Chapter 15: Social Psychology SW

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Figure 1.1: Trayvon Martin, 17, was shot to death at the hands of George Zimmerman, a volunteer neighborhood watchman, in 2012. Was his death the result of self-defense or racial bias? That question drew hundreds of people to rally on each side of this heated debate. (credit “signs”: modification of work by David Shankbone; credit “walk”: modification of work by "Fibonacci Blue" /Flickr)

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

Several groups protested what they deemed racial profiling and brutality against an unarmed Black male. Zimmerman, who has a Peruvian mother and a German father, was accused of being racist. Some media coverage was criticized for inflaming racial politics in their coverage. In spite of conflicts such as these, people also to work together to create positive change. For example, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, people

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1This content is available online at <http://cnx.org/content/m55930/1.1/>. Available for free at Connexions <http://cnx.org/content/col11809/1.1>
rallied together and charitable donations skyrocket (Brown & Minty, 2006). This chapter explores how the presence of other people influences the behavior of individuals, dyads, and groups. Social factors can determine whether human behavior tends toward conflict or harmony.

1.1 References


1.2 References


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East Haven mayor suggests “he might have tacos” to repair relations with Latinos. (2012). Retrieved April 27, 2014, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCUwtFqF4wU.


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Chapter 2

15.1 What Is Social Psychology?

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

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

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

2.1 SITUATIONAL AND DISPOSITIONAL INFLUENCES ON BEHAVIOR

Behavior is a product of both the situation (e.g., cultural influences, social roles, and the presence of by-standers) and of the person (e.g., personality characteristics). Subfields of psychology tend to focus on one influence or behavior over others. Situationism is the view that our behavior and actions are determined by our immediate environment and surroundings. In contrast, dispositionism holds that our behavior is determined by internal factors (Heider, 1958). An internal factor is an attribute of a person and includes personality traits and temperament. Social psychologists have tended to take the situationist perspective, whereas personality psychologists have promoted the dispositionist perspective. Modern approaches to social psychology, however, take both the situation and the individual into account when studying human behavior (Fiske, Gilbert, & Lindzey, 2010). In fact, the field of social-personality psychology has emerged to study the complex interaction of internal and situational factors that affect human behavior (Mischel, 1977; Richard, Bond, & Stokes-Zoota, 2003).

1This content is available online at <http://cnx.org/content/m55931/1.1/>.
2.2 FUNDAMENTAL ATtribution ERROR

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

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

As demonstrated in the example above, the fundamental attribution error is considered a powerful influence in how we explain the behaviors of others. However, it should be noted that some researchers have suggested that the fundamental attribution error may not be as powerful as it is often portrayed. In fact, a recent review of more than 173 published studies suggests that several factors (e.g., high levels of idiosyncrasy of the character and how well hypothetical events are explained) play a role in determining just how influential the fundamental attribution error is (Malle, 2006).

2.3 ACTOR-OBSERVER BIAS

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

One study on the actor-observer bias investigated reasons male participants gave for why they liked their girlfriend (Nisbett et al., 1973). When asked why participants liked their own girlfriend, participants focused on internal, dispositional qualities of their girlfriends (for example, her pleasant personality). The participants’ explanations rarely included causes internal to themselves, such as dispositional traits (for example, “I need companionship.”). In contrast, when speculating why a male friend likes his girlfriend, participants were equally likely to give dispositional and external explanations. This supports the idea that actors tend to provide few internal explanations but many situational explanations for their own behavior. In contrast, observers tend to provide more dispositional explanations for a friend’s behavior (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1:** Actor-observer bias is evident when subjects explain their own reasons for liking a girlfriend versus their impressions of others’ reasons for liking a girlfriend.
2.4 SELF-SERVING BIAS

Following an outcome, self-serving bias are those attributions that enable us to see ourselves in favorable light (for example, making internal attributions for success and external attributions for failures). When you do well at a task, for example acing an exam, it is in your best interest to make a dispositional attribution for your behavior (“I'm smart,”) instead of a situational one (“The exam was easy,”). The tendency of an individual to take credit by making dispositional or internal attributions for positive outcomes but situational or external attributions for negative outcomes is known as the self-serving bias (Miller & Ross, 1975). This bias serves to protect self-esteem. You can imagine that if people always made situational attributions for their behavior, they would never be able to take credit and feel good about their accomplishments.

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

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

2.5 JUST-WORLD HYPOTHESIS

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

Can you think of a negative consequence of the just-world hypothesis? One negative consequence is people’s tendency to blame poor individuals for their plight. What common explanations are given for why people live in poverty? Have you heard statements such as, “The poor are lazy and just don’t want to work’ or “Poor people just want to live off the government”? What types of explanations are these, dispositional or situational? These dispositional explanations are clear examples of the fundamental attribution error. Blaming poor people for their poverty ignores situational factors that impact them, such as high unemployment rates, recession, poor educational opportunities, and the familial cycle of poverty. Other research shows that people who hold just-world beliefs have negative attitudes toward people who are unemployed and people living with AIDS (Sutton & Douglas, 2005). In the United States and other countries, victims of sexual assault may find themselves blamed for their abuse. Victim advocacy groups, such as Domestic Violence Ended (DOVE), attend court in support of victims to ensure that blame is directed at the perpetrators of sexual violence, not the victims.

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2.6 Summary

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

2.7 Review Questions

Exercise 2.1 (Solution on p. 15.)
As a field, social psychology focuses on ________ in predicting human behavior.

a. personality traits  
b. genetic predispositions  
c. biological forces  
d. situational factors

Exercise 2.2 (Solution on p. 15.)
Making internal attributions for your successes and making external attributions for your failures is an example of ________.

a. actor-observer bias  
b. fundamental attribution error  
c. self-serving bias  
d. just-world hypothesis

Exercise 2.3 (Solution on p. 15.)
Collectivistic cultures are to ________ as individualistic cultures are to ________.

a. dispositional; situational  
b. situational; dispositional  
c. autonomy; group harmony  
d. just-world hypothesis; self-serving bias

Exercise 2.4 (Solution on p. 15.)
According to the actor-observer bias, we have more information about ________.

a. situational influences on behavior  
b. influences on our own behavior  
c. influences on others’ behavior  
d. dispositional influences on behavior

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2.8 Critical Thinking Questions

Exercise 2.5  
(Solution on p. 15.)  
Compare and contrast situational influences and dispositional influences and give an example of each. Explain how situational influences and dispositional influences might explain inappropriate behavior.

Exercise 2.6  
(Solution on p. 15.)  
Provide an example of how people from individualistic and collectivistic cultures would differ in explaining why they won an important sporting event.
Solutions to Exercises in Chapter 2

Solution to Exercise 2.1 (p. 13)
D

Solution to Exercise 2.2 (p. 13)
C

Solution to Exercise 2.3 (p. 13)
B

Solution to Exercise 2.4 (p. 13)
B

Solution to Exercise 2.5 (p. 14)
A situationism view is that our behaviors are determined by the situation—for example, a person who is late for work claims that heavy traffic caused the delay. A dispositional view is that our behaviors are determined by personality traits—for example, a driver in a road rage incident claims the driver who cut her off is an aggressive person. Thus, a situational view tends to provide an excuse for inappropriate behavior, and a dispositional view tends to lay blame for inappropriate behavior.

Solution to Exercise 2.6 (p. 14)
People from individualistic cultures would tend to attribute athletic success to individual hard work and ability. People from collectivistic cultures would tend to attribute athletic success to the team working together and the support and encouragement of the coach.
Chapter 3

15.2 Self-presentation

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

3.1 SOCIAL ROLES

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

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

3.2 SOCIAL NORMS

As discussed previously, social roles are defined by a culture’s shared knowledge of what is expected behavior of an individual in a specific role. This shared knowledge comes from social norms. A social norm is a group’s expectation of what is appropriate and acceptable behavior for its members—how they are supposed

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to behave and think (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Berkowitz, 2004). How are we expected to act? What are we expected to talk about? What are we expected to wear? In our discussion of social roles we noted that colleges have social norms for students’ behavior in the role of student and workplaces have social norms for employees’ behaviors in the role of employee. Social norms are everywhere including in families, gangs, and on social media outlets. What are some social norms on Facebook?

3.3 SCRIPTS

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

3.4 ZIMBARDO’S STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT

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

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

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

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

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

The Stanford Prison Experiment has some parallels with the abuse of prisoners of war by U.S. Army troops and CIA personnel at the Abu Ghraib prison in 2003 and 2004. The offenses at Abu Ghraib were documented by photographs of the abuse, some taken by the abusers themselves (2).

3.5 Summary

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

3.6 Review Questions

Exercise 3.1

A(n) ________ is a set of group expectations for appropriate thoughts and behaviors of its members.

a. social role
b. social norm
c. script
d. attribution

(Solution on p. 21.)

Exercise 3.2

On his first day of soccer practice, Jose suits up in a t-shirt, shorts, and cleats and runs out to the field to join his teammates. Jose’s behavior is reflective of ________.

a. a script
b. social influence
c. good athletic behavior
d. normative behavior

(Solution on p. 21.)

2 http://openstaxcollege.org/1/Stanford_psycho
CHAPTER 3. 15.2 SELF-PRESENTATION

Exercise 3.3 (Solution on p. 21.)
When it comes to buying clothes, teenagers often follow social norms; this is likely motivated by ————:

a. following parents’ rules
b. saving money
c. fitting in
d. looking good

Exercise 3.4 (Solution on p. 21.)
In the Stanford prison experiment, even the lead researcher succumbed to his role as a prison supervisor. This is an example of the power of ———— influencing behavior.

a. scripts
b. social norms
c. conformity
d. social roles

3.7 Critical Thinking Questions

Exercise 3.5 (Solution on p. 21.)
Why didn’t the “good” guards in the Stanford prison experiment object to other guards’ abusive behavior? Were the student prisoners simply weak people? Why didn’t they object to being abused?

Exercise 3.6 (Solution on p. 21.)
Describe how social roles, social norms, and scripts were evident in the Stanford prison experiment. How can this experiment be applied to everyday life? Are there any more recent examples where people started fulfilling a role and became abusive?
Solutions to Exercises in Chapter 3

Solution to Exercise 3.1 (p. 19)
B

Solution to Exercise 3.2 (p. 19)
A

Solution to Exercise 3.3 (p. 20)
C

Solution to Exercise 3.4 (p. 20)
D

Solution to Exercise 3.5 (p. 20)
The good guards were fulfilling their social roles and they did not object to other guards’ abusive behavior because of the power of the situation. In addition, the prison supervisor’s behavior sanctioned the guards’ negative treatment of prisoners. The prisoners were not weak people; they were recruited because they were healthy, mentally stable adults. The power of their social role influenced them to engage in subservient prisoner behavior. The script for prisoners is to accept abusive behavior from authority figures, especially for punishment, when they do not follow the rules.

Solution to Exercise 3.6 (p. 20)
Social roles were in play as each participant acted out behaviors appropriate to his role as prisoner, guard, or supervisor. Scripts determined the specific behaviors the guards and prisoners displayed, such as humiliation and passivity. The social norms of a prison environment sanctions abuse of prisoners since they have lost many of their human rights and became the property of the government. This experiment can be applied to other situations in which social norms, roles, and scripts dictate our behavior, such as in mob behavior. A more recent example of similar behavior was the abuse of prisoners by American soldiers who were working as prison guards at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.
Chapter 4

15.3 Attitudes and Persuasion

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

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

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

4.1 WHAT IS COGNITIVE DISSONANCE?

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

Later research documented that only conflicting cognitions that threaten individuals’ positive self-image cause dissonance (Greenwald & Ross, 1978). Additional research found that dissonance is not only psychologically uncomfortable but also can cause physiological arousal (Croyle & Cooper, 1983) and activate regions of the brain important in emotions and cognitive functioning (van Veen, Krug, Schooler, & Carter,

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When we experience cognitive dissonance, we are motivated to decrease it because it is psychologically, physically, and mentally uncomfortable. We can reduce cognitive dissonance by bringing our cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors in line—that is, making them harmonious. This can be done in different ways, such as:

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

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

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

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

4.1.1 The Effect of Initiation

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

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

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

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

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

4.2.1 Yale Attitude Change Approach

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

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

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

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

4.2.2 Elaboration Likelihood Model

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

The central route is logic driven and uses data and facts to convince people of an argument’s worthiness. For example, a car company seeking to persuade you to purchase their model will emphasize the car’s safety
features and fuel economy. This is a direct route to persuasion that focuses on the quality of the information.

In order for the central route of persuasion to be effective in changing attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors, the argument must be strong and, if successful, will result in lasting attitude change.

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

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

4.2.3 Foot-in-the-door Technique

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

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

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

4.3 Summary

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

4.4 Review Questions

**Exercise 4.1**
Attitudes describe our ________ of people, objects, and ideas.

a. treatment  
b. evaluations  
c. cognitions  
d. knowledge

**Exercise 4.2**
Cognitive dissonance causes discomfort because it disrupts our sense of ________.

a. dependency  
b. unpredictability  
c. consistency  
d. power

**Exercise 4.3**
In order for the central route to persuasion to be effective, the audience must be ________ and ________.

a. analytical; motivated  
b. attentive; happy  
c. intelligent; unemotional  
d. gullible; distracted

**Exercise 4.4**
Examples of cues used in peripheral route persuasion include all of the following except ________.

a. celebrity endorsement  
b. positive emotions  
c. attractive models  
d. factual information

4.5 Critical Thinking Questions

**Exercise 4.5**
Give an example (one not used in class or your text) of cognitive dissonance and how an individual might resolve this.

**Exercise 4.6**
Imagine that you work for an advertising agency, and you’ve been tasked with developing an advertising campaign to increase sales of Bliss Soda. How would you develop an advertisement
for this product that uses a central route of persuasion? How would you develop an ad using a peripheral route of persuasion?
Solutions to Exercises in Chapter 4

Solution to Exercise 4.1 (p. 27)
B

Solution to Exercise 4.2 (p. 27)
C

Solution to Exercise 4.3 (p. 27)
A

Solution to Exercise 4.4 (p. 27)
D

Solution to Exercise 4.5 (p. 27)

One example is choosing which college to attend—the public school close to home or the Ivy League school out of state. Since both schools are desirable, the student is likely to experience cognitive dissonance in making this decision. In order to justify choosing the public school close to home, the student could change her cognition about Ivy League school, asserting that it is too expensive and the quality of education at the public school is just as good. She could change her attitude toward the Ivy League school and determine that the students there are too stuffy and wouldn’t make good classmates.

Solution to Exercise 4.6 (p. 27)

Although potential answers will vary, advertisements using the central route of persuasion might involve a doctor listing logical reasons for drinking this product. For example, the doctor might cite research suggesting that the soda is better than alternatives because of its reduced calorie content, lack of adverse health consequences, etc. An advertisement using a peripheral route of persuasion might show very attractive people consuming the product while spending time on a beautiful, sunny beach.
CHAPTER 4. 15.3 ATTITUDES AND PERSUASION
Chapter 5

15.4 Conformity, Compliance, and Obedience

In this section, we discuss additional ways in which people influence others. The topics of conformity, social influence, obedience, and group processes demonstrate the power of the social situation to change our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. We begin this section with a discussion of a famous social psychology experiment that demonstrated how susceptible humans are to outside social pressures.

5.1 CONFORMITY

Solomon Asch conducted several experiments in the 1950s to determine how people are affected by the thoughts and behaviors of other people. In one study, a group of participants was shown a series of printed line segments of different lengths: a, b, and c (Figure 5.1). Participants were then shown a fourth line segment: x. They were asked to identify which line segment from the first group (a, b, or c) most closely resembled the fourth line segment in length.

1This content is available online at <http://cnx.org/content/m53935/1.2/>.
Each group of participants had only one true, naïve subject. The remaining members of the group were confederates of the researcher. A confederate is a person who is aware of the experiment and works for the researcher. Confederates are used to manipulate social situations as part of the research design, and the true, naïve participants believe that confederates are, like them, uninformed participants in the experiment. In Asch’s study, the confederates identified a line segment that was obviously shorter than the target line—a wrong answer. The naïve participant then had to identify aloud the line segment that best matched the target line segment.

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

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

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

- The size of the majority: The greater the number of people in the majority, the more likely an individual will conform. There is, however, an upper limit: a point where adding more members does not increase conformity. In Asch’s study, conformity increased with the number of people in the majority—up to seven individuals. At numbers beyond seven, conformity leveled off and decreased slightly (Asch, 1955).
• The presence of another dissenter: If there is at least one dissenter, conformity rates drop to near zero (Asch, 1955).

• The public or private nature of the responses: When responses are made publicly (in front of others), conformity is more likely; however, when responses are made privately (e.g., writing down the response), conformity is less likely (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).

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

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

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

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

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

### 5.2 STANLEY MILGRAM'S EXPERIMENT

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

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

In response to a string of incorrect answers from the learners, the participants obediently and repeatedly shocked them. The confederate learners cried out for help, begged the participant teachers to stop, and even complained of heart trouble. Yet, when the researcher told the participant-teachers to continue the shock, 65% of the participants continued the shock to the maximum voltage and to the point that the learner became unresponsive (Figure 5.2). What makes someone obey authority to the point of potentially causing serious harm to another person?

Figure 5.2: The Milgram experiment showed the surprising degree to which people obey authority. Two out of three (65%) participants continued to administer shocks to an unresponsive learner.

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

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

5.3 GROUPTHINK

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

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

There are several symptoms of groupthink including the following:

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

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

5.4 GROUP POLARIZATION

Another phenomenon that occurs within group settings is group polarization. Group polarization (Teger & Pruitt, 1967) is the strengthening of an original group attitude after the discussion of views within a group. That is, if a group initially favors a viewpoint, after discussion the group consensus is likely a stronger endorsement of the viewpoint. Conversely, if the group was initially opposed to a viewpoint, group discussion would likely lead to stronger opposition. Group polarization explains many actions taken by groups that would not be undertaken by individuals. Group polarization can be observed at political conventions, when platforms of the party are supported by individuals who, when not in a group, would decline to support them. A more everyday example is a group’s discussion of how attractive someone is. Does your opinion change if you find someone attractive, but your friends do not agree? If your friends vociferously agree, might you then find this person even more attractive?
CHAPTER 5. 15.4 CONFORMITY, COMPLIANCE, AND OBEDIENCE

5.4.1 Social Facilitation

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

5.4.2 Social Loafing

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

As a college student you may have experienced social loafing while working on a group project. Have you ever had to contribute more than your fair share because your fellow group members weren’t putting in the work? This may happen when a professor assigns a group grade instead of individual grades. If the professor doesn’t know how much effort each student contributed to a project, some students may be inclined to let more conscientious students do more of the work. The chance of social loafing in student work groups increases as the size of the group increases (Shepperd & Taylor, 1999).

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

5.5 Summary

The power of the situation can lead people to conform, or go along with the group, even in the face of inaccurate information. Conformity to group norms is driven by two motivations, the desire to fit in and be liked and the desire to be accurate and gain information from the group. Authority figures also have influence over our behaviors, and many people become obedient and follow orders even if the orders are contrary to their personal values. Conformity to group pressures can also result in groupthink, or the faulty decision-making process that results from cohesive group members trying to maintain group harmony.

Available for free at Connexions <http://cnx.org/content/col11809/1.1>
Group situations can improve human behavior through facilitating performance on easy tasks, but inhibiting performance on difficult tasks. The presence of others can also lead to social loafing when individual efforts cannot be evaluated.

5.6 Review Questions

Exercise 5.1
In the Asch experiment, participants conformed due to ________ social influence.

a. informational
b. normative
c. inspirational
d. persuasive

Exercise 5.2
Under what conditions will informational social influence be more likely?

a. when individuals want to fit in
b. when the answer is unclear
c. when the group has expertise
d. both b and c

Exercise 5.3
Social loafing occurs when ________.

a. individual performance cannot be evaluated
b. the task is easy
c. both a and b
d. none of the above

Exercise 5.4
If group members modify their opinions to align with a perceived group consensus, then ________ has occurred.

a. group cohesion
b. social facilitation
c. groupthink
d. social loafing

5.7 Critical Thinking Questions

Exercise 5.5
Describe how seeking outside opinions can prevent groupthink.

Exercise 5.6
Compare and contrast social loafing and social facilitation.
Solutions to Exercises in Chapter 5

Solution to Exercise 5.1 (p. 37)
B
Solution to Exercise 5.2 (p. 37)
D
Solution to Exercise 5.3 (p. 37)
C
Solution to Exercise 5.4 (p. 37)
C
Solution to Exercise 5.5 (p. 37)
Outsiders can serve as a quality control by offering diverse views and views that may differ from the leader's opinion. The outsider can also remove the illusion of invincibility by having the group's action held up to outside scrutiny. An outsider may offer additional information and uncover information that group members withheld.
Solution to Exercise 5.6 (p. 37)
In social loafing individual performance cannot be evaluated; however, in social facilitation individual performance can be evaluated. Social loafing and social facilitation both occur for easy or well-known tasks and when individuals are relaxed.
Chapter 6

15.5 Prejudice and Discrimination

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

6.1 UNDERSTANDING PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

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

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

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

Sometimes people will act on their prejudiced attitudes toward a group of people, and this behavior is known as discrimination. Discrimination is negative action toward an individual as a result of one’s membership in a particular group (Allport, 1954; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). As a result of holding negative beliefs (stereotypes) and negative attitudes (prejudice) about a particular group, people often treat the target of prejudice poorly, such as excluding older adults from their circle of friends. Table 6.1: Connecting Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination summarizes the characteristics of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. Have you ever been the target of discrimination? If so, how did this negative treatment make you feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Connection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype</td>
<td>Cognitive; thoughts about people</td>
<td>Overgeneralized beliefs about people may lead to prejudice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice</td>
<td>Affective; feelings about people, both positive and negative</td>
<td>Feelings may influence treatment of others, leading to discrimination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>Behavior; positive or negative treatment of others</td>
<td>Holding stereotypes and harboring prejudice may lead to excluding, avoiding, and biased treatment of group members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

6.2 TYPES OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

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

6.2.1 Racism

Racism is prejudice and discrimination against an individual based solely on one’s membership in a specific racial group (such as toward African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, European Americans). What are some stereotypes of various racial or ethnic groups? Research suggests cultural stereotypes for Asian Americans include cold, sly, and intelligent; for Latinos, cold and unintelligent; for European Americans, cold and intelligent; and for African Americans, aggressive, athletic, and more likely
Racism exists for many racial and ethnic groups. For example, Blacks are significantly more likely to have their vehicles searched during traffic stops than Whites, particularly when Blacks are driving in predominately White neighborhoods, (a phenomenon often termed “DWB,” or “driving while Black.”) (Rojek, Rosenfeld, & Decker, 2012)

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

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

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

One reason modern forms of racism, and prejudice in general, are hard to detect is related to the dual attitudes model (Wilson, Lindsey, & Schockler, 2000). Humans have two forms of attitudes: explicit attitudes, which are conscious and controllable, and implicit attitudes, which are unconscious and uncontrollable (Devine, 1989; Olson & Fazio, 2003). Because holding egalitarian views is socially desirable (Plant & Devine, 1998), most people do not show extreme racial bias or other prejudices on measures of their explicit attitudes. However, measures of implicit attitudes often show evidence of mild to strong racial bias or other prejudices (Greenwald, McGee, & Schwartz, 1998; Olson & Fazio, 2003).

6.2.2 Sexism

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

6.2.3 Ageism

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

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

6.2.4 Homophobia

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

6.3 WHY DO PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION EXIST?

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

6.4 STEREOTYPES AND SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

When we hold a stereotype about a person, we have expectations that he or she will fulfill that stereotype. A self-fulfilling prophecy is an expectation held by a person that alters his or her behavior in a way that tends to make it true. When we hold stereotypes about a person, we tend to treat the person according to our expectations. This treatment can influence the person to act according to our stereotypic expectations, thus confirming our stereotypic beliefs. Research by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) found that disadvantaged students whose teachers expected them to perform well had higher grades than disadvantaged students whose teachers expected them to do poorly.

Consider this example of cause and effect in a self-fulfilling prophecy: If an employer expects an openly gay male job applicant to be incompetent, the potential employer might treat the applicant negatively during the interview by engaging in less conversation, making little eye contact, and generally behaving coldly toward the applicant (Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002). In turn, the job applicant will perceive that the potential employer dislikes him, and he will respond by giving shorter responses to interview questions, making less eye contact, and generally disengaging from the interview. After the interview, the employer will reflect on the applicant’s behavior, which seemed cold and distant, and the employer will conclude, based on the applicant’s poor performance during the interview, that the applicant was in fact incompetent. Thus, the employer’s stereotype—gay men are incompetent and do not make good employees—is reinforced. Do you think this job applicant is likely to be hired? Treating individuals according to stereotypic beliefs can lead to prejudice and discrimination.
Another dynamic that can reinforce stereotypes is confirmation bias. When interacting with the target of our prejudice, we tend to pay attention to information that is consistent with our stereotypic expectations and ignore information that is inconsistent with our expectations. In this process, known as confirmation bias, we seek out information that supports our stereotypes and ignore information that is inconsistent with our stereotypes (Wason & Johnson-Laird, 1972). In the job interview example, the employer may not have noticed that the job applicant was friendly and engaging, and that he provided competent responses to the interview questions in the beginning of the interview. Instead, the employer focused on the job applicant’s performance in the later part of the interview, after the applicant changed his demeanor and behavior to match the interviewer’s negative treatment.

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

6.5 IN-GROUPS AND OUT-GROUPS

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

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

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

6.6 Summary

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

6.7 Review Questions

Exercise 6.1

Prejudice is to ______ as discrimination is to ______.

a. feelings; behavior

(Solution on p. 45.)

Available for free at Connexions <http://cnx.org/content/col11809/1.1>
b. thoughts; feelings  
c. feelings; thoughts  
d. behavior; feelings

Exercise 6.2  
Which of the following is not a type of prejudice?  

a. homophobia  
b. racism  
c. sexism  
d. individualism

Exercise 6.3  
________ occurs when the out-group is blamed for the in-group's frustration.  

a. stereotyping  
b. in-group bias  
c. scapegoating  
d. ageism

Exercise 6.4  
When we seek out information that supports our stereotypes we are engaged in ________.

a. scapegoating  
b. confirmation bias  
c. self-fulfilling prophecy  
d. in-group bias

6.8 Critical Thinking Questions  

Exercise 6.5  
Some people seem more willing to openly display prejudice regarding sexual orientation than prejudice regarding race and gender. Speculate on why this might be.

Exercise 6.6  
When people blame a scapegoat, how do you think they choose evidence to support the blame?
Solutions to Exercises in Chapter 6

Solution to Exercise 6.1 (p. 43)  
A

Solution to Exercise 6.2 (p. 44)  
D

Solution to Exercise 6.3 (p. 44)  
C

Solution to Exercise 6.4 (p. 44)  
B

Solution to Exercise 6.5 (p. 44)  
In the United States, many people believe that sexual orientation is a choice, and there is some debate in the research literature as to the extent sexual orientation is biological or influenced by social factors. Because race and gender are not chosen, many Americans believe it is unfair to negatively judge women or racial minority groups for a characteristic that is determined by genetics. In addition, many people in the United States practice religions that believe homosexuality is wrong.

Solution to Exercise 6.6 (p. 44)  
One way in which they might do this is to selectively attend to information that would bolster their argument. Furthermore, they may actively seek out information to confirm their assertions.
Chapter 7

15.6 Aggression

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

7.1 AGGRESSION

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

There are many different theories as to why aggression exists. Some researchers argue that aggression serves an evolutionary function (Buss, 2004). Men are more likely than women to show aggression (Wilson & Daly, 1985). From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, human male aggression, like that in nonhuman primates, likely serves to display dominance over other males, both to protect a mate and to perpetuate the male’s genes. Sexual jealousy is part of male aggression; males endeavor to make sure their mates are not copulating with other males, thus ensuring their own paternity of the female’s offspring. Although aggression provides an obvious evolutionary advantage for men, women also engage in aggression. Women typically display instrumental forms of aggression, with their aggression serving as a means to an end (Dodge & Schwartz, 1997). For example, women may express their aggression covertly, for example, by communication that impairs the social standing of another person. Another theory that explains one of the functions of human aggression is frustration aggression theory (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). This theory states that when humans are prevented from achieving an important goal, they become frustrated and aggressive.

7.1.1 Bullying

A modern form of aggression is bullying. As you learn in your study of child development, socializing and playing with other children is beneficial for children’s psychological development. However, as you may have experienced as a child, not all play behavior has positive outcomes. Some children are aggressive and want to play roughly. Other children are selfish and do not want to share toys. One form of negative social interactions among children that has become a national concern is bullying. Bullying is repeated

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1This content is available online at <http://cnx.org/content/m55937/1.1/>.

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negative treatment of another person, often an adolescent, over time (Olweus, 1993). A one-time incident in which one child hits another child on the playground would not be considered bullying. Bullying is repeated behavior. The negative treatment typical in bullying is the attempt to inflict harm, injury, or humiliation, and bullying can include physical or verbal attacks. However, bullying doesn't have to be physical or verbal, it can be psychological. Research finds gender differences in how girls and boys bully others (American Psychological Association, 2010; Olweus, 1993). Boys tend to engage in direct, physical aggression such as physically harming others. Girls tend to engage in indirect, social forms of aggression such as spreading rumors, ignoring, or socially isolating others. Based on what you have learned about child development and social roles, why do you think boys and girls display different types of bullying behavior?

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

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

- Children who are emotionally reactive are at a greater risk for being bullied. Bullies may be attracted to children who get upset easily because the bully can quickly get an emotional reaction from them.
- Children who are different from others are likely to be targeted for bullying. Children who are overweight, cognitively impaired, or racially or ethnically different from their peer group may be at higher risk.
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender teens are at very high risk of being bullied and hurt due to their sexual orientation.

7.1.2 Cyberbullying

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

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

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

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

7.3 Summary

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

7.4 Review Questions

**Exercise 7.1**

Typically, bullying from boys is to _________ as bullying from girls is to _________.

a. emotional harm; physical harm  
b. physical harm; emotional harm  
c. psychological harm; physical harm  
d. social exclusion; verbal taunting

**Solution on p. 51.**

**Exercise 7.2**

Which of the following adolescents is least likely to be targeted for bullying?

**Solution on p. 51.**
a. a child with a physical disability  
b. a transgender adolescent  
c. an emotionally sensitive boy  
d. the captain of the football team

Exercise 7.3  
The bystander effect likely occurs due to ______.  

a. desensitization to violence  
b. people not noticing the emergency  
c. diffusion of responsibility  
d. emotional insensitivity

7.5 Critical Thinking Questions

Exercise 7.4  
Compare and contrast hostile and instrumental aggression.  

Exercise 7.5  
What evidence discussed in the previous section suggests that cyberbullying is difficult to detect and prevent?
Solutions to Exercises in Chapter 7

Solution to Exercise 7.1 (p. 49)
B

Solution to Exercise 7.2 (p. 49)
D

Solution to Exercise 7.3 (p. 50)
C

Solution to Exercise 7.4 (p. 50)
Hostile aggression is intentional with the purpose to inflict pain. Hostile aggression is often motivated by anger. In contrast, instrumental aggression is not motivated by anger or the intention to cause pain. Instrumental aggression serves as a means to reach a goal. In a sense it is a more practical or functional form of aggression, whereas hostile aggression is more emotion-driven and less functional and rational.

Solution to Exercise 7.5 (p. 50)
Cyberbullying is difficult to prevent because there are so many forms of media that adolescents use and are exposed to. The Internet is virtually everywhere: computers, phones, tablets, TVs, gaming systems, and so on. Parents likely do not monitor all of their children's use of the Internet, thus their children could be exposed to cyberbullying without their knowledge. Cyberbullying is difficult to detect because it can be done anonymously. Cyberbullies can use pseudonyms and can attack victims in untraceable ways, such as hacking into Facebook accounts or making Twitter posts on their behalf.
CHAPTER 7. 15.6 AGGRESSION
Chapter 8

15.7 Prosocial Behavior

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

8.1 PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND ALTRUISM

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

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

8.2 FORMING RELATIONSHIPS

What do you think is the single most influential factor in determining with whom you become friends and whom you form romantic relationships? You might be surprised to learn that the answer is simple: the people with whom you have the most contact. This most important factor is proximity. You are more likely to be

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friends with people you have regular contact with. For example, there are decades of research that shows that you are more likely to become friends with people who live in your dorm, your apartment building, or your immediate neighborhood than with people who live farther away (Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950). It is simply easier to form relationships with people you see often because you have the opportunity to get to know them.

Similarity is another factor that influences who we form relationships with. We are more likely to become friends or lovers with someone who is similar to us in background, attitudes, and lifestyle. In fact, there is no evidence that opposites attract. Rather, we are attracted to people who are most like us (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Why do you think we are attracted to people who are similar to us? Sharing things in common will certainly make it easy to get along with others and form connections. When you and another person share similar music taste, hobbies, food preferences, and so on, deciding what to do with your time together might be easy. Homophily is the tendency for people to form social networks, including friendships, marriage, business relationships, and many other types of relationships, with others who are similar (McPherson et al., 2001).

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

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

### 8.3 Attraction

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

Researchers have documented several characteristics in men and women that humans find attractive. First we look for friends and lovers who are physically attractive. People differ in what they consider attractive, and attractiveness is culturally influenced. Research, however, suggests that some universally attractive features in women include large eyes, high cheekbones, a narrow jaw line, a slender build (Buss, 1989), and a lower waist-to-hip ratio (Singh, 1993). For men, attractive traits include being tall, having broad shoulders, and a narrow waist (Buss, 1989). Both men and women with high levels of facial and body symmetry are generally considered more attractive than asymmetric individuals (Fink, Neave, Manning, & Grammer, 2006; Penton-Voak et al., 2001; Rikowski & Grammer, 1999). Social traits that people find attractive in potential female mates include warmth, affection, and social skills; in males, the attractive traits include achievement, leadership qualities, and job skills (Regan & Berscheid, 1997). Although humans want mates who are physically attractive, this does not mean that we look for the most attractive person possible. In fact, this observation has led some to propose what is known as the matching hypothesis which asserts that people tend to pick someone they view as their equal in physical attractiveness and social desirability (Taylor, Fiore, Mendelsohn, & Cheshire, 2011). For example, you and most people you know likely would say that a very attractive movie star is out of your league. So, even if you had proximity to that person, you likely would not ask them out on a date because you believe you likely would be rejected. People weigh a potential partner’s attractiveness against the likelihood of success with that person. If you think you are particularly unattractive (even if you are not), you likely will seek partners that are fairly unattractive (that...
is, unattractive in physical appearance or in behavior).

8.4 STERNBERG’S TRIANGULAR THEORY OF LOVE

We typically love the people with whom we form relationships, but the type of love we have for our family, friends, and lovers differs. Robert Sternberg (1986) proposed that there are three components of love: intimacy, passion, and commitment. These three components form a triangle that defines multiple types of love: this is known as Sternberg’s triangular theory of love (Figure 8.1). Intimacy is the sharing of details and intimate thoughts and emotions. Passion is the physical attraction—the flame in the fire. Commitment is standing by the person—the “in sickness and health” part of the relationship.

![Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love Diagram](http://cnx.org/content/col11809/1.1)

**Figure 8.1:** According to Sternberg’s triangular theory of love, seven types of love can be described from combinations of three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment. (credit: modification of work by “Lnesa”/Wikimedia Commons)

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

8.5 SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

We have discussed why we form relationships, what attracts us to others, and different types of love. But what determines whether we are satisfied with and stay in a relationship? One theory that provides an explanation is social exchange theory. According to social exchange theory, we act as naïve economists in keeping a tally of the ratio of costs and benefits of forming and maintaining a relationship with others (Figure 8.2) (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003).

![Figure 8.2: Acting like naïve economists, people may keep track of the costs and benefits of maintaining a relationship. Typically, only those relationships in which the benefits outweigh the costs will be maintained.](http://cnx.org/content/col11809/1.1)

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

8.6 Summary

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

8.7 Review Questions

Exercise 8.1  
Altruism is a form of prosocial behavior that is motivated by _______.

a. feeling good about oneself  
b. selfless helping of others  
c. earning a reward  
d. showing bravery to bystanders

Exercise 8.2  
After moving to a new apartment building, research suggests that Sam will be most likely to become friends with _______.

a. his next door neighbor  
b. someone who lives three floors up in the apartment building  
c. someone from across the street  
d. his new postal delivery person

Exercise 8.3  
What trait do both men and women tend to look for in a romantic partner?

a. sense of humor  
b. social skills  
c. leadership potential  
d. physical attractiveness

Exercise 8.4  
According to the triangular theory of love, what type of love is defined by passion and intimacy but no commitment?
a. consummate love
b. empty love
c. romantic love
d. liking

Exercise 8.5  
According to social exchange theory, humans want to maximize the ________ and minimize the ________ in relationships.

a. intimacy; commitment
b. benefits; costs
c. costs; benefits
d. passion; intimacy

8.8 Critical Thinking Questions

Exercise 8.6  
Describe what influences whether relationships will be formed.

Exercise 8.7  
The evolutionary theory argues that humans are motivated to perpetuate their genes and reproduce. Using an evolutionary perspective, describe traits in men and women that humans find attractive.
Solutions to Exercises in Chapter 8

Solution to Exercise 8.1 (p. 57)
B

Solution to Exercise 8.2 (p. 57)
A

Solution to Exercise 8.3 (p. 57)
D

Solution to Exercise 8.4 (p. 57)
C

Solution to Exercise 8.5 (p. 58)
B

Solution to Exercise 8.6 (p. 58)

Proximity is a major situational factor in relationship formation; people who have frequent contact are more likely to form relationships. Whether or not individuals will form a relationship is based on non-situational factors such as similarity, reciprocity, self-disclosure, and physical attractiveness. In relationships, people seek reciprocity (i.e., a give and take in costs and benefits), self-disclosure of intimate information, and physically attractive partners.

Solution to Exercise 8.7 (p. 58)

Traits that promote reproduction in females warmth, affection, and social skills; women with these traits are presumably better able to care for children. Traits that are desired in males include achievement, leadership qualities, and job skills; men with these traits are thought to be better able to financially provide for their families.
Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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discrimination

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


dispositionism

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


empathy

capacity to understand another person’s perspective—to feel what he or she feels


foot-in-the-door technique

persuasion of one person by another person, encouraging a person to agree to a small favor, or to buy a small item, only to later request a larger favor or purchase of a larger item

fundamental attribution error

tendency to overemphasize internal factors as attributions for behavior and underestimate the power of the situation


group polarization

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


groupthink

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


homophily

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

homophobia

prejudice and discrimination against individuals based solely on their sexual orientation

hostile aggression

aggression motivated by feelings of anger with intent to cause pain


in-group bias

preference for our own group over other groups


in-group

group that we identify with or see ourselves as belonging to

individualistic culture

culture that focuses on individual achievement and autonomy

informational social influence

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

instrumental aggression

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

internal factor

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


just-world hypothesis

ideology common in the United States that people get the outcomes they deserve


normative social influence

conformity to a group norm to fit in, feel good, and be accepted by the group


obedience

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


out-group

group that we don’t belong to—one that we view as fundamentally different from us


peripheral route persuasion

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


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

**prejudice**

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

**prosocial behavior**

voluntary behavior with the intent to help other people

**racism**

prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based solely on their race

**reciprocity**

give and take in relationships

**romantic love**

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

**scapegoating**

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

**script**

person’s knowledge about the sequence of events in a specific setting

**self-disclosure**

sharing personal information in relationships

**self-fulfilling prophecy**

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

**self-serving bias**

tendency for individuals to take credit by making dispositional or internal attributions for positive outcomes and situational or external attributions for negative outcomes

**sexism**

prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based on their sex

**situationism**

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

**social exchange theory**

humans act as naïve economists in keeping a tally of the ratio of costs and benefits of forming and maintain a relationship, with the goal to maximize benefits and minimize costs

**social facilitation**

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

**social loafing**

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

**social norm**

group’s expectations regarding what is appropriate and acceptable for the thoughts and behavior of its members

**social psychology**

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

**social role**

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

**stanford prison experiment**

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

**stereotype**

negative beliefs about individuals based solely on their membership in a group, regardless of their individual characteristics
Triangular theory of love
model of love based on three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment;
several types of love exist, depending on the presence or absence of each of these components

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Index of Keywords and Terms

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Module: "15.4 Conformity, Compliance, and Obedience SW"
Used here as: "15.4 Conformity, Compliance, and Obedience"
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URL: http://cnx.org/content/m55935/1.2/
Pages: 31-38
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URL: http://cnx.org/content/m49124/1.6/

Module: "15.5 Prejudice and Discrimination SW"
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Module: "15.6 Aggression SW"
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Module: "15.7 Prosocial Behavior SW"
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Chapter 15: Social Psychology SW
What is social psychology; self-presentation; attitudes and persuasion; conformity; compliance, and obedience; prejudice and discrimination; aggression; prosocial behavior.

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