CHAPTER

14 Social Psychology

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Enduring Issues in Social Psychology

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On September 12, 2001, the day after the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, Sher Singh, a telecommunications consultant from Virginia, managed to catch a train home from Boston where he had been on a business trip. "With the horrific images of the terrorist attacks still fresh in my mind," Sher Singh recalls, "I was particularly anxious to get home to my family" (Singh, 2002, p. 1). Singh was very much like any other shocked and sorrowful American on that day—except for one small difference: As a member of the Sikh religion, Singh, unlike most Americans, wore a full beard and a turban.

The train made a scheduled stop in Providence, Rhode Island, about an hour outside of Boston. But oddly, the stop dragged on for a very long time. Singh began to wonder what was wrong. A conductor walking through the coaches announced that the train had mechanical trouble. However, when passengers from neighboring coaches began to disembark and line up on the platform, Singh became suspicious that this was not the true story. He didn't have long to speculate about the genuine cause of the problem, because suddenly law-enforcement officers burst into his coach and pulled him off the train at gunpoint. They were searching for four Arab men who had evaded authorities in a Boston hotel. A Sikh, however, is not an Arab. A Sikh belongs to a Hindu sect that comes from India, not the Middle East.

On the station platform, Singh was abruptly handcuffed and asked about his citizenship. Assurances that he was a U.S. citizen did not satisfy the officers. They asked him if he had a weapon. Singh informed them that, as a devout Sikh, he is required to carry a miniature ceremonial sword. They promptly arrested Singh and pushed him through a crowd of onlookers to a waiting police car. According to news reports, as Singh passed by, some teenagers shouted, "Let's kill him!" while a woman yelled, "Burn in Hell!"

Police never apologized for arresting Sher Singh as a terrorist after the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States.

As a terrorist suspect, Singh was photographed, fingerprinted, and strip-searched. He was held in custody at police headquarters until 9:00 PM. While he was jailed, news media nationwide had displayed a photo of him side by side with a photo of Osama bin Laden. Although all charges against Sher Singh were eventually dropped, he never received an apology from the law-enforcement officers involved.

How could this blatant case of mistaken identity have happened? Why were police so convinced that Sher Singh could be a fugitive terrorist? Researchers who specialize in the field of social psychology help provide some answers. **Social psychology** is the scientific study of how people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the behaviors and characteristics of other people, whether these behaviors and characteristics are real, imagined, or inferred. Sher Singh was clearly a victim of imagined and inferred characteristics formed on the basis of his ethnic appearance. As you read about the findings of social psychologists in this chapter, you will discover that Singh's experience is far from unique (Horry & Wright, 2009). Every day, we all make judgments concerning other people that are often based on very little "real" evidence. The process by which we form such impressions, whether accurate or not, is part of a fascinating area of social psychology known as *social cognition.* We turn to this topic first.

Enduring Issues in Social Psychology

A key issue throughout this chapter is the extent to which a particular behavior reflects personal characteristics like attitudes and values, versus situational ones like the behavior of others and social expectations (person–situation). And especially prominent in this chapter is the extent to which there are differences in social behavior among people in different cultures (individuality–universality).

social psychology The scientific study of the ways in which the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of one individual are influenced by the real, imagined, or inferred behavior or characteristics of other people.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Describe the role of schemata, stereotypes, and the primacy effect in impression formation. Explain how impressions of others can become self-fulfilling prophecies.**
- **Summarize the way in which *distinctiveness*, *consistency*, and *consensus* affect our judgment about whether a given behavior is due to internal or external causes.**
- **Explain what is meant by the statement "the causal attributions we make are often vulnerable to *biases*." In your answer, include the *actor-observer bias*, the *fundamental attribution error*, and *defensive attribution* (including the self-serving bias and the just-world hypothesis).**
- **Briefly summarize the five factors that influence attraction and the tendency to like another person.**

SOCIAL COGNITION

What do forming impressions, explaining others' behavior, and experiencing interpersonal attraction have in common?

Part of the process of being influenced by other people involves organizing and interpreting information about them to form first impressions, to try to understand their behavior, and to determine to what extent we are attracted to them. This collecting and assessing of information about other people is called **social cognition**. Social cognition is a major area of interest to social psychologists (Shrum, 2007).

Forming Impressions

How do we form first impressions of people?

We have all heard the expression "You'll never get a second chance to make a great first impression." Surprisingly, research indicates it only takes about 100 msec. or 1/10 of a second for an observer to form a durable first impression (Willis & Todorov, 2006). Despite the speed with which we make a first impression, the process is more complex than you may think. You must direct your attention to various aspects of the person's appearance and behavior and then make a rapid assessment of what those characteristics mean. How do you complete this process? What cues do you interpret? How accurate are your impressions? The concept of *schemata*, which we first encountered in Chapter 6, "Memory," helps to answer these questions.

Schemata When we meet someone for the first time, we notice a number of things about that person—clothes, gestures, manner of speaking, body build, and facial features. We then draw on these cues to fit the person into a category. No matter how little information we have or how contradictory it is, no matter how many times our initial impressions have been wrong, we still categorize people after meeting them only briefly. Associated with each category is a *schema*—an organized set of beliefs and expectations based on past experience that is presumed to apply to all members of that category (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005). *Schemata* (the plural of schema) influence the information we notice and remember. They also help us flesh out our impressions as we peg people into categories. For example, if a woman is wearing a white coat and has a stethoscope around her neck, you could reasonably categorize her as a doctor. Associated with this category is a schema of various beliefs and expectations: highly trained professional, knowledgeable about diseases and their cures, qualified to prescribe medication, and so on.

Over time, as we continue to interact with people, we add new information about them to our mental files. Our later experiences, however, generally do not influence us nearly as much as our earliest impressions. This phenomenon is called the **primacy effect**.

Schemata and the primacy effect reflect a desire to lessen our mental effort. Humans have been called "cognitive misers" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Madon, 1999). Instead of exerting ourselves to interpret every detail that we learn about a person, we are stingy with our mental efforts. Once we have formed an impression about someone, we tend not to exert the mental effort to change it, even if that impression was formed by jumping to conclusions or through prejudice (Fiske, 1995).

Sometimes, schemata can even help us create the behavior we expect from other people. In a classic study, pairs of participants played a competitive game (M. Snyder & Swann, 1978). The researchers told one member of each pair that his or her partner was either hostile or friendly. The players who were led to believe that their partner was hostile behaved differently toward that partner than did the players led to believe that their partner was friendly. In turn, those treated as hostile actually began to display hostility.

social cognition Knowledge and understanding concerning the social world and the people in it (including oneself).

primacy effect The fact that early information about someone weighs more heavily than later information in influencing one's impression of that person.

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In fact, these people continued to show hostility later, when they were paired with new players who had no expectations about them at all. The expectation of hostility seemed to produce actual aggressiveness, and this behavior persisted. When we bring about expected behavior in another person in this way, our impression becomes a **self-fulfilling prophecy**.

Considerable scientific research has shown how teacher expectations can take the form of a self-fulfilling prophecy and can influence student performance in the classroom (M. Harris & Rosenthal, 1985; Rosenthal, 2002b, 2006; Trouilloud, Sarrazin, Bressoux, Bressoux, & Bois, 2006). That finding has been named the *Pygmalion effect*, after the mythical sculptor who created the statue of a woman and then brought it to life. Although the research does not suggest that high teacher expectations can turn an "F" student into an "A" student, it does show that both high and low expectations can significantly influence student achievement. One study, for example, compared the performance of "at risk" ninth-grade students who had been assigned to regular classrooms with that of students assigned to experimental classrooms that received a year-long intervention aimed at increasing teachers' expectations. After 1 year, the students in the experimental classrooms had higher grades in English and history than the students who were not in the intervention classrooms. Two years later, the experimental students were also less likely to drop out of high school (Weinstein et al., 1991).

Suppose you are a new teacher entering this classroom on the first day of school in September. Do you have any expectations about children of any ethnic or racial groups that might lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Stereotypes Just as schemata shape our impressions of others, so do stereotypes. As a set of characteristics presumed to be shared by all members of a social category, a **stereotype** is actually a special kind of schema—one that is simplistic, very strongly held, and not necessarily based on firsthand experience. A stereotype can involve almost any distinguishing personal attribute, such as age, sex, race, occupation, place of residence, or membership in a certain group. As Sher Singh learned after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, many Americans developed a stereotype suggesting that all males who "looked" like they were from the Middle East were potential terrorists (Horry & Wright, 2009).

When our first impression of a person is governed by a stereotype, we tend to infer things about that person solely on the basis of some key distinguishing feature and to ignore facts that are inconsistent with the stereotype, no matter how apparent they are. For example, once you have categorized someone as male or female, you may rely more on your stereotype of that gender than on your own observations of how the person acts (Firestone, Firestone, & Catlett, 2006). Recent studies indicate that sorting people into categories is not automatic or inevitable (Castelli, Macrae, Zogmaister, & Arcuri, 2004). People are more likely to apply stereotyped schemata in a chance encounter than in a structured, task-oriented situation (such as a classroom or the office); more likely to pay attention to individual signals than to stereotypes when they are pursuing a goal; and are more likely to suppress stereotypes that violate social norms.

ENDURING ISSUES

Person–Situation Interpreting Behavior

The study of attribution, or how people explain their own and other people's behavior, focuses on when and why people interpret behavior as reflecting personal traits or social situations. Suppose you run into a friend at the supermarket. You greet him warmly, but he barely acknowledges you, mumbles "Hi," and walks away. You feel snubbed and try to figure out why he acted like that. Did he behave that way because of something in the situation? Perhaps you did something that offended him; perhaps he was having no luck finding the groceries he wanted; or perhaps someone had just blocked his way by leaving a cart in the middle of an aisle. Or did something within him, some personal trait such as moodiness or arrogance, prompt him to behave that way? ■

self-fulfilling prophecy The process in which a person's expectation about another elicits behavior from the second person that confirms the expectation.

stereotype A set of characteristics presumed to be shared by all members of a social category.

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Attribution

How do we decide why people act as they do?

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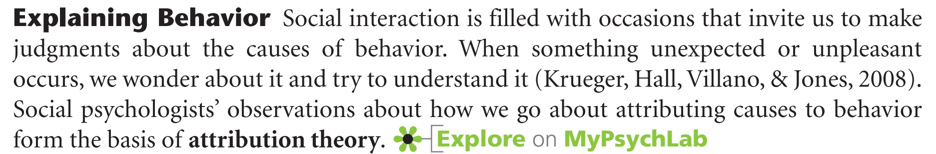

Explaining Behavior Social interaction is filled with occasions that invite us to make judgments about the causes of behavior. When something unexpected or unpleasant occurs, we wonder about it and try to understand it (Krueger, Hall, Villano, & Jones, 2008). Social psychologists' observations about how we go about attributing causes to behavior form the basis of **attribution theory**. Explore on MyPsychLab

An early attribution theorist, Fritz Heider (1958), argued that we attribute behavior to either internal or external causes, but not both. Thus, we might conclude that a classmate's lateness was caused by his laziness (a personal factor, or an internal attribution) *or* by traffic congestion (a situational factor, or an external attribution).

How do we decide whether to attribute a given behavior to internal or external causes? According to another influential attribution theorist, Harold Kelley (Kelley, 1967, 1973; also see B. Weiner, 2008), we rely on three kinds of information about the behavior: *distinctiveness*, *consistency*, and *consensus*. For example, if your instructor asks you to stay briefly after class so that she can talk with you, you will probably try to figure out what lies behind her request by asking yourself three questions.

First, how *distinctive* is the instructor's request? Does she often ask students to stay and talk (low distinctiveness) or is such a request unusual (high distinctiveness)? If she often asks students to speak with her, you will probably conclude that she has personal reasons for talking with you. But if her request is highly distinctive, you will probably conclude that something about you, not her, underlies her request.

Second, how *consistent* is the instructor's behavior? Does she regularly ask you to stay and talk (high consistency), or is this a first for you (low consistency)? If she has consistently made this request of you before, you will probably guess that this occasion is like those others. But if her request is inconsistent with past behavior, you will probably wonder whether some particular event—perhaps something you said in class—motivated her to request a private conference.

Finally, what degree of *consensus* among teachers exists regarding this behavior? Do your other instructors ask you to stay and talk with them (high consensus), or is this instructor unique in making such a request (low consensus)? If it is common for your instructors to ask to speak with you, this instructor's request is probably due to some external factor. But if she is the only instructor ever to ask to speak privately with you, it must be something about this particular person—an internal motive or a concern—that accounts for her behavior.

If you conclude that the instructor has her own reasons for wanting to speak with you, you may feel mildly curious for the remainder of class until you can find out what she wants. But if you think external factors—like your own actions—have prompted her request, you may worry about whether you are in trouble and nervously wait for the end of class.

Biases Unfortunately, the causal attributions we make are often vulnerable to *biases*. For instance, imagine that you are at a party and you see an acquaintance, Ted, walk across the room carrying several plates of food and a drink. As he approaches his chair, Ted spills food on himself. You may attribute the spill to Ted's personal characteristics—he is clumsy. Ted, however, is likely to make a very different attribution. He will likely attribute the spill to an external factor—he was carrying too many other things. Your explanation for this behavior reflects the **fundamental attribution error**—the tendency to attribute others' behavior to causes within themselves (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005; R. A. Smith & Weber, 2005; D. L. Watson, 2008).

The fundamental attribution error is part of the *actor–observer bias*—the tendency to explain the behavior of others as caused by internal factors, while attributing one's own behavior to external forces (Gordon & Kaplar, 2002; Hennessy, Jakubowski, & Benedetti, 2005). For example, during World War II, some Europeans risked their own safety to help Jewish refugees. From the perspective of an observer, we tend to attribute this behavior to

attribution theory The theory that addresses the question of how people make judgments about the causes of behavior.

fundamental attribution error The tendency of people to overemphasize personal causes for other people's behavior and to underemphasize personal causes for their own behavior.

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personal qualities. Indeed, Robert Goodkind, chairman of the foundation that honored the rescuers, called for parents to "inculcate in our children the values of altruism and moral courage as exemplified by the rescuers." Clearly, Goodkind was making an internal attribution for the heroic behavior. The rescuers themselves, however, attributed their actions to external factors. One said, "We didn't feel like rescuers at all. We were just ordinary students doing what we had to do." (Lipman, 1991).

A related class of biases is called **defensive attribution**. These types of attributions occur when we are motivated to present ourselves well, either to impress others or to feel good about ourselves (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005; Gyekye & Salminen, 2006). One example of a defensive attribution is the *self-serving bias*, which is a tendency to attribute our successes to our personal attributes while chalking up our failures to external forces beyond our control (Sedikides & Luke, 2008; R. A. Smith & Weber, 2005). Students do this all the time. They tend to regard exams on which they do well as good indicators of their abilities and exams on which they do poorly as bad indicators (R. A. Smith, 2005). Similarly, teachers are more likely to assume responsibility for students' successes than for their failures (R. A. Smith, 2005).

A second type of defensive attribution comes from thinking that people get what they deserve: Bad things happen to bad people, and good things happen to good people. This is called the **just-world hypothesis** (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005; Blader & Tyler, 2002; Melvyn Lerner, 1980). When misfortune strikes someone, we often jump to the conclusion that the person deserved it, rather than giving full weight to situational factors that may have been responsible. Why do we behave this way? One reason is that by reassigning the blame for a terrible misfortune from a chance event (something that could happen to us) to the victim's own negligence (a trait that *we*, of course, do not share), we delude ourselves into believing that we could never suffer such a fate (Dalbert, 2001). Interestingly, research has shown that because believing in a just world reduces stress, it may also promote good health, posttraumatic growth, and a sense of well-being following a traumatic event (T. Lucas, Alexander, Firestone, & Lebreton, 2008; Park, Edmondson, Fenster, & Blank, 2008).

Did this accident happen because of poor driving or because the driver swerved to avoid a child in the street? The fundamental attribution error says that we are more likely to attribute behavior to internal causes, such as poor driving, rather than situational factors, such as a child in the street.

Attribution Across Cultures Historically, most of the research on attribution theory has been conducted in Western cultures. Do the basic principles of attribution theory apply to people in other cultures as well? The answer appears to be "not always." Some recent research has confirmed the self-serving bias among people from Eastern collectivist cultures like Japan and Taiwan (L. Gaertner, Sedikides, & Chang, 2008; Kudo & Numazaki, 2003; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003), while other research has not (Balcetis, Dunning, & Miller, 2008). In one study, Japanese students studying in the United States usually explained failure as a lack of effort (an internal attribution) and attributed their successes to the assistance that they received from others (an external attribution) (Kashima & Triandis, 1986). This process is the reverse of the self-serving bias. Similarly, the fundamental attribution error may not be universal. In some other cultures, people place more emphasis on the role of external, situational factors in explaining both their own behavior and that of others (Incheo Choi, Dalal, Kim-Prieto, & Park, 2003; Morling & Kitayama, 2008; Triandis, 2001).

Interpersonal Attraction

Do "birds of a feather flock together," or do "opposites attract"?

A third aspect of social cognition involves interpersonal attraction. When people meet, what determines whether they will like each other? This is the subject of much speculation and even mystification, with popular explanations running the gamut from fate to compatible astrological signs. Social psychologists take a more hardheaded view. They have found that attraction and the tendency to like someone else are closely linked to such factors as *proximity*, *physical attractiveness*, *similarity*, *exchange*, and *intimacy*.

defensive attribution The tendency to attribute our successes to our own efforts or qualities and our failures to external factors.

just-world hypothesis Attribution error based on the assumption that bad things happen to bad people and good things happen to good people.

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Proximity **Proximity** is usually the most important factor in determining attraction (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005; J. W. Brehm, 2002). The closer two people live to each other, the more likely they are to interact; the more frequent their interaction, the more they will tend to like each other. Conversely, two people separated by considerable geographic distance are not likely to run into each other and thus have little chance to develop a mutual attraction. The proximity effect has less to do with simple convenience than with the security and comfort we feel with people and things that have become familiar. Familiar people are predictable and safe—thus more likable (Bornstein, 1989).

Physical Attractiveness Contrary to the old adage, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," research has found that people generally agree when rating the attractiveness of others (Gottschall, 2008; Langlois et al., 2000). Even people from different cultures and ethnic groups appear to have a similar standard for who is or is not considered beautiful. This cross-cultural, cross-ethnic agreement suggests the possibility of a universal standard of beauty (Bronstad, Langlois, & Russell, 2008; Rhodes, 2006). Consistent with the idea of a universal standard of beauty, brain-imaging studies have found a specific region of the brain that is responsive to facial beauty (Chatterjee, Thomas, Smith, & Aguirre, 2009).

Physical attractiveness can powerfully influence the conclusions that we reach about a person's character. We actually give attractive people credit for more than their beauty. We tend to presume they are more intelligent, interesting, happy, kind, sensitive, moral, and successful than people who are not perceived as attractive. They are also thought to make better spouses and to be more sexually responsive (Griffin & Langlois, 2006; Hosoda, Stone, & Coats, 2003; Katz, 2003; Langlois et al., 2000; Riniolo, Johnson, Sherman, & Misso, 2006). We also tend to like attractive people more than we do less attractive people. One reason is that physical attractiveness itself is generally considered a positive attribute. We often perceive beauty as a valuable asset that can be exchanged for other things in social interactions. We may also believe that beauty has a "radiating effect"—that the glow of a companion's good looks enhances our own public image (Kernis & Wheeler, 1981; Sedikides, Olsen, & Reis, 1993).

Wonderful or just beautiful? Physically attractive people are often perceived to have a host of other attractive qualities. The movie *Shrek 2* used this premise for humor by presenting the handsome Prince Charming as a villain.

Our preoccupation with physical attractiveness has material consequences. Research has found that mothers of more attractive infants tend to show their children more affection and to play with them more often than mothers of unattractive infants (Langlois, Ritter, Casey, & Sawin, 1995). Even in hospitals, premature infants rated as more attractive by attending nurses thrived better and gained weight faster than those judged as less attractive, presumably because they receive more nurturing (Badr & Abdallah, 2001). Attractive children are also more likely to be better adjusted, to display greater intelligence, and to be treated more leniently by teachers (Langlois et al., 2000; M. McCall, 1997). Similarly, attractive adults enjoy better health, tend to be slightly more intelligent, self-confident, and are generally judged to be more hirable and productive by employers (Desrumaux, De Bosscher, & Léoni, 2009; Hosoda, Stone, & Coats, 2003; L. A. Jackson, Hunter, & Hodge, 1995).

We also tend to give good-looking people the benefit of the doubt: If they don't live up to our expectations during the first encounter, we are likely to give them a second chance, ask for or accept a second date, or seek further opportunities for interaction. These reactions can give attractive people substantial advantages in life and can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. Physically attractive people may come to think of themselves as good or lovable because they are continually treated as if they are. Conversely, unattractive people may begin to see themselves as bad or unlovable because they have always been regarded that way—even as children.

Similarity Attractiveness isn't everything. In the abstract, people might prefer extremely attractive individuals, but in reality they usually choose friends and partners who are close to their own level of attractiveness (J. H. Harvey & Pauwells, 1999; L. Lee, Loewenstein, Ariely, Hong, & Young, 2008; D. K. Marcus & Miller, 2003). Similarity—of attitudes, interests, values, backgrounds, and beliefs, as well as looks—underlies much

proximity How close two people live to each other.

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interpersonal attraction (AhYun, 2002; Sano, 2002; S. Solomon & Knafo, 2007). When we know that someone shares our attitudes and interests, we tend to have more positive feelings toward that person in part because they are likely to agree with our choices and beliefs. In turn that strengthens our convictions and boosts our self-esteem.

If similarity is such a critical determinant of attraction, what about the notion that opposites attract? Aren't people sometimes attracted to others who are completely different from them? Extensive research has failed to confirm this notion. In long-term relationships, where attraction plays an especially important role, people overwhelmingly prefer to associate with people who are similar to themselves (Buss, 1985; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). It is true that in some cases, people are attracted to others with complementary characteristics (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997; K. H. Rubin, Fredstrom, & Bowker, 2008). For example, a person who likes to care for and fuss over others could be compatible with a mate who enjoys receiving such attention. But complementarity almost always occurs between people who share similar goals and similar values. True opposites are unlikely even to meet each other, much less interact long enough to achieve such compatibility.

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT . . .

Intimacy and the Internet

Many of the studies of interpersonal attraction were conducted before the advent of new Internet technologies.

- What impact (if any) has e-mail, instant messaging, online networking communities like Facebook, and dating services like match.com had on close relationships?
- Do these new technology tools make it easier to maintain long-distance relationships? Influence attributions? Encourage self-disclosure with intimates and/or strangers? Subtly shape social cognition in other ways?
- In answering the questions above, what did you use as the source of your opinions? Your personal experiences? Articles in the mass media? Reports of scientific research? Suppose you were conducting a survey to collect data on these questions. What would you ask your participants? How might you determine whether their self-reports are accurate?

Exchange According to the *reward theory of attraction*, we tend to like people who make us feel rewarded and appreciated. The relationship between attraction and rewards is subtle and complex. For example, Aronson's gain–loss theory of attraction (2003) suggests that *increases* in rewarding behavior influence attractiveness more than constant rewarding behavior does. Say that you were to meet and talk with someone at three successive parties, and during these conversations, that person's behavior toward you changed from polite indifference to overt flattery. You would be inclined to like this person more than if she or he had immediately started to praise you during the first conversation and kept up the stream of praise each time you met. The reverse also holds true: We tend to dislike people whose opinion of us changes from good to bad even more than we dislike those who consistently display a low opinion of us.

The reward theory of attraction is based on the concept of **exchange**. In social interactions, people make exchanges. For example, you may agree to help a friend paint his apartment if he prepares dinner for you. Every exchange involves both rewards (you get a free dinner; he gets his apartment painted) and costs (you have to paint first; he then has to cook you dinner).

Self-disclosure—revealing personal experiences and opinions—is essential to all close relationships.

Exchanges work only insofar as they are fair or equitable. A relationship is based on **equity** when both individuals receive equally from each other. However the role of perceived equity in a relationship is complex. In general, the feeling you are getting out of a relationship what you put into it (equity) is an important determinant of satisfaction (DeMaris, 2007). However, as relationships mature, this type of accounting may actually harm a relationship. For instance, long-term happily married couples rarely think about the cost and benefit of their relationship (M. S. Clark & Chrisman, 1994). As long as both parties find their interactions more rewarding than costly, and continue to feel the relationship is equitable, their relationship is likely to continue (Cook & Rice, 2003; Takeuchi, 2000; Van Yperen & Buunk, 1990).

exchange The concept that relationships are based on trading rewards among partners.

equity Fairness of exchange achieved when each partner in the relationship receives the same proportion of outcomes to investments.

Intimacy When does liking someone become something more? *Intimacy* is the quality of genuine closeness to and trust in another person. People become closer and stay closer through a continuing reciprocal pattern where each person tries to know the other and allows the other

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to know him or her (Theiss & Solomon, 2008). When you are first getting to know someone, you communicate about "safe," superficial topics like the weather, sports, or shared activities. As you get to know each other better over time, your conversation progresses to more personal subjects: your personal experiences, memories, hopes and fears, goals and failures. Thus, intimate communication is based on a process of gradual *self-disclosure* (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 2004). Because self-disclosure is possible only when you trust the listener, you will seek—and usually receive—a reciprocal disclosure to keep the conversation balanced and emotionally satisfying (Bauminger, Finzi-Dottan, Chason, & Har-Even, 2008; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). The pacing of disclosure is important. If you "jump levels" by revealing too much too soon—or to someone who is not ready to make a reciprocal personal response—the other person will probably retreat, and communication will go no further.

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CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Associated with the many categories into which we "peg" people are sets of beliefs and expectations called _____ that are assumed to apply to all members of a category. When these are quite simplistic, but deeply held, they are often referred to as _____.
2. When the first information we receive about a person weighs more heavily in forming an impression than later information does, we are experiencing the _____ effect.
3. The tendency to attribute the behavior of others to internal causes and one's own behavior to external causes is called the _____ _____ bias.
4. The belief that people must deserve the bad things that happen to them reflects the _____ _____ _____.
5. The tendency to attribute the behavior of others to personal characteristics is the _____ _____ error.
6. Which of the following is a basis for interpersonal attraction? (There can be more than one correct answer.)
   a. proximity
   b. similarity
   c. exchange
   d. attraction of true opposites
   e. all of the above

Answers: 1. schemata, stereotypes. 2. primacy. 3. actor-observer. 4. just-world hypothesis. 5. fundamental attribution. 6. a, b, and c.

APPLY YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. You meet someone at a party who is outgoing and entertaining, and has a great sense of humor. A week later, your paths cross again, but this time the person seems very shy, withdrawn, and humorless. Most likely, your impression of this person after the second meeting is that he or she
   a. is actually shy, withdrawn, and humorless, despite your initial impression.
   b. is actually outgoing and entertaining but was just having a bad day.
   c. is low in self-monitoring.
   d. Both (b) and (c) are correct.
2. Your roommate tells you she did really well on her history midterm exam because she studied hard and "knew the material cold." But she says she did poorly on her psychology midterm because the exam was unfair and full of ambiguous questions. On the basis of what you have learned in this portion of the chapter, this may be an example of
   a. defensive attribution.
   b. the primacy effect.
   c. the ultimate attribution error.
   d. the just-world effect.

Answers: 1. b. 2. a.

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ATTITUDES

Why are attitudes important?

An **attitude** is a relatively stable organization of beliefs, feelings, and tendencies toward something or someone. Attitudes are important because they often influence our behavior. For example, the phrase "I don't like his attitude" is a telling one. People are often told to "change your attitude" or make an "attitude adjustment." Since attitudes can affect behavior, social psychologists are interested in how attitudes are formed and how they can be changed.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Describe the three major components of attitudes and the variables that determine whether an attitude will be reflected in behavior.**
- **Distinguish between prejudice, racism, and discrimination. Explain the role of stereotypes and the *ultimate attribution error* in prejudicial attitudes. Compare and contrast the following potential sources of prejudice: frustration-aggression, authoritarian personality, "cognitive misers," and conformity. Describe the three strategies that appear promising as ways to reduce prejudice and discrimination.**
- **Describe the three steps in the use of persuasion to change attitudes: attention, comprehension, and acceptance. In your description, include the source (credibility and the sleeper effect), the message itself (one-sided vs. two-sided, fear), the medium of communication, and characteristics of the audience.**
- **Explain what is meant by "cognitive dissonance" and how that can be used to change attitudes.**

The Nature of Attitudes

What are the three major components of attitudes?

An attitude has three major components: *evaluative beliefs* about an object, *feelings* about that object, and *behavior tendencies* toward that object. Beliefs include facts, opinions, and our general knowledge. Feelings encompass love, hate, like, dislike, and similar sentiments. Behavior tendencies refer to our inclinations to act in certain ways toward the object—to approach it, avoid it, and so on. For example, our attitude toward a political candidate includes our beliefs about the candidate's qualifications and positions on crucial issues and our expectations about how the candidate will vote on those issues. We also have feelings about the candidate—like or dislike, trust or mistrust. And because of these beliefs and feelings, we are inclined to behave in certain ways toward the candidate—to vote for or against the candidate, to contribute time or money to the candidate's campaign, to make a point of attending or staying away from rallies for the candidate, and so forth.

As we will see shortly, these three aspects of an attitude are often consistent with one another. For example, if we have positive feelings toward something, we tend to have positive beliefs about it and to behave positively toward it. This tendency does not mean, however, that our every action will accurately reflect our attitudes. For example, our feelings about going to dentists may be negative, yet most of us make an annual visit anyway. Let's look more closely at the relationship between attitudes and behavior.

Attitudes and Behavior The relationship between attitudes and behavior is not always straightforward (Ajzen & Cote, 2008; Albarracín, Zanna, Johnson, & Kumkale, 2005). Variables such as the strength of the attitude, how easily it comes to mind, how noticeable a particular attitude is in a given situation, and how relevant the attitude is to the particular behavior in question help to determine whether a person will act in accordance with an attitude.

Moreover, attitudes predict behavior better for some people than for others. People who rate highly on **self-monitoring** are especially likely to override their attitudes to behave in accordance with others' expectations (Jawahar, 2001; O. Klein, Snyder, & Livingston, 2004). For example, before speaking or acting, those who score high in self-monitoring observe the situation for clues about how they should react. Then they try to meet those "demands," rather than behave according to their own beliefs or sentiments. In contrast, those who score low in self-monitoring express and act on their attitudes with great consistency, showing little regard for situational clues or constraints.

Attitude Development How do we acquire our attitudes? Where do they come from? Many of our most basic attitudes derive from early, direct personal experience (Jaccard & Blanton, 2005). Children are rewarded with smiles and encouragement when they please their parents, and they are punished through disapproval when they displease them. These early experiences give children enduring attitudes (Castelli, Zogmaister, & Tomelleri, 2009). Attitudes are also formed by imitation. Children mimic the behavior of their parents and peers, acquiring attitudes even when no one is deliberately trying to shape them.

attitude Relatively stable organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavior tendencies directed toward something or someone—the attitude object.

self-monitoring The tendency for an individual to observe the situation for cues about how to react.

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But parents are not the only source of attitudes. Teachers, friends, and even famous people are also important in shaping our attitudes. New fraternity or sorority members, for example, may model their behavior and attitudes on upper-class members (McConnell, Rydell, Strain, & Mackie, 2008). A student who idolizes a teacher may adopt many of the teacher's attitudes toward controversial subjects, even if they run counter to attitudes of parents or friends.

The mass media, particularly television, also have a great impact on attitude formation (Lin & Reid, 2009; Nielsen & Bonn, 2008). This is why having his photo televised with the label of terrorist suspect was particularly devastating for Sher Singh. Television and magazines bombard us with messages—not merely through news and entertainment, but also through commercials. Without experience of their own against which to measure the merit of these messages, children are particularly susceptible to the influence of television on their attitudes.

Prejudice and Discrimination

How does a person develop a prejudice toward someone else?

Although the terms *prejudice* and *discrimination* are often used interchangeably, they actually refer to different concepts. **Prejudice**—an attitude—is an unfair, intolerant, or unfavorable view of a group of people. **Discrimination**—a behavior—is an unfair act or a series of acts directed against an entire group of people or individual members of that group. To discriminate is to treat an entire class of people in an unfair way.

ENDURING ISSUES

Person–Situation Does Discrimination Reflect Prejudice?

Prejudice and discrimination do not always occur together. A variety of factors determine whether prejudice will be expressed in discriminative behavior (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Monteiro, de França, & Rodrigues, 2009). For example, a prejudiced storeowner may smile at an African American customer to disguise opinions that could hurt his business. Likewise, many institutional practices can be discriminatory even though they are not based on prejudice. For example, regulations establishing a minimum height requirement for police officers may discriminate against women and certain ethnic groups whose average height falls below the standard, even though the regulations do not stem from sexist or racist attitudes. ■

Prejudice Like all other attitudes, prejudice has three components: beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies. Prejudicial beliefs are virtually always negative stereotypes; and, as mentioned earlier, reliance on stereotypes can lead to erroneous thinking about other people. The *ultimate attribution error* refers to the tendency for a person with stereotyped beliefs about a particular group of people to make internal attributions for their shortcomings (they lack ability or motivation) and external attributions for their successes (they were given special advantages) (P. J. Henry, Reyna, & Weiner, 2004). Along with stereotyped beliefs, prejudiced attitudes are usually marked by strong emotions, such as dislike, fear, hatred, or loathing and corresponding negative behavioral tendencies such as avoidance, hostility, and criticism.

Sources of Prejudice Many theories attempt to sort out the causes and sources of prejudice. According to the **frustration–aggression theory**, prejudice is the result of people's frustrations (Allport, 1954; E. R. Smith & Mackie, 2005). As we saw in Chapter 8, "Motivation and Emotion," under some circumstances frustration can spill over into anger and hostility. People who feel exploited and oppressed often cannot vent their anger against an identifiable or proper target, so they displace their hostility onto those even "lower" on

prejudice An unfair, intolerant, or unfavorable attitude toward a group of people.

discrimination An unfair act or series of acts taken toward an entire group of people or individual members of that group.

frustration–aggression theory The theory that, under certain circumstances, people who are frustrated in their goals turn their anger away from the proper, powerful target and toward another, less powerful target that is safer to attack.

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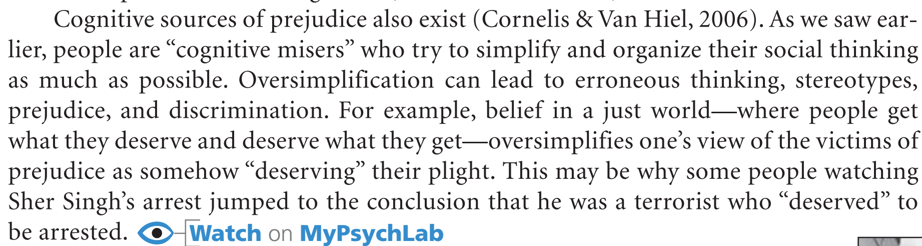
the social scale than themselves. The result is prejudice and discrimination. The people who are the victims of this displaced aggression, or *scapegoats,* are blamed for the problems of the times.

After the 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, many Arabs, Muslims, and even people who looked Middle Eastern, became scapegoats for some Americans' frustration about the violence. Recall the experiences of Sher Singh, whom we described at the start of this chapter. African Americans have long been scapegoats for the economic frustrations of some lower-income White Americans who feel powerless to improve their own condition. However, Latin Americans, Asian Americans, Jewish Americans, and women are also scapegoated—at times by African Americans. Like kindness, greed, and all other human qualities, prejudice is not restricted to a particular race, religion, gender, or ethnic group.

Another theory locates the source of prejudice in a bigoted or **authoritarian personality** (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Altemeyer, 2004). Authoritarian people tend to be rigidly conventional. They favor following the rules and abiding by tradition and are hostile to those who defy social norms. They respect and submit to authority and are preoccupied with power and toughness. Looking at the world through a lens of rigid categories, they are cynical about human nature, fearing, suspecting, and rejecting all groups other than those to which they belong. Prejudice is only one expression of their suspicious, mistrusting views (Jost & Sidanius, 2004).



Cognitive sources of prejudice also exist (Cornelis & Van Hiel, 2006). As we saw earlier, people are "cognitive misers" who try to simplify and organize their social thinking as much as possible. Oversimplification can lead to erroneous thinking, stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. For example, belief in a just world—where people get what they deserve and deserve what they get—oversimplifies one's view of the victims of prejudice as somehow "deserving" their plight. This may be why some people watching Sher Singh's arrest jumped to the conclusion that he was a terrorist who "deserved" to be arrested. **Watch** on **MyPsychLab**

Watch Acting White Is a Hurtful Accusation Among Black Students at www.mypsychlab.com

In addition, prejudice and discrimination may originate in people's attempts to conform. If we associate with people who express prejudices, we are more likely to go along with their ideas than to resist them. The pressures of social conformity help to explain why children quickly absorb the prejudices of their parents and playmates long before they have formed their own beliefs and opinions on the basis of experience. Peer pressure sometimes makes it "cool" or at least acceptable to harbor biased attitudes toward members of other social groups: Either you are one of "us," or you are one of "them." An *in-group* is any group of people who feels a sense of solidarity and exclusivity in relation to nonmembers. An *out-group*, in contrast, is a group of people who are outside this boundary and are viewed as competitors, enemies, or different and unworthy of respect. These terms can be applied to opposing sports teams, rival gangs, and political parties, or to entire nations, regions, religions, and ethnic or racial groups. According to the *in-group bias*, members see themselves not just as different, but also as superior to members of out-groups (K. Miller, Brewer, & Arbuckle, 2009). In extreme cases, members of an in-group may see members of an out-group as less than human and feel hatred that may lead to violence, civil war, and even genocide.

Signs like this were common in the South before the civil rights movement.

Racism is the belief that members of certain racial or ethnic groups are *innately* inferior. Racists believe that intelligence, industry, morality, and other valued traits are biologically determined and therefore cannot be changed. The most blatant forms of racism in the United States have declined during the past several decades, but racism still exists in subtle forms. For example, many Whites say that they approve of interracial marriage, but would be "uncomfortable" if someone in their family married an African American. Blacks and Whites in America also have different views on race-related policies such as school desegregation and affirmative action, with Blacks generally being more supportive of such policies (Julie Hughes, 2009). In one survey of 1,000 Americans shortly after hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, 66% of African Americans said that the government's response would have been faster if most victims had been

authoritarian personality A personality pattern characterized by rigid conventionality, exaggerated respect for authority, and hostility toward those who defy society's norms.

racism Prejudice and discrimination directed at a particular racial group.

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White; only 26% of White Americans agreed. Only 19% of African Americans, compared to 41% of White Americans, felt that the federal government's response was good or excellent. When asked about people who "took things from businesses and homes" during the flooding, 57% of African Americans said they were ordinary people trying to survive; only 38% of White Americans agreed. (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2005).

Strategies for Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination How can we use our knowledge of prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination to reduce prejudice and its expression? Three strategies appear promising: recategorization, controlled processing, and improving contact between groups. (See "Applying Psychology: Ethnic Conflict and Violence," page 468, for a discussion of how these strategies can be used to reduce ethnic conflict.)

- **Recategorization.** When we recategorize, we try to expand our schema of a particular group—such as viewing people from different races or genders as sharing similar qualities. These more inclusive schemata become superordinate categories. For instance, both Catholics and Protestants in the United States tend to view themselves as Christians, rather than as separate competing groups (as has occurred in Northern Ireland). If people can create such superordinate categories, they can often reduce stereotypes and prejudice (S. L. Gaertner & Dovidio, 2008).
- **Controlled Processing.** Some researchers believe that we all learn cultural stereotypes, so the primary difference between someone who is prejudiced and someone who is not is the ability to suppress prejudiced beliefs through controlled processing (Cunningham, Johnson, Raye, Gatenby, & Gore, 2004; Dion, 2003). We can train ourselves to be more "mindful" of people who differ from us. For example, to reduce children's prejudice toward people with disabilities, children could be shown slides of handicapped people and be asked to imagine how difficult it might be for such individuals to open a door or drive a car.
- **Improving group contact.** Finally, we can reduce prejudice and tensions between groups by bringing them together (Denson, 2008; McClelland & Linnander, 2006). This was one of the intentions of the famous 1954 U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* of Topeka, Kansas, which mandated that public schools become racially integrated. Intergroup contact alone is not enough, however (D. M. Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). It can work to undermine prejudicial attitudes if certain conditions are met:

  1. *Group members must have equal status.* When African Americans and Whites were first integrated in the army and in public housing, they had relatively equal status, so prejudice between them was greatly reduced (Wernet, Follman, Magueja, & Moore-Chambers, 2003). School desegregation has been less successful in part because the structure of our school system tends to reward the economic and academic advantages of White children, giving them an edge over many African American schoolchildren (Schofield, 1997).
  2. *People need to have one-on-one contact with members of the other group.* Simply putting students with differing racial and ethnic backgrounds together in a classroom does not change attitudes. Personal contact, like that which occurs among friends at lunch and after school, is more effective (S. C. Wright, Aron, & Brody, 2008).
  3. *Members of the two groups must cooperate rather than compete.* Perhaps because it provides personal contact as well as common ground and equal status, working together to achieve a goal helps to break down prejudice. (van Laar, Levin, & Sidanius, 2008; Wernet, Follman, Magueja, & Moore-Chambers, 2003).

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT . . .

Ethnic Conflict and Violence

1. Can you think of some examples of propaganda in this country that promote prejudice toward racial and ethnic groups? How can you distinguish "propaganda" from factual information?
2. Using the procedures described here to reduce ethnic hostility and violence, design a program to reduce ethnic conflict in a troubled inner-city high school. How could you tell whether your program was effective?

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4. *Social norms should encourage intergroup contact.* In many cases, school desegregation took place in a highly charged atmosphere. Busloads of African American children arrived at their new schools only to face the protests of angry White parents. These conditions did not promote genuine intergroup contact. In situations in which contact is encouraged by social norms, prejudiced attitudes are less likely.

In all of these suggestions, the primary focus is on changing behavior, not on changing attitudes directly. But changing behavior is often a first step toward changing attitudes. This is not to say that attitude change follows automatically. Attitudes can be difficult to budge because they are often so deeply rooted. Completely eliminating deeply held attitudes, then, can be very difficult. That is why social psychologists have concentrated so much effort on techniques that encourage attitude change. In the next section, we examine some of the major findings in the psychological research on attitude change.

One of the best antidotes to prejudice is contact among people of different racial groups. Working on class projects together, for example, can help children to overcome negative stereotypes about others.

Changing Attitudes

What factors encourage someone to change an attitude?

A man watching television on Sunday afternoon ignores scores of beer commercials, but listens to a friend who recommends a particular brand. A political speech convinces one woman to change her vote in favor of the candidate, but leaves her next-door neighbor determined to vote against him. Why would a personal recommendation have greater persuasive power than an expensively produced television commercial? How can two people with similar initial views derive completely different messages from the same speech? What makes one attempt to change attitudes fail and another succeed? Are some people more resistant to attitude change than others are?

The Process of Persuasion The first step in persuasion is to seize and retain the audience's attention (Albarracín, 2002). To be persuaded, you must first pay attention to the message; then you must comprehend it; finally, you must accept it as convincing (Perloff, 2003).

As competition has stiffened, advertisers have become increasingly creative in catching your attention (Lalwani, Lwin, & Ling, 2009). For example, ads that arouse emotions, especially feelings that make you want to act, can be memorable and thus persuasive (DeSteno & Braverman, 2002; Hansen & Christensen, 2007). Humor, too, is an effective way to keep you watching or reading an ad that you would otherwise ignore (Michael Conway & Dubé, 2002; Strick, van Baaren, Holland, & van Knippenberg, 2009). Other ads "hook" the audience by involving them in a narrative. A commercial might open with a dramatic scene or situation—for example, two people seemingly "meant" for each other but not yet making eye contact—and the viewer stays tuned to find out what happens. Some commercials even feature recurring characters and story lines so that each new commercial in the series is really the latest installment in a soap opera. Even annoying ads can still be effective in capturing attention, because people tend to notice them when they appear (Aaker & Bruzzone, 1985).

With so many clever strategies focused on seizing and holding your attention, how can you shield yourself from unwanted influences and resist persuasive appeals? Start by reminding yourself that these are deliberate attempts to influence you and to change your behavior. Research shows that to a great extent, "forewarned is forearmed" (Wood & Quinn, 2003). Another strategy for resisting persuasion is to analyze ads to identify which attention-getting strategies are at work. Make a game of deciphering the advertisers' "code" instead of falling for the ad's appeal. In addition, raise your standards for the kinds of messages that are worthy of your attention and commitment.

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APPLYING PSYCHOLOGY

Ethnic Conflict and Violence

Since the end of the Cold War, interethnic conflict has become the dominant form of war (Mays, Bullock, Rosenzweig, & Wessells, 1998; Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). Bosnia, Croatia, East Timor, Russia, Turkey, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Sri Lanka…the list of countries torn by ethnic conflict is long; and civilian deaths continue to increase by the thousands. Why does such conflict arise, and why is it so difficult to resolve?

Ethnic conflict has no single cause. In part, it "…is often rooted in histories of colonialism, ethnocentrism, racism, political oppression, human rights abuses, social injustice, poverty, and environmental degradation" (Mays et al., 1998, p. 737; Pederson, 2002; Toft, 2003). But these structural problems are only part of the story, determining primarily who fights whom. The rest of the story is found in psychological processes such as intense group loyalty, personal and social identity, shared memories, polarization and deep-rooted prejudice, and societal beliefs (Phinney, 2008; Tindale, Munier, Wasserman, & Smith, 2002). In other words, structural problems don't have the same effect when people are not prepared to hate and fear others. What are some of the psychological forces at work?

Conflict among different ethnic groups has led to many years of violence in Africa.

- *Propaganda* causes opponents to be painted in the most negative fashion possible, thus perpetuating racism, prejudice, and stereotypes. In Rwanda, for example, Tutsis (who were almost exterminated by the resulting violence with Hutus) for years were falsely accused in the mass media of having committed horrible crimes and of plotting the mass murder of Hutus (David Smith, 1998).
- When ethnic violence is protracted, *shared collective memories* become filled with instances of violence, hostility, and victimization. Prejudices are thus reinforced, and people increasingly come to view the conflict as inevitable and their differences as irreconcilable (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998).
- *Personal and social identity* can also contribute. Because group memberships contribute to self-image, if your group is maligned or threatened, then by extension you also are personally maligned and threatened. If you are unable to leave the group, you are pressured to defend it to enhance your own feelings of self-esteem (Cairns & Darby, 1998). In this way, what starts out as ethnic conflict quickly becomes a highly personal threat.
- Finally, widespread *societal beliefs* about the conflict and the parties to the conflict also play a role in prolonged ethnic conflicts. Four especially important societal beliefs are "Our goals are just," "The opponent has no legitimacy," "We can do no wrong," and "We are the victims" (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). These societal beliefs "provide a common social prism through which society members view the conflict.

Because conflict and violence stem partly from psychological processes, attempts to build peace cannot address only structural problems. Attempts to redistribute resources more equitably, to reduce oppression and victimization, and to increase social justice are essential, but they will succeed only if attention is also given to important psychological processes. Concerted efforts must be made to increase tolerance and improve intergroup relations while also developing new, nonviolent means for resolving conflicts (M. B. Brewer, 2008). The strategies of recategorization, controlled processing, and contact between groups have helped reduce ethnic conflict in some countries (David Smith, 1998). But cognitive changes must also be made: Societal beliefs must be changed, and new beliefs must be developed that are more consistent with conflict resolution and peaceful relationships. In addition, multidisciplinary techniques must be developed if programs are to be fully effective in addressing conflicts in different cultures. As one group of experts put it, "It is both risky and ethnocentric to assume that methods developed in Western contexts can be applied directly in different cultures and contexts. Research on different cultural beliefs and practices and their implications for ethnopolitical conflict analysis and prevention is essential if the field of psychology is going to be successful in its contributions" (Mays et al., 1998, p. 739).

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The Communication Model The second and third steps in persuasion—comprehending and then accepting the message—are influenced by both the message itself and the way in which it is presented. The *communication model* of persuasion spotlights four key elements to achieve these goals: the source, the message itself, the medium of communication, and characteristics of the audience. Persuaders manipulate each of these factors in the hopes of changing your attitudes.

The effectiveness of a persuasive message first depends on its *source*, the author or communicator who appeals to the audience to accept the message. Credibility makes a big difference, at least initially (Ito, 2002; Jain & Posavac, 2001). For example, we are less likely to change our attitude about the oil industry's antipollution efforts if the president of a major refining company tells us about them than if we hear the same information from an impartial commission appointed to study the situation. However, over a period of time, the message may nonetheless be influential. Apparently we are inclined to forget the source, while remembering the content. Not surprisingly, this is known as the *sleeper effect* (Kumkale & Albarracín, 2004; Nabi, Moyer-Gusé, & Byrne, 2007).

For an ad to affect our behavior, it must first attract our attention. This one also generates fear, which can sometimes be effective.
Source: © MADD. Used by permission.

The credibility of the source is also important (Ehigie & Shenge, 2000; Putrevu, 2005), especially when we are not inclined to pay attention to the message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986a). But in cases in which we have some interest in the message, the message itself plays the greater role in determining whether we change our attitudes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986b). Researchers have discovered that we frequently tune out messages that simply contradict our own point of view. The more effective you are at generating counterarguments, the less likely you are to be persuaded by opposing arguments (Jacks & Cameron, 2003). Thus, messages are generally more successful when they present both sides of an argument and when they present novel arguments, rather than when they rehash old standbys, heard many times before. A two-sided presentation generally makes the speaker seem less biased and thus enhances credibility. We have greater respect and trust for a communicator who acknowledges that there is another side to a controversial issue. Messages that create fear sometimes work well, too (Cochrane & Quester, 2005; Dillard & Anderson, 2004), for example in convincing people to stop smoking (Dahl, Frankenberger, & Manchanda, 2003; K. H. Smith & Stutts, 2003), or to drive safely (Shehryar & Hunt, 2005). However, research has shown that the persuasiveness of fearful ads is relatively short lived compared to the longer term influence of positive ads (Lewis, Watson, & White, 2008).

When it comes to choosing an effective *medium* of persuasion, written documentation is best suited to making people understand complex arguments, whereas videotapes or live presentations are more effective with an audience that already grasps the gist of an argument (Chaiken & Eagly, 1976). Most effective, however, are face-to-face appeals or the lessons of our own experience.

The most critical factors in changing attitudes—and the most difficult to control—have to do with the *audience*. Attitudes are most resistant to change if (1) the audience has a strong commitment to its present attitudes, (2) those attitudes are shared by others, and (3) the attitudes were instilled during early childhood by a pivotal group such as the family. The *discrepancy* between the content of the message and the present attitudes of the audience also affects how well the message will be received. Up to a point, the greater the difference between the two, the greater the likelihood of attitude change, as long as the person delivering the message is considered an expert on the topic. If the discrepancy is too great, however, the *audience* may reject the new information altogether, even though it comes from an expert.

Finally, certain personal characteristics make some people more susceptible to attitude change than others. People with low self-esteem are more easily influenced, especially when the message is complex and hard to understand. Highly intelligent people tend to resist persuasion because they can think of counterarguments more easily.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory One of the more fascinating approaches to understanding the process of attitude change is the theory of **cognitive dissonance**,

cognitive dissonance Perceived inconsistency between two cognitions.

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developed by Leon Festinger (J. Cooper, Mirabile, & Scher, 2005; Festinger, 1957; B. J. Friedman, 2000). Cognitive dissonance exists whenever a person has two contradictory cognitions, or beliefs, at the same time. "I am a considerate and loyal friend" is one cognition; "Yesterday I repeated some juicy gossip I heard about my friend Chris" is another cognition. These two cognitions are dissonant—each one implies the opposite of the other. According to Festinger, cognitive dissonance creates unpleasant psychological tension, which motivates us to try to resolve the dissonance in some way.

Sometimes changing one's attitude is the easiest way to reduce the discomfort of dissonance. I cannot easily change the fact that I have repeated gossip about a friend; therefore, it is easier to change my attitude toward my friend. If I conclude that Chris is not really a friend but simply an acquaintance, then my new attitude now fits my behavior—spreading gossip about someone who is *not* a friend does not contradict the fact that I am loyal and considerate to those who *are* my friends. Similarly, one way to reduce the discomfort or guilt associated with cheating in school is to show support for other students who engage in academic dishonesty (Storch & Storch, 2003).

Discrepant behavior that contradicts an attitude does not necessarily bring about attitude change, however, because there are other ways a person can reduce cognitive dissonance. One alternative is to *increase the number of consonant elements*—that is, the thoughts that are consistent with one another. For example, I might recall the many times I defended Chris when others were critical of him. Now my repeating a little bit of gossip seems less at odds with my attitude toward Chris as a friend. Another option is to reduce the importance of one or both dissonant cognitions. For instance, I could tell myself, "The person I repeated the gossip to was Terry, who doesn't really know Chris very well. Terry doesn't care and won't repeat it. It was no big deal, and Chris shouldn't be upset about it." By reducing the significance of my disloyal action, I reduce the dissonance that I experience and so make it less necessary to change my attitude toward Chris.

But why would someone engage in behavior that goes against an attitude in the first place? One answer is that cognitive dissonance is a natural part of everyday life. Simply choosing between two or more desirable alternatives leads inevitably to dissonance. Suppose you are in the market for a computer, but can't decide between a Dell™ and a Macintosh. If you choose one, all of its bad features and all the good aspects of the other contribute to dissonance. After you have bought one of the computers, you can reduce the dissonance by changing your attitude: You might decide that the other keyboard wasn't "quite right" and that some of the "bad" features of the computer you bought aren't so bad after all.

You may also engage in behavior at odds with an attitude because you are enticed to do so. Perhaps someone offers you a small bribe or reward: "I will pay you 25 cents just to try my product." Curiously, the larger the reward, the smaller the change in attitude that is likely to result (J. W. Brehm, 2007). When rewards are large, dissonance is at a minimum, and attitude change is small, if it happens at all. Apparently, when people are convinced that there is a good reason to do something that goes against their beliefs ("I'll try almost anything in exchange for a large cash incentive"), they experience little dissonance, and their attitudes are not likely to shift, even though their behavior may change for a time. If the reward is small, however—just barely enough to induce behavior that conflicts with one's attitude—dissonance will be great, maximizing the chances of attitude change: "I only got 25 cents to try this product, so it couldn't have been the money that attracted me. I must really like this product after all." The trick is to induce the behavior that goes against an attitude, while leaving people

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT . . .

Attitudes Toward Smoking

Most adolescents and young adults are well aware of the dangers of smoking cigarettes. Nonetheless a significant number of those same people smoke regularly. Based on what you have read concerning attitude change, how would you go about changing people's attitudes toward smoking? For each technique you would use, explain why you think it would be effective. How would you demonstrate whether your program was having the desired effect?

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feeling personally responsible for the dissonant act. In that way, they are more likely to change their attitudes than if they feel they were blatantly induced to act in a way that contradicted their beliefs.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. A(n) _____ is a fairly stable organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies directed toward some object, such as a person or group.
2. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)?
   a. ___ The best way to predict behavior is to measure attitudes.
   b. ___ Prejudice is the act of treating someone unfairly.
   c. ___ Messages are more persuasive when they present both sides of an argument.
   d. ___ A person who has two contradictory beliefs at the same time is experiencing cognitive dissonance.
3. The message that most likely will result in a change in attitude is one with
   a. high fear from a highly credible source.
   b. high fear from a moderately credible source.
   c. moderate fear from a highly credible source.
   d. moderate fear from a moderately credible source.

Answers: 1. attitude. 2. a. (F); b. (F); c. (T); d. (T). 3. c.

APPLY YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. You are asked to advise an elementary school on ways to reduce prejudice in an integrated third grade classroom. On the basis of what you have read, which of the following is most likely to be effective?
   a. Seating Black and White children alternately around the drawing table.
   b. Talking to the group regularly about the unfairness of prejudice and discrimination.
   c. Holding frequent competitions to see whether the Black students or the White students perform classroom work better.
   d. Assigning pairs consisting of one Black student and one White student to do interdependent parts of homework assignments.
2. Two people listen to a discussion on why our government should increase defense spending. John has never really thought much about the issue, while Jane has participated in marches and demonstrations against increased defense spending. Which person is LESS likely to change their attitude about defense spending?
   a. Jane
   b. John
   c. Both are equally likely to change their attitudes.

Answers: 1. d. 2. a.

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SOCIAL INFLUENCE

What are some areas in which the power of social influence is highly apparent?

social influence The process by which others individually or collectively affect one's perceptions, attitudes, and actions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Explain what is meant by the statement that "culture is a major form of social influence." In your explanation, include cultural truisms and norms.**
- **Compare and contrast conformity, compliance, and obedience. Describe the factors that influence conforming behavior. Distinguish between the foot-in-the-door technique, lowball procedure, and the door-in-the-face effect as ways to get compliance. Describe the factors that influence obedience.**

In social psychology, **social influence** refers to the process by which others—individually or collectively—affect our perceptions, attitudes, and actions (Nowak, Vallacher, & Miller, 2003). In the previous section, we examined one form of social influence: attitude change. Next, we'll focus on how the presence or actions of others can control behavior without regard to underlying attitudes.

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Cultural Influences

How does your culture influence how you dress or what you eat?

Culture exerts an enormous influence on our attitudes and behavior, and culture is itself a creation of people. As such, culture is a major form of social influence. Consider for a moment the many aspects of day-to-day living that are derived from culture:

1. **Culture dictates how you dress.** A Saudi woman covers her face before venturing outside her home; a North American woman freely displays her face, arms, and legs; and women in some other societies roam completely naked.
2. **Culture specifies what you eat—and what you do not eat.** Americans do not eat dog meat, the Chinese eat no cheese, and the Hindus refuse to eat beef. Culture further guides *how* you eat: with a fork, chopsticks, or your bare hands.
3. **People from different cultures seek different amounts of personal space.** Latin Americans, French people, and Arabs get closer to one another in most face-to-face interactions than do Americans, British, or Swedes.

To some extent, culture influences us through formal instruction. For example, your parents might have reminded you from time to time that certain actions are considered "normal" or the "right way" to behave. But more often, we learn cultural lessons through modeling and imitation. One result of such learning is the unquestioning acceptance of **cultural truisms**—beliefs or values that most members of a society accept as self-evident (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005; Maio & Olson, 1998). We are rewarded (reinforced) for doing as our companions and fellow citizens do in most situations—for going along with the crowd. This social learning process is one of the chief mechanisms by which a culture transmits its central lessons and values.

In the course of comparing and adapting our own behavior to that of others, we learn the norms of our culture. A **norm** is a culturally shared idea or expectation about how to behave. As in the preceding examples, norms are often steeped in tradition and strengthened by habit. Cultures seem strange to us if their norms are very different from our own. It is tempting to conclude that *different* means "wrong," simply because unfamiliar patterns of behavior can make us feel uncomfortable. To transcend our differences and get along better with people from other cultures, we must find ways to overcome such discomfort.

One technique for understanding other cultures is the *cultural assimilator*, a strategy for perceiving the norms and values of another group (Kempt, 2000). This technique teaches by example, asking students to explain why a member of another culture has behaved in a particular way. For example, why do the members of a Japanese grade school class silently follow their teacher single file through a park on a lovely spring day? Are they afraid of being punished for disorderly conduct if they do otherwise? Are they naturally placid and compliant? Once you understand that Japanese children are raised to value the needs and feelings of others over their own selfish concerns, their orderly, obedient behavior seems much less perplexing. Cultural assimilators encourage us to remain open-minded about others' norms and values by challenging such cultural truisms as "Our way is the right way."

Why do Japanese schoolchildren behave in such an orderly way? How does your answer compare with the discussion of cultural influences?

Conformity

What increases the likelihood that someone will conform?

Accepting cultural norms should not be confused with conformity. For instance, millions of Americans drink coffee in the morning, but not because they are conforming. They drink coffee because they like and desire it. **Conformity**, in contrast, implies a conflict between an individual and a group that is resolved when individual preferences or beliefs yield to the norms or expectations of the larger group.

Since the early 1950s, when Solomon Asch conducted the first systematic study of the subject, conformity has been a major topic of research in social psychology. Asch

cultural truisms Beliefs that most members of a society accept as self-evidently true.

norm A shared idea or expectation about how to behave.

conformity Voluntarily yielding to social norms, even at the expense of one's preferences.

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demonstrated in a series of experiments that under some circumstances, people will conform to group pressures even if this action forces them to deny obvious physical evidence. He asked people to view cards with several lines of differing lengths, then asked them to choose the card with the line most similar to the line on a comparison card. (See **Figure 14–1**.) The lines were deliberately drawn so that the comparison was obvious and the correct choice was clear. All but one of the participants were confederates of the experimenter. On certain trials, these confederates deliberately gave the same wrong answer. This procedure put the lone dissenter on the spot: Should he conform to what he knew to be a wrong decision and agree with the group, thereby denying the evidence of his own eyes, or should he disagree with the group, thereby risking the social consequences of nonconformity?

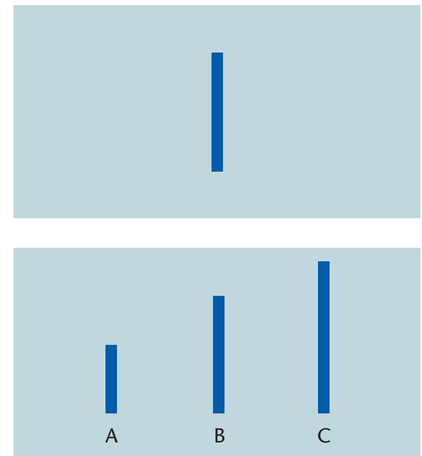

Figure 14–1
Asch's experiment on conformity
In Asch's experiment on conformity, participants were shown a comparison card like the top one and asked to indicate which of the three lines on the bottom card was the most similar. Participants frequently chose the wrong line in order to conform to the group choice.

Overall, participants conformed on about 35% of the trials. There were large individual differences, however; and in subsequent research, experimenters discovered that two sets of factors influence the likelihood that a person will conform: characteristics of the situation and characteristics of the person.

The *size* of the group is one situational factor that has been studied extensively (R. Bond, 2005). Asch (1951) found that the likelihood of conformity increased with group size until four confederates were present. After that point, the number of others made no difference to the frequency of conformity.

Another important situational factor is the degree of *unanimity* in the group. If just one confederate broke the perfect agreement of the majority by giving the correct answer, conformity among participants in the Asch experiments fell from an average of 35% to about 25% (Asch, 1956). Apparently, having just one "ally" eases the pressure to conform. The ally does not even have to share the person's viewpoint—just breaking the unanimity of the majority is enough to reduce conformity (Walther et al., 2002).

The *nature of the task* is still another situational variable that affects conformity. For instance, conformity has been shown to vary with the difficulty and ambiguity of a task. When the task is difficult or poorly defined, conformity tends to be higher (Blake, Helson, & Mouton, 1956). In an ambiguous situation, people are less sure of their own opinion and more willing to conform to the majority view.

Personal characteristics also influence conforming behavior (Griskevicius, Goldstein, Mortensen, Cialdini, & Kenrick, 2006). The more a person is attracted to the group, expects to interact with its members in the future, holds a position of relatively low status, and does not feel completely accepted by the group, the more that person tends to conform. The fear of rejection apparently motivates conformity when a person scores high on one or more of these factors.

ENDURING ISSUES

Individuality–Universality Social Influence Across Cultures

In collectivist cultures, community and harmony are very important. Thus, you might suspect that members of collectivist cultures would conform more frequently to the will of a group than would members of noncollectivist cultures. In fact, psychologists have found that levels of conformity in collectivist cultures are frequently higher than those found by Asch (H. Jung, 2006). In collectivist societies as diverse as Fiji, Zaire, Hong Kong, Lebanon, Zimbabwe, Kuwait, Japan, and Brazil, conformity on tasks similar to those used by Asch ranged from 25% to 51% (P. B. Smith & Bond, 1994).

The fact that conformity in the Asch situation is relatively high across a variety of cultures suggests that there may be some kind of universal "conformity norm" that is strengthened or weakened by a specific cultural context. Further research is needed before we will know the answers to the questions, "What is universal about social influence?" and "What is culturally determined?" ■

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Compliance

How could a salesperson increase a customer's compliance in buying a product?

Conformity is a response to pressure exerted by norms that are generally left unstated. In contrast, **compliance** is a change of behavior in response to an explicitly stated request. One technique for inducing compliance is the so-called *foot-in-the-door effect* (Matthiesen & Richter, 2007; Rodafinos, Vucevic, & Sideridis, 2005). Every salesperson knows that the moment a prospect allows the sales pitch to begin, the chances of making a sale improve greatly. The same effect operates in other areas of life: Once people have granted a small request, they are more likely to comply with a larger one.

In the most famous study of this phenomenon, Freedman and Fraser (1966) approached certain residents of Palo Alto, California, posing as members of a committee for safe driving. They asked residents to place a large, ugly sign reading "Drive Carefully" in their front yards. Only 17% agreed to do so. Then other residents were asked to sign a petition calling for more safe-driving laws. When these same people were later asked to place the ugly "Drive Carefully" sign in their yards, an amazing 55% agreed. Compliance with the first small request more than tripled the rate of compliance with the larger request.

Why does the foot-in-the-door technique work so well? One possible explanation is that agreeing to the token act (signing the petition) realigns the person's self-perception with that of someone who more strongly favors the cause. When presented with the larger request, the person then feels obligated to comply (Cialdini & Trost, 1998).

Another strategy commonly used by salespeople is the *lowball procedure* (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Guéguen, Pascual, & Dagot, 2002). The first step is to induce a person to agree to do something for a comparatively low cost. The second step is to raise the cost of compliance. Among car dealers, lowballing works like this: The dealer persuades the customer to buy a car by reducing the price well below that offered by competitors. Once the customer has agreed to buy the car, the terms of the sale shift so that, in the end, the car is more costly than it would be at other dealerships. Although the original inducement was the low price (the "lowball" that the salesperson originally pitched), once committed, buyers tend to remain committed to the now pricier car.

Under certain circumstances, a person who has refused to comply with one request may be more likely to comply with a second. This phenomenon has been dubbed the *door-in-the-face effect* (Ebster & Neumayr, 2008; Rodafinos, Vucevic, & Sideridis, 2005). In one study, researchers approached students and asked them to make an unreasonably large commitment: Would they counsel delinquent youths at a detention center for 2 years? Nearly everyone declined, thus effectively "slamming the door" in the researcher's face. But when later asked to make a much smaller commitment—supervising children during a trip to the zoo—many of the same students quickly agreed. The door-in-the-face effect appears to work because people interpret the smaller request as a concession and feel pressured to comply.

Obedience

How does the "power of the situation" affect obedience?

Compliance is agreement to change behavior in response to a request. **Obedience** is compliance with a direct order, generally from a person in authority, such as a police officer, principal, or parent. Several of the studies by Stanley Milgram mentioned in Chapter 1, "The Science of Psychology," showed how far some people will go to obey someone in authority (Blass, 2009; Milgram, 1963; Zimbardo, 2007).

What factors influence the degree to which people will do what they are told? Studies in which people were asked to put a dime in a parking meter by people wearing uniforms show that one important factor is the amount of power vested in the person giving the orders. People obeyed a guard whose uniform looked like that of a police officer more often than they obeyed a man dressed either as a milkman or as a civilian. Another factor

compliance Change of behavior in response to an explicit request from another person or group.

obedience Change of behavior in response to a command from another person, typically an authority figure.

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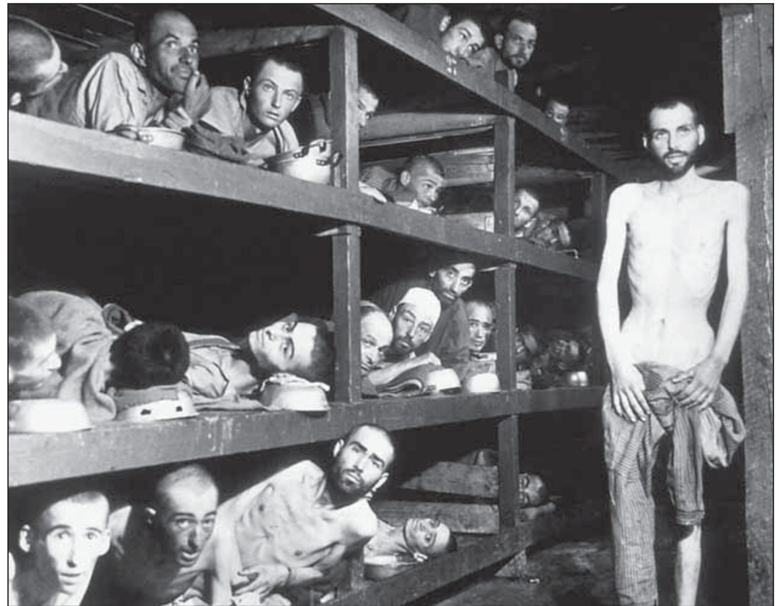
is surveillance. If we are ordered to do something and then left alone, we are less likely to obey than if we are being watched, especially if the act seems unethical to us. Milgram, for instance, found that his "teachers" were less willing to give severe shocks when the experimenter was out of the room.

Milgram's experiments revealed other factors that influence a person's willingness to follow orders. When the victim was in the same room as the "teacher," obedience dropped sharply. When another "teacher" was present, who refused to give shocks, obedience also dropped. But when responsibility for an act was shared, so that the person was only one of many doing it, the degree of obedience was much greater.

Why do people willingly obey an authority figure, even if doing so means violating their own principles? Milgram (1974) suggested that people come to see themselves as the agents of *another* person's wishes and therefore as not responsible for the obedient actions or their consequences. Once this shift in self-perception has occurred, obedience follows, because in their own minds, they have relinquished control of their actions. For example, you may recall that in the aftermath of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, the enlisted personnel who were photographed abusing prisoners insisted that they did so only on orders from higher authorities.

On a brighter note, some recent studies indicate that the high levels of obedience reported in Milgram's original experiment have declined in recent years. In fact, among males, disobedience has more than doubled since Milgram's original article was published in 1963 (Twenge, 2009). The reasons for this decline, and whether it will continue, remain to be determined.



Nazi concentration camps are a shocking example of the extremes to which people will go to obey orders. How do you explain the behaviors of the people who ran these camps?

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. A _________ is a shared idea or expectation about how to behave.
2. Many people are more likely to comply with a smaller request after they have refused a larger one. This is called the ___________ effect.
3. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)?
   a. ___ Research shows that compliance is often higher in collectivist cultures than in noncollectivist ones.
   b. ___ Many people are willing to obey an authority figure, even if doing so means violating their own principles.
   c. ___ Solomon Asch found that people were much more likely to conform in groups of four or more people.
   d. ___ A person is more likely to conform to the group when the group's task is ambiguous or difficult than when it is easy and clear.

Answers: 1. norm. 2. door-in-the-face. 3. a. (T), b. (T), c. (F), d. (T).

APPLY YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. You answer the telephone and hear the caller say, "Good morning. My name is _________ and I'm calling on behalf of XYZ. How are you today?" Right away you know this caller is using which of the following social influence techniques?
   a. the lowball technique
   b. the assimilator technique
   c. the foot-in-the-door technique
   d. the door-in-the-face technique

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2. You would like to say something in class. You raise your hand and wait to be recognized, even though the teacher has not told you to do so. This is an example of
   a. compliance.
   b. conformity.
   c. obedience.

Answers: 1. c. 2. b.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Explain how deindividuation and the snowball effect can contribute to mob behavior.**
- **Explain the role of the following factors in influencing helping behavior: altruism, the bystander effect, the ambiguity of the situation, and the personal characteristics of bystanders.**
- **Describe the process of polarization in group discussion. Identify the factors that affect whether a group is likely to be more or less effective than individuals acting alone.**
- **Compare and contrast the following theories of leadership: the great-person theory, the right-place-at-the-right-time theory, and contingency theory.**
- **Briefly summarize cultural and gender differences in leadership.**

SOCIAL ACTION

Do we behave differently when other people are present?

The various kinds of social influence we have just discussed may take place even when no one else is physically present. We refrain from playing music at full volume when our neighbors are sleeping, comply with jury notices received in the mail, and obey traffic signals even when no one is on the road to enforce them. We now turn to processes that *do* depend on the presence of others. Specifically, we examine processes that occur when people interact one-on-one and in groups. One of these social actions is called *deindividuation*.

Deindividuation

What negative outcomes can result from deindividuation?

We have seen several cases of social influence in which people act differently in the presence of others from the way they would if they were alone. The most striking and frightening instance of this phenomenon is *mob behavior*. Some well-known violent examples of mob behavior are the beatings and lynchings of African Americans, the looting that sometimes accompanies urban rioting, and the wanton destruction of property that mars otherwise peaceful protests and demonstrations. One reason for mob behavior is that people can lose their personal sense of responsibility in a group, especially in a group subjected to intense pressures and anxiety. This process is called **deindividuation**, because people respond not as individuals, but as anonymous parts of a larger group. In general, the more anonymous that people feel in a group, the less responsible that they feel as individuals (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005; Zimbardo, 2007). But deindividuation only partly explains mob behavior. Another contributing factor is that, in a group, one dominant and persuasive person can convince people to act through a *snowball effect*: If the persuader convinces just a few people, those few will convince others, who will convince still others, and the group becomes an unthinking mob. Returning to the chapter opening vignette, if Sher Singh had not been in police custody, it is possible that the bystanders who shouted “Let’s kill him!” could have had their way.

Helping Behavior

What factors make us more inclined to help a person in need?

Research on deindividuation seems to support the unfortunate—and inaccurate—notion that when people get together, they are likely to become more destructive and irresponsible than they would be individually. But instances of cooperation and mutual assistance are just as abundant as examples of human conflict and hostility. We need only to recall the behavior of people all over the United States in the aftermath of the

deindividuation A loss of personal sense of responsibility in a group.

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September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon to find hundreds of examples of people working together and helping each other (Ballie, 2001).

What are some of the social forces that can promote helping behavior? One is perceived self-interest. We may offer our boss a ride home from the office because we know that our next promotion depends on how much she likes us. We may volunteer to feed a neighbor's cat while he is away because we want him to do the same for us. But when helpful actions are not linked to such personal gain, they are considered **altruistic behavior** (Greg Miller, 2009). A person who acts in an altruistic way does not expect any recognition or reward in return, except perhaps the good feeling that comes from helping someone in need. For example, many altruistic acts are directed toward strangers in the form of anonymous charitable donations, as is often demonstrated in the aftermath of a natural disaster. Interestingly, altruism probably played an important role in the early evolution of humans (Boehm, 2008). Moreover, altruism is not unique to humans since it is frequently observed in other primates (de Waal, 2007).

After natural disasters like hurricane Katrina, which swept New Orleans in 2005, strangers often reach out to help each other with physical and financial support.

altruistic behavior Helping behavior that is not linked to personal gain.

bystander effect The tendency for an individual's helpfulness in an emergency to decrease as the number of passive bystanders increases.

Under what conditions is helping behavior most likely to occur? Like other things that social psychologists study, helping is influenced by two sets of factors: those in the situation and those in the individual.

The most important situational variable is the *presence of other people*. In a phenomenon called the **bystander effect**, the likelihood that a person will help someone else in trouble *decreases* as the number of bystanders present increases (Chekroun & Brauer, 2002; A. M. Rosenthal, 2008). In one experiment, people filling out a questionnaire heard a taped "emergency" in the next room, complete with a crash and screams. Of those who were alone, 70% offered help to the unseen victim, but of those who waited with a companion—a stranger who did nothing to help—only 7% offered help (Latané & Rodin, 1969).

Another key aspect of the situation is its *ambiguity*. Any factors that make it harder for others to recognize a genuine emergency reduce the probability of altruistic actions (R. D. Clark & Word, 1974; Jex, Adams, & Bachrach, 2003). The *personal characteristics* of bystanders also affect helping behavior. Not all bystanders are equally likely to help a stranger. Increasing the amount of personal responsibility that one person feels for another boosts the likelihood that help will be extended (Moriarty, 1975; Ting & Piliavin, 2000). The amount of *empathy* that we feel toward another person also affects our willingness to help (Batson, 2006; Batson, Ahmad, Lishner, & Tsang, 2002). *Mood* also makes a difference: A person in a good mood is more likely to help another in need than is someone who is in a neutral or bad mood (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2005; Salovey, Mayer, & Rosenhan, 1991). In addition, helping behavior is more likely to come from people who are not shy or fear negative evaluation for helping (Karakashian, Walter, Christopher, & Lucas, 2006). Finally, when others are watching, people who score high on the

THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT . . .

Helping Someone in Distress

On August 18, 1999, 24-year-old Kevin Heisinger was on his way home to Illinois from the University of Michigan. In the bathroom of a bus station, he was attacked and beaten to death. Several people were within earshot and heard his cries for help, but none of them helped him or called the police. One person saw him lying on the floor in a pool of blood, but he did nothing. Another person saw him struggling to breathe, but he also walked away. Eventually, a 12-year-old boy called for help. The police arrived in less than 20 seconds, but it was too late to save Kevin's life.

- What factors might have contributed to the unwillingness of people to help Kevin during and after the beating?
- One commentator writing for *The Detroit News* said, "Have our souls been this coarsened, this deadened, by the daily barrage of real and imaginary violence? Or have some of us become like a couple of the contestants on that summer television hit, *Survivor,* so consumed with winning our own pot of gold that we really don't care how we treat others?" (DeRamus, 2000). To what extent do you think the failure of bystanders to help was due to personal characteristics?
- Do your answers to the questions above shed light on the question of why a 12-year-old was the only person to call for help?

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need for approval are more likely to help than are low scorers (Jonas, Schimel, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2002; Satow, 1975).

Groups and Decision Making

How is making a decision in a group different from making a decision on your own?

There is a tendency in American society to turn important decisions over to groups. In the business world, key decisions are often made around a conference table rather than behind one person's desk. In politics, major policy decisions are seldom vested in just one person. In the courts, a defendant may request a trial by jury, and for some serious crimes, jury trial is required by law. The nine-member U.S. Supreme Court renders group decisions on legal issues affecting the entire nation.

Many people trust these group decisions more than decisions made by individuals. Yet, the dynamics of social interaction within groups sometimes conspire to make group decisions *less* sound than those made by someone acting alone. Social psychologists are intrigued by how this outcome happens.

Polarization in Group Decision Making People often assume that an individual acting alone is more likely to take risks than a group considering the same issue. This assumption remained unchallenged until the early 1960s. At that time, James Stoner (1961) designed an experiment to test the idea. He asked participants individually to counsel imaginary people who had to choose between a risky, but potentially rewarding course of action and a conservative, but less rewarding alternative. Next, the participants met in small groups to discuss each decision until they reached unanimous agreement. Surprisingly, the groups consistently recommended a riskier course of action than the people working alone did. This phenomenon is known as the **risky shift**.

Groups can make decisions and perform tasks very effectively under the right conditions.

The risky shift is simply one aspect of a more general group phenomenon called **polarization**—the tendency for people to become more extreme in their attitudes as a result of group discussion. Polarization begins when group members discover during discussion that they share views to a greater degree than they realized. Then, in an effort to be seen in a positive light by the others, at least some group members become strong advocates for what is potentially the dominant sentiment in the group. Arguments leaning toward one extreme or the other not only reassure people that their initial attitudes are correct, but they also intensify those attitudes so that the group as a whole becomes more extreme in its position (J. H. Liu & Latane, 1998). So, if you want a group decision to be made in a cautious, conservative direction, you should be certain that the members of the group hold cautious and conservative views in the first place. Otherwise, the group decision may polarize in the opposite direction (Jerry Palmer & Loveland, 2008).

The Effectiveness of Groups "Two heads are better than one" reflects the common assumption that members of a group will pool their abilities and arrive at a better decision than will individuals working alone. In fact, groups are more effective than individuals only under certain circumstances (M. E. Turner, 2001). For one thing, their success depends on the task they face. If the requirements of the task match the skills of the group members, the group is likely to be more effective than any single individual. However, even if task and personnel are perfectly matched, the ways in which group members *interact* may reduce the group's efficiency. For example, high-status individuals tend to exert more influence in groups, so if they do not possess the best problem-solving skills, group decisions may suffer (Lovaglia, Mannix, Samuelson, Sell, & Wilson, 2005). Another factor affecting group interaction and effectiveness is group size. The larger the group, the more likely it is to include someone who has the skills needed to solve a difficult problem. On the other hand, it is much harder to coordinate the activities of a large

risky shift Greater willingness of a group than an individual to take substantial risks.

polarization Shift in attitudes by members of a group toward more extreme positions than the ones held before group discussion.

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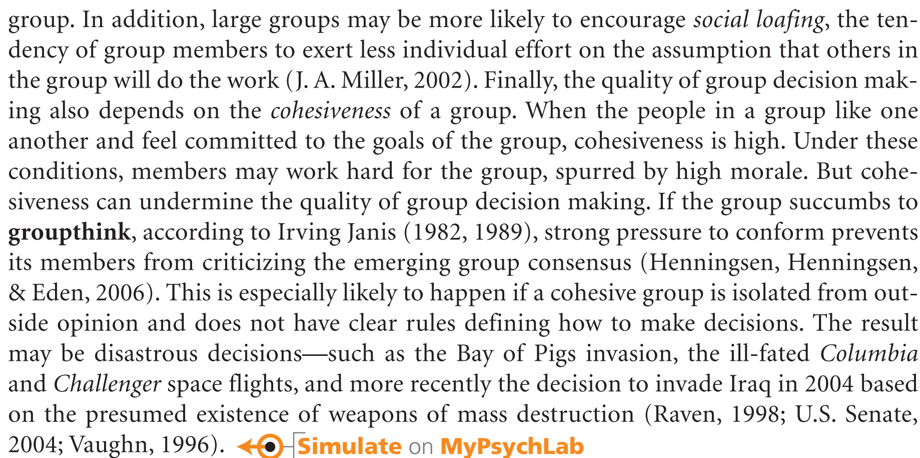

group. In addition, large groups may be more likely to encourage *social loafing*, the tendency of group members to exert less individual effort on the assumption that others in the group will do the work (J. A. Miller, 2002). Finally, the quality of group decision making also depends on the *cohesiveness* of a group. When the people in a group like one another and feel committed to the goals of the group, cohesiveness is high. Under these conditions, members may work hard for the group, spurred by high morale. But cohesiveness can undermine the quality of group decision making. If the group succumbs to **groupthink**, according to Irving Janis (1982, 1989), strong pressure to conform prevents its members from criticizing the emerging group consensus (Henningsen, Henningsen, & Eden, 2006). This is especially likely to happen if a cohesive group is isolated from outside opinion and does not have clear rules defining how to make decisions. The result may be disastrous decisions—such as the Bay of Pigs invasion, the ill-fated *Columbia* and *Challenger* space flights, and more recently the decision to invade Iraq in 2004 based on the presumed existence of weapons of mass destruction (Raven, 1998; U.S. Senate, 2004; Vaughn, 1996). Simulate on MyPsychLab

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Leadership

What makes a great leader?

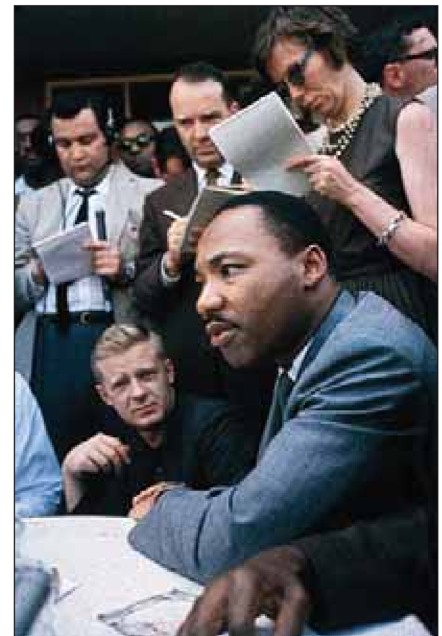
Leaders are important to the effectiveness of a group or organization (Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008). But what makes a good leader? For many years, the predominant answer was the **great-person theory**, which states that leaders are extraordinary people who assume positions of influence and then shape events around them. In this view, people like George Washington, Winston Churchill, and Nelson Mandela were "born leaders"—who would have led any nation at any time in history.

Most historians and psychologists now regard this theory as naive, because it ignores social and economic factors. An alternative theory holds that leadership emerges when the right person is in the right place at the right time. For instance, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., rose to lead the civil rights movement. Dr. King was clearly a "great person"—intelligent, dynamic, eloquent, and highly motivated. Yet, had the times not been right (for instance, had he lived 30 years earlier), it is doubtful that he would have been as successful as he was.

Many social scientists have argued that there is more to leadership than either the great-person theory or the right-place-at-the-right-time theory implies. Rather, the leader's traits, certain aspects of the situation in which the group finds itself, and the response of the group and the leader to each other are all important considerations (Brodbeck, 2008). Fred Fiedler's *contingency theory* of leader effectiveness is based on such a transactional view of leadership (F. E. Fiedler, 1993, 2002).

According to Fiedler's theory, personal characteristics are important to the success of a leader. One kind of leader is *task oriented*, concerned with doing the task well—even at the expense of worsening relationships among group members. Other leaders are *relationship oriented*, concerned with maintaining group cohesiveness and harmony. Which style is most effective depends on three sets of situational factors. One is the nature of the task (whether it is clearly structured or ambiguous). The second consideration is the relationship between leader and group (whether the leader has good or bad personal relations with the group members). The third consideration is the leader's ability to exercise great or little power over the group.

The contingency view of leadership, which has received a great deal of support from research conducted in the laboratory as well as in real-life settings, clearly indicates that there is no such thing as an ideal leader for all situations (Ayman, Chemers, & Fiedler, 2007; DeYoung, 2005; Graen & Hui, 2001). "Except perhaps for the unusual case," Fiedler states, "it is simply not meaningful to speak of an effective or of an ineffective leader; we can only speak of a leader who tends to be effective in one situation and ineffective in another" (F. E. Fiedler, 1967, p. 261). We discuss contingency theories of leadership in greater detail in Appendix B, "Psychology Applied to Work."



One theory of leadership holds that the particularly effective leader is the right person in the right place at the right time. For the American civil rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr., was such a leader.

groupthink A process that occurs when the members of a group like one another, have similar goals and are isolated, leading them to ignore alternatives and not criticize group consensus.

great-person theory The theory that leadership is a result of personal qualities and traits that qualify one to lead others.

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Recently Robert J. Sternberg has proposed a systems approach to understanding leadership (Sternberg, 2008; Sternberg, Jarvin, & Grigorenko, 2009). Known as WICS, Sternberg's theory of effective leadership stresses certain essential traits necessary for effective leadership: *wisdom, intelligence,* and *creativity,* synthesized. According to Sternberg, creativity is necessary to devise new ideas, intelligence to evaluate and implement ideas, and wisdom to balance the interests of everyone involved (Sternberg, 2007). Sternberg stresses that efforts to train new leaders should focus on ways to produce individuals who embody these traits and learn effective ways to synthesize them. Though promising, WICS is a relatively new approach to understanding leadership, which has not yet been fully exposed to the scrutiny of empirical research. Only future research will enable psychologists to evaluate the usefulness of this new theory of leadership.

Leadership Across Cultures An emphasis on the importance of individual leaders seems to apply well to most informal and work groups in the United States. Yet, it is not the only approach to leadership. In a collectivist culture that values cooperation and interdependence among group members, although one member may be named "the manager," it is less likely that individuals will have clearly defined roles as "this type of leader" or "that type of leader." All members see themselves as working together to accomplish the group's goals.

Interestingly, leadership in American businesses has begun to shift toward a management style that has proven successful in Japan and other Eastern collectivist cultures (Dean & Evans, 1994; McFarland, Senn, & Childress, 1993; Muczyk & Holt, 2008). This approach emphasizes decision-making input from all group members, small work teams that promote close cooperation, and a leadership style in which managers receive much the same treatment as any other employee. In the West, it is not uncommon for executives to have their own parking spaces, dining facilities, and fitness and social clubs, as well as separate offices and independent schedules. Most Japanese executives consider this privileged style of management very strange. In many Eastern cultures, managers and executives share the same facilities as their workers, hunt for parking spaces like everyone else, and eat and work side by side with their employees. It is interesting that the Japanese model has effectively combined the two leadership approaches—task oriented and relationship oriented—into a single overall style. By being a part of the group, the leader can simultaneously work toward and direct the group's goals, while also contributing to the group's morale and social climate.

Women in Leadership Positions Just as leadership styles differ across cultures, research has shown that the leadership styles of men and women can also vary considerably. In one 5-year study of 2,482 managers in more than 400 organizations, female and male coworkers said that women make better managers than men (Kass, 1999). The reason seems to be that many female managers have effectively combined such traditionally "masculine" task-oriented traits as decisiveness, planning, and setting standards with such "feminine" relationship-oriented assets as communication, feedback, and empowering other employees; most male managers have not been as successful at combining those two styles (Chin, 2008; Eagly, 2003). For example, one review concluded that, in contrast to the directive and task-oriented leadership style common among men, women tend to have a more democratic, collaborative, and interpersonally oriented style of managing employees (V. E. O'Leary & Flanagan, 2001). Moreover, a woman's more collaborate style of leadership is often able to overcome any preconceived resistance to their leadership (Lips, 2002).

Another large-scale review of 45 studies of gender and leadership found women's leadership styles are generally more effective than traditional male leadership styles (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van-Engen, 2003). This review found that female leaders are generally more effective than male leaders at winning acceptance for their ideas and instilling self-confidence in their employees (Lips, 2002). Results like these have prompted some experts to call for specialized women-only leadership training programs, to assist women in developing their full feminine leadership potential independent of male influence (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003).

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KEY TERMS

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CHAPTER REVIEW

SOCIAL COGNITION

What do forming impressions, explaining others' behavior, and experiencing interpersonal attraction have in common? Forming impressions, explaining others' behavior, and experiencing interpersonal attraction are all examples of **social cognition**, the process of taking in and assessing information about other people. It is one way in which we are influenced by others' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

How do we form first impressions of people? When forming impressions of others, we rely on *schemata,* or sets of expectations and beliefs about categories of people. Impressions are also affected by the order in which information is acquired. First impressions are the strongest (the **primacy effect**), probably because we prefer not to subsequently expend more cognitive effort to analyze or change them. This same preference also encourages us to form impressions by using simplistic, but strongly held schemata called **stereotypes**. First impressions can also bring about the behavior we expect from other people, a process known as **self-fulfilling prophecy**.

How do we decide why people act as they do? **Attribution theory** holds that people seek to understand human behavior by attributing it either to internal or external causes. Perceptual biases can lead to the **fundamental attribution error**, in which we overemphasize others' personal traits in attributing causes to their behavior. **Defensive attribution** motivates us to explain our own actions in ways that protect our self-esteem. *Self-serving bias* refers to our tendency to attribute our successes to internal factors and our failures to external ones. The **just-world hypothesis** may lead us to blame the victim when bad things happen to other people.

Do "birds of a feather flock together" or do "opposites attract"? People who are similar in attitudes, interests, backgrounds, and values tend to like one another. **Proximity** also promotes liking. The more we are in contact with certain people, the more we tend to like them. We also tend to like people who make us feel appreciated and rewarded, an idea based on the concept of **exchange**. Exchanges work only insofar as they are fair or equitable. A relationship is based on **equity** when both individuals receive equally from each other. Most people also tend to like physically attractive people, as well as attributing to them, correctly or not, many positive personal characteristics.

ATTITUDES

Why are attitudes important? An **attitude** is a relatively stable organization of beliefs, feelings, and tendencies toward an *attitude object*. Attitudes are important because they often influence behavior.

What are the three major components of attitudes? The three major components of attitudes are (1) evaluative beliefs about the attitude object, (2) feelings about that object, and (3) behavioral tendencies toward it. These three components are very often (but not always) consistent with one another.

How does a person develop a prejudice toward someone else? **Prejudice** is an unfair negative attitude directed toward a group and its members, whereas **discrimination** is unfair behavior based on prejudice. One explanation of prejudice is the **frustration–aggression theory**, which states that people who feel exploited and oppressed displace their hostility toward the powerful onto *scapegoats*—people who are "lower" on the social scale than they are. Another theory links prejudice to the **authoritarian personality**, a rigidly conventional and bigoted type marked by exaggerated respect for authority and hostility toward those who defy society's norms. A third theory proposes a cognitive source of prejudice—oversimplified or stereotyped thinking about categories

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of people. Finally, conformity to the prejudices of one's social group can help to explain prejudice. Three strategies for reducing prejudice appear to be especially promising: recategorization (expanding our schema of a particular group), controlled processing (training ourselves to be mindful of people who differ from us), and improving contact between groups.

What factors encourage someone to change an attitude? Attitudes may be changed when new actions, beliefs, or perceptions contradict preexisting attitudes, called **cognitive dissonance**. Attitudes can also change in response to efforts at persuasion. The first step in persuasion is to get the audience's attention. Then the task is to get the audience to comprehend and accept the message. According to the *communication model*, persuasion is a function of the source, the message itself, the medium of communication, and the characteristics of the audience. The most effective means of changing attitudes—especially important attitudes, behaviors, or lifestyle choices—may be *self-persuasion*.

SOCIAL INFLUENCE

What are some areas in which the power of social influence is highly apparent? **Social influence** is the process by which people's perceptions, attitudes, and actions are affected by others' behavior and characteristics. The power of social influence is especially apparent in the study of cultural influences and of conformity, compliance, and obedience.

How does your culture influence how you dress or what you eat? The culture in which you are immersed has an enormous influence on your thoughts and actions. Culture dictates differences in diet, dress, and personal space. One result of this is the unquestioning acceptance of **cultural truisms**—beliefs or values that most members of a society accept as self-evident. Eating pizza, shunning rattlesnake meat, dressing in jeans instead of a loincloth, and feeling uncomfortable when others stand very close to you when they speak are all results of culture. As we adapt our behavior to that of others, we learn the **norms** of our culture, as well as its beliefs and values.

What increases the likelihood that someone will conform? Voluntarily yielding one's preferences, beliefs, or judgments to those of a larger group is called **conformity**. Research by Solomon Asch and others has shown that characteristics of both the situation and the person influence the likelihood of conforming. Cultural influences on the tendency to conform also exist, with people in collectivist cultures often being more prone to conformity than those in noncollectivist ones.

How could a salesperson increase a customer's compliance in buying a product? **Compliance** is a change in behavior in response to someone's explicit request.. One technique to encourage compliance is the *foot-in-the-door approach*, or getting people to go along with a small request to make them more likely to comply with a larger one. Another technique is the *lowball procedure*: initially offering a low price to win commitment, and then gradually escalating the cost. Also effective is the *door-in-the-face tactic*, or initially making an unreasonable request that is bound to be turned down but will perhaps generate enough guilt to foster compliance with another request.

How does the "power of the situation" affect obedience? Classic research by Stanley Milgram showed that many people were willing to obey orders to administer harmful shocks to other people. This **obedience** to an authority figure was more likely when certain situational factors were present. For example, people found it harder to disobey when the authority figure issuing the order was nearby. They were also more likely to obey the command when the person being given the shock was some distance from them. According to Milgram, obedience is brought on by the constraints of the situation.

SOCIAL ACTION

Do we behave differently when other people are present? Conformity, compliance, and obedience may take place even when no one else is physically present, but other processes of social influence depend on the presence of others.

What negative outcomes can result from deindividuation? Immersion in a large, anonymous group may lead to **deindividuation**, the loss of a sense of personal responsibility for one's actions. Deindividuation can sometimes lead to violence or other forms of irresponsible behavior. The greater the sense of anonymity, the more this effect occurs.

What factors make us more inclined to help a person in need? Helping someone in need without expectation of a reward is called **altruistic behavior**. Altruism is influenced by situational factors such as the presence of other people. According to the **bystander effect**, a person is less apt to offer assistance when other potential helpers are present. Conversely, being the only person to spot someone in trouble tends to encourage helping. Also encouraging helping are an unambiguous emergency situation and certain personal characteristics, such as empathy for the victim and being in a good mood.

How is making a decision in a group different from making a decision on your own? Research on the **risky shift** and the broader phenomenon of group **polarization** shows that group decision making actually increases tendencies toward extreme solutions, encouraging members to lean toward either greater risk or greater caution. People deliberating in groups may also display *social loafing*, or a tendency to exert less effort on the assumption that others will do most of the work. And in very cohesive groups and isolated groups, there is a tendency toward **groupthink**, an unwillingness to criticize the emerging group consensus even when it seems misguided.

What makes a great leader? According to the **great-person theory**, leadership is a function of personal traits that qualify one to lead others. An alternative theory attributes leadership to being in the right place at the right time. According to the transactional view, traits of the leader and traits of the group interact with certain

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aspects of the situation to determine what kind of leader will come to the fore. Fred Fiedler's *contingency theory* focused on two contrasting leadership styles: task oriented and relationship oriented. The effectiveness of each style depends on the nature of the task, the relationship of the leader with group members, and the leader's power over the group.

The task-oriented leadership style typical of American businesses is being transformed through the introduction of a management style that emphasizes small work teams and input from all members of the group. Recent research indicates that women in leadership positions tend to have a more democratic, collaborative, and interpersonally oriented style of managing employees than do men in similar positions.

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