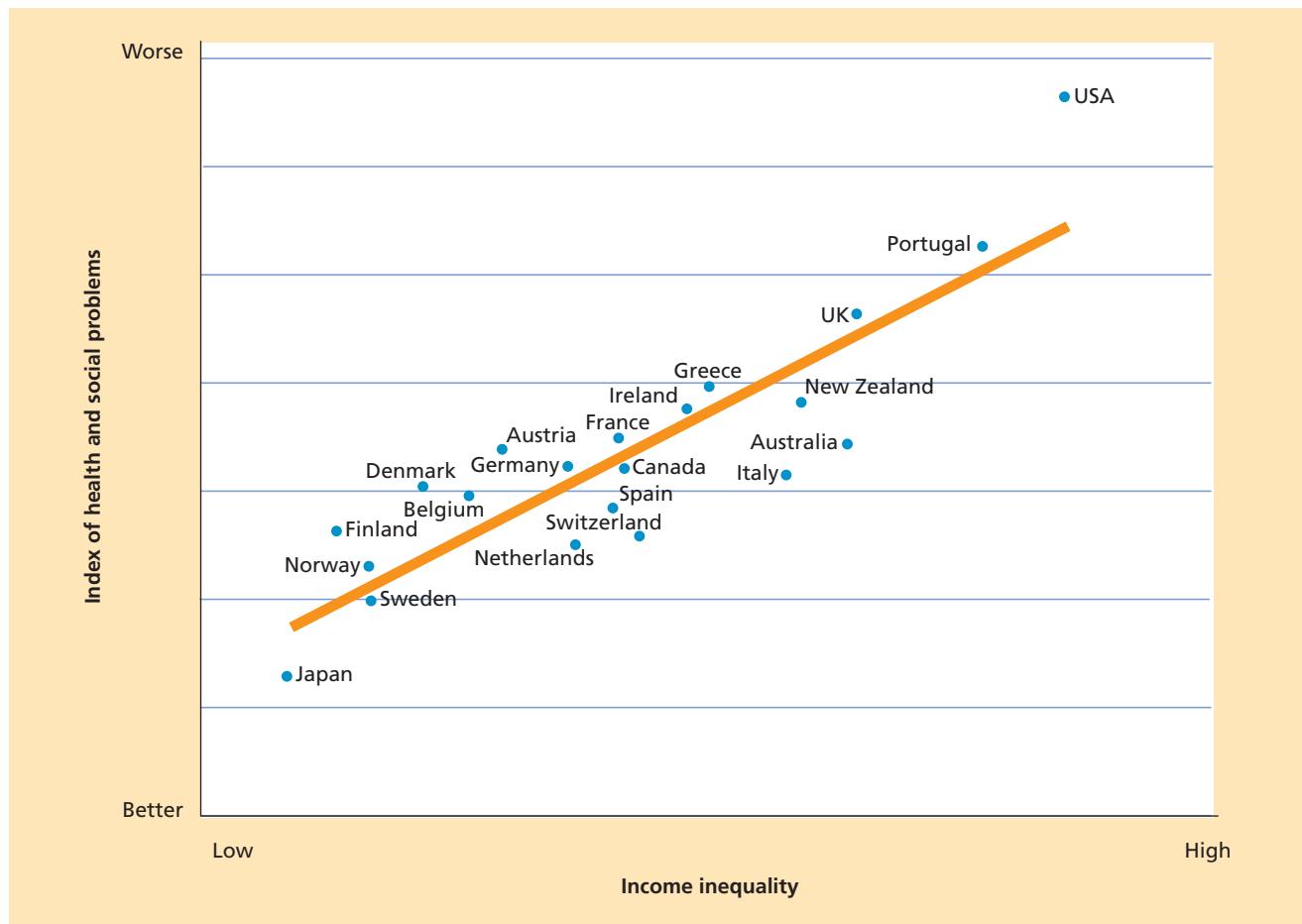
Wealthy and healthy. A 2008 *Scotsman* article illustrated the striking disparity in life expectancy in lower-income Calton, on the east end of Glasgow, and in affluent Lenzie, eight miles away.

(Adler & Snibbe, 2003; Chen, 2004; Gallo & Matthews, 2003). To be poor is to more often be sleep-deprived after working a second job, earning paychecks that don't cover the bills, commuting on crowded public transit, living in a high-pollution area, and doing hard labor that's controlled by someone else. Even among other primates, those with the least control—at the bottom of the social pecking order—are most vulnerable when exposed to a coldlike virus (Cohen & others, 1997).

Poverty also helps explain a curious but oft-reported correlation between intelligence and health. Edinburgh University researcher Ian Deary (2005) and his colleagues observed this correlation after stumbling across data from an intelligence test administered on June 1, 1932, to virtually all Scots born in 1921. When they searched Scotland's death records, they found, as have researchers in other countries since, that "whether you live to collect your old-age pension depends in part on your IQ at age 11. You just can't keep a good predictor down." Partly, the low-intelligence risk factor—which is roughly equivalent to that of obesity or high blood pressure, he reports—is due to the low-IQ persons having been less likely to cease smoking after its risks became known, and therefore more likely to die of lung cancer. Poverty-related stresses and lack of control also contribute, he notes.

People also die younger in regions with great income inequality (Kawachi & others, 1999; Lynch & others, 1998; See Figure 14.7). People in Britain and the United States have larger income disparities and lower life expectancies than people in Japan and Sweden. Where inequality has grown over the last decade, as in Eastern Europe and Russia, life expectancy has been at the falling end of the teeter-totter.

Is inequality merely an indicator of poverty? The mixed evidence indicates that poverty matters but that inequality matters, too. John Lynch and his colleagues (1998, 2000) report that people at every income level are at greater risk of early death if they live in a community with great income inequality. It's not just being poor, it's also *feeling* poor, relative to one's surroundings, that proves toxic. And that, Robert Sapolsky (2005) suggests, helps explain why the United States, which has the greatest income inequality of Westernized nations, has simultaneously ranked number 1 in the world on health care expenditures and number 29 on life expectancy.

**FIGURE :: 14.7**

Social and physical health problems are greater in countries with high income inequality. This health problems index is a composite of lower life expectancy, infant mortality, obesity, teen births, mental illness, imprisonment, and lower levels of literacy, social trust, and social mobility.

*Source: Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger* (Penguin, 2009).*

## Close Relationships and Happiness

Confiding painful feelings is good not only for the body but for the soul. That's the conclusion of studies showing that people are happier when supported by a network of friends and family.

Some studies, summarized in Chapter 2, compare people in a competitive, individualistic culture, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, with those in collectivist cultures, such as Japan and many developing countries. Individualistic cultures offer independence, privacy, and pride in personal achievements. Collectivist cultures, with their tighter social bonds, offer protection from loneliness, alienation, divorce, and stress-related diseases.

"WOE TO HIM WHO IS  
ALONE WHEN HE FALLS  
AND HAS NOT ANOTHER  
TO LIFT HIM UP."

—ECCLESIASTES 4:10B

### FRIENDSHIPS AND HAPPINESS

Other studies compare individuals with few or many close relationships. Being attached to friends with whom we can share intimate thoughts has two effects, observed the seventeenth-century philosopher Francis Bacon. "It redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in half." So it seems from answers to a question asked of Americans by the National Opinion Research Center: "Looking back over the

last six months, who are the people with whom you discussed matters important to you?" Compared with those who could name five or six such intimates, those who could name no such person were twice as likely to report being "not very happy."

Other findings confirm the importance of social networks. In many experiments, others' acceptance has been gratifying, and their rejection painful—so much so that a pain reliever can help relieve the hurt (DeWall & Bushman, 2011). Across the life span, friendships foster self-esteem and well-being (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). For example:

- The happiest university students are those who feel satisfied with their love life (Emmons & others, 1983).
- Those who enjoy close relationships cope better with a variety of stresses, including bereavement, rape, job loss, and illness (Abbey & Andrews, 1985; Perlman & Rook, 1987).
- Among 800 alumni of Hobart and William Smith colleges surveyed by Wesley Perkins, those who preferred having very close friends and a close marriage to having a high income and occupational success and prestige were twice as likely as their former classmates to describe themselves as "fairly" or "very" happy (Perkins, 1991). When asked "What is necessary for your happiness?" or "What is it that makes your life meaningful?" most people mention—before anything else—satisfying close relationships with family, friends, or romantic partners (Berscheid, 1985; Berscheid & Peplau, 1983). Happiness hits close to home.

"THE SUN LOOKS DOWN  
ON NOTHING HALF SO  
GOOD AS A HOUSEHOLD  
LAUGHING TOGETHER  
OVER A MEAL."

—C. S. LEWIS,

"MEMBERSHIP," 1949

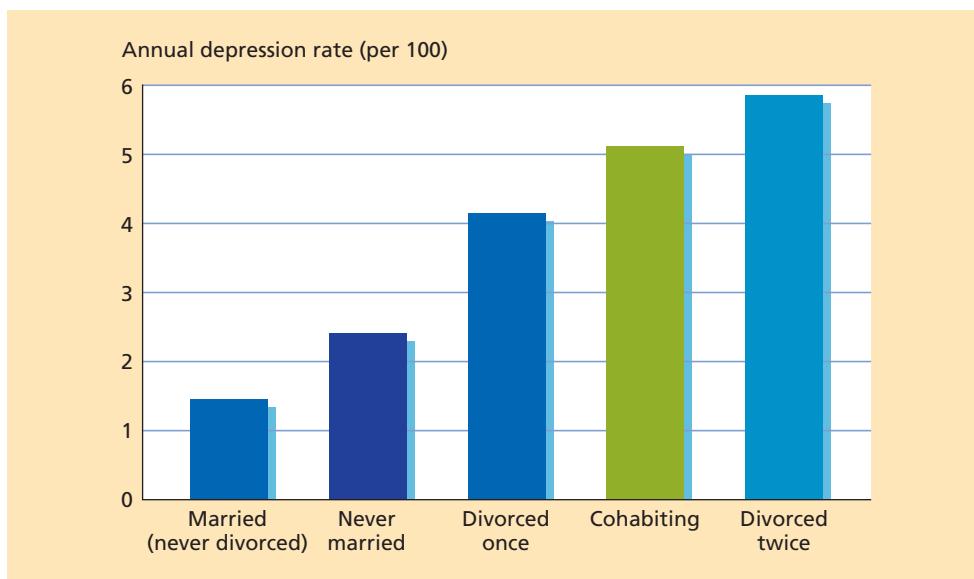
## MARITAL ATTACHMENT AND HAPPINESS

For more than 9 in 10 people worldwide, one eventual example of a close relationship has been marriage. Does marriage correlate positively with happiness? Or is there more happiness in the pleasure-seeking single life than in the "bondage," "chains," and "yoke" of marriage?

A mountain of data reveals that most people are happier attached than unattached. Survey after survey of many tens of thousands of Europeans and Americans has produced a consistent result: Compared with those single or widowed, and especially compared with those divorced or separated, married people report being happier and more satisfied with life (Gove & others, 1990; Inglehart, 1990). In National Opinion Research Center surveys of nearly 50,000 Americans since 1972, for example, 23 percent of never-married adults, but 40 percent of married adults, have reported being "very happy." This marriage-happiness link occurs across ethnic groups (Parker & others, 1995). Lesbian couples, too, report greater well-being than those who are alone (Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007). This is but one illustration of what social psychologist Bella DePaulo (2006) documents: There are multiple ways to satisfy the human need to belong. Nevertheless, there are few stronger predictors of happiness than a close, nurturing, equitable, intimate, lifelong companionship with one's best friend.

More important than being married, however, is the marriage's quality. People who say their marriages are satisfying—who find themselves still in love with their partners—rarely report being unhappy, discontented with life, or depressed. Fortunately, most married people *do* declare their marriages happy ones. In the National Opinion Research Center surveys, almost two-thirds say their marriages are "very happy." Three out of four say their spouses are their best friends. Four out of five people say they would marry the same people again. As a consequence, most such people feel quite happy with life as a whole.

Why are married people generally happier? Does marriage promote happiness, or is it the other way around—does happiness promote marriage? Are happy people more appealing as marriage partners? Do depressed people more often stay single or suffer divorce (Figure 14.8)? Certainly, happy people are more fun to

**FIGURE :: 14.8****Marital Status and Depression**

A National Institute of Mental Health survey of psychological disorders found depression rates two to four times greater for adults not married.

*Source:* Data from Robins & Regier, 1991, p. 72.

be with. They are also more outgoing, trusting, compassionate, and focused on others (Myers, 1993). Unhappy people, as we have noted, are more often socially rejected. Depression often triggers marital stress, which deepens the depression (Davila & others, 1997). So, positive, happy people do more readily form happy relationships.

But “the prevailing opinion of researchers,” reports University of Oslo sociologist Arne Mastekaasa (1995), is that the marriage-happiness connection is “mainly due” to the beneficial effects of marriage. Put on your thinking cap: If the happiest people marry sooner and more often, then as people age (and progressively less-happy people move into marriage), the average happiness of both married and never-married people should decline. (The older, less-happy newlyweds would pull down the average happiness of married people, and the unmarried group would be more and more left with the unhappy people.) But the data do not support that prediction. This suggests that marital intimacy does—for most people—pay emotional dividends. A Rutgers University team that followed 1,380 New Jersey adults over 15 years concurs (Horwitz & others, 1997). The tendency for married people to be less depressed occurs even after controlling for premarital happiness.

Marriage enhances happiness for at least two reasons. First, married people are more likely to enjoy an enduring, supportive, intimate relationship and are less likely to suffer loneliness. No wonder male medical students in a study by UCLA’s Robert Coombs survived medical school with less stress and anxiety if they were married (Coombs, 1991). A good marriage gives each partner a dependable companion, a lover, a friend.

There is a second, more prosaic, reason why marriage promotes happiness, or at least buffers us from misery. Marriage offers the roles of spouse and parent, which can provide additional sources of self-esteem (Crosby, 1987). It is true that multiple roles can multiply stress. Our circuits can and do overload. Yet each role also provides rewards, status, avenues to enrichment, and escape from stress faced in other parts of one’s life. A self with many identities is like a mansion with many rooms. When fire struck one wing of Windsor Castle, most of the castle still remained for royals and tourists to enjoy. When our personal identity stands on several legs, it, too, holds up under the loss of any one. If I mess up at work, well, I can tell myself I’m still a good husband and father, and, in the final analysis, these parts of me are what matter most.

## SUMMING UP: How Do Social Relationships Support Health and Well-Being?

- Health and happiness are influenced not only by social cognition but also by social relations. People who enjoy close, supportive relationships are at less risk for illness and premature death. Such relationships help people cope with stress, especially by enabling people to confide their intimate emotions.
- Close relationships also foster happiness. People who have intimate, long-term attachments with

friends and family members cope better with loss and report greater happiness. Compared with unmarried adults, those who are married, for example, are much more likely to report being very happy and are at less risk for depression. This appears due both to the greater social success of happy people and to the well-being engendered by a supportive life companion.

### POSTSCRIPT: Enhancing Happiness

Several years ago I wrote a book, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, that reported key findings from new research studies of happiness. When the editors wanted to subtitle the book *What Makes People Happy?* I cautioned them: That's not a question this or any book can answer. What we have learned is simply what correlates with—and therefore predicts—happiness. Thus, the book's revised subtitle was *Who Is Happy—and Why?*

Nevertheless, in 400 subsequent media interviews concerning happiness, the most frequent question has been "What can people do to be happy?" Without claiming any easy formula for health and happiness, I assembled 10 research-based points to ponder:

1. *Realize that enduring happiness doesn't come from "making it."* People adapt to changing circumstances—even to wealth or a disability. Thus, wealth is like health: Its utter absence breeds misery, but having it (or any circumstance we long for) doesn't guarantee happiness.
2. *Take control of your time.* Happy people feel in control of their lives, often aided by mastering their use of time. It helps to set goals and break them into daily aims. Although we often overestimate how much we will accomplish in any given day (leaving us frustrated), we generally underestimate how much we can accomplish in a year, given just a little progress every day.
3. *Act happy.* We can sometimes act ourselves into a frame of mind. Manipulated into a smiling expression, people feel better; when they scowl, the whole world seems to scowl back. So put on a happy face. Talk as if you feel positive self-esteem, are optimistic, and are outgoing. Going through the motions can trigger the emotions.
4. *Seek work and leisure that engage your skills.* Happy people often are in a zone called "flow"—absorbed in a task that challenges them without overwhelming them. The most expensive forms of leisure (sitting on a yacht) often provide less flow experience than gardening, socializing, or craft work.
5. *Join the "movement" movement.* An avalanche of research reveals that aerobic exercise not only promotes health and energy but also is an antidote for mild depression and anxiety. Sound minds reside in sound bodies.
6. *Give your body the sleep it wants.* Happy people live active, vigorous lives yet reserve time for renewing sleep and solitude. Many people suffer from a sleep debt, with resulting fatigue, diminished alertness, and gloomy moods.

7. *Give priority to close relationships.* Intimate friendships with those who care deeply about you can help you weather difficult times. Confiding is good for soul and body. Resolve to nurture your closest relationships: to *not* take those closest to you for granted, to display to them the sort of kindness that you display to others, to affirm them, to share, and to play together. To rejuvenate your affections, resolve in such ways to *act* lovingly.
  8. *Focus beyond the self.* Reach out to those in need. Happiness increases helpfulness. (Those who feel good do good.) But doing good also makes one feel good.
  9. *Keep a gratitude journal.* Those who pause each day to reflect on some positive aspect of their lives (their health, friends, family, freedom, education, senses, natural surroundings, and so on) experience heightened well-being.
  10. *Nurture your spiritual self.* For many people, faith provides a support community, a reason to focus beyond self, and a sense of purpose and hope. Study after study finds that actively religious people are happier and that they cope better with crises.
-

CHAPTER  
**15**

# Social Psychology in Court



**"A courtroom is a battleground where lawyers compete for the minds of jurors."**

—James Randi, 1999

**How reliable is eyewitness testimony?**

**What other factors influence juror judgments?**

**What influences the individual juror?**

**How do group influences affect juries?**

**Postscript: Thinking smart with psychological science**

**I**t was the most publicized criminal case in history: Football hero, actor, and broadcaster O. J. Simpson was accused of brutally murdering his estranged wife and her male acquaintance. The evidence was compelling, the prosecution argued. Simpson's behavior fit a long-standing pattern of spouse abuse and threats of violence. Blood tests confirmed that his blood was at the crime scene and his victim's blood was on his glove, on his car, even on a sock in his bedroom. His travels the night of the murder and the way he fled when arrest was imminent were, prosecutors said, additional indicators of his guilt.

Simpson's defense attorneys responded that racial prejudice may have motivated the officer who allegedly found the bloody glove at Simpson's estate. Moreover, they said, Simpson could not receive a fair trial. Would the jurors—10 of whom were women—be kindly disposed to a man alleged to have abused and murdered a woman? And how likely was it that jurors could heed the judge's instructions to ignore prejudicial pretrial publicity?

The case raised other questions that have been examined in social psychological experiments:

- There were no eyewitnesses to this crime. How influential is eyewitness testimony? How trustworthy are eyewitness recollections? What makes a credible witness?

- Simpson was handsome, rich, famous, and widely admired. Can jurors ignore, as they should, a defendant's attractiveness and social status?
- How well do jurors comprehend important information, such as statistical probabilities involved in DNA blood tests?
- The jury in the criminal case was composed mostly of women and Blacks, but it also included two men, one Hispanic, and two non-Hispanic Whites. In the follow-up civil trial, in which Simpson was sued for damages, the jury had nine Whites. Do jurors' characteristics bias their verdicts? If so, can lawyers use the jury selection process to stack a jury in their favor?
- In cases such as this, a 12-member jury deliberates before delivering a verdict. During deliberations, how do jurors influence one another? Can a minority win over the majority? Do 12-member juries reach the same decisions as 6-member juries?

Such questions fascinate lawyers, judges, and defendants. And they are questions to which social psychology can suggest answers, as law schools recognize by hiring professors of "law and social science" and as trial lawyers recognize when hiring psychological consultants.

We can think of a courtroom as a miniature social world, one that magnifies everyday social processes with major consequences for those involved. In criminal cases, psychological factors may influence decisions involving arrest, interrogation, prosecution, plea bargaining, sentencing, and parole. Whether a case reaches a jury verdict or not, the social dynamics of the courtroom matter. Let's therefore consider two sets of factors: (1) eyewitness testimony and its influence on jurors, and (2) characteristics of jurors as individuals and as a group.

## HOW RELIABLE IS EYEWITNESS TESTIMONY?

Explain the accuracy of eyewitness testimony, its association (or not) with eyewitness confidence, its contamination by misinformation effects, and ways to increase eyewitness accuracy and educate jurors.

As the courtroom drama unfolds, jurors hear testimony, form impressions of the defendant, listen to instructions from the judge, and render a verdict. Let's take these steps one at a time, starting with eyewitness testimony.

Although never in trouble with the law, Kirk Bloodsworth was convicted for the sexual assault and slaying of a 9-year-old girl after five eyewitnesses identified him at his trial. During his 2 years on death row and 7 more under a sentence of life imprisonment, he maintained his innocence. Then DNA testing proved it was

not his semen on the girl's underwear. Released from prison, he still lived under a cloud of doubt until in 2003, 19 years after his death sentence, DNA testing identified the actual killer (Wells & others, 2006).

## The Power of Persuasive Eyewitnesses

In Chapter 3, we noted that vivid anecdotes and personal testimonies can be powerfully persuasive, often more so than compelling but abstract information. There's no better way to end an argument than to say, "I saw it with my own eyes!"

Memory researcher Elizabeth Loftus (1974, 1979, 2011) found that those who had "seen" were indeed believed, even when their testimony was shown to be useless. When students were presented with a hypothetical robbery–murder case with circumstantial evidence but no eyewitness testimony, only 18 percent voted for conviction. Other students received the same information but with the addition of a single eyewitness. Now, knowing that someone had declared, "That's the one!" 72 percent voted for conviction. For a third group, the defense attorney discredited that testimony (the witness had 20/400 vision and was not wearing glasses). Did that discrediting reduce the effect of the testimony? In this case, not much: 68 percent still voted for conviction.

Later experiments revealed that discrediting may reduce somewhat the number of guilty votes (Whitley, 1987). But unless contradicted by another eyewitness, a vivid eyewitness account is difficult to erase from jurors' minds (Leippe, 1985). That helps explain why, compared with criminal cases lacking eyewitness testimony (such as the O. J. case), those that have eyewitness testimony (such as the Bloodsworth case) are more likely to produce convictions (Visher, 1987).

Can't jurors spot erroneous testimony? To find out, Gary Wells, R. C. L. Lindsay, and their colleagues staged hundreds of eyewitnessed thefts of a calculator at the University of Alberta. Afterward, they asked each eyewitness to identify the culprit from a photo lineup. Other people, acting as jurors, observed the eyewitnesses being questioned and then evaluated their testimony. Are incorrect eyewitnesses believed less often than those who are accurate? As it happened, both correct and incorrect eyewitnesses were believed 80 percent of the time (Wells & others, 1979). That led the researchers to speculate that "human observers have absolutely no ability to discern eyewitnesses who have mistakenly identified an innocent person" (Wells & others, 1980).

In a follow-up experiment, Lindsay, Wells, and Carolyn Rumpel (1981) staged the theft under conditions that sometimes allowed witnesses a good long look at the thief and sometimes didn't.

The jurors believed the witnesses more when conditions were good. But even when conditions were so poor that two-thirds of the witnesses had actually misidentified an innocent person, 62 percent of the jurors still usually believed the witnesses.

Wells and Michael Leippe (1981) found that jurors are more skeptical of eyewitnesses whose memory of trivial details is poor—though these tend to be the most *accurate* witnesses. Jurors think a witness who can remember that there were three pictures



*"As it turned out, my battery of lawyers was no match for their battery of eyewitnesses."*

© Joseph Mirachi/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com



The innocent James Newsome (left) mistakenly identified by eyewitnesses, and the actual culprit (right).



*Lie detection brain scans have, as yet, marginal validity. But such high-tech-seeming evidence can nevertheless seem credible to jurors (Gazzaniga, 2011; McCabe & others, 2011).*

**"CERTITUDE IS NOT THE TEST OF CERTAINTY."**

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES,  
COLLECTED LEGAL PAPERS

*Eyewitness recall of detail is sometimes impressive. When John Yuille and Judith Cutshall (1986) studied accounts of a midafternoon murder on a busy Burnaby, British Columbia, street, they found that eyewitnesses' recall for detail was 80 percent accurate.*

hanging in the room must have "really been paying attention" (Bell & Loftus, 1988, 1989). Actually, those who pay attention to surrounding details are *less* likely to attend to the culprit's face.

The persuasive power of three eyewitnesses sent Chicagoan James Newsome, who had never been arrested before, to prison on a life sentence for supposedly gunning down a convenience store owner. Fifteen years later he was released, after fingerprint technology revealed the real culprit to be Dennis Emerson, a career criminal who was 3 inches taller and had longer hair (*Chicago Tribune*, 2002).

## When Eyes Deceive

Is eyewitness testimony often inaccurate? Stories abound of innocent people who have wasted years in prison because of the testimony of eyewitnesses who were sincerely wrong (Brandon & Davies, 1973; Doyle, 2005; Wells & others, 2006). Eighty years ago, Yale law professor Edwin Borchard (1932) documented 65 convictions of people whose innocence was later proven (and who were released after receiving clemency or being acquitted after a new trial). Most resulted from mistaken identifications, and some were narrowly saved from execution. In modern times, among the first 250 convictions overturned by DNA evidence, 76 percent were wrongful convictions influenced by mistaken eyewitnesses (Garrett, 2011a).

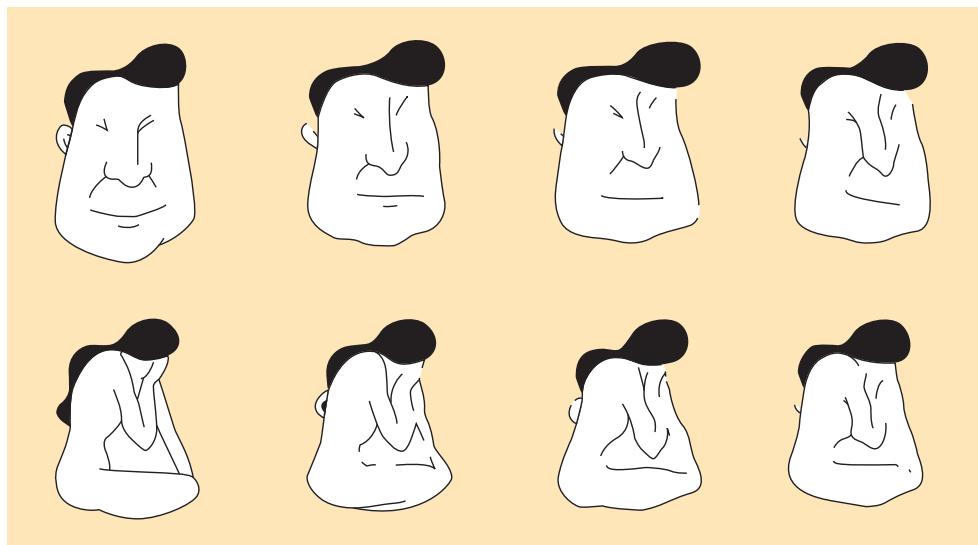
To assess the accuracy of eyewitness recollections, we need to learn their overall rates of "hits" and "misses." One way for researchers to gather such information is to stage crimes comparable to those in everyday life and then solicit eyewitness reports.

During the past century, this has been done many times in Europe and elsewhere, sometimes with disconcerting results (Sporer, 2008). For example, at California State University, Hayward, 141 students witnessed an "assault" on a professor. Seven weeks later, when Robert Buckhout (1974) asked them to identify the assailant from a group of six photographs, 60 percent chose an innocent person. No wonder eyewitnesses to actual crimes sometimes disagree about what they saw. Later studies have confirmed that eyewitnesses often are more confident than correct. For example, Brian Bornstein and Douglas Zickafoose (1999) found that students felt, on average, 74 percent sure of their later recollections of a classroom visitor but were only 55 percent correct.

Three studies of live lineups conducted in England and Wales show remarkable consistency. Roughly 40 percent of witnesses identified the suspect. Forty percent made no identification. And, despite having been cautioned that the person they witnessed might not be in the lineup, 20 percent made a mistaken identification (Valentine & others, 2003).

Of course, some witnesses are more confident than others. Wells and colleagues (2002, 2006) report that it's the confident witnesses whom jurors find most believable. Unless their credibility is punctured by an obvious error, confident witnesses seem more credible (Tenney & others, 2007). Confident witnesses are somewhat more accurate, especially when making quick and confident identifications soon after the event (Sauer & others, 2010; Sauerland & Sporer, 2009). In 57 percent of DNA exoneration cases that included eyewitness testimony, the eyewitnesses initially were uncertain (Garrett, 2011b). Still, the overconfidence phenomenon (Chapter 3) affects witnesses, too. Under many conditions, report Neil Brewer and Gary Wells (2011), witnesses that feel 90 to 100 percent confident tend to be approximately 75 to 90 percent accurate. Moreover, some people—whether right or wrong—chronically express themselves more assertively. And that, says Michael Leippe (1994), explains why mistaken eyewitnesses are so often persuasive.

This finding would surely come as a surprise to members of the 1972 U.S. Supreme Court. In a judgment that established the position of the U.S. judiciary



**FIGURE :: 15.1**  
**Expectations Affect Perception**

Is the drawing on the far right a face or figure?

*Source:* From Fisher (1968), adapted by Loftus (1979b). Drawing by Anne Canevari Green.

system regarding eyewitness identifications, the Court, we now realize, goofed. It declared that among the factors to be considered in determining accuracy is “the level of certainty demonstrated by the witness” (Wells & Murray, 1983).

Errors sneak into our perceptions and our memories because our minds are not videotape machines. Many errors are understandable, as revealed by “change blindness” experiments in which people fail to detect that an innocent person entering a scene differs from another person exiting the scene (Davis & others, 2008). People are quite good at recognizing a pictured face when later shown the same picture alongside a new face. But University of Stirling face researcher Vicki Bruce (1998) was surprised to discover that subtle differences in views, expressions, or lighting “are hard for human vision to deal with.” We construct our memories based partly on what we perceived at the time and partly on our expectations, beliefs, and current knowledge (Figure 15.1).

The strong emotions that accompany witnessed crimes and traumas may further corrupt eyewitness memories. In one experiment, visitors wore heart rate monitors while in the London Dungeon’s Horror Labyrinth. Those exhibiting the most emotion later made the most mistakes in identifying someone they had encountered (Valentine & Mesout, 2009).

Charles Morgan and his team of Yale colleagues and military psychologists (2004) documented the effect of stress on memory with more than 500 soldiers at survival schools—mock prisoner of war camps that were training the soldiers to withstand deprivation of food and sleep, combined with intense, confrontational interrogation, resulting in a high heart rate and a flood of stress hormones. A day after release from the camp, when the participants were asked to identify their intimidating interrogators from a 15-person lineup, only 30 percent could do so, although 62 percent could recall a low-stress interrogator. Thus, concluded the researchers, “contrary to the popular conception that most people would never forget the face of a clearly seen individual who had physically confronted them and threatened them for more than 30 minutes, [many] were unable to correctly identify their perpetrator.” We are most at risk for false recollections made with high confidence with faces of another race (Brigham & others, 2006; Meissner & others, 2005).

*Recall from Chapter 9  
the “own-race bias”—the  
tendency to more accurately  
recognize faces of one’s  
own race.*

## The Misinformation Effect

Elizabeth Loftus and associates (1978) dramatically demonstrated memory construction. They showed University of Washington students 30 slides depicting successive stages of an automobile–pedestrian accident. One critical slide showed a

red Datsun stopped at a stop sign or a yield sign. Afterward they asked half the students, among other questions, "Did another car pass the red Datsun while it was stopped at the stop sign?" They asked the other half the same question, but with the words "stop sign" replaced by "yield sign." Later, all viewed both slides in Figure 15.2 and recalled which one they had seen previously. Those who had been asked the question consistent with what they had seen were 75 percent correct. Those previously asked the misleading question were only 41 percent correct; more often than not, they denied seeing what they had actually seen and instead "remembered" the picture they had never seen!

### **misinformation effect**

Incorporating "misinformation" into one's memory of the event after witnessing an event and receiving misleading information about it.

In other studies of this **misinformation effect**, Loftus (1979a, 1979b, 2001) found that after suggestive questions, witnesses may believe that a red light was actually green or that a robber had a mustache when he didn't. When questioning eyewitnesses, police and attorneys commonly ask questions framed by their own understanding of what happened. So it is troubling to discover how easily witnesses incorporate misleading information into their memories, especially when they believe the questioner is well informed, when shown fabricated evidence, when suggestive questions are repeated, or when they have discussed events with other

### **FIGURE :: 15.2**

#### The Misinformation Effect

When shown one of these two pictures and then asked a question suggesting the sign from the other photo, most people later "remembered" seeing the sign they had never actually seen.

*Source:* From Loftus, Miller, & Burns (1978). Photos courtesy of Elizabeth Loftus.



witnesses (Frenda & others, 2011; Wade & others, 2010; Wright & others, 2009; Zaragoza & Mitchell, 1996).

It also is troubling to realize that false memories feel and look like real memories. They can be as persuasive as real memories—convincingly sincere, yet sincerely wrong. This is true of young children (who are especially susceptible to misinformation) as well as adults. Stephen Ceci and Maggie Bruck (1993a, 1993b, 1995) demonstrated children's suggestibility by telling children, once a week for 10 weeks, "Think real hard, and tell me if this ever happened to you." For example, "Can you remember going to the hospital with the mousetrap on your finger?" Remarkably, when later interviewed by a new adult who asked the same question, 58 percent of preschoolers produced false and often detailed stories about the fictitious event. One boy explained that his brother had pushed him into a basement woodpile, where his finger got stuck in the trap. "And then we went to the hospital, and my mommy, daddy, and Colin drove me there, to the hospital in our van, because it was far away. And the doctor put a bandage on this finger."

Given such vivid stories, professional psychologists were often fooled. They could not reliably separate real from false memories—nor could the children. Told the incident never actually happened, some protested. "But it really did happen. I remember it!" For Bruck and Ceci (1999, 2004), such findings raise the possibility of false accusations, as in alleged child sex abuse cases in which children's memories may have been contaminated by repeated suggestive questioning and in which there is no corroborating evidence. Given suggestive interview questions, Bruck and Ceci report, most preschoolers and many older children will produce false reports such as seeing a thief steal food in their day-care center.

Even among American and British university students, imagining childhood events, such as breaking a window with their hand or having a nurse remove a skin sample, led one-fourth to recall that the imagined event actually happened (Garry & others, 1996; Mazzoni & Memom, 2003). This "imagination inflation" happens partly because visualizing something activates similar areas in the brain as does actually experiencing it (Gonsalves & others, 2004).

Misinformation-induced false memories provide one explanation for a peculiar phenomenon: *false confessions* (Kassin & others, 2010; Lassiter, 2010; Loftus, 2011). Among 250 closely studied cases in which DNA evidence cleared wrongfully convicted people, 40 involved false confessions (Garrett, 2011b). Many of these were *compliant confessions*—people who confessed when worn down and often sleep deprived ("If you will just tell us you accidentally rather than deliberately set the fire, you can go home."). Others were *internalized confessions*—ones apparently believed after people were fed misinformation.

## Retelling

Retelling events commits people to their recollections, accurate or not. An accurate retelling helps them later resist misleading suggestions (Bregman & McAllister, 1982). Other times, the more we retell a story, the more we convince ourselves of a falsehood. Wells, Ferguson, and Lindsay (1981) demonstrated this by having eyewitnesses to a staged theft rehearse their answers to questions before taking the witness stand. Doing so increased the confidence of those who were wrong and thus made jurors who heard their false testimony more likely to convict the innocent person.

In Chapter 4, we noted that we often adjust what we say to please our listeners. Moreover, having done so, we come to believe the altered message. Imagine witnessing an argument that erupts into a fight in which one person injures the other. Afterward, the injured party sues. Before the trial, a smooth lawyer for one of the two parties interviews you. Might you slightly adjust your testimony, giving a version of the fight that supports this lawyer's client? If you did so, might your later recollections in court be similarly slanted?

"WITNESSES PROBABLY  
OUGHT TO BE TAKING A  
MORE REALISTIC OATH: 'DO  
YOU SWEAR TO TELL THE  
TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH,  
OR WHATEVER IT IS YOU  
THINK YOU REMEMBER?'"

—ELIZABETH F. LOFTUS,  
"MEMORY IN CANADIAN  
COURTS OF LAW," 2003

Blair Sheppard and Neil Vidmar (1980) report that the answer to both questions is yes. At the University of Western Ontario, they had some students serve as witnesses to a fight and others as lawyers and judges. When interviewed by lawyers for the defendant, the witnesses later gave the judge testimony that was more favorable to the defendant. In a follow-up experiment, Vidmar and Nancy Laird (1983) noted that witnesses did not omit important facts from their testimony; they just changed their tone of voice and choice of words depending on whether they thought they were witnesses for the defendant or for the plaintiff. Even this was enough to bias the impressions of those who heard the testimony. So it's not only suggestive questions that can distort eyewitness recollections but also their own retellings, which may be adjusted subtly to suit their audience.

## Reducing Error

Given these error-prone tendencies, what constructive steps can be taken to increase the accuracy of eyewitnesses and jurors? The U.S. Department of Justice convened a panel of researchers, attorneys, and law enforcement officers to hammer out *Eyewitness Evidence: A Guide for Law Enforcement* (Technical Working Group for Eyewitness Evidence, 1999; Wells & others, 2000). Their suggestions parallel many of those from a Canadian review of eyewitness identification procedures (Yarmey, 2003a). They include ways to (a) train police interviewers and (b) administer lineups. This "forensic science of mind" seeks to preserve rather than contaminate the eyewitness memory aspect of the crime scene.

### TRAIN POLICE INTERVIEWERS

When Ronald Fisher and co-workers (1987, 1989, 2011) examined tape-recorded interviews of eyewitnesses conducted by experienced Florida police detectives, they found a typical pattern. Following an open-ended beginning ("Tell me what you recall"), the detectives would occasionally interrupt with follow-up questions, including questions eliciting terse answers ("How tall was he?").

The *Eyewitness Evidence* guide instructs interviewers to begin by allowing eyewitnesses to offer their own unprompted recollections. The recollections will be most complete if the interviewer jogs the memory by first guiding people to reconstruct the setting. Have them visualize the scene and what they were thinking and feeling at the time. Even showing pictures of the setting—of, say, the store checkout lane with a clerk standing where she was robbed—can promote accurate recall (Cutler & Penrod, 1988). After giving witnesses ample, uninterrupted time to report everything that comes to mind, the interviewer then jogs their memory with evocative questions ("Was there anything unusual about the voice? Was there anything unusual about the person's appearance or clothing?").

When Fisher and colleagues (1989, 1994, 2011) trained detectives to question in this way, the eyewitnesses' information increased 25 to 50 percent without increasing the false memory rate. A later statistical summary of 46 published studies confirmed that this "cognitive interview" substantially increases details recalled, with no loss in accuracy (Memon & others, 2011). In response to such results, most police agencies in North America and Britain have adopted the cognitive interview procedure (Dando & others, 2009). (The procedure also shows promise for enhancing information gathered in oral histories and medical surveys.)

Accurate identifications tend to be automatic and effortless (Sauer & others, 2010). The right face just pops out. In studies by David Dunning and Scott Perretta (2002), eyewitnesses who make their identifications in less than 10 to 12 seconds were nearly 90 percent accurate; those taking longer were only about 50 percent accurate. Although other studies challenge a neat 10- to 12-second rule, they confirm that quicker identifications are generally more accurate (Weber & others, 2004). For example, when Tim Valentine and co-workers (2003) analyzed 640 eyewitness

# research CLOSE-UP

## Feedback to Witnesses

Eyewitness to a crime on viewing a lineup: "Oh, my God... I don't know... It's one of those two... but I don't know... Oh, man... the guy a little bit taller than number two... It's one of those two, but I don't know...."

Months later at trial: "You were positive it was number two? It wasn't a maybe?"

Eyewitness's answer: "There was no maybe about it... I was absolutely positive."

(Missouri v. Hutching, 1994, reported by Wells & Bradfield, 1998)

What explains witnesses misrecalling their original uncertainty? Gary Wells and Amy Bradfield (1998, 1999) wondered. Research had shown that one's confidence gains a boost from (a) learning that another witness has fingered the same person, (b) being asked the same question repeatedly, and (c) preparing for cross-examination (Lüüs & Wells, 1994; Shaw, 1996; Wells & others, 1981). Might the lineup interviewer's feedback also influence not just confidence but also recollections of earlier confidence ("I knew it all along")?

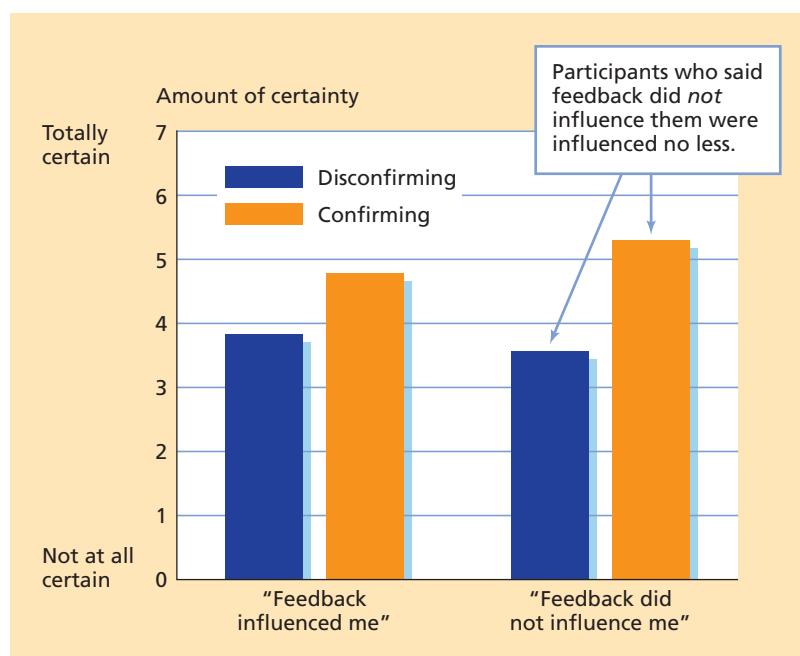
To find out, Wells and Bradfield conducted two experiments in which 352 Iowa State University students viewed a grainy security camera video of a man entering a store. Moments later, off camera, he murders a security guard. The students then viewed the photo spread from the actual criminal case, minus the gunman's photo,

and were asked to identify the gunman. All 352 students made a false identification, following which the experimenter gave confirming feedback ("Good. You identified the actual suspect"), disconfirming feedback ("Actually, the suspect was number\_\_\_\_"), or no feedback. Finally, all were later asked, "At the time that you identified the person in the photo spread, how certain were you that the person you identified from the photos was the gunman that you saw in the video?" (from 1, not at all certain, to 7, totally certain).

The experiment produced two striking results: First, the effect of the experimenter's casual comment was huge. In the confirming feedback condition, 58 percent of the eyewitnesses rated their certainty as 6 or 7 when making their initial judgments. This was 4 times the 14 percent who said the same in the no-feedback condition and 11 times the 5 percent in the disconfirming condition. What's striking is that those were their confident recollections before they received any feedback.

It wasn't obvious to the participants that their judgments were affected, for the second rather amazing finding is that when asked if the feedback had influenced their answers, 58 percent said no. Moreover, as a group, those who felt uninfluenced were influenced just as much as those who said they were (Figure 15.3).

This phenomenon—increased witness confidence after supportive feedback—is both big and reliable enough, across many studies, to have gained a name: the



**FIGURE :: 15.3**

**Recalled Certainty of Eyewitnesses' False Identification After Receiving Confirming or Disconfirming Feedback (Experiment 2)**

*Source:* Data from Wells & Bradfield (1998).

*post-identification feedback effect* (Douglass & Steblay, 2006; Jones & others, 2008; Wright & Skagerberg, 2007). It is understandable that eyewitnesses would be curious about the accuracy of their recollections, and that interrogators would want to satisfy their curiosity ("you did identify the actual suspect"). But the possible later effect of inflated eyewitness confidence points to the need to keep interrogators blind (ignorant) of which person is the suspect.

The inability of eyewitnesses to appreciate the post-identification feedback effect points to a lesson that

runs deeper than jury research. Once again, we see why we need social psychological research. As social psychologists have so often found—recall Milgram's obedience experiments—simply asking people how they would act, or asking what explains their actions, sometimes gives us wrong answers. Benjamin Franklin was right: "There are three things extremely hard, Steel, a Diamond, and to know one's self." That is why we need not only surveys that ask people to explain themselves but also experiments in which we see what they actually do.

viewings of London police lineups, they, too, found that nearly 9 in 10 "fast" identifications were of the actual suspect, as were fewer than 4 in 10 slower identifications. Younger eyewitnesses, and those who had viewed the culprit for more than 1 minute, were also more accurate than older eyewitnesses and those who had less than 1 minute's exposure.

### MINIMIZE FALSE LINEUP IDENTIFICATIONS

The case of Ron Shatford illustrates how the composition of a police lineup can promote misidentification (Doob & Kirshenbaum, 1973). After a suburban Toronto department store robbery, the cashier involved could recall only that the culprit was not wearing a tie and was "very neatly dressed and rather good looking." When police put the good-looking Shatford in a lineup with 11 unattractive men, all of whom wore ties, the cashier readily identified him as the culprit. Only after he had served 15 months of a long sentence did another person confess, allowing Shatford to be retried and found not guilty.

If a suspect has a distinguishing feature—a tie, a tattoo, or an eye patch—false identifications are reduced by putting a similar feature on other lineup "foils" (Zarkadi & others, 2009). Gary Wells (1984, 1993, 2005, 2008) and the *Eyewitness Evidence* guide report that another way to reduce misidentifications is to remind witnesses that the person they saw may or may not be in the lineup. Alternatively, give eyewitnesses a "blank" lineup that contains no suspects and screen out those who make false identifications. Those who do not make such errors turn out to be more accurate when they later face the actual lineup.

Dozens of studies in Europe, North America, Australia, and South Africa show that mistakes also subside when witnesses simply make individual yes or no judgments in response to a *sequence* of people (Lindsay & Wells, 1985; Meissner & others, 2005; Steblay & others, 2001). A simultaneous lineup tempts people to pick the person who, among the lineup members, most resembles the perpetrator. Witnesses viewing just one suspect at a time are less likely to make false identifications.

If witnesses view several photos or people simultaneously, they are more likely to choose whoever most resembles the culprit. (When not given a same-race lineup, witnesses may pick someone of the culprit's race, especially when it's a different race from their own [Wells & Olson, 2001].) With a "sequential lineup," eyewitnesses compare each person with their memory of the culprit and make an absolute decision—match or no-match (Goodsell & others, 2010; Gronlund, 2004a, 2004b). In one large study based on cases from several cities, the sequential lineup reduced the misidentification of foils from 18 to 12 percent, with no reduction in accurate identifications (Wells & others, 2011).

These no-cost procedures make police lineups more like good experiments. They contain a *control group* (a no-suspect lineup or a lineup in which mock witnesses

try to guess the suspect based merely on a general description). They have an experimenter who is *blind* to the hypothesis (and who therefore won't welcome an expected identification while asking "Might it be anyone else?" in response to a different identification). Questions are *scripted and neutral*, so they don't subtly demand a particular response (the procedure doesn't imply the culprit is in the lineup). And they prohibit confidence-inflating post-lineup comments ("you got him") prior to trial testimony. Such procedures greatly reduce the natural human confirmation bias (having an idea and seeking confirming evidence). Lineups can also be effectively administered by computers (MacLin & others, 2005).

Although procedures such as double-blind testing are common in psychological science, they are still uncommon in criminal procedures (Wells & Olson, 2003). So it was when Troy Davis was arrested for the 1989 killing of a Georgia police officer. The police showed some of the witnesses Davis's photo before they viewed the lineup. His lineup picture had a different background than the other photos. The lineup was administered by an officer who knew that Davis was the suspect. Later, seven of the nine witnesses against Davis recanted, with six saying the police threatened them if they did not identify Davis. The man who first told police that Davis was the shooter later confessed to the crime. Despite court appeals and pleas from the Pope, a former FBI director, and 630,000 others, in 2011, Georgia executed Troy Davis (*New York Times*, 2011).

Mindful of all this research, New Jersey's attorney general has mandated state-wide blind testing (to avoid steering witnesses toward suspects) and sequential lineups (to minimize simply comparing people and choosing the person who most resembles the one they saw commit a crime) (Kolata & Peterson, 2001; Wells & others, 2002). In 2011, the New Jersey Supreme Court, in response to research on eyewitness identification procedures, overhauled its state's rule for treating lineup evidence. By making it easier for defendants to challenge flawed evidence, the court attached consequences to the use of lineup procedures that are most likely to produce mistaken identifications (Goode & Schwartz, 2011).

Troy Davis (1968–2011). Despite error-prone procedures for screening eyewitness testimonies, the State of Georgia argued that Davis, who maintained his innocence to his last breath, was guilty of murder.



Researchers are also exploring the conditions under which "earwitness" testimony, based on voice recognition, is also vulnerable to error (Mullenix & others, 2011; Stevenage & others, 2011).

## EDUCATE JURORS

Do jurors evaluate eyewitness testimony rationally? Do they understand how the circumstances of a lineup determine its reliability? Do they know whether or not to take an eyewitness's self-confidence into account? Do they realize how memory can be influenced—by earlier misleading questions, by stress at the time of the incident, by the interval between the event and the questioning, by whether the suspect is the same or a different race, by whether recall of other details is sharp or hazy? Studies in Canada, Great Britain, Norway, and the United States reveal that although juror knowledge seems on the increase, jurors fail to fully appreciate some of these factors, all of which are known to influence eyewitness testimony (Desmarais & Read, 2011; Magnussen & others, 2010; Wise & Safer, 2010). In one national survey, more than half mistakenly agreed that, "Human memory works like a video camera, accurately recording the events we see and hear so that we can review and inspect them later" (Loftus, 2011).

To educate jurors, experts now are asked frequently (usually by defense attorneys) to testify about eyewitness testimony (Cutler & Kovera, 2011). Their aim is to offer jurors the sort of information you have been reading about to help them evaluate the testimony of both prosecution and defense witnesses. Table 15.1, drawn

**TABLE :: 15.1 Influences on Eyewitness Testimony**

<b>Phenomenon</b>	<b>Eyewitness Experts Agreeing*</b>	<b>Jurors Agreeing*</b>
<i>Question wording.</i> An eyewitness's testimony about an event can be affected by how the questions put to that eyewitness are worded.	98%	85%
<i>Lineup instructions.</i> Police instructions can affect an eyewitness's willingness to make an identification.	98%	41%
<i>Confidence malleability.</i> An eyewitness's confidence can be influenced by factors that are unrelated to identification accuracy.	95%	50%
<i>Mug-shot-induced bias.</i> Exposure to mug shots of a suspect increases the likelihood that the witness will later choose that suspect in a lineup.	95%	59%
<i>Postevent information.</i> Eyewitnesses' testimony about an event often reflects not only what they actually saw but also information they obtained later on.	94%	60%
<i>Attitudes and expectations.</i> An eyewitness's perception and memory of an event may be affected by his or her attitudes and expectations.	92%	81%
<i>Cross-race bias.</i> Eyewitnesses are more accurate when identifying members of their own race than members of other races.	90%	47%
<i>Accuracy versus confidence.</i> An eyewitness's confidence is not a good predictor of his or her identification accuracy.	87%	38%

\*\*This phenomenon is reliable enough for psychologists to present it in courtroom testimony."

Source: Experts from S. M. Kassin, V. A. Tubb, H. M. Hosch, & A. Memon (2001). Jurors from T. R. Benton, D. F. Ross, E. Bradshaw, W. N. Thomas, & G. S. Bradshaw (2006).

from a survey of 64 researchers on eyewitness testimony, lists some of the most agreed-upon phenomena. A follow-up survey compared their understandings with those of 111 jurors sampled in Tennessee.

When taught the conditions under which eyewitness accounts are trustworthy, jurors become more discerning (Cutler & others, 1989; Devenport & others, 2002; Wells, 1986). Moreover, attorneys and judges are recognizing the importance of some of these factors when deciding when to ask for or permit suppression of lineup evidence (Stinson & others, 1996, 1997).

## SUMMING UP: How Reliable Is Eyewitness Testimony?

- In hundreds of experiments, social psychologists have found that the accuracy of eyewitness testimony can be impaired by a host of factors involving the ways people form judgments and memories.
- Some eyewitnesses express themselves more assertively than others. The assertive witness is more likely to be believed, although assertiveness is actually a trait of the witness that does not reflect the certainty of the information.
- The human eye is not a video camera; it is vulnerable to variations in light, angle, and other changes that impair recognition of a face.
- When false information is given to a witness, the *misinformation effect* may result in the witness coming to believe that the false information is true.
- As the sequence of events in a crime is told repeatedly, errors may creep in and become embraced by the witness as part of the true account.
- To reduce such errors, interviewers are advised to let the witness tell what he or she remembers without interruption and to encourage the witness to visualize the scene of the incident and the emotional state the witness was in when the incident occurred.
- Educating jurors about the pitfalls of eyewitness testimony can improve the way testimony is received and, ultimately, the accuracy of the verdict.

# WHAT OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCE JUROR JUDGMENTS?

Explain how defendants' attractiveness and similarity to jurors may bias jurors, and how faithfully jurors follow judges' instructions.

## The Defendant's Characteristics

According to the famed trial lawyer Clarence Darrow (1933), jurors seldom convict a person they like or acquit one they dislike. He argued that the main job of the trial lawyer is to make a jury like the defendant. Was he right? And is it true, as Darrow also said, that "facts regarding the crime are relatively unimportant"?

Darrow overstated the case. One classic study of more than 3,500 criminal cases and 4,000 civil cases found that four times in five the judge agreed with the jury's decision (Kalven & Zeisel, 1966). Although both may have been wrong, the evidence usually is clear enough that jurors can set aside their biases, focus on the facts, and agree on a verdict (Saks & Hastie, 1978; Visher, 1987). Facts matter.

But facts are not all that matter. As we noted in Chapter 7, communicators are more persuasive if they seem credible and attractive. Likewise, in courtrooms, high-status defendants often receive more leniency (McGillis, 1979).

Actual cases vary in so many ways—in the type of crime, in the status, age, gender, and race of the defendant—that it's difficult to isolate the factors that influence jurors. So experimenters have controlled such factors by giving mock jurors the same basic facts of a case while varying, say, the defendant's attractiveness or similarity to the jurors.

## PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS

In Chapter 11, we noted a physical attractiveness stereotype: Beautiful people seem like good people. Michael Efran (1974) wondered whether that stereotype would bias students' judgments of someone accused of cheating. He asked some of his University of Toronto students whether attractiveness should affect presumption of guilt. They answered, "No, it shouldn't." But did it? Yes. When Efran gave other students a description of the case with a photograph of either an attractive or an unattractive defendant, they judged the more attractive as less guilty and recommended that person for lesser punishment.

Other experimenters have confirmed that when the evidence is meager or ambiguous, justice is not blind to a defendant's looks (Mazzella & Feingold, 1994). O. J. Simpson's being, as one prospective juror put it, "a hunk of a fellow" probably did not hurt his case. Diane Berry and Leslie Zebrowitz-McArthur (1988) discovered this when they asked people to judge the guilt of baby-faced and mature-faced defendants. Baby-faced adults (people with large, round eyes and small chins) seemed more naive and were found guilty more often of crimes of mere negligence but less often of intentional criminal acts. If found guilty, unattractive people also strike people as more dangerous, especially if they are sexual offenders (Esses & Webster, 1988).

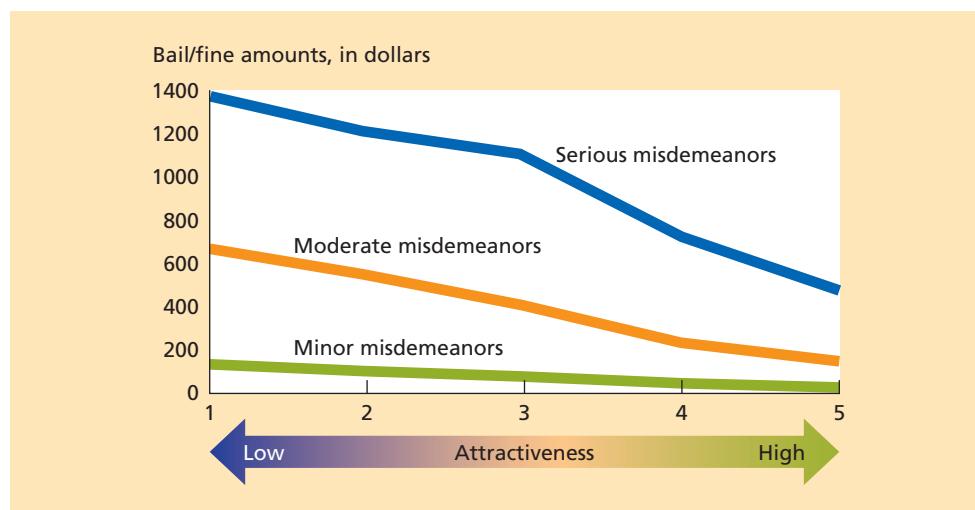
In a mammoth experiment conducted with BBC Television, Richard Wiseman (1998) showed viewers evidence about a burglary, with just one variation. Some viewers saw the defendant played by an actor who fit what a panel of 100 people judged as the stereotypical criminal—unattractive, crooked nose, small eyes. Among 64,000 people phoning in their verdict, 41 percent judged him guilty. British viewers elsewhere saw an attractive, baby-faced defendant with large blue eyes. Only 31 percent found him guilty.

### FIGURE :: 15.4

#### Attractiveness and Legal Judgments

Texas Gulf Coast judges set higher bails and fines for less attractive defendants.

*Source:* Data from Downs & Lyons (1991).



To see if these findings extend to the real world, Chris Downs and Phillip Lyons (1991) asked police escorts to rate the physical attractiveness of 1,742 defendants appearing before 40 Texas judges in misdemeanor cases that were serious (such as forgery), moderate (such as harassment), or minor (such as public intoxication). In each type of case, the judges set higher bails and fines for less attractive defendants (Figure 15.4). What explains this dramatic effect? Are unattractive people also lower in status? Are they more likely to flee or to commit another crime, as the judges perhaps suppose? Or do judges simply ignore the Roman statesman Cicero's advice: "The final good and the supreme duty of the wise man is to resist appearance."

### SIMILARITY TO THE JURORS

If Clarence Darrow was even partly right in his declaration that liking or disliking a defendant colors judgments, then other factors that influence liking may also matter. Among such influences is the principle, noted in Chapter 11, that likeness (similarity) leads to liking. When people pretend they are jurors, they are indeed more sympathetic to a defendant who shares their attitudes, religion, race, or (in cases of sexual assault) gender (Selby & others, 1977; Towson & Zanna, 1983; Ugwuegbu, 1979). Juror racial bias is usually small, but jurors do exhibit some tendency to treat racial outgroups less favorably (Mitchell & others, 2005).

Some examples:

- Paul Amato (1979) had Australian students read evidence concerning a left- or right-wing person accused of a politically motivated burglary. The students judged less guilt when the defendant's political views were similar to their own.
- Cookie Stephan and Walter Stephan (1986) had English-speaking people judge someone accused of assault. Participants were more likely to think the accused not guilty if the defendant's testimony was in English rather than translated from Spanish or Thai.
- In Israel, Moses Shayo and Asaf Zussman (2011) analyzed 1,748 small claims court cases, such as plaintiffs seeking damages for fender-bender accidents. Jewish plaintiffs received more favorable outcomes when their cases were randomly assigned to Jewish judges, and Arab plaintiffs received more favorable outcomes when assigned to Arab judges.
- When a defendant's race fits a crime stereotype—say, a White defendant charged with embezzlement or a Black defendant charged with auto theft—mock jurors offer more negative verdicts and punishments (Jones & Kaplan, 2003; Mazzella & Feingold, 1994). Whites who espouse nonprejudiced views

*There were differences within each race in perceptions of Simpson's guilt or innocence. White women whose identity focused on gender were especially likely to think Simpson guilty. African Americans for whom race was central to their identity were especially likely to think him innocent (Fairchild & Cowan, 1997; Newman & others, 1997).*

are more likely to demonstrate racial bias in trials in which race issues are not blatant (Sommers & Ellsworth, 2000, 2001).

In actual capital cases, reports Craig Haney (1991), data "show that Blacks are overpunished as defendants or undervalued as victims, or both." One analysis of 80,000 criminal convictions during 1992 and 1993 found that U.S. federal judges—only 5 percent of whom were Black—sentenced Blacks to 10 percent longer sentences than Whites when comparing cases with the same seriousness and criminal history (Associated Press, 1995). Likewise, Blacks who kill Whites are more often sentenced to death than Whites who kill Blacks (Butterfield, 2001). Compared with killing a Black person, killing a White person is also three times as likely to lead (in one U.S. study) to a death sentence (Radelet & Pierce, 2011).

In two studies, harsher sentences are also given those who look more stereotypically Black. Irene Blair and colleagues (2004) found that given similar criminal histories, Black and White inmates in Florida receive similar sentences—but that within each race, those with more "Afrocentric" facial features are given longer sentences. According to the famed trial lawyer Clarence Darrow (1933), jurors seldom convict a person they like or acquit one they dislike. (58 percent versus 24 percent for Blacks with features less Afrocentric than average.)

So it seems we are more sympathetic toward a defendant with whom we can identify. If we think we wouldn't have committed that criminal act, we may assume that someone like us is also unlikely to have done it. That helps explain why, in acquaintance-rape trials, men more often than women judge the defendant not guilty (Fischer, 1997). That also helps explain why a national survey before the O. J. Simpson trial got under way found that 77 percent of Whites, but only 45 percent of Blacks, saw the case against him as at least "fairly strong" (Smolowe, 1994).

Ideally, jurors would leave their biases outside the courtroom and begin a trial with open minds. So implies the Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: "The accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial by impartial jury." In its concern for objectivity, the judicial system is similar to science. Both scientists and jurors are supposed to sift and weigh the evidence. Both the courts and science have rules about what evidence is relevant. Both keep careful records and assume that others given the same evidence would decide similarly.



*"You look like this sketch of someone who's thinking about committing a crime."*

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study) to a death sentence (Radelet &

Pierce, 2011).

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So it seems we are more sympathetic toward a defendant with whom we can identify. If we think we wouldn't have committed that criminal act, we may assume that someone like us is also unlikely to have done it. That helps explain why, in acquaintance-rape



*"I'm going to have to recuse myself."*

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When the evidence is clear and individuals focus on it (as when they reread and debate the meaning of testimony), their biases are indeed minimal (Kaplan & Schersching, 1980; Lieberman, 2011). The quality of the evidence matters more than the prejudices of the individual jurors.

## The Judge's Instructions

All of us can recall courtroom dramas in which an attorney exclaimed, "Your honor, I object!" whereupon the judge sustains the objection and instructs the jury to ignore the other attorney's suggestive question or the witness's remark. How effective are such instructions?

Nearly all states in the United States now have "rape shield" statutes that prohibit or limit testimony concerning the victim's prior sexual activity. Such testimony, though irrelevant to the case at hand, tends to make jurors more sympathetic to the accused rapist's claim that the woman consented to sex (Borgida, 1981; Cann & others, 1979). If such reliable, illegal, or prejudicial testimony is nevertheless slipped in by the defense or blurted out by a witness, will jurors follow a judge's instruction to ignore it? And is it enough for the judge to remind jurors, "The issue is not whether you like or dislike the defendant but whether the defendant committed the offense"?

Very possibly not. Several experimenters report that jurors show concern for due process (Fleming & others, 1999) but that they find it difficult to ignore inadmissible evidence, such as the defendant's previous convictions. In one study, Stanley Sue, Ronald Smith, and Cathy Caldwell (1973) gave University of Washington students a description of a grocery store robbery-murder and a summary of the prosecution's case and the defense's case. When the prosecution's case was weak, no one judged the defendant guilty. When a tape recording of an incriminating phone call made by the defendant was added to the weak case, approximately one-third judged the person guilty. The judge's instructions that the tape was not legal evidence and should be ignored did nothing to erase the effect of the damaging testimony.

Indeed, a judge's order to ignore testimony—"It must play no role in your consideration of the case. You have no choice but to disregard it"—can even boomerang, adding to the testimony's impact (Wolf & Montgomery, 1972). Perhaps such statements create **reactance** in the jurors. Or perhaps they sensitize jurors to the

### reactance

A motive to protect or restore one's sense of freedom. Reactance arises when someone threatens our freedom of action.



It is not easy for jurors to erase inadmissible testimony from memory.

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*"The jury will disregard the witness's last remarks."*

inadmissible testimony, as when I warn you not to notice your nose as you finish this sentence. Judges can more easily strike inadmissible testimony from the court records than from the jurors' minds. As trial lawyers sometimes say, "You can't unring a bell."

This is especially so with emotional information (Edwards & Bryan, 1997). When jurors are told vividly about a defendant's record ("hacking up a woman"), a judge's instructions to ignore are more likely to boomerang than when the inadmissible information is less emotional ("assault with a deadly weapon"). Even if jurors later claim to have ignored the inadmissible information, it may alter how they construe other information.

Pretrial publicity also is difficult for jurors to ignore, especially in studies with real jurors and serious crimes (Steblay & others, 1999). In one large-scale experiment, Geoffrey Kramer and colleagues (1990) exposed nearly 800 mock jurors (most from actual jury rolls) to incriminating news reports about the past convictions of a man accused of robbing a supermarket. After the jurors viewed a videotaped reenactment of the trial, they either did or did not hear the judge's instructions to disregard the pretrial publicity. The effect of the judicial admonition? Nil.

People whose opinions are biased by pretrial publicity typically deny its effect on them, and that denial makes it difficult to eliminate biased jurors (Moran & Cutler, 1991). In experiments, even getting mock jurors to pledge their impartiality and their willingness to disregard prior information has not eliminated the pretrial publicity effect (Dexter & others, 1992). O. J. Simpson's attorneys, it seems, had reason to worry about the enormous pretrial publicity. And the trial judge had reason to order jurors not to view pertinent media publicity and to isolate them during the trial.

Judges can hope, with some support from available research, that during deliberation, jurors who bring up inadmissible evidence will be chastised for doing so, thus limiting its influence on jury verdicts (London & Nunez, 2000). To minimize the effects of inadmissible testimony, judges also can forewarn jurors that certain types of evidence, such as a rape victim's sexual history, are irrelevant. Once jurors form impressions based on such evidence, a judge's admonitions have much less effect (Borgida & White, 1980; Kassin & Wrightsman, 1979). Thus, reports Vicki Smith (1991), a pretrial training session pays dividends. Teaching jurors legal procedures and standards of proof improves their understanding of the trial procedure and their willingness to withhold judgment until after they have heard all the trial information.

Better yet, judges could cut inadmissible testimony before the jurors hear it—by videotaping testimonies and removing the inadmissible parts. Live and videotaped testimonies have much the same impact as do live and videotaped lineups



Will jurors clear their minds of pretrial publicity that might bias their evaluation of evidence? Although jurors will deny being biased, experiments have shown otherwise.

(Cutler & others, 1989; Miller & Fontes, 1979). Perhaps courtrooms of the future will have life-size television monitors. Videotaping not only enables the judge to edit out inadmissible testimony but also speeds up the trial and allows witnesses to talk about crucial events before memories fade.

## Additional Factors

We have considered three courtroom factors—eyewitness testimony, the defendant's characteristics, and the judge's instructions. Researchers also study the influence of other factors. For example, at Michigan State University, Norbert Kerr and colleagues (Kerr, 1978, 1981; Kerr & others, 1982) have asked: Does a severe potential punishment (for example, a death penalty) make jurors less willing to convict—and was it therefore strategic for the Los Angeles prosecutors not to seek the death penalty for O. J. Simpson? Do experienced jurors' judgments differ from those of novice jurors? Are defendants judged more harshly when the *victim* is attractive or has suffered greatly? Kerr's research suggests that the answer to all three questions is yes.

Experiments by Mark Alicke and Teresa Davis (1989) and by Michael Enzle and Wendy Hawkins (1992) confirm that jurors' judgments of blame and punishment can be affected by the victim's characteristics—even when the defendant is unaware of such. Consider the 1984 case of the "subway vigilante" Bernard Goetz. When four teens approached Goetz for \$5 on a New York subway, the frightened Goetz pulled out a loaded gun and shot each of them, leaving one partly paralyzed. When Goetz was charged with attempted homicide, there was an outcry of public support for him based partly on the disclosure that the youths had extensive criminal records and that three of them were carrying concealed, sharpened screwdrivers. Although Goetz didn't know any of this, he was acquitted of the attempted homicide charge and convicted only of illegal firearm possession.

## SUMMING UP: What Other Factors Influence Juror Judgments?

- The facts of a case are usually compelling enough that jurors can lay aside their biases and render a fair judgment. When the evidence is ambiguous, however, jurors are more likely to interpret it with their preconceived biases and to feel sympathetic to a defendant who is attractive or similar to themselves.
- When jurors are exposed to damaging pretrial publicity or to inadmissible evidence, will they follow a judge's instruction to ignore it? In simulated trials, the judge's orders were sometimes followed, but often, especially when the judge's admonition came *after* an impression was made, they were not.
- Researchers have also explored the influence of other factors, such as the severity of the potential sentence and various characteristics of the victim.

## WHAT INFLUENCES THE INDIVIDUAL JUROR?

Describe how verdicts depend on how the individual jurors process information.

Courtroom influences on "the average juror" are worth pondering. But no juror is the average juror; each carries into the courthouse individual attitudes and personalities. And when they deliberate, jurors influence one another. So two key questions are (1) How are verdicts influenced by individual jurors' dispositions? and (2) How are verdicts influenced by jurors' group deliberation?

## Juror Comprehension

To gain insight into juror comprehension, Nancy Pennington and Reid Hastie (1993) had mock jurors, sampled from courthouse jury pools, view reenactments of actual trials. In making their decisions, the jurors first constructed a story that made sense of all the evidence. After observing one murder trial, for example, some jurors concluded that a quarrel had made the defendant angry, triggering him to get a knife, search for the victim, and stab him to death. Others surmised that the frightened defendant picked up a knife that he used to defend himself when he later encountered the victim. When jurors begin deliberating, they often discover that others have constructed different stories. This implies—and research confirms—that jurors are best persuaded when attorneys present evidence in narrative fashion—a story. In felony cases, where the national conviction rate is 80 percent, the prosecution case more often than the defense case follows a narrative structure.

### UNDERSTANDING INSTRUCTIONS

Next, the jurors must grasp the judge's instructions concerning the available verdict categories. For those instructions to be effective, jurors must first understand them. Study after study has found that many people do not understand the standard legalese of judicial instructions. Depending on the type of case, a jury may be told that the standard of proof is a "preponderance of the evidence," "clear and convincing evidence," or "beyond a reasonable doubt." Such statements may have one meaning for the legal community and different meanings in the minds of jurors (Kagehiro, 1990; Wright & Hall, 2007).

A judge may also remind jurors to avoid premature conclusions as they weigh each new item of presented evidence. But research with both college students and mock jurors chosen from actual prospective jury pools shows that warm-blooded human beings do form premature opinions, and those leanings do influence how they interpret new information (Carlson & Russo, 2001).

After observing actual cases and later interviewing the jurors, Stephen Adler (1994) found "lots of sincere, serious people who—for a variety of reasons—were missing key points, focusing on irrelevant issues, succumbing to barely recognized prejudices, failing to see through the cheapest appeals to sympathy or hate, and generally botching the job."

In 1990, Imelda Marcos, widow of Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos, was tried for transferring hundreds of millions of dollars of Philippine money into American banks for her own use. During jury selection, her defense lawyers eliminated anyone who was aware of her role in her husband's dictatorship. Ill-equipped to follow the complex money transactions, those who made it onto the jury fell back on sympathy for Mrs. Marcos, a former beauty queen who appeared in court dressed in black, clutching her rosaries, and wiping away tears (Adler, 1994).

### UNDERSTANDING STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Tests on blood found at the scene where O. J. Simpson's ex-wife and her fellow victim were murdered revealed bloodstains that matched Simpson's mix of blood proteins but not the victims'. Learning that only 1 in 200 people share this blood type, some people assumed the chances were 99.5 percent that Simpson was the culprit. But 1 in 200 means the culprit could be any one of at least 40,000 people in the Los Angeles area, noted the defense. Faced with such arguments, three in five people will discount the relevance of the blood-type evidence, report William Thompson and Edward Schumann (1987). Actually, both attorneys were wrong. The evidence is relevant because few of the other 40,000 people can reasonably be considered suspects. But the 99.5 percent argument ignores the fact that the defendant was charged partly because his blood type matched.

Faced with an incomprehensibly complex accounting of Imelda Marcos's alleged thefts of public money, jurors fell back on their intuitive assessments of the seemingly devout and sincere woman and found her not guilty.

*Alan Dershowitz, an O. J. Simpson defense attorney, argued to the media that only 1 in 1,000 men who abuse their wives later murder them. More relevant, replied critics, is the probability that a husband is guilty given that (a) he abused his wife, and (b) his wife was murdered. From available data, Jon Merz and Jonathan Caulkins (1995) calculated that probability as .81.*



so for viewers of the television show *CSI*, many of whom—in Canadian, Australian, and American studies—have unreasonable expectations of the quantity and quality of physical evidence (Holmgren & Fordham, 2011; Houck, 2006; Winter & York, 2007).

### INCREASING JURORS' UNDERSTANDING

Understanding how jurors misconstrue judicial instructions and statistical information is a first step toward better decisions. A next step might be giving jurors access to transcripts rather than forcing them to rely on their memories in processing complex information (Bourgeois & others, 1993). A further step would be devising and testing clearer, more effective ways to present information—a task on which several social psychologists have worked. For example, when a judge quantifies the required standard of proof (as, say, 51, 71, or 91 percent certainty), jurors understand and respond appropriately (Kagehiro, 1990).

And surely there must be a simpler way to tell jurors, as required by the Illinois Death Penalty Act, not to impose the death sentence in murder cases when there are justifying circumstances: “If you do not unanimously find from your consideration of all the evidence that there are no mitigating factors sufficient to preclude imposition of a death sentence, then you should sign the verdict requiring the court to impose a sentence other than death” (Diamond, 1993). When jurors are given instructions rewritten into simple language, they are less susceptible to the judge’s biases (Halverson & others, 1997; Smith & Haney, 2011).

Phoebe Ellsworth and Robert Mauro (1998) sum up the dismal conclusions of jury researchers: “Legal instructions are typically delivered in a manner likely to frustrate the most conscientious attempts at understanding. . . . The language is technical and . . . no attempt is made either to assess jurors’ mistaken preconceptions about the law or to provide any kind of useful education.”

### Jury Selection

Given the variations among individual jurors, can trial lawyers use the jury selection process to stack juries in their favor? Legal folklore suggests that sometimes they can. One president of the Association of Trial Lawyers of America boldly proclaimed, “Trial attorneys are acutely attuned to the nuances of human

When a more precise DNA match with Simpson’s blood was found, prosecutors contended that the chance of such a match was 1 in 170 million, and the defense showed that experts disagreed about the reliability of DNA testing. For one thing, defendants for whom there is an incriminating DNA match seem less likely to be guilty when they are from a big city, where someone else might have the matching DNA (Koehler & Maachi, 2004).

Naked numbers, it seems, must be supported by a convincing story. Thus, reports Wells, one Toronto mother lost a paternity suit seeking child support from her child’s alleged father despite a blood test showing a 99.8 percent probability that the man was her child’s father. She lost after the man took the stand and persuasively denied the allegation. But a persuasive story without forensic evidence may also seem unconvincing. Some psychologists believe this is especially

behavior, which enables them to detect the minutest traces of bias or inability to reach an appropriate decision" (Bigam, 1977). In actuality, attorneys, like all of us, are vulnerable to overconfidence. For example, they overestimate the likelihood of their meeting their goals (such as acquittal) in trial cases, and likely also of their ability to read jurors (Goodman-Delahunty & others, 2010).

Mindful that people's assessments of others are error-prone, social psychologists doubt that attorneys come equipped with fine-tuned social Geiger counters. In some 6,000 American trials a year, consultants—some of them social scientists—help lawyers pick juries and plot strategy (Gavzer, 1997; Hutson, 2007; Miller, 2001). In several celebrated trials, survey researchers have used "scientific jury selection" to help attorneys weed out those likely to be unsympathetic. One famous trial involved two of President Nixon's former cabinet members, conservatives John Mitchell and Maurice Stans. A survey revealed that from the defense's viewpoint, the worst possible juror was "a liberal, Jewish, Democrat who reads the *New York Times* or the *Post*, listens to Walter Cronkite, is interested in political affairs, and is well-informed about Watergate" (Zeisel & Diamond, 1976). Of the first nine trials, relying on "scientific" selection methods, the defense won seven (Hans & Vidmar, 1981; Wrightsman, 1978). (However, we can't know how many of those nine would have been won anyway, without scientific juror selection.)

Many trial attorneys have now used scientific jury selection to identify questions they can use to exclude those biased against their clients, and most have reported satisfaction with the results (Gayoso & others, 1991; Moran & others, 1994). Most jurors, when asked by a judge to "raise your hand if you've read anything about this case that would prejudice you," don't directly acknowledge their preconceptions. But if, for example, the judge allows an attorney to check prospective jurors' attitudes toward drugs, the attorney can often guess their verdicts in a drug-trafficking case (Moran & others, 1990). Likewise, people who acknowledge they "don't put much faith in the testimony of psychiatrists" are less likely to accept an insanity defense (Cutler & others, 1992).

Individuals react differently to specific case features. Racial prejudice becomes relevant in racially charged cases; gender seems linked with verdicts only in rape and battered-woman cases; belief in personal responsibility versus corporate responsibility relates to personal injury awards in suits against businesses (Ellsworth & Mauro, 1998).

Despite the excitement—and ethical concern—about scientific jury selection, experiments reveal that attitudes and personal characteristics are weak verdict predictors (Lieberman, 2011). There are "no magic questions to be asked of prospective jurors," cautioned Steven Penrod and Brian Cutler (1987). Researchers Michael Saks and Reid Hastie (1978) agreed: "The studies are unanimous in showing that evidence is a substantially more potent determinant of jurors' verdicts than the individual characteristics of jurors" (p. 68).

Ditto for judges. At her Senate confirmation hearing, the first Hispanic U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor, assured her skeptical questioners that she would follow the law without influence from her background and identity. But complete neutrality is an ideal that even judges seldom attain (as illustrated by the 5-to-4 Supreme Court vote that decided the contested 2000 U.S. presidential election for Republican George W. Bush, with conservative and liberal judges voting in opposition). Simple weariness can also color judges' judgments. In one study of 1,112 Israeli parole board hearings, judges granted parole to 65 percent of the prisoners when their cases were decided right after a lunch or snack break, with favorable decisions declining thereafter with time (Figure 15.5).



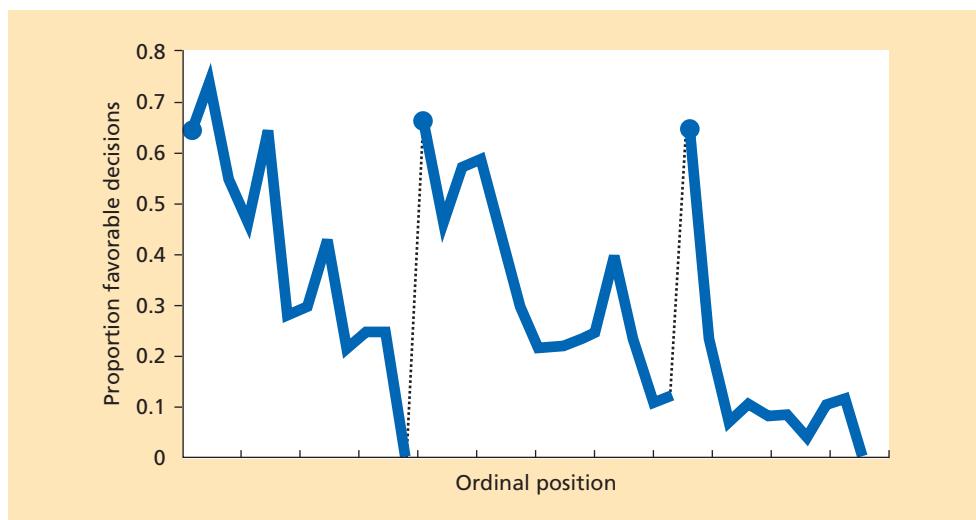
O. J. Simpson attorneys in the criminal trial also used a jury selection consultant—and won (Lafferty, 1994). Meeting the press after the not-guilty verdict, Simpson's attorney immediately thanked the jury selection consultant.

"BEWARE OF THE LUTHER-  
ANS, ESPECIALLY THE  
SCANDINAVIANS; THEY ARE  
ALMOST ALWAYS SURE TO  
CONVICT."

—CLARENCE DARROW, "HOW  
TO PICK A JURY," 1936

**FIGURE :: 15.5**

Hungry & harsh. After a food break (the dotted lines), Israeli judges became more likely, for a time, to approve prisoners' requests for parole (Danziger & others, 2011).

**"Death-Qualified" Jurors**

A *close* case can, however, be decided by who is selected for the jury. In criminal cases, people who do not oppose the death penalty—and who therefore are eligible to serve when a death sentence is possible—are more prone to favor the prosecution, to feel that courts coddle criminals, and to oppose protecting the constitutional rights of defendants (Bersoff, 1987). Simply put, these "death-qualified" jurors are more concerned with crime control and less concerned with due process of law. When a court dismisses potential jurors who have moral scruples against the death penalty—something O. J. Simpson's prosecutors chose not to do—it constructs a jury that is more likely to vote guilty.

On this issue, social scientists are in "virtual unanimity . . . about the biasing effects of death qualification," reports Craig Haney (1993). The research record is "unified," reports Phoebe Ellsworth (1985, p. 46): "Defendants in capital-punishment cases do assume the extra handicap of juries predisposed to find them guilty." What is more, conviction-prone jurors tend also to be more authoritarian—more rigid, punitive, closed to mitigating circumstances, and contemptuous of those of lower status (Gerbasi & others, 1977; Luginbuhl & Middendorf, 1988; Moran & Comfort, 1982, 1986; Werner & others, 1982).

Because the legal system operates on tradition and precedent, such research findings only slowly alter judicial practice. In 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court, in a split decision, overturned a lower court ruling that death-qualified jurors are indeed a biased sample. Ellsworth (1989) believes the Court in this case disregarded the compelling and consistent evidence partly because of its "ideological commitment to capital punishment" and partly because of the havoc that would result if the convictions of thousands of people on death row had to be reconsidered. The solution, should the Court ever wish to adopt it for future cases, is to convene separate juries to (a) decide guilt in capital murder cases, and, given a guilty verdict, to (b) hear additional evidence on factors motivating the murder and to decide between death or imprisonment.

But a deeper issue is at stake here: whether the death penalty itself falls under the U.S. Constitution's ban on "cruel and unusual punishment." As readers in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Western Europe, and most of South America know, their countries prohibit capital punishment. There, as in the United States, public attitudes tend to support the prevailing practice (Costanzo, 1997). But American pro-capital punishment attitudes seem to be softening. After reaching 80 percent in 1994, support fell to 61 percent in 2011 (Gallup, 2011).

In wrestling with the punishment, U.S. courts have considered whether courts inflict the penalty arbitrarily, whether they apply it with racial bias, and whether legal killing

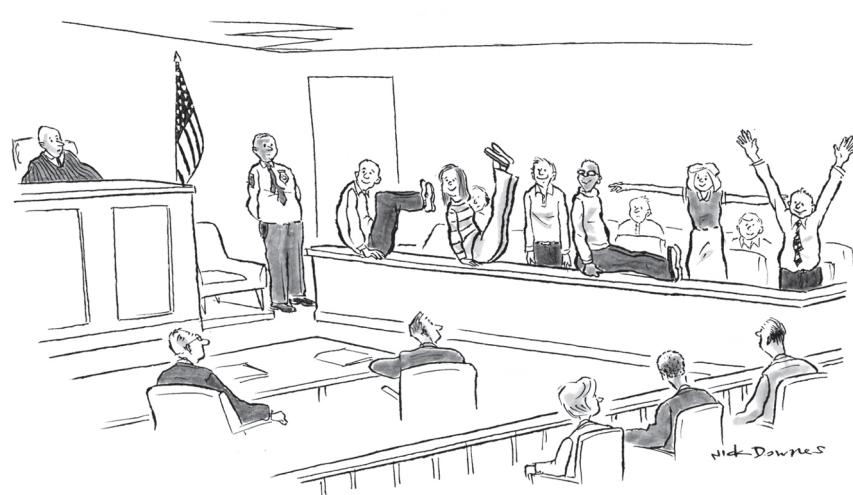
"THE KIND OF JUROR WHO WOULD BE UNPERTURBED BY THE PROSPECT OF SENDING A MAN TO HIS DEATH . . . IS THE KIND OF JUROR WHO WOULD TOO READILY IGNORE THE PRESUMPTION OF THE DEFENDANT'S INNOCENCE, ACCEPT THE PROSECUTION'S VERSION OF THE FACTS, AND RETURN A VERDICT OF GUILTY."

—WITHERSPOON V. ILLINOIS,

1968

deters illegal killing. The social science answers to these questions are clear, note social psychologists Mark Costanzo (1997) and Craig Haney and Deana Logan (1994). Consider the deterrence issue. States with a death penalty do not have lower homicide rates. Homicide rates have not dropped when states have initiated the death penalty, and they have not risen when states have abolished it. When committing a crime of passion, people don't pause to calculate the consequences (which include life in prison without parole as another potent deterrent). Moreover, the death penalty is applied inconsistently (in Texas 40 times as often as in New York). And it is applied more often with poor defendants, who often receive a weak defense (*Economist*, 2000). Nevertheless, the Supreme Court has determined that admitting only death-qualified jurors provides a representative jury of one's peers and that "the death penalty undoubtedly is a significant deterrent."

Humanitarian considerations aside, say the appalled social scientists, what is the rationale for clinging to cherished assumptions and intuitions in the face of contradictory evidence? Why not put our cultural ideas to the test? If they find support, so much the better for them. If they crash against a wall of contradictory evidence, so much the worse for them. Such are the ideals of critical thinking that fuel both psychological science and civil democracy.



**Guilty.** Jury selection criteria may yield conviction-prone jurors.

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Average homicide rate per 100,000

- for entire United States: 9
- for death-penalty states: 9.3

(Source: Scientific American, February 2001)

## SUMMING UP: What Influences the Individual Juror?

- Social psychologists are interested in not only the interactions among witnesses, judges, and juries but also what happens within and between individual jurors. One major concern is jurors' ability to comprehend evidence, especially when it involves statistics indicating the probability that a given person committed the crime.
- Trial lawyers often use jury consultants to help them select jurors most sympathetic to their case.

People who are aware of pretrial publicity, for example, may be disqualified from serving.

- In cases in which the death penalty may be applied, lawyers can disqualify any prospective juror who opposes the death penalty on principle. Social psychology research argues that this in itself produces a biased jury, but the Supreme Court has ruled otherwise.

## HOW DO GROUP INFLUENCES AFFECT JURIES?

Explain how individual jurors' prejudgments coalesce into a group decision, and what can influence the outcome.

Imagine a jury that has just finished a trial and has entered the jury room to begin its deliberations. Researchers Harry Kalven and Hans Zeisel (1966) reported that

chances are approximately two in three that the jurors will *not* agree initially on a verdict. Yet, after discussion, 95 percent emerge with a consensus. Group influence has occurred.

In the United States, 300,000 times a year small groups sampled from the 3 million people called for jury duty convene to seek a group decision (Kagehiro, 1990). Are they and juries elsewhere subject to the social influences that mold other decision groups—to patterns of majority and minority influence? To group polarization? To groupthink? Let's start with a simple question: If we knew the jurors' initial leanings, could we predict their verdict?

The law prohibits observing actual juries. So researchers simulate the jury process. They present a case to mock juries and have them deliberate as a real jury would. In a series of such studies at the University of Illinois, James Davis, Robert Holt, Norbert Kerr, and Garold Stasser tested various mathematical schemes for predicting group decisions, including decisions by mock juries (Davis & others, 1975, 1977, 1989; Kerr & others, 1976). Will some mathematical combination of initial decisions predict the final group decision? Davis and colleagues found that the scheme that predicts best varies with the nature of the case. But in several experiments, a "two-thirds-majority" scheme fared best: The group verdict was usually the alternative favored by at least two-thirds of the jurors at the outset. Without such a majority, a hung jury was likely.

Likewise, in Kalven and Zeisel's survey of juries, 9 in 10 reached the verdict favored by the majority on the first ballot. Although you or I might fantasize about someday being the courageous lone juror who sways the majority, it seldom happens.

## Minority Influence

Seldom, yet sometimes, what was initially a minority opinion prevails. A typical 12-person jury is like a typical small college class: The three quietest people rarely talk and the three most vocal people contribute more than half the talking (Hastie & others, 1983). In the Mitchell-Stans trial, the four jurors who favored acquittal persisted, were vocal, and eventually prevailed. From the research on minority influence, we know that jurors in the minority will be most persuasive when they are consistent, persistent, and self-confident. This is especially so if they can begin to trigger some defections from the majority (Gordijn & others, 2002; Kerr, 1981b).

## Group Polarization

Jury deliberation shifts people's opinions in other intriguing ways as well. In experiments, deliberation often magnifies initial sentiments. For example, Robert Bray and Audrey Noble (1978) had University of Kentucky students listen to a 30-minute tape of a murder trial. Then, assuming the defendant was found guilty, they recommended a prison sentence. Groups of high authoritarians initially recommended strong punishments (56 years) and after deliberation were even more punitive (68 years). The low-authoritarian groups were initially more lenient (38 years) and after deliberation became more so (29 years). By contrast, group diversity often moderates judgments. Compared with Whites who judge Black defendants on all-White mock juries, those serving on racially mixed mock juries enter deliberation expressing more leniency and during the deliberation exhibit openness to a wider range of information (Sommers, 2006).

Confirmation of group polarization in juries comes from an ambitious study in which Reid Hastie, Steven Penrod, and Nancy Pennington (1983) put together 69 twelve-person juries from Massachusetts citizens on jury duty. Each jury was shown a reenactment of an actual murder case, with roles played by an experienced judge and actual attorneys. Then they were given unlimited time to deliberate the

# research CLOSE-UP

## Group Polarization in a Natural Court Setting

In simulated juries, deliberation often amplifies jurors' individual inclinations. Does such group polarization occur in actual courts? Cass Sunstein, David Schkade, and Lisa Ellman (2004) show us how researchers can harvest data from natural settings when exploring social psychological phenomena. Their data were 14,874 votes by judges on 4,958 three-judge U.S. circuit court panels. (On these federal "Courts of Appeals," an appeal is almost always heard by three of the court's judges.)

Sunstein and his colleagues first asked whether a judge's votes tended to reflect the ideology of the Republican or Democratic president who appointed them. Indeed, when voting on ideologically tinged cases involving affirmative action, environmental regulation, campaign finance, and abortion, Democratic-appointed judges more often supported the liberal position than did Republican-appointed judges. No surprise there. That's what presidents and their party members assume when seeking congressional approval of their kindred-spirited judicial nominees.

Would such tendencies be amplified when the panel had three judges appointed by the same party? Would three Republican-appointed judges be even more often conservative than the average Republican appointee? And would three Democratic-appointed judges be more

often liberal than the average Democrat appointee? Or would judges vote their convictions uninfluenced by their fellow panelists? Table 15.2 presents their findings.

Note that when three appointees from the same party formed a panel (RRR or DDD), they became more likely to vote their party's ideological preference than did the average individual judge. The polarization exhibited by like-minded threesomes was, the Sunstein team reported, "confirmed in many areas, including affirmative action, campaign finance, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, piercing the corporate veil, disability discrimination, race discrimination, and review of environmental regulations" (although not in the politically volatile cases of abortion and capital punishment, where judges voted their well-formed convictions).

Sunstein and colleagues offer an example: If all three judges "believe that an affirmative action program is unconstitutional, and no other judge is available to argue on its behalf, then the exchange of arguments in the room will suggest that the program is genuinely unconstitutional." This is group polarization in action, they conclude—an example of "one of the most striking findings in modern social science: Groups of like-minded people tend to go to extremes."

**TABLE :: 15.2 Proportion of "Liberal" Voting by Individual Judges and by Three-Judge Panels**

	<b>Individual Judges' Votes</b>		<b>Individual Judges' Votes, by Panel Composition</b>			
	<b>Party</b>					
<b>Examples of Case Type</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>RRR</b>	<b>RRD</b>	<b>RDD</b>	<b>DDD</b>
Campaign finance	.28	.46	.23	.30	.35	.80
Affirmative action	.48	.74	.37	.50	.83	.85
Environmental	.46	.64	.27	.55	.62	.72
Sex discrimination	.35	.51	.31	.38	.49	.75
<b>Average across 13 case types</b>	<b>.38</b>	<b>.51</b>	<b>.34</b>	<b>.39</b>	<b>.50</b>	<b>.61</b>

D, Democratic appointee; R, Republican appointee.

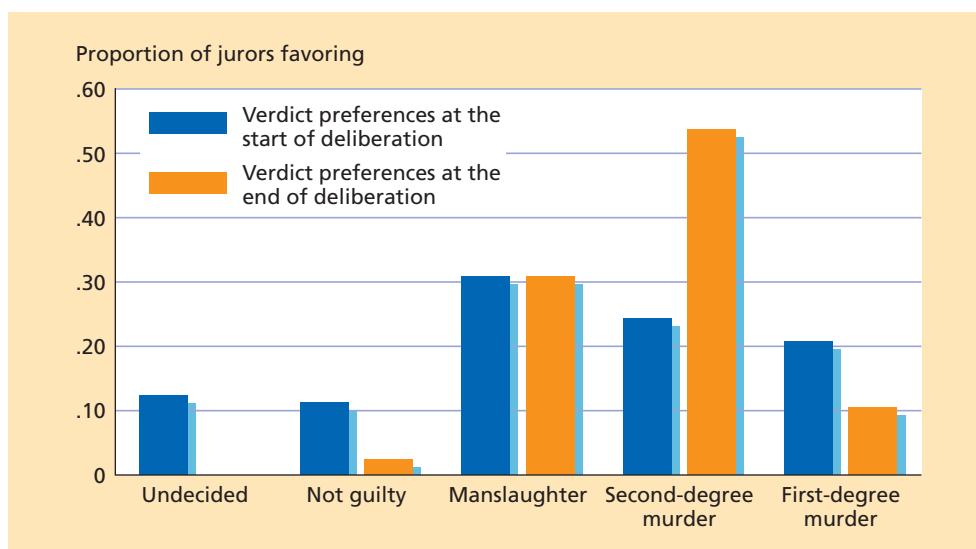
case in a jury room. As Figure 15.6 shows, the evidence was incriminating: Four out of five jurors voted guilty before deliberation but felt unsure enough that a weak verdict of manslaughter was their most popular preference. After deliberation, nearly all agreed the accused was guilty, and most now preferred a stronger verdict—second-degree murder. Through deliberation, their initial leanings had grown stronger.

### FIGURE :: 15.6

#### Group Polarization in Juries

In highly realistic simulations of a murder trial, 828 Massachusetts jurors stated their initial verdict preferences, then deliberated the case for periods ranging from 3 hours to 5 days. Deliberation strengthened initial tendencies that favored the prosecution.

*Source:* From Hastie & others (1983).



### Leniency

In many experiments, one other curious effect of deliberation has surfaced: Especially when the evidence is not highly incriminating, deliberating jurors often become more lenient (MacCoun & Kerr, 1988). This qualifies the “two-thirds-majority-rules” finding, for if even a bare majority initially favors *acquittal*, it usually will prevail (Stasser & others, 1981). Moreover, a minority that favors acquittal stands a better chance of prevailing than one that favors conviction (Tindale & others, 1990).

Once again, a survey of actual juries confirms the laboratory results. Kalven and Zeisel (1966) report that in those cases in which the majority does not prevail, it usually shifts to acquittal (as in the Mitchell-Stans trial). When a judge disagrees with the jury’s decision, it is usually because the jury acquits someone the judge would have convicted.

Might “informational influence” (stemming from others’ persuasive arguments) account for the increased leniency? The “innocent-unless-proved-guilty” and “proof-beyond-a-reasonable-doubt” rules put the burden of proof on those who favor conviction. Perhaps this makes evidence of the defendant’s innocence more persuasive. Or perhaps “normative influence” creates the leniency effect, as jurors who view themselves as fair-minded confront other jurors who are even more concerned with protecting a possibly innocent defendant.

“IT IS BETTER THAT TEN GUILTY PERSONS ESCAPE THAN ONE INNOCENT SUFFER.”

—WILLIAM BLACKSTONE, 1769

### Are Twelve Heads Better Than One?

In Chapter 8, we saw that on thought problems where there is an objective right answer, group judgments surpass those by most individuals. Does the same hold true in juries? When deliberating, jurors exert normative pressure by trying to shift others’ judgments by the sheer weight of their own. But they also share information, thus enlarging one another’s understanding. So, does informational influence produce superior collective judgment?

The evidence, though meager, is encouraging. Groups recall information from a trial better than do their individual members (Vollrath & others, 1989). Deliberation also tends to cancel out certain biases and draws jurors’ attention away from their own prejudgments and to the evidence. Twelve heads can be, it seems, better than one.

## Are Six Heads as Good as Twelve?

In keeping with their British heritage, juries in the United States and Canada have traditionally been composed of 12 people whose task is to reach consensus—a unanimous verdict. However, in several cases appealed during the early 1970s, the U.S. Supreme Court modified that requirement. It declared that in civil cases and state criminal cases not potentially involving a death penalty, courts could use 6-person juries. Moreover, the Court affirmed a state's right to allow less than unanimous verdicts, even upholding one Louisiana conviction based on a 9-to-3 vote (Tanke & Tanke, 1979). There is no reason to suppose, argued the Court, that smaller juries, or juries not required to reach consensus, will deliberate or decide differently from the traditional jury.

The Court's assumptions triggered an avalanche of criticism from both legal scholars and social psychologists (Saks, 1974, 1996). Some criticisms were matters of simple statistics. For example, if 10 percent of a community's total jury pool is Black, then 72 percent of 12-member juries but only 47 percent of 6-member juries may be expected to have at least one Black person. So smaller juries may be less likely to include a community's diversity.

And if, in a given case, one-sixth of the jurors initially favor acquittal, that would be a single individual in a 6-member jury and 2 people in a 12-member jury. The Court assumed that, psychologically, the two situations would be identical. But as you may recall from our discussion of conformity, resisting group pressure is far more difficult for a minority of one than for a minority of two. Psychologically speaking, a jury split 10 to 2 is not equivalent to a jury split 5 to 1. Not surprisingly, then, 12-person juries are twice as likely as 6-person juries to have hung verdicts (Ellsworth & Mauro, 1998; Saks & Marti, 1997).

Jury researcher Michael Saks (1998) sums up the research findings: "Larger juries are more likely than smaller juries to contain members of minority groups, more accurately recall trial testimony, give more time to deliberation, hang more often, and appear more likely to reach 'correct' verdicts."

In 1978, after some of these studies were reported, the Supreme Court rejected Georgia's 5-member juries (although it still retains the 6-member jury). Announcing the Court's decision, Justice Harry Blackmun drew upon both the logical and the experimental data to argue that 5-person juries would be less representative, less reliable, and less accurate (Grofman, 1980). Ironically, many of these data actually involved comparisons of 6- versus 12-member juries and thus also argued against the 6-member jury. But having made and defended a public commitment to the 6-member jury, the Court was not convinced that the same arguments applied (Tanke & Tanke, 1979).

## From Lab to Life: Simulated and Real Juries

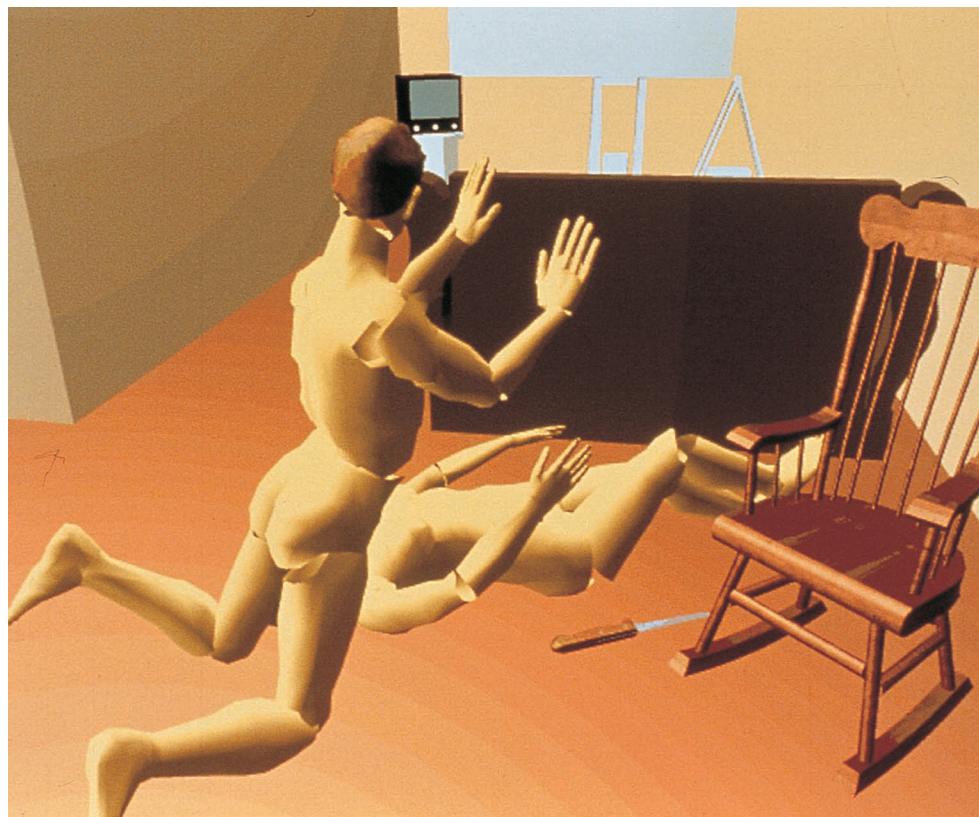
Perhaps while reading this chapter, you have wondered what some critics (Tapp, 1980; Vidmar, 1979) have wondered: Isn't there an enormous gulf between college students discussing a hypothetical case and real jurors deliberating a real person's fate? Indeed there is. It is one thing to ponder a pretend decision, given minimal information, and quite another to agonize over the complexities and profound consequences of an actual case. So Reid Hastie, Martin Kaplan, James Davis, Eugene Borgida, and others have asked their participants, who sometimes are drawn from actual juror pools, to view enactments of actual trials. The enactments are so realistic that sometimes participants forget the trial they are watching on television is staged (Thompson & others, 1981).

Student mock jurors become engaged, too. "As I eavesdropped on the mock juries," recalls researcher Norbert Kerr (1999), "I became fascinated by the jurors' insightful arguments, their mix of amazing recollections and memory fabrications,

*Hung juries are rarely a problem. Among 59,511 U.S. federal court criminal trials during one 13-year period, 2.5 percent ended in a hung jury, as did a mere 0.6 percent of 67,992 federal civil trials (Saks, 1998).*

"WE HAVE CONSIDERED  
[THE SOCIAL SCIENCE  
STUDIES] CAREFULLY  
BECAUSE THEY PROVIDE  
THE ONLY BASIS, BESIDES  
JUDICIAL HUNCH, FOR A  
DECISION ABOUT WHETHER  
SMALLER AND SMALLER  
JURIES WILL BE ABLE TO  
FULFILL THE PURPOSES AND  
FUNCTIONS OF THE SIXTH  
AMENDMENT."

—JUSTICE HARRY BLACKMUN,  
BALLEW V. GEORGIA, 1978



Attorneys are using new technology to present crime stories in ways jurors can easily grasp, as in this computer simulation of a homicide generated on the basis of forensic evidence.

their prejudices, their attempts to persuade or coerce, and their occasional courage in standing alone. Here brought to life before me were so many of the psychological processes I had been studying! Although our student jurors understood they were only simulating a real trial, they really cared about reaching a fair verdict."

The U.S. Supreme Court (1986) debated the usefulness of jury research in its decision regarding the use of death-qualified jurors in capital punishment cases. Defendants have a constitutional "right to a fair trial and an impartial jury whose composition is not biased toward the prosecution." The dissenting judges argued that this right is violated when jurors include only those who accept the death penalty. Their argument, they said, was based chiefly on "the essential unanimity of the results obtained by researchers using diverse subjects and varied methodologies." The majority of the judges, however, declared their "serious doubts about the value of these studies in predicting the behavior of actual jurors." The dissenting judges replied that the courts have not allowed experiments with actual juries; thus, "defendants claiming prejudice from death qualification should not be denied recourse to the only available means of proving their case."

Researchers also defend the laboratory simulations by noting that the laboratory offers a practical, inexpensive method of studying important issues under controlled conditions (Dillehay & Nietzel, 1980; Kerr & Bray, 2005). As researchers have begun testing them in more realistic situations, findings from the laboratory studies have often held up quite well. No one contends that the simplified world of the jury experiment mirrors the complex world of the real courtroom. Rather, the experiments help us formulate theories with which we interpret the complex world.

Come to think of it, are these jury simulations any different from social psychology's other experiments, all of which create simplified versions of complex realities? By varying just one or two factors at a time in this simulated reality, the experimenter pinpoints how changes in one or two aspects of a situation can affect us. And that is the essence of social psychology's experimental method.

## SUMMING UP: How Do Group Influences Affect Juries?

- Juries are groups, and they are swayed by the same influences that bear upon other types of groups. For example, the most vocal members of a jury tend to do most of the talking and the quietest members say little.
- As a jury deliberates, opposing views may become more entrenched and polarized.
- Especially when evidence is not highly incriminating, deliberation may make jurors more lenient than they originally were.
- The 12-member jury is a tradition stemming from English Common Law. Researchers find that a jury this size allows for reasonable diversity among jurors, a mix of opinions and orientations, and better recall of information.
- Researchers have also examined and questioned the assumptions underlying several recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions permitting smaller juries and non-unanimous juries.
- Simulated juries are not real juries, so we must be cautious in generalizing research findings to actual courtrooms. Yet, like all experiments in social psychology, laboratory jury experiments help us formulate theories and principles that we can use to interpret the more complex world of everyday life.

## POSTSCRIPT: Thinking Smart with Psychological Science

An intellectually fashionable idea, sometimes called "postmodernism," contends that truth is socially constructed; knowledge always reflects the cultures that form it. Indeed, as we have often noted in this book, we do often follow our hunches, our biases, our cultural bent. Social scientists are not immune to confirmation bias, belief perseverance, overconfidence, and the biasing power of preconceptions. Our preconceived ideas and values guide our theory development, our interpretations, our topics of choice, and our language.

Being mindful of hidden values within psychological science should motivate us to clean the cloudy spectacles through which we view the world. Mindful of our vulnerability to bias and error, we can steer between the two extremes—of being naive about a value-laden psychology that pretends to be value-neutral or of being tempted to an unrestrained subjectivism that dismisses evidence as nothing but collected biases. In the spirit of humility, we can put testable ideas to the test. If we think capital punishment does (or does not) deter crime more than other available punishments, we can utter our personal opinions, as has the U.S. Supreme Court. Or we can ask whether states with a death penalty have lower homicide rates, whether their rates have dropped after instituting the death penalty, and whether they have risen when abandoning the penalty.

As we have seen, the Court considered pertinent social science evidence when disallowing five-member juries and ending school desegregation. But it has discounted research when offering opinions as to whether the death penalty deters crime, whether society views execution as what the U.S. Constitution prohibits ("cruel and unusual punishment"), whether courts inflict the penalty arbitrarily, whether they apply it with racial bias, and whether potential jurors selected by virtue of their accepting capital punishment are biased toward conviction.

Beliefs and values do guide the perceptions of judges as well as scientists and laypeople. And that is why we need to think smarter—to rein in our hunches and biases by testing them against available evidence. If our beliefs find support, so much the better for them. If not, so much the worse for them. That's the humble spirit that underlies both psychological science and everyday critical thinking.

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CHAPTER  
**16**

# Social Psychology and the Sustainable Future



**"Have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground—the unborn of the future Nation."**

—*Gayanshagowa*, the Constitution of the Iroquois Nations  
(also known as "The Great Law of Peace")

**Psychology and climate change**

**Enabling sustainable living**

**The social psychology of materialism and wealth**

**Postscript: How does one live responsibly in the modern world?**

Imagine yourself on a huge spaceship traveling through our galaxy. To sustain your community, a spacecraft biosphere grows plants and breeds animals. By recycling waste and managing resources, the mission has, until recently, been sustainable over time and across generations of people born onboard.

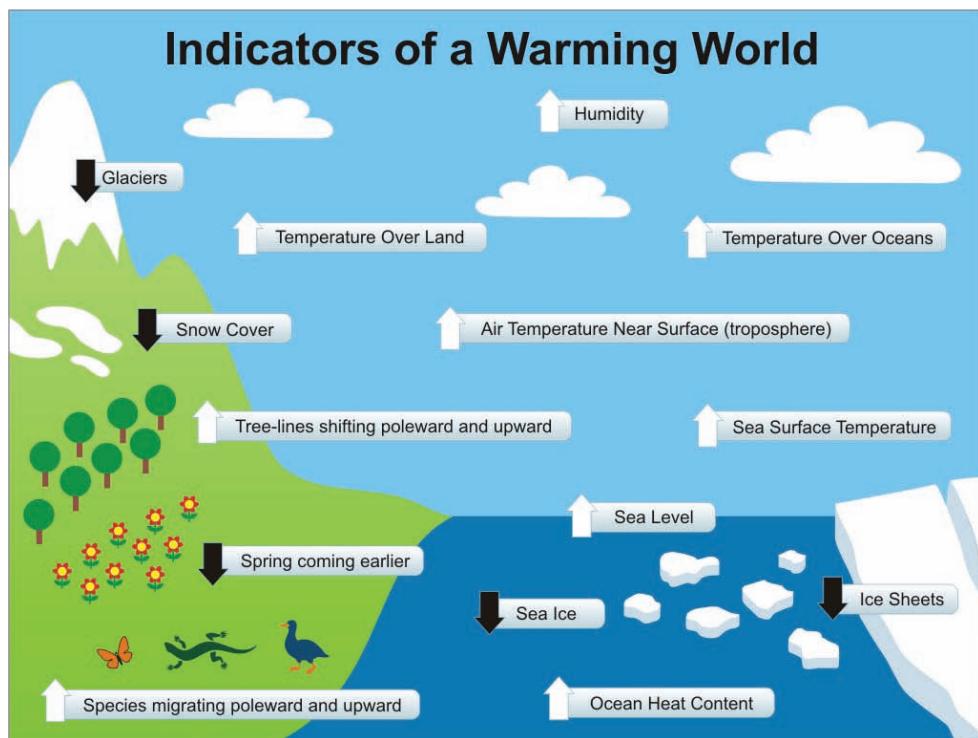
The spaceship's name is Planet Earth, and its expanding crew now numbers 7 billion. Alas, it increasingly consumes its resources at an unsustainable rate—50 percent beyond the spaceship's capacity (FootPrintNetwork.org, 2011). With the growing population and consumption have come deforestation, depletion of wild fish stocks, and climate destabilization. Some crew members are especially demanding. For all 7 billion to live the average American lifestyle would require five Planet Earths.

In 1960, the spaceship Earth carried 3 billion people and 127 million motor vehicles. Today, it has more than 7 billion people and nearly 1 billion motor vehicles (Davis & others, 2011). The greenhouse gases emitted by motor vehicles, along with the burning of coal and oil to generate electricity and heat homes and buildings, are changing the Earth's climate. To ascertain how much and how fast climate change is occurring, several thousand scientists worldwide have collaborated to create and review the evidence via the Intergovernmental Panel on

**FIGURE :: 16.1**

A synopsis of scientific indicators of global climate change.

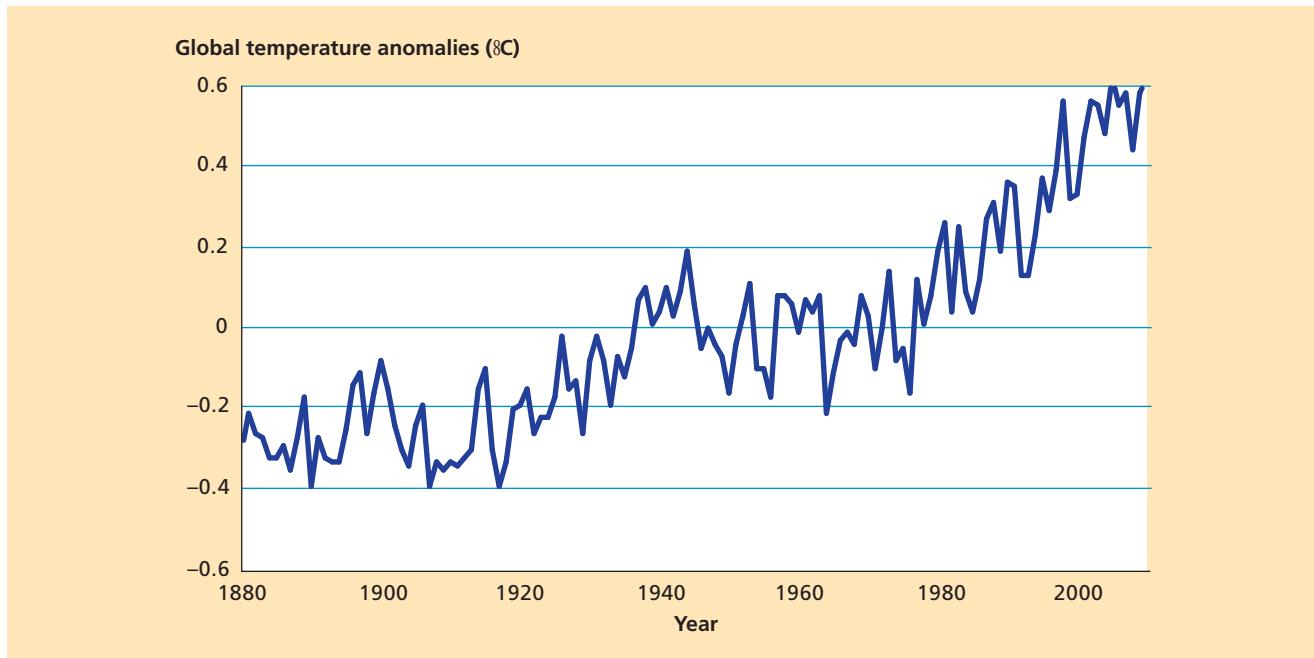
*Source:* From John Cook (2010, and [skepticalscience.com](http://skepticalscience.com)).



Climate Change (IPCC). The past chair of its scientific assessment committee, John Houghton (2011), reports that their conclusions—supported by the national academies of science of the world's 11 most developed countries—are undergirded by the most "thoroughly researched and reviewed" scientific effort in human history.

As the IPCC reports, and Figure 16.1 illustrates, converging evidence verifies climate change:

- A warming greenhouse gas blanket is growing. About half the carbon dioxide emitted by human activity since the Industrial Revolution (since 1750) remains in the atmosphere (Royal Society, 2010).
- There is now 39 percent more atmospheric carbon dioxide and 158 percent more atmospheric methane than before industrial times—and the increase has recently accelerated (World Meteorological Organization, 2011). As the permafrost thaws, methane gas release threatens to compound the problem (Gillis, 2011).
- Sea and air temperatures are rising. The numbers—the facts—have no political leanings. Every decade since the 1970s has been warmer than the one preceding it, with 9 of the 10 warmest years on record since 2001 (Royal Society, 2010; Figure 16.2). If the world were not warming, random weather variations should produce equal numbers of record-breaking high and low temperatures. In reality, record highs have been greatly outnumbering record lows—by about

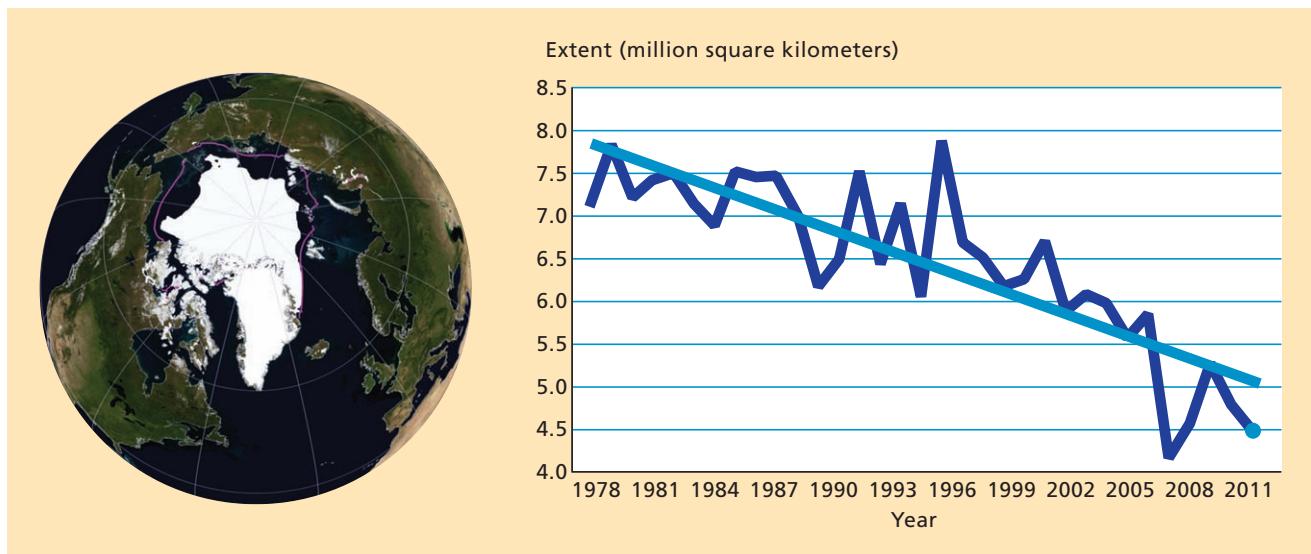


**FIGURE :: 16.2**

The warming world. Since 1980, global temperatures have trended upward, with record high temperatures greatly outnumbering record lows (NASA, 2011).

2 to 1 in the United States, for example (Meehl & others, 2009). After amassing 1.6 billion temperature reports from more than 39,000 weather stations, one-time climate change skeptic Richard Muller (2011) became convinced: "Global warming is real."

- *Various plant and animal species are migrating.* In response to the warming world, they are creeping northward and upward, with anticipated loss of biodiversity (Harley, 2011; Houghton, 2011).
- *The Arctic sea ice is melting.* The late-summer ice cover has shrunk from nearly 3 million square miles in the late 1970s to 1.67 million square miles in 2011 (Figure 16.3). The West Antarctica and Greenland glacial ice sheets are also melting—faster than ever (Kerr, 2011).
- *The seas are rising.* Ocean water expands as it warms. Moreover, what happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic. Projections of rising sea levels portend large problems for coastal and low-lying areas, including Pakistan, southern China, and Indian and Pacific Ocean islands (Houghton, 2011).
- *Extreme weather is increasing.* Any single weather event—even the record European heat of 2010, or the record 2011 Mississippi floods, Missouri tornadoes, and Texas heat and drought—cannot be attributed to climate change. Weird weather happens. Nevertheless, climate scientists predict that global warming will make extreme weather events—hurricanes, heat waves, droughts,



**FIGURE :: 16.3**

The shrinking ice cap. The National Snow and Ice Data Center and NASA show the September 2011, minimum Arctic ice sheet, compared with the median 1979 to 2000 minimum ice sheet. The figure depicts the shrinking September ice sheet year by year.

and floods—more intense (Kerr, 2011b). As precipitation in a warming and wetter world falls more as rain and less as snow, the likely result will be rainy season floods and less dry season snow and ice melt to sustain rivers.

## PSYCHOLOGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Identify possible psychological consequences of continuing or even accelerating climate change. Summarize the gap between scientific and public understandings of climate change and possible reasons for this difference.

Throughout its history, social psychology has responded to human events—to the civil rights era with studies of stereotyping and prejudice, to years of civil unrest and increasing crime with studies of aggression, to the women's movement with studies of gender development and gender-related attitudes. If global climate change is now "the greatest problem the world faces" (Houghton, 2011), surely we will see more and more studies of the likely effects of climate change on human behavior, of public opinion about climate change, and of ways to modify the human sources of climate change. Already, such inquiry is under way.

### Psychological Effects of Climate Change

It's a national security issue, say some: Terrorist bombs and climate change are both weapons of mass destruction. "If we learned that al Qaeda was secretly developing a new terrorist technique that could disrupt water supplies around the globe, force tens of millions from their homes and potentially endanger our entire planet, we would be aroused into a frenzy and deploy every possible asset to neutralize the threat," observed essayist Nicholas Kristof (2007). "Yet that is precisely the threat that we're creating ourselves, with our greenhouse gases." Consider the human consequences.



Is the weather getting weirder? In 2011, reported NOAA, the United States experienced a dozen billion dollar weather disasters, sharply up from the more typical three or four. No single weather event, such as the massive Joplin, Missouri, tornado shown here, can be attributed to climate change. But climate scientists warn that global warming will produce increasing extreme weather events and increased human displacement and trauma.

## DISPLACEMENT AND TRAUMA

In 2010, 42 million people were forced by natural disasters to leave their homes—up from 17 million in 2009. More than 90 percent of these displacements were caused by weather-related hazards, making climate-related displacement “the defining challenge of our times,” said Antonio Guerres, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (Amland, 2011).

If temperatures increase by the expected 28 to 48 Celsius this century, the resulting changes in water availability, agriculture, disaster risk, and sea level will necessitate massive resettlement (de Sherbinin & others, 2011). When drought or floods force people to leave their land, shelter, and work, as when sub-Saharan African farming and grazing lands become desert, the frequent result is increased poverty and hunger, earlier death, and loss of cultural identity. If an extreme weather event or climate change disrupted your ties to a place and its people, you could expect to feel grief, anxiety, and a sense of loss (Doherty & Clayton, 2011). For social and mental health, climate matters.

## CLIMATE AND CONFLICT

Got war? Blame the climate. Such is often the case, notes Jeffrey Sachs (2006). The recent deadly carnage in Darfur, Sudan, for example, had its roots in drought and the competition for water. And so it has happened across history. Many human maladies—from economic downturns to wars—have been traced to climate fluctuations (Zhang & others, 2011). When the climate changes, agriculture often suffers, leading to increased famine, epidemics, and overall misery. Poorer countries, with fewer resources, are especially vulnerable to climate-produced misery (Fischer & Van de Vliert, 2011). And when miserable, people become more prone to anger with their governments and with one another, leading to war. For social stability, climate matters.

As Chapter 11 explained, studies both in the laboratory and in everyday life reveal that heat also amplifies short-term aggression. On hot days, neighborhood violence, and even batters hit by pitches in baseball games, become more frequent. Violence is also more common in hotter seasons of the year, hotter summers, hotter years, hotter cities, and hotter regions (Anderson & Delisi, 2010). Craig Anderson and his colleagues project that if a 4-degree-Fahrenheit

(about 28C) warming occurs, the United States will suffer at least 50,000 more serious assaults each year.

## Public Opinion About Climate Change

Is the Earth getting warmer? Are humans responsible? Will it matter to our grandchildren? Yes, yes, and yes, say published climate scientists—97 percent of whom agree that climate change is occurring and is human caused (Anderegg & others, 2010). As one report in *Science* explained, “Almost all climate scientists are of one mind about the threat of global warming: It’s real, it’s dangerous, and the world needs to take action immediately” (Kerr, 2009).

In response, the European Community, Australia, and India have all passed either a carbon tax on coal or a carbon emissions trading system, and even China now has a limited plan that will make polluters pay for excess pollution. In China, India, and South Korea, a 2010 Pew survey found more than 70 percent of people willing to address climate change by paying more for energy—compared with only 38 percent in the United States (Rosenthal, 2011).

In 2011, only 38 percent of Americans likewise agreed that there is “solid evidence” of human-caused global warming (Pew, 2011). And in 2011, their doubts supported a 240 to 184 U.S. House of Representatives vote *defeating* a resolution stating that “climate change is occurring, is caused largely by human activities, and poses significant risks for public health and welfare” (McKibben, 2011).

The enormous gulf between the scientific and U.S. public understandings of climate change intrigues social psychologists. Why the gap? Why is global warming not a hotter topic? And what might be done to align scientific and public understandings?

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND THE AVAILABILITY HEURISTIC

By now, it’s a familiar lesson: vivid and recent experiences often overwhelm abstract statistics. Despite knowing the statistical rarity of shark attacks and plane crashes, vivid images of such—being readily available in memory—often hijack our emotions and distort our judgments. We make our intuitive judgments under the influence of the availability heuristic—and thus we often fear the wrong things. If an airline misplaces our bag, we likely will overweight our immediate experience; ignoring data on the airline’s overall lost-bag rate, we belittle the airline. Our ancient brains come designed to attend to the immediate situation, not out-of-sight data and beyond-the-horizon dangers (Gifford, 2011).

Likewise, people will often scorn global warming in the face of a winter freeze. One climate skeptic declared a record East Coast blizzard “a coup de grace” for global warming (Breckler, 2010). In a May 2011 survey, 47 percent of Americans agreed that “The record snowstorms this winter in the eastern United States make me question whether global warming is occurring” (Leiserowitz & others, 2011b). But then after the ensuing blistering summer, 67 percent of Americans agreed that global warming worsened the “record high summer temperatures in the U.S. in 2011” (Leiserowitz, 2011). In studies in the United States and Australia, people have expressed more belief in global warming, and more willingness to donate to a global warming charity, on warmer-than-usual days than on cooler-than-usual days (Li & others, 2011). As in so many life realms, our local experience distorts our global judgments.

## LACKING COMPREHENSION

As you may recall from Chapter 7, persuasive messages must first be understood. Thanks in part to the media’s mixed messages—its framing of two opposing sides: those concerned about and those dismissive of climate change—only 39 percent of Americans in 2011 believed that “Most scientists think global warming is happening.” More perceived “a lot of disagreement among scientists” or

didn't know enough to say (Leiserowitz & others, 2011). Perceiving uncertainty, and reassured by the natural human optimism bias, people discount the threat (Gifford, 2011).

People also exhibit a "system justification" tendency—a tendency to believe in and justify the way things are in their culture, and thus, especially when comfortable, to not want to change the familiar status quo (Feygina & others, 2010). We tend to like our habitual ways of living—of traveling, of eating, and of heating and cooling our spaces.

More encouraging news comes from an experiment that showed people the global temperature trend in Figure 16.2. Regardless of their prior assumptions about global climate change, people were able to understand the trend and project it into the near future—and to adjust their beliefs. Education matters.

We also benefit from framing energy savings in attention-getting ways. An information sheet or store sign might read, "If you do not install CFL light bulbs, you will lose \$\_\_\_\_." And use long time periods. Instead of saying, "This Energy Star refrigerator will save you \$120 a year on your electric bills, say it "will save you \$2,400 in wasted energy bills over the next 20 years" (Hofmeister, 2010).

"ONE DAY FAIRLY SOON  
WE WILL ALL GO BELLY  
UP LIKE GUPPIES IN A  
NEGLECTED FISHBOWL.  
I SUGGEST AN EPITAPH  
FOR THE WHOLE  
PLANET: . . . 'WE COULD  
HAVE SAVED IT, BUT WE  
WERE TOO DARN CHEAP  
AND LAZY.'"

—KURT VONNEGUT, "NOTES  
FROM MY BED OF GLOOM,"

1990

## SUMMING UP: Psychology and Climate Change

- Scientists report that exploding population and increasing consumption and greenhouse gas emissions have together exceeded the Earth's carrying capacity. We now are seeing the predicted beginnings of global warming, melting polar ice, rising seas, and more extreme weather.
- Expected social consequences of climate change include human displacement and trauma and conflict stemming from competition over scarce resources.
- Social psychologists are also exploring the gap between scientific and public understandings of climate change, and they are suggesting ways to educate the public and to encourage a flourishing human future in a sustainable world.

## ENABLING SUSTAINABLE LIVING

**Identify new technologies and strategies for reducing consumption that together may enable sustainable living.**

What shall we do? Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow is doom? Behave as so many participants have in prisoners' dilemma games, by pursuing self-interest to our collective detriment? ("Heck, on a global scale, my consumption is infinitesimal; it makes my life comfortable and costs the world practically nothing.") Wring our hands, dreading that fertility plus prosperity equals calamity, and vow never to bring children into a doomed world?

Those more optimistic about the future see two routes to sustainable lifestyles: (a) increasing technological efficiency and agricultural productivity, and (b) moderating consumption and population.

### New Technologies

One component in a sustainable future is improved technologies. We have not only replaced incandescent bulbs with energy-saving ones, but replaced printed and delivered letters and catalogs with email and e-commerce, and replaced commuter miles driven with telecommuting.

"NO ONE MADE A  
GREATER MISTAKE THAN  
HE WHO DID NOTHING  
BECAUSE HE COULD ONLY  
DO A LITTLE."

—EDMUND BURKE,  
18TH CENTURY BRITISH  
PHILOSOPHER



Capturing light in a bottle. Illac Diaz inspects a new solar light bulb sealed into the corrugated roof of a Manila apartment.

When driving, today's middle-aged adults drive cars that get twice the mileage and produce a twentieth of the pollution of the ones they drove as teenagers, and new hybrid and battery-driven cars promise greater efficiency.

Plausible future technologies include diodes that emit light for 20 years without bulbs; ultrasound washing machines that consume no water, heat, or soap; reusable and compostable plastics; cars running on fuel cells that combine hydrogen and oxygen and produce water exhaust; lightweight materials stronger than steel; roofs and roads that double as solar energy collectors; and heated and cooled chairs that provide personal comfort with less heating and cooling of rooms (N. Myers, 2000; Zhang & others, 2007).

Some energy solutions are low-tech. One Philippine nonprofit is working with the government and volunteers to install zero-energy solar light bulbs in one million low-income homes. The "bulbs" are nothing more than discarded clear plastic soda bottles that, when filled with water and wedged in a hole in the roof—with half the bottle exposed to the sun and half jutting into the room—transmit 55 watts of light. The result? Daytime light is provided without electricity bills (Orendain, 2011).

Given the speed of innovation (who could have imagined today's world a century ago?), the future will surely bring solutions that we aren't yet imagining. Surely, say the optimists, the future will bring increased material well-being for more people while requiring fewer raw materials and creating much less polluting waste.

## Reducing Consumption

The second component of a sustainable future is controlling consumption. Unless we argue that today's less-developed countries are somehow less deserving of an improved standard of living, we must anticipate that their consumption will increase. As it does, the United States and other developed countries must consume less.

Thanks to family planning efforts, the world's population growth rate has decelerated, especially in developed nations. Even in less-developed countries, when food security has improved and women have become educated and empowered, birth rates have fallen. But if birth rates everywhere instantly fell to a replacement level of 2.1 children per woman, the lingering momentum of population growth, fueled by the bulge of younger humans, would continue for years to come. In 1960, after tens of thousands of years on the spaceship Earth, there were 3 billion people—which is also the number that demographers expect the human population to grow in just this century.

With this population size, humans have already overshot the Earth's carrying capacity, so consumption must also moderate. With our material appetites continually swelling—as more people seek personal computers, refrigeration, air-conditioning, jet travel—what can be done to moderate consumption by those who can afford to overconsume?

## INCENTIVES

One way is through public policies that harness the motivating power of incentives. As a general rule, we get less of what is taxed, and more of what is rewarded. On jammed highways, high-occupancy vehicle lanes reward carpooling and penalize driving solo. Gregg Easterbrook (2004) noted that if the United States had raised its gasoline tax by 50 cents a decade ago, as was proposed, the country would now have smaller, more fuel-efficient cars (as do the Europeans, with their higher petrol taxes) and would therefore import less oil. This, in turn, would have led to lower oil consumption, less global warming, lower gas prices, less money flowing to petro-dictators, and a smaller trade deficit weighing down the economy.

Europe leads the way in incentivizing mass transit and bicycle use over personal vehicle use. In addition to the small vehicles incentivized by high fuel taxes, cities such as Vienna, Munich, Zurich, and Copenhagen have closed many city center streets to car traffic. London and Stockholm drivers pay congestion fees when entering the heart of the city. Amsterdam is a bicycle haven. Dozens of German cities have “environmental zones” where only low CO<sub>2</sub> cars may enter (Rosenthal, 2011). The Netherlands has even experimented with a car meter that would tax drivers a fee for miles driven, rather like paying a phone fee for minutes talked (Rosenthal, 2011b).

Some free-market proponents object to carbon taxes because they are taxes. Others respond that carbon taxes are simply payment for external damage to today’s health and tomorrow’s environment. If not today’s CO<sub>2</sub> emitters, who should pay for the cost of tomorrow’s more threatening floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, droughts, and sea rise? “Markets are truly free only when everyone pays the full price for his or her actions,” contends Environmental Defense Fund economist Gernot Wagner (2011). “Anything else is socialism.”

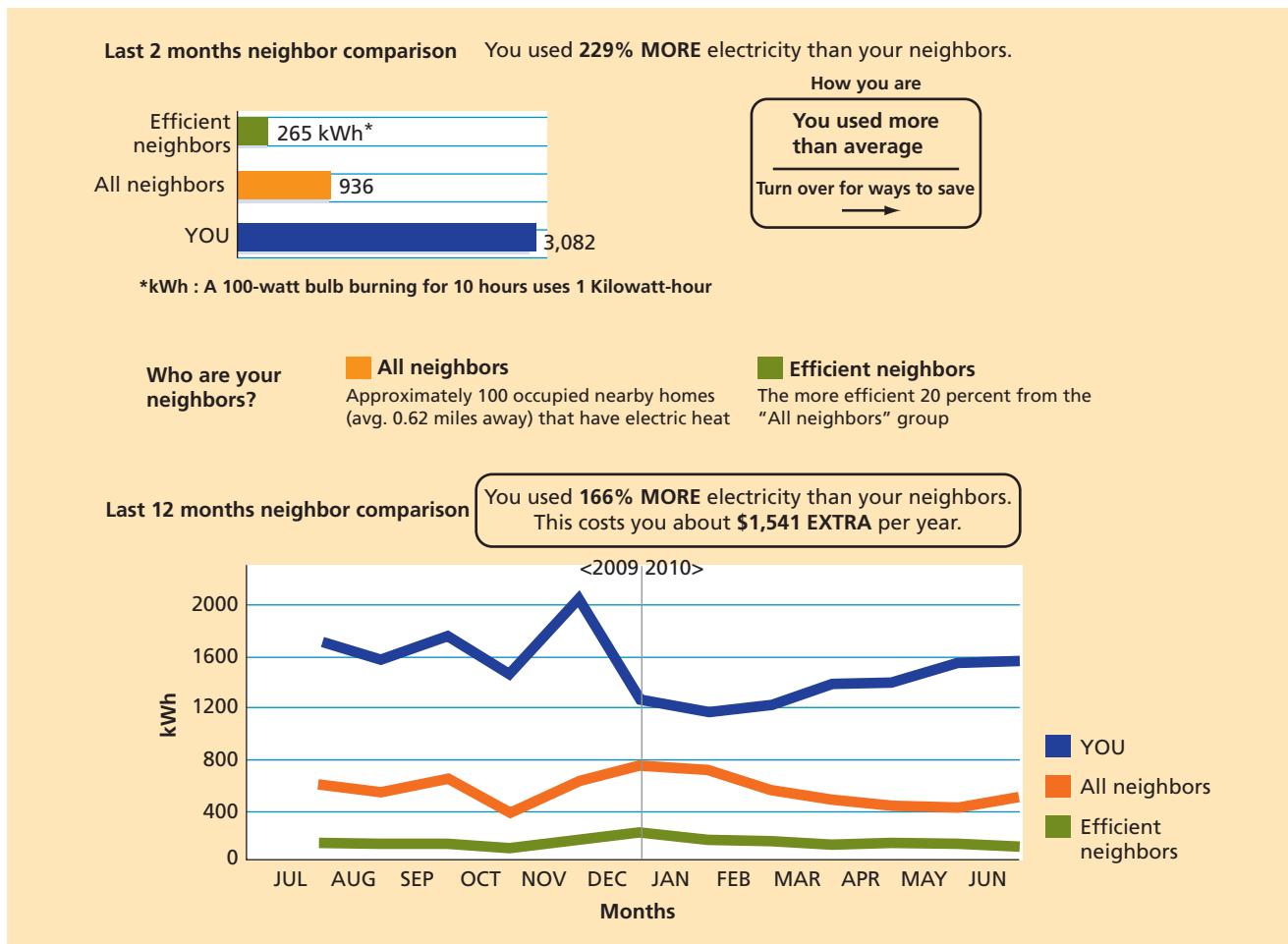
## FEEDBACK

Another way to encourage greener homes and businesses is to harness the power of immediate feedback to the consumer by installing “smart meters” that provide a continuous readout of electricity use and its cost. Turn off a computer monitor or the lights in an empty room, and the meter displays the decreased wattage. Turn on the air-conditioning, and you immediately know the usage and cost. In Britain, where smart meters are being installed in businesses, Conservative Party leader David Cameron has supported a plan to have them installed in all homes. “Smart meters have the power to revolutionize people’s relationship with the energy they use,” he said to Parliament (Rosenthal, 2008).

U.S. studies have shown that when an energy supplier sticks a “smiley” or “frowny” face on home energy bills when the consumer’s energy use is less or more than the neighborhood average, energy use is reduced (Schultz & others, 2007; Van Vugt, 2009). Sacramento’s Municipal Utility District has sent bills to randomly selected customers, rating their energy use compared with neighbors in similar-sized homes and with their most efficient neighbors (Figure 16.4), and giving suggestions for energy savings. By the second year, high-consumption households were using nearly 3 percent less electricity (Provencher & Klos, 2010).

## IDENTITY

In one survey, the top reason people gave for buying a Prius hybrid car was that it “makes a statement about me” (Clayton & Myers, 2009, p. 9). Indeed, argue Tom Crompton and Tim Kasser (2010), our sense of who we are—our identity—has profound implications for our climate-related behaviors. Does our social identity, the ingroup that defines our circle of concern, include only those around us now? Or does it encompass vulnerable people in places unseen, our descendants and others in the future, and even the creatures in the planet’s natural environment?

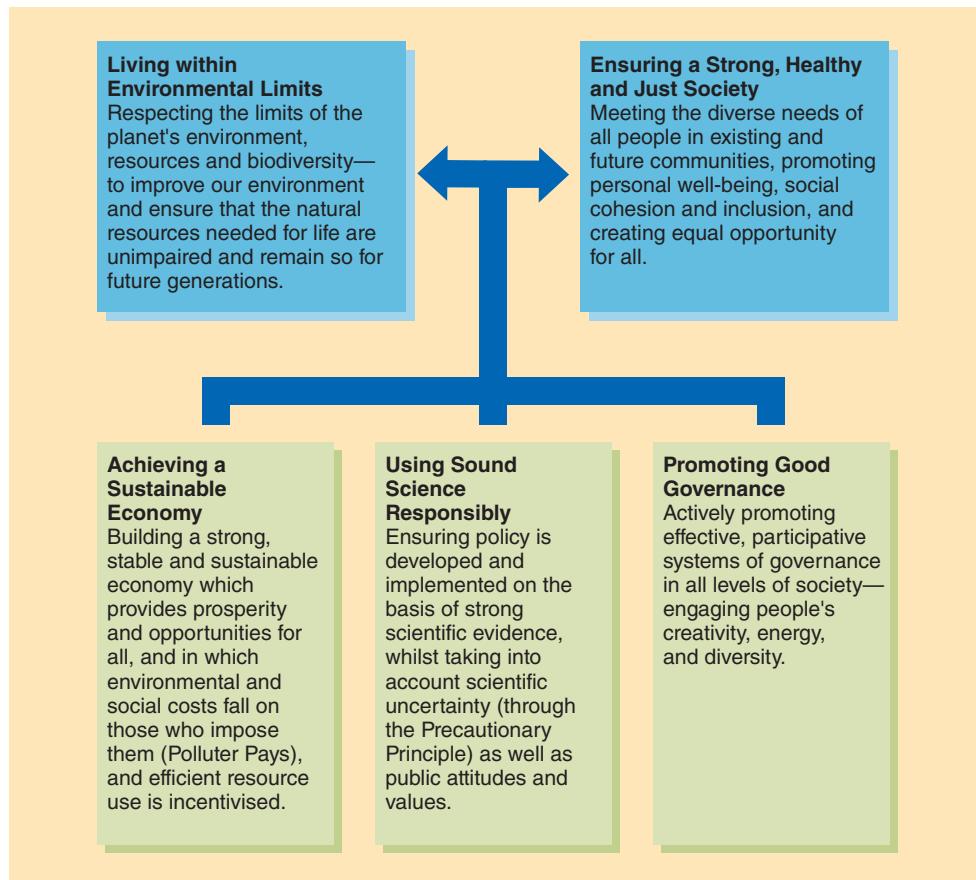
**FIGURE :: 16.4**

Sample feedback to selected Sacramento electricity users.

Support for new energy policies will require a shift in public consciousness not unlike that occurring during the 1960s civil rights movement and the 1970s women's movement. Yale University environmental science dean James Gustave Speth (2008) is calling for an enlarged identity—a “new consciousness”—in which people

- see humanity as part of nature.
- see nature as having intrinsic value that we must steward.
- value the future and its inhabitants as well as our present.
- appreciate our human interdependence, by thinking “we” and not just “me.”
- define quality of life in relational and spiritual rather than materialistic terms.
- value equity, justice, and the human community.

Is there any hope that human priorities might shift from accumulating money to finding meaning, and from aggressive consumption to nurturing connections? The British government's plan for achieving sustainable development includes an emphasis on promoting personal well-being and social health (Figure 16.5). Perhaps social psychology can help point the way to greater well-being, by suggesting *ways to reduce consumption*—and also by documenting *materialism*, by informing people that *economic growth does not automatically improve human morale*, and by helping people understand *why materialism and money fail to satisfy* and encouraging *alternative, intrinsic values*.

**FIGURE :: 16.5**

**The "Shared UK Principles of Sustainable Development"**

The British government defines sustainable development as development that meets present needs without compromising future generations' abilities to meet their needs. "We want to live within environmental limits and achieve a just society, and we will do so by means of sustainable economy, good governance, and sound science." Social psychology's contribution will be to help influence behaviors that enable people to live within environmental limits and to enjoy personal and social well-being.

*Source: www.sustainable-development.gov.uk, 2005.*

## SUMMING UP: Enabling Sustainable Living

- Humanity can prepare for a sustainable future by increasing technological efficiency.
- We can also create incentives, give feedback, and promote identities that will support more sustainable

consumption. Rapid cultural change has happened in the past 40 years, and there is hope that in response to the global crisis it can happen again.

## THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF MATERIALISM AND WEALTH

Explain social psychology's contribution to our understanding of changing materialism: To what extent do money and consumption buy happiness? And why do materialism and economic growth not bring enduringly greater satisfaction?

Despite the recent economic recession, life for most people in Western countries is good. Today the average North American enjoys luxuries unknown even to royalty in centuries past: hot showers, flush toilets, central air-conditioning, microwave ovens, jet travel, wintertime fresh fruit, big-screen digital television, e-mail, and Post-it notes. Does money—and such associated luxuries—buy happiness? Few of

us would answer yes. But ask a different question—"Would a *little* more money make you a *little* happier?"—and most of us will say yes. There is, we believe, a connection between wealth and well-being. That belief feeds what Juliet Schor (1998) has called the "cycle of work and spend"—working more to buy more.

## Increased Materialism

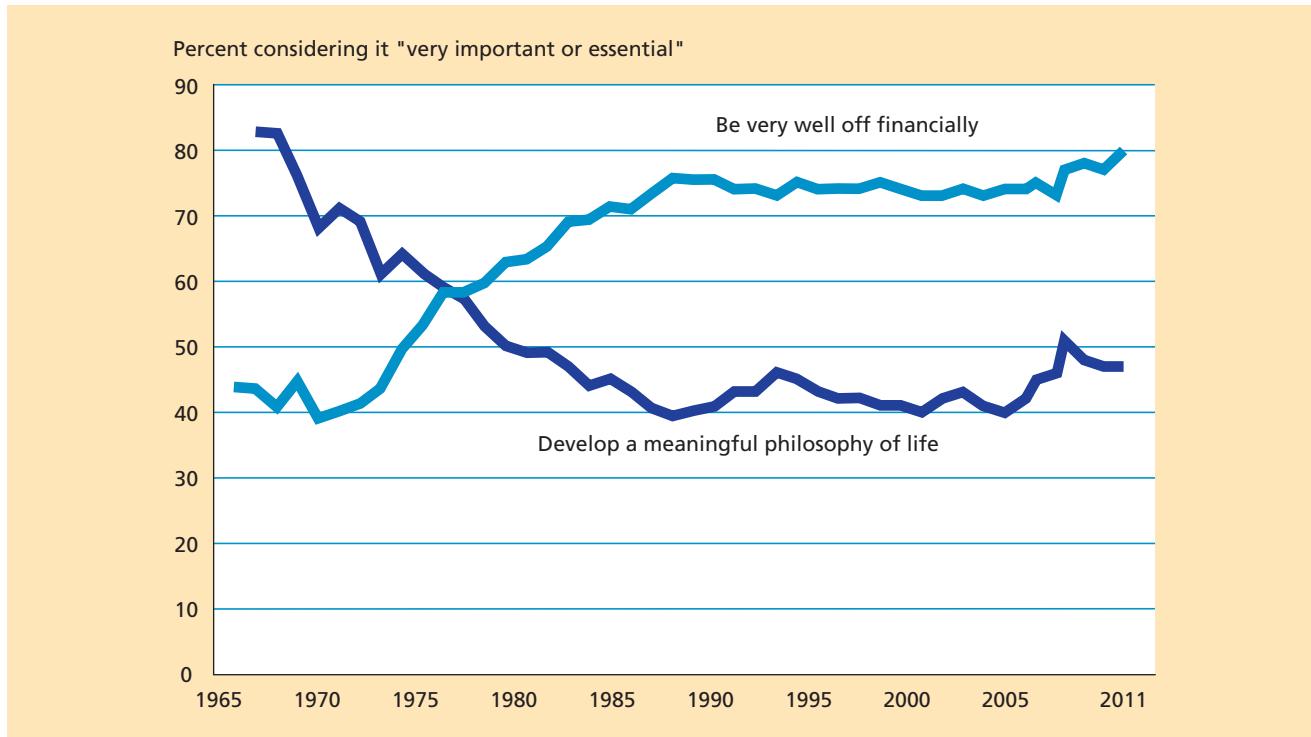
Although the Earth asks that we live more lightly upon it, materialism has surged, most clearly in the United States. Think of it as today's American dream: life, liberty, and the purchase of happiness.

Such materialism surged during the 1970s and 1980s. The most dramatic evidence comes from the UCLA/American Council on Education annual survey of nearly a quarter million entering collegians. The proportion considering it "very important or essential" that they become "very well-off financially" rose from 39 percent in 1970 to 77 percent in 2010 (Figure 16.6). Those proportions virtually flip-flopped with those who considered it very important to "develop a meaningful philosophy of life." Materialism was up, spirituality down.

What a change in values! Among 19 listed objectives, new American collegians in most recent years have ranked becoming "very well-off financially" number 1. That outranks not only developing a life philosophy but also "becoming an authority in my own field," "helping others in difficulty," and "raising a family."

## Wealth and Well-Being

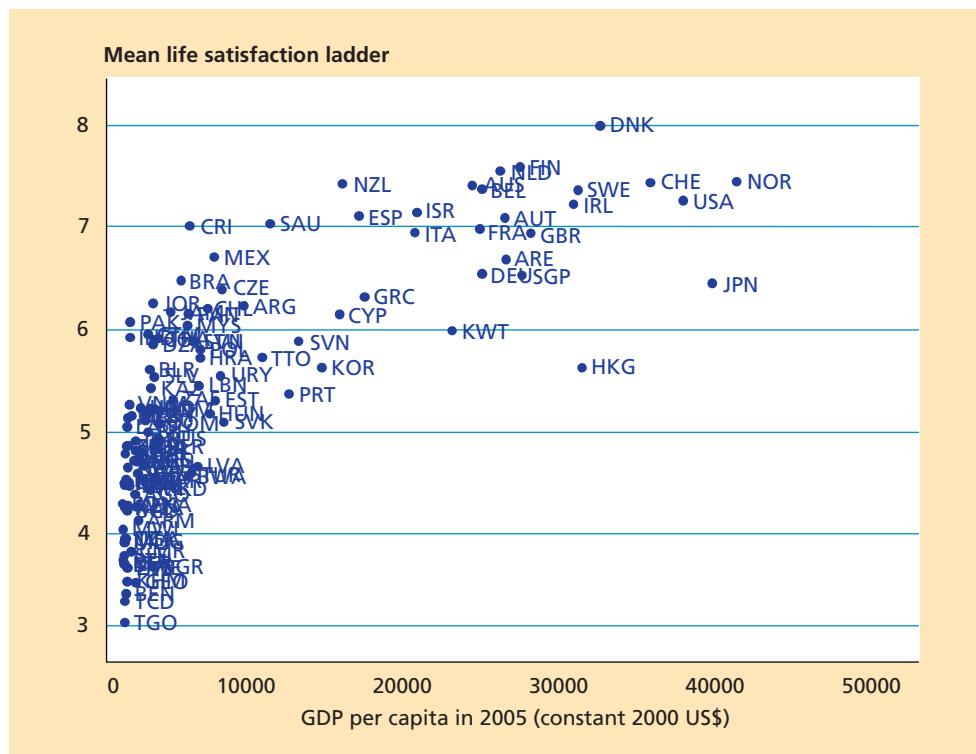
Does sustainable consumption indeed enable "the good life?" Does being well-off produce—or at least correlate with—psychological well-being? Would people be happier if they could exchange a simple lifestyle for one with palatial surroundings,



**FIGURE :: 16.6**

Changing Materialism, from Annual Surveys of More than 200,000 Entering U.S. Collegians (total sample 13 million students)

Source: Data from Dey, Astin, & Korn, 1991, and subsequent annual reports.



**FIGURE :: 16.7**  
**National Wealth and Well-Being**

Life satisfaction (on a 0 to 10 ladder) across 132 countries, as a function of national wealth (2005 gross domestic product, adjusted to the 2000 U.S. dollar value).

Source: From Di Tella & MacCullough (2008).

ski vacations in the Alps, and executive-class travel? Would you be happier if you won a sweepstakes and could choose from its suggested indulgences: a 40-foot yacht, deluxe motor home, designer wardrobe, luxury car, or private housekeeper? Social-psychological theory and evidence offer some answers.

### ARE WEALTHY COUNTRIES HAPPIER?

We can observe the traffic between wealth and well-being by asking, first, if rich nations are happier places. There is, indeed, some correlation between national wealth and well-being (measured as self-reported happiness and life satisfaction). The Scandinavians have been mostly prosperous and satisfied; the Bulgarians are neither (Figure 16.7). But after nations reached above \$20,000 GDP per person, higher levels of national wealth are not predictive of increased life satisfaction.

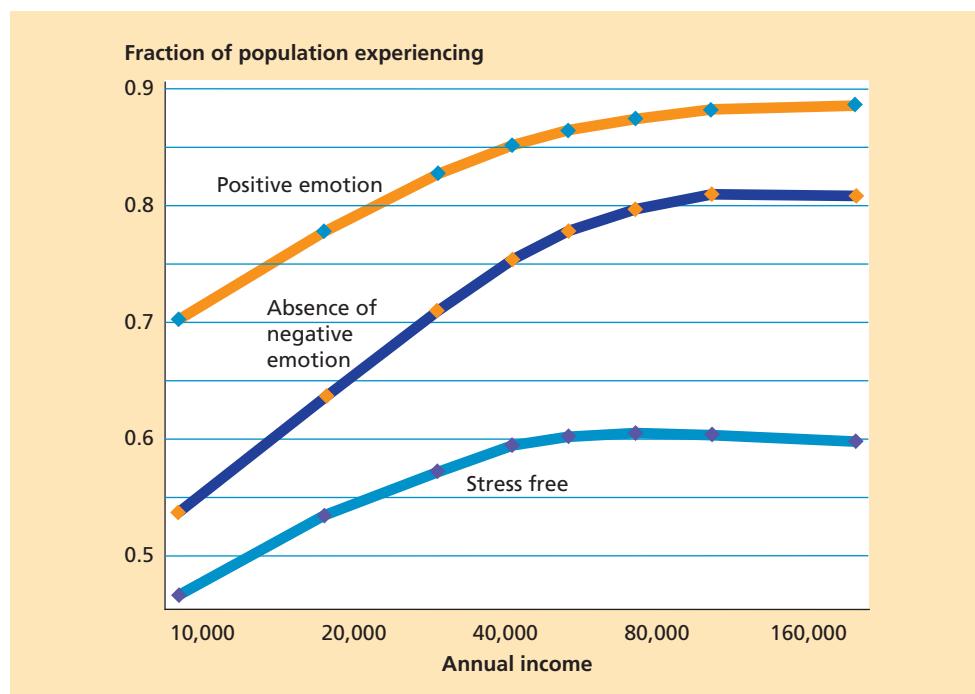
### ARE WEALTHIER INDIVIDUALS HAPPIER?

We can ask, second, whether within any given nation, rich people are happier. Are people who drive their BMWs to work happier than those who take the bus? In poor countries—where low income threatens basic needs—being relatively well-off does predict greater well-being (Howell & Howell, 2008). In affluent countries, where most can afford life's necessities, affluence still matters—partly because people with more money perceive more control over their lives (Johnson & Krueger, 2006). But after a comfortable income level is reached, more and more money produces diminishing long-term returns. In Gallup surveys of more than 450,000 Americans during 2008 and 2009, daily positive feelings (the average of self-reported happiness, enjoyment, and frequent smiling and laughter) increased with income up to, but not beyond, \$75,000 (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). The same was true for the absence of negative feelings of worry and sadness (Figure 16.8). In worldwide Gallup surveys across 123 countries, it's close relationships and feeling empowered and competent that predict subjective well-being (Tay & Diener, 2011). When those basic needs are met, more money adds little.

**FIGURE :: 16.8**

**The Diminishing Effects of Increasing Income on Positive and Negative Feelings**

Data from Gallup surveys of more than 450,000 Americans (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). (Note: income is reported on a log scale, which tends to accentuate the appearance of correlation between income and well-being.)



"I ALWAYS IN THE BACK OF  
MY MIND FIGURED A LOT  
OF MONEY WILL BUY YOU  
A LITTLE BIT OF HAPPINESS.  
BUT IT'S NOT REALLY  
TRUE."

—GOOGLE BILLIONAIRE  
COFOUNDER SERGEY  
BRIN, 2006

Even the super-rich—the *Forbes* 100 wealthiest Americans—have reported only slightly greater happiness than average (Diener & others, 1985). And winning a state lottery seems not to enduringly elevate well-being (Brickman & others, 1978). Such jolts of joy have “a short half-life,” notes Richard Ryan (1999).

### IS THE WEALTHIER TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY HAPPIER?

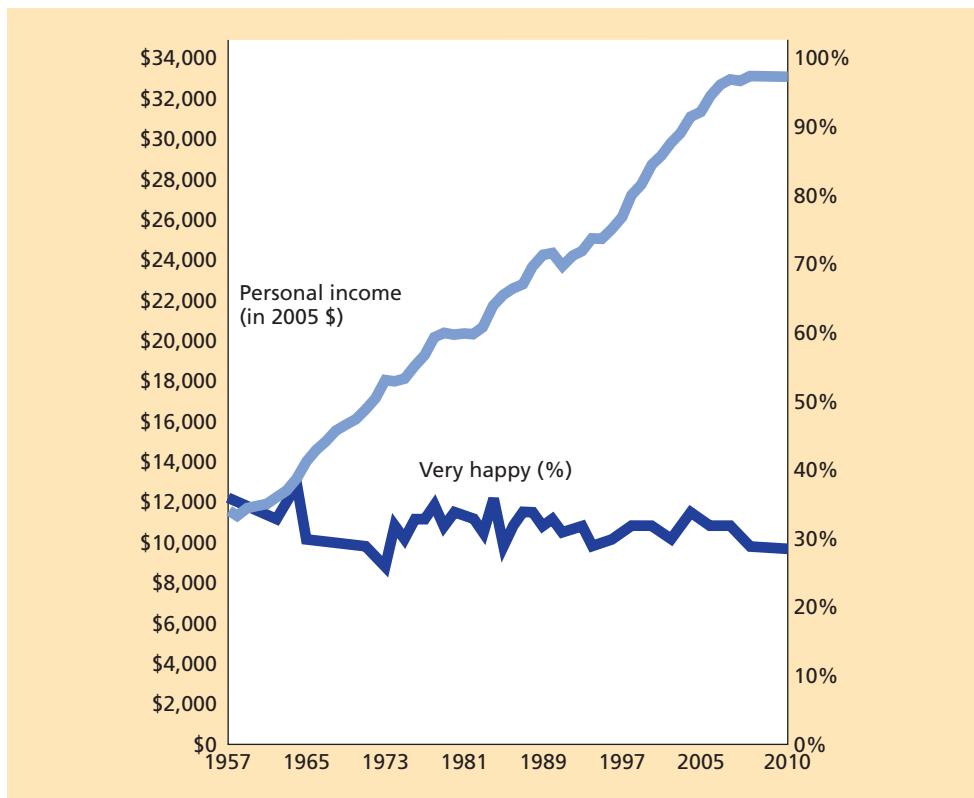
We can ask, third, whether, over time, a culture’s happiness rises with its affluence. Does our collective well-being float upward with a rising economic tide?

In 1957, as economist John Kenneth Galbraith was describing the United States as *The Affluent Society*, Americans’ per-person income was (in 2005 dollars) about \$12,000. Today, as Figure 16.9 indicates, the United States is a triply affluent society. Although this rising tide has lifted the yachts faster than the dinghies, nearly all boats have risen. With double the spending power, thanks partly to the surge in married women’s employment, we now own twice as many cars per person, eat out twice as often, and are supported by a whole new world of technology. Since 1960 we have also seen the proportion of households with dishwashers rise from 7 to 60 percent, with clothes dryers rise from 20 to 74 percent, and with air-conditioning rise from 15 to 86 percent (Bureau of the Census, 2009).

So, believing that it’s “very important” to “be very well-off financially,” and having become better off financially, are today’s Americans happier? Are they happier with espresso coffee, caller ID, camera cell phones, and suitcases on wheels than before?

They are not. Since 1957 the number of Americans who say they are “very happy” has declined slightly: from 35 to 29 percent. Twice as rich and apparently no happier. The same has been true of many other countries as well (Easterlin & others, 2010). After a decade of extraordinary economic growth in China—from few owning a phone and 40 percent owning a color television to most people now having such things—Gallup surveys revealed a *decreasing* proportion of people satisfied “with the way things are going in your life today” (Burkholder, 2005).

The findings are startling because they challenge modern materialism: *Economic growth has provided no apparent boost to humans*. More than ever, we have big houses and broken homes, high incomes and modest happiness. We excel at making a living but often fail at making a life. We celebrate our prosperity but yearn for purpose. We cherish our freedoms but long for connection.



**FIGURE :: 16.9**  
Has Economic Growth Advanced Human Morale?

While inflation-adjusted income has risen, self-reported happiness has not.

*Source:* Happiness data from General Social Surveys, National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. Income data from Bureau of the Census (1975) and *Economic Indicators*.

## Materialism Fails to Satisfy

It is striking that economic growth in affluent countries has failed to satisfy. It is further striking that individuals who strive most for wealth tend to live with lower well-being. This finding “comes through very strongly in every culture I’ve looked at,” reported Richard Ryan (1999). Seek *extrinsic* goals—wealth, beauty, popularity, prestige, or anything else centered on external rewards or approval—and you may find anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic ills (Eckersley, 2005; Sheldon &



Today's material comforts in China: people shopping for laptops and other increasingly valuable goods. Despite increasing incomes, the percentage of Chinese who feel satisfied with their lives has declined.

others, 2004). Those who instead strive for *intrinsic* goals such as “intimacy, personal growth, and contribution to the community” experience a higher quality of life, concludes Tim Kasser (2000, 2002). Intrinsic values, Kasser (2011) adds, promote personal and social well-being and help immunize people against materialistic values. Those focused on close relationships, meaningful work, and concern for others enjoy inherent rewards that often prove elusive to those more focused on things or on their status and image.

Pause a moment and think: What is the most personally satisfying event that you experienced in the last month? Kennon Sheldon and his colleagues (2001) put that question (and similar questions about the last week and semester) to samples of university students. Then they asked them to rate the extent to which 10 different needs were met by the satisfying event. The students rated self-esteem, relatedness (feeling connected with others), and autonomy (feeling in control) as the emotional needs that most strongly accompanied the satisfying event. At the bottom of the list of factors predicting satisfaction were money and luxury.

People who identify themselves with expensive possessions experience fewer positive moods, report Emily Solberg, Ed Diener, and Michael Robinson (2003). Such materialists tend to report a relatively large gap between what they want and what they have, and to enjoy fewer close, fulfilling relationships. Wealthier people also tend to savor life’s simpler pleasures less (Quoidbach & others, 2010). Sipping tea with a friend, savoring a chocolate, finishing a project, discovering a waterfall while hiking may pale alongside the luxuries enabled by wealth.

People focused on extrinsic and material goals also “focus less on caring for the Earth,” reports Kasser (2011). “As materialistic values go up, concern for nature tends to go down. . . . When people strongly endorse money, image, and status, they are less likely to engage in ecologically beneficial activities like riding bikes, recycling, and re-using things in new ways.”

But why do yesterday’s luxuries, such as air-conditioning and television, so quickly become today’s requirements? Two principles drive this psychology of consumption: our ability to adapt and our need to compare.

“WHY DO YOU SPEND  
YOUR MONEY FOR THAT  
WHICH IS NOT BREAD,  
AND YOUR LABOR FOR  
THAT WHICH DOES NOT  
SATISFY?”

—ISAIAH 55:2

### adaptation-level phenomenon

The tendency to adapt to a given level of stimulation and thus to notice and react to changes from that level.

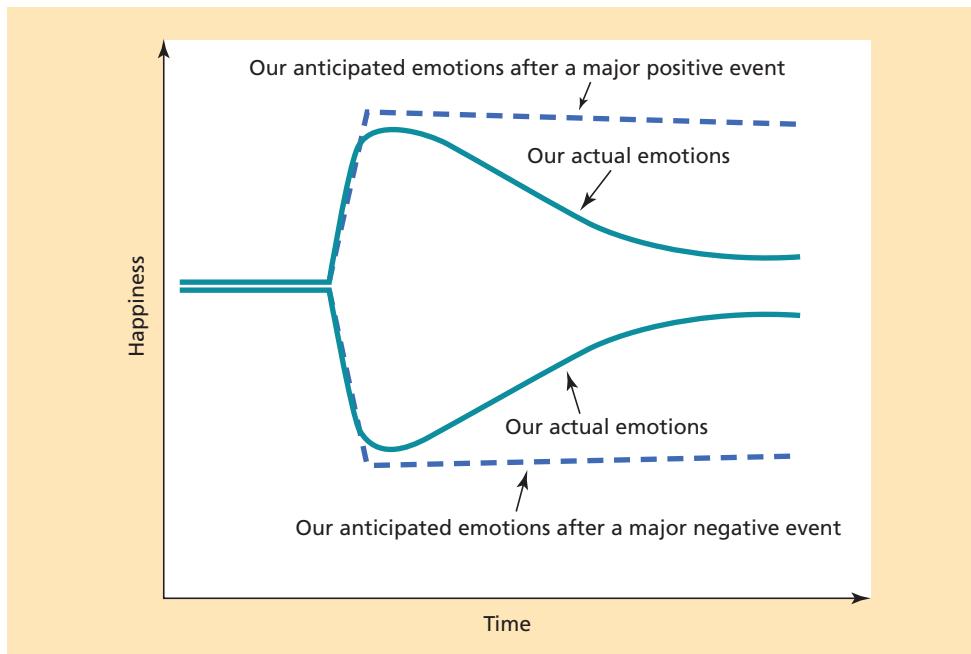
### OUR HUMAN CAPACITY FOR ADAPTATION

The **adaptation-level phenomenon** is our tendency to judge our experience (for example, of sounds, temperatures, or income) relative to a neutral level defined by our prior experience. We adjust our neutral levels—the points at which sounds seem neither loud nor soft, temperatures neither hot nor cold, events neither pleasant nor unpleasant—on the basis of our experience. We then notice and react to up or down changes from those levels.

Thus, as our achievements rise above past levels, we feel successful and satisfied. As our social prestige, income, or in-home technology improves, we feel pleasure. Before long, however, we adapt. What once felt good comes to register as neutral, and what formerly was neutral now feels like deprivation.

Would it ever, then, be possible to create a social paradise? Donald Campbell (1975b) answered no: If you woke up tomorrow to your utopia—perhaps a world with no bills, no ills, someone who loves you unreservedly—you would feel euphoric, for a time. Yet before long, you would recalibrate your adaptation level and again sometimes feel gratified (when achievements surpass expectations), sometimes feel deprived (when they fall below), and sometimes feel neutral.

To be sure, adaptation to some events, such as the death of a spouse, may be incomplete, as the sense of loss lingers (Diener & others, 2006). Yet, as Chapter 2 explained, we generally underestimate our adaptive capacity. People have difficulty predicting the intensity and duration of their future positive and negative emotions (Wilson & Gilbert, 2003; Figure 16.10). The elation from getting what we want—riches, top exam scores, the Chicago Cubs winning the World Series—evaporates more rapidly than we expect.



We also sometimes “miswant.” When first-year university students predicted their satisfaction with various housing possibilities shortly before entering their school’s housing lottery, they focused on physical features. “I’ll be happiest in a beautiful and well-located dorm,” many students seemed to think. But they were wrong. When contacted a year later, it was the social features, such as a sense of community, that predicted happiness, report Elizabeth Dunn and her colleagues (2003). Likewise, Leaf Van Boven and Thomas Gilovich (2003) report from their surveys and experiments that positive *experiences* (often social experiences) leave us happier. The best things in life are not things.

### OUR WANTING TO COMPARE

Much of life revolves around **social comparison**, a point made by the old joke about two hikers who meet a bear. One reaches into his backpack and pulls out a pair of sneakers. “Why bother putting those on?” asks the other. “You can’t outrun a bear.” “I don’t have to outrun the bear,” answers the first. “I just have to outrun you.”

Similarly, happiness is relative to our comparisons with others, especially those within our own groups (Lyubomirsky, 2001; Zagefka & Brown, 2005). Whether we feel good or bad depends on whom we’re comparing ourselves with. We are slow-witted or clumsy only when others are smart or agile. Let one professional athlete sign a new contract for \$15 million a year and an \$8-million-a-year teammate may now feel less satisfied. “Our poverty became a reality. Not because of our having

**FIGURE :: 16.10**

### The Impact Bias

As explained in Chapter 2, people generally overestimate the enduring impact of significant positive and negative life events.

*Source:* Figure inspired by de Botton, 2004.



Social comparisons foster feelings.

© Barbara Smaller/The New Yorker Collection/www.cartoonbank.com

# focus ON

## Social Comparison, Belonging, and Happiness

Mfezy was born in a South African village. She grew up in a family where there was no money for luxuries, yet she never felt herself to be poor. What she did know, from early childhood, was the truth of the Xhosa saying—“Umntu ngumtu ngaabantu,” which translated means “a person is made by other people.”

When Mfezy wanted to start a master’s degree in psychology at Rhodes University, she was asked at an interview about how, coming from such a poor background herself, she could understand better-off people. She replied that she did not come from a “poor” background.

The word “poor” was, she felt, only attached as a label by better-off people. She told her interviewers that the village community that she came from was all family. Every woman in the community was like a mother to her. Each carried responsibility for her well-being. She felt held in a wide love. In such a situation how could she be “poor”? Mfezy did not seek to romanticize poverty in any way, yet neither had she felt “poor”—even in times of hardship.

*Source:* From Peter Millar’s *Guguletu Journal*, The Iona Community.

less, but by our neighbors having more,” recalled Will Campbell in *Brother to a Dragonfly*. (See “Focus On: Social Comparison, Belonging, and Happiness.”)

Further feeding our luxury fever is the tendency to compare upward: As we climb the ladder of success or affluence, we mostly compare ourselves with peers who are at or above our current level, not with those who have less. People living in communities where a few residents are very wealthy tend to feel envy and less satisfaction as they compare upward (Fiske, 2011).

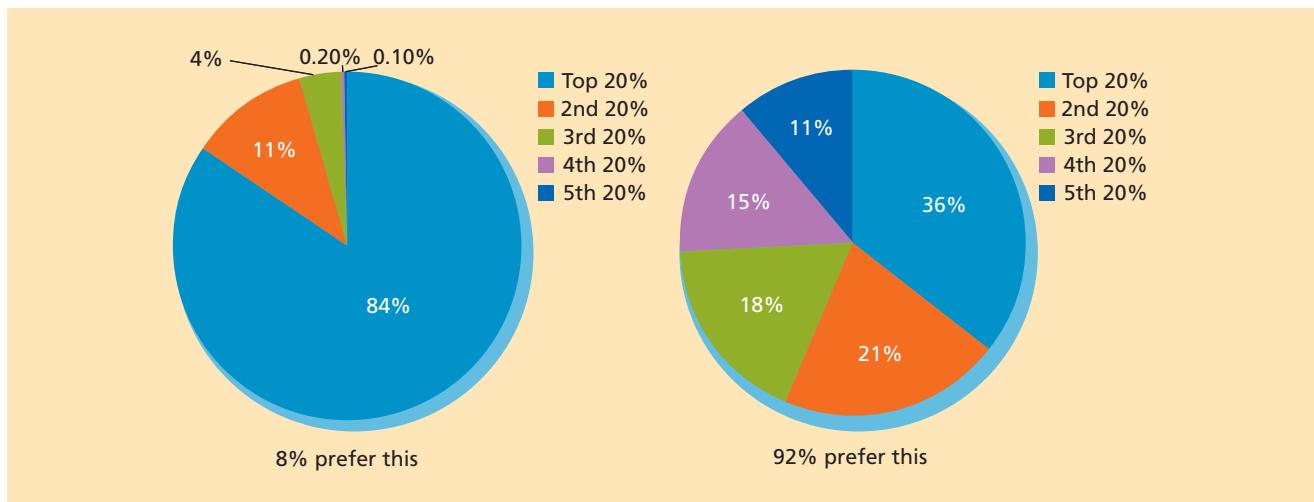
In developed and emerging economies worldwide, inequality has grown in recent years. In the 34 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2011) countries, the richest 10 percent now average nine times the income of the poorest 10 percent. (The gap is less in the Scandinavian countries, and is substantially greater in Israel, Turkey, the United States, Mexico, and Chile.) Countries with greater inequality not only have greater health and social problems, but also higher rates of mental illness (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2011). Likewise, U.S. states with greater inequality have higher rates of depression (Messias & others, 2011). And over time, years with more income inequality—and associated increases in perceived unfairness and lack of trust—correlate with less happiness among those with lower incomes (Oishi & others, 2011).

Although people often prefer the economic policies in place, a national survey found that Americans overwhelmingly preferred the income distribution on the right of Figure 16.11 (which, unbeknownst to the respondents, happened to be Sweden’s income distribution) to the one on the left (which happened to be the United States’ income distribution). Moreover, people preferred (in an ideal world) the top 20 percent income share ranging between 30 and 40 percent (rather than the actual 84 percent), with modest differences between Republicans and Democrats and between those making less than \$50,000 and more than \$100,000 (Norton & Ariely, 2011).

Even in China, income inequality has grown. This helps explain why rising affluence has not produced increased happiness—there or elsewhere. Rising income inequality, noted Michael Hagerty (2000), makes for more people who have rich



Times of increased inequality tend, for many, to be times of diminished perceived fairness and happiness.



**FIGURE :: 16.11**

In an ideal society, what would be the level of income inequality? A survey of Americans provided a surprising consensus that a more equal distribution of wealth—like that shown on the right (which happened to be Sweden's distribution) would be preferable to the American status quo (shown on the left).

neighbors. Television's modeling of the lifestyles of the wealthy also serves to accentuate feelings of "relative deprivation" and desires for more (Schor, 1998).

The adaptation-level and social-comparison phenomena give us pause. They imply that the quest for happiness through material achievement requires continually expanding affluence. But the good news is that adaptation to simpler lives can also happen. If we shrink our consumption by choice or by necessity, we will initially feel a pinch, but the pain likely will pass. "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning," reflected the Psalmist. Indeed, thanks to our capacity to adapt and to adjust comparisons, the emotional impact of significant life events—losing a job or even a disabling accident—dissipates sooner than most people suppose (Gilbert & others, 1998).

## Toward Sustainability and Survival

As individuals and as a global society, we face difficult social and political issues. How might a democratic society induce people to adopt values that emphasize psychological well-being over materialism? How might a thriving market economy mix incentives for prosperity with restraints that preserve a habitable planet? To what extent can we depend on technological innovations, such as alternative energy sources, to reduce our ecological footprints? And to what extent does the superordinate goal of preserving the Earth for our grandchildren call us each to limit our own liberties—our freedom to drive, burn, and dump whatever we wish?

A shift to postmaterialist values will gain momentum as people, governments, and corporations take these steps:

- Face the implications of population and consumption growth for climate change and environmental destruction
- Realize that extrinsic, materialist values make for *less* happy lives
- Identify and promote the things in life that can enable sustainable human flourishing

"If the world is to change for the better it must have a change in human consciousness," said Czech poet-president Vaclav Havel (1990). We must discover "a deeper sense of responsibility toward the world, which means responsibility toward something higher than self." If people were to believe that ever-bigger houses, closets full of seldom-worn clothes, and garages with luxury cars do not define the good

"ALL OUR WANTS, BEYOND  
THOSE WHICH A VERY  
MODERATE INCOME  
WILL SUPPLY, ARE PURELY  
IMAGINARY."

—HENRY ST. JOHN, LETTER TO  
SWIFT, 1719

life, then might a shift in consciousness become possible? Instead of being an indicator of social status, might conspicuous consumption become gauche?

Social psychology's contribution to a sustainable, flourishing future will come partly through its consciousness-transforming insights into adaptation and comparison. These insights also come from experiments that lower people's comparison standards and thereby cool luxury fever and renew contentment. In two such experiments, Marshall Dermer and his colleagues (1979) put university women through imaginative exercises in deprivation. After viewing depictions of the grimness of Milwaukee life in 1900, or after imagining and writing about being burned and disfigured, the women expressed greater satisfaction with their own lives.

In another experiment, Jennifer Crocker and Lisa Gallo (1985) found that people who five times completed the sentence "I'm glad I'm not a . . ." afterward felt less depressed and more satisfied with their lives than did those who completed sentences beginning "I wish I were a . . ." Realizing that others have it worse helps us count our blessings. "I cried because I had no shoes," says a Persian proverb, "until I met a man who had no feet." *Downward* social comparison facilitates contentment.

Downward comparison to a hypothetical worse-off self also enhances contentment. In one experiment, Minkyung Koo and her colleagues (2008) invited people to write about how they might never have met their romantic partner. Compared to others who wrote about meeting their partner, those who imagined not having the relationship expressed more satisfaction with it. Can you likewise imagine how some good things in *your* life might never have happened? It's very easy for me to imagine not having chanced into an acquaintance that led to an invitation to author this book. Just thinking about that reminds me to count my blessings.

Social psychology also contributes to a sustainable and survivable future through its explorations of the good life. If materialism does not enhance life quality, what does?

- *Close, supportive relationships.* As we saw in Chapter 11, our deep need to belong is satisfied by close, supportive relationships. People who are supported by intimate friendships or a committed marriage are much more likely to declare themselves "very happy."
- *Faith communities* and voluntary organizations are often a source of such connections, as well as of meaning and hope. That helps explain a finding from National Opinion Research Center surveys of nearly 50,000 Americans

Close, supportive relationships are a key element in well-being.



since 1972: 26 percent of those rarely or never attending religious services declared themselves very happy, as did 48 percent of those attending multiple times weekly.

- *Positive thinking habits.* Optimism, self-esteem, perceived control, and extraversion also mark happy experiences and happy lives. One analysis of 638 studies of 420,000 people in 63 countries found that a sense of autonomy—feeling free and independent—consistently influences people's sense of well-being more than does wealth (Fischer & Boer, 2011).
- *Experiencing nature.* Carleton University students randomly assigned to a 17-minute nature walk near their campus ended up (to their and others' surprise) much happier than students who took a similar-length walk through campus walking tunnels (Nisbet & Zelenski, 2011). Japanese researchers report that "forest bathing"—walks in the woods—also help lower stress hormones and blood pressure (Phillips, 2011).
- *Flow.* Work and leisure experiences that engage one's skills mark happy lives. Between the anxiety of being overwhelmed and stressed, and the apathy of being underwhelmed and bored, notes Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1999), lies a zone in which people experience *flow*. Flow is an optimal state in which, absorbed in an activity, we lose consciousness of self and time. When people's experience is sampled using electronic pagers, they report greatest enjoyment not when they are mindlessly passive but when they are unselfconsciously absorbed in a mindful challenge. In fact, the less expensive (and generally more involving) a leisure activity, the *happier* people are while doing it. Most people are happier gardening than powerboating, talking to friends than watching TV. Low-consumption recreations prove most satisfying.

That is good news indeed. Those things that make for the genuinely good life—close relationships, social networks based on belief, positive thinking habits, engaging activity—are enduringly sustainable. And that is an idea close to the heart of Jigme Singye Wangchuk, former King of Bhutan. "Gross national happiness is more important than gross national product," he said. Writing from the Center of Bhutan Studies in Bhutan, Sander Tideman (2003) explained: "Gross National Happiness . . . aims to promote real progress and sustainability by measuring the quality of life, rather than the mere sum of production and consumption." Now other nations, too, are assessing national quality of life. (See "Research Close-Up: Measuring National Well-Being.")

"WE HAVE FAILED TO SEE  
HOW OUR ECONOMY, OUR  
ENVIRONMENT AND OUR  
SOCIETY ARE ALL ONE.  
AND THAT DELIVERING  
THE BEST POSSIBLE  
QUALITY OF LIFE FOR US  
ALL MEANS MORE THAN  
CONCENTRATING SOLELY  
ON ECONOMIC GROWTH."

—PRIME MINISTER TONY BLAIR,  
FOREWORD TO A BETTER  
QUALITY OF LIFE, 1999

## research CLOSE-UP

### Measuring National Well-Being

"A city is successful not when it's rich, but when its people are happy." So said Bogotá, Colombia, former mayor Enrique Peñalosa, in explaining his campaign to improve his city's quality of life—by building schools and increasing school enrollment 34 percent, building or rebuilding more than 1,200 parks, creating an effective transit system, and reducing the murder rate dramatically (Gardner & Assadourian, 2004).

Peñalosa's idea of national success is shared by a growing number of social scientists and government planners. In Britain, the New Economic Foundation (2009, 2011) has developed "National Accounts of Well-Being" that track national social health and has published a

*Well-Being Manifesto for a Flourishing Society.* The foundation's motto: "We believe in economics as if people and the planet mattered." To assess national progress, they urge, we should measure not just financial progress but also the kinds of growth that enhance people's life satisfaction and happiness.

British economist Andrew Oswald (2006), one of a new breed of economists who study the relationships between economic and psychological well-being, notes that "economists' faith in the value of growth is diminishing. That is a good thing and will slowly make its way into the minds of tomorrow's politicians."

(continued)

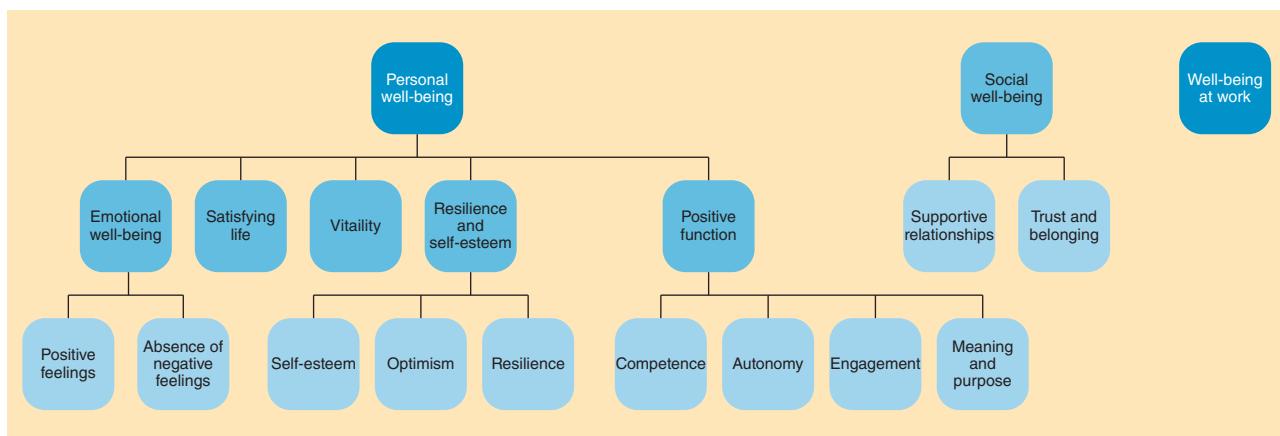
Leading the way toward new ways of assessing human progress are the newly developed "Guidelines for National Indicators of Subjective Well-Being and Ill-Being" developed by University of Illinois psychologist Ed Diener (2005; Diener & others, 2008, 2009) and signed by four dozen of the world's leading researchers (Figure 16.12). It notes that "global measures of subjective well-being, such as assessments of life satisfaction and happiness, can be useful for policy debates," such as by detecting the human effects of any policy interventions. More specifically, questions are now available for assessing these indicators:

- *Positive emotions*, including those involving low arousal (contentment), moderate arousal (pleasure), and high arousal (euphoria), and those involving positive responses to others (affection) and to activities (interest and engagement).
- *Negative emotions*, including anger, sadness, anxiety, stress, frustration, envy, guilt and shame, loneliness, and helplessness. Measures may ask people to recall or record the frequency of their experiencing positive and negative emotions.
- *Happiness*, which often is taken to mean a general positive mood, such as indicated by people's answers to a widely used survey question: "Taking all things together, how would you say things are these days—would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?"
- *Life satisfaction*, which engages people in appraising their life as a whole.
- *Domain satisfactions*, which invites people to indicate their satisfaction with their physical health, work, leisure, relationships, family, and community.

- *Quality of life*, a broader concept that includes one's environment and health, and one's perceptions of such.

Such well-being measures can assist governments as they debate economic and tax policies, family protection laws, health care, and community planning—a point now affirmed by the Canadian, French, German, and British governments, each of which are assessing national well-being (Cohen, 2011; Gertner, 2010; Stiglitz, 2009). University of Waterloo researchers, for example, are tracking a "Canadian Index of Wellbeing."

Well-being indicators are also part of worldwide Gallup surveys of well-being in more than 150 countries encompassing more than 98 percent of the world's people. The surveys compare countries (revealing, for example, that people in some high-income countries such as Israel and Saudi Arabia report lower levels of positive emotion than people in some low-income countries such as Kenya and India). Gallup also is conducting a massive 25-year survey of the health and well-being of U.S. residents, with 250 interviewers conducting a thousand surveys a day, seven days a week. The result is a daily snapshot of American well-being—of people's happiness, stress, anger, sleep, money worries, laughter, socializing, work, and much more. Although the project was recently launched, researchers have already identified the best days of the year (weekends and holidays) and monitored the short-term emotional impact of economic ups and downs. And with 300,000 respondents a year, any subgroup of 1 percent of the population will have some 3,000 respondents included, thus enabling researchers to compare people in very specific occupations, locales, religions, and ethnic groups.



**FIGURE :: 16.12**  
**Components of Well-Being**

In its 2009 *National Accounts of Well-Being* report, Britain's New Economic Foundation urges governments to "directly measure people's subjective well-being: their experiences, feelings and perceptions of how their lives are going." What matters, this think tank argues, is not so much people's economic level as their experienced quality of life. Categories for assessing national well-being include personal well-being, social well-being, and work-related well-being.

## SUMMING UP: The Social Psychology of Materialism and Wealth

- To judge from the expressed values of college students and the “luxury fever” that marked late-twentieth-century America, today’s Americans—and to a lesser extent people in other Western countries—live in a highly materialistic age.
- People in rich nations report greater happiness and life satisfaction than those in poor nations (though with diminishing returns as one moves from moderately to very wealthy countries). Rich people within a country are somewhat happier than working-class people, though again more and more money provides diminishing returns (as evident in studies of the super-rich and of lottery winners). Does economic growth over time make people happier? Not at all, it seems from the slight decline in self-reported happiness and the increasing rate of depression during the post-1960 years of increasing affluence.
- Two principles help explain why materialism fails to satisfy: the *adaptation-level phenomenon* and *social comparison*. When incomes and consumption rise, we soon adapt. And comparing ourselves with others, we may find our relative position unchanged. Comparing upward breeds dissatisfaction, which helps explain the more frequent sense of unfairness and unhappiness in times and places of great inequality.
- To build a sustainable and satisfying future, we can individually seek and, as a society, promote close relationships, supportive social networks, positive thinking habits, and engaging activity.

### POSTSCRIPT:

#### How Does One Live Responsibly in the Modern World?

We must recognize that . . . we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of the Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

—Preamble, The Earth Charter, [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org)

Reading and writing about population growth, global warming, materialism, consumption, adaptation, comparison, and sustainability provokes my reflection: Am I part of the answer or part of the problem? I can talk a good line. But do I walk my own talk?

If I’m to be honest, my record is mixed.

I ride a bike to work year-round. But I also flew 90,000 miles last year on fuel-guzzling jets.

I have insulated my 114-year-old home, installed an efficient furnace, and turned the winter daytime thermostat down to 68. But having grown up in a cool summer climate, I can’t imagine living without my air-conditioning on sweltering summer days.

To control greenhouse gas production, I routinely turn off lights and the computer monitor when away from my office and have planted trees around my house. But I’ve helped finance South American deforestation with the imported beef I’ve dined on and the coffee I’ve sipped.

I applauded in 1973 when the United States established an energy-conserving 55 mph national maximum speed limit and was disappointed when it was abandoned in 1995. But now that drivers on the highway around my town are back up to 70 mph, I drive no less than 70 mph—even with (blush) no other cars in sight.

At my house we recycle all our home paper, cans, and bottles. But each week we receive enough mail, newspapers, and periodicals to fill a 3-cubic-foot paper recycling bin.

Not bad, I tell myself. But it's hardly a bold response to the looming crisis. Our great-grandchildren will not thrive on this planet if all of today's 7 billion humans were to demand a similar-sized ecological footprint.

How, then, does one participate in the modern world, welcoming its beauties and conveniences, yet remain mindful of our environmental legacy? Even the leaders of the simpler-living movement—who also flew gas-guzzling jets to the three conferences we attended together in luxurious surroundings—struggle with how to live responsibly in the modern world.

So what do you think? What regulations do you favor or oppose? Higher fuel-efficiency requirements for cars and trucks? Auto-pollution checks? Leaf-burning bans to reduce smog? If you live in a country where high fuel taxes motivate people to drive small, fuel-efficient cars, do you wish you could have the much lower fuel taxes and cheaper petrol that have enabled Americans to drive big cars? If you are an American, would you favor higher gasoline and oil taxes to help conserve resources and restrain climate change?

How likely is it that humanity will be able to curb global warming and resource depletion? If the biologist E. O. Wilson (2002) is right to speculate that humans evolved to commit themselves only to their small piece of geography, their own kin, and their own time, can we hope that our species will exhibit “extended altruism” by caring for our distant descendants? Will today’s envied “lifestyles of the rich and famous” become gauche in a future where sustainability becomes necessity? Or will people’s concern for themselves and for displaying the symbols of success always trump their concerns for their unseen great-grandchildren?

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“THE GREAT DILEMMA  
OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
REASONING STEMS FROM  
THIS CONFLICT BETWEEN  
SHORT-TERM AND LONG-  
TERM VALUES.”

—E. O. WILSON, *THE FUTURE  
OF LIFE*, 2002

# Epilogue

If you have read this entire book, your introduction to social psychology is complete. In the Preface, I offered my hope that this book “would be at once solidly scientific and warmly human, factually rigorous and intellectually provocative.” You, not I, are the judge of whether that goal has been achieved. But I can tell you that sharing the discipline has been a joy for me as your author. If receiving my gift has brought you any measure of pleasure, stimulation, and enrichment, then my joy is multiplied.

A knowledge of social psychology, I do believe, has the power to restrain intuition with critical thinking, illusion with understanding, and judgmentalism with compassion. In these 16 chapters, we have assembled social psychology’s insights into belief and persuasion, love and hate, conformity and independence. We have glimpsed incomplete answers to intriguing questions: How do our attitudes feed and get fed by our actions? What leads people sometimes to hurt and sometimes to help one another? What kindles social conflict, and how can we transform closed fists into helping hands? Answering such questions expands our minds. And, “once expanded to the dimensions of a larger idea,” noted Oliver Wendell Holmes, the mind “never returns to its original size.” Such has been my experience, and perhaps yours, as you, through this and other courses, become an educated person.

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# Name Index

## A

Abbate, C. S., 472  
 Abbey, A., 100, 550  
 ABC News, 201, 216  
 Abelson, R., 119  
 Abelson, R. P., 236  
 Abrams, D., 287  
 Abramson, L. Y., 529, 530, 543  
 Abrevaya, J., 319  
 Acitelli, L. K., 413  
 Acker, M., 349  
 Ackerman, J. M., 423  
 Ackermann, R., 529  
 Adam, A., 388  
 Adamopoulos, J., 294  
 Adams, D., 360  
 Adams, G., 112  
 Adams, J. M., 434  
 Addis, M. E., 164, 450  
 Aderman, D., 444  
 Adinolfi, A. A., 403  
 Adler, N. E., 18, 548, 573  
 Adler, R. P., 260  
 Adler, S., 573  
 Adorno, T., 321  
 Aesop, 403  
 Affleck, G., 540  
 Agerström, J., 123  
 Agnew, C. R., 433  
 Agthe, M., 172, 404, 407  
 Agustsdottir, S., 541  
 Ahmad, N., 456  
 Aiello, J. R., 269, 270  
 Ainsworth, M. D. S., 426, 427  
 Ajzen, I., 123, 124  
 Albaracin, D., 124, 125, 232, 245  
 Aldag, R. J., 292  
 Alden, L. E., 535  
 Alexander, J., 246  
 Alexander, L., 498  
 al-Hazmi, N., 206  
 al-Hazmi, S., 206  
 Alickie, M. D., 572  
 Alkhuzai, A. H., 475  
 Allee, W. C., 267, 362  
 Allen, M., 164  
 Allen, V. L., 209  
 Allesoe, K., 539  
 Allik, J., 61  
 Allison, S. T., 103, 487  
 Alloy, L. B., 529, 531, 532  
 Allport, F. H., 267  
 Allport, G. W., 309, 320, 322, 326, 344, 345, 346, 507, 508  
 Al-Sadat, A., 513  
 Altemeyer, R., 321  
 Altman, I., 159  
 Alwin, D. F., 248, 249, 517  
 Amabile, T., 104  
 Amato, P. R., 455, 568  
 Ambady, N., 112, 348, 404  
 American Bar Association, 178  
 American College Health Association, 521  
 American Enterprises, 433

American Medical Association, 178  
 American Psychological Association, 27, 162, 358, 376  
 American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ASAPS), 403  
 Amir, Y., 497  
 Amland, B. H., 591  
 Amadio, D. H., 331  
 Amundsen, R., 299  
 Anastasi, J. S., 335  
 and Cooper, J., 345  
 and Fromkin, H. L., 220  
 Anda, R., 537  
 Anderegg, W. R. L., 592  
 Andersen, S. M., 36, 442, 477  
 Anderson, C., 72, 302, 379  
 Anderson, C. A., 28, 69, 82, 83, 367, 369, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 385, 408, 413, 484, 533, 534, 591  
 Anderson, D. C., 367  
 Anderson, P. D., 213  
 Anderson, P. L., 67  
 Anderson, R., 482  
 Andrew, Prince, 433  
 Andrews, D. S., 5  
 Andrews, F. E., 470  
 Andrews, F. M., 550  
 Andrews, P. W., 531  
 Angier, N., 389  
 Anik, L., 442  
 Annan, K., 177, 509  
 Anne, Princess, 433  
 Antonakis, J., 404  
 Antonio, A. L., 298  
 AP/Ipsos, 326  
 Applewhite, M., 251, 252, 253, 255  
 Archer, D., 324  
 Archer, J., 168, 356, 358, 374  
 Archer, R. L., 429  
 Arendt, H., 206  
 Argyle, M., 159, 183  
 Arieff, A., 271  
 Ariely, D., 604  
 Aristotle, 133, 155, 387, 403, 412, 487, 530  
 Ariza, L. M., 285  
 Arkes, H. R., 123, 245  
 Arkin, R. M., 71, 73, 398  
 Armitage, C. J., 124  
 Armor, D. A., 66  
 Arms, R. L., 387  
 Arnold, K., 193  
 Aron, A., 194, 415, 421–422, 422, 423, 430, 489  
 Aron, E., 194, 430, 489  
 Aronson, E., 26, 136, 240, 253, 417, 507, 518  
 Aronson, J., 347, 348  
 Arora, R., 41  
 Arriaga, X. B., 433  
 Arrow, K. J., 297  
 Asch, S. E., 194, 195, 202, 203, 207, 208, 209, 217, 242  
 Asendorpf, J. B., 404, 534

Ash, R., 355  
 Asher, J., 357  
 Ashton-James, C., 48, 475  
 Assadourian, E., 607  
 Associated Press (AP), 162, 193, 194, 528, 569  
 Astin, A. W., 178, 317, 598  
 Athappilly, K., 424  
 Atta, M., 206  
 Attia, S., 363  
 Auden, W. H., 157  
 Augoustinos, M., 11  
 Augustine, St., 174, 315  
 Austin, J. B., 444  
 Australian Attorney-General's Department, 382  
 Averill, J. R., 361  
 Avis, W. E., 181  
 Axsom, D., 250  
 Azrin, N. H., 366

## B

Baars, B. J., 78  
 Babad, E., 111  
 Bach, R., 58  
 Bachman, J. G., 20, 232  
 Back, M. D., 397  
 Badger, A. J., 394  
 Bähler, M., 309  
 Bahrami, B., 294  
 Bailenson, J. N., 235, 401  
 Bailey, J. M., 168  
 Bainbridge, W. S., 255  
 Baize, H. R., Jr., 405  
 Baker, L., 430  
 Baldwin, M. W., 426  
 Balliet, D., 487  
 Banaji, M. R., 86, 122, 243, 311  
 Bandura, A., 40, 56, 60, 363, 364, 365, 376  
 Banks, S. M., 238  
 Banse, R., 342  
 Barash, D., 153, 356, 450, 452  
 Barber, B. M., 97, 167  
 Barber, N., 169  
 Barber, R., 508  
 Bareket-Bojmel, L., 310  
 Bargh, J. A., 78, 79, 86, 101, 192, 311, 431  
 Bar-Haim, Y., 402  
 Bar-Hillel, M., 91  
 Barkley, C., 356  
 Barlett, C. P., 381  
 Barlow, F. K., 500  
 Barnes, E., 439  
 Barnes, R. D., 448  
 Barnett, M. A., 445  
 Barnett, P. A., 530  
 Baron, J., 342, 448  
 Baron, R. A., 388, 407  
 Baron, R. S., 255, 269, 270, 362, 493  
 Baron-Cohen, S., 165  
 Barongan, C., 377

- Berkman, L. F., 545  
 Berkowitz, L., 208, 210, 361, 362, 366, 368, 369, 376, 377, 444, 446, 448  
 Berman, J., 124  
 Berndsen, M., 338  
 Bernhardt, P. C., 54, 360  
 Bernieri, F., 111  
 Berns, G. S., 214  
 Bernstein, D. M., 83  
 Bernstein, M. J., 311, 335  
 Berra, Y., 447  
 Berry, B., 246  
 Berry, D., 567  
 Berry, J. W., 510  
 Berscheid, E., 113, 131, 399, 403, 405, 406, 407, 415, 421, 422, 427, 550  
 Bersoff, D. N., 576  
 Bertrand, M., 313  
 Besser, A., 427  
 Best, D. L., 166  
 Bettencourt, B. A., 168, 336, 350, 357  
 Bianchi, S. M., 177, 178  
 Bickman, L., 208, 465, 471, 511  
 Bielawski, D., 177  
 Bierce, A., 307  
 Biernat, M., 70, 333, 336, 344, 349, 413  
 Bigam, R. G., 575  
 Billig, M., 328  
 bin Laden, O., 15, 355  
 Binder, J., 498  
 Biner, P. M., 368  
 Bingenheimer, J. B., 364  
 Binham, R., 451  
 Birrell, P., 81  
 BIS, 166  
 Bishop, B., 284  
 Bishop, G. D., 283, 537  
 Bizzoco, N. M., 434  
 Björkqvist, K., 168  
 Blackburn, R. T., 69  
 Blackhart, G. C., 395  
 Blackmun, H., 581  
 Blackstone, W., 580  
 Blackwell, E., 537  
 Blair, C. A., 459  
 Blair, I. V., 569  
 Blair, T., 607  
 Blake, R. R., 504, 514  
 Blanchard, F. A., 132  
 Blank, H., 14  
 Blanton, D., 225  
 Blanton, H., 123, 139, 311  
 Blascovich, J., 235, 333  
 Blass, T., 197, 198, 200, 216, 217  
 Block, J., 105  
 Bloodsworth, K., 556–557  
 Bloom, P., 152  
 Boardman, S. K., 512  
 Boden, J. M., 52, 53  
 Bodenhausen, G. V., 49, 99, 237, 314, 331, 332, 333  
 Boehm, J. K., 537  
 Boehner, J., 514  
 Boer, D., 413, 606  
 Boggiano, A. K., 143–144, 144  
 Bohr, N., 182  
 Bombeck, E., 260  
 Bonanno, G. A., 69  
 Bond, C. F., Jr., 268, 350  
 Bond, M. H., 160, 364, 412, 490  
 Bond, R., 217  
 Bonnot, V., 348  
 Bono, J. E., 302  
 Bonta, B. D., 507  
 Boomsma, D. I., 533  
 Booth, A., 360  
 Borchard, E. M., 558  
 Borgida, E., 318, 342, 348, 570, 571, 581  
 Borkenau, P., 89  
 Bornstein, B., 558  
 Bornstein, G., 487  
 Bornstein, R. F., 85, 399, 400  
 Bos, P. A., 9  
 Bossard, J. H. S., 397  
 Bossio, L. M., 540  
 Boswell, J., 330  
 Bothwell, R. K., 334  
 Botvin, G. J., 259, 261  
 Botwin, M. D., 415  
 Bouas, K. S., 487  
 Bourgeois, M. J., 574  
 Bourke, M. L., 372  
 Bowen, E., 5  
 Bower, G. H., 98, 530  
 Bowlby, J., 425  
 Boyatzis, C. J., 25  
 Boyes, A. D., 418  
 Bradbury, T. N., 53, 418, 435  
 Bradfield, A. L., 563  
 Bradley, E., 458, 459  
 Bradley, O., 496  
 Bradley, W., 144  
 Bradshaw, E., 566  
 Bradshaw, G. S., 566  
 Branais, C. C., 390  
 Brandon, R., 558  
 Branscombe, N. R., 337  
 Bratslavsky, E., 416, 429  
 Brauer, M., 282, 286  
 Braun, C., 409  
 Braverman, J., 237  
 Bray, R. M., 578, 582  
 Breckler, S. J., 592  
 Bregman, N. J., 561  
 Brehm, J. W., 139, 146, 220, 241  
 Brehm, S. S., 220, 541, 543  
 Brekke, N., 342  
 Brenner, S. N., 63  
 Brescoll, V. L., 318  
 Brewer, M., 26  
 Brewer, M. B., 328, 329, 345, 509  
 Brewer, N., 558  
 Breyer, S., 378  
 Brickman, P., 219, 600  
 Brigham, J. C., 334, 559  
 Brin, S., 600  
 Briñol, P., 141, 229, 233  
 British Psychological Society, 27  
 Britt, T. W., 361  
 Brock, T. C., 234, 250  
 Brockner, J., 485  
 Brodt, S. E., 536  
 Bronfenbrenner, U., 491, 492  
 Broockman, D. E., 310  
 Brooks, D., 197, 283  
 Brooks, R. D., 239  
 Broome, A., 535  
 Brown, D., 152  
 Brown, E. H., 269  
 Brown, G., 439  
 Brown, H. J., Jr., 64  
 Brown, J. D., 50, 98, 411, 530  
 Brown, P., 46  
 Brown, R., 160, 334, 360, 500, 501, 603  
 Brown, R. A., 29, 131  
 Brown, R. P., 347  
 Brown, S. L., 365, 442, 506, 546  
 Brown, T. J., 450  
 Brown, V. R., 296  
 Brown, W. M., 409  
 Browning, C. R., 210, 211  
 Browning, E. B., 420  
 Browning, R., 424, 525  
 Brownlee, E. A., 71  
 Bruce, V., 559  
 Bruck, M., 561  
 Brückner, H., 212, 308  
 Bruun, S. E., 273  
 Bryan, J. H., 463  
 Bryan, T. S., 571  
 Buckhout, R., 558  
 Buddha, 120  
 Buehler, R., 46, 47, 90  
 Buffardi, L. E., 72  
 Bugental, D. B., 308  
 Bugental, D. P., 531  
 Bull, R., 406  
 Buller, D. J., 175  
 Bullock, J., 245  
 Bumstead, C. H., 298  
 Bundy, T., 371  
 Burchill, S. A. L., 531  
 Bureau of Labor Statistics, 178  
 Bureau of the Census, 85, 601  
 Burger, J. M., 65, 106, 130, 140, 197, 206, 210, 233, 300, 398, 447, 466  
 Burke, E., 593  
 Burkholder, R., 226, 600  
 Burns, D. D., 529  
 Burns, H. J., 560  
 Burns, J. F., 276  
 Burns, L., 65  
 Burnstein, E., 286, 361, 451  
 Burr, W. R., 397  
 Burson, K. A., 89  
 Burton, C. M., 547  
 Burton, R., 190  
 Bush, G. H. W., 121, 511  
 Bush, G. W., 136, 161, 293, 330, 494, 502, 575  
 Bushman, B. J., 51, 52, 53, 250, 280, 358, 367, 376, 377, 378, 380, 381, 382, 385, 387, 388, 550  
 Buss, D. M., 115, 153, 171, 172, 173, 409, 414, 415, 437  
 Butcher, S. H., 387  
 Butler, A. C., 531  
 Butler, D. M., 310  
 Butler, J. L., 269  
 Butler, S., 171  
 Butterfield, F., 569  
 Butz, D. A., 112  
 Buunk, B. P., 70, 428  
 Byers, S., 418  
 Byrne, D., 334, 412, 418  
 Byrnes, J. P., 167  
 Bytwerk, R. L., 239
- C**  
 Cacioppo, J. T., 9, 122, 142, 146, 228, 236, 240, 250, 294, 511, 533, 544, 546  
 Cafferty, J., 217  
 Cai, S., 41  
 Cain, H., 341  
 Cain, T. R., 111  
 Cairns, E., 498  
 Cal, A. V., 232  
 Caldwell, C., 570  
 Caldwell, D. F., 140  
 Caldwell, H. K., 427  
 Calley, W., 202, 203  
 Callow, K., 402  
 Cameron, C. D., 80, 454, 595  
 Cameron, G., 486  
 Cameron, L., 496  
 Campbell, A. C., 463  
 Campbell, D. T., 10, 190, 242, 450, 452, 602  
 Campbell, E. Q., 323  
 Campbell, L., 93  
 Campbell, W. K., 33, 41, 52, 53, 54, 61, 65, 72, 353, 434, 485, 604  
 Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 220  
 Canadian Psychological Association, 27  
 Cann, A., 570  
 Canter, D., 460  
 Cantor, N., 37, 66, 430  
 Cantril, H., 5, 298  
 Caputo, D., 89  
 Carducci, B. J., 421  
 Carli, L., 166  
 Carli, L. L., 300, 342  
 Carlo, G., 468  
 Carlsmith, J. M., 26, 136, 137, 240, 444  
 Carlson, J., 424  
 Carlson, K. A., 573  
 Carlson, M., 361, 446  
 Carlton, D. E., 74, 82  
 Carlton-Ford, S., 69  
 Carnagey, N. L., 381  
 Carnahan, T., 127  
 Carnegie, A., 389  
 Carnegie, D., 397, 415, 417  
 Carnevale, P. J., 493, 513  
 Carney, D. R., 141, 243  
 Carpenter, S., 310  
 Carpenter, T. F., 470  
 Carpusor, A. G., 310  
 Carranza, E., 163  
 Carré, J. M., 359  
 Carroll, D., 18, 547  
 Carroll, J. S., 313, 370  
 Carter, J., 293, 488  
 Carter, S., 336, 413  
 Cartwright, D. S., 284, 364  
 Carvallo, M., 394, 401  
 Carver, C. S., 125, 472, 531, 534, 539  
 Cash, T. F., 407  
 Caspi, A., 154, 358, 412  
 Cassidy, J., 427  
 Castelli, L., 320, 413  
 Castro, F., 103, 289  
 Caulkins, J. P., 574  
 Ceci, S. J., 561  
 Cemalcilar, Z., 394

- Center on Philanthropy, 470  
 Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 369, 372, 373  
 Central Intelligence Agency, 154  
 Cerankosky, B. C., 382  
 Chaiken, S., 120, 228, 229, 232, 233, 236, 239, 247  
 Chalmers, A., 63  
 Chambers, J. R., 68, 493  
 Champagne, F. A., 181  
 Chan, M. K. H., 298  
 Chance, J. E., 334  
 Chandler, J., 142  
 Chandra, A., 338  
 Chang, L., 171  
 Chapman, J. P., 523  
 Chapman, L. J., 523  
 Chapman, M., 339  
 Charles, Prince, 433  
 Charles I, King, 39  
 Chartrand, T. L., 86, 141, 192, 311, 412  
 Chatard, A., 343  
 Check, J., 372  
 Check, J. V. P., 371  
 Chen, E., 548  
 Chen, F. F., 413  
 Chen, H., 412  
 Chen, L.-H., 282  
 Chen, S., 36, 326  
 Chen, S. C., 267  
 Chen, Z., 396  
 Cheney, R., 361  
 Cheng, J. B., 250  
 Cheng, K., 58  
 Chermack, S. T., 358  
 Chesterfield, Lord, 236, 334, 463  
 Chesterton, G. K., 162  
 Chiao, J. Y., 404  
 Chicago Tribune, 558  
 Chida, Y., 537  
 Chiles, C., 210  
 Chilicki, W., 261  
 Chodorow, N. J., 163  
 Choi, D-W., 513  
 Choi, I., 42, 107  
 Choi, Y., 42  
 Chorost, A. F., 423  
 Christ, O., 496  
 Christakis, N. A., 190, 530  
 Christensen, P. N., 534  
 Chua, H. F., 41  
 Chua-Eoan, H., 253  
 Church, G. J., 275  
 Churchill, W., 227, 488  
 Cialdini, R. B., 130, 134, 140, 234, 258, 295, 328, 456, 457, 473, 475, 503, 511  
 Ciano, G., 69  
 Cicerello, A., 405  
 Cicero, 403, 568  
 Cikara, M., 451, 504  
 Cioffi, D., 477  
 Claassen, C., 496  
 Clack, B., 498  
 Clancy, S. M., 165  
 Clark, G., 469  
 Clark, K., 311  
 Clark, M., 311, 427–428, 446  
 Clark, M. H., 347  
 Clark, M. S., 428  
 Clark, R. D., III, 299, 466  
 Clark, R. S., III, 210  
 Clarke, A. C., 397  
 Clarke, V., 161  
 Clarkson, T., 322  
 Clary, E. G., 470  
 Clayton, S., 591, 595  
 Cleghorn, R., 22  
 Clement, R. W., 66, 334  
 Clemmon, M., 527  
 Clevstrom, J., 220  
 Clifford, M. M., 406  
 Clinton, H. R., 123, 221  
 Clore, G. L., 46, 417, 418, 450, 498  
 CNN, 201  
 Coan, J. A., 546  
 Coates, B., 476  
 Coats, E. J., 165  
 Cobain, K., 524  
 Codol, J.-P., 69  
 Cohen, D., 40, 364  
 Cohen, E. A., 270  
 Cohen, E. G., 507  
 Cohen, G. L., 348  
 Cohen, M., 200  
 Cohen, R., 156, 608  
 Cohen, S., 261, 537, 539, 546, 548  
 Cohn, E. G., 367  
 Cohrs, J. C., 321  
 Colarelli, S. M., 166  
 Colby, C. A., 512  
 Cole, S. W., 539  
 Coleman, L. M., 416  
 College Board, The, 394  
 Collins, M. E., 497  
 Collins, N. L., 429  
 Colman, A. M., 284  
 Comer, D. R., 276  
 Comfort, J. C., 576  
 Comstock, G., 376  
 Confer, J. C., 175, 176  
 Confucius, 91, 151, 154  
 Conger, R. D., 427  
 Conner, A., 177  
 Conner, M., 124  
 Conrad, J., 85  
 Contrada, R. J., 210  
 Conway, F., 254  
 Conway, L. G., III, 493  
 Conway, M., 85  
 Cook, C. E., 429  
 Cook, J., 588  
 Cook, S. W., 132, 507  
 Cook, T. D., 232  
 Cooke, L., 144  
 Cooley, C. H., 39  
 Coombs, R. H., 551  
 Cooper, H., 111  
 Cooper, H. M., 56  
 Cooper, J., 135, 145, 146, 262  
 Cooper, M., 77  
 Cooper, R., 507  
 Cooper, W. H., 216  
 Copper, C., 290  
 Cormann, M. D., 358  
 Correll, J., 315, 316  
 Coskun, H., 296  
 Costa, Jr., P. T., 160  
 Costanzo, M., 355, 388, 576, 577  
 Costello, C., 486  
 Cota, A. A., 221, 309  
 Cotton, J. L., 367  
 Cottrell, N. B., 270  
 Cousins, N., 116  
 Cowan, C. L., 444  
 Cowan, G., 568  
 Coyne, J. C., 531  
 Coyne, S. M., 374  
 Cozzolino, P. J., 320  
 Crabbe, P. B., 177  
 Crabtree, S., 164, 471  
 Craig, W., 354  
 Crandall, C. S., 210, 331  
 Crane, F., 429  
 Crano, W. D., 111  
 Crawford, M., 309  
 Crawford, T. J., 244  
 Crick, F., 295  
 Crisp, R. J., 496, 509  
 Critcher, C. R., 95  
 Crocker, J., 50, 54, 96, 327, 330, 335, 343, 606  
 Crockett, M. J., 513  
 Crofton, C., 411  
 Croizet, J-C., 348  
 Crompton, T., 595  
 Cromwell, O., 528  
 Crosby, F., 313  
 Crosby, F. J., 551  
 Crosby, J. R., 314  
 Cross, C. P., 167  
 Cross, P., 69  
 Cross, S. E., 42  
 Crossen, C., 23  
 Cross-National Collaborative Group, 532  
 Crowley, M., 165, 449, 468  
 Crowther, S., 462  
 Croxton, J. S., 84  
 Croyle, R. T., 146  
 Csikszentmihalyi, M., 378, 607  
 Cuddy, A. J. C., 202, 320  
 Cullum, J., 210  
 Cunningham, J. D., 426, 430  
 Cunningham, M. R., 446  
 Cunningham, W. A., 316  
 Cutler, B. L., 562, 565, 566, 571, 572, 575  
 Cutrona, C. E., 547  
 Cutshall, J. L., 558
- D**
- Dabbs, J. M., Jr., 176, 236, 358, 359, 459  
 D'Agostino, P. R., 400  
 Dalgas, O., 404  
 Dalrymple, T., 384  
 Dambrun, M., 10, 199  
 Damon, W., 19  
 Dando, C., 562  
 Daniels, D., 179  
 Dannelet, M., 527  
 Danner, D. D., 539  
 Danziger, S., 576  
 Darby, J., 216  
 Dardenne, B., 320  
 Darley, J. M., 350, 388, 399, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 464, 465, 467, 468, 471, 479  
 Darley, S., 262  
 Darrow, C., 567, 568, 569, 575  
 Darwin, C., 17, 142, 153, 174, 268, 387  
 Dasgupta, N., 331  
 Dashiell, J. F., 267  
 Dateline NBC, 458  
 Dauenheimer, D., 348  
 Davenport, G., 199  
 Davey Smith, G., 18  
 Davidson, R. J., 357  
 Davies, C., 558  
 Davies, M. F., 83  
 Davies, P., 174  
 Davies, P. G., 347  
 Davila, J., 551  
 Davis, B. M., 166  
 Davis, C. G., 96  
 Davis, D., 559  
 Davis, H. L., 228  
 Davis, J., 581  
 Davis, J. A., 248  
 Davis, J. H., 257, 578  
 Davis, J. L., 413  
 Davis, K. E., 101, 131, 425  
 Davis, L., 275  
 Davis, M. H., 533  
 Davis, N., 200  
 Davis, S. C., 587  
 Davis, T., 565  
 Davis, T. L., 572  
 Dawes, R. M., 19, 52, 67, 116, 487, 488, 526, 527  
 Dawkins, R., 154, 333, 450, 452  
 Dawson, N. V., 16  
 de Botton, A., 603  
 De Cremer, D., 488  
 De Graaf, N. D., 470  
 de Hoog, N., 238  
 de Hoogh, A. H. B., 302  
 De Houwer, J., 418  
 de Jong-Gierveld, J., 533  
 de Sherbinin, A., 591  
 de Tocqueville, A., 222, 361  
 De Vogli, R., 546  
 de Waal, F., 455  
 de Wit, L., 308  
 Dean, C., 225  
 Deary, I. J., 322, 548  
 Deaton, A., 64, 599  
 Deaux, K., 167  
 DeBruine, L. M., 401, 464, 466  
 Decety, J., 37  
 Dechêne, A., 245  
 DeChurch, L. A., 294  
 Deci, E. L., 59, 143, 145, 395  
 DeGeneres, E., 349  
 Delgado, J., 126  
 Delisi, M., 367, 591  
 Dembroski, T. M., 234  
 Demoulin, S., 329  
 DeNeve, K. M., 369  
 Denissen, J. J. A., 394  
 Dennett, D., 153, 174  
 Denollet, J., 537  
 Denrell, J., 214  
 Denson, T. F., 357  
 Department of Canadian Heritage, 510  
 DePaulo, B. M., 89, 550  
 Derks, B., 348  
 Derlega, V., 429  
 Dermer, M., 402, 421, 606  
 Dershowitz, A., 574  
 DeRubeis, R. J., 529  
 Desforges, D. M., 509  
 Desmarais, S. L., 565  
 DeSteno, D., 98, 120

Detweiler, J. B., 537  
 Deuser, W. E., 369  
 Deutsch, M., 212, 213, 483, 487, 492, 497, 509, 516  
 Deutsch, R., 86  
 Devendorf, J. L., 566  
 Devine, P. A., 331  
 Devine, P. G., 145, 311, 331, 335, 336  
 DeVos-Comby, L., 239  
 DeWall, C. N., 41, 55, 358, 395, 396, 550  
 Dexter, H. R., 571  
 Dey, E. L., 598  
 deZavala, G., 53  
 Di Tella, R., 599  
 Diallo, A., 316  
 Diamond, J., 410  
 Diamond, S. S., 574, 575  
 Diana, Princess, 155, 454  
 Diaz, I., 594  
 Dick, S., 308  
 Dickerson, S. S., 539  
 Dicum, J., 431  
 DiDonato, T. E., 328  
 Diehl, M., 295  
 Diekman, A. B., 93, 164  
 Diekmann, K. A., 62  
 Diener, E., 125, 278, 279, 280, 357, 599, 600, 602, 608  
 Dienstbier, R. A., 369  
 Dietrich, M., 415  
 Dijker, A. J., 156  
 Dijksterhuis, A., 87, 229  
 Dill, J. C., 533, 534  
 Dill, K., 383  
 Dillehay, R. C., 582  
 Dindia, K., 164  
 Dion, K., 406, 407  
 Dion, K. K., 233, 406, 422, 423, 424, 433  
 Dion, K. L., 221, 309, 337, 406, 422, 423, 424, 433, 502  
 Dishion, T. J., 284  
 Disraeli, B., 120  
 Dixon, J., 482, 496, 497, 498  
 Dobzhansky, T., 174  
 Dodge, R. W., 245  
 Doherty, T. J., 591  
 Dohrenwend, B., 546  
 Dolinski, D., 446, 477  
 Dollard, J., 360  
 Dollinger, S. J., 165  
 Dolnik, L., 249  
 Donal Carlston, D. E., 82  
 Donaldson, Z. R., 425  
 Donders, N. C., 316  
 Donnellan, M. B., 41, 53, 427  
 Donnerstein, E., 371, 372, 373, 374, 376, 466  
 Doob, A. N., 93, 232, 474, 564  
 Doria, J. R., 69  
 D'Orlando, F., 370  
 Dorr, A., 260  
 Dotan-Eliaz, O., 395  
 Dotsch, R., 316  
 Doty, R. M., 321  
 Douglas, C., 97  
 Douglas, K. M., 278  
 Douglass, A. B., 564  
 Douglass, F., 128  
 Douthat, R., 77  
 Douthitt, E. Z., 270  
 Dovidio, J., 466

Dovidio, J. F., 311, 312, 326, 457, 505  
 Dovidio, J. R., 310  
 Dowd, M., 491  
 Downing, L. L., 279  
 Downs, A. C., 568  
 Doyle, A. C., 16  
 Doyle, J. M., 169, 558  
 Draguns, J. G., 532  
 Drapeau, J., 90  
 Dreber, A., 484  
 Driedger, L., 509  
 Driskell, J. E., 211  
 Drolet, A. L., 487  
 Drury, J., 501  
 Drwecki, B. B., 315  
 Drydakis, N., 313  
 Dryer, D. C., 415  
 DuBois, W. E. B., 509  
 Duck, J. M., 247  
 Dudley, K. A., 106  
 Duffy, M., 136, 225  
 Dunbar, R., 487  
 Duncan, B. L., 340  
 Dunfield, K. A., 447  
 Dunkel-Schetter, C., 199  
 Dunn, E., 48, 475  
 Dunn, E. W., 72, 107, 442, 603  
 Dunn, J. R., 514  
 Dunn, M., 172  
 Dunning, D., 46, 64, 66, 68, 88, 89, 350, 562  
 Durante, K. M., 410  
 Durrheim, K., 497, 498  
 Dutton, D., 152  
 Dutton, D. G., 353, 421–422, 466  
 Dutton, K. A., 50  
 Duval, S., 472  
 Duval, V. H., 472  
 Dweck, C. S., 56  
 Dye, M. W. G., 382  
 Dykstra, P. A., 533

## E

Eagles, M., 491  
 Eagly, A., 166, 228, 449, 468  
 Eagly, A. H., 120, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 181, 182, 232, 247, 286, 300, 317, 318, 406, 468  
 Easterbrook, G., 595  
 Easterlin, R. A., 600  
 Eastwick, P. W., 48, 173, 404, 415  
 Eaton, A. A., 249  
 Ebbesen, E. B., 387  
 Eberhardt, J. L., 316, 340  
 Ebert, J., 60  
 Ebert, J. E. J., 47, 59  
 Eckersley, R., 358, 601  
 Eckes, T., 124  
*Economist*, 577  
 Edelson, M., 188  
 Edney, J. J., 487  
 Edsall, T. B., 227  
 Edwards, C. P., 177  
 Edwards, D., 494  
 Edwards, J., 424  
 Edwards, J. A., 98  
 Edwards, K., 236, 571  
 Efran, M. G., 567

## F

Egan, L. C., 140  
 Ehrlich, P., 173  
 Ehrlinger, J., 312  
 Eibach, R., 109  
 Eibach, R. P., 312  
 Eich, E., 85  
 Eichmann, A., 197, 202, 205–206  
 Einstein, A., 354  
 Eisenberg, N., 165, 447, 454, 468  
 Eisenberger, N. I., 396  
 Eisenberger, R., 144  
 Eisenhower, D., 354  
 Eiser, J. R., 136  
 Elder, G. H., Jr., 405  
 Elder, J., 328  
 Eldersveld, S. J., 245  
 Eliot, G., 411  
 Eliot, T. S., 114, 240  
 Ellemers, N., 329  
 Elliott, A. J., 143, 145  
 Elliott, J., 121  
 Elliott, L., 469  
 Ellis, B. J., 169  
 Ellis, H. D., 334  
 Ellis, L., 163  
 Ellison, P. A., 278  
 Ellman, L. M., 579  
 Ellsworth, P., 576  
 Ellsworth, P. C., 569, 574, 575, 581  
 Elms, A., 206  
 Elms, A. C., 197  
 Emerson, D., 558  
 Emerson, R. W., 119, 176, 205, 277, 298, 342, 415  
 Emery, R., 437  
 Emmons, R. A., 550  
 Emswiller, T., 464  
 Eng, P. M., 546  
 Engemann, K. M., 407  
 Engs, R., 220  
 Ennis, B. J., 256  
 Ennis, R., 363  
 Enzle, M. E., 97, 572  
 Epictetus, 147  
 Epley, N., 27, 63, 79, 533  
 Epstein, J. A., 261  
 Epstein, M., 424  
 Epstein, S., 215  
 Epstude, K., 95  
 Erb, H-P., 221  
 Erber, R., 115, 331  
 Erbring, L., 431  
 Erickson, B., 232, 513  
 Erikson, E. H., 427  
 Ernst, M. O., 294  
 Eron, L. D., 374, 375, 389  
 Escobar-Chaves, S. L., 378  
 Eshelman, A., 331  
 Espelage, D., 391  
 Esser, J. K., 293  
 Esses, V. M., 312, 333, 490, 567  
 Estess, F., 525  
 Etaugh, C. E., 309  
 Etzioni, A., 187, 223, 312, 510, 516, 517  
 Evans, D., 465  
 Evans, G. W., 269  
 Evans, M., 91  
 Evans, M. A., 411  
 Evans, R. I., 259  
 Exline, J. J., 55

## G

Fabrigar, L. R., 236  
 Fairchild, H. H., 568  
 Falbo, T., 394  
 Falk, A., 325  
 Falk, C. F., 62  
 Farb, N. A. S., 37  
 Farquhar, J. W., 246  
 Farrell, E. F., 260  
 Farrelly, M. C., 238  
 Farris, C., 100  
 Farwell, L., 107  
 Faulkner, S. L., 274  
 Faust, D., 525  
 Faye, C., 27  
 Fazio, R., 125, 146  
 Fazio, R. H., 123, 146, 311, 500, 525  
 Feather, N. T., 10  
 Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), 93, 168, 312, 354, 370  
 Federal Trade Commission (FTC), 260  
 Feeney, J., 428  
 Feeney, J. A., 426  
 Fein, S., 330, 349  
 Feinberg, J. M., 269  
 Feinberg, M., 238  
 Feingold, A., 403, 405, 406, 408, 567, 568  
 Feldman, M., 173  
 Feldman, N. S., 342  
 Feldman, R. S., 111, 112, 165  
 Feldman, S. S., 509  
 Feller, B., 508  
 Felson, R. B., 355  
 Fenigstein, A., 534, 535  
 Ferguson, C. J., 382  
 Ferguson, M. J., 86  
 Ferguson, S., 433  
 Ferguson, T. J., 561  
 Fergusson, D. M., 434  
 Ferriman, K., 165  
 Feshbach, S., 260, 261  
 Festinger, L., 38, 119, 135, 136, 137, 138, 232, 249, 277, 287  
 Feygina, I., 593  
 Feynman, R., 145  
 Fichter, J., 322  
 Fiedler, F. E., 300  
 Fiedler, L., 221  
 Fincham, F., 100  
 Fincham, F. D., 53, 132  
 Finchilescu, G., 378, 496, 499  
 Findley, M. J., 56  
 Fingerhut, A. W., 169, 550  
 Finkel, E., 404  
 Finkel, E. J., 54, 431  
 Finkenauer, C., 416  
 Fischer, E. F., 422  
 Fischer, G. J., 569  
 Fischer, P., 134, 377, 462  
 Fischer, R., 63, 590, 606  
 Fischhoff, B., 14, 91  
 Fischstein, D. S., 168  
 Fishbein, D., 414  
 Fishbein, M., 123, 124  
 Fisher, G. H., 559  
 Fisher, H., 423, 514  
 Fisher, J. D., 447  
 Fisher, K., 177  
 Fisher, R. P., 168, 200, 562  
 Fishman, S., 492

- Fiske, S. T., 10, 115, 154, 202, 205, 314, 316, 318, 320, 334, 335, 350, 351, 604  
 Fitzpatrick, A. R., 286  
 Fitzpatrick, M. A., 435  
 Fitzsimons, G. J., 124  
 Flay, B. R., 232, 259  
 Fleming, M. A., 570  
 Fletcher, G. J. O., 85, 99, 339, 403, 418, 428  
 Flynn, F. J., 65  
 Foa, E. B., 440  
 Foa, U. G., 440  
 Fogelman, E., 474  
 Fokkema, T., 533  
 Foley, L. A., 498  
 Follett, M. P., 511  
 Fontes, N. E., 572  
 FootPrintNetwork.org, 587  
 Forbes, C., 348  
 Ford, R., 311, 323  
 Ford, T. E., 324  
 Fordham, J., 574  
 Forgas, J. P., 97, 98, 99, 237, 445  
 Form, W. H., 450  
 Forster, E. M., 145  
 Forster, J., 348  
 Forsyth, D. R., 51, 540  
 Foss, R. D., 472  
 Foster, C. A., 422, 434  
 Foster, J. D., 54  
 Fournier, R., 311  
 Fowler, J. H., 190, 530  
 Fox, G., 469  
 Francesconi, M., 407  
 Francis of Assisi, St., 443  
 Frank, A., 141  
 Frank, J. D., 256  
 Frank, P., 466  
 Frank, R., 325  
 Frankel, A., 70  
 Franklin, B., 33, 132, 564  
 Franklin, B. J., 466  
 Frantz, C. M., 493  
 Franzoi, S. L., 533  
 Fraser, S. C., 128  
 Frasure-Smith, N., 537  
 Frederick, D. A., 409, 410  
 Freedman, J. L., 128, 132, 249, 269  
 Freeh, L., 391  
 Freeman, M. A., 40  
 French, J. R. P., 63  
 Frenda, S. J., 561  
 Freshley, H. B., 466  
 Freud, S., 63, 142, 345, 356, 365, 503  
 Freund, B., 65  
 Frey, B. S., 468  
 Frey, J., 366  
 Friebel, G., 163  
 Friedman, H. S., 415  
 Friedman, R., 143  
 Friedman, T. L., 361  
 Friedrich, J., 70  
 Friedrich, L. K., 475, 476  
 Frieze, I. H., 407  
 Frimer, J. A., 468  
 Frisell, T., 357  
 Froming, W. J., 125  
 Fromm, E., 405  
 Fry, A., 298  
 Fulbright, J. W., 291, 487  
 Fuller, S. R., 292  
 Fulton, R., 298  
 Fultz, J., 454, 457  
 Funder, D. C., 105, 115  
 Furnham, A., 108, 341  
**G**  
 Gable, S. L., 429  
 Gabrenya, W. K., Jr., 275  
 Gabriel, S., 163, 394  
 Gaebelein, J. W., 383  
 Gaedert, W., 490  
 Gaertner, L., 43, 62, 329  
 Gaertner, S. L., 311, 345, 465, 466, 505, 509  
 Gailliot, M. T., 54, 55  
 Gaissmaier, W., 115  
 Galanter, M., 256  
 Galbraith, J. K., 599  
 Gale, C. R., 57  
 Galinsky, A. D., 97, 513  
 Galinsky, E., 63  
 Galizio, M., 236  
 Gallagher, B., 311  
 Gallo, L., 606  
 Gallo, L. C., 548  
 Gallup, 174, 338, 370, 502, 576  
 Gallup, G. G., Jr., 409, 410  
 Gallup, G. H., 495  
 Gallup, G. H., Jr., 322  
 Gallup Organization, 136, 170, 225, 312, 317  
 Gange, J. J., 269  
 Gangestad, S. W., 73, 409, 410  
 Garb, H. N., 523, 528  
 Garcia-Marques, T., 402  
 Gardner, G., 607  
 Gardner, M., 253  
 Gardner, W. L., 163, 430, 534  
 Garner, R., 477  
 Garrett, B. L., 558, 561  
 Garrity, M. J., 361  
 Garry, M., 561  
 Garver-Apgar, C. E., 414  
 Gates, B., 457  
 Gates, G. J., 93  
 Gates, M. F., 267  
 Gaucher, D., 310  
 Gaunt, R., 412  
 Gavanski, I., 49  
 Gavzer, B., 575  
 Gawande, A., 63  
 Gawronski, B., 49  
 Gayoso, A., 575  
 Gazzaniga, M. S., 88, 126, 558  
 Gearhart, J. P., 176  
 Gebauer, J. E., 399  
 Geen, R. G., 269, 359, 376, 377  
 Geers, A. L., 241  
 Gelfand, M., 240  
 Gelfand, M. J., 159  
 Geller, D., 205  
 Gelles, R. J., 364  
 Genovese, K., 458, 461, 462  
 Gentile, B., 41, 61  
 Gentile, D. A., 375, 376, 379, 381, 382, 476  
 George, D., 468  
 George, H., 194  
 Gerard, H. B., 208, 212, 213, 253  
 Gerbasi, K. C., 576  
 Gerber, J., 395  
 Gerbner, G., 374, 378  
 Gergen, K. E., 478  
 Gerrig, R. J., 93  
 Gershoff, E. T., 364  
 Gerstein, L. H., 468  
 Gerstenfeld, P. B., 285  
 Gertner, J., 608  
 Gesan, A., 493  
 Gesch, B., 359  
 Gesch, C. B., 360  
 Geyer, A. L., 194  
 Giancola, P. R., 358  
 Gibbons, F. X., 125, 444  
 Gibson, B., 65  
 Gibson, J. I., 496  
 Gifford, R., 338, 485, 486, 592  
 Gigerenzer, G., 7, 87, 88, 94, 115  
 Gigone, D., 286  
 Gilbert, D., 46, 60  
 Gilbert, D. T., 38, 47, 48, 49, 59, 101, 104, 257, 333, 399, 602, 605  
 Gilbert, L. A., 166  
 Gildersleeve, K., 173  
 Gill, M. J., 89  
 Gillath, O. M., 427  
 Gillham, J. E., 543  
 Gilligan, C., 163, 164  
 Gillis, J., 588  
 Gillis, J. S., 181  
 Gilman, C. P., 225  
 Gilovich, T., 34, 35, 62, 64, 90, 96, 97, 109, 460, 603  
 Giltay, E. J., 539  
 Gino, F., 210  
 Ginsburg, B., 362  
 Giuliani, R., 502  
 Gladwell, M., 15  
 Glasman, L. R., 125  
 Glass, C. R., 98  
 Glass, D. C., 131  
 Gleason, M. E. J., 442  
 Glenn, N., 249  
 Glick, P., 318, 320  
 Glidden, M. V., 512  
 Gluszek, A., 326  
 Gockel, C., 275  
 Goel, S., 66  
 Goethals, G. R., 66, 67, 234  
 Goethe, 125, 140, 192, 193, 241  
 Goetz, B., 572  
 Goetz, J. L., 448  
 Goggin, W. C., 524  
 Goh, J. O., 41  
 Goldberg, L. R., 107  
 Goldberg, P., 318  
 Goldhagen, D. J., 203  
 Golding, W., 277, 489  
 Goldman, W., 408  
 Goldstein, A. G., 334  
 Goldstein, A. P., 384, 389  
 Goldstein, D., 23  
 Goldstein, J. H., 387  
 Golec de Zavala, A., 168, 255  
 Gómez, Á., 327  
 Gonsalkorale, K., 396  
 Gonsalves, B., 561  
 Gonzaga, G. C., 412, 421  
 Gonzalez, A., 507  
 González, K. V., 496  
 González-Vallejo, C., 87  
 Goode, A., 469  
 Goode, E., 193, 565  
 Goodhart, D. E., 66  
 Goodman-Delahunty, J., 575  
 Goodsell, C. A., 564  
 Gorbachev, M., 493, 494, 501  
 Gordijn, E. H., 578  
 Gordon, R. A., 416  
 Gore, A., 504  
 Gortmaker, S. L., 24, 308  
 Gosselin, J. T., 56  
 Gotlib, I. H., 512, 530  
 Gottlieb, A., 463  
 Gottlieb, J., 472  
 Gottman, J., 435  
 Gough, H. G., 535  
 Gough, S., 204  
 Gould, M. S., 193  
 Gould, S. J., 487  
 Gouldner, A. W., 447  
 Gove, W. R., 550  
 Govern, J. M., 278  
 Grajek, S., 425  
 Gramzow, R. H., 69  
 Granberg, D., 209  
 Granstrom, K., 293  
 Granville, J., 110  
 Graves, J., 272  
 Gray, J. D., 62  
 Graziano, W. G., 56, 381  
 Greeley, A. M., 133, 430  
 Green, A. G., 559  
 Green, A. R., 315  
 Green, C. W., 325, 506  
 Green, D. P., 506  
 Green, J., 107  
 Green, M. D., 93  
 Green, S., 407  
 Green, S. K., 471  
 Greenberg, J., 52, 69, 71, 330, 415, 490  
 Greene, D., 143  
 Greene, J., 451  
 Greenlees, C., 275  
 Greenspan, A., 16  
 Greenwald, A. G., 85, 86, 88, 122, 123, 145, 310, 311, 314, 316  
 Greer, G., 160  
 Gregory, R. J., 199  
 Greitemeyer, T., 134, 310, 377, 381, 389, 476  
 Griffitt, W., 168, 366  
 Grim, B. J., 307  
 Grishevicius, V., 356, 450  
 Groenenboom, A., 275  
 Grofman, B., 581  
 Gronlund, S. D., 564  
 Gross, A. E., 411, 444  
 Gross, A. M., 100  
 Gross, J. T., 354  
 Gross, P. H., 350  
 Gross, T. F., 334  
 Grossmann, I., 514  
 Grote, N. K., 428  
 Grove, J. R., 61  
 Grove, W. M., 526  
 Grube, J. W., 330  
 Gruder, C. L., 39  
 Gruendl, M., 409  
 Gruman, J. C., 342  
 Grunberger, R., 133  
 Grusec, J. E., 464  
 Grush, J. E., 125, 245, 512  
 Guadagno, R. E., 130, 239  
 Guardian, 359  
 Guéguen, N., 129

Guerin, B., 63, 268  
 Guimond, S., 320  
 Guinness, O., 433  
 Gullone, E., 533  
 Gunaratna, R., 240  
 Gunter, B., 341  
 Gupta, U., 424  
 Gurin, P., 501  
 Guthrie, W., 219  
 Gutierrez, S. E., 410, 411  
 Gutmann, D., 176

**H**

Hacker, H. M., 320  
 Hackman, J. R., 276  
 Hadden, J. K., 322  
 Haddock, G., 163, 250, 317  
 Haddon, L., 376  
 Haeffel, G. J., 529  
 Haemmerlie, F. M., 542, 543  
 Hafer, C. L., 342  
 Hafner, H., 193  
 Hagendoorn, L., 309  
 Hagerty, M., 604  
 Hagerty, M. R., 362  
 Hagtvet, K. A., 20  
 Haidt, J., 10, 36, 463  
 Haining, J., 439  
 Hains, S. C., 293  
 Halberstadt, A. G., 165  
 Halberstadt, J., 409, 504  
 Haldane, J. B. S., 451  
 Halevy, N., 302  
 Hall, D. L., 322  
 Hall, G. C. N., 377  
 Hall, J. A., 165, 167, 404  
 Hall, M., 573  
 Hall, T., 85  
 Hall, V. C., 144  
 Halpern, D. F., 170  
 Halverson, A. M., 574  
 Hamamura, T., 62  
 Hamberger, J., 501  
 Hamblin, R. L., 388  
 Hamermesh, D. S., 407  
 Hamilton, D. L., 96, 338, 339  
 Hamm, H. K., 199  
 Hammerstein, O., 411  
 Hampson, R. B., 468  
 Hancock, K. J., 334  
 Hancock, R. D., 73  
 Hand, L., 116, 528  
 Haney, C., 127, 569, 574,  
     576, 577  
 Hans, V. P., 575  
 Hansel, T. C., 502  
 Hansen, D. E., 470  
 Hansen, J., 400  
 Hansen, P., 405  
 Hanson, D. J., 220  
 Harbaugh, W. T., 442  
 Harber, K. D., 314  
 Harburg, E. Y., 398  
 Hardin, G., 485  
 Hardy, C., 273  
 Hardy, C. L., 442  
 Harel, Y., 354  
 Haritos-Fatouros, M., 204  
 Harkins, S., 272, 274  
 Harkins, S. G., 250, 272, 273, 275  
 Harkness, K. L., 529

Harley, C. D.G., 589  
 Harmon-Jones, E., 146, 330, 400  
 Harries, K. D., 367  
 Harris, E., 395, 526  
 Harris, J. R., 163, 179, 427  
 Harris, L. T., 202, 316  
 Harris, M. J., 111  
 Harris, V., 103, 106  
 Harrison, A. A., 400  
 Hart, A. J., 314, 331  
 Hart, W., 135  
 Harton, H. C., 210  
 Hartup, W. W., 550  
 Harvey, J. H., 430, 437  
 Harvey, R. J., 534  
 Haselton, M. G., 66, 115,  
     173, 409  
 Haslam, N., 4, 101, 329  
 Haslam, S. A., 127, 300  
 Hass, R. G., 314  
 Hasselhoff, D., 67  
 Hastie, R., 59, 286, 293, 567,  
     573, 575, 578, 580, 581  
 Hastorf, A., 5  
 Hatfield, E., 142, 232, 406, 417,  
     418, 421, 422, 423, 424, 428  
 Hatfield (Walster), E., 404, 427  
 Hatzfeld, J., 384  
 Haugen, J., 24  
 Haugtvedt, C. P., 242  
 Hauser, M., 152  
 Havas, D. A., 141  
 Havel, V., 605  
 Hawkins, L. B., 73  
 Hawkins, W. L., 572  
 Hawley, L. C., 396, 533  
 Hawthorne, N., 127  
 Hazan, C., 426, 427, 434  
 Hazlitt, W., 320, 529  
 He, Y., 335  
 Headey, B., 63  
 Hearold, S., 476  
 Hearst, P., 218, 219  
 Heath, C., 69, 220  
 Heatherton, T. F., 308  
 Hebl, M. R., 308, 323  
 Hecato, 415  
 Hedge, A., 451  
 Heesacker, M., 545  
 Hegarty, P., 166  
 Hehman, J. A., 308  
 Heider, F., 101  
 Heine, S. J., 40, 43, 44, 62, 159,  
     280, 340  
 Heinrich, L. M., 533  
 Heinz, A., 358  
 Heise, L., 373  
 Heisenberg, W., 11  
 Hellman, P., 439  
 Helweg-Larsen, M., 167, 188  
 Hemslay, G. D., 232  
 Henderson, M., 159  
 Henderson-King, E. I., 337  
 Hendrick, C., 236, 423  
 Hendrick, S. S., 423, 430  
 Hennenlotter, A., 141  
 Hennigan, K. M., 362  
 Henrich, J., 28, 442  
 Henry, P. J., 28, 364  
 Henslin, M., 97  
 Hepworth, J. T., 325  
 Heradstveit, D., 492  
 Herbener, E. S., 412  
 Herbenick, D., 338  
 Herek, G. M., 308  
 Herlocker, C. E., 485  
 Hernandez, A. E., 372  
 Herodotus, 341  
 Hershberger, S. L., 451  
 Hershey, J. C., 342  
 Hertwig, R., 296  
 Herzog, S. M., 296  
 Heschel, A., 226  
 Heslin, P. A., 296  
 Heuer, C. A., 310  
 Hewstone, M., 100, 333, 334,  
     341, 345, 498, 501, 509  
 Higgins, E. T., 128, 275, 530  
 Higgins, R. L., 68  
 Highfield, R., 450  
 Hillery, J. M., 268  
 Hilpert, C. J., 210  
 Hilton, J. L., 80, 349  
 Himmelstein, K. E. W., 308  
 Himmler, H., 199  
 Hinckley, J., Jr., 339  
 Hine, D. W., 485, 486  
 Hines, M., 176  
 Hinkle, S., 327  
 Hinsz, V. B., 286, 294, 385  
 Hippocrates, 366  
 Hirschman, R. S., 259  
 Hirt, E. R., 83, 530  
 Hitchcock, A., 374  
 Hitler, A., 90, 133, 229, 291, 330,  
     353, 494  
 Hitsch, G. J., 405, 406  
 Hixon, J. G., 333  
 Ho, S. J., 413  
 Hobbes, T., 355  
 Hobden, K. L., 137  
 Hodges, B. H., 194  
 Hodson, G., 500  
 Hoffer, E., 192  
 Hoffman, C., 49  
 Hoffman, L. W., 323  
 Hoffman, M. L., 455  
 Hofling, C. K., 200  
 Hofmann, W., 418  
 Hofmeister, B., 593  
 Hogan, R., 300  
 Hogg, M. A., 210, 287, 293,  
     302, 326  
 Holland, R. W., 79, 146  
 Hollander, E. P., 214  
 Holmberg, D., 84  
 Holmes, J. G., 84, 418, 429  
 Holmes, O. W., 93, 558, 611  
 Holmgren, J. A., 574  
 Holt, R., 578  
 Holtgraves, T., 42  
 Holt-Lunstad, J., 533  
 Holtzman, Z., 498  
 Holtz, R., 329  
 Holtzworth, A., 100  
 Holtzworth-Munroe, A., 100  
 Holyfield, E., 366  
 Honigman, R. J., 406  
 Hoorens, V., 63, 64, 399  
 Hoover, C. W., 472  
 Hooykaas, R., 117  
 Hopkins, A., 350, 351  
 Hormuth, S. E., 71  
 Horner, V., 211, 455  
 Hornstein, H., 356  
 Horowitz, L., 426  
 Horowitz, L. M., 415  
 Horowitz, S. V., 512  
 Horry, R., 334  
 Horwitz, A. V., 551  
 Hosch, H. M., 101, 566  
 Houck, M. M., 574  
 Houghton, J., 588, 589, 590  
 House, R. J., 301  
 Houston, V., 406  
 Hovland, C. I., 227, 236,  
     241, 325  
 Howard, D. J., 229  
 Howell, C. J., 599  
 Howell, R. T., 599  
 Hoyle, R. H., 413  
 Hsee, C. K., 59  
 Hu, L., 334  
 Huart, J., 343, 344  
 Huddy, L., 334  
 Huesmann, L. R., 357, 375, 389  
 Huff, C., 27  
 Hugenberg, K., 314, 335  
 Hui, C. H., 490  
 Hull, J. G., 280, 535  
 Hume, D., 293  
 Hunt, A. R., 178  
 Hunt, M., 57, 165, 457  
 Hunt, P. J., 268  
 Hunt, R., 308  
 Hunter, J. A., 492  
 Hur, T., 95  
 Hurt, H. T., 534  
 Husband, R. W., 267  
 Huston, A. C., 374  
 Huston, T. L., 405, 423, 436  
 Hutnik, N., 509  
 Hutson, M., 575  
 Huxley, T. H., 268  
 Hvistendahl, M., 319  
 Hyde, J. S., 163, 168, 169, 531  
 Hyers, L. L., 205  
 Hyman, H. H., 311  
 Hyman, R., 129

Ibler, S., 321  
 Ibsen, H., 116  
 Ickes, B., 107  
 Ickes, W., 183, 216, 280, 344,  
     448  
 Iizuka, Y., 158  
 Ijzerman, H., 79  
 Imai, Y., 62  
 Imber, L., 336  
 Imhoff, R., 67, 221, 342  
 Ingham, A. G., 272  
 Inglehart, M. R., 37  
 Inglehart, R., 59, 154, 178,  
     437, 550  
 Inkster, J. A., 139  
 Inman, M. L., 493  
 Innes, J. M., 11  
 Insko, C. A., 413, 415  
 International Parliamentary  
     Union, 166, 178  
 International  
     Telecommunication  
         Union, 394  
 Inzlicht, M., 346  
 Ireland, M. E., 142, 192, 412  
 Irvine, A. A., 106  
 Isen, A. M., 98, 446  
 Isozaki, M., 282

ISR Newsletter, 133  
 Ito, T. A., 358  
 Iyengar, S. S., 59

**J**

Jackman, M. R., 312, 317  
 Jackson, J., 109  
 Jackson, J. M., 269, 273  
 Jackson, J. W., 340  
 Jackson, L. A., 406  
 Jacob, C., 129  
 Jacobs, R. C., 190  
 Jacobson, C. K., 200  
 Jacobson, L., 111  
 Jacobson, N. S., 100  
 Jacoby, S., 414  
 Jacques-Tiura, A. J., 373  
 Jaffe, Y., 384  
 James, D. J., 358  
 James, W., 140, 142, 147, 148,  
     321, 395

Jamieson, D. W., 112, 269

Janda, L. H., 407

Janes, L. M., 214

Janis, I. L., 236, 237, 241, 289,  
     290, 292, 293, 294, 493, 494

Jankowiak, W. R., 422

Janoff, D., 544

Jaremka, L. M., 434

Jason, L. A., 472

Jefferson, T., 90

Jeffery, R. W., 544

Jelalian, E., 83

Jellison, J. M., 107

Jemmott, J. B., III, 539

Jenkins, A. C., 316

Jenkins, H. M., 96

Jennings, D. L., 96

Jensen, J., 308

Jensen, J. D., 239

Jervis, R., 80, 491

Jetten, J., 211

John, O. P., 160

John Allen, J. J. B., 400

John Bargh, J. A., 285, 431

Johns, M., 348

Johnson, A. L., 266

Johnson, B., 328

Johnson, B. T., 238, 300

Johnson, C., 402

Johnson, C. S., 324, 498

Johnson, D. J., 411

Johnson, D. W., 507, 512

Johnson, E. J., 23

Johnson, H., 427

Johnson, J., 127

Johnson, J. D., 324, 344, 377

Johnson, J. G., 375

Johnson, Louis, 502

Johnson, Lyndon, 90, 289,

291, 485

Johnson, M. H., 98, 530

Johnson, M. K., 322

Johnson, P., 218

Johnson, R. D., 279

Johnson, R. T., 507, 512

Johnson, S., 330

Johnson, W., 599

Johnston, L., 85

Joiner, T. E., Jr., 193, 531

Joinson, A. N., 431

Joly-Mascheroni, R. M., 191  
 Jonas, K., 193  
 Jones, C. R., 229  
 Jones, C. S., 568  
 Jones, E., 103, 106  
 Jones, E. E., 71, 101, 104, 106,  
     131, 242, 416, 534, 541, 564  
 Jones, J., 252, 254, 256, 257, 401  
 Jones, J. M., 311, 345, 413, 456  
 Jones, J. T., 401, 426  
 Jones, R. A., 241  
 Jones, T., 322  
 Jones, T. F., 193  
 Jones, W. H., 28, 434  
 Josephson, W. L., 377  
 Jost, J. T., 51, 343  
 Joubert, J., 213  
 Jourard, S. M., 429  
 Jourden, F. J., 69  
 Judd, C. M., 316  
 Judge, T. A., 54, 302  
 Jussim, L., 11, 79, 111, 112, 115,  
     309, 310, 338, 348

**K**

Kagan, J., 10, 357  
 Kagehiro, D. K., 573, 574, 578  
 Kahan, D. M., 232  
 Kahle, L. R., 124  
 Kahlor, L., 371  
 Kahn, A., 490  
 Kahn, M. W., 362  
 Kahneman, D., 48, 88, 92,  
     93, 95, 97, 98, 295, 400, 492,  
     515, 599  
 Kaiser, C. R., 320  
 Kaiser Family Foundation, 377  
 Kalenkoski, C. M., 177  
 Kalick, S. M., 406  
 Kalton, G., 22  
 Kalven, H. Jr., 567, 577,  
     578, 580  
 Kambara, T., 367  
 Kameda, T., 298  
 Kammer, D., 107  
 Kanagawa, C., 40  
 Kanazawa, S., 405  
 Kandel, D. B., 414  
 Kandinsky, W., 328, 329  
 Kanekar, S., 101  
 Kanten, A. B., 63  
 Kaplan, M., 581  
 Kaplan, M. F., 288, 333,  
     568, 570  
 Kaprio, J., 546  
 Karasawa, M., 399  
 Karau, S. J., 273, 275  
 Karberg, J. C., 358  
 Karna, A., 385  
 Karney, B. R., 418, 430, 435  
 Karremans, J. C., 410  
 Kasen, S., 176  
 Kashima, E. S., 40  
 Kashima, Y., 4, 40  
 Kashy, D. A., 534  
 Kasser, T., 595, 602  
 Kassin, S. M., 112, 561, 566, 571  
 Katz, E., 246  
 Katz, I., 466  
 Katz, J., 531  
 Katzev, R., 212, 473  
 Katz-Wise, S. L., 165  
 Kaufman, J., 364  
 Kaufman-Gilliland, C. M., 486  
 Kawachi, I., 362, 548  
 Kawakami, K., 120, 205, 310  
 Kay, A. C., 343  
 Kaye, D., 237  
 Kearney, K. A., 330  
 Keating, J. P., 250  
 Keillor, G., 63  
 Keith, P. M., 428  
 Keizer, K., 157  
 Keller, E. B., 246  
 Keller, J., 348  
 Kellerman, J., 436  
 Kellermann, A. L., 369  
 Kelley, H. H., 102, 112  
 Kelley, K., 387  
 Kelly, B. R., 363  
 Kelly, D. J., 335, 402  
 Kelly, K. M., 174  
 Kelman, H. C., 492, 514  
 Kennedy, D., 153  
 Kennedy, J. F., 214, 233, 289,  
     290, 516  
 Kennedy, K. A., 492  
 Kennedy, R., 292  
 Kenny, D. A., 413, 415  
 Kenrick, D. T., 171, 173, 367,  
     410, 411, 413, 424  
 Kenworthy, J. B., 298  
 Kernahan, C., 168  
 Kernis, M. H., 54  
 Kerr, N. L., 166, 212, 273, 275,  
     486, 487, 488, 572, 578, 580,  
     581, 582  
 Kerr, R. A., 589, 590, 592  
 Kesebir, S., 37  
 Kessler, T., 509  
 Key, E., 384  
 Keynes, J. M., 110  
 Khrushchev, N., 516  
 Kidd, R. F., 448  
 Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K., 539  
 Kierkegaard, S., 14  
 Kiesler, C. A., 258  
 Kight, T. D., 422  
 Kihlstrom, J. F., 37, 83  
 Kilburn, J., 382  
 Kilduff, G. J., 302  
 Kim, H., 42  
 Kim, H. S., 40, 42, 70  
 Kimbro, W., 216  
 Kimmel, A. J., 27  
 Kimmel, Admiral, 290  
 Kimmel, M. J., 487  
 Kinder, D. R., 81  
 King, L., 173  
 King, L. A., 547  
 King, L. L., 415  
 Kingdon, J. W., 61  
 Kingston, D. A., 371, 372  
 Kinnier, R. T., 96  
 Kinzler, K. D., 326  
 Kipling, R., 156, 329  
 Kirschner, P., 237  
 Kirsh, S. J., 374  
 Kirshenbaum, H. M., 564  
 Kissinger, H., 409  
 Kitayama, S., 39, 40, 41, 44, 45,  
     102, 107, 188, 399  
 Kite, M. E., 177  
 Kitt, A. S., 362  
 Klaas, E. T., 128  
 Klapwijk, A., 516  
 Klauer, K. D., 316  
 Klebold, D., 395  
 Kleck, R. E., 336  
 Klee, P., 328, 329  
 Klein, J. G., 415  
 Klein, O., 73  
 Klein, S. B., 9  
 Klein, W. M., 399  
 Kleinhesselink, R. R., 330  
 Kleinke, C. L., 199  
 Klentz, B., 411  
 Kline, S. L., 42  
 Klinesmith, J., 358  
 Klinger, M. R., 88  
 Klopfer, P. H., 267  
 Klos, M., 595  
 Klucharev, V., 213  
 Knewton, H. S., 399  
 Knight, G. P., 167–168  
 Knight, J., 402  
 Knight, J. A., 399  
 Knight, K. M., 54  
 Knight, P. A., 233  
 Knowles, E. D., 221  
 Knowles, E. S., 269  
 Knox, R. E., 139  
 Knudson, R. M., 512  
 Kobrynowicz, D., 336  
 Koehler, D. J., 91  
 Koehler, J. J., 574  
 Koenig, A. M., 166  
 Koenig, L. B., 248  
 Koestner, R., 405  
 Kohn, N. W., 296  
 Koladny, A., 26  
 Kolata, G., 565  
 Kolivas, E. D., 100  
 Komorita, S. S., 487  
 Konrad, A. M., 164  
 Konrath, S. H., 54  
 Koo, M., 606  
 Koole, S. L., 394, 401  
 Koomen, W., 156, 309  
 Koop, C. E., 372  
 Koppel, M., 167  
 Koresh, D., 252, 256  
 Koriat, A., 91  
 Korn, J. H., 26  
 Korn, W. S., 598  
 Korte, C., 462  
 Koss, M. P., 373  
 Kovari, J. L., 405  
 Kovera, M. B., 565  
 Kowalski, R. M., 168, 395,  
     534–535  
 Krackow, A., 200  
 Krahe, B., 373, 377, 380  
 Kramer, A. E., 275  
 Kramer, G. P., 571  
 Kraus, M. W., 165, 319  
 Kraus, S. J., 121  
 Krauss, R. M., 487  
 Kraut, R. E., 474  
 Kravitz, D. A., 272  
 Krebs, D., 403, 442, 443, 452  
 Kren, G., 476  
 Krendl, A. C., 348  
 Kressel, K., 515  
 Kretz, S., 413  
 Krisberg, K., 234  
 Kristof, N. D., 307, 590  
 Krizan, Z., 64  
 Kroger, R. O., 160

- Kropotkin, P., 487  
 Krosnick, J. A., 22, 226, 248, 249  
 Krueger, A. B., 119  
 Krueger, J., 66, 334, 349  
 Krueger, J. L., 115  
 Krueger, R. F., 468, 599  
 Kruger, J., 62, 89, 91, 95, 431  
 Kruglanski, A. W., 7, 87, 168,  
     240, 255, 298, 355, 492  
 Krull, D. S., 107  
 Kubany, E. S., 388  
 Kubey, R., 378  
 Kugihara, N., 275  
 Kuhlmeier, V. A., 447  
 Kuiper, N. A., 530  
 Kull, S., 136  
 Kumkale, G. T., 232  
 Kunda, Z., 331, 345, 399  
 Kunkel, D., 378  
 Kunst-Wilson, W. R., 400  
 Kupper, N., 537  
 Kurtz, J. E., 415  
 Kurz, E., 324  
 Kurzman, D., 469  
 Kutner, L., 382
- L**  
 La Rochefoucauld, 125,  
     131, 418  
 Lacey, M., 510  
 Ladd, J., 469  
 Lafferty, E., 575  
 LaFrance, M., 47, 165, 167  
 LaFromboise, T., 510  
 Lagerspetz, K., 357  
 Lagerspetz, K. M. J., 384  
 Lagnado, D., 293  
 Laird, J. D., 84, 141, 436  
 Laird, N. M., 562  
 Lake, R. A., 466  
 Lakin, J. L., 396, 412  
 Lalancette, M.-F., 217  
 Lalonde, R. N., 61  
 Lalwani, A. K., 42  
 Lamal, P. A., 83  
 Lambert, A. J., 413, 502  
 Lambert, N. M., 371, 372  
 Lamberth, J., 314  
 Lamoreaux, M., 42  
 Landau, M. J., 330  
 Landers, A., 21, 386  
 Landon, A., 22  
 Lane, D. J., 210  
 Langer, E. J., 58, 69, 97,  
     242, 336  
 Langford, D. J., 455  
 Langlois, J. H., 406, 408, 409  
 Lankford, A., 205  
 Lanzetta, J. T., 501  
 Lao-tzu, 47, 183  
 Larkin, C., 63, 67  
 Lerrick, R. P., 367  
 Larsen, K., 217  
 Larsen, O. N., 192  
 Larsen, R., 416  
 Larsen, R. J., 357, 533  
 Larson, J. R., Jr., 284, 286  
 Larsson, K., 267  
 Larwood, L., 63  
 Lasater, T. M., 234  
 Lassiter, G. D., 63, 87, 106, 561
- Latané, B., 269, 272, 273, 274,  
     275, 299, 458, 459, 460, 461,  
     462, 467, 471  
 Latham, G. P., 300  
 Latte, K., 439  
 Laughlin, P. R., 294  
 Laumann, E. O., 101, 168  
 Lawler, A., 276  
 Lawson, T. J., 34  
 Lay, T. C., 502  
 Layden, M. A., 543  
 Lazarsfeld, P. F., 13  
 Lazer, D., 285  
 Le Mens, G., 214  
 Leahy, W., 90  
 Leaper, C., 167  
 Leary, M. R., 19, 36, 40, 51,  
     72, 73, 135, 393, 395, 534,  
     534–535, 540  
 LeBoeuf, R., 101  
 LeDoux, J., 87  
 Lee, F., 108  
 Lee, I.-C., 300  
 Lee, R. Y.-P., 412  
 Lee, S., 123  
 Lee, Y.-T., 309  
 Legrain, P., 155  
 Lehavot, K., 413  
 Lehman, D. R., 43, 116, 340  
 Leippe, M. R., 557, 558  
 Leiserowitz, A., 226, 592, 593  
 Lemay, E. P., 406  
 Lemyre, L., 330  
 Lench, H. C., 65  
 Lenhart, A., 164, 394  
 Lennon, J., 339, 393  
 Lennon, R., 165  
 Lenton, A. P., 407  
 Leodoro, G., 472  
 Leonardelli, G. F., 79, 396, 533  
 Leone, C., 73  
 LePage, A., 369  
 Lepore, S. J., 547  
 Lepper, M. J., 80  
 Lepper, M. R., 59, 80, 82,  
     83, 143  
 Lerner, M. J., 63, 341, 342  
 Lerner, R. M., 466  
 Leshner, A. I., 17, 174  
 Leung, K., 160, 490  
 Levav, J., 124  
 Levenson, S., 470  
 Leventhal, H., 238, 259  
 Levesque, M. J., 101  
 Levin, S., 320  
 Levine, J. M., 209, 298, 299  
 Levine, M., 462, 465  
 Levine, R. V., 462  
 Levinger, G., 272  
 Levinson, H., 488  
 Levitan, L. C., 262  
 Levy, B., 56  
 Levy, K. N., 174  
 Levy, S. R., 340  
 Levy-Leboyer, C., 238  
 Lewandowski, G. W., 434  
 Lewandowski, G. W., Jr., 411  
 Lewicki, P., 418  
 Lewin, K., 17, 216, 494  
 Lewinsohn, P. M., 530, 532  
 Lewis, C. S., 44, 138, 140, 221,  
     249, 550  
 Lewis, D. O., 357  
 Lewis, J., 436
- Lewis, P., 408  
 Lewis, R., 423  
 Lewis, R. J., 337  
 Lewis, R. S., 41–42  
 Lewis, S. A., 511  
 Leyens, J.-P., 329, 376, 415  
 Li, N. P., 408–409  
 Li, Y., 95, 592  
 Liberman, A., 239  
 Liberman, V., 488  
 Lichtblau, E., 260, 314  
 Lichtenberg, G. C., 221  
 Lichtenstein, S., 91  
 Licoppe, C., 164  
 Lieberman, J. D., 570, 575  
 Lieberman, M. D., 396  
 Liebler, A., 89  
 Liehr, P., 502  
 Lilienfeld, S. O., 523  
 Lim, D. T. K., 99  
 Lincoln, A., 453  
 Lind, E. A., 474  
 Linder, D., 417  
 Lindsay, R. C. L., 557, 561, 564  
 Lindskjold, S., 516  
 Linssen, J., 309  
 Linville, P. W., 23, 334  
 Linz, D., 371, 373  
 Lippa, R. A., 164, 168, 403  
 Lippitt, R., 494  
 Lipsey, M. W., 388  
 Lipsitz, A., 129  
 Lit, L., 27  
 Little, A. C., 173  
 Livingston, R. W., 315, 407  
 Livingstone, S., 376  
 Locke, E. A., 300  
 Locke, K. D., 415  
 Locke, S. E., 539  
 Locksley, A., 328, 348  
 Lockwood, P., 39  
 Loewenstein, G., 47  
 Lofland, J., 255  
 Loftin, C., 369  
 Loftus, E. F., 83, 84, 88, 122, 557,  
     558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 565  
 Logan, D. D., 577  
 Logel, C., 347  
 Loges, W. E., 310  
 Lombardo, J. P., 419  
 LoMonaco, B. L., 188  
 London, K., 571  
 London, P., 475  
 Lonner, W. J., 159, 161  
 Lord, C., 80  
 Lord, C. G., 83, 349  
 Lorenz, K., 356, 365  
 Losch, M. E., 146  
 Lott, A. J., 210, 418  
 Lott, B. E., 210, 418  
 Loughman, S., 329  
 Lovett, F., 63  
 Lowenstein, D., 379  
 Lowenthal, M. F., 176  
 Loy, J. W., 5  
 Lücken, M., 298  
 Lüdtke, O., 20  
 Luetow, L. B., 317  
 Luginbuhl, J., 576  
 Luhtanen, R., 54, 327  
 Lumeng, J. C., 308  
 Lumsdaine, A. A., 241  
 Lumsden, A., 227  
 Lun, J., 542
- Luntz, F., 136  
 Luppino, F. S., 308  
 Luthans, F., 56  
 Lutsky, L. A., 46  
 Lütüs, C. A. E., 563  
 Lydon, J., 199  
 Lykken, D. T., 284, 358, 398  
 Lynch, J. G., Jr., 90  
 Lynch, J. W., 548  
 Lynn, M., 472  
 Lyons, P. A., 307  
 Lyons, P. M., 568  
 Lyubomirsky, S., 547, 603
- M**  
 Ma, V., 40  
 Maachi, L., 574  
 Maas, J., 270  
 Maass, A., 299, 341  
 Maass, S. A., 210  
 Macaulay, T., 457  
 Maccoby, E. E., 163, 283  
 Maccoby, N., 246, 249  
 MacCoun, R. J., 212, 580  
 MacCullough, R., 599  
 MacDonald, G., 47, 245, 358  
 MacDonald, T. K., 46  
 MacEwan, L., 486  
 MacFarlane, S. W., 367  
 Mack, D., 407  
 Mackie, D. M., 237, 333  
 Mackinnon, S. P., 412  
 MacLeod, C., 93  
 MacLin, O. H., 565  
 Macrae, C. N., 85, 331, 332,  
     333, 410  
 Madden, N. A., 506  
 Maddux, J. E., 56, 239, 326, 513,  
     523, 528  
 Madera, J. M., 166  
 Madon, S., 111, 309  
 Madrian, B. C., 23  
 Mae, L., 82  
 Maeder, G., 255  
 Magaro, P. A., 98, 530  
 Magnussen, S., 565  
 Mahalik, J. R., 164, 450  
 Maheswaran, D., 229  
 Mahoney, J., 469  
 Major, B., 62  
 Malamuth, N., 372  
 Malamuth, N. M., 371, 372, 373  
 Malecková, J., 119  
 Malka, A., 470  
 Malkiel, B., 90  
 Malle, B. F., 106  
 Malone, P. S., 101  
 Malpass, R. S., 335  
 Mandela, N., 8  
 Mander, A., 383  
 Maner, J. K., 360, 434  
 Manis, M., 128, 349, 350  
 Mann, L., 277, 292  
 Mannell, R. C., 144  
 Manning, R., 458  
 Mao Zedong, 231, 353  
 Mar, R. A., 93  
 Marcos, F., 573  
 Marcos, I., 573, 574  
 Marcus, S., 197  
 Marcus Aurelius, 17, 225

- Marcus-Newhall, A., 361  
 Margaret, Princess, 433  
 Markey, P. M., 129, 415  
 Markman, H. J., 436  
 Markman, K. D., 83, 95  
 Marks, G., 66, 399  
 Markus, H., 8, 37, 42, 56  
 Markus, H. R., 40, 41, 42, 44, 45,  
     177, 188  
 Marmaros, D., 497  
 Marsden, P., 363  
 Marsh, H. W., 38, 50  
 Marshall, M. A., 470  
 Marshall, R., 40  
 Marshall, W. L., 372  
 Marshuetz, C., 407  
 Marston, M. V., 362  
 Martens, A., 131  
 Marti, M. W., 581  
 Martin, B., 272  
 Martin, L. L., 115  
 Martin, R., 298  
 Martin, S., 374  
 Martino, S. C., 378  
 Marty, M., 29  
 Maruyama, G., 20, 318  
 Marvelle, K., 407  
 Marx, K., 268, 362, 490  
 Mashoodh, R., 181  
 Masi, C. M., 543  
 Maslow, A., 11, 12  
 Mason, W., 66  
 Massey, C., 65  
 Mast, M. S., 165, 404  
 Mastekaasa, A., 551  
 Masters, K. S., 470  
 Mastroianni, G. R., 127  
 Masuda, T., 42, 107  
 Masure, R. M., 267  
 Matheny, A. P., Jr., 357  
 Mathewson, G. C., 253  
 Matthews, D., 415  
 Matthews, K. A., 537, 548  
 Maughan, W. S., 411  
 Maurice, J., 411  
 Mauro, R., 574, 575, 581  
 Maxwell, G. M., 425  
 Mayer, J. D., 98, 530  
 Mazur, A., 360  
 Mazzella, R., 567, 568  
 Mazzoni, G., 561  
 Mazzuca, J., 377  
 McAlister, A., 259, 260  
 McAllister, H. A., 561  
 McAndrew, F. T., 242, 356, 452  
 McCabe, D., 558  
 McCain, J., 245, 248, 284, 360  
 McCann, C. D., 73, 128  
 McCarthy, J. F., 363  
 McCartney, P., 393  
 McCauley, C., 285, 292, 293  
 McCauley, C. R., 285, 309  
 McClure, J., 102  
 McConahay, J. B., 507  
 McConnell, H. K., 84  
 McCormick, C. M., 359  
 McCrae, R. R., 160  
 McCullough, J. L., 402  
 McDermott, T., 206  
 McDonald, M. M., 410  
 McFall, R. M., 523  
 McFarland, C., 84, 85, 287  
 McFarland, S., 127  
 McGarty, C., 278  
 McGarty, C. A., 283  
 McGilligan, N. B., 515  
 McGillis, D., 567  
 McGlone, M. S., 245  
 McGlynn, R. P., 294  
 McGovern, K. A., 78  
 McGowan, P. O., 181  
 McGrath, J. E., 266  
 McGraw, A. P., 95  
 McGraw, K. M., 335  
 McGregor, I., 330, 385  
 McGuire, A., 260  
 McGuire, W. J., 221, 228, 258  
 McKelvie, S. J., 93  
 McKenna, F. P., 63  
 McKenzie-Mohr, D., 387  
 McKibben, B., 592  
 McLatchie, N., 381  
 McLaughlin, D. S., 474  
 McMillen, D. L., 444, 445  
 McMullen, M. N., 95  
 McNeill, B. W., 544  
 McNulty, J. K., 100, 430, 436  
 McPeek, R. W., 541  
 McPherson, M., 397  
 McQuinn, R. D., 420, 430, 533  
 Mead, G. H., 39  
 Mead, M., 265  
 Meade, R. D., 217  
 Means, B., 98  
 Medalia, N. Z., 192  
 Medvec, V. H., 95, 96, 460  
 Meehl, G. A., 589  
 Meehl, P. E., 525, 526  
 Mehl, M., 7  
 Mehl, M. R., 46, 394, 429  
 Meier, B. P., 385, 470  
 Meissner, C. A., 334, 559,  
     564  
 Meleshko, K. G. A., 535  
 Mellers, B., 92  
 Mellon, P. M., 111  
 Memmert, D., 195  
 Memon, A., 522, 561, 562, 566  
 Mendes, E., 308  
 Mendonca, P. J., 541  
 Meninger, K., 439  
 Merari, A., 286  
 Merikle, P. M., 79  
 Merkel, A., 402  
 Merton, R. K., 109, 117, 362  
 Merz, J. F., 574  
 Mesmer-Magnus, J. R., 294  
 Mesoudi, A., 177  
 Mesout, J., 559  
 Messé, L. A., 487  
 Messias, E., 604  
 Messick, D. M., 270, 490  
 Messner, S. F., 284  
 Metha, A. T., 96  
 Mettee, D. R., 417  
 Meyers, S. A., 421  
 Mezei, L., 334  
 Mezulis, A. H., 61  
 Michaels, J. W., 268  
 Mickelson, K. D., 426  
 Middendorf, K., 576  
 Mikula, G., 490  
 Mikulincer, M., 330, 394,  
     425, 454  
 Milgram, A., 197, 202  
 Milgram, S., 195, 196–199, 201,  
     202, 203, 205, 206, 207, 208,  
     210, 211, 215–216, 217,  
     387, 564  
 Mill, J. S., 187, 291  
 Millar, M. G., 123  
 Millar, P., 604  
 Miller, A. G., 83, 103, 163, 197,  
     203, 206  
 Miller, C. E., 213  
 Miller, C. T., 80  
 Miller, D., 287  
 Miller, D. G., 560  
 Miller, D. T., 95, 328, 335, 341  
 Miller, D. W., 575  
 Miller, G., 410  
 Miller, G. E., 66, 537, 539  
 Miller, G. R., 572  
 Miller, J. G., 108, 448  
 Miller, K. I., 59  
 Miller, L. C., 429  
 Miller, L. E., 125  
 Miller, M. G., 478, 532  
 Miller, N., 66, 233, 242, 361,  
     399, 500, 509  
 Miller, P. A., 454, 464  
 Miller, P. C., 57  
 Miller, P. J. E., 418, 426  
 Miller, R. L., 113  
 Miller, R. S., 69, 74, 209,  
     411, 434  
 Millett, K., 430  
 Mills, J., 253, 427–428  
 Milyavskaya, M., 395  
 Mims, P. R., 450  
 Minard, R. D., 323  
 Mirabile, R. R., 262  
 Mirels, H. L., 541  
 Mirenberg, M., 401  
 Mirsky, S., 452  
 Mischel, W., 215  
 Mishna, F., 354  
 Mita, T. H., 402  
 Mitchell, F., 286  
 Mitchell, J., 316, 575  
 Mitchell, Joni, 424  
 Mitchell, K. J., 561  
 Mitchell, T. L., 568  
 Mitchell, T. R., 84  
 Modigliani, A., 204, 440  
 Moffitt, T., 357, 358  
 Moghaddam, F. M., 286,  
     509, 510  
 Mohr, H., 90  
 Mojzisch, A., 294  
 Molander, E. A., 63  
 Moller, I., 380  
 Monge, P. R., 59  
 Monin, B., 314  
 Monroe, M., 193  
 Monson, T. C., 216  
 Montaigne, 125  
 Monteith, M. J., 331  
 Montgomery, D. A., 570  
 Montgomery, R. L., 542, 543  
 Montoya, R. M., 405, 415  
 Moody, K., 260  
 Moon, S. M., 252, 254  
 Moons, W. G., 237, 245  
 Moor, B. G., 396  
 Moore, D., 255  
 Moore, D. A., 102, 232  
 Moore, D. L., 269, 270  
 Moore, D. W., 22, 226, 242  
 Mor, N., 531  
 Morales, L., 77, 93, 338  
 Moran, G., 571, 575, 576  
 Moran, T., 514  
 Moreland, R. L., 400  
 Morgan, C. A., 559  
 Morgan, G. S., 108  
 Morgan, K. L., 535  
 Mori, H., 141  
 Mori, K., 141  
 Morling, B., 42  
 Mormille, A., 458  
 Morris, M. W., 487  
 Morris, R., 358  
 Morris, W. N., 209  
 Morrison, D., 371  
 Morrison, E. L., 408  
 Morrow, L., 188  
 Morry, M. M., 314  
 Moscovici, S., 11, 282, 298, 299  
 Moskowitz, G. B., 513  
 Motherhood Project, 261, 262  
 Moussaoui, Z., 206  
 Mouton, J. S., 504, 514  
 Moyer, K. E., 357  
 Moyers, B., 291  
 Moylan, S., 97  
 Moynihan, D. P., 10  
 MSNBC, 440  
 Muehlenhard, C. L., 101  
 Mueller, C. M., 56  
 Mueller, C. W., 377  
 Mugny, G., 298  
 Mullainathan, S., 313  
 Mullen, B., 61, 66, 211, 268, 269,  
     270, 273, 277, 290, 293, 329,  
     334, 383  
 Mullenix, J. W., 565  
 Muller, R. A., 589  
 Muller, S., 238  
 Mullin, C. R., 371  
 Mummendey, A., 509  
 Munhall, P. J., 63  
 Munro, G. D., 81  
 Murachver, T., 164  
 Muraven, M., 55  
 Murdoch, J., 39  
 Murdoch, R., 39  
 Murphy, C., 13, 15  
 Murphy-Berman, V., 490  
 Murray, D., 217  
 Murray, D. M., 559  
 Murray, D. R., 418  
 Murray, J. P., 377  
 Murray, S. L., 54, 113, 413, 418  
 Murstein, B. L., 405  
 Muson, G., 375  
 Mussweiler, T., 143  
 Myers, D. G., 60, 94, 98, 283,  
     288, 318, 372, 434, 551, 611  
 Myers, G., 595  
 Myers, J. E., 424  
 Myers, J. N., 296  
 Myers, K., 301  
 Myers, L. B., 63  
 Myers, N., 594

**N**

- Na, J., 102  
 Nadler, A., 280, 447, 450  
 Nadler, J. T., 347  
 Nagar, D., 269  
 Nagourney, A., 121

- Nail, P. R., 188, 220  
 Nair, H., 247  
 Nario-Redmond, M. R., 310  
 NASA, 589  
 Nasby, W., 415  
 National Center for Health Statistics, 537, 546  
 National Institute of Mental Health, 376, 476  
 National Opinion Research Center, 178, 601  
 National Research Council, 226, 391  
 National Safety Council, 7, 94  
 National Television Violence Study, 374  
 Navarrete, C. D., 173, 333  
 Nawrat, R., 446  
 Nazareth, A., 101  
 Neal, D. T., 141  
 Neely, R., 472  
 Neff, K. D., 54  
 Neff, L. A., 430  
 Neimeyer, G. J., 544  
 Nelson, E. R., 234  
 Nelson, L., 101  
 Nelson, L. D., 408  
 Nelson, L. J., 335  
 Nelson, T. E., 349  
 Nemeth, C., 210, 294, 298, 299  
 Nemeth, C. J., 293, 295  
 Nestler, S., 14  
 Nettle, D., 66  
 Nettles, B. L., 253, 255  
 Neumann, R., 192  
 New Economic Foundation, 607, 608  
 New York Times, 461, 565  
 Newcomb, T., 277  
 Newcomb, T. M., 249, 398, 412  
 Newell, B., 293  
 Newell, B. R., 87  
 Newman, H. M., 69  
 Newman, L. S., 108, 568  
 Newport, F., 136, 174, 225, 318  
 Newsome, J., 558  
 Nias, D. K. B., 415  
 Nicholson, C., 238  
 Nicholson, N., 217  
 Nicks, S. D., 26  
 Nida, S., 459  
 Nida, S. A., 395  
 Nie, N. H., 431  
 Niebuhr, R., 65  
 Nielsen, 374  
 Nielsen, M. E., 27  
 Niemi, R. G., 178, 387  
 Niemiec, C. P., 395  
 Nietzel, M. T., 582  
 Nietzsche, 326  
 Nigbur, D., 124  
 Nigro, G. N., 324  
 Nijstad, B. A., 295  
 Nisbet, E. K., 607  
 Nisbett, R. E., 41, 42, 106, 115, 116, 337, 364  
 Nix, G., 532  
 Noble, A. M., 578  
 Nock, M. K., 123  
 Noel, J. G., 58  
 Nolan, J. M., 214  
 Nolan, S. A., 394  
 Nolen-Hoeksema, S., 531  
 Noller, P., 426, 435, 437  
 Noor, M., 513  
 Nordgren, L. F., 65, 87, 395, 455  
 Norem, J. K., 66  
 Norenzayan, A., 159, 470  
 North, A. C., 229  
 North, O., 202  
 Norton, M. I., 413, 604  
 Nosek, B. A., 49, 122, 123, 311  
 Nosow, S., 450  
 Notarius, C., 436  
 Novalis, 212  
 Novelli, D., 157  
 Nowak, M. A., 450  
 Nunez, N., 522, 571  
 Nurius, P., 37  
 Nurmi, J.-E., 52, 534  
 Nuttin, J. M., 399  
 Nuttin, J. M., Jr., 399  
 Nyhan, B., 245
- O**  
 Oaten, M., 58  
 Oatley, K., 93  
 Obama, B., 77, 225, 245, 284, 294, 311, 312, 360, 514  
 Obama, M., 453  
 Oceja, L., 456  
 O'Connor, A., 216  
 Oddone-Paolucci, E., 371  
 O'Dea, T. F., 255  
 Odean, T., 97, 167  
 Ohbuchi, K., 367  
 O'Heeron, R. C., 547  
 O'Hegarty, M., 238  
 Ohtaki, P., 301  
 Oishi, S., 37, 43, 487, 604  
 O'Keefe, D. J., 239  
 Okimoto, T. G., 318  
 O'Leary, K. D., 435  
 Oleson, K. C., 345  
 Olfsen, M., 537  
 Oliner, P. M., 475  
 Oliner, S. P., 475  
 Olson, C. K., 382  
 Olson, E. A., 564  
 Olson, I. R., 407  
 Olson, J. M., 73, 112, 137, 146, 214, 232  
 Olson, K. R., 342  
 Olweus, D., 357, 358  
 O'Malley, P. M., 20  
 O'Mara, A., 50  
 Omarzu, J., 437  
 Omoto, A. M., 470, 472  
 Open Secrets, 245  
 Optow, S., 474  
 Oppenheimer, D. M., 92, 143  
 Orendain, S., 594  
 Orenstein, P., 221  
 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 604  
 Oriña, M. M., 426  
 Orive, R., 279  
 Ormerod, T. C., 87  
 Ormiston, M., 293  
 Ornstein, R., 129, 201  
 Orwell, G., 85, 503  
 Osborne, J. W., 347  
 Osgood, C. E., 515, 516  
 Oskamp, S., 124
- Osofsky, M. J., 131  
 Osswald, S., 476  
 Osterhouse, R. A., 250  
 Ostrom, T. M., 334, 402  
 Oswald, A., 607  
 Ouellette, J. A., 125  
 Ovid, 405, 442  
 Owyang, M. T., 407  
 Oyserman, D., 40
- Penton-Voak, I. S., 409  
 Pepitone, A., 277  
 Peplau, L. A., 169, 429, 550  
 Pereira, C., 326  
 Pereira, J., 379  
 Perez, V., 440  
 Perilloux, H. K., 410  
 Perkins, H. W., 550  
 Perlman, D., 550  
 Perls, F. S., 222, 387  
 Perrett, D., 409  
 Perrott, D. J., 359  
 Perretta, S., 562  
 Perrin, S., 217  
 Persico, N., 407  
 Pessin, J., 267  
 Peters, E., 238  
 Petersen, J. L., 168, 169  
 Peterson, C., 58, 69, 529, 539, 540  
 Peterson, E., 29  
 Peterson, I., 565  
 Peterson, J. L., 378  
 Petrocelli, J. V., 95  
 Petruska, R., 468  
 Pettigrew, T. F., 308, 313, 323, 326, 330, 340, 496, 497, 500, 501  
 Petty, R. E., 122, 143, 146, 228, 229, 236, 237, 240, 241, 250, 275  
 Pew Research Center, 77, 178, 225, 226, 307, 313, 326, 338, 379, 397, 428, 431, 592  
 Phares, J., 56  
 Phelan, J. E., 318  
 Phillips, A. L., 607  
 Phillips, D. L., 493  
 Phillips, D. P., 193  
 Phillips, T., 510  
 Phinney, J. S., 509, 510  
 Pichon, I., 470  
 Pickett, K., 320, 547, 549, 604  
 Pierce, G. L., 569  
 Pierce, K. P., 509  
 Piff, P. K., 470  
 Piliavin, I. M., 443  
 Piliavin, J. A., 441, 442, 443  
 Pincus, H. A., 537  
 Pincus, J. H., 357  
 Pinel, E. C., 113, 337  
 Pingitore, R., 308  
 Pinker, S., 153, 164, 169, 318, 389, 390  
 Pipher, M., 533  
 Pittinsky, T. L., 348  
 Place, S. S., 100, 421  
 Plaks, J. E., 275  
 Plant, E. A., 112, 316, 331  
 Platek, S. M., 410  
 Plato, 317, 376  
 Platow, M. J., 190  
 Plaut, V. C., 40, 407  
 Pliner, P., 129  
 Plomin, R., 179  
 Poincaré, J. H., 17  
 Poling, C., 469  
 Polk, M., 276  
 Pomazal, R. J., 450  
 Pondy, L. R., 493  
 Poniewozik, J., 80  
 Poole, D. A., 522  
 Pooley, E., 239  
 Popenoe, D., 434

Pornpitakpan, C., 233  
Post, J. M., 286  
Postmes, T., 279, 283, 293  
Potok, C., 29  
Potter, J., 494  
Pratkanis, A. R., 71, 232, 290,  
293, 447, 508  
Pratt, M. W., 176  
Pratt-Hyatt, J. S., 320  
Pratto, F., 164, 166, 320  
Predmore, S. C., 429  
Prentice, D. A., 93, 163  
Prentice-Dunn, S., 280, 313  
Presson, P. K., 97  
Preston, E., 83  
Preston, J., 494  
Price, G. H., 411  
Priel, B., 427  
Pritchard, I. L., 377  
Probst, T. M., 493  
Prohaska, M. L., 415  
Prohaska, T., 112  
Prohaska, V., 66  
Pronin, E., 62, 107, 109, 217, 492  
Prosser, A., 465  
Prothrow-Stith, D., 512  
Provencier, B., 595  
Provine, R. R., 191  
Pruitt, D. G., 487, 511, 513, 515  
Pryor, J. B., 100  
Pryor, J. H., 164, 168, 178, 227,  
284, 468  
Przyblski, A. K., 382  
PTC, 374  
*Public Opinion*, 63  
Publius Syrus, 130  
Puhl, R. M., 310  
Purvis, J. A., 429  
Putnam, R., 165, 377, 378, 431,  
432, 470, 477, 502, 518, 532  
Pyszczynski, T., 69, 71, 330, 531  
Pyszczynski, T. A., 421

**Q**

Qirko, H. N., 286  
Quarts, S. R., 181  
Quinn, D. M., 346  
Quoidbach, J., 107, 602

**R**

Radelet, M. L., 569  
Raine, A., 357  
Rainey, D., 407  
Rajagopal, P., 96  
Rajecki, D. W., 405  
Ramirez, A., 234  
Ramirez, J. M., 387  
Randall, P. K., 173  
Randi, J., 555  
Randler, C., 413  
Range, L. M., 524  
Rank, S. G., 200  
Rapoport, A., 483  
Rapoport, L., 476  
Rapson, R. L., 422  
Ratner, R. K., 287  
Rawls, J., 490  
Rawn, C. D., 72

Ray, D. G., 326  
Raymond, P., 101  
Read, J. D., 565  
Read, S. J., 91  
Reagan, R., 77, 250, 251, 339,  
501, 504, 517  
Reardon, S., 238  
Reber, J. S., 113  
Redick, C., 527  
Reed, D., 322  
Reed, G., 127  
Reeder, L., 358  
Regan, D. T., 125, 250  
Regan, P. C., 418–419  
Regier, D., 551  
Reicher, S., 127, 279, 465  
Reid, P., 378  
Reifler, J., 245  
Reijntjes, A., 395  
Reiner, W. G., 176  
Reis, H. T., 402, 403, 422,  
429, 534  
Reisenzein, R., 368  
Reitzes, D. C., 323  
Remley, A., 517  
Rempel, J. K., 426, 429  
Renaud, H., 525  
Renshon, J., 492  
Ressler, R. K., 372  
Reynolds, J., 66  
Rhine, R. J., 240  
Rhodes, G., 334, 409  
Rhodes, M. G., 335  
Rhodewalt, F., 71, 541  
Rholes, W. S., 107, 128  
Rice, B., 62  
Rice, M. E., 464  
Richards, K., 405  
Richards, Z., 345  
Richardson, D. S., 168  
Richardson, J. D., 80  
Richardson, L. F., 481  
Richeson, J. A., 331, 499, 500  
Richtel, M., 370  
Rickey, B., 508  
Ridge, R. D., 113  
Ridley, M., 154  
Riess, M., 73  
Rietzschel, E. F., 295  
Riggs, J. M., 71  
Ringelmann, M., 272  
Riordan, C. A., 61, 419  
Risen, J. L., 95, 339  
Riva, P., 396  
Rivera, L. M., 331  
Robberson, M. R., 238  
Roberts, J., 93  
Robertson, I., 154  
Robins, L., 551  
Robins, R. W., 54, 65, 101  
Robinson, J. P., 374  
Robinson, J. R., 508  
Robinson, M. D., 66, 357, 602  
Robinson, M. S., 531  
Robinson, T. N., 389  
Robnett, R. D., 167  
Robustelli, S. L., 111  
Rochat, F., 204, 440  
Rodeheffer, C., 381  
Rodgers, R., 411  
Rodin, J., 58, 461  
Rodriguez, M. S., 537  
Roehling, M. V., 24, 308  
Roese, N. J., 95

Roese, N. L., 146  
Roethke, T., 49  
Roger, L. H., 509  
Rogers, Carl, 222, 429  
Rogers, Carlos, 451  
Rogers, R., 280  
Rogers, R. W., 238, 239, 313  
Roggman, L., 409  
Rohrer, J. H., 190  
Rokeach, M., 334, 413  
Romer, D., 468  
Roney, J. R., 172  
Rook, K. S., 534, 547, 550  
Rooney, A., 418  
Roosevelt, F. D., 22  
Rooth, D. O., 123, 315  
Rose, A. J., 164  
Rose, T. L., 339  
Rosenbaum, M., 530  
Rosenbaum, M. E., 329, 413  
Rosenberg, L. A., 208  
Rosenblatt, A., 415  
Rosenbloom, S., 72  
Rosenfeld, D. L., 144  
Rosenhan, D. L., 444, 475,  
524  
Rosenthal, A. M., 462  
Rosenthal, D. A., 509  
Rosenthal, E., 227, 595  
Rosenthal, L., 592, 595  
Rosenthal, R., 110, 111, 112  
Rosenzweig, M. R., 132  
Roseth, C. J., 507  
Ross, D. F., 566  
Ross, J. M., 322  
Ross, L., 62, 80, 82, 103, 104,  
105, 107, 115, 116, 196,  
513, 514  
Ross, M., 46, 62, 68, 84, 85, 99  
Rossi, A. S., 165  
Rossi, P. H., 165  
Roszell, P., 407  
Rotenberg, K. J., 113  
Roth, J., 242  
Rothbart, M., 81, 222, 334,  
338, 349  
Rothblum, E. D., 169  
Rothman, A. J., 537  
Rotter, J., 56–57  
Rotton, J., 366, 367  
Rotundo, M., 100  
Rousseau, J.-J., 355  
Rowe, D. C., 28, 357  
Rowling, J. K., 245  
Roy, M. M., 47  
Royal Society, 588  
Ruback, R. B., 59  
Rubel, T., 166  
Ruben, C., 66  
Rubin, J., 363  
Rubin, L. B., 165  
Rubin, R. B., 516  
Rubin, Z., 420, 421, 436  
Ruble, D. N., 144  
Rudman, L. A., 318  
Rudolph, K. D., 164  
Rudolph, U., 448, 449  
Ruiter, R. A. C., 239  
Ruiter, S., 470  
Rule, B. G., 367  
Rule, N. O., 173, 410  
Rumpel, C. H., 557  
Rupp, H. A., 169  
Rusbult, C., 411

Rusbult, C. E., 413, 418,  
435, 436  
Rushton, J. P., 215, 357, 451,  
463, 464, 468  
Rusk, D., 292  
Russell, B., 73, 403  
Russell, G. W., 387  
Russell, N. J. C., 196, 199  
Russo, J. E., 573  
Russo, N. F., 373  
Rutland, A., 496  
Ruvolo, A., 56  
Ryan, R., 600, 601  
Ryan, R. M., 59, 143, 145,  
395, 442  
Ryckman, R. M., 24  
Rydell, R. J., 347, 348  
Ryff, C. D., 66, 545

**S**

Saad, L., 136  
Sabini, J., 205  
Sacerdote, B., 497  
Sachs, J. D., 591  
Sack, K., 328  
Sackett, A. M., 66  
Sacks, C. H., 531  
Sacks, J. D., 70  
Saddam Hussein, 136, 225, 276,  
293, 361, 494, 511  
Safer, M. A., 85, 565  
Sagarin, B. J., 67, 257  
Sageman, M., 286  
Said, C. P., 409  
Saitta, M. B., 165  
Sakamoto, Y., 499  
Saks, M. J., 567, 575, 581  
Sakurai, M. M., 210  
Sales, S. M., 255, 321  
Salganik, M. J., 288  
Salmela-Aro, K., 52  
Salmivalli, C., 355, 385  
Salovey, P., 98, 238, 239, 445,  
530, 537  
Saltzstein, H. H., 212  
Salvatore, J., 426  
Sam, D. L., 510  
Sampson, E. E., 490  
Sanbonmatsu, D. M., 65  
Sancton, T., 462  
Sandberg, L., 212  
Sande, G. N., 107  
Sanders, G. S., 270, 294  
Sanderson, C. A., 430  
Sanderson, E., 444  
Sani, F., 330  
Sanislow, C. A., 531  
Sanitioso, R., 68  
Sanna, L. J., 95  
Sansone, C., 144  
Santos, A., 326  
Sapadin, L. A., 165  
Sapolsky, R., 547, 548  
Sarnoff, I., 437  
Sarnoff, S., 437  
Sartre, J.-P., 3, 545  
Sasaki, J. Y., 40  
Sasaki, S. J., 340, 510  
Sassenberg, K., 326  
Sato, K., 485  
Saucier, D. A., 80, 466

- Saucier, G., 321  
 Sauer, J., 558, 562  
 Sauerland, M., 558  
 Savani, K., 342  
 Savitsky, K., 34, 35, 36, 63,  
     95, 460  
 Sax, L. J., 164, 317  
 Sbarra, D. A., 539  
 Scalia, A., 382  
 Scarpa, A., 368  
 Scarr, S., 163  
 Schachter, S., 213, 368, 421  
 Schacter, D., 56  
 Schafer, R. B., 428  
 Schaffner, P. E., 98, 402  
 Schaller, M., 456, 457  
 Scheier, M. F., 125, 534  
 Schein, E. H., 134  
 Scher, S. J., 71  
 Schersching, C., 570  
 Schiavo, R. S., 269  
 Schiffenbauer, A., 269  
 Schiffman, W., 218  
 Schimel, J., 54, 330  
 Schimmack, U., 40  
 Schindler, O., 476  
 Schirmer, A., 472  
 Schkade, D., 47, 579  
 Schkade, D. A., 48, 283, 284  
 Schlenker, B. R., 69, 72, 74, 534  
 Schlesinger, A., Jr., 13, 291,  
     292, 518  
 Schlesinger, A. M., Jr., 291, 298  
 Schmader, T., 348  
 Schmidtke, A., 193  
 Schmiege, S. J., 195  
 Schmitt, D. P., 61, 168, 169, 171,  
     182, 427  
 Schnall, S., 141, 463  
 Schneider, M. E., 447  
 Schneider, P., 439  
 Schneider, T. R., 537  
 Schoeneman, T. J., 39, 40  
 Schoenrade, P. A., 454  
 Schofield, J., 497  
 Schollander, D., 163  
 Schooler, J. W., 58  
 Schor, J. B., 605  
 Schroeder, D. A., 273, 457, 473  
 Schroeder, J. E., 405  
 Schuh, E. S., 316  
 Schuller, R. A., 309  
 Schulman, P., 58  
 Schultz, P. W., 595  
 Schulz, J. W., 513  
 Schulz-Hardt, S., 293, 294  
 Schuman, H., 22, 249  
 Schuman, R., 433  
 Schumann, E., 573  
 Schuster, A. M.H., 276  
 Schutte, J. W., 101  
 Schwartz, B., 59  
 Schwartz, J., 565  
 Schwartz, M. F., 446  
 Schwartz, S. H., 166, 448, 463  
 Schwarz, N., 46, 98, 142, 324  
 Schweitzer, K., 98  
 Schweitzer, M. E., 514  
 Sciolino, E., 489  
 Scott, J., 249  
 Scott, J. P., 362  
*Scottish Life*, 486  
 Seabright, P., 163  
 Searle, R., 172  
 Sears, D. O., 81, 248, 249  
 Sears, R., 325  
 Sechler, E. S., 83  
 Sedikides, C., 61, 62, 68, 334  
 Segal, H. A., 133  
 Segal, M., 285  
 Segal, N. L., 451  
 Segall, M. H., 168  
 Segerstrom, S., 539  
 Segerstrom, S. C., 66, 540  
 Seligman, M. E. P., 19, 58, 532,  
     538, 539  
 Semin, G. R., 79  
 Seneca, 69, 430, 547  
 Sengupta, S., 502  
 Senter, M. S., 312, 317  
 Sentis, K. P., 490  
 Sentyrz, S. M., 280  
 Serena, 234  
 Severance, L. J., 240  
 Shaffer, D., 193  
 Shaffer, D. R., 429  
 Shah, A. K., 92  
 Shakespeare, W., 46, 81, 114,  
     213, 217, 218, 236, 285, 367  
 Shankar, A., 533  
 Shapiro, D. L., 516  
 Shapiro, P., 329  
 Shapiro, P. N., 344, 502  
 Sharan, S., 507  
 Sharan, Y., 507  
 Shariff, A. F., 470  
 Sharot, T., 140  
 Sharp, L. B., 311  
 Sharpe, D., 27  
 Shatford, R., 564  
 Shaver, P., 429  
 Shaver, P. R., 330, 425, 426, 434  
 Shaw, G. B., 286  
 Shaw, J. S., III, 563  
 Shaw, M. E., 266  
 Shayo, M., 568  
 Shea, D. F., 23  
 Sheatsley, P. B., 133, 311  
 Sheehan, E. P., 405  
 Sheeran, P., 124  
 Sheese, B. E., 381  
 Sheffield, F. D., 241  
 Sheldon, K. M., 395, 601–602,  
     602  
 Shell, R. M., 447  
 Shelton, J. N., 499, 500  
 Shen, H., 447  
 Sheppard, B. H., 562  
 Shepperd, J. A., 39, 64, 71, 90,  
     275, 535  
 Shergill, S. S., 484  
 Sherif, C. W., 190  
 Sherif, M., 189, 190, 195, 207,  
     489, 490, 495, 501, 502, 503,  
     504, 505  
 Sherman, D. A., 350  
 Sherman, D. K., 42, 70, 493  
 Sherman, J. W., 333, 337, 338  
 Sherman, S. J., 93  
 Shermer, M., 505  
 Shih, M., 348  
 Shiller, R., 110  
 Shipman, P., 153  
 Shook, N. J., 500  
 Short, J. F., Jr., 364  
 Shostak, M., 423  
 Shotland, R. L., 101, 448, 461  
 Shovar, N., 74  
 Showers, C., 66  
 Shrauger, J. S., 39, 66, 416  
 Shriver, E. R., 335  
 Sias, R. W., 399  
 Sicoly, F., 68  
 Sidanius, J., 166, 167, 320  
 Siegelman, J., 254  
 Sieverding, M., 195  
 Sigall, H., 419  
 Silk, A. J., 228  
 Silk, J. B., 451  
 Silke, A., 279  
 Silver, M., 205, 328  
 Silver, N., 248  
 Silver, R. C., 62  
 Silver, S., 298  
 Silverman, J., 394  
 Silvia, P. J., 210  
 Simmons, C. H., 342  
 Simon, B., 298  
 Simon, H. A., 115  
 Simon, P., 22  
 Simon, R., 380  
 Simonsohn, U., 401  
 Simonton, D. K., 302  
 Simpson, J. A., 196, 411, 426,  
     427, 434  
 Simpson, O. J., 555–556, 567,  
     568, 569, 571, 572, 573, 574,  
     576  
 Sinclair, S., 321  
 Singer, B., 545  
 Singer, J. E., 368, 421  
 Singer, M., 255  
 Singer, T., 165  
 Singh, D., 173, 410  
 Singh, J. V., 301  
 Singh, P., 424  
 Singh, R., 413  
 Sio, U. N., 87  
 SIPRI, 481  
 Sissons, M., 466  
 Sittser, G. L., 96  
 Sivacek, J. M., 487  
 Sivarajasingam, V., 360  
 Six, B., 124  
 Skaalvik, E. M., 20  
 Skagerberg, E. M., 564  
 Skinner, B. F., 442  
 Skitka, L. J., 105, 108, 326,  
     413, 448  
 Skowronski, J. J., 82  
 Skurnik, I., 245  
 Slatcher, R. B., 432  
 Slater, M., 197  
 Slavin, R. E., 506, 507, 508  
 Sloan, R. P., 342  
 Slopen, N., 539  
 Slotow, R., 383  
 Slotter, E. B., 36, 430, 434  
 Slovic, P., 14, 114, 475  
 Small, M. F., 175  
 Smedley, J. W., 312  
 Smelser, N. J., 286  
 Smith, A., 486  
 Smith, A. E., 574  
 Smith, D. E., 199  
 Smith, E., 292  
 Smith, G. D., 18  
 Smith, H., 275  
 Smith, H. J., 327  
 Smith, H. W., 157  
 Smith, J., 276  
 Smith, L. G. E., 283  
 Smith, P. B., 4, 12, 217, 300  
 Smith, P. M., 330  
 Smith, R. E., 570  
 Smith, R. H., 39  
 Smith, S. J., 496  
 Smith, S. L., 474  
 Smith, T. W., 535, 543  
 Smith, V. L., 571  
 Smolowe, J., 569  
 Smoreda, Z., 164  
 Snell, J., 400  
 Snibbe, A. C., 548  
 Snodgrass, M. A., 534  
 Snopes, 201  
 Snow, C., 413  
 Snyder, C. R., 63, 68, 220,  
     221, 535  
 Snyder, M., 24, 73, 95, 113, 125,  
     183, 450, 470, 472, 525  
 Snyder, M. L., 70  
 Solano, C. H., 429  
 Solberg, E. C., 362, 602  
 Solomon, H., 472  
 Solomon, L. Z., 472  
 Solomon, S., 69  
 Somaiya, R., 276  
 Sommer, R., 157  
 Sommers, S. R., 569, 578  
 Sommerville, J. A., 37  
 Sonne, J., 544  
 Sontag, S., 382  
 Sophocles, 236  
 Sorokowski, P., 409  
 Sotomayor, S., 575  
 Southwick-King, S., 173  
 Sparrell, J. A., 66  
 Spears, R., 67, 279  
 Spector, P. E., 300  
 Speer, A., 291  
 Spence, A., 123  
 Spencer, C., 217  
 Spencer, H., 236  
 Spencer, S., 348  
 Spencer, S. J., 330, 331, 346  
 Speth, J. G., 596  
 Spiegel, H. W., 65  
 Spielmann, S. S., 434  
 Spinoza, B., 417  
 Spisak, B. R., 167  
 Spitz, H. H., 111  
 Spitzberg, B. H., 534  
 Spivak, J., 275  
 Sporer, S. L., 334, 335, 558  
 Sprecher, S., 403, 424, 430  
 Spruijt, N., 300  
 Srivastava, S., 113, 160  
 St. John, H., 606  
 Stadler, S. J., 367  
 Stahelski, A. J., 112  
 Stajkovic, A., 56  
 Stalder, D. R., 459  
 Stalin, 353  
 Standing, L., 217  
 Stangor, C., 162, 500  
 Stanley, S. J., 123  
 Stanovich, K. E., 114  
 Stans, M., 575  
 Stanton, E. C., 362  
 Stanton, S. J., 360  
 Staples, B., 314, 358

Stark, E., 238  
 Stark, R., 255  
 Stasser, G., 286, 578, 580  
 Statistics Canada, 168  
 Staub, E., 204, 327, 384, 443,  
     457, 463, 474, 475, 476, 477,  
     491  
 Stebbins, C. A., 448  
 Steblay, N., 564  
 Steblay, N. M., 451, 571  
 Steele, C. M., 39, 122, 146, 346,  
     347, 348, 351  
 Steen, T. A., 529  
 Steffen, P. R., 470  
 Stein, A. H., 475, 476  
 Stein, D. D., 334  
 Stein, S., 233  
 Steinem, G., 373  
 Steinmetz, J., 104  
 Stelter, B., 278  
 Stelzl, M., 328  
 Stephan, C. W., 568  
 Stephan, W. G., 421, 497,  
     501, 568  
 Stephens, N. M., 217  
 Steptoae, A., 537  
 Sternberg, R. J., 353, 420,  
     425, 436  
 Stevenage, S. V., 565  
 Stevens, N., 550  
 Stewart, K. D., 54  
 Stewart-Williams, S., 451  
 Stiglitz, J., 608  
 Stiles, W. B., 531  
 Stillinger, C., 514  
 Stillman, T. F., 58  
 Stinson, D. A., 113, 534  
 Stinson, V., 566  
 Stirrat, M., 359  
 Stiwnie, D., 293  
 Stix, G., 297  
 Stockdale, J. E., 157  
 Stocks, E. L., 457  
 Stoer, G., 254  
 Stokes, J.I., 533  
 Stolberg, S. G., 284  
 Stoltenberg, C. D., 544  
 Stone, A. A., 46  
 Stone, A. L., 98  
 Stone, J., 347  
 Stone, L., 434  
 Stoner, J. A. F., 281  
 Storms, M. D., 269  
 Stouffer, S. A., 362, 497  
 Stout, J. G., 323  
 Stowell, J. R., 211  
 Strack, F., 86, 142, 192  
 Strack, S., 531  
 Strasburger, V. C., 374  
 Straus, M. A., 364  
 Strauss, L., 155  
 Straw, M. K., 461  
 Strenta, A., 336  
 Strick, M., 87, 237  
 Stroebe, W., 267, 295, 533  
 Stroessner, S. J., 333  
 Strong, S. R., 256, 541, 544  
 Stroud, J. N., 335  
 Stroufe, B., 450  
 Strube, M. J., 267  
 Stukas, A. A., 138  
 Su, R., 164  
 Sue, S., 570  
 Suedfeld, P., 463

Sugimori, S., 298  
 Sullivan, A., 387  
 Sulz, J., 39, 64  
 Summers, G., 342  
 Sun, C., 370  
 Sundie, J. M., 172  
 Sunstein, C. R., 94, 282, 283,  
     285, 293, 579  
 Surowiecki, J., 296  
 Sussman, N. M., 218  
 Sutton, D., 216  
 Svenson, O., 63  
 Swami, V., 308  
 Swann, W., 125  
 Swann, W. B., Jr., 50, 54, 68, 89,  
     91, 327, 417, 429, 436  
 Swap, W. C., 402  
 Sweeney, J., 273  
 Sweeney, P. D., 529  
 Sweeny, K., 135  
 Swets, J. A., 525  
 Swift, J., 84, 222, 322  
 Swift, S. A., 232  
 Swim, J., 318  
 Swim, J. K., 163, 205, 313,  
     317, 336  
 Swindle, R., Jr., 532  
 Symons, D., 169  
 Szentgyörgyi, Albert von, 268  
 Szymanski, K., 275

**T**

Tafarodi, R. W., 43  
 Tajfel, H., 10, 299, 326, 328  
 Talbert, B., 67  
 Talbot, M., 193  
 Tale-Yax, H. A., 461  
 Tamres, L. K., 164  
 Tan, H. H., 275  
 Tan, M. L., 275  
 Tang, S-H., 144  
 Tanke, E. D., 113, 581  
 Tanke, T. J., 581  
 Tannen, D., 164  
 Tanner, R. J., 192  
 Tapp, J. L., 581  
 Tarrant, M., 451  
 Taubes, G., 369, 390  
 Tausch, N., 496  
 Tavris, C., 136, 387  
 Tay, L., 599  
 Tayeb, M., 300  
 Taylor, D. A., 429  
 Taylor, D. M., 69  
 Taylor, K. M., 39, 275  
 Taylor, L. S., 405  
 Taylor, P., 222  
 Taylor, S. E., 64, 66, 68, 98, 133,  
     164, 333, 334, 335, 423, 529,  
     530, 547  
 Taylor, S. P., 358  
 Technical Working Group for  
     Eyewitness Evidence, 562  
 Tedeschi, J. T., 135  
 Teger, A. I., 485  
 Teigen, K. H., 15, 63, 95  
 Telch, M. J., 260  
 Tellegen, A., 398  
 Temple, W., 252  
 Tennen, H., 540  
 Tenney, E. R., 558

Tennov, D., 445  
 Teoh, J. B. P., 413  
 Terenzini, P., 283  
 Teresa, Mother, 475  
 Terracciano, A., 160  
 Tesch, F., 39  
 Tesser, A., 51, 128, 287, 328  
 Test, M. A., 463  
 Testa, M., 358  
 Tetlock, P. E., 90, 123, 128, 293,  
     448, 493, 494, 514  
 Thakar, M., 424  
 t'Hart, P., 293  
 Thatcher, M., 363, 517  
 Theiss, A. J., 111  
 Thelen, M. H., 414  
 Thelwall, M., 430  
 Theroux, P., 84  
 Thomas, E. F., 283  
 Thomas, G. C., 269  
 Thomas, K. W., 493  
 Thomas, L., 172, 353  
 Thomas, S. L., 376  
 Thomas, W. N., 566  
 Thomas à Kempis, 303  
 Thompson, L., 84, 511  
 Thompson, L. L., 330  
 Thompson, S. C., 97  
 Thompson, W. C., 444, 573, 581  
 Thomson, Jr., J. A., 531  
 Thomson, R., 164  
 Thoreau, H. D., 83  
 Thorne, A., 535  
 Thornhill, R., 409  
 Thornton, B., 411  
 Tice, D. M., 72  
 Tideman, S., 607  
 Tierney, J., 19, 486  
 Tilcsik, A., 313  
 Timberlake, J., 41  
*Time*, 22, 374, 433  
 Timmerman, T. A., 361  
 Tindale, R. S., 580  
 Titus, L. J., 268  
 Tobin, R. J., 491  
 Toburen, T., 470  
 Todd, A. R., 514  
 Todorov, A., 102, 404, 409  
 Tofighbakhsh, J., 245  
 Tolstoy, L., 107, 132, 408  
 Tomasello, M., 455  
 Tompson, T., 311  
 Tormala, Z. L., 233  
 Toro-Morn, M., 424  
*Toronto News*, 61  
 Totterdell, P., 190  
 Towles-Schwen, T., 123  
 Townsend, E., 123  
 Towson, S. M. J., 568  
 Trail, T. E., 143, 498  
 Trautwein, U., 20  
 Travis, L. E., 267  
 Trawalter, S., 316, 331  
 Tredoux, C., 496, 498  
 Trewin, D., 374  
 Triandis, H. C., 40, 44, 121, 157,  
     424, 433, 509  
 Trimble, D. E., 470  
 Triplett, N., 267  
 Trolier, T. K., 96  
 Tropp, L. R., 313, 496, 500  
 Trost, M. R., 298, 424  
 Truman, H., 90  
 Trzesniewski, K. H., 41, 52, 53

Tsang, J-A., 206  
 Tuan, Y-F., 279  
 Tubb, V. A., 566  
 Turner, C. W., 374  
 Turner, J. A., 240  
 Turner, J. C., 10, 326, 328  
 Turner, M. E., 71, 290, 293,  
     447, 508  
 Turner, M. R., 302  
 Turner, R. N., 496  
 Tutu, D., 223  
*TV Guide*, 374  
 Tversky, A., 88, 92, 93, 97, 98,  
     115, 295, 515  
 Twain, M., 417, 424, 521  
 Twenge, J. M., 41, 54, 64, 65,  
     182, 353, 394, 395, 517  
 Tykocinski, O. E., 310  
 Tyler, T. R., 327, 474  
 Tyson, M., 366  
 Tzeng, M., 434

## U

Uchino, B. N., 547  
 Uecker, J. E., 212  
 Ugwuuegbu, C. E., 568  
 Uleman, J. S., 102  
 Unger, R. K., 11, 442  
 United Nations (UN), 166,  
     177, 318  
 Unkelbach, C., 195, 316  
 Urbina, I., 90  
 U.S. Senate, 135  
 U.S. Supreme Court, 582  
 Ustinov, P., 397  
 Uysal, A., 429

## V

Väänänen, A., 546  
 Vaillant, G. E., 84, 538  
 Valcour, M., 59  
 Valdesolo, P., 120  
 Valentine, T., 558, 559, 562  
 Vallacher, R. R., 399  
 Vallone, R. P., 80, 89  
 van Baaren, R. B., 191, 411  
 Van Boven, L., 603  
 Van de Vliert, E., 590  
 van den Bos, K., 300  
 van der Eijnden, R. J. J. M., 70  
 van der Plight, J., 22  
 Van der Velde, S. W., 192  
 van Dijk, W. W., 48  
 Van Knippenberg, D., 234  
 Van Laar, C., 498  
 Van Lange, P. A. M., 516  
 Van Straaten, I., 405  
 Van Vugt, M., 167, 442, 595  
 Van Yperen, N. W., 428  
 Vanable, P., 534  
 VanDellen, M. R., 51  
 Vandello, J. A., 40, 365  
 VanderLaan, B. F., 527  
 Vanderslice, V. J., 300  
 VanderWeele, T. J., 533  
 Vanman, E. J., 331  
 Vargas, R. A., 213  
 Varnum, M. E. W., 41

- Vasquez, E. A., 361  
 Västfjäll, D., 475  
 Vatiné, E., 199  
 Vaughan, K. B. Lanzetta, J. T., 142  
 Vazire, S., 46  
 Vega, V., 372  
 Veitch, R., 366  
 Ventis, W. L., 322  
 Verkuyten, M., 328  
 Verplanken, B., 229  
 Verrilli, D. B., Jr., 256  
 Verwoerd, H., 231  
 Vescio, T. K., 320  
 Veysey, B. M., 284  
 Vidmar, N., 562, 575, 581  
 Viken, R. J., 96  
 Vinokur, A., 286  
 Vinsel, A. M., 159  
 Virgil, 58, 232, 406  
 Virtanen, S., 334  
 Visher, C. A., 557, 567  
 Visintainer, M. A., 538  
 Visser, P. S., 249, 262  
 Vitelli, R., 26  
 Vogel, T., 233  
 Vohs, D. K., 416  
 Vohs, K., 169  
 Vohs, K. D., 58, 59, 72, 470  
 Vollhardt, J. R., 500  
 Vollrath, D. A., 580  
 Von Arnim, E., 113  
 von Hippel, W., 80, 94, 315, 331  
 Vonnegut, K., 328, 593  
 Vorauer, J. D., 287, 337, 340, 499, 510  
 Voss, A., 316  
 Vukovic, J., 172  
 Vul, E., 296
- W**  
 Wachtler, J., 299  
 Wade, K. A., 561  
 Wagner, G., 595  
 Wagner, U., 310  
 Wagstaff, G. F., 108  
 Wald, M. L., 94  
 Walinsky, A., 390  
 Walker, L., 313  
 Walker, L. J., 468  
 Walker, P. M., 334  
 Walker, R., 245  
 Wallace, D. S., 124  
 Wallace, M., 203  
 Wallbom, M., 125, 280  
 Wallen, K., 169  
 Wallenberg, R., 475, 476  
 Waller, J., 131, 206, 213  
 Walster (Hatfield), E., 232, 403, 415, 417, 490  
 Walster, E. H., 406  
 Walster, G. W., 418, 427  
 Walters, R. H., 364, 376  
 Walther, E., 229  
 Walther, J. B., 72  
 Walum, H., 425, 427  
 Wang, A., 418  
 Wang, C. X., 256  
 Wang, Q., 57  
 Wang, T., 212  
 Wangchuk, J. S., 607
- Wänke, M., 400  
 Ward, A., 513, 514  
 Ward, C., 339  
 Ward, W. C., 96  
 Warnick, D. H., 294  
 Warr, P., 545  
 Warren, N. C., 413  
 Washington, J., 469  
 Wason, P. C., 91  
 Waters, E. A., 64–65  
 Watkins, D., 164  
 Watkins, E. R., 531  
 Watson, D., 107  
 Watson, J., 295  
 Watson, R. I., Jr., 279  
 Watt, S. E., 63, 67, 394  
 Watts, D. J., 66  
 Wearing, A., 63  
 Weary, G., 73, 98  
 Weaver, J. B., 376  
 Webb, T. L., 124  
 Weber, A. L., 430  
 Weber, N., 562  
 Webley, K., 318  
 Webster, C. D., 567  
 Webster, D. M., 298  
 Webster, P., 420  
 Weeks, J. L., 457  
 Wegener, D. T., 241, 242  
 Wegner, D. M., 331, 535  
 Wehr, P., 514  
 Weichselbaumer, D., 313  
 Weigold, M. F., 72  
 Weiner, B., 100, 107, 108, 361  
 Weinstein, N., 442  
 Weinstein, N. D., 64  
 Weis, R., 382  
 Weisbuch, M., 325  
 Weischelbaum, S., 442  
 Weiss, H. M., 233  
 Weiss, J., 46  
 Wells, G. L., 143, 557, 558, 559, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566  
 Welzel, C., 154, 178  
 Werner, R., 59  
 Wenzlaff, R. M., 415  
 Werner, C. M., 240, 576  
 West, R. F., 114  
 West, S. G., 325, 450  
 Weyant, J. M., 473, 474  
 Whatley, M. A., 447  
 Wheeler, L., 39, 395, 405  
 Whitaker, J. L., 382  
 Whitchurch, E., 63  
 White, G. L., 405, 422  
 White, J. W., 168  
 White, K., 43  
 White, L., 424  
 White, M. J., 468  
 White, P., 571  
 White, R., 491  
 White, R. K., 493, 494  
 Whitechurch, E. R., 415  
 Whitehead, A. N., 16, 125  
 Whitley, B. E., Jr., 557  
 Whitman, D., 70, 311  
 Whitman, R. M., 525  
 Whitman, W., 123, 397  
 Whitson, J. A., 97  
 Whittaker, J. O., 217  
 Whooley, M. A., 540  
 Wicker, A. W., 120, 121  
 Wicklund, R. A., 444  
 Widom, C. S., 364
- Wiebe, D. J., 370  
 Wiegman, O., 231  
 Wiesel, E., 439  
 Wieselquist, J., 428  
 Wigboldus, D. H. J., 316  
 Wike, R., 307  
 Wikipedia, 201  
 Wilberforce, W., 322  
 Wilde, O., 298  
 Wilder, D. A., 208, 234, 329, 334, 344, 502  
 Wildschut, T., 489  
 Wilford, J. N., 174  
 Wilke, H., 234  
 Wilkes, J., 355  
 Wilkinson, G. S., 451  
 Wilkinson, R., 320, 547, 549, 604  
 Wilkowski, B. M., 357  
 Willard, G., 69  
 Willem, S., 400  
 Willer, R., 238  
 Williams, D. K., 241  
 Williams, E. F., 64  
 Williams, G., 301  
 Williams, J. E., 161, 166, 317  
 Williams, K., 272  
 Williams, K. D., 273, 274, 275, 395, 396, 489  
 Williams, K. M., 52  
 Williams, L. E., 79  
 Williams, M. J., 340  
 Williams, R. L., 144  
 Williams, V., 234  
 Willis, F. N., 199  
 Willis, J., 102  
 Wilson, A., 62  
 Wilson, D., 238  
 Wilson, D. K., 537  
 Wilson, D. S., 452  
 Wilson, D. W., 466  
 Wilson, E. O., 450, 451, 452, 610  
 Wilson, G., 172  
 Wilson, J. P., 468  
 Wilson, L. C., 368  
 Wilson, R. S., 357  
 Wilson, S. J., 388  
 Wilson, T. D., 46, 47, 48, 49, 602  
 Wilson, W. R., 400  
 Wiltermuth, S. S., 65  
 Wiltze, A., 296  
 Winch, R. F., 414  
 Windschitl, P. D., 68  
 Winegard, B., 503  
 Wines, M., 93  
 Winfrey, O., 37  
 Winquist, J., 531  
 Winquist, J. R., 284  
 Winseman, A. L., 470  
 Winter, F. W., 402  
 Winter, R. J., 574  
 Wirth, J. H., 421  
 Wise, R. A., 565  
 Wiseman, R., 567  
 Wisman, A., 394  
 Wispe, L. G., 466  
 Withey, M. J., 216  
 Wittenberg, M. T., 534  
 Wittenbrink, B., 311  
 Wixon, D. R., 84  
 Wodehouse, P. G., 445  
 Wohl, M. J. A., 97, 503  
 Wojciszke, B., 419
- Wolf, S., 299, 570  
 Wolfe, C., 50  
 Women on Words and Images, 323  
 Wong, J. S., 506  
 Wong, T. J., 334  
 Wood, J. V., 68  
 Wood, L. A., 160  
 Wood, W., 125, 167, 181, 182, 232  
 Woods, T., 233  
 Woodward, M., 301  
 Woodward, W., 301  
 Woodzicka, J. A., 47  
 Woolley, A. W., 293  
 Wootton-Millward, L., 334  
 Worcheil, P., 361  
 Worcheil, S., 269, 275, 505  
 Word, C. O., 345  
 Workman, E. A., 144  
 World Bank, 166  
 World Meteorological Organization, 588  
 Worringham, C. J., 270  
 Wotman, S. R., 434  
 Wraga, M., 348  
 Wright, D., 335  
 Wright, D. B., 335, 561, 564, 573  
 Wright, E. F., 294  
 Wright, R., 171, 285, 493  
 Wright, R. A., 275  
 Wrightsman, L., 575  
 Wrightsman, L. S., 571  
 Wrosch, C., 66  
 Wurf, E., 37  
 Wylie, R. C., 63
- Y**  
 Yamaguchi, S., 62  
 Yarmey, A. D., 562  
 Ybarra, M. L., 371, 376  
 Ybarra, O., 54  
 Yee, L., 382  
 Yee, N., 235  
 Yelsma, P., 424  
 Yildiz, A. A., 328  
 Yinon, Y., 384  
 York, R. M., 574  
 Young, J. E., 533  
 Young, L. J., 425  
 Young, R. D., 535  
 Young, S. G., 335  
 Younger, J., 396  
 Yousif, Y., 462  
 Yousif, Y. H., 451  
 Yovetich, N. A., 436  
 Yuchtman (Yaar), E., 362  
 Yuille, J. C., 558  
 Yukl, G., 511  
 Yzerbyt, V. Y., 415
- Z**  
 Zadro, L., 396  
 Zagefska, H., 448  
 Zagefska, J., 603  
 Zajonc, R. B., 267, 268, 271, 286, 384, 399, 400, 401, 402

- Zak, P. J., 513  
Zakaria, F., 355  
Zaki, J., 188, 214  
Zanna, M., 387  
Zanna, M. P., 73, 163, 239, 317,  
    345, 363, 568  
Zaragoza, M. S., 561  
Zarkadi, T., 564  
Zauberman, G., 90  
Zavalloni, M., 282  
Zebrowitz, L. A., 411, 497  
Zebrowitz-McArthur, L.,  
    108, 567  
Zeelenberg, M., 96  
Zeisel, H., 567, 575, 577,  
    578, 580  
Zelenski, J. M., 607  
Zhang, D. D., 591  
Zhang, S., 42  
Zhang, Y. F., 594  
Zhong, C.-B., 79, 278, 396, 533  
Zhou, X., 534  
Zhu, W. X., 319  
Zhu, Y., 42  
Zick, A., 308, 321  
Zickafoose, D., 558  
Zigler, E., 364  
Zill, N., 378  
Zillmann, D., 269, 368, 376,  
    377, 411  
Zillmer, E. A., 206  
Zimbardo, P. G., 127, 128, 256,  
    277, 278, 279, 478, 492, 536  
Zimmer, C., 37, 451  
Ziskin, J., 525  
Zitek, E. M., 323  
Zola-Morgan, S., 402  
Zuckerman, E. W., 51  
Zussman, A., 568  
Zuwerink, J. R., 331

# Subject Index/Glossary

## A

ABCs of attitudes, 120  
**acceptance:** Conformity that involves both acting and believing in accord with social pressure, 188, 253. *See also* conformity  
achievement. *See* performance or achievement  
**adaptation-level phenomenon:** The tendency to adapt to a given level of stimulation and thus to notice and react to changes from that level, 602–603  
addiction, 423–424  
additive tasks, 272  
advertising, inoculating children against, 260–262  
affective forecasting, 47–49  
age  
  audience of persuasion and, 248–249  
  prejudice and, 308  
**aggression:** Physical or verbal behavior intended to hurt someone. In laboratory experiments, this might mean delivering electric shocks or saying something likely to hurt another's feelings, 167, 353–391  
  arousal and, 368  
  attitudes-follow-behavior principle and, 127, 131–132, 203–204  
  aversive incidents and, 366–368  
  as biological phenomenon, 355–360  
  catharsis and, 381–382, 386–388  
  cues, 368–370  
  culture change and, 389–391  
  evolutionary psychology on, 356  
  gender and, 167–168, 176  
  genetic influences on, 357–358  
  group influences on, 383–386  
  hostile, 355, 369  
  influences on, 365–386  
  instrumental, 355  
  just-world phenomenon and, 342  
  as learned social behavior, 362–365  
  narcissism and, 52–53  
  neural influences on, 356–357  
  pornography and sexual violence, 370–373  
  priming and, 79, 378  
  rape, 342, 371–373  
  reducing, 386–390  
  as response to frustration, 360–362  
  rewards of, 362–363  
  scapegoat theory of, 325–326  
  social learning approach to, 388–389  
  television violence and, 24–25, 373–378  
  theories of, 355–365  
  video-game violence, 379–383  
alcohol, 358, 535  
**altruism:** A motive to increase another's welfare without conscious regard for one's self-interests, 440. *See also* helping  
  distress and, 453–456  
  egoism vs., 457  
  empathy-induced, 454–456

foot-in-the-door phenomenon and, 129–130  
  genuine, 453–457  
  modeling, 463–464, 475–476  
  Samaritan story, 440–441  
  social dilemmas and, 488  
  socializing, 474–478  
**androgynous:** From *andro* (man) + *gyn* (woman)—thus mixing both masculine and feminine characteristics, 176  
anonymity, deindividuation and, 277–279  
anticipation of interaction, 399  
anxiety, 534–536  
approval, gaining after disapproval, 417–418  
**arbitration:** Resolution of a conflict by a neutral third party who studies both sides and imposes a settlement, 510, 515  
arousal  
  aggression and, 368  
  deindividuation and, 279–280  
  dissonance as, 145–146  
  from others' presence, 268–271  
  passionate love and, 421–422  
  in two-factor theory of emotion, 421–422  
attachment, 425–427  
  love and, 425–426  
  marital happiness and, 550–551  
  need to belong, 393–396  
  styles of, 426–427  
attacks, aggression bred by, 367–368  
**attitude:** A favorable or unfavorable evaluative reaction toward something or someone (often rooted in one's beliefs, and exhibited in one's feelings and intended behavior), 119–148. *See also* attitudes-follow-behavior principle; prejudice  
  ABCs of, 120  
  among rescuers of Jews, 476  
  behavior's affect on, 126–147  
  contact and, 496–497  
  dual attitude system, 49, 122–123, 310–311  
  facial feedback effect and, 143  
  implicit vs. explicit, 49, 122–123  
  moral hypocrisy and, 120–121  
  potent, 125  
  prediction of behavior from, 119, 120–126  
  principle of aggregation and, 123–124  
  reconstruction of, 84–85  
  sexual, gender and, 168–170  
  social influences and, 121–123  
  theory of planned behavior and, 124  
**attitude inoculation:** Exposing people to weak attacks upon their attitudes so that when stronger attacks come, they will have refutations available, 258, 259–262  
attitudes-follow-behavior principle, 126–147  
  altruism and, 477  
  changing oneself using, 147–148  
  cognitive dissonance and, 135–140, 145–146  
comparison of theories about, 145–146  
cult indoctrination and, 253–254  
foot-in-the-door phenomenon, 128–130, 203–204, 253–254  
immoral acts and, 131–132  
impression management and, 135, 145  
racial prejudice and, 132–133  
role playing and, 127–128  
self-perception theory and, 140–145, 146  
social movements and, 133–134  
treatment approach, 541  
verbal support and, 128  
attraction  
  attractiveness of loved ones, 411  
  bad events' consequences for, 416  
  dating and, 403–404  
  evolution and, 409–410  
  first impressions, 407  
  matching phenomenon, 405–406  
  mere-exposure effect, 399–403  
  mutual liking and, 415–418  
  of opposites, 414–415  
  physical attractiveness and, 403–411  
  proximity and, 397–403  
  reward theory of, 418–419  
  self-esteem and, 417  
  similarity vs. complementarity and, 411–415  
  social comparison and, 410–411  
  twins and, 398  
**attractiveness:** Having qualities that appeal to an audience. An appealing communicator (often someone similar to the audience) is most persuasive on matters of subjective preference, 233–235. *See also* physical attractiveness  
**attribution theory:** The theory of how people explain others' behavior—for example, by attributing it either to internal dispositions (enduring traits, motives, and attitudes) or to external situations, 100–109  
  commonsense attributions, 102  
  depression and, 529–530  
  dispositional attribution, 101, 108  
  flattery and, 416  
  fundamental attribution error, 103–109, 485, 491  
  group-serving bias and, 69–70, 340–341  
  helping and, 448–449  
  maintaining change and, 543–544  
  misattribution, 100–101  
  prejudice and, 339–343  
  self-serving bias and, 61–62  
  situational attribution, 101, 108  
audience of persuasion, 248–251, 255  
**authoritarian personality:** A personality that is disposed to favor obedience to authority and intolerance of outgroups and those lower in status, 321  
authority  
  institutional, 201–202  
  obedience and legitimacy of, 199–201

**autokinetic phenomenon:** Self (*auto*) motion (*kinetic*). The apparent movement of a stationary point of light in the dark, 190

**automatic prejudice,** 314–316

**automatic processing:** “Implicit” thinking that is effortless, habitual, and without awareness; roughly corresponds to “intuition,” 86–88

**availability heuristic:** A cognitive rule that judges the likelihood of things in terms of their availability in memory. If instances of something come readily to mind, we presume it to be commonplace, 92–95, 592

average, attractiveness of, 409

aversive incidents, aggression and, 366–368

**avoidant attachment:** Attachments marked by discomfort over, or resistance to, being close to others, 426

**B**

bad events, power of, 416

**bargaining:** Seeking an agreement to a conflict through direct negotiation between parties, 510, 511

“beautiful is good” stereotype, 408

**behavioral confirmation:** A type of self-fulfilling prophecy whereby people’s social expectations lead them to behave in ways that cause others to confirm their expectations, 113–114

**behavioral medicine:** An interdisciplinary field that integrates and applies behavioral and medical knowledge about health and disease, 536

behavior problems, 528–540

- anxiety and shyness, 534–536
- depression, 528–532
- health, illness, and death, 536–540
- loneliness, 532–534

behavior therapists, 541

**belief perseverance:** Persistence of one’s initial conceptions, such as when the basis for one’s belief is discredited but an explanation of why the belief might be true survives, 80–81, 82–83

**bias.** *See also* prejudice; stereotype confirmation, 91

- correspondence (fundamental attribution error), 103–109, 485, 491
- experimenter, 110
- explaining the opposite and, 83
- group-serving, 69–70, 340–341
- hindsight, 14–16, 524
- impact, 48, 603
- implicit, 122–123
- implicit egotism and, 401
- ingroup, 327–329, 330–331, 334–335, 465, 491
- own-race, 334–335
- political perception and, 80–81
- self-serving, 61–71, 80–81, 491
- social perception and, 80

**biology.** *See also* evolutionary psychology

- aggression and, 355–360
- conformity and, 217
- culture and, 180–182
- passionate love and, 422, 425
- roots of behavior in, 8–9
- trust and, 513

blindsight, 87

**bystander effect:** The finding that a person is less likely to provide help when there are other bystanders, 458–463

- assuming responsibility and, 462–463
- ethics of experiments on, 463
- examples of, 458
- increasing helping, 471–472
- interpreting and, 460–462
- noticing and, 459, 460

**C**

categorization, 332–335

**catharsis:** Emotional release. The catharsis view of aggression is that aggressive drive is reduced when one “releases” aggressive energy, either by acting aggressively or by fantasizing aggression, 381–382, 386–388

causation vs. correlation, 18–21. *See also* attribution theory

**central route to persuasion:** Occurs when interested people focus on the arguments and respond with favorable thoughts, 228, 229, 230, 249

chameleon effect, 192

change blindness, 559

**channel of communication:** The way the message is delivered—whether face-to-face, in writing, on film, or in some other way, 244–247, 286–287

children

- inoculating against advertising, 259–262
- social attachments and survival of, 393
- TV viewing and behavior of, 374–377

choice

- costs of excess, 59–60
- deciding-becomes-believing effect, 138–140
- informed consent, 27

Cinderella story, 3

climate change, 588–593

- IPCC report on, 588–590
- persuasion and skepticism about, 226–227
- psychological effects of, 590–592
- public opinion about, 592–593

**clinical psychology:** The study, assessment, and treatment of people with psychological difficulties, 521–553

- accuracy of clinical judgments, 522–528
- cognitive processes and behavior problems, 528–540
- social relationships and health and well-being, 545–552
- treatment approaches, 541–545

clinical vs. statistical prediction, 525–528

**co-actors:** Co-participants working individually on a noncompetitive activity, 267

**cognitive dissonance:** Tension that arises when one is simultaneously aware of two inconsistent cognitions. For example, dissonance may occur when we realize that we have, with little justification, acted contrary to our attitudes or made a decision favoring one alternative despite reasons favoring another, 135–140

- dissonance as arousal, 145–146
- insufficient justification and, 136–138

post-decision, 138–140

- selective exposure and, 135–136
- self-affirmation theory of, 146
- self-perception theory compared to, 145–146

cognitive errors. *See also* bias; eyewitness testimony; social perception

- in clinical prediction, 525–528
- counterfactual thinking, 95–96
- fundamental attribution error, 103–109, 485, 491
- illusory correlation, 96, 338–339, 523
- illusory thinking, 96–98
- misattribution, 100–101
- negative thinking, 530–532
- overconfidence phenomenon, 88–92, 524, 558–559
- pornography and, 370–371
- self-confirming diagnoses, 525
- self-defeating social thinking, 534
- self-fulfilling prophecy, 109–110, 112–114, 345–346
- simplistic thinking, 493–495
- training to overcome, 116

cognitive processing. *See also* behavior problems

- automatic, 86–88
- behavior problems and, 528–540
- categorization, 332–335
- controlled vs. automatic, 86–88
- culture and, 41–43
- need for cognition, 250
- persuasion and, 228–230, 236, 250–251
- priming and, 78–79, 378
- self-serving bias and, 66–67
- video-game violence and, 381

**cohesiveness:** A “we feeling”; the extent to which members of a group are bound together, such as by attraction for one another, 210

collective rights, 517–518

**collectivism:** Giving priority to the goals of one’s group (often one’s extended family or work group) and defining one’s identity accordingly, 40

commitment

- irrevocable, 59–60
- prior, conformity and, 211–212
- resistance to persuasion and, 257–259

common sense, 13–16, 102

communication. *See also* persuasion

- arbitration, 510, 515
- bargaining, 510, 511
- channels of, 244–247, 286–287
- fear-arousing, 238–239
- leadership and, 302
- mediation, 510, 511–515
- misperception and, 511–515
- peacemaking and, 510–515
- self-disclosure, 428–430, 432
- social dilemmas and, 487
- two-step flow of, 246–247

communicator for persuasion

- attractiveness of, 233–235
- credibility of, 231–233, 240
- cult indoctrination and, 254–255
- importance of, 231

community

- conflict between individualism and, 517–518
- conformity and, 223
- group polarization in, 283–284

**companionate love:** The affection we feel for those with whom our lives are deeply intertwined, 423–424, 430

**compassion, personalization and,** 200

**competition,** 488–490, 503–504

**complementarity:** The popularly supposed tendency, in a relationship between two people, for each to complete what is missing in the other, 415

**compliance:** Conformity that involves publicly acting in accord with an implied or explicit request while privately disagreeing, 188

compliant confessions, 561

comprehension by jurors, 573–575

concepts, hidden values in, 11–12

conciliation, 515–516

confessions, 561

confiding, health and, 547

**confirmation bias:** A tendency to search for information that confirms one's preconceptions, 91

**conflict:** A perceived incompatibility of actions or goals, 481–495

- climate change and, 591–592
- competition and, 488–490, 503–504
- elements of, 481–482
- between individual and communal rights, 517–518
- misperception and, 490–495
- perceived injustice and, 490
- social dilemmas and, 482–488

**conformity:** A change in behavior or belief as the result of real or imagined group pressure, 188. *See also* obedience

- acceptance compared to, 188
- biology and, 217
- community and, 223
- compliance compared to, 188
- contagious yawning, 191
- culture and, 217
- ethics of experiments on, 195
- evil and, 205–206
- factors motivating resistance to, 219–222
- factors predicting, 208–212
- group cohesion and, 210–211
- group pressure studies of Asch, 194–195, 207
- group size and, 208
- groupthink and, 291
- individualism and, 222–223
- informational influence and, 213, 214
- liberating effects of, 202
- normative influence and, 213–214, 387–388
- norm formation studies of Sherif, 189–190, 207
- norm violation and, 204–205
- obedience compared to, 188
- personality and, 215–217
- positive and negative connotations of, 188
- prejudice and, 322–323
- prior commitment and, 211–212
- in public responses, 211
- reactance and, 220
- social roles and, 217–219
- status and, 211
- suggestibility and, 190–194
- summary of classic studies, 207
- unanimity and, 209–210
- uniqueness vs., 220–222
- connectedness, gender and, 163–165

consistency, minority influence and, 298–299

consumption, reducing, 594–597

contact, 496–501. *See also* proximity

**controlled processing:** "Explicit" thinking that is deliberate, reflective, and conscious, 86

cooperation, 501–510

- common external threats and, 501–503
- cooperative learning and racial attitudes, 506–509
- group and superordinate identities and, 509–510
- superordinate goals and, 504–505

correlation

- causation vs., 18–21
- illusory, 96, 338–339, 523

**correlational research:** The study of the naturally occurring relationships among variables, 18–23

- correlation vs. causation, 18–21
- experimental research vs., 24–25, 29
- survey research, 21–23

correspondence bias. *See* fundamental attribution error

counterarguing, 249–250, 258–259

**counterfactual thinking:** Imagining alternative scenarios and outcomes that might have happened, but didn't, 95–96

courts. *See* eyewitness testimony; juries

**credibility:** Believability. A credible communicator is perceived as both expert and trustworthy, 231–233, 240

crowding, 269

**cult (also called new religious movement):** A group typically characterized by (1) distinctive ritual and beliefs related to its devotion to a god or a person, (2) isolation from the surrounding "evil" culture, and (3) a charismatic leader. (A sect, by contrast, is a spinoff from a major religion), 251–257

- attitudes-follow-behavior principle and, 253–254
- elements of persuasion and, 254–255
- group effects and, 255–257

cultural psychology, 45

**culture:** The enduring behaviors, ideas, attitudes, and traditions shared by a large group of people and transmitted from one generation to the next, 11, 154

- aggression and culture change, 389–391
- aggression models in, 364–365
- attractiveness criteria and, 408
- behavior and, 154–162
- biology and, 180–182
- cognition and, 41–43
- collectivist, 40
- conformity and, 217
- diversity in, 154–156, 509–510
- divorce rates and, 433–434
- fundamental attribution error and, 107–108
- gender roles and, 177–178, 181
- humans as cultural animals, 155
- individualism within, 40–41, 222–223
- love and, 422
- morality common across, 152
- norm similarities in, 159–162
- norm variations in, 156–159
- peer-transmitted, 179–180
- racial prejudice and, 414

self-concept and, 40–44

self-esteem and, 43–44

uniqueness and, 221–222

values and, 10, 11

cyberostricism, 395–396

## D

**dating.** *See also* relationships

- detachment process after, 434–435
- physical attractiveness and, 403–404
- self-disclosure and, 432

"death-qualified" jurors, 576–577

**debriefing:** In social psychology, the postexperimental explanation of a study to its participants. Debriefing usually discloses any deception and often queries participants regarding their understandings and feelings, 27

**deception:** In research, an effect by which participants are misinformed or misled about the study's methods and purposes, 26

deciding-becomes-believing effect, 138–140

**defensive pessimism:** The adaptive value of anticipating problems and harnessing one's anxiety to motivate effective action, 66

**deindividuation:** Loss of self-awareness and evaluation apprehension; occurs in group situations that foster responsiveness to group norms, good or bad, 276–280. *See also* depersonalization

- anonymity and, 277–279
- arousal and, 279–280
- diminished self-awareness and, 280
- group size and, 277

**demand characteristics:** Cues in an experiment that tell the participant what behavior is expected, 27

**dependent variable:** The variable being measured, so called because it may depend on manipulations of the independent variable, 25

depersonalization. *See also* deindividuation

- obedience and, 198–199
- in war, 279

depression, 528–532

**depressive realism:** The tendency of mildly depressed people to make accurate rather than self-serving judgments, attributions, and predictions, 529–530

deprivation, relative, 362

desegregation, 497–501

desensitization, television and, 377

detachment process, 434–436

diet, aggression and, 359–360

**disclosure reciprocity:** The tendency for one person's intimacy of self-disclosure to match that of a conversational partner, 429

**discrimination:** Unjustified negative behavior toward a group or its members, 310

- gender and, 318–319
- self-fulfilling prophecy and, 345–346

**displacement:** The redirection of aggression to a target other than the source of the frustration. Generally, the new target is a safer or more socially acceptable target, 360–361

**dispositional attribution:** Attributing behavior to the person's disposition and traits, 101, 106–108  
**dissimilarity,** dislike and, 413–414  
**dissonance theory.** *See cognitive dissonance*  
**distinctiveness,** prejudice and, 335–339  
**diversity,** 154–156, 414, 509–510. *See also culture*  
**divorce,** 433–434  
**door-in-the-face technique:** A strategy for gaining a concession. After someone first turns down a large request (the door-in-the-face), the same requester counteroffers with a more reasonable request, 473–474  
**doubt of social ability,** 534–535  
**dual attitude system:** Differing implicit (automatic) and explicit (consciously controlled) attitudes toward the same object. Verbalized explicit attitudes may change with education and persuasion; implicit attitudes change slowly, with practice that forms new habits, 49, 122–123, 310–311  
**dual processing,** 7

## E

**egoism:** A motive (supposedly underlying all behavior) to increase one's own welfare. The opposite of altruism, which aims to increase another's welfare, 443, 457  
**egotism, implicit,** 401  
**embodied cognition:** The mutual influence of bodily sensations on cognitive preferences and social judgments, 79  
**emotions.** *See also moods*  
 affective forecasting, 47–49  
 altruism and, 453–454  
 attitudes-follow-behavior principle and, 541  
 automatic processing of, 87  
 catharsis and, 381–382, 386–388  
 eyewitness testimony and, 559  
 facial feedback effect, 141–143  
 gender and, 165  
 illness and, 537–538  
 persuasion and, 236–239  
 priming, 79, 378  
 self-perception theory of, 140  
 two-factor theory of, 421–422  
**empathy:** The vicarious experience of another's feelings; putting oneself in another's shoes, 165, 454  
 altruism induced by, 454–456  
 for deaths in war, 474–475  
 facial feedback effect and, 142  
 gender and, 165  
 narcissism and lack of, 54  
 video-game violence and, 381  
**epigenetics,** 181  
**equal-status contact:** Contact on an equal basis. Just as a relationship between people of unequal status breeds attitudes consistent with their relationship, so do relationships between those of equal status. Thus, to reduce prejudice, interracial contact should be between persons equal in status, 501  
**equity:** A condition in which the outcomes people receive from a relationship are

proportional to what they contribute to it. Note: Equitable outcomes needn't always be equal outcomes, 427–428  
**ethics and morality.** *See also norms*  
 attitudes-follow-behavior principle and, 131–133  
 "beautiful is good" stereotype, 408  
 of bystander experiments, 463  
 clinical vs. statistical prediction and, 526  
 common across cultures, 152  
 of conformity experiments, 195  
 of experimentation, 26–27  
 groupthink and, 290–291  
 moral exclusion, 474–475  
 moral hypocrisy, 120–121  
 of obedience experiments, 197–198  
 self-serving bias and, 63

**ethnocentric:** Believing in the superiority of one's own ethnic and cultural group, and having a corresponding disdain for all other groups, 321

**evaluation apprehension:** Concern for how others are evaluating us, 270  
 everyday life, social psychology and, 9  
 evil, 205–206

**evolutionary psychology:** The study of the evolution of cognition and behavior using principles of natural selection, 153  
 on aggression, 356  
 on attraction, 409–410  
 on gender, 170–176  
 on helping, 450–452  
 human nature and, 153–154  
 predictions derived from, 174–176  
 religion and, 174

expectations, 109–116  
 behavioral confirmation and, 113–114  
 distinctiveness from violating, 336  
 experimenter bias and, 110  
 optimism, 64–66, 113, 538–540  
 pessimism, 66, 113  
 self-fulfilling prophecy, 109–110,  
 112–114, 345–346  
 teacher, student performance and,  
 110–112

**experimental realism:** Degree to which an experiment absorbs and involves its participants, 26

**experimental research:** Studies that seek clues to cause-effect relationships by manipulating one or more factors (independent variables) while controlling others (holding them constant), 18, 24–27  
 control and variables in, 24–25  
 correlational research vs., 24–25, 29  
 ethical issues for, 26–27  
 generalizing from, 27–28  
 random assignment in, 25–26

experimenter bias, 110  
 expertise  
 intuition and, 87  
 perceived, persuasion and, 232

**explanatory style:** One's habitual way of explaining life events. A negative, pessimistic, depressive explanatory style attributes failure to stable, global, and internal causes, 529–530, 539–540  
**explanatory style therapy,** 543  
**expressiveness norms,** 157  
**eyewitness testimony,** 556–566. *See also juries*

feedback and, 563–564  
 inaccuracy of, 558–559

influences on, 566  
 lineup identifications, 564–565  
 misinformation effect and, 559–561  
 overconfidence phenomenon and,  
 558–559  
 power of, 557–558  
 reducing error in, 54–56, 562  
 retelling and, 561–562

## F

**facial feedback effect:** The tendency of facial expressions to trigger corresponding feelings such as fear, anger, or happiness, 141–143

false confessions, 561

**false consensus effect:** The tendency to overestimate the commonality of one's opinions and one's undesirable or unsuccessful behaviors, 66–67

**false uniqueness effect:** The tendency to underestimate the commonality of one's abilities and one's desirable or successful behaviors, 67

family. *See also relationships*

aggression and, 364  
 gender and, 165  
 peer-transmitted culture vs., 179–180  
 favoritism, ingroup bias and, 328–329  
 fear-arousing communication, 238–239  
 feedback  
 eyewitness testimony and, 563–564  
 facial feedback effect, 141–143  
 for reducing consumption, 595, 596

"feel bad/do good" phenomenon,  
 444–445

"feel good/do good" phenomenon,  
 445–446

**field research:** Research done in natural, real-life settings outside the laboratory, 18

first impressions, 407

flattery, 416

folie à deux, 255

**foot-in-the-door phenomenon:** The tendency for people who have first agreed to a small request to comply later with a larger request, 128–130, 203–204, 253–254

**framing:** The way a question or an issue is posed; framing can influence people's decisions and expressed opinions, 23

freedom, reactance and, 220

**free riders:** People who benefit from the group but give little in return, 273

friendship. *See also relationships*

cross-racial, 498–501  
 gender and, 164  
 happiness and, 549–550  
 physical attractiveness and, 403–411  
 proximity and, 397–403  
 self-disclosure and, 428–430, 432  
 universal norms of, 159–160

**frustration-aggression theory:** The theory that frustration triggers a readiness to aggress, 360–362

**frustration:** The blocking of goal-directed behavior, 360. *See also aggression*  
 aggression as response to, 360–362  
 displacement of, 360–361  
 relative deprivation and, 362  
 scapegoat theory, 325–326

**fundamental attribution error:** The tendency for observers to underestimate situational influences and overestimate dispositional influences upon others' behavior. (Also called *correspondence bias* because we so often see behavior as corresponding to a disposition), 103–109, 485, 491

## G

**gender:** In psychology, the characteristics, whether biological or socially influenced, by which people define male and female, 162  
 aggression and, 167–168, 371–373  
 culture and, 177–180, 181  
 discrimination, 318–319  
 evolutionary psychology on, 170–176  
 genes and, 162–163  
 helping and, 449–450, 466–468  
 hormones and, 176  
 importance of physical attractiveness and, 403–404  
 independence vs. connectedness and, 163–165  
 love and, 422–423  
 mating preferences and, 171–173  
 prejudice, 316–318  
 similarity and, 163  
 social dominance and, 166–167  
 uniqueness and, 221

**gender role:** A set of behavior expectations (norms) for males and females, 177–179  
 generalizing

from distinctive cases, 337–338  
 from experimental research, 27–28  
 overgeneralized stereotypes, 310

genes, 153, 162–163, 357–358. *See also* evolutionary psychology

genocide, 384

global warming. *See* climate change

**GRIT:** Acronym for “graduated and reciprocated initiatives in tension reduction”—a strategy designed to de-escalate international tensions, 515–516

group brainstorming, 294–297

group cohesion, conformity and, 210–211

group influences, 265–303

on aggression, 383–386

cult indoctrination and, 255–257

deindividuation, 276–280

groupthink, 289–297

ingroup bias, 327–329, 330–331,

334–335, 465, 491

on juries, 577–583

minority influence, 297–302

polarization, 280–289, 578–580

pros and cons of, 302–303

social facilitation, 267–271, 273

social loafing, 271–276

**group polarization:** Group-produced enhancement of members' preexisting tendencies; a strengthening of the members' average tendency, not a split within the group, 280–289

informational influence and, 286–287

in juries, 578–580

misperception and, 491

normative influence and, 287–288

opinion intensification and, 282–286

risky shift phenomenon, 281–282

group pressure studies of Asch, 194–195, 207

group selection, 452

**group-serving bias:** Explaining away outgroup members' positive behaviors; also attributing negative behaviors to their dispositions (while excusing such behavior by one's own group), 69–70, 340–341

group size

conformity and, 208

crowding, 269

deindividuation and, 277

performance and, 273

social dilemmas and, 486–487

**groupthink:** “The mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to override realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action.”—Irving Janis (1971), 289–297

conflict and, 491

critiques of, 293

group problem solving vs., 294–297

in major fiascos, 289–290

preventing, 293–294

symptoms of, 290–293

**group:** Two or more people who, for longer than a few moments, interact with and influence one another and perceive one another as “us,” 266

guilt, helping out of, 444, 473–474

guns, 368–370, 390

personality traits and, 467–468

religious faith and, 469–471

rewards of, 441–446

similarity and, 464–467

social-exchange theory of, 441–446, 452

social norms and, 446–450, 452

time pressures and, 464

when someone else does, 463–464

**heuristic:** A thinking strategy that enables quick, efficient judgments, 92  
 availability, 92–95, 592  
 persuasion and, 229–230  
 representativeness, 92, 93  
 social judgment and, 92–95

**hindsight bias:** The tendency to exaggerate, after learning an outcome, one's ability to have foreseen how something turned out. Also known as the *I-knew-it-all-along phenomenon*, 14–16, 524

hormones

aggression and, 358–359

gender differences and, 176

**hostile aggression:** Aggression that springs from anger; its goal is to injure, 355, 369

**hypothesis:** A testable proposition that describes a relationship that may exist between events, 17–18

## H

happiness

adaptation-level phenomenon and, 602–603

close relationships and, 549–551

enhancing, 552–553

helpfulness and, 442, 445–446

marriage and, 434, 435–436

relationships and, 436–437

social comparison and, 604

wealth and, 599–601

health, 536–540

clinical vs. statistical prediction and, 526

close relationships and, 545–546

confiding and, 547

emotions and illness, 537–538

explanatory style and, 539–540

optimism and, 538–540

positive illusions and, 530

poverty and inequality and, 547–549

reactions to illness, 536–537

stress and illness, 538–539

**health psychology:** The study of the psychological roots of health and illness. Offers psychology's contribution to behavioral medicine, 536

heat, aggression and, 366–367

helping, 439–479

bystanders and, 458–463

circumstances prompting, 458–467

comparison of theories about, 452

door-in-the-face technique and, 473–474

evolutionary psychology on, 450–452

gender and, 449–450, 466–468

increasing, 471–478

illness. *See* health

**illusion of control:** Perception of uncontrollable events as subject to one's control or as more controllable than they are, 96–98

illusion of invulnerability, 290

**illusion of transparency:** The illusion that our concealed emotions leak out and can be easily read by others, 34–36

**illusory correlation:** Perception of a relationship where none exists, or perception of a stronger relationship than actually exists, 96, 338–339, 523

immigrants, prejudice against, 308

**immune neglect:** The human tendency to underestimate the speed and the strength of the “psychological immune system,” which enables emotional recovery and resilience after bad things happen, 49

**impact bias:** Overestimating the enduring impact of emotion-causing events, 48, 603

**implicit association test (IAT):** A computer-driven assessment of implicit attitudes. The test uses reaction times to measure people's automatic associations between attitude objects and evaluative words. Easier pairings (and faster responses) are taken to indicate stronger unconscious associations, 122–123

implicit bias, 122–123

implicit egotism, 401

impression management, 71–74, 135, 145

incest taboo, 161

income inequality, health and, 548–549

independence, gender and, 163–165

**independent self:** Construing one's identity as an autonomous self, 40

**independent variable:** The experimental factor that a researcher manipulates, 24

**individualism:** The concept of giving priority to one's own goals over group goals and defining one's identity in terms of personal attributes rather than group identifications, 40  
 communal rights and, 517–518  
 conformity and, 222–223  
 culture and, 40–41, 222–223

**informational influence:** Conformity occurring when people accept evidence about reality provided by other people, 213  
 conformity and, 213, 214  
 group polarization and, 286–287

**informed consent:** An ethical principle requiring that research participants be told enough to enable them to choose whether they wish to participate, 27

**ingratiation:** The use of strategies, such as flattery, by which people seek to gain another's favor, 416

**ingroup bias:** The tendency to favor one's own group, 327–329  
 exclusive nature of groups and, 327–328  
 favoritism and, 328–329  
 helping and, 465  
 misperception and, 491  
 outgroup dislike and, 329, 330–331  
 outgroup homogeneity effect, 334–335  
 self-concept and, 328

**ingroup:** "Us"—a group of people who share a sense of belonging, a feeling of common identity, 327

injustice, perceived, 490

**insecure attachment:** Attachments marked by anxiety or ambivalence, 426

**instinctive behavior:** An innate, unlearned behavior pattern exhibited by all members of a species, 356

instinct theory, 356

institutional supports of prejudice, 323–325

**instrumental aggression:** Aggression that aims to injure, but only as a means to some other end, 355

**insufficient justification:** Reduction of dissonance by internally justifying one's behavior when external justification is "insufficient," 136–138

**integrative agreements:** Win-win agreements that reconcile both parties' interests to their mutual benefit, 511

**interaction:** A relationship in which the effect of one factor (such as biology) depends on another factor (such as environment), 181. *See also* group influences  
 anticipation of, 399

between behavior and biology, 360

between culture and biology, 181–182

between culture and individuals, 183, 184

proximity and, 397–399

**interdependent self:** Construing one's identity in relation to others, 40  
 internalized confessions, 561

Internet  
 group polarization on, 284–285  
 intimacy vs. isolation and, 431–432  
 social networks, 394, 432

**intimacy.** *See also* love  
 attachment and, 425–427  
 equity and, 427–428

Internet and, 431–432  
 self-disclosure and, 428–430, 432  
**intuition**  
 automatic processing and, 86–88  
 power and limits of, 6–7, 86–88  
 representativeness heuristic, 92, 93  
 social judgment and, 86–88  
 irrevocable commitments, 59–60

## J

judge's instructions, 570–572  
**juries.** *See also* eyewitness testimony  
 comprehension by jurors, 573–575  
 "death-qualified" jurors, 576–577  
 defendant characteristics and, 567–570  
 educating jurors, 565–566  
 factors influencing, 567–572  
 group influences on, 577–583  
 inadmissible testimony and, 570–572  
 judge's instructions to, 570–572  
 juror selection, 574–575  
 laboratory simulations, 581–582  
 size of, 580–581

**just-world phenomenon:** The tendency of people to believe that the world is just and that people therefore get what they deserve and deserve what they get, 341–343

## K

**kin selection:** The idea that evolution has selected altruism toward one's close relatives to enhance the survival of mutually shared genes, 450–451

Kulechov effect, 81

## L

labeling, value judgments in, 12

**leadership:** The process by which certain group members motivate and guide the group, 299  
 great person theory of, 300  
 minority influence and, 299–302  
 social, 300  
 task, 300  
 transformational, 302

**learned helplessness:** The sense of hopelessness and resignation learned when a human or animal perceives no control over repeated bad events, 58–59

leniency, juror deliberation and, 580

likeability, persuasion and, 233–234

**locus of control:** The extent to which people perceive outcomes as internally controllable by their own efforts or as externally controlled by chance or outside forces, 56–58

loneliness, 532–534

longevity–status correlation, 18–19, 20–21

looking-glass self, 39

love, 420–425. *See also* intimacy

attachment and, 425–426

attractiveness of loved ones, 411

children's survival and, 393

companionate, 423–424, 430  
 components of, 420  
 culture and, 422  
 gender and, 422–423  
 mutual gaze and, 420–421, 436  
 passionate, 420–423, 425–426, 436

**lowball technique:** A tactic for getting people to agree to something. People who agree to an initial request will often still comply when the requester ups the ante. People who receive only the costly request are less likely to comply with it, 130

## M

marriage. *See* relationships

mass delusions, 193

**matching phenomenon:** The tendency for men and women to choose as partners those who are a "good match" in attractiveness and other traits, 405–406

materialism and wealth

increase in materialism, 598

national wealth, 599

satisfaction and materialism, 601–605

well-being and wealth, 598–601

mating preferences, 171–173

media

inoculating children against advertising, 260–262

order of persuasiveness for kinds of, 247

passively received appeals from, 244–245

personal contact vs. influence of, 245–247

pornography and sexual violence, 370–373

prejudice and, 324–325

television violence, 24–25, 373–378

two-step flow of communication and, 246–247

video games, 379–383

media awareness education, 373

**mediation:** An attempt by a neutral

third party to resolve a conflict by facilitating communication and offering suggestions, 510, 511–515

medicine, social psychology of, 527

memory. *See also* eyewitness testimony

construction of, 83–85

false confessions and, 561

misinformation effect, 84, 559–561

modified by moods, 530

priming, 78–79, 378

stress and, 559

**mere-exposure effect:** The tendency for novel stimuli to be liked more or rated more positively after the rater has been repeatedly exposed to them, 399–403

mere presence of others, 267–269, 270–271

mindguards in groupthink, 292

minority influence, 297–302

consistency and, 298–299

defections from the majority and, 299

juries and, 578

leadership and, 299–302

minority of one and, 294, 298

self-confidence and, 299

minority slowness effect, 298

**mirror-image perceptions:** Reciprocal views of each other often held by parties in conflict; for example, each may view itself as moral and peace-loving and the other as evil and aggressive, 491–493

**misattribution:** Mistakenly attributing a behavior to the wrong source, 100–101

**misinformation effect:** Incorporating “misinformation” into one’s memory of the event after witnessing an event and receiving misleading information about it, 84, 559–561

misperception, 490–495, 511–515

mixed-motive situations. *See* non-zero-sum games  
modeling altruism, 463–464, 475–476  
moods. *See also* emotions  
helpfulness and, 445–446  
negative thinking and, 530–532  
priming, 79, 378  
social judgment and, 98–99

**moral exclusion:** The perception of certain individuals or groups as outside the boundary within which one applies moral values and rules of fairness. Moral inclusion is regarding others as within one’s circle of moral concern, 474–475

moral hypocrisy, 120–121

morality. *See* ethics and morality

**mundane realism:** Degree to which an experiment is superficially similar to everyday situations, 26

## N

narcissism, 52–54, 72

**natural selection:** The evolutionary process by which heritable traits that best enable organisms to survive and reproduce in particular environments are passed to ensuing generations, 153, 171

**need for cognition:** The motivation to think and analyze. Assessed by agreement with items such as “The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me” and disagreement with items such as “I only think as hard as I have to,” 250

**need to belong:** A motivation to bond with others in relationships that provide ongoing, positive interactions, 393–396

negative thinking, 530–532

neural influences on aggression, 356–357

neuroscience. *See* social neuroscience

new religious movement. *See* cult

**non-zero-sum games:** Games in which outcomes need not sum to zero. With cooperation, both can win; with competition, both can lose (also called *mixed-motive situations*), 486

**normative influence:** Conformity based on a person’s desire to fulfill others’ expectations, often to gain acceptance, 213–214, 287–288

**norms:** Standards for accepted and expected behavior. Norms prescribe “proper” behavior. (In a different sense of the word, norms also describe what most others do—what is *normal*), 156  
conformity and formation of, 189–190, 192–194

conformity and violation of, 204–205  
cultural similarities in, 159–162  
cultural variations in, 156–159  
helping and, 446–450, 452  
reciprocity norm, 447  
social-responsibility norm, 447–449

love, and are disconsolate on losing it, 420–423, 425–426, 436

patronization, 314

**peace:** A condition marked by low levels of hostility and aggression and by mutually beneficial relationships, 482

peacemaking, 496–517

communication and, 510–515  
conciliation and, 515–516  
contact and, 496–501  
cooperation and, 501–510

pedestrian interaction norms, 158

peer-transmitted culture, 179–180

perceived injustice, 490

perceived self-control, 55–61

performance or achievement

presence of others and, 267–271  
self-esteem and, 19–20, 50–51

self-fulfilling prophecy and, 109–110, 112–114, 345–346

social loafing, 271–275

stereotype threat and, 346–348

teacher expectations and, 110–112

**peripheral route to persuasion:** Occurs when people are influenced by incidental cues, such as a speaker’s attractiveness, 228–230, 250–251

**personality:**

behavior shaped by, 8  
conformity and, 215–217  
helping and, 467–468

universal trait dimensions, 160

personalization, compassion and, 200

personal space norms, 157, 159

**personal space:** The buffer zone we like to maintain around our bodies. Its size depends on our familiarity with whoever is near us, 157

**persuasion:** The process by which a message induces change in beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors, 225–226

active experience vs. passive reception and, 244–245, 286–287

attitude inoculation and, 259–262

attractiveness and, 233–235

audience of, 248–251, 255

central vs. peripheral route to, 228–230, 249, 250–251

channel of communication for, 244–247

communicator for, 231–235, 254–255

counterarguing, 249–250, 258–259

credibility and, 231–233, 240

cult indoctrination, 251–257

discrepancy and, 239–240

hurdles to, 228

message content in, 236–243

one-sided vs. two-sided appeals, 240–241

openness vs. naiveté and, 262–263

personal commitment and, 257–259

personal vs. media influence and, 245–247

power of, 225–227

primacy vs. recency and, 242–243

real-life inoculation programs, 259–262

reason vs. emotion in, 236–239

repetition and, 245

resistance to, 257–262

virtual social reality and, 235

pessimism, 66, 113

physical attractiveness, 403–411

of the average and symmetry, 409

## P

pain

aggression and, 366  
of rejection, 396

partisanship, 77–78

**passionate love:** A state of intense longing for union with another. Passionate lovers are absorbed in each other, feel ecstatic at attaining their partner’s

- "beautiful is good" stereotype, 408  
 cultural agreement about, 408  
 dating and, 403–404  
 first impressions, 407  
 jurors influenced by, 567–568  
 matching phenomenon, 405–406  
 stereotype of, 406–408
- physical-attractiveness stereotype:** The presumption that physically attractive people possess other socially desirable traits as well: What is beautiful is good, 406–408
- placebo effect, 540
- planned behavior theory, 124
- planning fallacy:** The tendency to underestimate how long it will take to complete a task, 46, 90, 91
- play, gender and, 163–164
- pluralistic ignorance:** A false impression of what most other people are thinking or feeling, or how they are responding, 287
- political perception  
 bias and, 80–81  
 climate change and public opinion, 592–593  
 overconfidence phenomenon, 90  
 partisanship and, 77–78
- pornography, sexual violence and, 370–373
- positive illusions, 530
- possible selves:** Images of what we dream of or dread becoming in the future, 37–38
- postmodernism, 583
- poverty, health and, 547–548
- prediction  
 of behavior from attitudes, 119, 120–126  
 clinical vs. statistical, 525–528  
 by evolutionary psychology, 174–176  
 factors predicting conformity, 208–219  
 overconfidence phenomenon and, 89–90  
 self-knowledge and, 46–49
- prejudice:** A preconceived negative judgment of a group and its individual members, 307–351. *See also racial prejudice*
- alleviating, 351
  - attribution and, 339–343
  - categorization and, 332–335
  - cognitive sources of, 332–343
  - conformity and, 322–323
  - consequences of, 315–316, 343–351
  - contact and, 496–497
  - defined, 309–310
  - discrimination vs., 310
  - distinctiveness and, 335–339
  - gender, 316–318
  - illusory correlation and, 338–339
  - implicit bias and, 122–123
  - implicit vs. explicit, 310–311
  - institutional supports of, 323–325
  - motivational sources of, 325–331
  - motivation to avoid, 331
  - against obesity, 24
  - realistic group conflict theory of, 326
  - religion and, 307, 321–322
  - scapegoat theory of, 325–326
  - self-concept and, 39
  - self-perpetuating prejudices and, 343–345
  - social identity theory of, 326–331
  - socialization and, 320–322
- social sources of, 319–325  
 status and, 319–320  
 varieties of, 307–308
- primacy effect:** Other things being equal, information presented first usually has the most influence, 242, 243
- priming:** Activating particular associations in memory, 78  
 power of, 86  
 social perception and, 78–79  
 television violence and, 378
- principle of aggregation, 123–124
- Prisoner's Dilemma, 483–484, 485–486
- prison role-playing experiment, 127, 128
- professional advice, values and, 12
- prosocial behavior:** Positive, constructive, helpful social behavior; the opposite of antisocial behavior, 377
- proverbs, scientific truth vs., 14–15
- proximity:** Geographical nearness. Proximity (more precisely, "functional distance") powerfully predicts liking, 397–403. *See also contact*
- psychological immune system, 48–49
- public responses, conformity and, 211
- punctuality norms, 157
- punishment, insufficient justification and, 137–138
- R
- racial prejudice, 311–316  
 attitudes-follow-behavior principle and, 132–133  
 automatic, 314–316  
 changing racial attitudes, 311–312  
 conformity and, 323  
 cooperative learning and, 506–509  
 culture and, 414  
 desegregation and, 497–501  
 integration of baseball, 508  
 subtle forms of, 312–314
- racism:** (1) An individual's prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior toward people of a given race, or (2) institutional practices (even if not motivated by prejudice) that subordinate people of a given race, 310
- random assignment:** The process of assigning participants to the conditions of an experiment such that all persons have the same chance of being in a given condition. (Note the distinction between random *assignment* in experiments and random *sampling* in surveys. Random assignment helps us infer cause and effect. Random sampling helps us generalize to a population), 25–26
- random sampling:** Survey procedure in which every person in the population being studied has an equal chance of inclusion, 21
- rape, 342, 371–373
- rape myth, 371
- rational-emotive therapy, 541
- rationalization, groupthink and, 291
- reactance:** A motive to protect or restore one's sense of freedom. Reactance arises when someone threatens our freedom of action, 220, 570
- realistic group conflict theory:** The theory that prejudice arises from competition between groups for scarce resources, 326, 488–489
- recency effect:** Information presented last sometimes has the most influence. Recency effects are less common than primacy effects, 242–243
- reciprocity, genetic self-interest and, 451
- reciprocity norm:** An expectation that people will help, not hurt, those who have helped them, 447
- regression toward the average:** The statistical tendency for extreme scores or extreme behavior to return toward one's average, 97–98
- regulation, social dilemmas and, 486
- rejection, 394, 395–396
- relationships. *See also conflict; family; friendship*
- attachment in, 425–427
  - bad events' consequences for, 416
  - constructive fighting, 512
  - current decline of, 437
  - detachment process, 434–436
  - divorce, 433–434
  - equity in, 427–428
  - flattery and, 416
  - happiness and, 436–437, 549–551
  - health and, 545–546
  - idealization and, 112–113
  - love, 420–425
  - memory reconstruction and, 84–85
  - mere-exposure effect, 399–403
  - mutual liking and, 415–418
  - need to belong, 393–396
  - ostracism from, 394, 395–396
  - physical attractiveness and, 403–411
  - power of, 394
  - proximity and, 397–403
  - reward theory of attraction, 418–419
  - self-disclosure in, 428–430, 432
  - similarity vs. complementarity and, 411–415
- relative deprivation:** The perception that one is less well off than others with whom one compares oneself, 362
- religion
- evolutionary psychology and, 174
  - helping and, 469–471
  - prejudice and, 307, 321–322
- repetition, persuasion and, 245
- representativeness heuristic:** The tendency to presume, sometimes despite contrary odds, that someone or something belongs to a particular group if resembling (representing) a typical member, 92, 93
- research methods, 16–29
- correlational research, 18–23, 29
  - ethical issues for, 26–27, 195, 197–198, 463
  - experimental research, 24–27, 29
  - generalization, 27–28
  - hypothesis formation and testing, 17–18
- resistance to persuasion, 257–262
- response options on surveys, 22, 23
- retelling, accuracy and, 561–562
- reward theory of attraction:** The theory that we like those whose behavior is rewarding to us or whom we associate with rewarding events, 418–419
- reward theory of helping, 441–446
- risky shift phenomenon, 281–282, 288

**role:** A set of norms that defines how people in a given social position ought to behave, 127  
 attitude affected by, 127–128  
 conformity and social roles, 217–219  
 gender roles, 177–179  
 reversal in role playing, 217–219  
 self-concept and, 38  
 rosy retrospection, 84  
 rule-breaking norms, 157

## S

samples for survey research, 21–22  
 scapegoat theory, 325–326  
 schemas, 37, 86  
**secure attachment:** Attachments rooted in trust and marked by intimacy, 426  
**selective exposure:** The tendency to seek information and media that agree with one's views and to avoid dissonant information, 135–136  
 self-actualization, 11–12  
**self-affirmation theory:** A theory that (a) people often experience a self-image threat after engaging in an undesirable behavior; and (b) they can compensate by affirming another aspect of the self. Threaten people's self-concept in one domain, and they will compensate either by refocusing or by doing good deeds in some other domain, 146  
**self-awareness:** A self-conscious state in which attention focuses on oneself. It makes people more sensitive to their own attitudes and dispositions, 280  
 group experiences diminishing, 280  
 social surroundings affecting, 36  
 self-censorship, groupthink and, 291  
**self-concept:** What we know and believe about ourselves, 37–50. *See also* social identity  
 culture and, 40–44  
 development of, 38–40  
 helping and, 473–474  
 independent vs. interdependent, 40, 42, 43  
 ingroup bias and, 328  
 possible selves, 37–38  
 prejudice and, 330  
 self-knowledge, 44, 46–49  
 self-schemas, 37  
 social relationships and, 36  
 uniqueness in, 221  
 self-concern, behavior motivated by, 36  
**self-confidence**  
 credibility and, 232  
 incompetence and, 89  
 leadership and, 301  
 minority influence and, 299  
 overconfidence phenomenon, 88–90, 524  
 self-confirming diagnoses, 525  
 self-consciousness, 34–36, 221, 336–337  
**self-control**  
 costs of excess choice, 59–60  
 learned helplessness vs.  
   self-determination, 58–59  
 limits on, 55–56  
 locus of control and, 56–58

perceived, 55–61  
 self-efficacy and, 56  
**self-disclosure:** Revealing intimate aspects of oneself to others, 428–430, 432  
**self-efficacy:** A sense that one is competent and effective, distinguished from self-esteem, which is one's sense of self-worth. A bombardier might feel high self-efficacy and low self-esteem, 56, 57–58, 66, 74  
**self-esteem:** A person's overall self-evaluation or sense of self-worth, 50–55  
 adaptive, 68–69  
 attraction and, 417  
 culture and, 43–44  
 helping and, 442  
 low vs. secure, 54–55  
 maladaptive, 69–70  
 motive to maintain, 51–52  
 narcissism, 52–54  
 performance and, 19–20, 50–51  
 self-concept and, 39–40  
 self-efficacy vs., 56  
 self-presentation and, 71, 72, 74  
 self-serving bias and, 61, 68–70  
**self-fulfilling prophecy:** A belief that leads to its own fulfillment, 109–110, 112–114, 345–346  
**self-handicapping:** Protecting one's self-image with behaviors that create a handy excuse for later failure, 71, 72–73  
**self-help groups,** 541  
**self-image.** *See* self-concept  
**self-interest**  
 reciprocity and, 451  
 reward theory of helping and, 442–443  
 social judgment affected by, 36  
 trustworthiness and, 232–233  
**self-justification,** 491  
**self-knowledge,** 44, 46–49  
**self-monitoring:** Being attuned to the way one presents oneself in social situations and adjusting one's performance to create the desired impression, 73  
**self-perception theory:** The theory that when we are unsure of our attitudes, we infer them much as would someone observing us—by looking at our behavior and the circumstances under which it occurs, 140–145  
 cognitive dissonance theory  
   compared to, 145–146  
 emotions and, 140  
 facial feedback effect, 141–143  
 intrinsic motivation and, 144–145  
 overjustification effect, 143–144, 477–478  
 self-perpetuating prejudices, 343–345  
**self-presentation:** The act of expressing oneself and behaving in ways designed to create a favorable impression or an impression that corresponds to one's ideals, 71–74, 135, 145  
**self-schema:** Beliefs about self that organize and guide the processing of self-relevant information, 37  
**self-serving attributions:** A form of self-serving bias; the tendency to attribute positive outcomes to oneself and negative outcomes to other factors, 61–62

**self-serving bias:** The tendency to perceive oneself favorably, 61–71  
 adaptive, 68–69  
 attribution and, 61–62  
 bias against seeing, 62  
 in comparisons with others, 62–64  
 explaining, 68  
 faces of, 63  
 false consensus effect, 66–67  
 false uniqueness effect, 67  
 group-serving bias and, 69–70  
 maladaptive, 69–70  
 misperception and, 491  
 optimism and, 64–66  
 political perception and, 80–81  
 self-efficacy and, 74  
 self-esteem and, 61, 68–70  
**sexism:** (1) An individual's prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior toward people of a given sex, or (2) institutional practices (even if not motivated by prejudice) that subordinate people of a given sex, 310, 313, 317–318  
 sexuality  
 aggression against women, 371–373  
 attitudes and gender, 168–170  
 mating preferences and gender, 171–173  
 pornography and sexual violence, 370–373  
 sexual orientation, prejudice and, 308, 313–314  
 shyness, 534–536  
**similarity**  
 attractiveness and, 411–413  
 in cultural norms, 159–162  
 gender and, 163  
 helping and, 464–467  
 jurors influenced by, 568–570  
 perceived, prejudice and, 333–335  
 persuasion and, 233–234  
 simplistic thinking, 493–495  
**situational attribution:** Attributing behavior to the environment, 101, 106–108  
 slavery, 127–128, 131  
**sleep effect:** A delayed impact of a message that occurs when an initially discounted message becomes effective, such as we remember the message but forget the reason for discounting it, 232  
 smiling, gender and, 165  
 social belief dimensions, universal, 160  
**social capital:** The mutual support and cooperation enabled by a social network, 447  
 social cognition, 31  
**social comparison:** Evaluating one's abilities and opinions by comparing oneself with others, 38  
 attraction and, 410–411  
 materialism and, 603–605  
 normative influence and, 287–288  
 self-concept and, 38–39  
 social contagion, 190–194  
 social dilemmas, 482–488  
 escalation of, 484  
 evolving motives in, 485–486  
 fundamental attribution error and, 485  
 nature of, 482–483, 485–486  
 as non-zero-sum games, 486  
 Prisoner's Dilemma, 483–484, 485–486  
 resolving, 486–488  
 Tragedy of the Commons, 484–486

- social dominance orientation:** A motivation to have one's group dominate other social groups, 320  
 gender and, 166–167  
 prejudice and, 320, 321
- social-exchange theory:** The theory that human interactions are transactions that aim to maximize one's rewards and minimize one's costs, 441–446, 452
- social facilitation:** (1) Original meaning: the tendency of people to perform simple or well-learned tasks better when others are present. (2) Current meaning: the strengthening of dominant (prevalent, likely) responses in the presence of others, 267–271, 273
- social identity theory,** 326–327
- social identity:** The “we” aspect of our self-concept; the part of our answer to “Who am I?” that comes from our group memberships, 326  
 ingroup bias, 327–329, 330–331, 465  
 need for status, self-regard, and belonging, 330–331  
 prejudice and, 326–331  
 sustainability and, 595–596
- social influences.** *See also* conformity; culture; group influences; persuasion on aggression, 365–386  
 behavior shaped by, 7–8  
 on helping, 458–464, 474–478  
 personal control and, 182–183  
 therapy, 544–545
- socialization**  
 of altruism, 474–478  
 prejudice and, 320–322
- social judgment,** 86–99  
 adaptivity of, 115–116  
 counterfactual thinking and, 95–96  
 heuristics and, 92–95  
 illusory thinking and, 96–98  
 intuitive, 86–88  
 moods and, 98–99  
 overconfidence phenomenon, 88–92, 524  
 self-interest and, 36
- social leadership:** Leadership that builds teamwork, mediates conflict, and offers support, 300
- social learning theory:** The theory that we learn social behavior by observing and imitating and by being rewarded and punished, 362–365, 388–389
- social loafing:** The tendency for people to exert less effort when they pool their efforts toward a common goal than when they are individually accountable, 271–276
- social movements, attitudes-follow-behavior principle and,** 133–134
- social networks, Internet,** 394, 432
- social neuroscience:** An interdisciplinary field that explores the neural bases of social and emotional processes and behaviors, and how these processes and behaviors affect our brain and biology, 9  
 on aggression, 356–357  
 on trust, 513
- social perception,** 77–85  
 of equity, satisfaction and, 428  
 of gender and social dominance, 166–167
- of injustice, 490  
 memory and, 78–79  
 mirror-image perceptions, 491–493  
 misperception and conflict, 490–495  
 of others, 81  
 of ourselves by others, 81–82  
 political, 77–78, 80–81  
 priming and, 78–79, 378  
 of similarity, prejudice and, 333–335  
 television and, 377–378
- of trustworthiness, persuasion and, 232–233
- social pressure.** *See* conformity
- social psychology:** The scientific study of how people think about, influence, and relate to one another, 4, 31  
 areas of study, 4  
 central concepts behind, 5–9  
 common sense and, 13–16  
 described, 4–5  
 motivations for, 29  
 research methods, 16–29  
 values and, 10–13  
 view of human nature and, 115
- social representations:** A society's widely held ideas and values, including assumptions and cultural ideologies. Our social representations help us make sense of our world, 11
- social-responsibility norm:** An expectation that people will help those needing help, 447–449
- social scripts:** Culturally provided mental instructions for how to act in various situations, 377–378
- social skills training,** 542–543
- social trap:** A situation in which the conflicting parties, by each rationally pursuing its self-interest, become caught in mutually destructive behavior. Examples include the Prisoner's Dilemma and the Tragedy of the Commons, 483. *See also* social dilemmas  
 Prisoner's Dilemma, 483–484, 485–486  
 Tragedy of the Commons, 484–486
- spontaneous categorization,** 333
- spontaneous trait inference:** An effortless, automatic inference of a trait after exposure to someone's behavior, 102
- spotlight effect:** The belief that others are paying more attention to one's appearance and behavior than they really are, 34, 36
- statistical information**  
 correlation vs. causation, 18–21  
 illusory correlation, 93, 338–339, 523  
 juror comprehension of, 573–574  
 regression toward the average, 97–98  
 statistical vs. clinical prediction, 525–528
- status**  
 conformity and, 211  
 conversational style and, 167  
 equal-status contact, 501  
 need for, 330  
 prejudice and, 319–320, 330  
 universal norms of, 160–161
- status-longevity correlation,** 18–19, 20–21
- stereotype:** A belief about the personal attributes of a group of people. Stereotypes are sometimes overgeneralized, inaccurate, and resistant to new information (and sometimes accurate), 309. *See also* prejudice  
 accurate, 309–310  
 automatic vs. controlled, 316  
 “beautiful is good,” 408  
 biased judgment due to, 348–350  
 categorization and, 332–335  
 gender, 316–317  
 groupthink and, 291  
 illusory correlation and, 339  
 importance of strength of, 349–350  
 misperception and, 491  
 motivation to avoid, 331  
 of physical attractiveness, 406–408  
 stigma consciousness, 337  
 varieties of, 309
- stereotype threat:** A disruptive concern, when facing a negative stereotype, that one will be evaluated based on a negative stereotype. Unlike self-fulfilling prophecies that hammer one's reputation into one's self-concept, stereotype threat situations have immediate effects, 346–348
- stigma consciousness:** A person's expectation of being victimized by prejudice or discrimination, 337
- stress,** 538–539, 559
- subgrouping:** Accommodating individuals who deviate from one's stereotype by forming a new stereotype about this subset of the group, 345
- subjective aspects of science,** 11
- subtyping:** Accommodating individuals who deviate from one's stereotype by thinking of them as “exceptions to the rule,” 345
- suggestibility,** 190–194
- suicide, imitative,** 193–194
- superordinate goal:** A shared goal that necessitates cooperative effort; a goal that overrides people's differences from one another, 504–505
- survey research,** 21–23
- sustainability,** 593–597, 605–607, 609–610
- symmetry and attractiveness,** 409

**T**

- task leadership:** Leadership that organizes work, sets standards, and focuses on goals, 300
- teacher expectations,** 110–112
- technology, sustainability and,** 593–594
- television violence,** 24–25, 373–378
- terrorism**  
 group polarization in organizations, 285–286  
 rewards of, 362–363
- terror management:** According to “terror management theory,” people's self-protective emotional and cognitive responses (including adhering more strongly to their cultural worldviews and prejudices) when confronted with reminders of their mortality, 330
- terror management theory:** Proposes that people exhibit self-protective emotional and cognitive responses (including adhering more strongly to their cultural worldviews and prejudices) when

confronted with reminders of their mortality, 52, 69  
testosterone, 176, 358–359  
**theory:** An integrated set of principles that explain and predict observed events, 17–18  
theory of planned behavior, 124  
time-lagged correlations, 20  
time pressures, helping and, 463  
**Tragedy of the Commons:** The “commons” is any shared resource, including air, water, energy sources, and food supplies. The tragedy occurs when individuals consume more than their share, with the cost of their doing so dispersed among all, causing the ultimate collapse—the tragedy—of the commons, 484–486  
trait dimensions, universal, 160  
**transformational leadership:** Leadership that, enabled by a leader’s vision and inspiration, exerts significant influence, 302  
transgender people, 162  
trust, conflict and, 513  
trustworthiness, persuasion and, 232–233

**two-factor theory of emotion:** Arousal 3 its label 5 emotion, 421–422  
**two-step flow of communication:** The process by which media influence often occurs through opinion leaders, who in turn influence others, 246–247

**U**  
unanimity, 209–210, 291  
unconscious thinking, 87. *See also* intuition  
uniqueness vs. conformity, 220–222

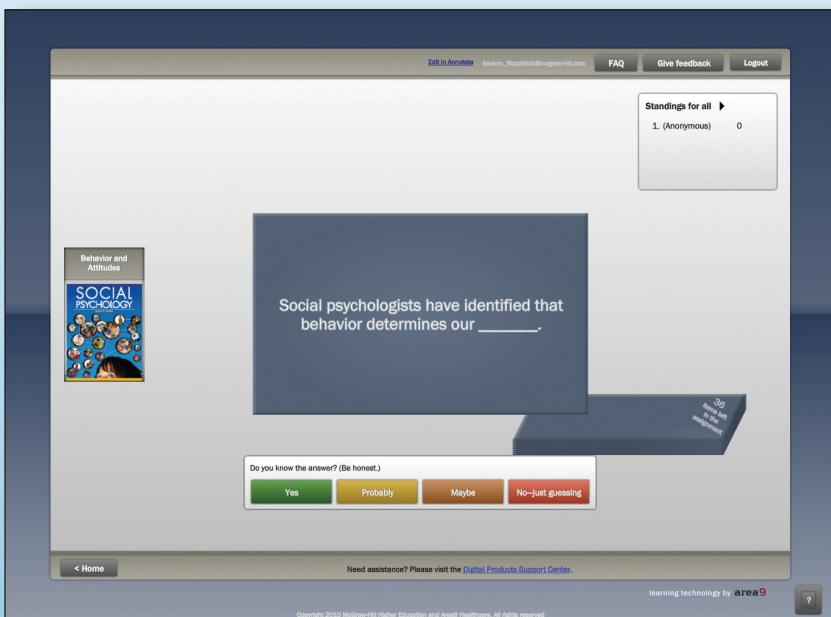
**V**  
video-game violence, 379–383  
violence. *See* aggression  
virtual social reality, 235  
vision, leadership and, 302  
vocations, gender and, 164  
voting, physical attractiveness and, 404

**W**  
war. *See also* conflict  
depersonalization and, 279  
empathy for deaths in, 474–475  
as instrumental aggression, 355  
misperception and, 493–495  
norms of, 161  
obedience during, 202–203  
persuasion and, 225–226  
tolls of, 353, 354  
wealth. *See* materialism and wealth  
well-being. *See also* happiness; health  
components of, 608  
national, 599, 607–608  
wealth and, 598–601  
women-are-wonderful effect, 318  
wording of survey questions, 22–23

**Y**  
yawning, contagious, 191

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In the 11th edition of *Social Psychology*, David Myers once again weaves an inviting and compelling narrative that speaks to ALL of your students regardless of background or intended major. Social Psychology is available to instructors and students in traditional print format as well as online within McGraw-Hill's Connect *Social Psychology* and LearnSmart, an integrated assignment and assessment platform that creates a personalized learning plan, helping students study both more effectively, and more efficiently.



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Question #23 (of 58) next >

Match the terms to the correct descriptions in the graph.

Social self   Self-concept   Self-esteem   Self-knowledge

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◀ ▶ jump to pg go book contents go edit print ebook go

**CONFORMITY**

**Conformity** is a change in a person's behavior to coincide more closely with a group standard. Conformity takes many forms and affects many aspects of people's lives, in negative and positive ways. Conformity is at work, for example, when a person comes to college and starts to drink alcohol heavily at parties, even though he or she might have never been a drinker before. Conformity is also at work when we obey the rules and regulations that allow society to run smoothly. Consider how chaotic it would be if people did not conform to social norms such as stopping at a red light, driving on the correct side of the road, and not punching others in the face. Conformity can also be a powerful way to increase group cohesion. Even something as simple as marching in step together or singing a song along with a group can lead to enhanced cooperation among group members (Wittemuth & Heath, 2009).

**Candid Conformity**

**Asch's Experiment** Put yourself in this situation: You are taken into a room where you see five other people seated along a table. A person in a white lab coat enters the room and announces that you are about to participate in an experiment on perceptual accuracy. The group is shown two cards—the first having only a single vertical line on it and the second having three vertical lines of varying length. You are told that the task is to determine which of the three lines on the second card is the same length as the line on the first card. You look at the cards and think, "What a snap. It's so obvious which is the same."

**Conformity, Aschs Experiment Revisited**

What you do not know is that the other people in the room are confederates who are working with the experimenter. On the first several trials, everyone agrees about which line matches the standard. Then on the fourth trial, each of the others picks the same incorrect line. As the last person to make a choice, you have the dilemma of responding as your eyes tell you or conforming to what the others before you said. How do you think you would answer?

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