

Social Psychology

Chapter

16

Social psychology focuses on the individual in relation to society and emphasizes how we think about, shape, and connect with one another. Although social psychologists draw on the areas of sociology and cultural anthropology, their primary interest is still the psychological level of thought and action. Social psychologists work to explain social thought and behavior through the use of the scientific method and have produced a large body of knowledge about the underlying psychological processes involved in social interactions. Humans are social animals, and behavior is dramatically impacted by interactions with others.

Social Cognition

Social cognition involves how people gather, use, and react to information about the behavior of others. This process occurs, for example, when meeting someone for the first time and forming an initial impression. First impressions form rapidly, are resistant to change, and are especially strong if they are negative. Impressions formed about others can become self-fulfilling prophecies because our own expectations can influence how others behave. A **self-fulfilling prophecy** happens when our beliefs about another person or ourselves lead us to act in a way that brings about the behaviors we expect and confirms our original impression.

In a classic study on the self-fulfilling prophecy called “Pygmalion in the Classroom,” researchers Rosenthal and Jacobsen, in order to investigate how the expectations of teachers effected student achievement, told teachers that a group of students were on the verge of a dramatic increase in intellectual growth or “academic blooming.” The students were actually randomly selected and did not have any special potential. At the end of the year, the students whom teachers believed were on the verge of a dramatic increase in intelligence, in fact, demonstrated significantly higher increases in their scores compared to the other students. How did this happen? Additional research has shown that teachers treat students with positive academic labels differently by providing them with more feedback and increased opportunities to work with more

challenging material, as well as by giving them more chances to respond in class. This additional attention and positive treatment leads the students to work harder and think of themselves as talented and capable, thus making these beliefs a reality. Self-fulfilling prophecies can also pertain to a person's own behavior. This occurs when predictions an individual has about his or her own abilities lead the person to act in a way that results in confirming those expectations. If Robert believes that he is not good at writing, he may give up when given a difficult assignment, confirming his beliefs. However, if he believes he excels at writing and is given a difficult assignment, he will be more likely to work hard and confirm his opinion of himself as a talented writer.

STUDY TIP

Be able to apply the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy to a specific example.

Earl believes his girlfriend Fiona is going to break up with him. Because of this belief, he frequently checks her text messages and questions her about conversations with other boys. As a result of this behavior, Fiona decides that Earl is too clingy and breaks up with him. Earl's belief about Fiona led him to behave in a way that made his expectation become reality, which is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Social Comparison

Individuals develop **self-concepts** or **self-schemas** consisting of the beliefs they have about themselves. Self-schemas include the various ways people describe themselves; for example, an individual's self-concept might include a belief that he or she is creative, intelligent, persistent, and stubborn. The term **self-esteem**, however, refers to a value judgment a person makes about how worthy a person he or she is based on comparisons with how he or she was in the past, as well as how the person measures up to others. When we compare our current abilities and traits with how we performed in the past, this is a **temporal comparison** and can result in either an increase or decrease in self-esteem. If we make a temporal comparison between our gymnastic skills now and what we were capable of two years ago, and determine that we have improved, the result will most likely be an increase in self-esteem. However, if our skill level has decreased over time, the temporal comparison may result in a decrease in self-esteem.

Another way to evaluate self-esteem is to make comparisons between others and ourselves; these are called **social comparisons**. Typically we compare ourselves to individuals we perceive to be similar to us or to people who are members of groups to which we belong; these groups are called **reference groups**. The members of a reference

group share a common aspect of social identity such as gender, interests, ethnicity, or occupation. **Relative deprivation** occurs when we compare ourselves with our reference group and find that, regardless of how much wealth, status, and appreciation we are receiving, it is less than what others who are similar to us have. For example, a recent college graduate making \$60,000 may feel he is not getting what he deserves if others in his reference group are making over \$100,000.

Another way we enhance our self-esteem is through the **false consensus effect**, which involves overestimating how much others share our opinions or behave in the same way as we do. Students who believe that a test was really difficult will be more likely to overestimate how many other students share their opinion. When we fail at something or behave badly, we may preserve our self-esteem by saying that most other people would have done the same thing. For example, when people feel bad about speeding, the false consensus effect allows them to justify their actions by convincing themselves that everyone else also drives over the speed limit.

Attitudes and Cognitive Dissonance

An **attitude** is a person's belief about another person, object, or situation. Each attitude consists of a cognition (belief), affect (feeling), and behavior (action). An attitude about attending college may include the understanding that it is essential for future employment (cognition or belief), that it is an exciting opportunity (affect or feeling), and that excellent grades are necessary for admission (behavior or action). Social psychologists investigate how attitudes influence our behavior and how our behaviors influence our attitudes.

Although it would seem that an individual's behavior would be consistent with his or her beliefs, this is not always the case. **Cognitive dissonance** occurs when we experience an unpleasant state because we are holding two conflicting beliefs *or* have an inconsistency between our behavior and beliefs. This tension motivates us to reduce our cognitive dissonance by either changing our behavior or altering our beliefs. For example, John thinks smoking can kill and does not want to harm himself (belief) but continues to smoke (behavior), and this inconsistency causes him discomfort. In order to reduce dissonance, John will be motivated to change his behavior and quit smoking, *or* he will alter his belief to explain his behavior in a way that allows him to feel comfortable again. Because it is usually easier to alter our beliefs than to change our behaviors, John will most likely rationalize that death due to smoking occurs only to people that smoke much more than he does so, and he will continue to smoke.

Cognitive dissonance was demonstrated by psychologist **Leon Festinger** in a famous experiment in which participants were asked to complete a dull task (turning knobs on a board). After completing the task, participants were asked to tell the next participant (a confederate) that the experience was fun. Half of the participants were paid \$1 to lie to the next participant, and half were paid \$20 to lie. In the final part of the experiment, participants were asked to rate how much they enjoyed the original task. Those who were paid \$20 had received sufficient justification for lying to the next participant and reported that they found the task to be boring. The individuals in the experimental group who were paid only \$1 did not have sufficient justification for lying and experienced cognitive dissonance. The participants resolved this inconsistency between their belief (the task was dull) and their behavior (telling another participant it was fun) by altering their belief and telling the researcher that the experiment was actually enjoyable. It is important to mention that if a person's beliefs and behaviors do not match, cognitive dissonance does not always occur. If Alfonso hates doing homework (belief) but chooses to do his assignments because there is an incentive (college admission, high grades, etc.), there is no dissonance because he has sufficient justification for acting in a manner that is not aligned with his beliefs. This is why the participants in Festinger's study who were paid \$20 did not feel any dissonance.

The phenomenon of **justification of effort** is related to cognitive dissonance and states that if something involves a higher cost in terms of money, pain, or effort, we will value it more. Justification of effort explains why individuals who have to suffer through a difficult initiation process end up valuing membership in the group more than they would if joining required little effort. The hazing rituals used for fraternities and sororities require potential members to suffer in order to gain entrance into the group. Justification of effort explains why individuals who endure hazing value their membership in the organization more.

STUDY TIP

Cognitive dissonance is a key concept that has appeared frequently on both the multiple-choice and free-response sections of the AP exam.

- Tension created when holding two conflicting beliefs or if our beliefs and actions do not match.
- Attitude change results because we are motivated to reduce the tension.

Hint: Cognitive dissonance occurs only within the individual and *not* between two individuals.

Attribution Theory and Biases

Why do people do what they do? Social psychologists study the various types of attributions or explanations people generate for their own behavior and the behaviors of others. Fritz Heider's attribution theory states that the attributions we generate are either dispositional or situational. **Dispositional (internal) attributions** explain behavior in terms of factors inside the person (personality, intelligence, maturity, etc.), whereas **situational (external) attributions** explain behavior in terms of factors outside the person (luck, social etiquette, etc.). The attributions we make about ourselves and others influence our behavior. For instance, if a salesperson complements Amanda's hairstyle and she attributes it to the person's ability to appreciate her style and fashion sense (dispositional), she might respond warmly to the person; if Amanda attributes the compliment to pressure from the salesperson's boss to make a sale (situational), she might walk away. Making attributions can result in various types of errors. The main types of bias in attribution are explained in Table 16.1.

STUDY TIP

Be able to apply attribution theory to specific examples.

Table 16.1. Common Attribution Biases

Attribution Bias	Definition	Study Tip	Example
Fundamental Attribution Error (FAE) *More common in Individualistic Cultures	Tendency to use a dispositional (internal) explanation without considering the situational (external) factors that might be influencing the behavior of someone else.	FAE occurs only when explaining someone else's behavior—it is about "them."	Brent is having dinner with his girlfriend, and their waiter is inattentive. He most likely will attribute the waiter's behavior ("them") as being rude (dispositional). Brent is making the FAE because he failed to take into account the potential external (situational) factors involved, such as the fact that his waiter is new and the restaurant is short-staffed.

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Attribution Bias	Definition	Study Tip	Example
Actor–Observer Bias	Tendency to explain the behavior of others with dispositional attributions (FAE), but attribute our own behavior as the actor to situational factors. This is due to the greater awareness we have about how our own behavior can vary from one situation to another.	Actor–observer bias involves two individuals in comparison—“you” (the person making the attribution) and “them” to whom you assigned an attribution.	When Samantha watches her classmate stumble while giving a speech, she believes it is because her classmate (“them”) is a bad public speaker (dispositional), but when Samantha stumbles during her speech, she explains that it was because she (“you”) was distracted by noise in the hallway (situational).
Self-Serving Bias *More common in Individualistic Cultures	Tendency to attribute our successes to dispositional factors and our failures to situational factors. This is due to the desire to see oneself in a positive way. We serve ourselves by making ourselves look good, taking credit for our successes and avoiding responsibility for our failures.	Self-serving bias involves only your own behavior (“you”) and involves choosing attributions that make “you” look good.	Jordan believes he aced the chemistry test because he is smart (dispositional), but that he failed the calculus test because his teacher did a poor job explaining the content (situational). In this example, Jordan has explained only his own behavior (“you”).
Self-Effacing Bias *More common in Collectivist Cultures	Tendency to attribute our failures to dispositional factors and our successes to situational factors. This results in modesty by taking responsibility for one’s failures and crediting the contributions of others for one’s successes.	Self-effacing bias involves only your own behavior (“you”) and involves choosing attributions that make the group look good and “you” seem modest.	When Mari’s team loses the soccer game, she takes the responsibility for not being prepared (dispositional), and when her team wins, she attributes it to the effort of her teammates (situational). In this example, Mari has explained only her own behavior (“you”).
False Consensus Effect	Tendency for an individual to overestimate how many others act and think the way that they do.	False consensus effect involves “your” perceptions about how others think and behave.	Ethan did well on his psychology midterm, leading him to exhibit the false consensus effect by assuming everyone else was successful on the exam as well.

The prevalence of a particular attribution error can be impacted by culture. The self-serving bias and fundamental attribution error occur more frequently in **individualistic cultures**, such as those found in the United States and Western Europe, due to their emphasis on the values of independence and self-reliance. The self-effacing bias is more frequently identified in **collectivist cultures** such as those in Eastern Asia, Western

Africa, and parts of South America; these cultures emphasize group membership and harmony above individual achievement.

Individuals often preserve their self-esteem by using **self-handicapping** strategies to create a convenient situational explanation for potential failures before they happen. Alina realizes she needs to pass her calculus exam, but she is afraid that she will fail, so she chooses to stay up all night watching a marathon of old movies to create an excuse in case she fails. On the day of the test, Alina tells all of her friends that she had no time to study, so that if she is not successful, they will attribute her failure to being tired (situational) instead of saying she is not smart (dispositional). Alina has sabotaged her chances of being successful on the exam in order to preserve her self-esteem.

As humans we feel the need to see our world as fair, in what is known as the just-world phenomenon, and that individuals get what they deserve. The belief in a just world may lead individuals to **blame the victim** or to hold victims responsible for their own misfortunes. Blaming the victim can lead people to believe that someone who was robbed at gunpoint deserved it because the person should have been more careful about walking home alone in a high crime area.

Social Influence

Behavior is contagious! We have all experienced how a collective yawn can spread through a room. **Social influence** is the study of how other individuals' thoughts and actions shape our own beliefs, feelings, and behaviors. Social influence is spread through **norms**, or conditioned social rules, that provide information on how to behave. These rules may be implicit or explicit and learned from parents, peers, teachers, or cultural role models. Failure to adhere to these social rules can result in exclusion from the group. Norms are not universal; for example, the personal space norm, or the acceptable distance required between individuals varies by culture.

Social Roles and the Stanford Prison Study

In addition to norms, social roles have a significant impact on our thoughts and actions. **Social roles** are the expected patterns of behavior required by specific situations or social positions. For example, there are certain behaviors associated with particular social roles, such as mother, employer, student, and teacher. In 1971 **Phillip Zimbardo** conducted the famous **Stanford Prison Experiment**, investigating the power of social roles and the impact of the situation on behavior. Twenty-four male college students

were selected to participate in a study located in a mock prison, constructed in a basement of Stanford University. The participants were randomly assigned to the social role of either “prisoner” or “guard” and provided with a wardrobe symbolizing their new status. Although the experiment was designed to last for fourteen days, it had to be canceled after only six days due to the suffering of the participants. The guards and prisoners had started to actually become their social roles, with the guards becoming increasingly aggressive in their psychological torment of the prisoners and prisoners developing signs of extreme psychological stress, such as symptoms of depression. The power of the situation led both the guards and the prisoners to alter their own thoughts and behaviors to align with the social roles that they were assigned.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2004, comparisons were made between the Stanford Prison Experiment and the abuses and human rights violations that came out of the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Phillip Zimbardo compared Abu Ghraib’s leader, Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, to his own role in the Stanford Prison Experiment. Both operations ended when someone inside—another researcher at Stanford and a soldier in Baghdad—brought to light the events taking place.

Compliance and Persuasion

Persuasion refers to a type of social influence that involves various methods designed to change the behavior of others by convincing them to alter their beliefs or behaviors. **Compliance** is a change in behavior that results from a direct request. Social and organizational psychologists study the necessary motivations required to convince people to buy products or alter their opinions. Salespeople, politicians, and others use a variety of methods designed to gain compliance and persuade individuals to change their opinions. The **foot-in-the-door** technique involves having someone comply with a small request first in order to increase the likelihood that they will agree to a second larger request later. Students utilize this technique in the classroom to convince the teacher to give them help with multiple answers by first asking for assistance on only one question. The **door-in-the-face** technique works in the opposite direction because the individual begins by making a large request that most likely will be turned down. After this large initial request is denied, the person makes a more reasonable request that is now much more likely to be granted. In the classroom students may use the door-in-the-face technique to persuade their teacher to move the date of the test. The students would begin by first asking the teacher to have the date of the test moved to the following week, knowing that they will most likely be denied. The teacher is now likely to agree to their more reasonable request to postpone the test for one additional

day. The door-in-the face method is an effective way of persuading someone by first make a request for something that is so extreme that it will be rejected and then asking for what one wanted in the first place. The **low-ball** technique is a compliance method that involves convincing someone to commit to an agreement and then increasing the effort or cost required to fulfill the commitment. The low-ball technique is a two-step process: First, obtain a commitment and, second, increase the effort or cost to fulfill that commitment by revealing hidden or additional costs. A car salesperson might have the customer test drive the car and then convince the customer to commit to purchasing the car by offering an extremely good deal. After the individual has agreed to the deal, the salesperson using the low-ball technique would change the terms and increase the price. Many individuals will accept the new price because they are already emotionally committed to the new car. The effectiveness of a persuasive message is also influenced by the source (who says it), the nature of the communication (how it is said), and the audience. All of these persuasion factors can be applied to print and broadcast media, as well as face-to-face interactions. The **elaboration likelihood model** of persuasion offers two general methods that individuals use to process the claims being presented to them in a persuasive message. The two approaches of the elaboration likelihood model are the *central* and *peripheral* routes to persuasion and they are discussed in Table 16.2.

STUDY TIP

Be able to discriminate between the two methods of persuasion that make up the elaboration likelihood model.

Table 16.2. Elaboration Likelihood Model

Concept	Definition	Example
Central Route of Persuasion	Focuses on the factual content of the message and uses evidence and logical arguments as the basis for attitude change. Individuals are persuaded based on the strength of the argument presented.	An advertisement for a car that uses the central route of persuasion will include data such as the safety rating or highway/city miles per gallon.
Peripheral Route of Persuasion	Focuses on positive or negative associations and emotional appeals. Individuals are persuaded by surface or external factors and not the strength of the argument presented.	An advertisement for a car that uses the peripheral route of persuasion would involve an emotional appeal such as a celebrity endorsement.

Conformity

Changing one's behavior or beliefs to fit in with others due to real or imagined social pressures is known as **conformity**. In a famous experiment on conformity, **Solomon Asch** assigned participants to work on a panel with seven other participants who were really confederates. **Confederates** are individuals who are part of the research team that pose as subjects and whose behavior in the experiment is determined in advance. Asch asked the participants to choose which of three comparison lines on a card was the same length as a standard line on a separate card. The subject was asked to give an answer to the line question after all of the confederates first gave the same wrong answer aloud. Under these conditions 70 percent of the subjects conformed to the group's wrong answer at least once, but when the subject was given the task alone, that person gave the correct answer 99 percent of the time. Since there were no explicit rewards or punishments, the reason for conformity could be that in the face of such "overwhelming" opposition the subjects agreed with the confederates to gain group acceptance (or avoid group rejection). The results of the Asch study showed that individuals would, under certain conditions, conform to an obviously wrong group norm. Asch and his colleagues repeated this study many times, varying the conditions in attempts to determine what variables play a causal role in decreasing or increasing conformity. The Asch studies revealed that group size and unanimity were the best predictors of conformity. Further research discovered additional factors that increased the likelihood of conformity, including attraction to the group, having no strong preexisting opinion, and being presented with a situation in which the correct answer is unclear or ambiguous.

Obedience

Obedience involves changing one's behavior in response to a demand from an authority figure. **Stanley Milgram** conducted one of the most famous experiments in psychology and discovered that the average American would, under the direction of a legitimate authority figure, give what they believed were severe shocks to other people in an experimental setting. In Milgram's experiment, two men were told that they would be taking part in an experiment on the effects of punishment on learning. One man was predetermined to be the learner (a confederate), and the participant was assigned to be the teacher (the participant). The learner was taken into an adjoining room and strapped into a chair. The teacher was placed in front of a shock generator and told to administer shocks from 15 to 450 volts to the learner when they provided an incorrect answer. However, there were no actual shocks being given to the learner (confederate). The first mistake resulted in a mild shock, and each subsequent wrong answer resulted in a progressively stronger shock. Despite cries from the learner (confederate) of "Let me

out of here, I've got a heart condition!", the teacher (participant), with encouragement from the authority figure, would continue administering shocks, although more and more reluctantly. Out of the forty males who took part in the initial experiment, 65 percent went all the way to the maximum shock level of 450 volts. This alarming finding has been replicated many times. It demonstrates that ordinary people will obey orders given by a legitimate authority figure even to the point of committing cruel and harmful actions. The main factors that increased the likelihood of obedience in Milgram's studies were the prestige of the institution, proximity of the authority figure, the behavior of others, and the depersonalization of the victim. Later experiments by Milgram revealed that the most significant factor in reducing obedience to authority was the presence of other teachers who chose not to continue.

DID YOU KNOW?

The American Psychological Association (APA) put Stanley Milgram's membership application "on hold" because of the questions raised about the ethics of his research—a year before his first journal article on obedience research. After an investigation, the APA finally admitted him.

STUDY TIP

Be able to discriminate among the various types of social influence. The AP exam requirements specifically reference four psychologists and their corresponding experiments on social influence. See Table 16.3.

Table 16.3. Key Social Influence Studies

Concepts	Definition	Researcher	Results
Cognitive Dissonance	Altering one's behavior or beliefs to reduce the discomfort caused when there is conflict.	Festinger's \$1 or \$20 Study	After lying about the task, participants in the \$1 experimental condition revised their belief to say that the task was interesting to reduce their cognitive dissonance.
Social Roles	Altering one's behavior to fit the expectations of a social role.	Zimbardo's Prison Study	The study was terminated after six days due to the negative consequences of participants assuming their social role.
Conformity	Altering one's behavior or beliefs to fit in with a group.	Asch's Line Study	Approximately 70% of the subjects conformed to the group's wrong answer at least once.

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Table 16.3. (continued)

Concepts	Definition	Researcher	Results
Obedience	Altering one's behavior in response to a demand from an authority figure.	Milgram's Shock Study	In response to a demand from an authority figure, 65% of the subjects obeyed and administered what they believed was the maximum shock level to the learner.
Compliance	Altering one's behavior in response to a request, <i>not</i> a command, by an authority figure.		
Persuasion	Attempting to alter the attitudes, opinions, and behaviors of others through the use of arguments and techniques designed to exert influence.		

Group Dynamics

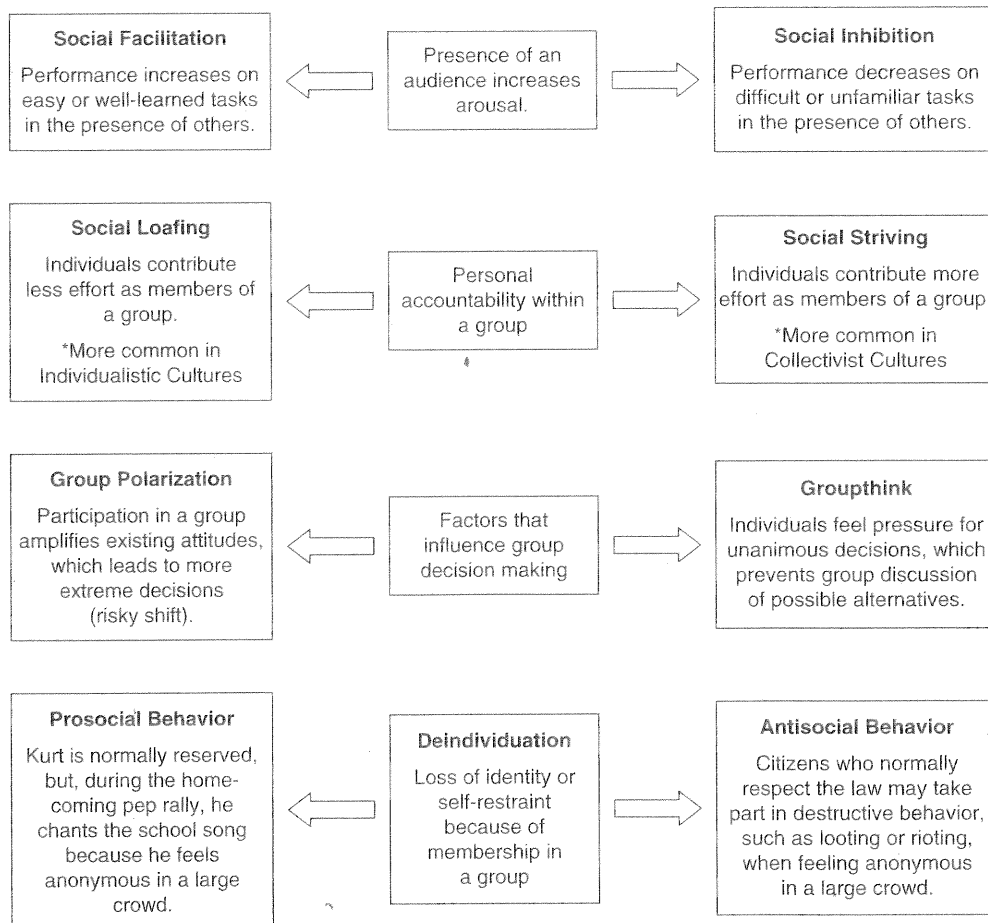
The behavior of individuals can be powerfully influenced by the presence of others, and people often behave differently when they are in a group. Depending on a variety of factors, the existence of an audience can lead to either increased or decreased individual performance. In **social facilitation** the presence of others, such as an audience or coworkers, increases individual performance on easy or well-rehearsed tasks. However, if the task is unfamiliar or difficult, the presence of an audience leads to decreased individual performance in what is known as **social interference**. These opposite effects explain why an experienced actor has a better performance in front of a large audience, while a new actor may experience stage fright in front of a crowd.

Membership in a group can also lead to increased or decreased individual performance or changes in behavior. **Social loafing** occurs when a person contributes less when working with others in a group than when performing the same task alone, due to the lessening of personal accountability. While social loafing is more common in individualistic cultures, **social striving** or an increased effort when working as part of a group is more common in collectivist cultures. If a group is large enough, such as the size of an audience at a sporting event, social influence can lead people to behave in ways that is very different from what they would normally do. **Deindividuation** is a state of lessened personal responsibility and self-restraint due to feelings of anonymity created by being part of a crowd. Deindividuation can lead individuals to participate in **prosocial** or **antisocial behaviors** that they would not otherwise do.

Group decision-making processes can be either improved or hindered by the strength of our prior personal beliefs or the desire for harmony. **Group polarization**

occurs when groups of like-minded individuals interact, resulting in an amplification of their existing attitudes and a tendency to make more extreme decisions. For example, if a group of conservative voters gather together to discuss politics, their overall opinion will become more conservative. Groups in general also have a tendency to make more risky decisions than the members would individually in what is known as **risky shift**. Groups working together often make better decisions, but, under certain conditions, group influences can lead to bad decision-making processes such as groupthink. **Groupthink** is a the tendency for a cohesive decision-making group to ignore or dismiss reasonable alternatives because of the desire for a unanimous decision. The likelihood of groupthink increases when contradictory evidence is ignored, disagreement is discouraged, and there is pressure for a quick decision. To effectively prevent groupthink, groups should include members who genuinely challenge the group's beliefs or an individual should be assigned the role of *devil's advocate*. The *devil's advocate* assumes the unpopular role of voicing any possible concerns that other group members might be reluctant to mention. A summary of group dynamics is presented in Figure 16.1.

Figure 16.1. Group Dynamics Summary



STUDY TIP

Be able to describe the impact of the presence of others or membership in a group on individual behavior.

Conflict and Aggression

Prejudice, Discrimination, and Stereotypes

In addition to forming a self-concept or self-schema, humans also add organization to their world by creating social schemas by grouping similar types of people or events into categories. Individuals we view as similar to ourselves are considered members of our **in-group**, and those perceived as different are categorized as **out-groups**. There is a natural tendency for people to notice negative characteristics in members of out-groups, and not in members of their in-group; this is known as **in-group bias**. People are also more capable of distinguishing differences among members of their in-groups than among members of out-groups, in what is known as **out-group homogeneity**, often leading to stereotyping and discrimination. It is easy for individuals to acknowledge that only some of the football fans at their school are disrespectful (in-group bias), yet still hold the belief that most of the fans of their cross-town rival are disrespectful (out-group homogeneity). In-group bias can be a method individuals use to elevate their self-esteem by associating themselves with successful groups and putting down members of out-groups. **Prejudice** is usually a negative attitude directed toward a particular group and its members. It is translated into behavior through **discrimination**, or any action that results from prejudiced points of view. **Stereotypes** make up the cognitive component of prejudice and are schemas for entire groups that assume that all or most of the members share the same negative traits. **Ethnocentrism** is a specific type of prejudice that involves favoring one's own cultural or ethnic group and holding negative stereotypes about other cultures. A specific type of discrimination known as the **scapegoat theory** occurs when an innocent out-group is blamed by an individual or community for a negative experience. According to scapegoat theory, during times of economic or social hardship when people are angry and frustrated, they may blame out-groups for their problems.

STUDY TIP

The AP exam requirements specifically reference students being able to articulate the processes that contribute to treatment of different groups (i.e., in-group/out-group dynamics, ethnocentrism, and prejudice).

- *Culture*: enduring ideas, attitudes, and traditions shared and transmitted by a large group. Cultural group identifications can include ethnicity, religion, language, customs, etc.
- *Ethnocentrism*: specific type of prejudice in which an individual favors his or her own culture or ethnic group's values, attitudes, and actions over other cultural groups.

All people are ethnocentric to some degree. For example, when traveling people might view their own culture's food as superior to the food in the country they are visiting. When ethnocentrism is extreme, it can lead to discrimination, conflict, or war.

Decreasing Prejudice

One method of decreasing prejudice is to provide opportunities for groups in conflict to spend time together in order to reduce stereotypes. This increased interaction, known as **contact theory**, allows members of groups in conflict to recognize what they have in common and provides an opportunity for them to work together and build relationships. Contact theory is most effective if the opposing individuals or groups are required to collaborate on a **superordinate goal**, or obstacle that requires cooperation to ensure success. These concepts were illustrated in Sherif's Robber's Cave experiment that involved boys who attended a summer camp and were divided into two opposing teams. The researchers created in-group bias and prejudice and then utilized contact theory and superordinate goals to create harmony between the two groups.

Social Dilemmas

Individuals in groups may work collectively toward a common goal, known as **cooperation**, but, if they are working to reach a goal while simultaneously preventing others from doing the same, they are in a state of **competition**. Competition may lead to open clash between individuals or groups known as **conflict**.

Social dilemmas (traps) are situations in which individuals must choose whether to cooperate or compete with others. In social dilemmas, choosing to compete will provide one individual with an advantage, but, if all parties compete, it will result in harmful consequences for everyone. A social trap based on the scenario when two people are immediately separated after being arrested for a serious crime is known as

the **prisoner's dilemma**. Prisoners have the choice to cooperate with their partner or to compete by confessing. In this situation there are good reasons to compete and good reasons to cooperate, but the best result would be for both partners to cooperate (see Figure 16.2).

Figure 16.2. The Prisoner's Dilemma

		Prisoner A	
		Remain Silent (Cooperate)	Confess (Compete)
Prisoner B	Remain Silent (Cooperate)	Both prisoners are released.	Prisoner A is released and Prisoner B receives the maximum sentence.
	Confess (Compete)	Prisoner A receives the maximum sentence and Prisoner B is released.	Both prisoners receive a moderate sentence.

Social dilemmas may also involve conflict between the short-term interests of one person and the long-term interest of the group regarding a shared resource. In the **commons dilemma (tragedy of the commons)**, individuals need to determine how much to *take* from a shared supply. If a group of sheep ranchers all share the same pasture area, a commons dilemma emerges because, although it is in the best interest of each individual rancher to allow their sheep to graze frequently, the pasture would not be sustainable if all of the ranchers did this. In a **public goods dilemma**, individuals must decide how much to *contribute* to a shared resource. It is in the best short-term interest of each individual citizen to not pay taxes, but if everyone chose to behave this way, government services would shut down.

Aggression

Psychology defines **aggression** as any action, verbal or physical, meant to hurt others. According to social psychologists, there needs to be a distinction between two main types of aggression. In **instrumental aggression** the goal is not to harm the victim, but to achieve a goal or protect oneself. Aggression intended to cause damage to a victim is called **hostile aggression**, and it is usually the result of anger or frustration. In professional boxing instrumental aggression is involved, because violence against an opponent is a method used to win the match or title. When a street fight breaks out, it is the result of hostile aggression because the goal is solely to inflict harm.

STUDY TIP

Both Sigmund Freud and Konrad Lorenz believed aggression was an instinct that needed to be released when it built up. Freud's theory regarding aggression is known as the **catharsis hypothesis**. This theory states that expressing aggression is needed to release inner tension. Research does not support this theory and has actually shown the opposite to be true. Venting anger increases aggressive behavior.

Aggression is clearly influenced by both biological and psychological factors. Brain structures involved in aggression include the emotional limbic system and the frontal lobes that allow individuals to evaluate the potential consequences of their actions and restrain their aggressive impulses. Increased levels of the hormone testosterone are also associated with aggressiveness.

STUDY TIP

Think of the emotional limbic system as the gas pedal for aggression and the thinking and planning functions of the frontal lobes as the brakes that restrain aggressive responses. Damage to the frontal lobes will lead to increased aggression because it is like driving without brakes.

Many social psychologists believe that aggression, like other behaviors, is learned through conditioning or observation. **Albert Bandura's** work on modeling was designed to explain how aggressive tendencies in children are learned through imitation. Aggression may also be conditioned through reinforcements and punishments. The **frustration-aggression hypothesis** states that frustration or stress resulting from being blocked from reaching a goal produces aggression. For example, if a person is late to school and stuck in traffic, this will result in frustration and stress, increasing the likelihood of aggressive driving. There are various negative environmental factors that can increase the likelihood of aggression. **Aversive conditions** include crowding, pain, foul odors, high temperatures, etc. Within a school setting, overcrowding may lead to increased aggression, measured by an increase in the number of student fights.

Altruism

Altruism and the bystander effect are two opposite responses to situations where another person needs help. In **altruism**, a person will risk his or her own health or well-being to help another. If a large group of people witness an event where someone desperately needs assistance, each person is less likely to intervene than if there were fewer onlookers. This phenomenon is called the **bystander effect** in which the presence of more witnesses decreases helping. The bystander effect results from the belief of each individual in a crowd that they do not need to help because somebody else will take action. This phenomenon is known as **diffusion of responsibility**. Research into the bystander effect was first inspired by the brutal murder of Kitty Genovese. Media coverage of this event highlighted the fact that, although there were many witnesses to the crime, none of them called the police. This example can be explained by diffusion of responsibility because the presence of others decreased each person's obligation to respond or call the police.

Various factors contribute to the likelihood that altruism will occur, including the **social exchange theory**, which states that individuals balance the costs and rewards of helping and are more likely to assist others if the potential for reward is high and potential costs are low. **Reciprocity norms** lead people to help others with the expectation that they would receive help if they needed it or because they had been helped in the past and are now returning the favor. The variable of **time pressure** has a huge impact on helping behavior, because individuals who are in a hurry are significantly less likely to offer assistance.

Attraction

Although what is considered attractive varies by culture and time period, social psychologists have identified factors that influence whether people will like each other or not. One of the strongest predictors of attraction is **proximity**, because people are more likely to be attracted to those who live near them and with whom they have repeated contact. Research indicates that repeated contact with a new stimulus leads to increased liking in what is called the **mere exposure effect**. For example, David did not think that his new coworker Alice was attractive when he first met her, but, after seeing her at work every weekend for several months, he changed his mind and asked her out on a date.

Another factor related to attraction is similarity in both attitudes and physical attractiveness. Individuals are more likely to be attracted to people with whom they share

common interests, beliefs, and values. Online dating services collect information from members and suggest matches based on similar beliefs and interests. The theory that individuals pair up in relationships with those who are similar to themselves in terms of their level of physical attractiveness is known as the **matching hypothesis**. It is important to remember that the matching hypothesis applies only to similarity in terms of physical attractiveness.

Robert Sternberg proposed the **triangular theory of love** that includes several different types of love resulting from various combinations of three main components: passion (physical attraction), intimacy (closeness), and commitment (a decision to remain together). **Companionate love** consists of intimacy and commitment, and **passionate** or romantic love consists of intimacy and passion. The ultimate form of love, according to Sternberg, is **consummate love**, which includes all three aspects—passion, intimacy, and commitment—and for that reason is rare. To remember the three parts of Sternberg's triangular theory of love, use the acronym PIC (passion, intimacy, and commitment).

STUDY TIP

Be able to apply psychological concepts to a variety of behaviors both within and across chapters. One example within the social chapter is the norm of reciprocity, which can influence a variety of behaviors.

- Reciprocity in Persuasion—Individuals are more likely to comply with a request from someone who has already done them a favor.
- Reciprocity in Altruism—Individuals are more likely to help someone who has helped them in the past.
- Reciprocity in Attraction—Individuals are more likely to be attracted to someone who is attracted to them.