A Gift of Life

John Kluth approached people outside banks, churches, casinos, libraries, and the federal courthouse. He'd walk up with a look of surprised recognition and greet people as if he knew them.

"You know me!" he'd say. "I'm the guy who drives around the neighborhood in the white truck." Or: "You know my mother. She lives up the hill and walks the dog on your street." Then Kluth would lay out his story, police say. He was driving to Boston on Interstate 95 with hundreds of pounds of lobsters when his truck broke down. He needs several hundred dollars to get it fixed. He has a check, but it hasn't cleared yet. If he doesn't get the cash, the lobsters will die and spoil. He'll pay you back tomorrow at your home. And, to show his appreciation, he'll drop off a few lobsters, too.

Asked for $70, Bob Fricker, a hard-eyed antiques auctioneer, gave Kluth $80. "It was like we'd known each other sometime, someplace. I was just very comfortable with him. It's hard to express. I'd probably do it again tomorrow. He was that good." (Hampson, 2007, p. 2A) ■

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

John Kluth's story was just that: a story. Kluth was a successful con artist who made his living duping innocent victims.

What made John Kluth such a successful con artist? Why would anyone at all fall for his ploy, much less the prominent public figures and business leaders he generally targeted? The answer is that Kluth made use of a number of psychological principles: He presented himself in a familiar, likable way that made people feel as if they knew him. He took advantage of biases in the way that people make decisions about others' behavior that led him to be viewed favorably. He used effective compliance tactics to get people to do his bidding willingly. And he capitalized on people's willingness to help out a friend in distress. What made Kluth a successful con artist, then, was his uncanny instinctive knowledge of social psychology.

Social psychology is the scientific study of how people's thoughts, feelings, and actions are affected by others. Social psychologists consider the kinds and causes of the behavior of the individual in social situations. They examine how the nature of situations in which we find ourselves influences our behavior in important ways.

> **Social psychology** The scientific study of how people's thoughts, feelings, and actions are affected by others.

The broad scope of social psychology is conveyed by the kinds of questions social psychologists ask, such as: How can we convince people to change their attitudes or adopt new ideas and values? In what ways do we come to understand what others are like? How are we influenced by what others do and think? Why do some people display so much violence, aggression, and cruelty toward others that people throughout the world live in fear of annihilation at their hands? And why, in comparison, do some people place their own lives at risk to help others?

We begin with a look at how our attitudes shape our behavior and how we form judgments about others. We discuss how we are influenced by others, and we consider prejudice and discrimination, focusing on their roots and the ways in which we can reduce them. After examining what social psychologists have learned about how people form friendships and relationships, we look at the determinants of aggression and helping—two opposing sides of human behavior. Finally, we conclude by addressing stress and the ways that we can cope with it.

》 》

Attitudes and Social Cognition

What do Tiger Woods, Rachel Ray, and Tom Brady have in common?

Each has appeared in advertisements designed to mold or change our attitudes. Such commercials are part of the barrage of messages we receive each day from sources as varied as politicians, sales staff in stores, and celebrities, all of which are meant to influence us.

» LO 1 Persuasion: Changing Attitudes

Attitudes Evaluations of a particular person, behavior, belief, or concept.

Persuasion is the process of changing attitudes, one of the central concepts of social psychology. **Attitudes** are evaluations of a particular person, behavior, belief, or concept. For example, you probably hold attitudes toward the U.S. president (a person), abortion (a behavior), affirmative action (a belief), or architecture (a concept) (Brock & Green, 2005; Hegarty & Massey, 2007).

The ease with which we can change our attitudes depends on a number of factors, including:

- *Message source.* The characteristics of a person who delivers a persuasive message, known as an *attitude communicator,* have a major impact on the

Companies use celebrities such as Queen Latifah to persuade consumers to buy their products. Can celebrities really affect the purchasing habits of consumers? How?

effectiveness of that message. For example, the expertise and trustworthiness of a communicator are related to the impact of a message.

- *Characteristics of the message.* It is not just *who* delivers a message but what the message is like that affects attitudes. Generally, two-sided messages—which include both the communicator's position and the one he or she is arguing against—are more effective than one-sided messages, given the assumption that the arguments for the other side can be effectively refuted and the audience is knowledgeable about the topic.

- *Characteristics of the target.* Once a communicator has delivered a message, characteristics of the *target* of the message may determine whether the message will be accepted. For example, intelligent people are more resistant to persuasion than are those who are less intelligent.

Central route processing Message interpretation characterized by thoughtful consideration of the issues and arguments used to persuade.

Peripheral route processing Message interpretation characterized by consideration of the source and related general information rather than of the message itself.

Routes to Persuasion

Recipients' receptiveness to persuasive messages relates to the type of information processing they use. Social psychologists have discovered two primary information-processing routes to persuasion: central route and peripheral route processing. **Central route processing** occurs when the recipient thoughtfully considers the issues and arguments involved in persuasion. In central route processing, people are swayed in their judgments by the logic, merit, and strength of arguments.

> *Social psychologists have discovered two primary information-processing routes to persuasion: central route and peripheral route processing.*

In contrast, **peripheral route processing** occurs when people are persuaded on the basis of factors unrelated to the nature or quality of the content of a persuasive message. Instead, factors that are irrelevant or extraneous to the issue, such as who is providing the message, how long the arguments are, or the emotional appeal of the arguments, influence them (Wegener et al., 2004; Petty et al., 2005; Warden, Wu, & Tsai, 2006).

In general, people who are highly involved and motivated use central route processing to comprehend a message. However, if a person is uninvolved, unmotivated, bored, or distracted, the nature of the message becomes less important, and peripheral factors become more critical (see Figure 1 on page 468). Although both central route and peripheral route processing lead to attitude change, central route processing generally leads to stronger, more lasting attitude change.

STUDY ALERT

Central route processing involves the **c**ontent of the message; **p**eripheral route processing involves how the message is **p**rovided.

From the perspective of . . .

A Graphic Designer   Suppose you were assigned to develop an advertisement for a product for the local newspaper and a store front. How might theories of persuasion guide you to suit the different audiences who will see the ad?
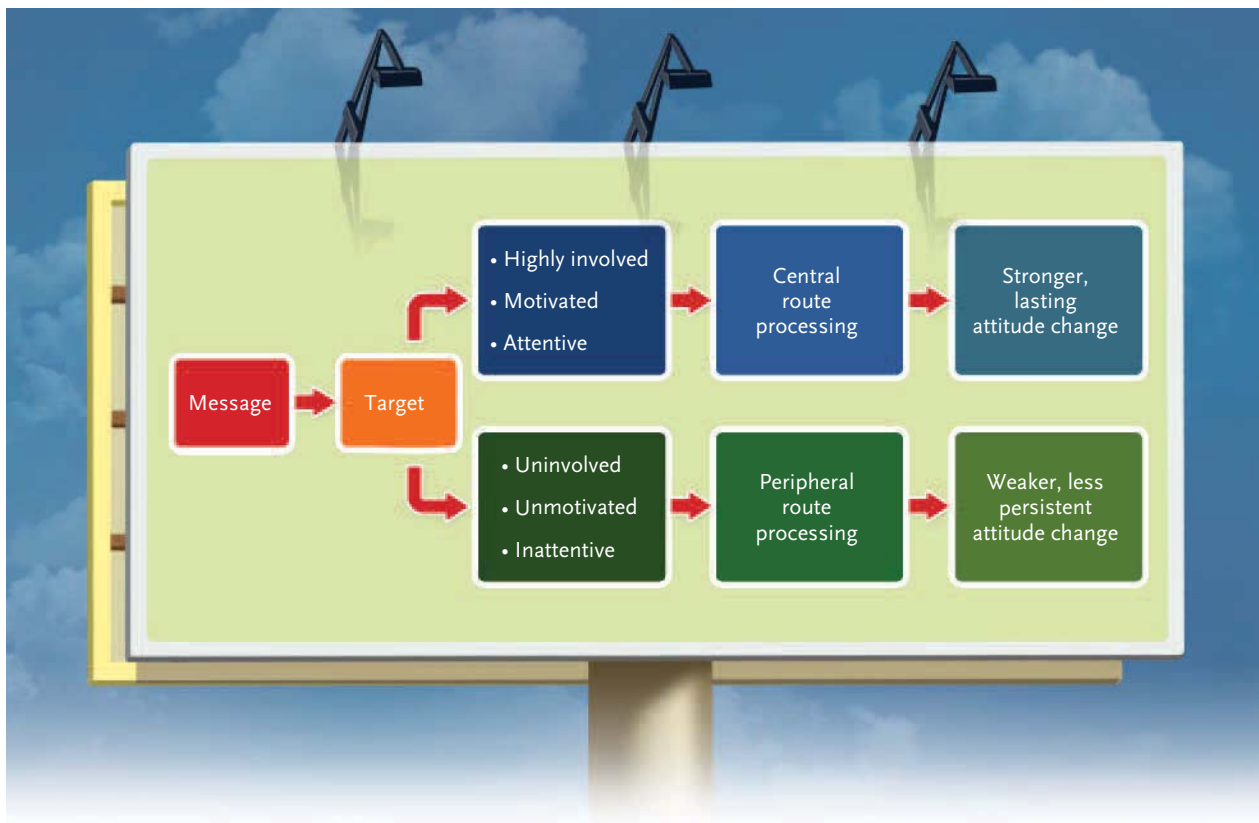
FIGURE 1   Routes to persuasion. Targets who are highly involved, motivated, and attentive use central route processing when they consider a persuasive message, which leads to a more lasting attitude change. In contrast, uninvolved, unmotivated, and inattentive targets are more likely to use peripheral route processing, and attitude change is likely to be less enduring. Can you think of specific advertisements that try to produce central route processing?

The Link Between Attitudes and Behavior

Not surprisingly, attitudes influence behavior. The strength of the link between particular attitudes and behavior varies, of course, but generally people strive for consistency between their attitudes and their behavior. Furthermore, people hold fairly consistent attitudes. For instance, you would probably not hold the attitude that eating meat is immoral and still have a positive attitude toward hamburgers (Conner et al., 2003; Levi, Chan, & Pence, 2006).

Cognitive dissonance The conflict that occurs when a person holds two contradictory attitudes or thoughts (referred to as *cognitions*).

Ironically, the consistency that leads attitudes to influence behavior sometimes works the other way around, for in some cases it is our behavior that shapes our attitudes. According to social psychologist Leon Festinger (1957), **cognitive dissonance** is the psychological tension that occurs when a person holds two contradictory attitudes or thoughts (referred to as *cognitions*).

Cognitive dissonance explains many everyday events involving attitudes and behavior. For example, smokers who know that smoking leads to lung cancer hold contradictory cognitions: (1) I smoke, and (2) smoking leads to lung cancer. The theory predicts that these two thoughts will lead to a state of cognitive dissonance. More important, it predicts that—assuming that they don't change their behavior by quitting smoking—smokers will be motivated to reduce their dissonance by one of the following methods: (1) modifying one or both of the cognitions, (2) changing the perceived importance of one

cognition, (3) adding cognitions, or (4) denying that the two cognitions are related to each other. Hence, a smoker may decide that he really doesn't smoke all that much or that he'll quit soon (modifying the cognition), that the evidence linking smoking to cancer is weak (changing the importance of a cognition), that the amount of exercise he gets compensates for the smoking (adding cognitions), or that there is no evidence linking smoking and cancer (denial). Whichever technique the smoker uses results in reduced dissonance (see Figure 2).

» LO 2 Social Cognition: Understanding Others

One of the dominant areas in social psychology during the last few years has focused on learning how we come to understand what others are like and how we explain the reasons underlying others' behavior.

Understanding What Others Are Like

Consider for a moment the enormous amount of information about other people to which we are exposed. How can we decide what is important and what is not and make judgments about the characteristics of others? Social psychologists interested in this question study **social cognition**—the way people understand and make sense of others and themselves. Those psychologists have learned that individuals have highly developed **schemas,** sets of cognitions about people and social experiences. Those schemas organize

Social cognition The cognitive processes by which people understand and make sense of others and themselves.

Schemas Sets of cognitions about people and social experiences.

FIGURE 2 Cognitive dissonance. The simultaneous presence of two contradictory cognitions ("I smoke" and "Smoking leads to cancer") produces dissonance, which can be reduced through several methods. What are additional ways in which dissonance can be reduced?

Two Contradictory Cognitions
1. "I smoke."
2. "Smoking leads to cancer."

Dissonance

Modifying one or both cognitions ("I really don't smoke too much.")

Changing perceived importance of the cognition ("The evidence is weak that smoking causes cancer.")

Adding additional cognitions ("I exercise so much that it doesn't matter that I smoke.")

Denying that cognitions are related ("There is no evidence linking smoking and cancer.")

information stored in memory, represent in our minds the way the social world operates, and give us a framework to recognize, categorize, and recall information relating to social stimuli such as people and groups (Brewer & Hewstone, 2003; Moskowitz, 2004; Smith & Semin, 2007).

We typically hold schemas for specific types of people. Our schema for "teacher," for instance, generally consists of a number of characteristics: knowledge of the subject matter he or she is teaching, a desire to impart that knowledge, and an awareness of the student's need to understand what is being said. Or we may hold a schema for "mother" that includes the characteristics of warmth, nurturance, and caring. Regardless of their accuracy, schemas are important because they organize the way in which we recall, recognize, and categorize information about others. Moreover, they help us predict what others are like on the basis of relatively little information (Bargh & Chartrand, 2000; Ruscher, Fiske, & Schnake, 2000).

Impression Formation

How do we decide that Sayreeta is a hard worker, Jacob is obnoxious, or Hector is a really nice guy? The earliest work on social cognition examined *impression formation,* the process by which an individual organizes information about another person to form an overall impression of that person. In a classic study, for instance, students learned that they were about to hear a guest lecturer (Kelley, 1950). Researchers told one group of students that the lecturer was "a rather warm person, industrious, critical, practical, and determined" and told a second group that he was "a rather cold person, industrious, critical, practical, and determined."

The simple substitution of "cold" for "warm" caused drastic differences in the way the students in each group perceived the lecturer, even though he gave the same talk in the same style in each condition. Students who had been told he was "warm" rated him considerably more positively than students who had been told he was "cold."

Central traits The major traits considered in forming impressions of others.

The findings from this experiment led to additional research on impression formation that focused on the way in which people pay particular attention to certain unusually important traits—known as **central traits**—to help them form an overall impression of others. The presence of a central trait alters the meaning of other traits. Hence, the description of the lecturer as "industrious" meant something different when it was associated with the central trait "warm" than it meant when it was associated with "cold" (Widmeyer & Loy, 1988; Glicksohn & Nahari, 2007).

We make impressions about others remarkably quickly. In just a few seconds, using what have been called "thin slices of behavior," we are able to make judgments of people that are accurate and that match those of people who make judgments based on longer snippets of behavior (Choi, Gray, & Ambady, 2004; Pavitt, 2007).

Of course, as we gain more experience with people and see them exhibiting behavior in a variety of situations, our impressions of them become more complex. However, because our knowledge of others usually has gaps, we still tend to fit individuals into personality schemas that represent particular "types" of people. For instance, we may hold a "gregarious person" schema, made up of the traits of friendliness, aggressiveness, and openness. The presence of just one or two of those traits may be sufficient to make us assign a person to a particular schema.

Even when schemas are not entirely accurate, they serve an important function: They allow us to develop expectations about how others will behave. Those

expectations permit us to plan our interactions with others more easily and serve to simplify a complex social world.

Attribution Processes: Understanding the Causes of Behavior

When Barbara Washington, a new employee at the Ablex Computer Company, completed a major staffing project two weeks early, her boss, Yolanda, was delighted. At the next staff meeting, she announced how pleased she was with Barbara and explained that *this* was an example of the kind of performance she was looking for in her staff. The other staff members looked on resentfully, trying to figure out why Barbara had worked night and day to finish the project not just on time but two weeks early. She must be an awfully compulsive person, they decided.

At one time or another, most of us have puzzled over the reasons behind someone's behavior. In contrast to theories of social cognition, which describe how people develop an overall impression of others' personality traits, **attribution theory** seeks to explain how we decide, on the basis of samples of an individual's behavior, what the specific causes of that person's behavior are.

In seeking an explanation for behavior, we must answer one central question: Is the cause situational or dispositional? **Situational causes** are those brought about by something in the environment. For instance, someone who knocks over a quart of milk and then cleans it up probably does the cleaning not because he or she is necessarily a neat person but because the *situation* requires it. In contrast, a person who spends hours shining the kitchen floor probably does so because he or she is a neat person—hence, the behavior has a **dispositional cause,** prompted by the person's disposition (his or her internal traits or personality characteristics).

In our example involving Barbara Washington, her fellow employees attributed her behavior to her disposition rather than to the situation. But from a logical standpoint, it is equally plausible that something about the situation caused the behavior. If asked, Barbara might attribute her accomplishment to situational factors, explaining that she had so much other work to do that she just had to get the project out of the way, or that the project was not all that difficult and so it was easy to complete ahead of schedule. To her, then, the reason for her behavior might not be dispositional at all; it could be situational.

Attribution Biases: To Err Is Human

If we always processed information in the rational manner that attribution theory suggests, the world might run a lot more smoothly. Unfortunately, although attribution theory generally makes accurate predictions, people do not always process information about others in as logical a fashion as the theory seems to suggest. In fact, research reveals consistent biases in the ways people make attributions. Typical ones include the following:

- *The halo effect.* Harry is intelligent, kind, and loving. Is he also conscientious? If you were to guess, your most likely response probably would be yes. Your guess reflects the **halo effect,** a phenomenon in which an initial understanding that a person has positive traits is used to infer other uniformly positive characteristics. The opposite would also hold true. Learning that Harry was unsociable and argumentative would probably lead you to assume that he was lazy as well. However, because few people

Attribution theory The theory of personality that seeks to explain how we decide, on the basis of samples of an individual's behavior, what the specific causes of that person's behavior are.

Situational causes (of behavior) Perceived causes of behavior that are based on environmental factors.

Dispositional causes (of behavior) Perceived causes of behavior that are based on internal traits or personality factors.

Halo effect A phenomenon in which an initial understanding that a person has positive traits is used to infer other uniformly positive characteristics.

Assumed-similarity bias The tendency to think of people as being similar to oneself, even when meeting them for the first time.

Self-serving bias The tendency to attribute personal success to personal factors (skill, ability, or effort) and to attribute failure to factors outside oneself.

Fundamental attribution error A tendency to overattribute others' behavior to dispositional causes and the corresponding minimization of the importance of situational causes.

psych2.0

WWW.MHHE.COM/PSYCHLIFE

Fundamental Attribution Error

have either uniformly positive or uniformly negative traits, the halo effect leads to misperceptions of others (Goffin, Jelley, & Wagner, 2003; Dennis, 2007).

- *Assumed-similarity bias.* How similar to you—in terms of attitudes, opinions, and likes and dislikes—are your friends and acquaintances? Most people believe that their friends and acquaintances are fairly similar to themselves. But this feeling goes beyond just people we know to a general tendency—known as the **assumed-similarity bias**—to think of people as being similar to oneself, even when meeting them for the first time. Given the range of people in the world, this assumption often reduces the accuracy of our judgments (Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000; Lemay, Clark, Feeney, 2007).

- *The self-serving bias.* When their teams win, coaches usually feel that the success is due to their coaching. But when they coach a losing team, coaches may think it's due to the poor skills of their players. Similarly, if you get an A on a test, you may think it's due to your hard work, but if you get a poor grade, it's due to the professor's inadequacies. The reason is the **self-serving bias,** the tendency to attribute success to personal factors (skill, ability, or effort) and attribute failure to factors outside oneself (Spencer et al., 2003; Bergeron, 2006).

- *The fundamental attribution error.* One of the more common attribution biases is the tendency to overattribute others' behavior to dispositional causes and the corresponding failure to recognize the importance of situational causes. Known as the **fundamental attribution error,** this tendency is prevalent in Western cultures. We tend to exaggerate the importance of personality characteristics (dispositional causes) in producing others' behavior, minimizing the influence of the environment (situational factors). For example, we are more likely to jump to the conclusion that someone who is often late to work is too lazy to take an earlier bus (a dispositional cause) than to assume that the lateness is due to situational factors, such as the bus is always running behind schedule.

Despite the importance of the fundamental attribution error in shaping the perceptions of members of Western cultures, it turns out that it's not so fundamental when we look at non-Western cultures, as we discuss next.

EXPLORING diversity

Attributions in a Cultural Context: How Fundamental Is the Fundamental Attribution Error?

Attribution biases do not affect all of us in the same way. The culture in which we are raised clearly plays a role in the way we attribute others' behavior.

Take, for example, the fundamental attribution error, the tendency to overestimate the importance of personal, dispositional factors and underattribute situational factors in determining the causes of others' behavior. The error is pervasive in Western cultures and not in Eastern societies. For instance, adults in India were more likely to use situational attributions than dispositional

ones in explaining events. These findings are the opposite of those for the United States, and they contradict the fundamental attribution error (Miller, 1984; Lien et al., 2006).

Cultural differences in attributions may have profound implications. For example, parents in Asia tend to attribute good academic performance to effort and hard work (situational factors). In contrast, parents in Western cultures tend to de-emphasize the role of effort and attribute school success to innate ability (a dispositional factor). As a result, Asian students in general may strive harder to achieve and ultimately outperform U.S. students in school (Stevenson, Lee, & Mu, 2000; Lien et al., 2006).

Students in Asian societies may perform exceptionally well in school because the culture emphasizes academic success and perseverance.

The difference in thinking between people in Asian and Western cultures is a reflection of a broader difference in the way the world is perceived. Asian societies generally have a *collectivistic orientation,* a worldview that promotes the notion of interdependence. People with a collectivistic orientation generally see themselves as parts of a larger, interconnected social network and as responsible to others. In contrast, people in Western cultures are more likely to hold an *individualist orientation,* which emphasizes personal identity and the uniqueness of the individual. They focus more on what sets them apart from others and what makes them special (Markus & Kitayama, 2003; Wang, 2004; Haugen, Lund, & Ommundsen, 2008).

[R E C A P]

Define persuasion.

- Social psychology is the scientific study of the ways in which people's thoughts, feelings, and actions are affected by others and the nature and causes of individual behavior in social situations. (p. 465)

- Attitudes are evaluations of a particular person, behavior, belief, or concept. (p. 466)

- Cognitive dissonance occurs when an individual simultaneously holds two cognitions—attitudes or thoughts—that contradict each other. To resolve the contradiction, the person may modify one cognition, change its importance, add a cognition, or deny a link between the two cognitions, thereby bringing about a reduction in dissonance. (p. 468)

Explain social cognition.

- Social cognition involves the way people understand and make sense of others and themselves. People develop schemas that organize information about people and social experiences in memory and allow them to interpret and categorize information about others. (p. 469)

- People form impressions of others in part through the use of central traits, personality characteristics that receive unusually heavy emphasis when we form an impression. (p. 470)

- Information-processing approaches have found that we tend to average together sets of traits to form an overall impression. (p. 470)

- Attribution theory tries to explain how we understand the causes of behavior, particularly

with respect to situational or dispositional factors. (p. 471)

- Even though logical processes are involved, attribution is prone to error. For instance, people are susceptible to the halo effect, assumed-similarity bias, self-serving bias, and fundamental attribution error (the tendency to overattribute others' behavior to dispositional causes and the corresponding failure to recognize the importance of situational causes). (p. 471)

[E V A L U A T E]

1. An evaluation of a particular person, behavior, belief, or concept. is called a(n) _____.

2. One brand of peanut butter advertises its product by describing its taste and nutritional value. It is hoping to persuade customers through _____ route processing. In ads for a competing brand, a popular actor happily eats the product—but does not describe it. This approach hopes to persuade customers through _____ route processing.

3. Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that we commonly change our behavior to keep it consistent with our attitudes. True or false?

4. Sopan was happy to lend his textbook to a fellow student who seemed bright and friendly. He was surprised when his classmate did not return it. His assumption that the bright and friendly student would also be responsible reflects the _____ effect.

[R E T H I N K]

Joan sees Annette, a new co-worker, act in a way that seems abrupt and curt. Joan concludes that Annette is unkind and unsociable. The next day Joan sees Annette acting kindly toward another worker. Is Joan likely to change her impression of Annette? Why or why not? Finally, Joan sees several friends of hers laughing and joking with Annette, treating her in a very friendly fashion. Is Joan likely to change her impression of Annette? Why or why not?

Answers to Evaluate Questions 1. attitude; 2. central, peripheral; 3. false; we typically change our behavior, not our attitudes, to reduce cognitive dissonance; 4. halo

[K E Y   T E R M S]

Social psychology *p. 465*

Attitude *p. 466*

Central route processing *p. 467*

Peripheral route processing *p. 467*

Cognitive dissonance *p. 468*

Social cognition *p. 469*

Schema *p. 469*

Central trait *p. 470*

Attribution theory *p. 471*

Situational causes (of behavior) *p. 471*

Dispositional causes (of behavior) *p. 471*

Halo effect *p. 471*

Assumed-similarity bias *p. 472*

Self-serving bias *p. 472*

Fundamental attribution error *p. 472*

module 40

Social Influence and Groups

Social influence is the process by which the actions of an individual or group affect the behavior of others. As you undoubtedly know from your own experience, pressures to conform can be painfully strong and can bring about changes in behavior that otherwise never would have occurred.

Why can conformity pressures in groups be so strong? For one reason, groups, and other people generally, play a central role in our lives. Groups develop and hold *norms*, expectations regarding behavior appropriate to the group. Furthermore, we understand that not adhering to group norms can result in retaliation from other group members, ranging from being ignored to being overtly derided or even being rejected or excluded by the group. Thus, people conform to meet the expectations of the group (Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002; Jetten, Hornsey, & Adarves-Yorno, 2006).

Groups exert considerable social influence over individuals, ranging from the mundane, such as the decision to wear a certain kind of jeans, to the extreme cases such as the cruelty of guards at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. We'll consider three types of social pressure: conformity, compliance, and obedience.

» LO1 Conformity: Following What Others Do

Conformity is a change in behavior or attitudes brought about by a desire to follow the beliefs or standards of other people. Subtle or even unspoken social pressure results in conformity.

The classic demonstration of pressure to conform comes from a series of studies carried out in the 1950s by Solomon Asch (Asch, 1951). In the experiments, the participants thought they were taking part in a test of perceptual skills with six other people. The experimenter showed the participants one card with three lines of varying length and a second card that had a fourth line that matched one of the first three (see Figure 1 on page 476). The task was seemingly straightforward: Each of the participants had to announce aloud which of the first three lines was identical in length to the "standard" line on the second card. Because the correct answer was always obvious, the task seemed easy to the participants.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

40.1 Define conformity.

40.2 Explain compliance.

40.3 Discuss obedience.

Social influence The process by which the actions of an individual or group affect the behavior of others.

Conformity A change in behavior or attitudes brought about by a desire to follow the beliefs or standards of other people.

STUDY ALERT

The distinction between the three types of social pressure—conformity, compliance, and obedience—depends on the nature and strength of the social pressure brought to bear on a person.
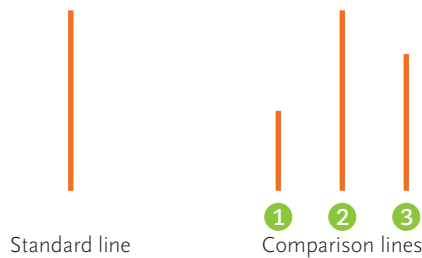
FIGURE 1 Which of the three comparison lines is the same length as the "standard" line?

Standard line   Comparison lines

Indeed, because the participants all agreed on the first few trials, the procedure appeared to be simple. But then something odd began to happen. From the perspective of the participant in the group who answered last on each trial, all the answers of the first six participants seemed to be wrong—in fact, unanimously wrong. And this pattern persisted. Over and over again, the first six participants provided answers that contradicted what the last participant believed to be correct. The last participant faced the dilemma of whether to follow his or her own perceptions or follow the group by repeating the answer everyone else was giving.

As you might have guessed, this experiment was more contrived than it appeared. The first six participants were actually confederates (paid employees of the experimenter) who had been instructed to give unanimously erroneous answers in many of the trials. And the study had nothing to do with perceptual skills. Instead, the issue under investigation was conformity.

Asch found that in about one-third of the trials, the participants conformed to the unanimous but erroneous group answer, with about 75 percent of all participants conforming at least once. However, he found strong individual differences. Some participants conformed nearly all the time, whereas others never did. Subsequent research further shows that conformity is considerably higher when people must respond publicly than it is when they can do so privately. Also, having just one person present who shares the minority point of view is sufficient to reduce conformity pressures (Prislin, Brewer, & Wilson, 2002; Goodwin, Costa, & Adonu, 2004; Levine & Moreland, 2006).

Conformity to Social Roles

Conformity also influences behavior through social roles. *Social roles* are the behaviors that are associated with people in a given position, such as a restaurant waiter or a schoolteacher. In some cases, though, social roles influence us so profoundly that we engage in behavior in entirely atypical—and damaging—ways. This fact was brought home in an influential experiment conducted by Philip Zimbardo and colleagues. In the study, the researchers set up a mock prison, complete with cells, solitary confinement cubicles, and a small

> *In some cases, though, social roles influence us so profoundly that we engage in behavior in entirely atypical—and damaging—ways.*

It is easy to think of conformity in the context of teenagers and their desire to fit in. However, conformity is equally as pervasive in adults. Can you think of a time that you conformed to the group norm?

recreation area. The researchers then advertised for participants who were willing to spend 2 weeks in a study of prison life. Once they identified the study participants, a flip of a coin designated who would be a prisoner and who would be a prison guard. Neither prisoners nor guards were told how to fulfill their roles (Zimbardo, 1973; Zimbardo, Maslach, & Haney, 2000; Zimbardo, 2007).

After just a few days in this mock prison, the students assigned to be guards became abusive to the prisoners, waking them at odd hours and subjecting them to arbitrary punishment. They withheld food from the prisoners and forced them into hard labor. On the other hand, the students assigned to the prisoner role soon became docile and submissive to the guards. They became extremely demoralized, and one slipped into a depression so severe he was released after just a few days. In fact, after only 6 days of captivity, the remaining prisoners' reactions became so extreme that the study was ended.

The experiment (which, it's important to note, drew criticism on both methodological and ethical grounds) provided a clear lesson: Conforming to a social role can have a powerful consequence on the behavior of even normal, well-adjusted people, inducing them to change their behavior in sometimes undesirable ways. This phenomenon may explain how the situation in which U.S. Army guards at the Iraq Abu Ghraib prison found themselves could have led to their abusive behavior toward the prisoners (Zimbardo, 2007).

» LO 2 Compliance: Submitting to Direct Social Pressure

When we refer to conformity, we usually mean a phenomenon in which the social pressure is subtle or indirect. But in some situations social pressure is much more obvious, with direct, explicit pressure to endorse a particular point of view or behave in a certain way. Social psychologists call the type of behavior that occurs in response to direct social pressure **compliance.**

Compliance Behavior that occurs in response to direct social pressure.

Several specific techniques represent attempts to gain compliance. Those frequently employed include the following:

- *Foot-in-the-door technique.* A volunteer comes to your door and asks you to sign a petition. You agree, thinking you have nothing to lose. A little later comes a request to make a donation, which, because you have already agreed to the first request, you have a hard time turning down.

    The volunteer in this case is using a tried-and-true strategy that social psychologists call the foot-in-the-door technique. In the *foot-in-the-door technique,* you ask a person to agree to a small request and later ask that person to comply with a more important one. It turns out that compliance with the more important request increases significantly when the person first agrees to the smaller favor.

- *Door-in-the-face technique.* A fund-raiser asks for a $500 contribution. You laughingly refuse, telling her that the amount is way out of your league. She then asks for a $10 contribution. What do you do? If you are like most people, you'll probably be a lot more compliant than you would be if she hadn't asked for the huge contribution first. In this tactic, called the *door-in-the-face technique,* someone makes a large request, expecting it to be refused, and follows it with a smaller one. This strategy, which is the opposite of the foot-in-the-door approach, has also proved to be effective (Millar, 2002; Pascual & Guéguen, 2005, 2006).

- *That's-not-all technique.* In this technique, a salesperson offers you a deal at an inflated price. But immediately after the initial offer, the salesperson offers an incentive, discount, or bonus to clinch the deal.

   Although it sounds transparent, this practice can be quite effective. In one study, the experimenters set up a booth and sold cupcakes for 75 cents each. In one condition, the experimenters directly told customers that the price was 75 cents. But in another condition, they told customers that the price was originally $1 but had been reduced to 75 cents. As we might predict, more people bought cupcakes at the "reduced" price—even though it was identical to the price in the other experimental condition (Burger, Reed, & DeCesare, 1999; Pratkanis, 2007).

- *Not-so-free sample.* If you ever receive a free sample, keep in mind that it comes with a psychological cost. Although they may not couch it in these terms, salespeople who provide samples to potential customers do so to instigate the norm of reciprocity. The *norm of reciprocity* is the well-accepted societal standard dictating that we should treat other people as they treat us. Receiving a *not-so-free sample,* then, suggests the need for reciprocation—in the form of a purchase, of course (Spiller & Wymer, 2001; Cialdini, 2006; Park & Antonioni, 2007).

   Companies seeking to sell their products to consumers often use the techniques identified by social psychologists for promoting compliance. But employers also use them to bring about compliance and raise the productivity of employees in the workplace. In fact, a close cousin to social psychology, **industrial-organizational (I/O) psychology,** considers issues such as worker motivation, satisfaction, safety, and productivity. I/O psychologists also focus on the operation and design of organizations, asking questions such as how decision making can be improved in large organizations and how the fit between workers and their jobs can be maximized.

Industrial-organizational (I/O) psychology The branch of psychology focusing on work and job-related issues, including worker motivation, satisfaction, safety, and productivity.

Obedience A change in behavior in response to the commands of others.

From the perspective of . . .

A Salesperson   Imagine that you have been trained to use the various compliance techniques described in this section. Because these compliance techniques are so powerful, should the use of certain of these techniques be banned? Should consumers be taught defenses against such techniques? Is the use of such techniques ethically and morally defensible? Why?

» LO3 Obedience: Following Direct Orders

Compliance techniques are used to gently lead people toward agreement with a request. In some cases, however, requests aim to produce **obedience,** a change in behavior in response to the commands of others. Although obedience is considerably less common than conformity and compliance, it does occur in

several specific kinds of relationships. For example, we may show obedience to our bosses, teachers, or parents merely because of the power they hold to reward or punish us.

To acquire an understanding of obedience, consider for a moment how you might respond if a stranger said to you:

> I've devised a new way of improving memory. All I need is for you to teach people a list of words and then give them a test. The test procedure requires only that you give learners a shock each time they make a mistake on the test. To administer the shocks you will use a "shock generator" that gives shocks ranging from 15 to 450 volts. You can see that the switches are labeled from "slight shock" through "danger: severe shock" at the top level, where there are three red X's. But don't worry; although the shocks may be painful, they will cause no permanent damage.

Presented with this situation, you would be likely to think that neither you nor anyone else would go along with the stranger's unusual request. Clearly, it lies outside the bounds of what we consider good sense.

Or does it? Suppose the stranger asking for your help were a psychologist conducting an experiment. Or suppose the request came from your teacher, your employer, or your military commander—all people in authority with a seemingly legitimate reason for the request. If you still believe it's unlikely that you would comply—think again. The situation presented above describes a classic experiment conducted by social psychologist Stanley Milgram in the 1960s. In the study, an experimenter told participants to give increasingly stronger shocks to another person as part of a study on learning (see Figure 2). In reality, the experiment had nothing to do with learning; the real issue under consideration was the degree to which participants would obey the experimenter's requests. In fact, the "learner" supposedly receiving the shocks was a confederate who never really received any punishment (Milgram, 2005).

Most people who hear a description of Milgram's experiment feel that it is unlikely that *any* participant would give the maximum level of shock—or, for that matter, any shock at all. Even a group of psychiatrists to whom the situation was described predicted that fewer than 2 percent of the participants
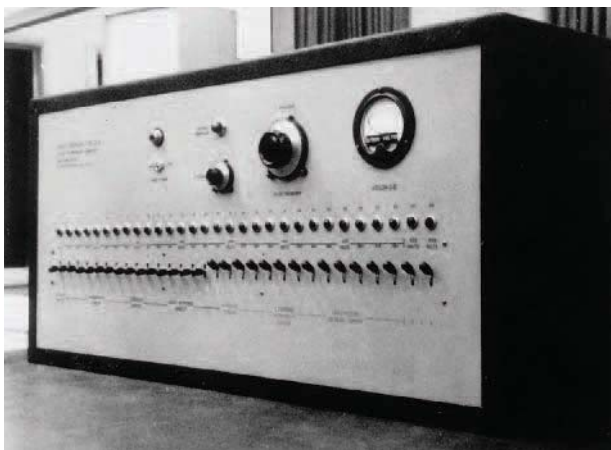

FIGURE 2 This fearsome-looking "shock generator" led participants to believe they were administering electric shocks to another person, who was connected to the generator by electrodes that were attached to the skin. *(Source: Copyright 1965 by Stanley Milgram. From the film Obedience, distributed by the New York University Film Library and Pennsylvania State University, PCR.)*

STUDY ALERT

Because of its graphic demonstration of obedience to authority, the Milgram experiment is one of the most famous and influential studies in social psychology.

psych2.0

WWW.MHHE.COM/PSYCHLIFE

Milgram Obedience Experiment

would fully comply and administer the strongest shocks. However, the actual results contradicted both experts' and nonexperts' predictions. Some 65 percent of the participants eventually used the highest setting on the shock generator—450 volts—to shock the learner. This obedience occurred even though the learner, who had mentioned at the start of the experiment that he had a heart condition, demanded to be released, screaming, "Let me out of here! Let me out of here! My heart's bothering me. Let me out of here!" Despite the learner's pleas, most participants continued to administer the shocks.

 Why did so many individuals comply with the experimenter's demands? The participants, who were extensively interviewed after the experiment, said they obeyed primarily because they believed that the experimenter would be responsible for any potential ill effects that befell the learner. The participants accepted the experimenter's orders, then, because they thought that they personally could not be held accountable for their actions—they could always blame the experimenter (Blass, 1996, 2004).

 We need only consider actual instances of obedience to authority to witness some frightening real-life parallels. For instance, after World War II, the major defense that Nazi officers gave to excuse their participation in atrocities during the war was that they were "only following orders." Milgram's experiment, which was motivated in part by his desire to explain the behavior of everyday Germans during World War II, forces us to ask ourselves this question: Would we be able to withstand the intense power of authority?

R E C A P

Define conformity.

- Social influence is the area of social psychology concerned with situations in which the actions of an individual or group affect the behavior of others. (p. 475)

- Conformity refers to changes in behavior or attitudes that result from a desire to follow the beliefs or standards of others. (p. 475)

Explain compliance.

- Compliance is behavior that results from direct social pressure. Among the ways of eliciting compliance are the foot-in-the-door, door-in-the-face, that's-not-all, and not-so-free-sample techniques. (p. 477)

Discuss obedience.

- Obedience is a change in behavior in response to the commands of others. (p. 478)

E V A L U A T E

1. _____ _____, or a person who agrees with the dissenting viewpoint, is likely to reduce conformity.

2. Which of the following techniques asks a person to comply with a small initial request to enhance the likelihood that the person will later comply with a larger request?

   a. Door-in-the-face

   b. Foot-in-the-door

   c. That's-not-all

   d. Not-so-free sample

3. The _____-_____-_____-_____ technique begins with an outrageous request that makes a subsequent, smaller request seem reasonable.

4. _____ is a change in behavior that is due to another person's orders.

R E T H I N K

Why do you think the Milgram experiment is so controversial? What sorts of effects might the experiment have had on participants? Do you think the experiment would have had similar results if it had been conducted not in a laboratory setting, but among members of a social group (such as a fraternity or sorority) with strong pressures to conform?

Answers to Evaluate Questions 1. social supporter; 2. b; 3. door-in-the-face; 4. obedience

K E Y   T E R M S

Social influence *p. 475*

Conformity *p. 475*

Compliance *p. 477*

Industrial-organizational (I/O) psychology *p. 478*

Obedience *p. 478*

Prejudice and Discrimination

LEARNING OUTCOMES

41.1 Identify the foundations of prejudice.

41.2 Distinguish measuring practices for prejudice and discrimination.

41.3 Assess ways to reduce prejudice and discrimination.

Stereotype A set of generalized beliefs and expectations about a particular group and its members.

Prejudice A negative (or positive) evaluation of a particular group and its members.

Discrimination Behavior directed toward individuals on the basis of their membership in a particular group.

What do you think when someone says, "He's African American," "She's Chinese," or "That's a woman driver"?

If you're like most people, you'll probably automatically form some sort of impression of what each person is like. Most likely your impression is based on a **stereotype,** a set of generalized beliefs and expectations about a specific group and its members. Stereotypes, which may be negative or positive, grow out of our tendency to categorize and organize the vast amount of information we encounter in our everyday lives. All stereotypes share the common feature of oversimplifying the world: We view individuals not in terms of their unique, personal characteristics, but in terms of characteristics we attribute to all the members of a particular group.

Stereotypes can lead to **prejudice,** a negative (or positive) evaluation of a group and its members. For instance, racial prejudice occurs when a member of a racial group is evaluated in terms of race and not because of his or her own characteristics or abilities.

Common stereotypes and forms of prejudice involve racial, religious, and ethnic groups. Over the years, various groups have been called "lazy" or "shrewd" or "cruel" with varying degrees of regularity by those who are not members of that group. Even people who on the surface appear to be unprejudiced may harbor hidden prejudice. For example, when white participants in experiments are shown faces on a computer screen so rapidly that they cannot consciously perceive the faces, they react more negatively to black than to white faces—an example of what has been called *modern racism* (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Pearson, 2005; Liu & Mills, 2006; Pearson, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2007).

Although usually backed by little or no evidence, stereotypes can have harmful consequences. Acting on negative stereotypes results in **discrimination**—behavior directed toward individuals on the basis of their membership in a particular group. Discrimination can lead to exclusion from jobs, neighborhoods, and educational opportunities, and it may result in lower salaries and benefits for members of specific groups. Discrimination can also result in more favorable treatment to favored groups, as when an employer hires a job applicant of her own racial group because of the applicant's race.

Stereotyping not only leads to overt discrimination, but also can cause members of stereotyped groups to behave in ways that reflect the stereotype through a phenomenon known as the *self-fulfilling prophecy*. Self-fulfilling prophecies

are expectations about the occurrence of a future event or behavior that act to increase the likelihood that the event or behavior will occur. For example, if people think that members of a specific group lack ambition, they may treat them in a way that actually brings about a lack of ambition.

» LO 1 The Foundations of Prejudice

No one has ever been born disliking a specific racial, religious, or ethnic group. People learn to hate, in much the same way that they learn the alphabet.

According to *observational learning approaches* to stereotyping and prejudice, the behavior of parents, other adults, and peers shapes children's feelings about members of various groups. For instance, bigoted parents may commend their children for expressing prejudiced attitudes. Likewise, young children learn prejudice by imitating the behavior of adult models. Such learning starts at an early age: children as young as 3 years of age begin to show preferences for members of their own race (Schneider, 2003; Nesdale, Maass, & Durkin, 2005; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2006).

The mass media also provide information about stereotypes, not just for children but for adults as well. Even today, some television shows and movies portray Italians as Mafia-like mobsters, Jews as greedy bankers, and African Americans as promiscuous or lazy. When such inaccurate portrayals are the primary source of information about minority groups, they can lead to the development and maintenance of unfavorable stereotypes (Coltraine & Messineo, 2000; Ward, 2004; Do, 2006).

> *Social identity theory suggests that people tend to be ethnocentric, viewing the world from their own perspective and judging others in terms of their group membership.*

Other explanations of prejudice and discrimination focus on how being a member of a specific group helps to magnify one's sense of self-esteem. According to *social identity theory,* we use group membership as a source of pride and self-worth. Social identity theory suggests that people tend to be *ethnocentric,* viewing the world from their own perspective and judging others in terms of their group membership. Slogans such as "gay pride" and "black is beautiful" illustrate that the groups to which we belong furnish us with a sense of self-respect (Rowley et al., 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Hogg, 2006).

However, the use of group membership to provide social respect produces an unfortunate outcome. In an effort to maximize our sense of self-esteem, we may come to think that our own group (our *ingroup*) is better than groups to which we don't belong (our *outgroups*). Consequently, we inflate the positive aspects of our ingroup—and, at the same time, devalue outgroups. Ultimately, we come to view members of outgroups as inferior to members of our ingroup (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). The end result is prejudice toward members of groups of which we are not a part.

Neither the observational learning approach nor the social identity approach provides a full

Like father, like son: Social learning approaches to stereotyping and prejudice suggest that attitudes and behaviors toward members of minority groups are learned through the observation of parents and other individuals. How can this cycle be broken?

explanation for stereotyping and prejudice. For instance, some psychologists argue that prejudice results when there is perceived competition for scarce societal resources. Thus, when competition exists for jobs or housing, members of majority groups may believe (however unjustly or inaccurately) that minority group members are hindering their efforts to attain their goals, and this belief can lead to prejudice. In addition, other explanations for prejudice emphasize human cognitive limitations that lead us to categorize people on the basis of visually conspicuous physical features such as race, sex, and ethnic group. Such categorization can lead to the development of stereotypes and, ultimately, to discriminatory behavior (Dovidio, 2001; Fiske, 2002; Mullen & Rice, 2003; Weeks & Lupfer, 2004).

» LO 2 Measuring Prejudice and Discrimination: The Implicit Personality Test

A 34-year-old white woman sat down in her Washington office to take a psychological test. Her office decor attested to her passion for civil rights—as a senior activist at a national gay rights organization, and as a lesbian herself, fighting bias and discrimination is what gets her out of bed every morning. . . .

All [the test] asked her to do was distinguish between a series of black and white faces. When she saw a black face she was to hit a key on the left, when she saw a white face she was to hit a key on the right. Next, she was asked to distinguish between a series of positive and negative words. Words such as "glorious" and "wonderful" required a left key, words such as "nasty" and "awful" required a right key. The test remained simple when two categories were combined: The activist hit the left key if she saw either a white face or a positive word, and hit the right key if she saw either a black face or a negative word.

Then the groupings were reversed. The woman's index fingers hovered over her keyboard. The test now required her to group black faces with positive words, and white faces with negative words. She leaned forward intently. She made no mistakes, but it took her longer to correctly sort the words and images. (Vedantam, 2005, p. W12)

When she found out her results, the activist was shocked: The test showed that she showed bias in favor of whites over blacks.

Could you, like this woman, be prejudiced and not even know it? The answer, according to the researchers who developed the *Implicit Association Test,* is probably yes. People often fool themselves, and they are very careful about revealing their true attitudes about members of various groups, not only to others but to themselves. However, even though they may truly believe that they are unprejudiced, the reality is that they actually routinely differentiate between people on the basis of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

The Implicit Association Test, or IAT, is an ingenious measure of prejudice that permits a more accurate assessment of people's discrimination between members of different groups. It was developed, in part, as a reaction to the difficulty in finding a questionnaire that would reveal prejudice. Direct questions such as, "Would you prefer interacting with a member of Group X rather than Group Y?" typically identify only the most blatant prejudices, because people

try to censor their responses (Greenwald, Nosek, & Sririam, 2006; Rudman & Ashmore, 2007).

In contrast, the IAT makes use of the fact that people's automatic reactions often provide the most valid indicator of what they actually believe. Having grown up in a culture that teaches us to think about members of particular groups in specific ways, we tend to absorb associations about those groups that are reflective of the culture (Lane et al., 2007).

The results of the IAT show that almost 90 percent of test takers have a pro-white implicit bias, and more than two-thirds of non-Arab, non-Muslim volunteers display implicit biases against Arab Muslims. Moreover, more than 80 percent of heterosexuals display an implicit bias against gays and lesbians (Wittenbrink & Schwarz, 2007).

Of course, having an implicit bias does not mean that people will overtly discriminate, a criticism that has been made of the test. Yet it does mean that the cultural lessons to which we are exposed have a considerable unconscious influence on us. (Interested in how you would perform on the IAT? Go to this website to take the test: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit).

» LO 3 Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination

How can we diminish the effects of prejudice and discrimination? Psychologists have developed several strategies that have proved effective, including the following:

- *Increasing contact between the target of stereotyping and the holder of the stereotype.* Research consistently has shown that increasing the amount of interaction between people can reduce negative stereotyping. But only certain kinds of contact are likely to reduce prejudice and discrimination. Situations in which contact is relatively intimate, the individuals are of equal status, or participants must cooperate with one another or are dependent on one another are more likely to reduce stereotyping (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

- *Making values and norms against prejudice more conspicuous.* Sometimes just reminding people about the values they already hold regarding equality and fair treatment of others is enough to reduce discrimination. Similarly, people who hear others making strong, vehement antiracist statements are subsequently more likely to strongly condemn racism (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006; Tropp & Bianchi, 2006).

From the perspective of . . .

A CRIMINAL JUSTICE WORKER   How might overt forms of prejudice and discrimination toward disadvantaged groups (such as African Americans) be reduced in a state or federal prison?

Providing information about the targets of stereotyping. Probably the most direct means of changing stereotypical and discriminatory attitudes is education: teaching people to be more aware of the positive characteristics of targets of stereotyping. For instance, when the meaning of puzzling behavior is explained to people who hold stereotypes, they may come to appreciate the actual significance of the behavior (Isbell & Tyler, 2003; Banks, 2006; Nagda, Tropp, & Paluck, 2006).

[R E C A P]

Identify the foundations of prejudice.

- Stereotypes are generalized beliefs and expectations about a specific group and its members. Stereotyping can lead to prejudice and self-fulfilling prophecies. (p. 482)
- Prejudice is the negative (or positive) evaluation of a particular group and its members. (p. 482)
- According to observational learning approaches, children learn stereotyping and prejudice by observing the behavior of parents, other adults, and peers. Social identity theory suggests that group membership is used as a source of pride and self-worth, and this may lead people to think of their own group as better than others. (p. 483)

Distinguish measuring practices for prejudice and discrimination.

- Stereotyping and prejudice can lead to discrimination, behavior directed toward individuals on the basis of their membership in a particular group. (p. 484)

Assess ways to reduce prejudice and discrimination.

- Among the ways of reducing prejudice and discrimination are increasing contact, demonstrating positive values against prejudice, and education. (p. 485)

[E V A L U A T E]

1. Any expectation—positive or negative—about an individual solely on the basis of that person's membership in a group can be a stereotype. True or false?

2. The negative (or positive) evaluation of a group and its members is called
   a. Stereotyping.
   b. Prejudice.
   c. Self-fulfilling prophecy.
   d. Discrimination.

3. Paul is a store manager who does not expect women to succeed in business. He therefore offers important, high-profile responsibilities only to men. If the female employees fail to move up in the company, it could be an example of a _____-_____ prophecy.

R E T H I N K

Do you think it matters that some people have implicit biases against certain groups if those people never express their biases explicitly? Why or why not?

K E Y   T E R M S

Stereotype *p. 482*

Prejudice *p. 482*

Discrimination *p. 482*

Positive and Negative Social Behavior

Are people basically good or bad?

Like philosophers and theologians, social psychologists have pondered the basic nature of humanity. Is it represented mainly by the violence and cruelty we see throughout the world, or does something special about human nature permit loving, considerate, unselfish, and even noble behavior as well?

We turn to two routes that social psychologists have followed in seeking answers to these questions. We first consider what they have learned about the sources of our attraction to others, and we end with a look at two opposite sides of human behavior: aggression and helping.

» LO 1 Liking and Loving: Interpersonal Attraction and the Development of Relationships

Interpersonal attraction (or close relationship) Positive feelings for others; liking and loving.

Nothing is more important in most people's lives than their feelings for others. Consequently, it is not surprising that liking and loving have become a major focus of interest for social psychologists. Known more formally as the study of **interpersonal attraction** or **close relationships,** this area addresses the factors that lead to positive feelings for others.

How Do I Like Thee? Let Me Count the Ways.

Research has given us a good deal of knowledge about the factors that initially attract two people to each other. The important factors considered by social psychologists are the following:

- *Proximity.* Consider the friends you made when you first moved to a new neighborhood. Chances are that you became friendliest with those who lived geographically closest to you. In fact, this is one of the more firmly established findings in the literature on interpersonal attraction: *Proximity* leads to liking (Burgoon et al., 2002; Smith & Weber, 2005).

- *Mere exposure.* Repeated exposure to a person is often sufficient to produce attraction. Interestingly, repeated exposure to *any* stimulus—a person, picture, compact disc, or virtually anything—usually makes us like the stimulus more. In cases of strongly negative initial interactions, though, repeated exposure may instead intensify our initial dislike (Zajonc, 2001; Butler & Berry, 2004).

- *Similarity.* Discovering that others have similar attitudes, values, or traits makes us like them more. Furthermore, the more similar others are, the more we like them. One reason similarity increases the likelihood of interpersonal attraction is that we assume that people with similar attitudes will evaluate us positively. Because we experience a strong *reciprocity-of-liking effect* (a tendency to like those who like us), knowing that someone evaluates us positively promotes our attraction to that person (Bates, 2002; Umphress, Smith-Crowe, & Brief, 2007).

- *Physical attractiveness.* For most people, the equation *beautiful = good* is literally true. As a result, physically attractive people are more popular than are physically unattractive ones, if all other factors are equal. This finding, which contradicts the values that most people say they hold, is apparent even in childhood—with nursery-school-age children rating their peers' popularity on the basis of attractiveness—and continues into adulthood (Zebrowitz & Montepare, 2005; Little, Burt, & Perrett, 2006).

"I'm attracted to you, but then I'm attracted to me, too."

How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Ways

As a first step to investigating love, researchers tried to identify the characteristics that distinguish between mere liking and full-blown love. They discovered that love is not simply a greater quantity of liking, but a qualitatively different psychological state. For instance, at least in its early stages, love includes relatively intense physiological arousal, an all-encompassing interest in another individual, fantasizing about the other, and relatively rapid swings of emotion. Similarly, love, unlike liking, includes elements of passion, closeness, fascination, exclusiveness, sexual desire, and intense caring. We idealize partners by exaggerating their good qualities and minimizing their imperfections (Garza-Guerrero, 2000; Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 2004).

Other researchers have theorized that there are two main types of love: passionate love and companionate love. **Passionate (or romantic) love** represents a state of intense absorption in someone. It includes intense physiological arousal, psychological interest, and caring for the needs of another. In contrast, **companionate love** is the strong affection we have for those with whom our lives are deeply involved. The love we feel for our parents, other family members, and even some close friends falls into the category of companionate love (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2003; Masuda, 2003; Regan, 2006).

Psychologist Robert Sternberg makes an even finer differentiation between types of love. He proposes that love consists of three parts:

- *Decision/commitment,* the initial thoughts that one loves someone and the longer-term feelings of commitment to maintain love.

psych2.0
WWW.MHHE.COM/PSYCHLIFE

First Impressions and Attraction

Passionate (or romantic) love A state of intense absorption in someone that includes intense physiological arousal, psychological interest, and caring for the needs of another.

Companionate love The strong affection we have for those with whom our lives are deeply involved.

- *Intimacy component,* feelings of closeness and connectedness.

- *Passion component,* the motivational drives relating to sex, physical closeness, and romance.

According to Sternberg, these three components combine to produce the different types of love (see Figure 1). He suggests that different combinations of the three components vary over the course of relationships. For example, in strong, loving relationships the level of commitment peaks and then remains stable. Passion, on the other hand, peaks quickly, and then declines and levels off relatively early in most relationships. In addition, relationships are happiest in which the strength of the various components are similar between the two partners (Sternberg, Hojjat, & Barnes, 2001; Sternberg, 2004, 2006).

Is love a necessary ingredient in a good marriage? Yes, if you live in the United States. But it's considerably less important in other cultures. Although mutual attraction and love are the two most important characteristics desired in a mate by men and women in the United States, men in China rated good health as most important, and women there rated emotional stability and maturity as most important. Among the Zulu in South Africa, men rated emotional stability first and women rated dependable character first (Buss, Abbott, & Angleitner, 1990; see Figure 2). (To consider how you approach relationships, complete the Try It! on page 492.)
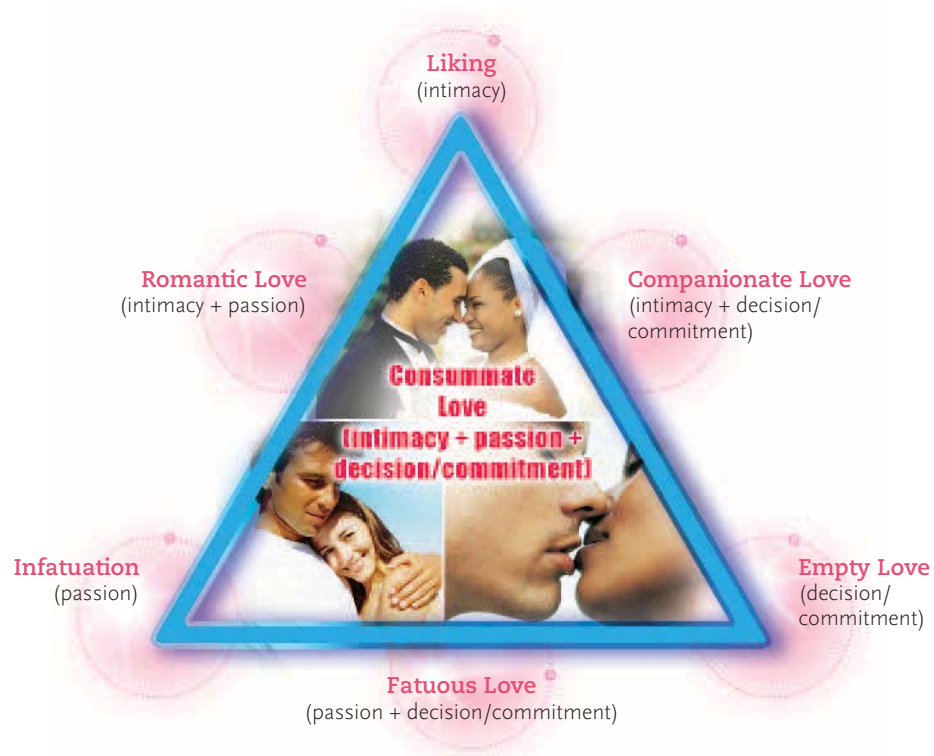

FIGURE 1   According to Sternberg, love has three main components: intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment. Different combinations of these components can create other types of love. Nonlove contains none of the three components.

Rank Ordering of Desired Characteristics in a Mate						
	United States		China		South Africa Zulu	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Mutual attraction—love	1	1	8	4	5	10
Emotional stability and maturity	2	2	1	5	2	1
Dependable character	3	3	7	6	1	3
Pleasing disposition	4	4	16	13	3	4
Education and intelligence	5	5	4	8	6	6
Good health	9	6	3	1	4	5
Good looks	13	7	15	11	16	14
Sociability	8	8	9	12	8	11
Desire for home and children	7	9	2	2	9	9
Refinement, neatness	12	10	10	7	10	7
Ambition and industriousness	6	11	5	10	7	8
Similar education	10	12	12	15	12	12
Good cook and houskeeper	16	13	11	9	15	2
Favorable social status or rating	14	14	13	14	14	17
Similar religious background	15	15	18	18	11	16
Good financial prospect	11	16	14	16	13	18
Chastity (no prior sexual intercourse)	18	17	6	3	18	13
Similar political background	17	18	17	17	17	15

FIGURE 2   Although love may be an important factor in choosing a marriage partner if you live in the United States, other cultures place less importance on it. *(Source: Buss et al., 1990.)*

Liking and loving clearly show a positive side of human social behavior. Now we turn to behaviors that are just as much a part of social behavior: aggression and helping behavior.

» LO 2 Aggression and Prosocial Behavior: Hurting and Helping Others

Drive-by shootings, carjackings, and abductions are just a few examples of the violence that seems all too common today. But also common are the simple kindnesses of life: lending a valued compact disc, stopping to help a child who has fallen off her bicycle, or merely sharing a candy bar with a friend. Such instances of helping are no less characteristic of human behavior than are the distasteful examples of aggression.

Hurting Others: Aggression

We need look no further than the daily paper or the nightly news to be bombarded with examples of **aggression,** the intentional injury of or harm to another person, both on a societal level (war, invasion, assassination) and on an individual level (crime, child abuse, and the many petty cruelties humans are capable of inflicting on one another). Is such aggression an inevitable part

Aggression The intentional injury of, or harm to, another person.

Understand Your Relationship Style

Each of us has a general manner in which we approach close relationships with others. Read the three statements below, and determine which best describes you:

1. I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.

2. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely and to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.

3. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away.

The choice you make suggests the general style of emotional bonds that you develop with others.

If you thought the first statement described you best, it is probably easy for you to develop close ties with others. Around 55 percent of people describe themselves in this way.

If statement 2 describes you best, you probably have a more difficult time getting close to others, and you may have to work harder to develop close ties with other people. About 25 percent of people place themselves in this category.

Finally, if statement 3 describes you best, you, along with the 20 percent of people who describe themselves in this way, aggressively seek out close relationships. However, they probably present a source of concern to you.

Keep in mind that this is an inexact assessment and presents only a very rough estimate of your general approach to close relationships. But your response can be helpful in answering these questions: Are you generally satisfied with your relationships? Would you like to change them in some way?

---

of the human condition? Or is aggression primarily a product of particular circumstances that, if changed, could lead to its reduction?

Instinct Approaches: Aggression as a Release.

Instinct theories, noting the prevalence of aggression not only in humans but in animals as well, propose that aggression is primarily the outcome of innate—or inborn—urges.

Sigmund Freud was one of the first to suggest, as part of his theory of personality, that aggression is a primary instinctual drive. Konrad Lorenz, an ethologist (a scientist who studies animal behavior), expanded on Freud's notions by arguing that humans, along with members of other species, have a fighting instinct, which in earlier times ensured protection of food supplies and weeded out the weaker of the species (Lorenz, 1966, 1974). Lorenz's instinct approach led to the controversial notion that aggressive energy constantly builds up within an individual until the person finally discharges it in a process called **catharsis.** The longer the energy builds up, says Lorenz, the greater will be the amount of the aggression displayed when it is discharged.

Catharsis The process of discharging built-up aggressive energy.

Probably the most controversial idea to come out of instinct theories of aggression is Lorenz's proposal that society should provide acceptable ways of permitting catharsis. For example, he suggested that participation in aggressive sports and games would prevent the discharge of aggression in less socially desirable ways. However, little research has found evidence for the existence of a pent-up reservoir of aggression that needs to be released. In fact, some studies flatly contradict the notion of catharsis, leading psychologists to look for other explanations for aggression (Bushman & Anderson, 2002; Bushman, Wang, & Anderson, 2005; Scheele & DuBois, 2006).

Frustration-Aggression Approaches: Aggression as a Reaction to Frustration.
Frustration-aggression theory suggests that *frustration* (the reaction to the thwarting or blocking of goals) produces anger, leading to a readiness to act aggressively. Whether actual aggression occurs depends on the presence of *aggressive cues,* stimuli that have been associated in the past with actual aggression or violence and that will trigger aggression again (Berkowitz, 2001).

Is road rage a result of frustration? According to frustration-aggression approaches, frustration is a likely cause.

What kinds of stimuli act as aggressive cues? They can range from the most explicit, such as the presence of weapons, to more subtle cues, such as the mere mention of the name of an individual who behaved violently in the past (Berkowitz, 2001; Marcus-Newhall, Pederson, & Carlson, 2000).

Observational Learning Approaches: Learning to Hurt Others.
Do we learn to be aggressive? The observational learning (sometimes called social learning) approach to aggression says that we do. Taking an almost opposite view from instinct theories, which focus on innate explanations of aggression, observational learning theory emphasizes that social and environmental conditions can teach individuals to be aggressive. The theory sees aggression not as inevitable, but rather as a learned response that can be understood in terms of rewards and punishments.

Observational learning theory pays particular attention not only to direct rewards and punishments that individuals themselves receive, but also to the rewards and punishments that models—individuals who provide a guide to appropriate behavior—receive for their aggressive behavior. According to observational learning theory, people observe the behavior of models and the subsequent consequences of that behavior. If the consequences are positive, the behavior is likely to be imitated when observers find themselves in a similar situation.

Suppose, for instance, a girl hits her younger brother when he damages one of her new toys. Whereas instinct theory would suggest that the aggression had been pent up and was now being discharged and frustration-aggression theory would examine the girl's frustration at no longer being able to use her new toy, observational learning theory would look to previous situations in which the girl had viewed others being rewarded for their aggression.

> *What kinds of stimuli act as aggressive cues? They can range from the most explicit, such as the presence of weapons, to more subtle cues, such as the mere mention of the name of an individual who behaved violently in the past.*

STUDY ALERT

Understand the distinction between the instinctual, frustration-aggression, and observational learning approaches to aggression.

For example, perhaps she had watched a friend get to play with a toy after he painfully twisted it out of the hand of another child.

Observational learning theory has received wide research support. For example, nursery-school-age children who have watched an adult model behave aggressively and then receive reinforcement for it later display similar behavior themselves if they have been angered, insulted, or frustrated after exposure. Furthermore, a significant amount of research links watching television shows containing violence with subsequent viewer aggression (Coyne & Archer, 2005; Winerman, 2005; Greer, Dudek-Singer, & Gautreaux, 2006).

Prosocial behavior Helping behavior.

Diffusion of responsibility The tendency for people to feel that responsibility for acting is shared, or diffused, among those present.

From the perspective of . . .

A Criminal Justice Worker   How would the aggression of Eric Rudolph, who was convicted of exploding a bomb during the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta and later attacking several women's clinics, be interpreted by proponents of the three main approaches to the study of aggression: instinct approaches, frustration-aggression approaches, and observational learning approaches? Do you think any of these approaches fits the Rudolph case more closely than the others?

Helping Others: The Brighter Side of Human Nature

Turning away from aggression, we move now to the opposite—and brighter—side of human nature: helping behavior. Helping behavior, or **prosocial behavior** as it is more formally known, has been considered under many different conditions. However, the question that psychologists have looked at most closely relates to bystander intervention in emergency situations. What are the factors that lead someone to help a person in need?

One critical factor is the number of others present. When more than one person witnesses an emergency situation, a sense of **diffusion of responsibility** can arise among the bystanders. Diffusion of responsibility is the tendency for people to feel that responsibility for acting is shared, or diffused, among those present. The more people who are present in an emergency, the less personally responsible each individual feels—and therefore the less help

Figure 3   The basic steps of helping. *(Source: Based on Latané & Darley, 1970).*

Noticing a person, event, or situation that may require help

Interpreting the event as one that requires help

Assuming responsibility for helping

Deciding on and implementing the form of helping

he or she provides (Blair, Thompson, & Wuensch, 2005; Barron & Yechiam, 2002; Gray, 2006).

Although most research on helping behavior supports the diffusion-of-responsibility explanation, other factors are clearly involved in helping behavior. According to a model of the helping process, the decision to give aid involves four basic steps (Latané & Darley, 1970; Garcia et al., 2002; see Figure 3):

- *Noticing a person, event, or situation that may require help.*

- *Interpreting the event as one that requires help.* Even if we notice an event, it may be sufficiently ambiguous for us to interpret it as a non-emergency situation. It is here that the presence of others first affects helping behavior. The presence of inactive others may indicate to us that a situation does not require help—a judgment we do not necessarily make if we are alone.

- *Assuming responsibility for helping.* It is at this point that diffusion of responsibility is likely to occur if others are present.

- *Deciding on and implementing the form of helping.* After we assume responsibility for helping, we must decide how to provide assistance. Helping can range from very indirect forms of intervention, such as calling the police, to more direct forms, such as giving first aid or taking the victim to a hospital. After determining the nature of the assistance needed, the actual help must be implemented. A rewards-costs analysis suggests that we are most likely to use the least costly form of implementation. However, this is not always the case: In some situations, people behave altruistically. **Altruism** is helping behavior that is beneficial to others but clearly requires self-sacrifice. For example, people who helped strangers escape from the burning World Trade Center towers during the 9/11 terrorist attack, putting themselves at mortal risk, would be considered altruistic (Krueger, Hicks, & McGue, 2001; Batson & Powell, 2003; Manor & Gailliot, 2007).

Altruism Helping behavior that is beneficial to others but clearly requires self-sacrifice.

Altruism is often the only bright side of a natural disaster.

R E C A P

Compare and contrast the concepts of "like" and love.

- The primary determinants of liking include proximity, exposure, similarity, and physical attractiveness. (p. 488)

- Loving is distinguished from liking by the presence of intense physiological arousal, an all-encompassing interest in another, fantasies about the other, rapid swings of emotion, fascination, sexual desire, exclusiveness, and strong feelings of caring. (p. 489)

- Love can be categorized as passionate or companionate. In addition, love has several components: intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment. (p. 489)

Explain aggression and prosocial behavior.

- Aggression is intentional injury of or harm to another person. (p. 491)

- Explanations of aggression include instinct approaches, frustration-aggression theory, and observational learning. (p. 492)

- Helping behavior in emergencies is determined in part by the phenomenon of diffusion of responsibility, which results in a lower likelihood of helping when more people are present. (p. 494)

- Deciding to help is the outcome of a four-stage process consisting of noticing a possible need for help, interpreting the situation as requiring aid, assuming responsibility for taking action, and deciding on and implementing a form of assistance. (p. 495)

E V A L U A T E

1. We tend to like people who are similar to us. True or false?

2. Which of the following sets are the three components of love proposed by Sternberg?
   a. Passion, closeness, sexuality
   b. Attraction, desire, complementarity
   c. Passion, intimacy, decision/commitment
   d. Commitment, caring, sexuality

3. Based on research evidence, which of the following might be the best way to reduce the amount of fighting a young boy does?
   a. Take him to the gym and let him work out on the boxing equipment.
   b. Make him repeatedly watch violent scenes from the film *The Matrix Reloaded* in the hope that it will provide catharsis.
   c. Reward him if he doesn't fight during a certain period.
   d. Ignore it and let it die out naturally.

4. If a person in a crowd does not help in an apparent emergency situation because many other people are present, that person is falling victim to the phenomenon of _____ _____ _____.

R E T H I N K

Can love be studied scientifically? Is there an elusive quality to love that makes it at least partially unknowable? How would you define "falling in love"? How would you study it?

Answers to Evaluate Questions 1. true; 2. c; 3. c; 4. diffusion of responsibility

[KEY TERMS]

Interpersonal attraction (or close relationship) *p. 488*

Passionate (or romantic) love *p. 489*

Companionate love *p. 489*

Aggression *p. 491*

Catharsis *p. 492*

Prosocial behavior *p. 494*

Diffusion of responsibility *p. 494*

Altruism *p. 495*

Stress and Coping

Anthony Lepre started feeling awful almost as soon as [U.S. Homeland Security Secretary] Tom Ridge put the nation on high alert for a terrorist attack . . . He awoke in the middle of the night short of breath, his heart pounding. And the sound of his telephone seemed a sure sign of bad news. By midweek, he was rushing off to Costco to stock up on fruit juice, bottled water, peanut butter, canned tuna "and extra food for my cats Monster, Monkey and Spike." He also picked up a first-aid kit, six rolls of duct tape and a bulk package of plastic wrap to seal his windows. "The biggest problem was that I felt helpless," he says, "completely powerless over the situation." (Cowley, 2003, pp. 43–44.)

» LO 1 Stress: Reacting to Threat and Challenge

Stress A person's response to events that are threatening or challenging.

Most of us need little introduction to the phenomenon of **stress,** people's response to events that threaten or challenge them. Whether it is a family problem or even the ongoing threat of a terrorist attack, life is full of circumstances and events, known as *stressors,* that produce threats to our well-being. Even pleasant events—such as planning a party or beginning a sought-after job—can produce stress, although negative events result in greater detrimental consequences than do positive ones.

All of us face stress in our lives. Some psychologists believe that daily life actually involves a series of repeated sequences of perceiving a threat, considering ways to cope with it, and ultimately adapting to the threat, with greater or lesser success. Although adaptation is often minor and occurs without our awareness, adaptation requires a major effort when stress is more severe or longer lasting. Ultimately, our attempts to overcome stress may produce biological and psychological responses that result in health problems (Boyce & Ellis, 2005; Dolbier, Smith, & Steinhardt, 2007).

» LO 2 The Nature of Stressors: My Stress Is Your Pleasure

Stress is a very personal thing. Although certain kinds of events, such as the death of a loved one or participation in military combat, are universally stressful, other situations may or may not be stressful to a specific person.

Consider, for instance, bungee jumping. Some people would find jumping off a bridge while attached to a slender rubber tether extremely stressful. However, there are individuals who see such an activity as challenging and fun-filled. Whether bungee jumping is stressful depends in part, then, on a person's perception of the activity.

For people to consider an event stressful, they must perceive it as threatening or challenging and must lack all the resources to deal with it effectively. Consequently, the same event may at some times be stressful and at other times provoke no stressful reaction at all. A young man may experience stress when he is turned down for a date—if he attributes the refusal to his unattractiveness or unworthiness. But if he attributes it to some factor unrelated to his self-esteem, such as a previous commitment by the woman he asked, the experience of being refused may create no stress at all. Hence, a person's interpretation of events plays an important role in the determination of what is stressful (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Giacobbi et al., 2004; MacKinnon & Luecken, 2008).

Categorizing Stressors

What kinds of events tend to be seen as stressful? There are three general types of stressors: cataclysmic events, personal stressors, and background stressors.

Cataclysmic events are strong stressors that occur suddenly and typically affect many people simultaneously. Disasters such as tornadoes and plane crashes, as well as terrorist attacks, are examples of cataclysmic events that can affect hundreds or thousands of people simultaneously.

Although it might seem that cataclysmic events would produce potent, lingering stress, in many cases they do not. In fact, cataclysmic events involving natural disasters may produce less stress in the long run than do events that initially are not as devastating. One reason is that natural disasters have a clear resolution. Once they are over, people can look to the future knowing that the worst is behind them. Moreover, the stress induced by cataclysmic events is shared by others who also experienced the disaster. Such sharing permits people to offer one another social support and a firsthand understanding of the difficulties others are going through (Hobfoll et al., 1996; Benight, 2004; Yesilyaprak, Kisac, & Sanlier, 2007).

The second major category of stressor is the personal stressor. **Personal stressors** include major life events such as the death of a parent or spouse, the loss of one's job, a major personal failure, or even something positive such as getting married. Typically, personal stressors produce an immediate major reaction that soon tapers off. For example, stress arising from the death of a loved one tends to be greatest just after the time of death, but people begin to feel less stress and are better able to cope with the loss after the passage of time.

Some victims of major catastrophes and severe personal stressors experience **posttraumatic stress disorder,** or **PTSD,** in which a person has experienced a significantly stressful event that has long-lasting effects that may include reexperiencing the event in vivid flashbacks or dreams.

psych2.0

WWW.MHHE.COM/PSYCHLIFE

Stress

Cataclysmic events Strong stressors that occur suddenly, affecting many people at once (e.g., natural disasters).

Personal stressors Major life events, such as the death of a family member, that have immediate negative consequences that generally fade with time.

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) A phenomenon in which victims of major catastrophes or strong personal stressors feel long-lasting effects that may include reexperiencing them even in vivid flashbacks or dreams.

Even positive events can produce significant stress.

An episode of PTSD may be triggered by an otherwise innocent stimulus, such as the sound of a honking horn that leads someone to reexperience a past event that produced considerable stress.

Symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder also include emotional numbing, sleep difficulties, interpersonal problems, alcohol and drug abuse, and—in some cases—suicide. For instance, the suicide rate for veterans of the Iraq war is considerably higher than it is for the general population (Dohrenwend et al., 2006; Pole, 2007).

Background stressors, or more informally, *daily hassles,* are the third major category of stressors. Exemplified by standing in a long line at a bank and getting stuck in a traffic jam, daily hassles are the minor irritations of life that we all face time and time again. Another type of background stressor is a long-term, chronic problem, such as experiencing dissatisfaction with school or a job, being in an unhappy relationship, or living in crowded quarters without privacy (Lazarus, 2000; Weinstein et al., 2004).

> *Exemplified by standing in a long line at a bank and getting stuck in a traffic jam, daily hassles are the minor irritations of life that we all face time and time again.*

By themselves, daily hassles do not require much coping or even a response on the part of the individual, although they certainly produce unpleasant emotions and moods. Yet daily hassles add up—and ultimately they may take as great a toll as a single, more stressful incident does. In fact, the *number* of daily hassles people face is associated with psychological symptoms and health problems such as flu, sore throat, and backaches.

The flip side of hassles is *uplifts,* the minor positive events that make us feel good—even if only temporarily. As indicated in Figure 1, uplifts range from relating well to a companion to finding one's surroundings pleasing. What is especially intriguing about uplifts is that they are associated with people's psychological health in just the opposite way that hassles are: The greater the number of uplifts we experience, the fewer the psychological symptoms we report later (Chamberlain & Zika, 1990; Ravindran et al., 2002; Jain, Mills, & Von Känel, 2007).

Everyone confronts daily hassles, or background stressors, at some point. At what point do daily hassles become more than mere irritants?

The High Cost of Stress

Stress can produce both biological and psychological consequences. Often the most immediate reaction to stress is a biological one. Exposure to stressors generates a rise in hormone secretions by the adrenal glands, an increase in heart rate and blood pressure, and changes in how well the skin conducts electrical impulses. On a short-term basis, these responses may be adaptive because they produce an "emergency reaction" in which the body prepares to defend itself through activation of the sympathetic nervous system. Those responses may allow more effective coping with the stressful situation (Akil & Morano, 1996; McEwen, 1998).

However, continued exposure to stress results in a decline in the body's overall level of biological functioning because of the constant secretion of stress-related hormones. Over time, stressful reactions can promote deterioration of body tissues such as blood vessels and the heart. Ultimately, we become more susceptible to disease as our ability to fight off infection is lowered (Kemeny, 2003; Brydon et al., 2004; Dean-Borenstein, 2007).
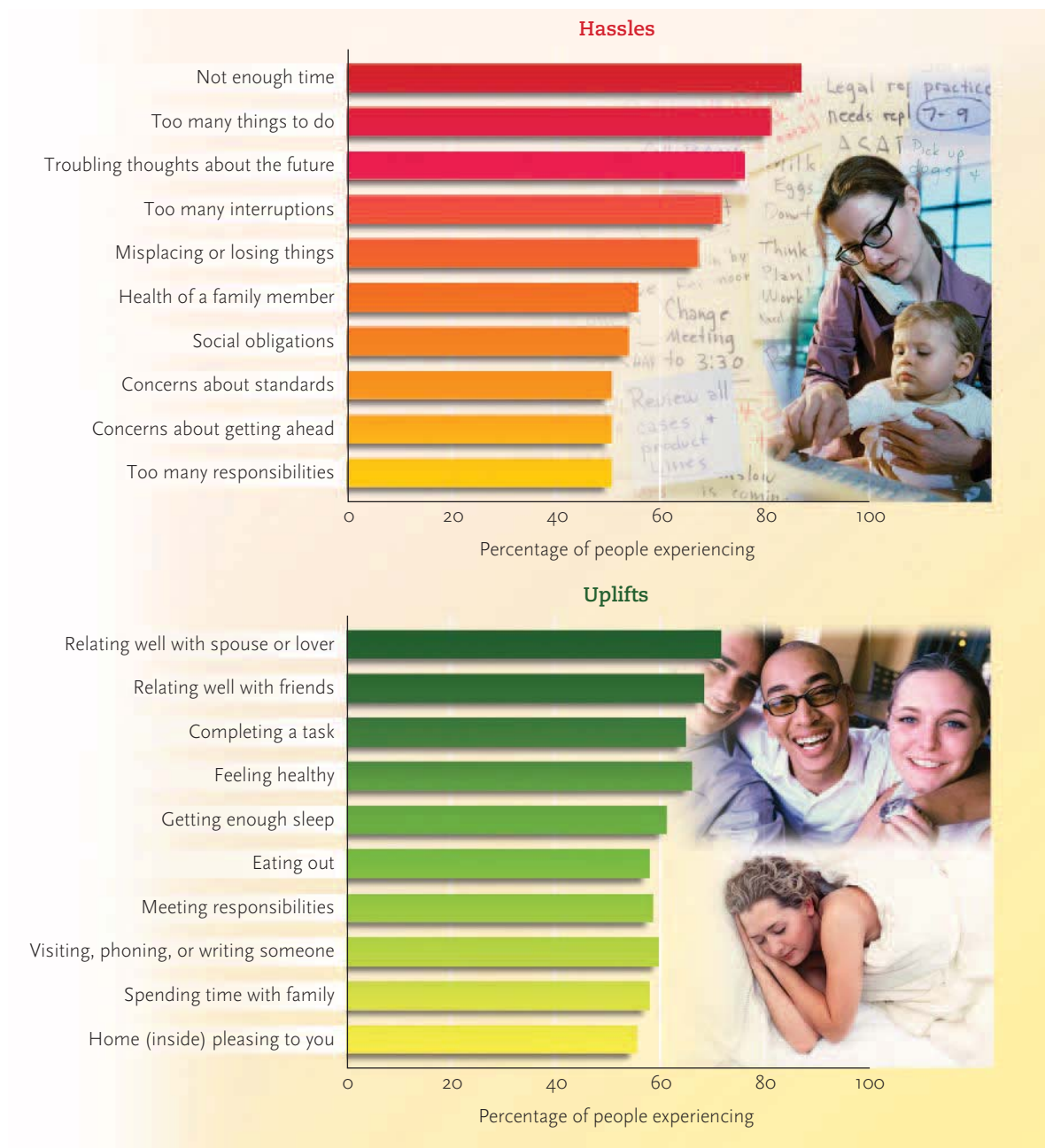
Hassles

Percentage of people experiencing

- Not enough time
- Too many things to do
- Troubling thoughts about the future
- Too many interruptions
- Misplacing or losing things
- Health of a family member
- Social obligations
- Concerns about standards
- Concerns about getting ahead
- Too many responsibilities

Uplifts

Percentage of people experiencing

- Relating well with spouse or lover
- Relating well with friends
- Completing a task
- Feeling healthy
- Getting enough sleep
- Eating out
- Meeting responsibilities
- Visiting, phoning, or writing someone
- Spending time with family
- Home (inside) pleasing to you

FIGURE 1   The most common everyday hassles and uplifts (hassles: Chamberlain & Zika, 1990; uplifts: Kanner et al., 1981). How many of these are part of your life, and how do you cope with them?

Furthermore, an entire class of physical problems known as **psychophysiological disorders** often result from or are worsened by stress. Once referred to as *psychosomatic disorders* (a term dropped because people assumed that the disorders were somehow unreal), psychophysiological disorders are actual medical problems that are influenced by an interaction of psychological, emotional, and physical difficulties. The more common psychophysiological disorders range from major problems such as high blood pressure to usually less serious conditions, such as headaches, backaches, skin rashes, indigestion, fatigue, and constipation. Stress has even been linked to the common cold (Cohen et al., 2003; Andrasik, 2006).

Psychophysiological disorders Medical problems influenced by an interaction of psychological, emotional, and physical difficulties.

In short, stress affects us in multiple ways. It may increase the risk that we will become ill, it may directly cause illness, it may make us less able to recover from a disease, and it may reduce our ability to cope with future stress. (See Figure 2 to get a measure of your own level of stress.)

Q **How Stressful Is Your Life?**

Test your level of stress by answering these questions, and adding the score from each box. Questions apply to the last month only. A key below will help you determine the extent of your stress.

1 How often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?

> 0 = never, 1 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, 4 = very often

2 How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

> 0 = never, 1 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, 4 = very often

3 How often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?

> 0 = never, 1 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, 4 = very often

4 How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

> 4 = never, 3 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 1 = fairly often, 0 = very often

5 How often have you felt that things were going your way?

> 4 = never, 3 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 1 = fairly often, 0 = very often

6 How often have you been able to control irritations in your life?

> 4 = never, 3 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 1 = fairly often, 0 = very often

7 How often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?

> 0 = never, 1 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, 4 = very often

8 How often have you felt that you were on top of things?

> 4 = never, 3 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 1 = fairly often, 0 = very often

9 How often have you been angered because of things that were outside your control?

> 0 = never, 1 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, 4 = very often

10 How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

> 0 = never, 1 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, 4 = very often

How You Measure Up

Stress levels vary among individuals—compare your total score to the averages below:

AGE		GENDER	
18–29	14.2	Men	12.1
30–44	13.0	Women	13.7
45–54	12.6		
55–64	11.9		
65 & over	12.0		

MARITAL STATUS

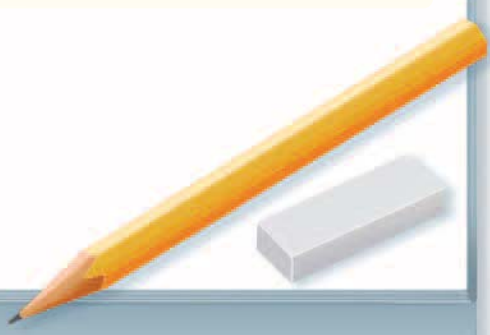|	
Widowed	12.6
Married or living with a partner	12.4
Single or never wed	14.1
Divorced	14.7
Separated	16.6

FIGURE 2 To get a sense of the level of stress in your life, complete this questionnaire. *(Source: Cohen, 1999.)*

FIGURE 3 The general adaptation syndrome (GAS) suggests that there are three major stages to stress responses. *(Source: Selye, 1976.)*

The General Adaptation Syndrome Model: The Course of Stress

The effects of long-term stress are illustrated in a series of stages proposed by Hans Selye (pronounced "sell-yay"), a pioneering stress theorist (Selye, 1976, 1993). This model, the **general adaptation syndrome (GAS),** suggests that the physiological response to stress follows the same set pattern regardless of the cause of stress.

As shown in Figure 3, the GAS has three phases. The first stage—*alarm and mobilization*—occurs when people become aware of the presence of a stressor. On a biological level, the sympathetic nervous system becomes energized, helping a person cope initially with the stressor.

However, if the stressor persists, people move into the second response stage: *resistance*. During this stage, the body prepares to fight the stressor. During resistance, people use a variety of means to cope with the stressor—sometimes successfully but at a cost of some degree of physical or psychological well-being. For example, a worker who faces the stress of impending layoffs might spend long hours working overtime, seeking to cope with the stress.

psych2.0

WWW.MHHE.COM/PSYCHLIFE

The Various Sources of Stress

General adaptation syndrome (GAS) A theory developed by Hans Selye that suggests that a person's response to a stressor consists of three stages: alarm and mobilization, resistance, and exhaustion.

From the perspective of . . .

A SUPERVISOR How would you help people deal with and avoid stress in their everyday lives? How might you encourage people to create social support networks?

Figure 4 Three major types of consequences result from stress: direct physiological effects, harmful behaviors, and indirect health-related behaviors. *(Source: Adapted from Baum, 1994.)*

If resistance is inadequate, people enter the last stage of the GAS: *exhaustion.* During the exhaustion stage, a person's ability to adapt to the stressor declines to the point where negative consequences of stress appear: physical illness and psychological symptoms in the form of an inability to concentrate, heightened irritability, or, in severe cases, disorientation and a loss of touch with reality. In a sense, people wear out, and their physical reserves are used up.

How do people move out of the third stage after they have entered it? In some cases, exhaustion allows people to avoid a stressor. For example, people who become ill from overwork may be excused from their duties for a time, giving them a temporary respite from their responsibilities. At least for a time, then, the immediate stress is reduced.

Psychoneuroimmunology and Stress

Psychologists specializing in **psychoneuroimmunology,** or **PNI,** the study of the relationship among psychological factors, the immune system, and the brain, have taken a broader approach to stress. Focusing on the outcomes of stress, they have identified three main consequences (see Figure 4).

First, stress has direct physiological results, including an increase in blood pressure, an increase in hormonal activity, and an overall decline in the functioning of the immune system. Second, stress leads people to engage in behaviors that are harmful to their health, including increased nicotine, drug, and alcohol use; poor eating habits; and decreased sleep. Finally, stress produces indirect consequences that result in declines in health: a reduction in the likelihood of obtaining health care and decreased compliance with medical advice when it is sought (Sapolsky, 2003; Broman, 2005; Lindblad, Lindahl, & Theorell, 2006).

Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) The study of the relationship among psychological factors, the immune system, and the brain.

Coping The efforts to control, reduce, or learn to tolerate the threats that lead to stress.

» LO3 Coping with Stress

Stress is a normal part of life—and not necessarily a completely bad part. For example, without stress, we might not be sufficiently motivated to complete the activities we need to accomplish. However, it is also clear that too much stress can take a toll on physical and psychological health. How do people deal with stress? Is there a way to reduce its negative effects?

Efforts to control, reduce, or learn to tolerate the threats that lead to stress are known as **coping.** We habitually use certain coping responses to deal with stress. Most of the time, we're not aware of these responses—just as we may be

unaware of the minor stressors of life until they build up to harmful levels (Wrzesniewski & Chylinska, 2007).

We also have other, more direct, and potentially more positive ways of coping with stress, which fall into two main categories (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000, 2004):

The ability to fight off disease is related to psychological factors. Here a cell from the body's immune system engulfs and destroys disease-producing bacteria.

- *Emotion-focused coping.* In emotion-focused coping, people try to manage their emotions in the face of stress, seeking to change the way they feel about or perceive a problem. Examples of emotion-focused coping include strategies such as accepting sympathy from others and looking at the bright side of a situation.

- *Problem-focused coping.* Problem-focused coping attempts to modify the stressful problem or source of stress. Problem-focused strategies lead to changes in behavior or to the development of a plan of action to deal with stress. Getting your resume ready when impending layoffs are announced is an example of problem-focused coping.

People often employ several types of coping strategies simultaneously. Furthermore, they use emotion-focused strategies more frequently when they perceive circumstances as being unchangeable and problem-focused approaches more often in situations they see as relatively modifiable (Penley, Tomaka, & Wiebe, 2002).

Some forms of coping are less successful. One of the least effective forms of coping is avoidant coping. In *avoidant coping,* a person may use wishful thinking to reduce stress or use more direct escape routes, such as drug use, alcohol use, and overeating. Avoidant coping usually results in a postponement of dealing with a stressful situation, and this often makes the problem even worse (Hutchinson, Baldwin, & Oh, 2006).
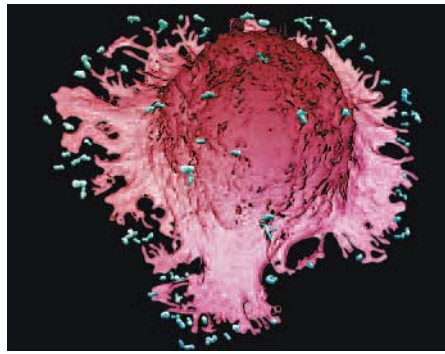
Learned Helplessness

Have you ever faced an intolerable situation that you just couldn't resolve, and you finally simply gave up and accepted things the way they were? This example illustrates one of the possible consequences of being in an environment in which control over a situation is not possible—a state that produces learned helplessness. **Learned helplessness** occurs when people conclude that unpleasant or aversive stimuli cannot be controlled—a view of the world that becomes so ingrained that they cease trying to remedy the aversive circumstances, even if they actually can exert some influence on the situation (Seligman, 1975, 2007; Aujoulat, Luminet, & Deccache, 2007).

Victims of learned helplessness have concluded that there is no link between the responses they make and the outcomes that occur. People experience more physical symptoms and depression when they perceive that they have little or no control than they do when they feel a sense of control over a situation (Chou, 2005; Bjornstad, 2006).

Learned helplessness A state in which people conclude that unpleasant or aversive stimuli cannot be controlled—a view of the world that becomes so ingrained that they cease trying to remedy the aversive circumstances, even if they actually can exert some influence.

Social support A mutual network of caring, interested others.

Social Support: Turning to Others

Our relationships with others also help us cope with stress. Researchers have found that **social support,** the knowledge that we are part of a mutual network of caring, interested others, enables us to experience lower levels of stress and be better able to

cope with the stress we do undergo (Cohen, 2004; Martin & Brantley, 2004; Bolger & Amarel, 2007).

The social and emotional support people provide each other helps in dealing with stress in several ways. For instance, such support demonstrates that a person is an important and valued member of a social network. Similarly, other people can provide information and advice about appropriate ways of dealing with stress (Day & Livingstone, 2003; Lindorff, 2005). Finally, people who are part of a social support network can provide actual goods and services to help others in stressful situations. For instance, they can supply temporary living quarters to a person whose house has burned down, or they can offer babysitting to a parent who is experiencing stress because of the serious illness of a spouse (Natvig, Albrektsen, & Ovarnstrom, 2003; Takizawa, Kondo, & Sakihara, 2007).

becoming an *informed consumer*
OF PSYCHOLOGY

Effective Coping Strategies

How can we deal with the stress in our lives? Although there is no universal solution, because effective coping depends on the nature of the stressor and the degree to which it can be controlled, here are some general guidelines (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000):

- *Turn a threat into a challenge.* When a stressful situation might be controllable, the best coping strategy is to treat the situation as a challenge, focusing on ways to control it. For instance, if you experience stress because your car is always breaking down, you might take a course in auto mechanics and learn to deal directly with the car's problems.

- *Make a threatening situation less threatening.* When a stressful situation seems to be uncontrollable, you need to take a different approach. It is possible to change your appraisal of the situation, view it in a different light, and modify your attitude toward it. The old truism "Look for the silver lining in every cloud" is supported by research (Smith & Lazarus, 2001; Cheng & Cheung, 2005).

Most jobs are stressful. How would good stress coping techniques help you in this situation?

- *Change your goals.* If you are faced with an uncontrollable situation, a reasonable strategy is to adopt new goals that are practical in view of the particular situation. For example, a dancer who has been in an automobile accident and has lost full use of her legs may no longer aspire to a career in dance but might modify her goals and try to become a choreographer.
- *Take physical action.* Exercise can be effective in reducing stress.
- *Prepare for stress before it happens.* A final strategy for coping with stress is *proactive coping,* anticipating and preparing for stress *before* it is encountered (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997; Bode et al., 2007).

R E C A P

Define stress and discuss how it affects us.

- Stress is a response to threatening or challenging environmental conditions. People encounter stressors—the circumstances that produce stress—of both a positive and a negative nature. (p. 498)

Explain the nature of stressors.

- The way an environmental circumstance is interpreted affects whether it will be considered stressful. Still, there are general classes of events that provoke stress: cataclysmic events, personal stressors, and background stressors (daily hassles). (p. 499)
- Stress produces immediate physiological reactions. In the short term those reactions may be adaptive, but in the long term they may

have negative consequences, including the development of psychophysiological disorders. (p. 500)
- The consequences of stress can be explained in part by Selye's general adaptation syndrome (GAS), which suggests that there are three stages in stress responses: alarm and mobilization, resistance, and exhaustion. (p. 503)

Describe how we people cope with stress.

- Stress can be reduced by developing a sense of control over one's circumstances. In some cases, however, people develop a state of learned helplessness. (p. 505)
- Coping with stress can take a number of forms, including the use of emotion-focused or problem-focused coping strategies. (p. 505)

E V A L U A T E

1. _____ is defined as a response to challenging or threatening events.
2. Match each portion of the GAS with its definition

   1. Alarm and mobilization   a. Ability to adapt to stress diminishes; symptoms appear.
   2. Exhaustion   b. Activation of sympathetic nervous system.
   3. Resistance   c. Various strategies are used to cope with a stressor.

3. Stressors that affect a single person and produce an immediate major reaction are known as
   a. Personal stressors.
   b. Psychic stressors.
   c. Cataclysmic stressors.
   d. Daily stressors.

[R E T H I N K]

Why are cataclysmic stressors less stressful in the long run than are other types of stressors? Does the reason relate to the coping phenomenon known as social support? How?

[K E Y   T E R M S]

Stress *p. 498*

Cataclysmic events *p. 499*

Personal stressors *p. 499*

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) *p. 499*

Background stressors (daily hassles) *p. 500*

Psychophysiological disorders *p. 501*

General adaptation syndrome (GAS) *p. 503*

Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) *p. 504*

Coping *p. 504*

Learned helplessness *p. 505*

Social support *p. 505*

«« looking BACK

Psychology on the Web

1. Find examples on the Web of advertisements or other persuasive messages that use central route processing and peripheral route processing. What type of persuasion appears to be more prevalent on the Web? For what type of persuasion does the Web appear to be better suited? Is there a difference between Web-based advertising and other forms of advertising?

2. Is "hate crimes legislation" a good idea? Use the Web to find at least two discussions of hate crimes legislation—one in favor and one opposed—and summarize in writing the main issues and arguments presented. Using your knowledge of prejudice and aggression, evaluate the arguments for and against hate crimes legislation. State your opinion about whether this type of legislation is advisable.

the case of...

JOHN BUCKINGHAM, THE NEW GUY ON THE JOB

When John Buckingham moved across the country to take a new job, he didn't expect to run into much difficulty. He would be doing the same kind of work he was used to doing, just for a new company. But when he arrived on his first day, he realized there was more for him to adjust to than he had realized.

Clearly, John had moved to a region where the culture was much more laid back and casual than he was used to. He showed up for his first day in his usual business suit only to find that almost all the other employees wore jeans, Western shirts, and cowboy boots. Many of them merely stared awkwardly when they first saw John, and then hurriedly tried to look busy while avoiding eye contact.

John got the message. On his second day at work John also wore jeans and a casual shirt, although he didn't yet own a pair of cowboy boots. He found that people seemed more relaxed around him, but that they continued to treat him warily. It would be several weeks—after he'd gone out and bought boots and started wearing them to work—before certain people warmed up to John enough to even talk to him.

1. What does the behavior of John's co-workers toward John suggest about their attributions for his initial manner of dress?

2. Describe the kinds of biases that might have affected John's co-workers as they formed impressions of him on his first day. Could they have been using a faulty schema to understand him? Is there evidence of the halo effect?

3. Explain why John changed his manner of dress so soon after starting his new job. What processes were likely involved in his decision to do so?

4. John's co-workers seemed very hesitant to "warm up" to John. How would you explain to John their initial reluctance to like him very much?

5. If you were the human resources director for this company, what strategies could you employ to prevent experiences like John's? How would you justify the implementation of these strategies to the company president?

Attitudes and Social Cognition

Persuasion: Changing Attitudes

Social Cognition: Understanding Others

Social Influence

Conformity: Following What Others Do

Compliance: Submitting to Direct Social Pressure

Obedience: Following Direct Orders

Prejudice and Discrimination

- The Foundations of Prejudice
- Measuring Prejudice and Discrimination: The Implicit Personality Test
- Reducing the Consequences of Prejudice and Discrimination

Positive and Negative Social Behavior

- Liking and Loving: Interpersonal Attraction and the Development of Relationships
- Aggression and Prosocial Behavior: Hurting and Helping Others

Stress and Coping

- Stress: Reacting to Threat and Challenge
- The Nature of Stressors: My Stress Is Your Pleasure
- Coping with Stress