ONE DAY WHILE WALKING DOWN THE STREET you notice two people looking up at the sky. Suddenly other people also start doing so. You wonder why and find yourself also looking up to see what has captured everyone’s attention. Now there are many of you looking up at, well, apparently nothing. Why did everyone on the street feel compelled to look up? As a highly social species, humans are readily influenced by the actions of others.

The subfield of social psychology is concerned with how people influence other people’s thoughts, feelings, and actions. Humans are social animals who live in a highly complex world. Because almost every human activity has a social dimension, research in social psychology covers expansive and varied territory: how people perceive and understand others, how people function in groups, why people hurt or help others, why people stigmatize and discriminate against certain others, why people fall in love. In this chapter, you will learn the basic principles of how people interact with each other. For social psychologists, the big questions are: How does group membership affect people? When do people harm or help others? How do attitudes guide behavior? How do people think about others? What determines the quality of relationships?
How Does Group Membership Affect People?

The genes of any species survive by being passed on from generation to generation. For that to happen, the animals that carry those genes must survive long enough to reproduce. To survive and reproduce, animals need food, water, shelter, and mates. These resources have been in limited supply throughout humans’ evolutionary history. As a result, our ancestors competed for the limited resources. Those who won the competition passed on their genes. Contemporary humans have inherited the genes that are coded for the successful behaviors, and one of the successful strategies that humans evolved was to live in social groups. Since over the course of human evolution being kicked out of the group would have had dire consequences, people are motivated to maintain good relations with members of their groups.

But group membership brings many challenges, such as figuring out how to be a good group member. The social brain hypothesis (Dunbar, 1998; 2014) places such challenges in the context of brain size. The largest biological class that humans belong to is the order primates, which includes great apes and monkeys. According to this theory, primates have large brains—in particular, large prefrontal cortices—because they live in dynamic and complex social groups that change over time (FIGURE 12.1). Being a good group member requires the capacity to understand complex and subtle social rules, recognize when actions might offend others, and control desires to engage in behaviors that might violate group norms. Various brain regions involved in processing social information and controlling behavior work together to support human sociality (Heatherton, 2011).

12.1 People Favor Their Own Groups

Banding together in a group provides numerous advantages, such as security from predators and assistance in hunting and gathering food (Buss & Kenrick, 1998). Group living also provides mating opportunities. The downside of grouping is that other groups may compete for the same limited resources. Alternatively, other groups may be able to supply needed resources, as in trade, or cooperate in attaining the resources. Thus, over the course of human evolution it was critical for groups to identify other groups as friends (suppliers) or foes (competitors). Once such a categorization was made, it was equally critical to react accordingly, either by working together or by exhibiting aggression.

Social groups, or coalitions, are prevalent in some primate species, such as chimpanzees, and in other social mammals, such as dolphins. Humans automatically and pervasively form groups. Because human ancestors banded together for survival, people are powerfully connected to the groups they belong to: sororities and fraternities, sports teams, and so on. People cheer on their own groups, fight for them, and sometimes are even willing to die for them (Swann et al., 2014). Those groups to which particular people belong are ingroups; those to which they do not belong are outgroups (FIGURE 12.2). Beginning in infancy, humans readily differentiate between ingroups and outgroups (Guassi Moreira, Van Bavel, & Telzer, 2017).

FORMATION OF INGROUPS AND OUTGROUPS

Two conditions appear to be critical for group formation: reciprocity and transitivity (Gray et al., 2014). Reciprocity means that if Person A helps (or harms) Person B, then Person B will help (or harm) Person A. In other words, if you scratch my back, I will scratch yours. Transitivity means that people generally share their friends’ opinions of other people. If Person
A and Person B are friends, then if Person A likes Person C and dislikes Person D, then Person B will also tend to like Person C and dislike Person D.

Gray and colleagues (2014) developed a computer program in which simulated individuals interacted in a game that involved simple rules of reciprocity and transitivity. The rules were so simple that the program consisted of only 80 lines of code, whereas most programs include thousands or millions of lines. After 10,000 rounds of interaction, the simulated individuals formed into stable groups and showed many of the characteristics that are true of human groups. This research shows that ingroups and outgroups can be formed based on minimal rules of social interaction and thus may help explain the pervasive nature of groups throughout human history.

Once people categorize others as ingroup or outgroup members, they treat the others accordingly. For instance, due to the outgroup homogeneity effect, people tend to view outgroup members as less varied than ingroup members. University of Missouri students may think University of Kansas students are all alike, but when they think about Missouri students, they cannot help but notice the wide diversity of student types. Of course, for Kansas’s students, the reverse is true about Missouri’s students and themselves. Overall, people show a positivity bias for ingroup members, such as rating their smiles as indicating greater happiness than similar smiles by outgroup members (Lazarus, Stolier, Freeman, Ingbretsen, & Cikara, 2016).

**SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY** Group memberships are an important part of social identities, and they contribute to each group member’s overall sense of self-esteem (Hogg, 2012). According to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), ingroups consist of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category. Inherent in social identity theory is the idea that people value the groups with which they identify and in doing so also experience pride through their group membership. Whether it is pride in your school, your ethnicity, your country, and so on, defining yourself by that group status is part of your social identity.

As people define themselves as members of groups, they begin to conceive of themselves in terms of how other group members typically behave toward both ingroup and outgroup members (Hogg, 2016). One consequence of categorizing people as ingroup or outgroup members is ingroup favoritism. That is, people are more likely to distribute resources to ingroup members than to outgroup members. The simulated individuals in the study mentioned earlier showed this kind of behavior (Gray et al., 2014). In addition, people are more willing to do favors for ingroup members or to forgive their mistakes or errors. The power of group membership is so strong that people exhibit ingroup favoritism even if the groups are determined by arbitrary processes.

Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) randomly assigned volunteers to two groups, using meaningless criteria such as flipping a coin. This procedure is known as the minimal group paradigm. Participants were then given a task in which they divided up money. Not surprisingly, they gave more money to their ingroup members, but they also tried to prevent the outgroup members from receiving any money. These effects occurred even when the participants were told that the basis of group membership was arbitrary and that giving money to the outgroup would not affect how much money their own group obtained. Why do people favor members of their own groups? We can
speculate that those who work together to keep resources within their group and deny resources to outgroup members have a selective advantage over those who are willing to share with the outgroup. This advantage would become especially important when groups are competing for scarce resources.

In addition, women show a much greater automatic ingroup bias toward other women than men do toward other men (Rudman & Goodwin, 2004). Although men generally favor their ingroups, they fail to do so when the category is sex, at least within Western cultures. Rudman and Goodwin speculate that men and women depend on women for nurturing and that both are threatened by male violence. Moreover, women can freely express their affection for their female friends (FIGURE 12.3). Men may be less comfortable doing so for their male friends, perhaps because it might threaten their sexual identities (Morman & Floyd, 1998).

**BRAIN ACTIVITY ASSOCIATED WITH GROUP MEMBERSHIP** Being a good group member requires recognizing and following the group’s social rules. When members violate these rules, they risk exclusion from the group. As noted in Chapter 10, group exclusion was likely a death sentence in the ancestral environment. People therefore need to be able to understand what other group members are thinking, especially how others are thinking about them. The middle region of the prefrontal cortex, called the medial prefrontal cortex, is especially important for thinking about other people—thinking about them generally or specifically, whether they are in ingroups or outgroups (Mitchell, Heatherton, & Macrae, 2002). Activity in this region is also associated with ingroup bias that emerges after assignment through the minimal group paradigm (Volz, Kessler, & von Cramon, 2009). However, when people observe others in pain, a different set of brain regions becomes activated (recall the idea of mirror neurons, from Chapter 6, which may enable people to empathize with others). These “pain regions” are more active when people see an ingroup member being harmed than when they see the same harm inflicted on an outgroup member (Xu, Zuo, Wang, & Han, 2009). Similarly, sports fans show activity in brain reward regions when a rival team performs poorly (Cikara, Botvinick, & Fiske, 2011). In general, various brain regions are differentially active when we consider ingroup versus outgroup members (Cikara & Van Bavel, 2014).

The medial prefrontal cortex is less active when people consider members of outgroups, at least members of extreme outgroups such as homeless persons or drug addicts (Harris & Fiske, 2006). One explanation for this reduction in activity is that people dehumanize some outgroups (Harris & Fiske, 2011). People more readily see human minds in ingroups than in outgroups (Hackel, Looser, & Van Bavel, 2014).

In developed nations, people tend to pass the homeless as if they were mere obstacles, and they generally do not feel much sympathy regarding people’s plights in developing nations (Haslam & Loughnan, 2014). Indeed, such dehumanization of outgroups has been used as a propaganda tool to justify inhumane acts. In World War II–era Germany, the Nazis classified Jews as vermin. In Rwanda in 1994, the Hutu majority described the Tutsi minority as cockroaches. These descriptions were major factors in the subsequent genocides against the Jews and the Tutsi.

**Q** Although Tarika always agrees to help members of her sorority when asked, she seldom agrees to help those in other sororities. What is Tarika’s behavior an example of?
**Groups Influence Individual Behavior**

Given the importance of groups, it is not surprising that people's thoughts, emotions, and actions are strongly influenced by their desire to be good group members. One way people try to fit in is by presenting themselves positively. That is, they display their best behavior and try not to offend others.

Most people are easily influenced by others, conform to group norms, and obey commands made by authorities. In fact, the desire to fit in with the group and avoid being ostracized is so great that under some circumstances people willingly engage in behaviors they otherwise would condemn. As noted throughout this chapter, the power of the social situation is much greater than most people believe—and this truth is perhaps the single most important lesson from social psychology. Let's examine some of the ways that people are influenced by the presence of others.

**Social Facilitation**

The first social psychology experiment was conducted in 1897. Through that experiment, Norman Triplett showed that bicyclists pedal faster when they ride with other people than when they ride alone. They do so because of social facilitation. That is, the presence of others generally enhances performance. Social facilitation also occurs in other animals, including horses, dogs, rats, birds, fish, and even cockroaches.

Robert Zajonc (1965) proposed a model of social facilitation that involves three basic steps (Figure 12.4). According to Zajonc, all animals are genetically predisposed to become aroused by the presence of others of their own species. Why? Others are associated with most of life’s rewards and punishments. Zajonc then invokes Clark Hull’s well-known learning principle: Arousal leads animals to emit a dominant response—that is, the response most likely to be performed in the situation. In front of food, for example, the dominant response is to eat.

Zajonc’s model predicts that social facilitation can either enhance or impair performance. The change depends on whether the response that is required in a situation is the individual's dominant response. If the required response is easy or well learned (such as an experienced cyclist riding a bike), so that the dominant response is good performance, the presence of others will enhance performance. If the required response is novel or less well learned (such as riding a unicycle for the first time), so that the dominant response is poor performance, the presence of others will further impair performance. These effects help explain why crowds of spectators distract professional golfers less than they distract novice golfers. The professionals practice so often that hitting a good shot is their dominant response. Therefore, the professionals may be even more likely to hit well in the presence of spectators. When you need to make a public presentation, try to practice your presentation repeatedly so that it becomes easy for you. You want your best work to be your dominant response, so that you do well even under pressure.

**Deindividuation**

In a classic study, the psychologists Philip Zimbardo and Chris Haney showed how quickly apparently normal students could be transformed into the social roles they were playing (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973; Figure 12.5A). The researchers had male undergraduates at Stanford University play the roles of prisoners and guards in a mock prison. The students, who had all been screened and found to be psychologically stable, were randomly assigned to their roles. What the authors reported happening was unexpected and shocking.

Within days, some of the “guards” became brutal and sadistic. They constantly harassed the “prisoners,” forcing them to engage in meaningless and tedious tasks and exercises. The prisoners became helpless to resist. Although the Stanford prison
study was scheduled to last two weeks, the researchers stopped it after only six days. The study lacked many of the features of a true experiment, and it is likely that the participants experienced reactivity for how they were supposed to behave (recall the Hawthorne effect from Chapter 2). Moreover, recent critiques of the Stanford prison study have noted that there was considerable variability in the behavior of the guards (Bartels, 2015; Bartels, Milovich, & Moussier, 2016). Nonetheless, the results demonstrate what some people are willing to do when put in a situation with defined social roles.

Because of a real-life situation that has been likened to the Stanford study, the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, now named the Baghdad Central Prison, will always be remembered as the site of horrible abuses of power. During 2003, the first year of the Iraq War, American soldiers brutalized Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib. The soldiers raped prisoners, threatened them with dogs, beat them, placed them in humiliating positions, and forced them to perform or simulate oral sex and masturbation (Figure 12.5b).

When the news media began to reveal the abuse at Abu Ghraib, U.S. military and government officials were quick to claim that these incidents were isolated and carried out by a small group of wayward soldiers. They emphasized that even amid the horrors of war, soldiers are expected to behave in a civilized and professional manner. The idea that only a few troubled individuals were responsible for the abuses is strangely comforting, but is it true?

The soldiers at Abu Ghraib, like the students in the Stanford study, were probably normal people who were caught up in overwhelming situations where being part of the group influenced their actions in extreme ways. Some people might be more prone to social influence than others, but most people can sometimes lose their individuality when they become part of a group. Deindividuation occurs when people are not self-aware and therefore are not paying attention to their personal standards. When self-awareness disappears, so do restraints. Deindividuated people often do things they would not do if they were alone or self-aware. A good example is crowd behavior. Most of us like to think we would try to help a person who was threatening suicide. But people in crowds often fail to intercede in such situations. Disturbingly, they also sometimes egg the person on, yelling "Jump! Jump!" to someone teetering on a ledge.

People are especially likely to become deindividuated when they are aroused and anonymous and when responsibility is diffused. Rioting by fans, looting following disasters, and other mob behaviors are the products of deindividuation. Not all deindividuated behavior is so serious, of course. Gamblers in crowded casinos, fans doing the wave, and people dancing the funky chicken while inebriated at a wedding are most likely in deindividuated states. Accordingly, in these situations, people act in ways they would avoid if they were self-aware (Figure 12.6).

**GROUP DECISION MAKING** Social psychologists have shown that being in a group influences decision making in complex ways. For instance, James Stoner (1963) found that groups often make riskier decisions than individuals do. Stoner identified this phenomenon as the *risky-shift effect*. It accounts for why teenagers in a group may try something dangerous that none of them would have tried alone. But sometimes groups become more cautious. Subsequent research has demonstrated that the initial attitudes of group members determine if the group becomes riskier or more cautious. If most of the group members are somewhat cautious, then the group becomes even more cautious. This process is known as *group polarization* (Myers & Lamm, 1976). For example, when a jury discusses a case, the discussion tends to make individual jurors believe more strongly in their initial opinions about a defendant’s guilt or innocence.
When groups make decisions, they usually choose the course of action that was initially favored by the majority of individuals in the group. Through mutual persuasion, the decision-making individuals come to agreement.

Sometimes group members are particularly concerned with preserving the group and maintaining its cohesiveness. Therefore, for the sake of cordiality, the group may end up making a bad decision. In 1972, the social psychologist Irving Janis coined the term **groupthink** to describe this extreme form of group polarization. Consider some contemporary examples of groupthink: In 1998, when allegations arose of President Bill Clinton’s affair with the White House intern Monica Lewinsky, Clinton and his advisers responded in devious ways that ultimately led to Clinton’s impeachment. The second Bush administration went to war with Iraq in 2003 over weapons of mass destruction that turned out not to exist. The leadership of Penn State football tried to protect the reputation of a beloved coach, Joe Paterno, rather than protecting young children from sexual abuse by an assistant coach, Jerry Sandusky, whose crimes may have extended from the 1970s until his indictment in 2011.

Groupthink typically occurs when a group is under intense pressure, is facing external threats, and is biased in a particular direction. The group does not carefully process all the information available to it, dissent is discouraged, and group members assure each other they are doing the right thing. To prevent groupthink, leaders must refrain from expressing their opinions too strongly at the beginning of discussions. The group should be encouraged to consider alternative ideas, either by having someone play devil’s advocate or by purposefully examining outside opinions. Carefully going through alternatives and weighing the pros and cons of each can help people avoid groupthink.

Of course, a group can make a bad decision even without falling victim to groupthink. Other factors, such as political values, can bias a group’s decision making. The main point behind the concept of groupthink is that group members sometimes go along with bad decisions to protect group harmony.

**SOCIAL LOAFING** In some cases, people do not work as hard when in a group as when working alone. This effect is called **social loafing**. It occurs when people’s efforts are pooled so that individuals do not feel personally responsible for the group’s output. In a classic study, six blindfolded people wearing headphones were told to shout as loudly as they could. Some were told they were shouting alone. Others were told they were shouting with other people. Participants did not shout as loudly when they believed that others were shouting as well (Latané, Williams, & Harkins, 1979).

When people know that their individual efforts can be monitored, they do not engage in social loafing. Thus, if a group is working on a project, each person must feel personally responsible for some component of the project for everyone to exert maximum effort (Williams, Harkins, & Latané, 1981).

Q How does social facilitation differ from social loafing?

**ANSWER:** In social facilitation, the presence of others leads to higher performance. In social loafing, the presence of others leads to lower performance.

**12.3 People Conform to and Comply with Others**

Another powerful form of social influence is **conformity**. Why do people conform, altering their behaviors or opinions to match those of others or to match what is expected of them? Social psychologists have identified two primary reasons that...
people conform: **Normative influence** occurs when people go along with the crowd to fit in with the group and to avoid looking foolish. **Informational influence** occurs when people assume that the behavior of the crowd represents the correct way to respond. Suppose you are in a train station. You turn a corner and see a mass of people running for the exit. You might join them if you suspect they are exiting for a good reason. In situations such as this potential emergency, other people’s actions provide information about the right thing to do.

Normative influence relies on the societal need for rules. For example, imagine the problems you would cause if you woke up one morning and decided that from then on you would drive on the wrong side of the road. Expected standards of conduct are called **social norms**. These norms influence behavior in multiple ways. For example, norms indicate which behavior is appropriate in a given situation and also how people will respond to those who violate norms. Standing in line is a social norm, and people who violate that norm by cutting in line are often reprimanded and directed to the back of the line. Normative influence works because people feel embarrassed when they violate social norms and they worry about what others think of them. The next time you enter an elevator, try standing with your back to the elevator door and facing people. You may find it quite difficult to defy this simple social norm (FIGURE 12.7).

Muzafer Sherif (1936) became one of the first researchers to demonstrate the power of conformity in social judgment. Sherif’s studies relied on the **autokinetic effect**. Through this perceptual phenomenon, a stationary point of light appears to move when viewed in a totally dark environment. This effect occurs because people have no frame of reference and therefore cannot correct for small eye movements. Sherif asked participants who were alone in a room to estimate how far the light moved. Individual differences were considerable: Some saw the light move only an inch or two, whereas others saw it move 8 inches or more.

In the second part of the study, Sherif put two or more participants in the room and had them call out their estimates. Although there were initial differences, participants quickly revised their estimates until they agreed. They relied on the information provided by others to base their estimates. This result is an example of informational influence. In ambiguous situations, people often compare their reactions with the reactions of others to judge the correct course of action.

Solomon Asch (1955) speculated that Sherif’s results probably occurred because the autokinetic effect is a subjective visual illusion. If perceptions were objective, Asch thought, participants would not conform. To test his hypothesis, Asch assembled male participants for a study of visual acuity. In the 18 trials, the participants looked at a reference line and three comparison lines. They decided which of the three comparison lines matched the reference line and said their answers aloud. Normally, people are able to perform this easy task with a high level of accuracy. But in these studies, Asch included a naive participant with a group of five confederates who pretended to be participants but were actually working for the experimenter. The real participant always went sixth, giving his answer after the five confederates gave theirs.

On 12 of the 18 trials, the confederates deliberately gave the same wrong answer. After hearing five wrong answers, the participant then had to state his answer. Because the answer was obvious, Asch speculated that the participant would give the correct answer. About one-third of the time, however, the participant went along with the confederates. More surprisingly, in repeated trials, three out of four people conformed to the incorrect response at least once. Why did most people conform? It was not because they knew others were providing the right answer. Instead, people conformed because they did not want to look foolish by going against the group (see

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**FIGURE 12.7**

Social Norms

One social norm in industrialized societies is to stand facing the elevator door and facing away from other passengers. Violating this norm may make the other passengers very uncomfortable.
The Methods of Psychology
Asch’s Study on Conformity to Social Norms

HYPOTHESIS: Conformity would not take place if there were objective perceptions.

RESEARCH METHOD:
1. A naive participant joined a group of five other participants. The five others were confederates, secretly in league with the researcher. Each participant was asked to look at a reference line (left) and then say out loud which of three comparison lines matched it (right).

2. On 12 of the 18 trials, the five confederates deliberately gave the wrong answer.

RESULTS: When confederates gave false answers first, ¾ of the real participants conformed by giving the wrong answer at least once.

CONCLUSION: People tend to conform to social norms, even when those norms are obviously wrong.

QUESTION: How do we know that the participants did not simply misperceive the line lengths, so that social rather than perceptual factors produced this effect?

ANSWER: Only the one line matched the reference line. The other two lines were obviously different from the reference line.


“The Methods of Psychology: Asch’s Study on Conformity to Social Norms”). Thus, the findings of the Asch study were attributable to normative influence.

FACTORS AFFECTING CONFORMITY Research has consistently demonstrated that people tend to conform to social norms. This effect can be seen outside the laboratory as well: Adolescents conform to peer pressure to smoke; jury members go along with the group rather than state their own opinions; people stand in line to buy tickets. But when do people reject social norms? In a series of follow-up studies, Asch (1956) and others identified factors that decrease the chances of conformity. One factor is group size. When there are only one or two confederates, a naive participant usually does not conform. When the confederates number three or more, the participant is more likely to conform. Conformity seems to level off at a certain point, however. Subsequent research has found that even groups as large as 16 do not lead to greater conformity than groups of 7.
Asch found that lack of unanimity is another factor that diminishes conformity. If even one confederate gives the correct answer, conformity to the group norm decreases a great deal. Any dissent from majority opinion can diminish the influence of social norms. But dissenters are typically not treated well by groups. Stanley Schachter (1951) conducted a study in which a group of students debated the fate of a juvenile delinquent, Johnny Rocco. A confederate deviated from the group judgment of how Johnny should be treated. When it became clear that the confederate would not be persuaded by group sentiment, the group began to ostracize him. When group members subsequently were given the opportunity to reduce group size, they consistently rejected the “deviant” confederate.

The bottom line is that groups enforce conformity, and those who fail to go along are rejected. The need to belong, including the anxiety associated with the fear of social exclusion, gives a group powerful influence over its members. Indeed, a number of brain imaging studies have examined conformity to group standards. A review of these studies found that activity in the medial prefrontal cortex, the region mentioned earlier in terms of understanding group members, predicted people’s conforming behaviors (Wu, Luo, & Feng, 2016).

**COMPLIANCE** People often influence others’ behavior simply by asking them to do things. If someone does the requested thing, she is exhibiting **compliance**. A number of factors increase compliance. For instance, Joseph Forgas (1998) has demonstrated that a person in a good mood is especially likely to comply. This tendency may be the basis for “buttering up” others when we want things from them. In addition, according to Robert Cialdini (2008), people often comply with requests because they fail to pay attention. Wanting to avoid conflict, they follow a standard mental shortcut: They respond without fully considering their options. Thus, if you simply give people a reason for a request, they will be much more likely to comply, even if the reason makes little sense. Recall from Chapter 1 that heuristic processing is a form of psychological reasoning in which mental shortcuts can yield quick results, but noncritical thinking can also lead to poor conclusions or bad outcomes.

As shown in **TABLE 12.1**, people can use a number of powerful strategies to influence others to comply. Consider the **foot in the door** technique: If people agree to a small request, they become more likely to comply with a large and undesirable request. Jonathan Freedman and Scott Fraser (1966) asked homeowners to allow a large, unattractive “DRIVE CAREFULLY” sign to be placed on their front lawns. As you might imagine, fewer than 1 in 5 people agreed to do so. Other homeowners, however, were first asked to sign a petition that supported legislation intended to reduce traffic accidents. A few weeks later, these same people were approached about having the

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TECHNIQUE</th>
<th>INFLUENCE METHOD</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foot in the door</td>
<td>If you agree to a small request, you are more likely to comply with a large request.</td>
<td>You agree to help a friend move a couch. Now you are more likely to comply when she asks you to help her move all of her belongings to her new apartment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door in the face</td>
<td>If you refuse a large request, you are more likely to comply with a smaller request.</td>
<td>A marketer calls, and you refuse to answer a product questionnaire that takes 20 minutes. Now you are likely to agree to answer 5 questions about a product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-balling</td>
<td>When you agree to buy a product for a certain price, you are likely to comply with a request to pay more for the product.</td>
<td>You agree to buy a used car for $4,750. When the salesman says he forgot to add some charges, you agree to buy the car for $5,275.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
large sign placed on their lawns, and more than half agreed. Once people commit to a course of action, they behave in ways consistent with that commitment.

The opposite influence technique is the door in the face: People are more likely to agree to a small request after they have refused a large request (Cialdini et al., 1975). After all, the second request seems modest in comparison, and the people want to seem reasonable. The effectiveness of this strategy relies on reciprocity, in which the compliant person feels compelled to compromise because the requester has compromised. As you might have encountered, salespeople often use this technique.

Another favorite tactic among salespeople is lowballing. Here, a salesperson offers a product—for example, a car—for a very low price. Once the customer agrees, the salesperson may claim that the manager did not approve the price or that there will be additional charges. Whatever the reason, someone who has already agreed to buy a product will often agree to pay the increased cost. The big decision was whether to make a purchase at all. Once a person has committed to that option, then deciding to do so by spending a bit more money does not seem like such a big decision.

A person does the wave because everyone else around her is doing so and she does not want to look foolish. Does this behavior represent normative or informational influence?

**THINK LIKE A PSYCHOLOGIST**

**12.4 Can Social Norms Marketing Reduce Binge Drinking?**

Can the power of social norms be harnessed to modify behavior in positive ways? As noted in Chapter 4, excessive drinking kills more than 1,800 college students each year, is often involved in unprotected sexual activity, and contributes to date rape. Across North America, universities have tried to use social norms marketing to reduce binge drinking on campus. The assumption of such programs is that students often overestimate how often and how much other students drink. Moreover, students use their beliefs about peer norms to judge their own behavior. Students who believe that most students drink heavily may do so themselves in order to fit in with their peer group. Social norms marketing tries to correct these false beliefs by giving factual normative comparisons for average students at a particular college (Miller & Prentice, 2016). Thus, to change norms, colleges put up posters with messages such as “Most students have fewer than four drinks when they party.”

Some studies have found that social norms marketing reduces the level of binge drinking on college campuses (Mattern & Neighbors, 2004). Indeed, one large study of 18 college campuses, involving several thousand students, found that students attending schools that used social norms marketing had a lower risk of binge drinking than students at control schools (DeJong et al., 2006). One recent Australian study used Facebook to provide students with individualized feedback comparing their behavior with the actual behavior of students in their class (Ridout & Campbell, 2014). These students were selected because they reported excessive drinking on an initial survey. They were randomly assigned to an intervention or control group, and both groups reported their drinking in surveys they completed one and three months later. The researchers found considerable reductions in self-reported alcohol consumption for the intervention group (FIGURE 12.8). Because

**FIGURE 12.8 A Social Norms Study**

This graph reports the results of using Facebook for social norms marketing at one college. The group that received intervention experienced a far greater decrease in drinking than the control group.
of findings such as these, the use of social norms marketing has become extremely popular, with most college campuses adopting some form of it.

Unfortunately, social norms marketing may inadvertently increase drinking among light drinkers, whose behavior is also susceptible to social norms (Russell, Clapp, & Dejong, 2005). Students who usually have only one drink might interpret the posters as suggesting that the norm is to have two or three drinks, and they might adjust their behavior accordingly. Indeed, one large study found that social norms marketing actually increased the drinking behavior and misperceived norms they set out to correct (Wechsler et al., 2003). One team of researchers demonstrated that simply providing descriptive norms (i.e., the frequency of behavior) can cause this sort of backfire effect. They found that adding a message that the behavior is undesirable might help prevent social norms marketing from increasing the behavior it is meant to reduce (Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2007). These findings indicate that campuses that want to reduce student drinking need to do more than simply publicize drinking norms. They need to also convince students that there are numerous negative consequences associated with excessive drinking. Strategies that both change perceived norms and provide persuasive reasons to avoid binge drinking are most likely to be successful (Miller & Prentice, 2016).

Q Does social norms marketing to reduce binge drinking lead to lower drinking for all students?

12.5 People Are Obedient to Authority

One of the most famous and most disturbing psychology experiments was conducted by Stanley Milgram (1963). Milgram wanted to understand why apparently normal German citizens willingly obeyed orders to injure or kill innocent people during World War II (FIGURE 12.9). Milgram was interested in the determinants of obedience. That is, he wanted to find out which factors influence people to follow orders given by an authority, such as a boss, parent, or police officer.

Imagine yourself as a participant in Milgram’s experiment. You have agreed to take part in a study on learning. On arriving at the laboratory, you meet your fellow participant, a 60-year-old grandfatherly type. The experimenter describes the study as consisting of a teacher administering electric shocks to a learner engaged in a simple memory task that involves word pairs. Your role as the teacher is determined by an apparently random drawing of your name from a hat. On hearing that he may receive electric shocks, the learner reveals that he has a heart condition and expresses minor reservations. The experimenter says that although the shocks will be painful, they will not cause permanent tissue damage. You help the experimenter take the learner to a small room and hook him up to the electric shock machine (FIGURE 12.10). You then proceed to a nearby room and sit at a table in front of a large shock generator with switches that will deliver from 15 volts to 450 volts. Each voltage level carries a label, and the labels range from “slight” to “danger—severe shock” to, finally, an ominous “XXX.”

Each time the learner makes a mistake, your task as the teacher is to give him a shock. With each subsequent error, you increase the voltage. When you reach 75 volts, over the intercom you hear the man yelp in pain. At 150 volts, he screams, bangs on the wall, and demands that the experiment be stopped. At the experimenter’s command, you apply additional, stronger shocks. The learner is clearly in agony. Each time you say you are quitting and try to stop the experiment, the experimenter replies, “The experiment requires that you continue,” “It is essential that you go on,” “There is no other choice;
you must go on!” So you do. At 300 volts, the learner refuses to answer any more questions. After 330 volts, the learner is silent. All along you have wanted to leave, and you severely regret participating in the study. You might have killed the man, for all you know.

Does this scenario sound crazy to you? If you really were the teacher, at what level would you stop administering the shocks? Would you quit as soon as the learner started to complain? Would you go up to 450 volts? Before conducting the experiment, Milgram asked various people for predictions. These people predicted that most participants would go no higher than 135 volts. They felt that fewer than one in a thousand participants would administer the highest level of shock. But that is not what happened. What did happen changed how people viewed the power of authority.

Almost all the participants tried to quit. Nearly two-thirds, however, completely obeyed all the experimenter’s directives (FIGURE 12.11). The majority were willing to administer 450 volts to an older man with a heart condition (in reality a confederate not actually receiving shocks). These findings have been replicated by Milgram and others around the world. The conclusion of these studies is that ordinary people can be coerced into obedience by insistent authorities. This effect occurs even when what the people are coerced into doing goes against the way they usually would behave. At the same time, these results do not mean all people are equally obedient. Indeed, some aspects of personality seem related to being obedient, such as the extent to which people are concerned about how others view them (Blass, 1991). As discussed in Chapter 13, both situation and personality influence behavior.

Surprised by the results of his study, Milgram next studied ways to reduce obedience. He found that some situations produced less obedience. For instance, if the teacher could see or had to touch the learner, obedience decreased (FIGURE 12.12). When the experimenter gave the orders over the telephone and thus was more removed from the situation, obedience dropped dramatically. By contrast, a number of factors produce maximum obedience. Obedience is heightened when the shock level increases slowly and sequentially, when the victim starts protesting later in the study, when the orders help justify continuing with the study, and when the study is conducted at a high-status school, where the experimenters might be viewed as being more authoritative (Jetten & Mols, 2014).

Over the fifty years since the Milgram studies were conducted, a number of criticisms have emerged (Brannigan, Nicholson, & Cherry, 2015; Griggs, 2017). For instance, some participants received stronger encouragement than others to continue (Gibson, 2013). Moreover, some participants apparently did not fully believe that the victim was receiving a life-threatening shock (Hoffman, Myerberg, & Morawski, 2015). Some researchers have even questioned whether participants were truly obedient, or whether they were following the experimenter’s directives because they believed in the value of the scientific enterprise and wanted to help the experimenter (Haslam, Reicher, Millard, & McDonald, 2014). Indeed, encouragements to continue for the sake of the experiment have greater impact on participants than telling them that they must obey because they have no choice (Burger, Girgis, & Manning, 2011). From this perspective, participants are willing to inflict harm because they identify with the goals of science and believe their actions are virtuous (Haslam, Reicher, & Birney, 2016). Still, people were willing to inflict significant pain on an innocent victim for the cause.

The earliest and most persistent critiques of Milgram’s experiments revolved around the ethical treatment of the research participants (Baumrind, 1964). Even though Milgram claimed to be highly concerned with his participants’ mental states,
not all participants received timely debriefings in which they learned the true nature of the experiments (FIGURE 12.13; Nicholson, 2011; Perry, 2013). In an attempt to understand the long-term impact of taking part in the research, Milgram (1974) followed his participants over time and reported that most people were glad they had participated. They felt they had learned something about themselves and about human nature. Nowadays, as discussed in Chapter 2, researchers follow clear guidelines to protect the physical and mental health of research participants.

Despite the studies’ flaws, Milgram’s results document just how powerful situational influences can be. Most of us assume that only evil people would willingly inflict injury on others when ordered to do so. Milgram’s research, and studies that followed up on it, demonstrated that ordinary people may do horrible things when ordered to do so by an authority. Although some people have speculated that these results would not be true today, a recent replication found that 70 percent of the participants were obedient up to the maximum voltage in the experiment (Burger, 2009).

In the main Milgram study described in the text, approximately how many people administered the maximum, potentially dangerous shock to the elderly learner when ordered to do so?

When Do People Harm or Help Others?

Although obedience can lead people to commit horrible acts, the need to belong to a group can also lead to acts of altruism and of generosity. Events of the past decade have revealed the human capacities for harming and helping others. At points around the globe, we have seen terrorists, special forces, and militias killing civilians (FIGURE 12.14A). At the same time, we have also seen people being kind, compassionate, and giving in response to natural disasters. For example, members of the group Doctors Without Borders travel to dangerous regions to care for those in need (FIGURE 12.14B). This tension between our aggressive and altruistic sides is at the core of who we are as a species. Psychologists working at all levels of analysis have provided much insight into the roles that nature and nurture play in these fundamental human behaviors.

12.6 Many Factors Can Influence Aggression

Aggression can be expressed through countless behaviors. These behaviors all involve the intention to harm another. Among nonhuman animals, aggression often occurs in the context of fighting over a mate or defending territory from intruders. In the latter case, just the threat of aggressive action may be sufficient to dissuade. Among humans, physical aggression is common among young children but relatively rare in adults due to social norms discouraging it. Adults’ aggressive acts more often involve words, or other symbols, meant to threaten, intimidate, or emotionally harm others.

Many situational factors have been associated with aggression. Recall from Chapter 6 that people can learn to be aggressive by observational learning and exposure to media violence. Aggression is also likely when people feel socially rejected. Throughout evolutionary history, rejection from the group has been akin to a death warrant, and therefore signs of rejection can activate defensive mechanisms that include lashing out at those who are perceived to be responsible for the rejection (MacDonald &
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Leary, 2005). Feeling ostracized or rejected and the desire to retaliate have been identified as factors in many school shootings (Fox & DeLateur, 2014).

Another factor that influences aggression is heat (Van Lange, Rinderu, & Bushman, 2017). More crime occurs in the summer, and more violence occurs in hotter regions (Anderson, 1989; Anderson & DeLisi, 2011). Major league baseball pitchers are most likely to hit batters with pitches when the weather is hottest (Reifman, Larrick, & Fein, 1991), especially in hot weather when their own players have been hit by pitches (Larrick, Timmerman, Carton, & Abrevaya, 2011). A common thread through many of the situations that lead to aggression is that they involve negative emotions. Any situation that induces negative emotions—such as being insulted, afraid, frustrated, overly hot, or in pain—can trigger physical aggression (Berkowitz, 1990). This effect may occur because emotional states can disrupt the functioning of brain regions involved in controlling behavior (Heatherton & Wagner, 2011).

BIOLOGICAL FACTORS Genetic research has identified the role of the MAOA gene in aggression. The MAOA gene controls the amount of MAO (monoamine oxidase), an enzyme that regulates the activity of a number of neurotransmitters, including serotonin and norepinephrine. One study found an unusual MAOA gene mutation in an extended Dutch family in which several of the males had a history of impulsive aggression (Brunner, Nelen, Breakefield, Ropers, & Van Oost, 1993). Since the Dutch study, numerous other studies have shown that the MAOA gene is involved in aggressive violence (Buckholtz & Meyer-Lindenberg, 2008; Dorfman, Meyer-Lindenberg, & Buckholtz, 2014). Indeed, it is often referred to in the media as the “warrior gene.”

MAOA is not a “violence gene” per se. Instead, a particular form of the gene appears to make individuals susceptible to environmental risk factors associated with antisocial behaviors. Recall the New Zealand study from Chapter 3, in which those who had one version of the MAOA gene and suffered childhood maltreatment were much more likely to become violent criminals (Caspi et al., 2002). In 2009, a man from Tennessee who brutally murdered his wife with a machete used the defense of possessing the warrior gene and having been abused as a child. The jury found him guilty of manslaughter rather than first-degree murder (Hagerty, 2010).

The MAOA gene regulates the neurotransmitter serotonin, and several lines of evidence suggest that serotonin is especially important in the control of aggressive behavior (Caramaschi, de Boer, & Koolhaus, 2007). Altered serotonin function has been associated with impulsive aggressiveness in adults and hostility and disruptive behavior in children (Carver & Miller, 2008). Alterations in serotonin activity increase the amygdala response to threat and interfere with the prefrontal cortex’s control over aggressive impulses (Buckholtz & Meyer-Lindenberg, 2013). Disrupted serotonin systems may lead people to respond impulsively when provoked (Chester et al., 2015).

The hormone testosterone also appears to have a modest correlation with aggression. Males have more testosterone than females, and males carry out the vast majority of aggressive and violent acts. Boys play more roughly than girls at an early age. They become especially aggressive during early adolescence, a time when their levels of testosterone rise tenfold (Mazur & Booth, 1998). However, these increases in testosterone in boys coincide with other maturational changes that promote aggression, such as physical growth. Particularly aggressive men, such as violent criminals, and especially physical athletes, such as hockey players, have been found to have higher levels of testosterone than other males (Dabbs & Morris, 1990). This relationship is small, though, and it is unclear how testosterone is linked to greater aggressiveness. Testosterone may increase aggression because it reduces the activity of brain circuits that control impulses (Mehta & Beer, 2010).
In addition, testosterone changes may be the result—rather than the cause—of aggressive behavior. That is, the situation may change testosterone levels. A number of studies have shown that testosterone rises just before athletic competition (Mazur & Booth, 1998). Testosterone remains high for the winners of competitive matches and drops lower for the losers (Booth, Shelley, Mazur, Tharp, & Kittok, 1989). Even those who simply watch a competition can be affected. Hockey players who watched a replay of a former victory by their team showed increased testosterone (Carré & Putnam, 2010). Fans are affected as well. Testosterone levels increased in Brazilian television viewers who watched Brazil beat Italy in the 1994 World Cup soccer tournament, but levels decreased in Italian television viewers (Bernhardt, Dabbs, Fielden, & Lutter, 1998). These results suggest that testosterone might not play a direct role in aggression, but rather may be related to social dominance, the result of having greater power and status (Mehta, Jones, & Josephs, 2008).

**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS** Violence varies dramatically across cultures and even within cultures at different times. For example, over the course of 300 years, Sweden went from being one of the most violent nations on Earth to being one of the most peaceable. This cultural change did not correspond with a change in the gene pool or with other immediately apparent biological changes. Moreover, murder rates are far higher in some countries than in others (FIGURE 12.15). And analysis of crime statistics in the United States reveals that physical violence is much more prevalent in the South than in the North (UNODC, 2013a). Aggression may be part of human nature and influenced by situational factors, but society and culture influence people’s tendencies to commit violent acts.

Some cultures may be violent because they subscribe to a *culture of honor*. In this belief system, men are primed to protect their reputations through physical aggression. Men in the southern United States, for example, traditionally were (and perhaps still are) raised to be ready to fight for their honor and to respond aggressively to personal threats. To determine whether southern males are more likely to be aggressive than
northern males, researchers at the University of Michigan conducted a series of studies (Cohen, Nisbett, Bowdle, & Schwarz, 1996). In each study, a male participant had to walk down a narrow hallway. The participant had to pass a filing cabinet, where a male confederate was blocking the hallway. As the participant tried to edge past the confederate, the confederate responded angrily and insulted the participant. Compared with participants raised in the North, those raised in the South became more upset and were more likely to feel personally challenged. Perhaps because of a need to express social dominance in this situation, the southern participants were more physiologically aroused (measured by cortisol and testosterone increases), more cognitively primed for aggression, and more likely to act in an aggressive and dominant manner for the rest of the experiment. For instance, in another part of the studies, participants raised in the South shook a new confederate’s hand much more vigorously than the participants raised in the North did (FIGURE 12.16).

12.7 Many Factors Can Influence Helping Behavior

People often act in ways that help others. Prosocial behaviors include doing favors, offering assistance, paying compliments, subjugating egocentric desires or needs, resisting the temptation to insult or hit another person, or simply being pleasant and cooperative. By providing benefits to others, prosocial behaviors promote positive interpersonal relationships. Living in groups, in which people necessarily engage in prosocial behaviors such as sharing and cooperating, may be a central human survival strategy. After all, a group that works well together is a strong group, and belonging to a strong group benefits the individual members.

Why are humans prosocial? Theoretical explanations range from selflessness to selfishness and from the biological to the philosophical. For instance, Daniel Batson...
and colleagues (Batson et al., 1988; Batson, Turk, Shaw, & Klein, 1995) argue that prosocial behaviors are motivated by empathy, in which people share other people’s emotions. Conversely, Robert Cialdini and colleagues (1987; also Maner et al., 2002) argue that most prosocial behaviors have selfish motives, such as wanting to manage one’s public image or relieve one’s negative mood. Other theorists have proposed that people have an inborn tendency to help others. Consider that young infants become distressed when they see other infants crying (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). Generally, children’s early attempts to soothe other children are ineffective. For instance, they tend initially to comfort themselves rather than the other children. Still, this empathic response to other people’s suffering suggests that prosocial behavior is hardwired in humans.

Altruism is providing help when it is needed, without any apparent reward for doing so. The fact that people help others, and even risk personal safety to do so, may seem contrary to evolutionary principles. After all, those who protect themselves first would appear to have an advantage over those who risk their lives to help others. During the 1960s, the geneticist William Hamilton offered an answer to this riddle. Hamilton (1964) proposed that natural selection occurs at the genetic level rather than at the individual level.

**EVOLUTIONARY EXPLANATIONS** As discussed in Chapter 1, the “fittest” animals pass along the most genes to future generations. These animals increase the chances of passing along their genes by helping ensure that their offspring survive. Hamilton’s concept of inclusive fitness describes the adaptive benefits of transmitting genes rather than focusing on individual survival. According to this model, people are altruistic toward those with whom they share genes. This phenomenon is known as kin selection. A good example of kin selection occurs among insects, such as ants and bees. In these species, workers feed and protect the egg-laying queen, but they never reproduce. By protecting the group’s eggs, they maximize the number of their common genes that will survive into future generations (Dugatkin, 2004).

Of course, animals sometimes help nonrelatives. For example, dolphins and lions will look after orphans within their own species. Similarly, a person who jumps into a lake to save a drowning stranger is probably not acting for the sake of genetic transmission. To help explain altruism toward nonrelatives, Robert Trivers (1971) proposed the idea of reciprocal helping. According to Trivers, one animal helps another because the other may return the favor in the future. Consider grooming, in which primates take turns cleaning each other’s fur: “You scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours.” For reciprocal helping to be adaptive, benefits must outweigh costs. Indeed, people are less likely to help others when the costs of doing so are high (Wagner & Wheeler, 1969). Reciprocal helping is also much more likely to occur among animals, such as humans, that live in social groups, because their species’ survival depends on cooperation. Thus, as discussed earlier, people are more likely to help members of their ingroups than to help members of outgroups. From an evolutionary perspective, then, altruism confers benefits. When an animal acts altruistically, it may increase the chances that its genes will be transmitted. The altruistic animal may also increase the likelihood that other members of the social group will reciprocate when needed.

**Bystander Intervention** In 1964, a young woman named Kitty Genovese was walking home from work in a relatively safe area of New York City. An assailant savagely attacked her for half an hour, eventually killing her. At the time, a newspaper reported that none of the 38 witnesses to the crime tried to help or called the police. As you might imagine, most people who followed the story were outraged that 38 people could sit by and watch a brutal murder (FIGURE 12.17). That story appears to have been
wrong, however. Few of the witnesses were in a position to observe what was happening to Genovese (Manning, Levine, & Collins, 2007), and at least two people did call the police.

Yet the idea of 38 silent witnesses prompted researchers to undertake important research on how people react in emergencies. Shortly after the Genovese murder, the social psychologists Bibb Latané and John Darley examined situations that produce the **bystander intervention effect**. This term refers to the failure to offer help by those who observe someone in need. Common sense might suggest that the more people who are available to help, the more likely it is that a victim will be helped. Latané and Darley made the paradoxical claim, however, that a person is less likely to offer help if other bystanders are around.

To test their theory, Latané and Darley conducted studies in which people were placed in situations that indicated they should seek help. In one of the first situations, male college students were in a room, filling out questionnaires (Latané & Darley, 1968). Pungent smoke started puffing in through the heating vents. Some participants were alone. Some were with two other naive participants. Some were with two confederates, who noticed the smoke, shrugged, and continued filling out their questionnaires. When participants were on their own, most went for help. When three naive participants were together, however, few initially went for help. With the two calm confederates, only 10 percent of participants went for help in the first 6 minutes (**FIGURE 12.18**). The other 90 percent “coughed, rubbed their eyes, and opened the window—but they did not report the smoke” (p. 218).

In subsequent studies, people were confronted with mock crimes, apparent heart attack victims in subway cars, and people passed out in public places. The experimenters obtained similar results each time. The bystander intervention effect has been shown to occur in a wide variety of contexts. Even divinity students, while rushing to give a lecture on the Good Samaritan—a biblical figure who helps a severely injured traveler—failed to help a person in apparent need of medical attention (Darley & Batson, 1973).

Years of research have indicated four major reasons for the bystander intervention effect. First, a **diffusion of responsibility** occurs. In other words, bystanders expect other bystanders to help. Thus, the greater the number of people who witness someone in need of help, the less likely it is that any of them will step forward. Second, people fear making **social blunders** in ambiguous situations. All the laboratory situations had some degree of ambiguity, and people may have worried that they would look foolish if they sought help that was not needed. There is evidence that people feel less constrained from seeking help as the need for help becomes clearer (Fischer et al., 2011). In the Genovese murder case, some of the witnesses found the situation unclear and therefore might have been reluctant to call the police. Third, people are less likely to help when they are **anonymous** and can remain so. Therefore, if you need help, it is often wise to point to a specific person and request her help by saying something like, “You, in the red shirt, call an ambulance!” Fourth, people weigh two factors: How much harm do they risk to themselves by helping? What benefits might they have to forgo if they help? Imagine you are walking to a potentially dull class on a beautiful day. Right in front of you, someone falls down, twists an ankle, and needs transportation to the nearest clinic. You probably would be willing to help. Now imagine you are running to a final exam.
What is inclusive fitness?

12.8 Cooperation Can Reduce Outgroup Bias

Can the findings of social psychology be used to encourage harmony between groups? Since the 1950s, social psychologists have worked with politicians, activists, and others in numerous attempts to alleviate the hostility and violence between factions. Beliefs about ethnic groups are embedded deeply in cultural and religious values, however, and it is extraordinarily difficult to change such beliefs. Around the world, groups clash over disputes that predate the births of most of the combatants. Sometimes people cannot even remember the original sources of particular conflicts. There have been success stories, however, such as the reconciliation between the Tutsi and Hutu 20 years after the genocide in Rwanda. There have also been examples of people banding together to help those outside their groups. Recall the earthquakes and tsunamis in Japan in 2011, when thousands of people were killed, or the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010, when hundreds of thousands of people were killed and millions were left homeless (FIGURE 12.19). The international responses to these tragedies show that people respond to outgroup members in need. In working together toward a greater purpose, people can overcome intergroup hostilities.

Social psychology may be able to suggest strategies for promoting intergroup harmony and producing greater tolerance for outgroups. The first study to suggest so was conducted in the 1950s by Muzafer Sherif and colleagues (1961). Sherif arranged for 22 well-adjusted and intelligent fifth-grade boys from Oklahoma City to attend a summer camp at a lake. The boys did not know each other. Before arriving at camp, they were divided into two groups that were essentially the same. During the first week, each group lived in a separate camp on a different side of the lake. Neither group knew that the other group existed.

The next week, over a four-day period, the groups competed in an athletic tournament. They played games such as tug-of-war, football, and softball, and the stakes
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were high. The winning team would receive a trophy, individual medals, and appealing prizes. The losers would receive nothing. The groups named themselves the Rattlers and the Eagles. Group pride was extremely strong, and animosity between the groups quickly escalated. The Eagles burned the Rattlers’ flag, and the Rattlers retaliated by trashing the Eagles’ cabin. Eventually, confrontations and physical fights had to be broken up by the experimenters. All the typical signs of prejudice emerged, including the outgroup homogeneity effect and ingroup favoritism. (Prejudice and discrimination are defined and discussed in Sections 12.13–14.)

Phase 1 of the study was complete. Sherif had shown how easy it was to make people hate each other: Simply divide them into groups and have the groups compete, and prejudice and mistreatment will result (FIGURE 12.20). Phase 2 of the study then explored whether the hostility could be undone.

Sherif first tried what made sense at the time: simply having the groups come in contact with each other. This approach failed miserably. The hostilities were too strong, and skirmishes continued. Sherif reasoned that if competition led to hostility, then cooperation should reduce hostility. The experimenters created situations in which members of both groups had to cooperate to achieve necessary goals. For instance, the experimenters rigged a truck to break down. Getting the truck moving required all the boys to pull together. In an ironic twist, the boys had to use the same rope they used earlier in the tug-of-war. When they succeeded, a great cheer arose from the boys, with plenty of backslapping all around. After a series of tasks that required cooperation, the walls between the two sides broke down, and the boys became friends across the groups (FIGURE 12.21). Among strangers, competition and isolation created enemies. Among enemies, cooperation created friends.

Research over the past four decades has indicated that only certain types of contact between hostile groups is likely to reduce prejudice and discrimination. Shared superordinate goals—goals that require people to cooperate—reduce hostility between groups. People who work together to achieve a common goal often break down subgroup distinctions as they become one larger group (Dovidio et al., 2004). For example, athletes on multiethnic teams often develop positive feelings toward other ethnicities.

What is the key to building cooperation between groups?

ANSWER: Have clear shared superordinate goals.
How Do Attitudes Guide Behavior?

You probably have feelings, opinions, and beliefs about yourself, your friends, your favorite television program, and so on. These feelings, opinions, and beliefs are called attitudes. Such evaluations of objects, of events, or of ideas are central to social psychology. Attitudes are shaped by social context, and they play an important role in how we evaluate and interact with other people.

People have attitudes about all sorts of things. For example, people have opinions on trivial and mundane matters, such as which deodorant works best. They also form positions on grand issues, such as politics, morals, and religion—that is, the core beliefs and values that define who one is as a human being. Some attitudes are held consciously, while others remain below conscious awareness. This section considers how attitudes affect people’s daily lives.

12.9 People Form Attitudes Through Experience and Socialization

Throughout life, people encounter new things. Those things can be objects, other people, or situations. When people hear about things, read about them, or experience them directly, they learn about them and perhaps explore them. Through this process, they gain information that shapes their attitudes. Generally, people develop negative attitudes about new things more quickly than they develop positive attitudes about them (Fazio, Eisner, & Shook, 2004). Throughout evolution, sensitivity to learning about danger would have been particularly adaptive. While missing out on something pleasurable may be a lost opportunity, it is unlikely that such a loss would produce a really bad outcome. Ignoring danger, however, might be deadly. In general, bad is always a stronger motivating force than good (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001).

People talk about acquiring a taste for foods that they did not like originally, such as bleu cheese or sushi. How do they come to like something that they could not stand the first time they were exposed to it? Typically, the more people are exposed to something, the more they tend to like it. In a classic set of studies, Robert Zajonc (1968, 2001) exposed people to unfamiliar items a few times or many times. Greater exposure to the item, and therefore greater familiarity with it, caused people to have more-positive attitudes about the item. This process is called the mere exposure effect.

For example, when people are presented with normal photographs of themselves and the same images reversed, they tend to prefer the reversed versions. Why would this be the case? The reversed images correspond to what people see when they look in the mirror (FIGURE 12.22). People's associations between things and their meanings can change, attitudes can be conditioned (for a full discussion of conditioning, see Chapter 6). Advertisers often use classical conditioning. When people see a celebrity paired with a product, they tend to develop more-positive attitudes about the product. After conditioning, a formerly neutral stimulus (e.g., a deodorant) triggers the same attitude response as the paired object (e.g., George Clooney if he

FIGURE 12.22
The Mere Exposure Effect
If he is like most people, Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau will prefer (right) his mirror image to (left) his photographic image. There is nothing wrong with the photographic image. Trudeau will simply be more familiar with the mirror image.
were to endorse a deodorant). Operant conditioning also shapes attitudes: If you are rewarded with good grades each time you study, you will develop a more positive attitude toward studying.

Attitudes are also shaped through socialization (Figure 12.23). Caregivers, peers, teachers, religious leaders, politicians, and media figures guide people’s attitudes about many things. For example, teenagers’ attitudes about clothing styles and music, about behaviors such as smoking and drinking alcohol, and about the latest celebrities are heavily influenced by their peers’ beliefs. Society instills many basic attitudes, including which things are edible. For instance, many Hindus do not eat beef, whereas many Jews do not eat pork.

**ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOR CONSISTENCY** In general, the stronger and more personally relevant the attitude, the more likely it is to predict behavior. The strong and personally relevant nature of the attitude will lead the person to act the same across situations related to that attitude. It will also lead the person to defend the attitude. For instance, someone who grew up in a strongly Democratic household, especially one where derogatory comments about Republicans were expressed frequently, is more likely to register as a Democrat and vote Democratic than someone who grew up in a more politically neutral environment.

Moreover, the more specific the attitude, the more predictive it is. For instance, your attitudes toward recycling are more predictive of whether you take your soda cans to a recycling bin than are your general environmental beliefs. Attitudes formed through direct experience also tend to predict behavior better. Consider parenthood. No matter what kind of parent you think you will be, by the time you have seen one child through toddlerhood, you will have formed very strong attitudes about child-rearing techniques. These attitudes will predict how you approach the early months and years of your second child.

Another factor predicting behavior is how quickly your attitude comes to mind. **Attitude accessibility** refers to the ease or difficulty that a person has in retrieving an attitude from memory. This accessibility predicts behavior consistent with the attitude. Russell Fazio (1995) has shown that easily activated attitudes are more stable, predictive of behavior, and resistant to change. Thus, the more quickly you recall that you like your psychology course, the more likely you are to attend lectures and read the textbook.

**EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT ATTITUDES** How do you know your attitude about something? Recall from Chapter 4 that access to mental processes is limited and that unconscious processes can influence behavior. People’s conscious awareness of their attitudes can be limited because of several factors, such as their desire to believe they hold positive attitudes about certain racial groups, but their actions can reveal their less positive attitudes (Nosek, Hawkins, & Frazier, 2011).

Over the last 20 years, researchers have demonstrated that attitudes can be explicit or implicit and that these different attitudes have different effects on behavior. **Explicit attitudes** are those you know about and can report to other people. If you say you like bowling, you are stating your explicit attitude toward it. Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji (1995) have noted that people’s many **implicit attitudes** influence their feelings and behaviors at an unconscious level. People access implicit attitudes from memory quickly, with little conscious effort or control. In this way, implicit attitudes function like implicit memories. As discussed in Chapter 7, implicit memories

**FIGURE 12.23**
Socialization Shapes Attitudes
This photo was taken in Gainesville, Georgia, in 1992. The child’s attitudes about African Americans may have been socialized by his parents’ involvement with a racist organization.
make it possible for people to perform actions, such as riding a bicycle, without thinking through all the required steps. Similarly, you might purchase a product endorsed by a celebrity even though you have no conscious memory of having seen the celebrity use the product. The product might simply look familiar to you. Some evidence suggests that implicit attitudes involve brain regions associated with implicit rather than explicit memory (Lieberman, 2000).

One method researchers use to assess implicit attitudes is a reaction time test called the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). The IAT measures how quickly a person associates concepts or objects with positive or negative words. For example, according to the developers of the method, having to use the same button to indicate that a name is female or that a word is bad implies an association between female and bad (FIGURE 12.24). Responding more quickly when a button is used to indicate female or good (Figure 12.24, condition 2) than when the same button is used to indicate female or bad (Figure 12.24, condition 4) indicates a person’s implicit attitude about females. A typical female will tend to respond more quickly when female is paired with good than when female is paired with bad. This difference in reaction time is proposed to indicate the degree of implicit bias.

Use of the IAT has become controversial. An early meta-analysis of more than 100 studies found that, in socially sensitive situations in which people might not want to admit their real attitudes, the IAT is a better predictor of behavior than explicit self-reports are (Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009). However, more-recent evidence suggests that the IAT may not be an effective way to predict racial and ethnic discrimination (Oswald, Mitchell, Blanton, Jaccard, & Tetlock, 2013). Indeed, there is growing concern that the public perception of the IAT greatly exaggerates its ability to accurately identify racial bias or predict biased behavior. At this time, there is no reliable way to measure whether someone has unconscious bias.

Q Suppose that the more times you taste an unfamiliar food, the more you like it. Why does this happen?

ANSWER: According to the mere exposure effect, greater exposure leads to greater liking.
12.10 Discrepancies Lead to Dissonance

Generally, attitudes seem to guide behavior. Citizens vote for candidates they like, and people avoid foods they do not like. What happens when people hold conflicting attitudes? In 1957, the social psychologist Leon Festinger answered that question by proposing the theory of [cognitive dissonance](FIGURE 12.25).

According to this theory, dissonance—a lack of agreement—occurs when there is a contradiction between two attitudes or between an attitude and a behavior. For example, people experience cognitive dissonance when they smoke even though they know that smoking might kill them. A basic assumption of cognitive dissonance theory is that dissonance causes anxiety and tension. Anxiety and tension cause displeasure. Displeasure motivates people to reduce dissonance. Generally, people reduce dissonance by changing their attitudes or behaviors. They sometimes also rationalize or trivialize the discrepancies.

**INSUFFICIENT JUSTIFICATION** In one of the original dissonance studies, each participant performed an extremely boring task for an hour (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). The experimenter then paid the participant $1 or $20 to lie and tell the next participant that the task was really interesting, educational, and worthwhile. Nearly all the participants subsequently provided the false information. Later, under the guise of a different survey, the same participants were asked how worthwhile and enjoyable the task had actually been. You might think that those paid $20 remembered the task as more enjoyable, but just the opposite happened. Participants who had been paid $1 rated the task much more favorably than those who had been paid $20.

According to the researchers, this effect occurred because those paid $1 had insufficient monetary justification for lying. Therefore, to justify why they went along with the lie, they changed their attitudes about performing the dull experimental task. Those paid $20 had plenty of justification for lying, since $20 was a large amount of money in 1959 (roughly equivalent to $150 today), so they did not experience dissonance and did not have to change their attitudes about the task (FIGURE 12.26). As this research shows, one way to get people to change their attitudes is to change their behaviors first, using as few incentives as possible.

**POSTDECISIONAL DISSONANCE** According to cognitive dissonance theory, dissonance can arise when a person holds positive attitudes about different options but has to choose one of the options. For example, a person might have trouble deciding which of many excellent colleges to attend. The person might narrow the choice to two or three alternatives and then have to choose. Postdecisional dissonance then motivates the person to focus on one school’s—the chosen school’s—positive aspects and the other schools’ negative aspects. This effect occurs automatically, with minimal cognitive processing, and apparently without awareness. Indeed, even patients with long-term memory loss may show postdecisional effects for past choices, even if the patients do not consciously recall which items they chose (Lieberman, Ochsner, Gilbert, & Schacter, 2001).

**JUSTIFYING EFFORT** So far, the discussion of people’s attitudes has focused on changes in individual behavior. What about group-related behavior? Consider the extreme group-related behaviors of initiation rites. On college campuses, administrators impose rules and penalties to discourage hazing, yet some fraternities and sororities continue to do it. The groups require new recruits to undergo embarrassing
or difficult rites of passage because these endurance tests make membership in the group seem much more valuable. The tests also make the group more cohesive.

To test these ideas, Eliot Aronson and Judson Mills (1959) required women to undergo a test to see if they qualified to take part in a research study. Some women had to read a list of obscene words and sexually explicit passages in front of the male experimenter. In the 1950s, this task was very difficult for many women and took considerable effort. A control group read a list of milder words, such as prostitute. Participants in both conditions then listened to a boring and technical presentation about mating rituals in lower animals. Women who had read the embarrassing words reported that the presentation was much more interesting, stimulating, and important than did the women who had read the milder words.

As this research shows, when people put themselves through pain, embarrassment, or discomfort to join a group, they experience a great deal of dissonance. After all, they typically would not choose to be in pain, embarrassed, or uncomfortable. Yet they made such a choice. They resolve the dissonance by inflating the importance of the group and their commitment to it. This justification of effort helps explain why people are willing to subject themselves to humiliating experiences such as hazing (FIGURE 12.27). More tragically, it may help explain why people who give up connections to families and friends to join cults or to follow enigmatic leaders are willing to die rather than leave the groups. If they have sacrificed so much to join a group, people believe the group must be extraordinarily important.

Before buying a car, your aunt spent months choosing between two options. Once she decided, she claimed that the right choice was always obvious because the one car is so much better. Why might your aunt believe this?

12.11 Attitudes Can Be Changed Through Persuasion

A number of forces other than dissonance can conspire to change attitudes. People are bombarded by television advertisements; lectures from parents, teachers, and physicians; pressure from peers; public service announcements; politicians appealing for votes; and so on. Persuasion is the active and conscious effort to change an attitude through the transmission of a message. In the earliest scientific work on persuasion, Carl Hovland and colleagues (1953) emphasized that persuasion is most likely to occur when people pay attention to a message, understand it, and find it convincing. In addition, the message must be memorable, so its impact lasts over time.

Various factors affect the persuasiveness of a message (Petty & Wegener, 1998). These factors include the source (who delivers the message), the content (what the message says), and the receiver (who processes the message). Sources who are both attractive and credible are the most persuasive. Thus, television ads for medicines and medical services often feature very attractive people playing the roles of physicians. Even better, of course, is when a drug company ad uses a spokesperson who is both attractive and an actual doctor. Credibility and persuasiveness may also be heightened when the receiver perceives the source as similar to himself.

Of course, the arguments in the message are also important for persuasion (Greenwald, 1968). Strong arguments that appeal to emotions are the most persuasive. Advertisers also use the mere exposure effect, repeating the message over and over in the hope that multiple exposures will lead to increased persuasiveness. For this reason, politicians often make the same statements over and over during campaigns.
Those who want to persuade (including, of course, politicians) also have to decide whether to deliver one-sided arguments or to consider both sides of particular issues. One-sided arguments work best when the audience is on the speaker’s side or is gullible. With a more skeptical crowd, speakers who acknowledge both sides but argue that one is superior tend to be more persuasive than those who completely ignore the opposing view.

According to the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), persuasive communication leads to attitude change in two fundamental ways (FIGURE 12.28). When people are motivated to process information and are able to process that information, persuasion takes the central route. That is, people are paying attention to the arguments, considering all the information, and using rational cognitive processes. This route leads to strong attitudes that last over time and that people actively defend. When people are either not motivated to process information or are unable to process it, persuasion takes the peripheral route. That is, people minimally process the message. This route leads to more-impulsive action, as when a person decides to purchase a product because a celebrity has endorsed it or because of how an advertisement makes the person feel. Peripheral cues, such as the attractiveness or status of the person making the argument, influence what attitude is adopted. Attitudes developed through the peripheral route are weaker and more likely to change over time.

**Q** Describing both sides of a position before emphasizing the superiority of one side is particularly persuasive under what circumstance?

**ANSWER:**

When the person being persuaded is skeptical about the speaker’s position.

**FIGURE 12.28**

The Elaboration Likelihood Model

When people are motivated and able to consider information, they process it via the central route. As a result, their attitude changes reflect cognitive elaboration (left). When people are either not motivated or not able to consider information, they process it via the peripheral route. As a result, their attitude changes reflect the presence or absence of shallow peripheral cues. For example, as a result of peripheral processing, people may be persuaded because the person making an argument is attractive or a celebrity (right).
How Do People Think About Others?

As social psychologists have shown, long-term evaluations of people are heavily influenced by first impressions. But the factors that affect first impressions can lead to perceptual biases. For instance, when one person’s gender or skin color leads someone else to automatically think about the person in particular ways, those first impressions can often be mistaken.

12.12 People Make Judgments About Others

When someone walks toward you, you make a number of quick judgments. For example, do you know the person? Does the person pose a threat? Do you want to know the person better?

The first thing people notice about another person is usually the face. When human babies are less than an hour old, they prefer to look at and will track a picture of a human face rather than a blank outline of a head (Morton & Johnson, 1991). After all, the face communicates information such as emotional state, interest, competence, and trustworthiness. In one study, participants were shown pairs of faces of candidates who were competing in U.S. congressional elections. The people selected as the most competent, based solely on facial appearance, won nearly 70 percent of the actual elections (Todorov, Mandisodza, Goren, & Hall, 2005). Throughout human evolution, it has been crucial to identify others who might not be trustworthy. By age 7, children can make judgments about whether a face is trustworthy or not (using descriptors such as nice or mean) that match adult consensus judgments (Cogsdill, Todorov, Spelke, & Banaji, 2014). As mentioned in Chapter 10, the amygdala is particularly important for judging trustworthiness.

NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR

Facial expressions, gestures, mannerisms, and movements are all examples of nonverbal behavior, sometimes referred to as body language (FIGURE 12.29). How much can be learned from nonverbal behavior? Nalini Ambady and Robert Rosenthal (1993) have found that people can make accurate judgments based on only a few seconds of observation. Ambady and Rosenthal refer to such
quick views as thin slices of behavior. Thin slices of behavior are powerful cues for impression formation. For instance, videotapes of judges giving instructions to juries reveal that a judge’s nonverbal actions can predict whether a jury will find the defendant guilty or not guilty (Hart, 1995). Judges, perhaps unconsciously, may indicate their beliefs about guilt or innocence through facial expressions, tones of voice, and gestures. Another good example of thin slices is “gaydar,” people’s seeming ability to judge other people’s sexual orientation from afar. There is substantial evidence that people are quite accurate in judging sexual orientation based on nonverbal behavior (Rule & Alaei, 2016).

ATTRIBUTIONAL DIMENSIONS People constantly try to explain other people’s motives, traits, and preferences. Attributes are explanations for events or actions, including other people’s behavior. People are motivated to draw inferences in part by a basic need for both order and predictability. The world can be a dangerous place in which many unexpected things happen. People prefer to think that things happen for reasons and that therefore they can anticipate future events. For instance, you might expect that if you study for an exam, you will do well on it.

In any situation, various plausible explanations may exist for specific outcomes. For example, doing well on a test could be due to brilliance, luck, intensive studying, the test’s being unexpectedly easy, or a combination of factors. Fritz Heider (1944), the originator of attribution theory, drew an essential distinction between two types of attributions. Personal attributions are internal or dispositional attributions. These explanations refer to things within people, such as abilities, moods, or efforts. For instance, if you believe you did well on an exam because you worked hard and are smart, you are making a personal attribution. Situational attributions are external attributions. These explanations refer to outside events, such as luck, accidents, or the actions of other people. Thus, if you blame poor test performance on the quality of the exam items, then you are making a situational attribution.

Bernard Weiner (1974) noted that attributions can vary on other dimensions. For example, attributions can be stable over time (permanent) or unstable (temporary). They can be controllable or uncontrollable. Blaming your field hockey team’s loss on the weather involves making situational, unstable, and uncontrollable attributions. Explaining that hard work produced your team’s winning season reflects making personal, stable, and controllable attributions.

ATTRIBUTIONAL BIAS Social psychologists such as Fritz Heider and Harold Kelley have described people as intuitive scientists who try to draw inferences about others and make attributions about events. Unlike objective scientists, however, people tend to be systematically biased when they process social information. When explaining other people’s behavior, people tend to overemphasize the importance of personality traits and underestimate the importance of situations. Edward Jones called it the correspondence bias to emphasize the expectancy that people’s actions correspond with their beliefs and personalities (Jones & Davis, 1965). For example, someone who follows orders to inflict harm on another, as in the obedience study, is assumed to be an evil person. This tendency is so pervasive that it has been called the fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977).

People generally fail to take into account that other people are influenced by social circumstances, such as the social pressures that lead to obedience to authority. Consider the host of Jeopardy!, Alex Trebek. Viewers exhibit the fundamental attribution error when they assume Trebek must be very smart because he knows so much information. Trebek may indeed be very smart. But when viewers develop this belief based on his performance on the show, they neglect to take into account that
he knows the questions and the answers because writers have provided them on cards (FIGURE 12.30).

In contrast, when people make attributions about themselves, they tend to focus on situations rather than on their personal dispositions. In conjunction with the fundamental attribution error, this focus on personal situations leads to the actor/observer discrepancy. This term refers to two tendencies: When interpreting their own behavior, people tend to focus on situations. When interpreting other people's behavior, they tend to focus on dispositions. For instance, people tend to attribute their own lateness to external factors, such as traffic or competing demands. They tend to attribute other people's lateness to personal characteristics, such as laziness or lack of organization. According to a meta-analysis of 173 studies, the actor/observer effect is not large and happens mainly for negative events or when people explain the behavior of people they know well (Malle, 2006).

Is the fundamental attribution error really fundamental? That is, does it occur across cultures, or do attributional styles differ between Eastern cultures and Western cultures? As discussed in Chapter 1, people in Eastern cultures tend to be more holistic in how they perceive the world. They see the forest rather than individual trees. On average, people in Eastern cultures use much more information when making attributions than do people in Western cultures, and they are more likely to believe that human behavior is the outcome of both personal and situational factors (Choi, Dalal, Kim-Prieto, & Park, 2003; Miyamoto & Kitayama, 2002). Although Easterners are more likely than Westerners to take situational forces into account, however, they still tend to favor personal information over situational information when making attributions about others (Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999). Thus, in interpreting behavior, cultures tend not to differ in whether they emphasize personal factors. Instead, cultures differ in how much they emphasize the situation.

What does the actor/observer discrepancy predict about how you would explain being late for class compared with another student’s being late for class?

ANSWER: You would attribute your lateness to situational factors, whereas you would attribute your classmate's lateness to her personality.

FIGURE 12.30
Fundamental Attribution Error
Since 1984, Alex Trebek has hosted the enormously popular television game show Jeopardy! Here, Trebek converses with three contestants on the show. Can we judge from this interaction how smart Trebek is?

actor/observer discrepancy
People focus on situations to explain their own behaviors while focusing on dispositions to explain other people’s behavior.

12.13 Stereotypes Can Lead to Prejudice and Discrimination

Do all Italians have fiery tempers? Do all Canadians like hockey? Can white women rap? People hold beliefs about groups because such beliefs make it possible to answer these sorts of questions quickly (FIGURE 12.31). As discussed in Chapter 8, such beliefs are stereotypes. That is, they are cognitive schemas that help in the organization of information about people on the basis of their membership in certain groups. Mental shortcuts are forms of heuristic thinking: They enable people to make quick decisions. Stereotypes are mental shortcuts that allow for easy, fast processing of social information. Stereotyping occurs automatically and, in most cases, outside of awareness (Devine, 1989).

In and of themselves, stereotypes are neutral. They simply reflect efficient cognitive processes. They can contain information that is negative or positive. Some stereotypes are based in truth: Men tend to be more violent than women, and women tend to be more nurturing than men. These statements are true on average. However, not all men are violent, nor are all women nurturing.
People construct and use such categories for two basic reasons: to streamline the formation of impressions and to deal with the limitations inherent in mental processing (Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen, 1994). That is, because of limited mental resources, people cannot scrutinize every person they encounter. Rather than consider each person as unique and unpredictable, people categorize others as belonging to particular groups. They hold knowledge about the groups in long-term memory. For example, they might automatically categorize others on the basis of clothing or hairstyles. Once they have put others into particular categories, they will have beliefs about the others based on stereotypes about the particular categories. That is, stereotypes affect the formation of impressions, which can be positive or negative (Kunda & Spencer, 2003). Consider the stereotype that men are more likely than women to be famous. As a result of this stereotype, people are more likely to falsely remember a male name than a female name as that of a famous person (Banaji & Greenwald, 1995; this misremembering, the false fame effect, is discussed further in Chapter 7).

Once people form stereotypes, they maintain them by numerous processes. As schemas, stereotypes guide attention toward information that confirms the stereotypes and away from disconfirming evidence. Memories may also become biased to match stereotypes. As a result of directed attention and memory biases, people may see illusory correlations. Such correlations are an example of the psychological reasoning error (discussed in Chapter 1 and in Section 6.9, “Think like a Psychologist: How Do Superstitions Start?”) of seeing relationships that do not exist. In this case, people believe false relationships because they notice only information that confirms their stereotypes. For example, one type of behavior might be perceived in different ways so it is consistent with a stereotype. A lawyer described as aggressive and a construction worker described as aggressive conjure up different images.

Moreover, when people encounter someone who does not fit a stereotype, they put that person in a special category rather than alter the stereotype. This latter process is known as subtyping. Thus, a racist who believes Latinos are lazy may categorize a superstar such as Salma Hayek or Jennifer Lopez as an exception to the rule rather than as evidence for the invalidity of the stereotype. Forming a subtype that includes successful Latinos allows the racist to maintain his or her stereotype that Latinos are lazy.
SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

CHAPTER 12

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

Stereotypes may be positive, neutral, or negative. When they are negative, stereotypes can lead to prejudice and discrimination. Prejudice involves negative feelings, opinions, and beliefs associated with a stereotype. Discrimination is the inappropriate and unjustified treatment of people as a result of prejudice. Prejudice and discrimination are responsible for much of the conflict and warfare around the world. Within nearly all cultures, some groups of people are treated negatively because of prejudice. Over the last half century, social psychologists have studied the causes and consequences of prejudice, and they have tried to find ways to reduce its destructive effects.

Why do stereotypes so often lead to prejudice and discrimination? Various researchers have theorized that only certain types of people are prejudiced, that people treat others as scapegoats to relieve the tensions of daily living, and that people discriminate against others to protect their own self-esteem. One overarching explanation, consistent with our discussion in Section 12.1, is that evolution has led to two processes that produce prejudice and discrimination: People tend to favor their own groups over other groups, and people tend to stigmatize those who pose threats to their groups. From the perspectives of competition between groups over scarce resources and of social identity theory, it is understandable that people can feel threatened by anything that favors the outgroup at the expense of the ingroup. People are hardwired to categorize people into groups and to defend the ingroups to which they belong and with which they identify.

STEREOTYPES AND PERCEPTION

So far, the discussion of stereotypes has focused on beliefs and behavior. What does social psychology have to say about perception itself?

As mentioned earlier, stereotypes can affect attention. Indeed, research has shown that stereotypes can influence basic perceptual processes. In two experiments that demonstrated this influence, white participants looked at pictures of either tools or guns and were asked to classify them as quickly as possible (Payne, 2001). Immediately before seeing a picture, the participants were briefly shown a picture of a white face or a black face. They were told that the face was being shown to signal that either a gun or a tool would appear next. Being shown a black face led the participants to identify guns more quickly and to mistake tools for guns (FIGURE 12.32). Another study, in which over 90 percent of the participants were white, found that the reverse is also true: Priming people with pictures of weapons, such as guns and knives, may lead them to pay greater attention to pictures of black faces than to pictures of white faces (Eberhardt, Goff, Purdie, & Davies, 2004). In 2017, the Colgate University campus was locked down due to a report of an armed person in the student center. It turned out that a black student was holding a glue gun on his way to work on an art project. In a letter to the community, the Colgate president, Brian Casey, suggested that implicit bias might have played a role in both the reporting of the incident and the response of safety officers.

PREJUDICE

Negative feelings, opinions, and beliefs associated with a stereotype.

discrimination

The inappropriate and unjustified treatment of people as a result of prejudice.

FIGURE 12.32

Stereotypes and Perception

(a) Participants were briefly shown a picture of a black or white face. (b) The participants were then immediately shown an object and asked to classify it as a gun or tool. Participants primed by seeing black faces identified guns more quickly and mistook tools for guns. The study revealed that stereotypes can influence basic perceptual processes.
Using a virtual reality simulation, Greenwald, Oakes, and Hoffman (2003) required each participant in a study to play the role of a police officer. On each trial, the participant had to respond, or not, as three things appeared: When a criminal was holding a gun, the participant needed to click a computer mouse to shoot the criminal; when a fellow police officer was holding a gun, the participant needed to press the space bar; when a civilian was holding a neutral object, the participant needed to do nothing. In some trials, the criminal holding a gun was a white male and the police officer holding a gun was a black male. In the other trials, these pairings were reversed. Whatever their assigned roles in the study, blacks were more likely to be incorrectly shot. These shootings occurred, in part, because the participants were more likely to identify as weapons the objects held by the blacks.

Fortunately, there is evidence that special computerized training—in which race is unrelated to the presence of a weapon—can help police officers avoid racial bias in deciding when to shoot (Plant & Peruche, 2005). Research compared police officers who received this training with community members who had not. In simulated decisions to shoot or not shoot blacks and whites, the police officers were much less likely to shoot unarmed people and were equally likely to shoot armed blacks and whites (Correll et al., 2007). The community members were more likely to shoot unarmed black targets. Thus, training seems to be able to override the effects of stereotypes.

MODERN PREJUDICE

Even people who believe themselves to be egalitarian may hold negative implicit attitudes about certain groups of people. In 2014, when the Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban said he would cross the street to avoid a black man in a hoodie or a white person looking like a skinhead, he was acknowledging his prejudices even as he condemned himself for having them. Although nowadays few people openly admit to being racist, and many explicitly reject racist attitudes, there remain more subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination. Social psychologists have introduced the idea of modern racism, which refers to subtle forms of prejudice that coexist with the rejection of racist beliefs. Modern racists tend to believe that discrimination is no longer a serious problem and that minority groups are demanding too much societal change, as in too many changes to traditional values (Henry & Sears, 2000). Modern racism often leaks out more through indifference to the concerns of minority group members than through overt negativity. For instance, people may condemn racist attitudes toward Latinos but be unwilling to help a Latino in need (Abad-Merino, Newheiser, Dovidio, Tabernero, & González, 2013).

Because most people are reluctant to acknowledge explicit racist attitudes, researchers use questionnaires, such as the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986), to measure subtle prejudices. For example, a version of this scale was used to assess subtle racism against Asians in Canada (Son Hing, Chung-Yan, Hamilton, & Zanna, 2008). Participants were asked to agree or disagree with statements such as “There are too many foreign students of Asian descent being allowed to attend university in Canada,” “Discrimination against Asians is no longer a problem in Canada,” and “It is too easy for Asians to illegally arrive in Canada and receive refugee status.”

Modern racism arises in part because the equal treatment of minorities can challenge traditions associated with the majority. Other prejudices also have modern subtle forms, such as people who say that gay and lesbian people should not face discrimination but are reluctant to support same-sex marriage because it threatens the traditional definition of marriage as being between a man and a woman (FIGURE 12.33).

What is the difference between prejudice and discrimination?

**ANSWER:** Prejudice involves negative attitudes associated with stereotypes, whereas discrimination involves negative treatment or people. Because modern racism is subtle, it may be more difficult to identify than overt discrimination.
12.14 Prejudice Can Be Reduced

As noted in Section 12.8, having people work on superordinate goals can reduce outgroup bias. These methods also reduce prejudice. Even simply imagining positive social interactions with outgroup members can reduce prejudice and increase prosocial behaviors toward outgroup members (Miles & Crisp, 2014). In addition, other strategies have been shown to reduce prejudice. For example, bilingual instruction in schools lessens ingroup favoritism among elementary school children (Wright & Tropp, 2005). Prejudice can also be reduced through explicit efforts to train people about stereotypical associations. For example, participants who practice associating women and counter-stereotypical qualities—for example, strength and dominance—are more likely than a control group to choose to hire women (Kawakami, Dovidio, & van Kamp, 2005).

People who face discrimination can also take steps to combat prejudice. Strategies such as trying to hide or escape from a stigmatizing condition—think of a gay person “staying in the closet”—often leave prejudice intact, but two strategies that combat prejudice are reframing and self-labeling (Wang, Whitson, Anicich, Kray, & Galinsky, 2017). Reframing involves taking a negative stereotype and transforming it from a weakness into a strength. For instance, women are often stereotyped as being weak negotiators. However, if negotiation is reframed as requiring more stereotypically feminine traits, such as being a good listener and relying on intuition, then female negotiators outperform men. Self-labeling involves embracing the very slurs used against you (e.g., queer). Taking ownership of the slur can provide a sense of power to those who are stigmatized (Galinksy et al., 2013). Self-labeling with a slur can reduce its negative associations in the minds of observers.

INHIBITING STEREOTYPES Patricia Devine (1989) made the important point that people can override the stereotypes they hold and act in nondiscriminatory ways. For instance, most people in North America know some of the negative stereotypes associated with Muslim Americans. When a non-Muslim North American encounters a Muslim person, the information in the stereotypes becomes cognitively available. According to Devine, people who are motivated to be low in prejudice override this automatic activation and act in a nondiscriminatory fashion. Although some automatic stereotypes alter how people perceive and understand the behavior of those they stereotype, simply categorizing people does not necessarily lead to mistreating them.

Indeed, numerous studies have shown that people can consciously alter their automatic stereotyping (Blair, 2002). For instance, Dasgupta and Greenwald (2001) found that presenting positive examples of admired black individuals (e.g., Denzel Washington) produced more-favorable responses toward African Americans. In another study, training people to respond counter-stereotypically—as in having them press a “no” key when they saw an elderly person paired with a stereotype of the elderly—led to reduced automatic stereotyping in subsequent tasks (Kawakami, Dovidio, Moll, Hermsen, & Russin, 2000).

In everyday life, however, inhibiting stereotyped thinking is difficult and requires self-control (Monteith, Ashburn-Nardo, Voils, & Czopp, 2002). The challenge comes, in part, from the need for the frontal lobes to override the emotional responses associated with amygdala activity. As discussed throughout this book, the frontal lobes are important for controlling both thoughts and behavior, whereas the amygdala is involved in detecting potential threats. In one brain imaging study, the amygdala became activated when white participants were briefly shown pictures of black faces (Cunningham et al., 2004). In this context, the amygdala activity may indicate that the participants’ immediate responses to black faces were negative. If the faces were presented longer, however, the frontal lobes became active and the amygdala response decreased. Thus, the frontal lobes appear to have overridden the immediate reaction.
PERSPECTIVE TAKING AND PERSPECTIVE GIVING The technique called perspective taking involves people actively contemplating the psychological experiences of other people. Such contemplation can reduce racial bias and help to smooth potentially awkward interracial interactions (Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, & Galinsky, 2011). Taking another group’s perspective appears to reduce negative or positive stereotypes. In one study, participants who used perspective taking rated a typical construction worker to be smarter and more passionate and a typical doctor to be less intelligent and less passionate than did participants in the control condition who did not engage in perspective taking and used their stereotypes to rate a typical construction worker and doctor (Wang, Ku, Tai, & Galinsky, 2014). Taking the perspective of a transgender person markedly reduced prejudice in a sample of over 500 voters in Florida, an effect that persisted three months later (Broockman & Kalla, 2016).

The value of perspective taking for reducing prejudice may depend on whether the person is a member of the majority group or the minority group. In a study that included Palestinian and Israeli participants, perspective taking led the Israelis to the largest positive changes in attitude toward the Palestinians (Bruneau & Saxe, 2012). By contrast, perspective giving, in which people share their experiences of being targets of discrimination, led the Palestinians to the largest positive changes in attitude toward the Israelis. These results illustrate the critical roles, in reducing prejudice, of being heard for minority group members (e.g., the Palestinians) and listening for majority group members (i.e., the Israelis). Bruneau and Saxe (2012) found a similar pattern for Mexican immigrants and white Americans in Arizona (Figure 12.34). However, perspective taking by the Mexican group actually worsened their attitudes about white Americans. Disempowered groups may resent having to consider the perspectives of empowered groups (Bruneau & Saxe, 2010). Indeed, perspective taking can backfire whenever an individual feels threatened by the other group (Sassenrath, Hodges, & Pfattheicher, 2016). Social psychologists continue to conduct research to find the most useful ways to reduce intergroup hostility and reduce prejudice and discrimination (Oskamp, 2013).

What is perspective giving?

What Determines the Quality of Relationships?

Involvements between people sometimes lead to relationships. Here, the term relationships refers to connections with friends and romantic partners. Researchers have made considerable progress in identifying the factors that lead people to form relationships (Berscheid & Regan, 2005). Many of these findings consider the adaptive value of forming lasting affiliative bonds with others. As discussed in Chapter 10, humans have a fundamental need to belong. This chapter has further explored that strong need for social contact and the various factors that influence how people select friends and mates. Now let’s consider the quality of human relationships: how friendships develop, why people fall in love, why romantic relationships sometimes fail, and how people can work to sustain their romantic relationships. As you will see, many of the same principles are involved in choosing friends and choosing lovers.

Learning Objectives

- Identify factors that influence interpersonal attraction.
- Discuss the social and personal benefits that being attractive can bring.
- Distinguish between passionate and companionate love.
- Identify interpersonal styles and attributional styles that contribute to dissatisfaction in relationships and to the dissolution of relationships.
What factors influence which people become friends, lovers, or even enemies? Social psychologists have discovered a number of factors that predict people becoming friends or romantically involved. Some of these factors are situational, such as the frequency with which people come into contact, whereas others depend on specific personal characteristics, such as whether a person is judged to be trustworthy. For romantic relationships, psychologists have also identified certain physical characteristics that are found to be more or less attractive in a potential partner.

**12.15 Situational and Personal Factors Influence Interpersonal Attraction and Friendships**

**PROXIMITY AND FAMILIARITY** In an early study, Leon Festinger, Stanley Schachter, and Kurt Back (1950) examined friends in a college dorm. Because room assignments were random, the researchers were able to examine the effects of proximity on friendship. **Proximity** here simply means how often people come into contact with each other because they are physically nearby. The more people come into contact, the more likely they are to become friends. Indeed, friendships often form among people who belong to the same groups, clubs, and so on. In other words, people’s social networks tend to form with individuals they regularly come into contact with (Rivera, Soderstrom, & Uzzi, 2010).

Proximity might have its effects because of familiarity: People like familiar things more than unfamiliar ones. In fact, humans generally fear anything novel. This phenomenon is known as neophobia. By contrast, as discussed earlier, when people are repeatedly exposed to something, they tend to like the thing more over time. This effect—the mere exposure effect—has been demonstrated in hundreds of studies that have used various objects, including faces, geometric shapes, Chinese characters, and nonsense words (Zajonc, 2001). Familiarity can sometimes breed contempt rather than liking. The more we get to know someone, the more aware we become of how different that person is from us (Norton, Frost, & Ariely, 2007). And we tend to prefer people who are similar to us.

**BIRDS OF A FEATHER** Birds of a feather really do flock together (FIGURE 12.35). People similar in attitudes, values, interests, backgrounds, and personalities tend to like each other (Youyou, Schwartz, Stillwell, & Kosinski, 2017). In high school, people tend to be friends with those of the same sex, race or ethnicity, age, and year in school. College roommates who are most similar at the beginning of the school year are most likely to become good friends (Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988). The most successful romantic couples also tend to be the most physically similar, a phenomenon called the matching principle (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978; Caspi & Herbener, 1990). Of course, people can and do become friends with, become romantic partners with, and marry people of other races, people who are much older or younger, and so on. Such friendships and relationships tend to be based on other important similarities, such as values, education, and socioeconomic status.

**PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS** People tend to especially like those who have admirable personality characteristics and who are physically attractive. This tendency holds true whether people are choosing friends or lovers. In a now–classic study, Norman Anderson (1968) asked college students to rate 555 trait descriptions by how much they would like others who possessed those traits. As you might guess from the earlier discussion of who is rejected from social groups, people dislike cheaters and
WHAT DETERMINES THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS?

Table 12.2 The Ten Most Positive and Most Negative Personal Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOST POSITIVE</th>
<th>MOST NEGATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sincere</td>
<td>Unkind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>Untrustworthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Malicious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>Obnoxious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Truthful</td>
<td>Untruthful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Dishonest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>Cruel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependable</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-Minded</td>
<td>Phony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughtful</td>
<td>Liar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Anderson (1968).

others who drain group resources. Indeed, as shown in Table 12.2, the least likable characteristics are related to dishonesty, insincerity, and lack of personal warmth. Conversely, people especially like those who are kind, dependable, and trustworthy. Generally, people like those who have personal characteristics valuable to the group. For example, people like those whom they perceive to be competent or reliable much more than those they perceive to be incompetent or unreliable. People who seem overly competent or too perfect make others feel uncomfortable or inadequate, however, and small mistakes can make a person seem more human and therefore more likable. In one study, a highly competent person who spilled a cup of coffee on himself was rated more favorably than an equally competent person who did not perform this clumsy act (Helmreich, Aronson, & LeFan, 1970). This “pratfall effect” helps to humanize people and make others like them more.

PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS What determines physical attractiveness? Some standards of beauty, such as preferences for particular body types, appear to change over time and across cultures. Nevertheless, how people rate attractiveness is generally consistent across all cultures (Cunningham, Roberts, Barbee, Druen, & Wu, 1995). Indeed, brain imaging studies show activity in brain reward regions when both men and women see photographs of opposite-sex faces that have been rated as attractive by other people (Cloutier, Heatherton, Whalen, & Kelley, 2008).

As noted in Chapter 10, there is a general tendency in mate selection for men to seek physical attractiveness and for women to seek status. From an evolutionary point of view, men are attracted to signs of youth and fertility to maximize passing along their genes, whereas women are motivated to find partners who can provide resources for them and their offspring. If women truly are motivated in this way, we would expect them to show preferences for and be attracted to men displaying cues of dominance, strength, and earnings potential. Which physical characteristics might imply dominance in males? As noted earlier in this chapter, the hormone testosterone has been associated with ratings of dominance. One study found that men with the highest
level of testosterone had faces with a higher width-to-height ratio (Lefèvre, Lewis, Perrett, & Penke, 2013; FIGURE 12.36). If higher width-to-height ratio is a sign of dominance, then heterosexual women might be expected to find men with such characteristics most attractive. Recently, researchers had participants meet many potential partners using speed dating. Width-to-height ratio in men was associated with their perceived dominance, physical attractiveness, and likelihood of being chosen for a second date (Valentine, Li, Penke, & Perrett, 2014).

At a more general level, most people find symmetrical faces more attractive than asymmetrical ones (Perrett et al., 1999). This preference may be adaptive, because a lack of symmetry could indicate poor health or a genetic defect. Indeed, one study found evidence that people with more-symmetrical faces reported using fewer antibiotics during the preceding three years, indicating they may be more disease resistant (Thornhill & Gangestad, 2006). There are no racial differences in the extent to which faces are symmetrical, but biracial people tend to have more-symmetrical facial features and correspondingly are rated as more attractive than those who are uniracial (Phelan, 2006). It does not seem to matter which two races are involved in the genetic makeup.

In a cleverly designed study of what people find attractive, Langlois and Roggman (1990) used a computer program to combine (or “average”) various faces without regard to individual attractiveness. They found that as more faces were combined, participants rated the “averaged” faces as more attractive (FIGURE 12.37). People may view averaged faces as attractive because of the mere exposure effect. In other words, averaged faces may be more familiar than unusual faces. Other researchers contend that although averaged faces might be attractive, averaged attractive faces are rated more favorably than averaged unattractive faces (Perrett, May, & Yoshikawa, 1994).

Attractiveness can bring many important social benefits: Most people are drawn to those they find physically attractive (Langlois et al., 2000). Attractive people are less likely to be perceived as criminals; are given lighter sentences when convicted of crimes; are typically rated as happier, more intelligent, more sociable, more capable, more gifted, more successful, and less socially deviant; are paid more for doing the same work; and have greater career opportunities. These findings point to what Karen Dion and colleagues (1972) dubbed the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype.

Do attractive people actually possess characteristics consistent with the “what is beautiful is good” stereotype? The evidence on this issue is mixed. Attractive people tend to be more popular, more socially skilled, and healthier, but they are not necessarily smarter or happier (Feingold, 1992). Among studies of college students, the

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**FIGURE 12.36**

*Testosterone and Facial Width*

This figure shows the average faces of twenty men with the (left) lowest and (right) highest testosterone levels in two different samples of men (one sample on top, one sample on bottom). The men with the highest testosterone levels have wider faces.

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**“what is beautiful is good” stereotype**

The belief that attractive people are superior in most ways.

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**FIGURE 12.37**

*“Average” Is Attractive*

The more faces that are averaged together, the more attractive people find the outcome. The face on the right, a combination of 32 faces, typically is rated most attractive.
correlation between objective ratings of attractiveness and other characteristics appears small. In one study, multiple judges objectively rated the attractiveness of the participants. The researchers did not find any relationship between appearance and grades, number of personal relationships, financial resources, or just about anything (Diener, Wolsic, & Fujita, 1995). In addition, attractive people are similar to less attractive people in intelligence, life satisfaction, and self-esteem. Why does having all the benefits of attractiveness not lead to greater happiness? Possibly, attractive people learn to distrust attention from others, especially romantic attention (Reis et al., 1982). They assume that people like them simply for their looks. Because they believe that good things happen to them primarily because they are good-looking, attractive people may come to feel insecure. After all, looks can change or fade with age.

In terms of relationships, why don’t opposites attract?

**12.16 Love Is an Important Component of Romantic Relationships**

The pioneering work of Ellen Berscheid and Elaine (Walster) Hatfield (1969) has drawn an important distinction between passionate love and companionate love. **Passionate love** is a state of intense longing and sexual desire. This kind of love is often portrayed stereotypically in the arts and media. In passionate love, people fall head over heels for each other. They feel an overwhelming urge to be together. When they are together, they are continually aroused sexually (FIGURE 12.38A). Brain imaging studies show that passionate love is associated with activity in dopamine reward systems, the same systems involved in drug addiction (Fisher, Aron, & Brown, 2006; Ortigue, Bianchi-Demicheli, Hamilton, & Grafton, 2007).

People experience passionate love early in relationships. In most enduring relationships, passionate love evolves into companionate love (Sternberg, 1986). **Companionate love** is a strong commitment to care for and support a partner (Berscheid & Walster, 1969). This kind of love develops slowly over time because it is based on friendship, trust, respect, and intimacy (FIGURE 12.38B).

One theory of love is based on attachment theory. As discussed in Chapter 9, infants can form different levels of attachment with their parents. According to Cindy Hazan and Phillip Shaver (1987), adult relationships also vary in their attachment styles. Romantic relationships are especially likely to vary in terms of attachment. The attachment style a person has as an adult appears to be related to how the person’s parents treated her or him as a child (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). People who believe their parents were warm, supportive, and responsive report having secure attachments in their relationships. They find it easy to get close to others and do not fear being abandoned. Just under 60 percent of adults report having this attachment style. About 40 percent of adults report having avoidant attachments. These people are best described as clinging. They worry that people do not really love them and are bound to leave them. About 11 percent of adults report having this attachment style.

These findings are based partly on people’s recollections of how their parents treated them, however. It is possible that people’s memories in this area are distorted.
Moreover, relationships can change people's attachment styles. People are likely to become secure in attachment style with a patient, understanding, and trustworthy partner. They may become insecure if paired with a "bad" partner.

Passion typically fades over time. The long-term pattern of sexual activity within relationships shows a rise and then a decline. Typically, for a period of months or even years, the two people experience frequent, intense desire for one another. They have sex as often as they can arrange it. Past that peak, however, their interest in having sex with each other decreases. For example, from the first year of marriage to the second, frequency of sex declines by about half (James, 1983). After that, the frequency continues to decline, but it does so more gradually. In addition, people typically—and normally—experience less passion for their partners over time as they shift from passionate to companionate love. If people do not develop companionate forms of satisfaction in their romantic relationships—such as friendship, social support, and intimacy—the loss of passion leads to dissatisfaction and often to the eventual dissolution of the relationship (Berscheid & Regan, 2005).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, relatively few marriages meet the blissful ideals that newlyweds expect. Many contemporary Western marriages fail. In the United States, approximately half of all marriages end in divorce or separation. There are considerable racial differences in the probability of divorce, with Asians being the most likely to remain married after 20 years and African Americans the least likely (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012; FIGURE 12.39).

Dealing with Conflict

Even in the best relationships, some conflict is inevitable. Couples continually need to resolve strife. Confronting and discussing important problems is clearly an important aspect of any relationship. The way a couple deals with conflict often determines whether the relationship will last.

John Gottman (1995) describes four interpersonal styles that typically lead couples to discord and dissolution. These maladaptive strategies are being overly critical, holding the partner in contempt (i.e., having disdain, lacking respect), being defensive, and mentally withdrawing from the relationship. Gottman humorously uses the phrase Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (a reference to the biblical Book of Revelation) to reflect the serious threats that these patterns pose to relationships. For example, when one partner voices a complaint, the other partner responds with his or her own complaint(s). The responder may raise the stakes by recalling all of the other person's failings. People use sarcasm and sometimes insult or demean their partners. Inevitably, any disagreement, no matter how small, escalates into a major fight over the core problems. Often, the core problems center on a lack of money, a lack of sex, or both.

When a couple is more satisfied with their relationship, the partners tend to express concern for each other even while they are disagreeing. They manage to stay relatively calm and try to see each other's point of view. They may also deliver criticism lightheartedly and playfully (Keltner, Young, Heerey, Oemig, & Monarch, 1998). In addition, optimistic people are more likely to use cooperative problem solving; as a result, optimism is linked to having satisfying and happy romantic relationships (Assad, Donnellan, & Conger, 2007; Srivastava, McGonigal, Richards, Butler, & Gross, 2006).
For additional suggestions about maintaining strong relationships, see Section 12.17, “Using Psychology in Your Life: How Can Psychology Rekindle the Romance in Your Relationship?”

**ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLE AND ACCOMMODATION** Happy couples also differ from unhappy couples in attributional style, or how one partner explains the other’s behavior (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). Happy couples make partner-enhancing attributions. That is, they overlook bad behavior or respond constructively, a process called accommodation (Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996). In contrast, unhappy couples make distress-maintaining attributions: They view each other in the most negative ways possible. Essentially, happy couples attribute good outcomes to each other, and they attribute bad outcomes to situations. Unhappy couples attribute good outcomes to situations, and they attribute bad outcomes to each other. For example, if a couple is happy and one partner brings home flowers as a gift, the other partner reflects on the gift-giver’s generosity and sweetness. If a couple is unhappy and one of the partners brings home flowers as a gift, the other partner wonders what bad deed the first partner is making up for. Above all, then, viewing your partner in a positive light—even to the point of idealization—may be key to maintaining a loving relationship.

To investigate this hypothesis, Murray and colleagues (1996) investigated partners’ perceptions of each other. Their study included couples who were dating and married couples. The results were consistent with their predictions. Those people who loved their partners the most also idealized their partners the most. That is, they viewed their partners in very positive terms compared with how they viewed other people and compared with how their partners viewed themselves. Those people with the most positively biased views of their partners were more likely to still be in the relationships with their partners several months later than were those people with more “realistic” views of their partners. These perceptions cannot be completely unfounded. It is about viewing your partner kindly, not unrealistically.

**Q** How does companionate love differ from passionate love?

**USING PSYCHOLOGY IN YOUR LIFE**

**12.17 How Can Psychology Rekindle the Romance in Your Relationship?**

Some couples seem loving and supportive. We look at them and think, “That’s the kind of relationship I’d like to have someday!” Other couples seem downright mean to each other. We look at them and think, “That relationship seems so toxic! Why are they even together?” What factors help create these healthy and unhealthy relationships? How can their successes and failures help you create a healthy relationship that will thrive?

Over the past two decades, a number of psychologists have conducted research on healthy and unhealthy relationships. Among the foremost of these researchers is John Gottman. To understand what predicts marital outcomes, Gottman (1998) has studied thousands of married couples. In *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail . . . and How You Can Make Yours Last* (1995), Gottman outlines numerous differences between couples who are happy and those who are not.

Based on his research, Gottman believes that if a couple has about five positive interactions for every negative one, chances are good that the relationship will be stable. If the interactions fall below this level, the couple may be headed for a breakup. If there are as many negatives as positives in a relationship, the prognosis is pretty bleak.

**Q** How does companionate love differ from passionate love?

**ANSWER:** Companionate love is based on friendship, trust, and intimacy and builds over a long period. Passionate love happens quickly and is based on sexual attraction.
Therefore, the task for any couple is to seek opportunities for positive feelings and interactions within the relationship. According to Gottman and others, the same principles apply to all long-term, committed relationships, heterosexual or homosexual:

1. **Show interest in your partner.** Listen to her describe the events of the day. Pay attention while she is speaking, and maintain eye contact. Try to be empathetic: Show you really understand and can feel what your partner is feeling. Such empathy and understanding cannot be faked. To convey that you understand your partner's feelings, say things like “That must have been really annoying.” Ask follow-up questions to show you are engaged in what your partner is saying.

2. **Be affectionate.** You can show love in very quiet ways, such as simply touching the person once in a while. Reminisce about happy times together. Appreciate the benefits of the relationship. When a couple talks about the joys of their relationship, they tend to be happier with the relationship. Such conversation can include comparing the partnership favorably with the partnerships of other people.

3. **Show you care.** Try to do spontaneous things such as bringing your partner a special treat from the bakery or texting at an unexpected time just to see how he is doing (FIGURE 12.40A). Such actions let your partner know you think about him, even when you are not together. When people are dating, they flirt, give each other compliments, and display their best manners. Being in a committed relationship does not mean discarding these things. Be nice to your partner and show her that you value your mutual companionship. Praise your partner whenever possible. In turn, she will feel free to act in kind, which will help you feel good about yourself. Positivity begets positivity.

4. **Spend quality time together.** It is easy for a couple to drift apart and develop separate lives. Find time to explore joint interests, such as hobbies or other activities (FIGURE 12.40B). Partners should pursue independent interests, but having some activities and goals in common helps bring a couple closer. In fact, research shows that when a couple engages in novel and exciting activities, the couple’s relationship satisfaction increases (Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000). Having fun together is an important part of any relationship. Share private jokes, engage in playful teasing, be witty, have adventures. Enjoy each other.

5. **Maintain loyalty and fidelity.** Outside relationships can threaten an intimate partnership. Believing your partner is emotionally or physically involved with another person can pose harm to even the healthiest relationship, as can being distrustful or jealous for no reason. At their core, relationship partners have to trust each other. Anything that threatens that basic sense of trust will harm the relationship. When relationship partners dismiss attractive or threatening alternatives, the partners are better able to remain faithful (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993).

6. **Learn how to handle conflict.** Many people believe that conflict is a sign of a troubled relationship and that couples who never fight must be the happiest, but these ideas are not true. Fighting, especially when it allows grievances to be aired, is one of the healthiest things a couple can do for their relationship. Conflict is inevitable in any serious relationship, but resolving conflict positively is the key to happiness as a couple. Do not avoid conflict or pretend you have no serious issues. Rather, calm down, try to control your anger, and avoid name-calling, sarcasm, or excessive criticism. If you are unable to do so in the heat of the moment, call for a time-out. Return to the discussion when you both feel ready to engage respectfully. Validate your partner’s feelings and beliefs even as you express your own feelings and beliefs. Look for areas of compromise.

Much of this advice may seem like common sense. However, many couples lose sight of how to express their love and commitment. Partners can get so caught up in
everything else in their lives, from work to stress about exams to worries about family, that it becomes easier to focus on what is wrong in a relationship than on what is right. When that happens, the relationship has taken a wrong turn. To make a relationship stronger, partners should put considerable effort into recognizing and celebrating all that is good about the relationship. Those affirming experiences might make relationships succeed.

**Q** Why is conflict not necessarily bad for maintaining relationships?

**ANSWER:** Conflict is inevitable, and most healthy relationships have occasional conflicts. Not dealing with conflict appropriately is what is bad for relationships.

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**Your Chapter Review**

**Chapter Summary**

**How Does Group Membership Affect People?**

**12.1 People Favor Their Own Groups**
Social psychology is the study of how people influence others’ thoughts, feelings, and actions. People readily identify ingroups, to which they belong, and outgroups, to which they do not belong. Ingrou and ingroup formation is affected by reciprocity (if Person A helps Person B, Person B will help Person A) and transitivity (friends having the same opinions toward other people). The ingroup homogeneity effect is the tendency to perceive ingroup members as stereotypically more similar than outgroup members are. People also tend to dehumanize members of outgroups. According to social identity theory, individual social identity is based on identification with an ingroup. Ingroup favoritism is pervasive and may reflect evolutionary pressure to protect the self and resources. The prefrontal cortex appears important for ingroup formation.

**12.2 Groups Influence Individual Behavior**
The presence of others can improve performance (social facilitation). Loss of individuality and self-awareness (deindividuation) can occur in groups. Group decisions can become extreme (group polarization), and poor decisions may be made to preserve group harmony (groupthink). Working in a group can result in decreased effort (social loafing) if group members think their individual efforts cannot be monitored.

**12.3 People Conform to and Comply with Others**
Conformity occurs when people alter their behaviors or opinions to match the behaviors, opinions, or expectations of others. Conformity results from normative influence (the attempt to fit in with the group and avoid looking foolish) and informational influence (the assumption that the behavior of others is the correct way to respond). People may reject social norms and not conform when group size is small or when the group includes at least one other dissenter. When group size is larger than six, conformity increases if the group demonstrates unanimity. Conformity likely results from a fear of social rejection. Compliance occurs when people agree to the requests of others. Compliance increases when people are in a good mood or are subjected to tactics such as the foot-in-the-door, door-in-the-face, and low-ball techniques.

**12.4 Think like a Psychologist: Can Social Norms Marketing Reduce Binge Drinking?**
Social norms marketing tries to correct false beliefs about drinking behavior by giving factual normative comparisons for average students. Although some programs have been successful, social norms marketing can backfire by increasing consumption of alcohol by light drinkers. The most successful programs include social norms marketing with persuasive arguments about the hazards of excessive alcohol consumption.

**12.5 People Are Obedient to Authority**
Obedience occurs when people follow the orders of an authority. As demonstrated by Milgram’s famous study, people may inflict harm on others if ordered to do so by an authority. Individuals who are concerned about others’ perceptions of them are more likely to be obedient. Obedience decreases with greater distance from the authority.

**When Do People Harm or Help Others?**

**12.6 Many Factors Can Influence Aggression**
Aggression is influenced by situational, biological, social, and cultural factors. Situational factors that lead to negative emotions—factors including social rejection, fear, heat, and pain—can influence aggression. A mutation in the MAOA gene and serotonin levels have been linked to aggressive behavior in some individuals. High levels of the hormone testosterone have also been associated with aggressive behavior. However, it is difficult to determine whether high testosterone levels motivate aggression, or whether threatening encounters produce high testosterone levels. It is also possible that testosterone is more important for dominance than for aggression. The effects of social and cultural factors on aggression can change over time. In societies that advocate a culture of honor, people are more likely to exhibit violence and aggression.

**12.7 Many Factors Can Influence Helping Behavior**
Prosocial behaviors promote positive interpersonal relationships. Altruism toward kin members increases the likelihood of passing on common genes. Altruism toward nonrelatives increases the likelihood that others
will reciprocate help when we need it. The bystander intervention effect is most likely to occur when people experience diffusion of responsibility, when a situation is unclear and people fear making social blunders, when people are anonymous, and when people perceive greater risk than benefit to helping others.

12.8 Cooperation Can Reduce Outgroup Bias
People can respond to outgroup members in need, as demonstrated by global response to natural disasters. Cooperation and working toward superordinate goals can increase harmony across groups.

How Do Attitudes Guide Behavior?

12.9 People Form Attitudes Through Experience and Socialization
Attitudes are evaluations of objects, of events, or of ideas. Attitudes are influenced by familiarity (the mere exposure effect) and may be shaped by conditioning and socialization. Attitudes that are strong, personally relevant, specific, formed through personal experience, and easily accessible are most likely to affect behavior. Explicit attitudes are attitudes that people are consciously aware of and can report. Implicit attitudes operate at an unconscious level. In some situations that are socially sensitive, implicit attitudes can predict behavior better than explicit attitudes.

12.10 Discrepancies Lead to Dissonance
A contradiction between attitudes or between an attitude and a behavior produces cognitive dissonance. This state is characterized by anxiety, tension, and displeasure. People reduce dissonance by changing their attitudes or behaviors; trivializing the discrepancies (such as through postdecisional dissonance); or rationalizing the discrepancies (such as through justifying effort).

12.11 Attitudes Can Be Changed Through Persuasion
Persuasion involves the use of a message to actively and consciously change an attitude. According to the elaboration likelihood model, persuasion through the central route (which involves careful thought about the message) produces stronger and more persistent attitude change than persuasion through the peripheral route (which relies on peripheral cues, such as the attractiveness of the person making the argument).

How Do People Think About Others?

12.12 People Make Judgments About Others
People are highly sensitive to nonverbal information (e.g., facial expression, eye contact), and they can develop accurate impressions of others on the basis of very thin slices of behavior. People use personal dispositions and situational factors to explain behavior. The fundamental attribution error occurs when people favor personal attributions over situational attributions in explaining other people’s behavior. The actor/observer discrepancy is people’s tendency to make personal attributions when explaining other people’s behavior and situational attributions when explaining their own behavior.

12.13 Stereotypes Can Lead to Prejudice and Discrimination
Stereotypes are cognitive schemas that allow for fast, easy processing of social information. Illusory correlations cause people to see relationships that do not exist, and they result from confirmatory bias toward selecting information that supports stereotypes. Prejudice occurs when the feelings, opinions, and beliefs associated with a stereotype are negative. Prejudice can lead to discrimination, the inappropriate and unjustified treatment of others. Modern racism is a subtle form of prejudice that has developed as people have learned to inhibit the public expression of their prejudiced beliefs.

12.14 Prejudice Can Be Reduced
Sharing superordinate goals that require cooperation can lead to reduced prejudice and discrimination. Imagining positive social interactions with outgroup members, inhibiting stereotypes (for instance, by presenting people with positive examples of negatively stereotyped groups), perspective taking (actively contemplating the psychological experiences of other people), and perspective giving (describing personal experiences of discrimination) can also reduce prejudice and discrimination.

What Determines the Quality of Relationships?

12.15 Situational and Personal Factors Influence Interpersonal Attraction and Friendships
People are attracted to individuals they have frequent contact with, with whom they share similar attributes, who possess admirable characteristics, and who are physically attractive. Men are attracted by physical signs of youth and fertility. Women are attracted by signs of dominance, strength, and earnings potential, and these signs may include faces with a higher width-to-height ratio. People find “averaged” faces and symmetrical faces more attractive. Physically attractive people experience many social benefits, but they do not report greater happiness.

12.16 Love Is an Important Component of Romantic Relationships
Passionate love is characterized by intense longing and sexual desire. Companionate love is characterized by commitment and support. In successful romantic relationships, passionate love tends to evolve into companionate love. How a couple deals with conflict influences the stability of their relationship. Couples who attribute positive outcomes to each other and negative outcomes to situational factors and make partner-enhancing attributions report higher levels of marital happiness.

12.17 Using Psychology in Your Life: How Can Psychology Rekindle the Romance in Your Relationship?
In successful relationships, people express interest in their partners, are affectionate, show they care, spend quality time together, remain loyal to each other, and handle conflict appropriately. Putting effort into a relationship and engaging in these actions increase the likelihood of the relationship enduring over time.
Key Terms

actor/observer discrepancy, p. 496
aggression, p. 480
altruism, p. 484
attributes, p. 495
bystander intervention effect, p. 485
cognitive dissonance, p. 491
companionate love, p. 505
compliance, p. 476
conformity, p. 473
dehindividuation, p. 472
discrimination, p. 498
elaboration likelihood model, p. 493
explicit attitudes, p. 489
fundamental attribution error, p. 495
group polarization, p. 472
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implicit attitudes, p. 489
inclusive fitness, p. 484
informational influence, p. 474
ingroup favoritism, p. 469
mere exposure effect, p. 488
modern racism, p. 499
nonverbal behavior, p. 494
normative influence, p. 474
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personal attributions, p. 495
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social facilitation, p. 471
social identity theory, p. 469
social norms, p. 474
“what is beautiful is good” stereotype, p. 504

Putting Psychology to Work

How Can Social Psychology Be Used in Politics?

What does it take to win an election? As you have learned in this chapter, social psychologists study the ways in which people can influence and change the thoughts and behavior of others. Persuading potential voters to choose one candidate over another, to take a position on an issue, or to vote at all can, of course, be quite useful in political campaigns.

Consider the persuasion techniques, studied in social psychology, that can be used to increase voter turnout. In an example of social norming, people may be informed that their neighbors are planning to vote. In foot-in-the-door appeals, potential voters may be asked to sign unofficial pledges to vote. Once people have complied with this small request, they will be much more likely to follow up with the promise on Election Day. Finally, attitude-behavior consistency may be primed by reminding potential voters that they have voted in past elections.

While social psychology research in persuasion and attitude formation has long been used in advertising and marketing, its application to the political realm has opened up many new employment opportunities. Lobbyists for advocacy organizations rely on persuasion techniques. Campaign managers, communication directors, voter outreach coordinators, and social media editors benefit from knowing how attitudes are formed and how they can be changed.

In addition, a subfield of psychology focuses on politics. Political psychology is an interdisciplinary area of research that examines politics, political parties, and the behavior of voters and politicians from a psychological perspective. Political psychologists have doctoral degrees and conduct research in academic centers or policy think tanks.

The bottom line: Even for those without college degrees, an understanding of social psychological concepts such as persuasion, attitude change, and social norms provides excellent training for jobs in the political sector. Those with baccalaureate degrees can work in campaign organizations or as lobbyists on Capitol Hill. Doctoral training is required for political psychologists.

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