### Attitudes

Rate each of these items on the following scale:

1=Strongly disagree

2=Moderately disagree

3=Moderately agree

4=Strongly agree

\_\_\_1. Our country needs to address the growing number of homeless persons.

\_\_\_2. It is a good idea to floss your teeth daily.

\_\_\_3. The right to vote is one of the most valuable rights of American citizens.

\_\_\_4. Eating a variety of foods each day, including five or more servings of fruits and vegetables, contributes to good health.

Now answer yes or no to these questions:

1. Do you personally do anything to help the homeless (e.g., volunteer at a homeless shelter or donate money)? \_\_\_\_

2. Do you floss your teeth everyday? \_\_\_\_

3. Did you vote in the last election for which you were eligible? \_\_\_\_

4. Do you regularly eat five servings of fruits and vegetables each day? ­­­­\_\_\_\_

Were your attitudes and behaviors in line with each other? If not, how did it make you feel? A little hypocritical, maybe? The negative arousal we feel when we realize that our attitudes or behaviors aren’t consistent with each other is called cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance theory is one of the main topics in this assignment.

We’ve been talking so far about how we know ourselves and others primarily using the social cognition approach. In this assignment, we move on to the self-esteem approach. The theories in this chapter deal with ways in which we try to maintain our self-esteem and feel good about ourselves. We sometimes reinterpret our world to make ourselves feel better. Are there things that you do even though you know they are bad for you? How do you deal with thinking of yourself as a smart person and still doing this probably-not-so-smart thing? One way I rationalize eating chocolate (which isn’t so good for you) is by reminding myself that it has calcium in it, and calcium is good for me. I could also react by never eating chocolate, by deciding that chocolate really isn’t bad for me, or by telling myself that cancer will kill me before the chocolate ever does.

Cognitive dissonance theory deals with responses to inconsistencies, such as eating foods we know are bad for us. It was first formulated by Leon Festinger (remember him from social comparison theory in the last assignment?). The theory was later expanded by Elliot Aronson. Cognitive dissonance theory says that whenever we do or learn something that threatens our image of ourselves, we will feel dissonance and be driven to reduce that negative feeling by retaining consistency. Whenever we do something that surprises us, makes us feel stupid, or makes us feel guilty, we’re likely to feel dissonance. We can respond to this inconsistency by changing our attitude, changing our behavior, changing our thoughts about the behavior, or making the inconsistency less important. If I believe in animal rights and someone gives me a fur coat, I may feel dissonance. I could respond by changing my attitudes about animal rights, getting rid of the coat, deciding that the animal is already dead now and I didn’t buy the coat anyway, or deciding that animal rights isn’t that important of an issue to me anymore. In general, we’ll choose whichever of these options is the easiest for us at the time.

Cognitive dissonance theory is one of the most researched theories in social psychology, with applications to lots of different types of behavior. We use cognitive dissonance tactics to justify behaviors that don’t fit with our attitudes (notice some of the applications to sales, condom use, war, and making people like us). We also use it to justify choices that we make. If you have two options of who to marry and you choose one, you’ll feel better about yourself and your choice if you remind yourself of all the good things about the chosen one and the bad things about the rejected one. Dissonance also applies to how we justify our efforts. Social groups that make new members perform humiliating acts (such as some fraternities and military organizations) use cognitive dissonance theory to their advantage, causing their members to become more dedicated to the group. It seems to be automatic—even children and monkeys show cognitive dissonance effects (like devaluing something that we didn’t choose). People in collectivist cultures may show less direct dissonance effects (though they still show them), but they are more likely to show vicarious dissonance—that is, cognitive dissonance aroused by someone else doing something that would make them feel stupid or immoral. People from collectivist countries tend to be more bothered than people from Western countries when they see a friend in a dissonance-arousing situation.

There is also a discounting application to cognitive dissonance theory. We talked about the overjustification effect in the last assignment—how being rewarded for doing something we like can cause our intrinsic motivation for that activity to decrease. Cognitive dissonance theory describes insufficient punishment as an almost opposite motivational application. If we don’t have an external reason for doing something, we may think that we must have done it because we enjoyed it (thus reducing our dissonance). Inducing children to perform activities, such as picking up litter or playing nicely with their brother, with a minimum of reward or punishment can lead them to internalize the activity, enjoying it for its own sake (and requiring less reminders from you to do it).

Attitude has been called social psychology’s most indispensable concept. It was one of the first topics studied by social psychologists and has remained an important and central research area for the discipline. Like schemas, attitudes help us deal with our environment. They also give us a sense of identity

Researchers talk about three components of an attitude—the affective component, the cognitive component, and the behavioral component. The affective component is how you feel about the attitude object or your emotions. The cognitive component is how you think about it, your beliefs about the attitude object, and the behavioral component represents your actions toward the object. Let’s use Tide laundry detergent as an example. The affective component of your attitude toward Tide may be based on the color of the box or on whether your mother used it or not. Your cognitive component would include your beliefs about how good a job it does cleaning. And the behavioral component would be based on whether you buy it or not. These components will not be equally important for every attitude. Some of your attitudes, like maybe your attitude toward snakes or your romantic partner, may be based mostly on affect. Others, such as your attitude toward a Presidential candidate, may be based mostly on cognitive factors. Attitudes also differ in the strength with which they are held. There are many measures of attitude strength, including importance, relevance, certainty, and direct experience. Attitudes are usually measured via self-report, although they can also be measured indirectly in various ways. Some component of many attitudes is genetic. We also get our attitudes from others, from prior experiences, from how they relate to other attitudes we hold, and through exposure (more familiar people and ideas become more attractive, assuming we were slightly positive toward them to start with).

There are many theories of attitude change. We’ve already discussed one way to get people to change their attitudes—through inducing cognitive dissonance.

The Yale Attitude Change approach was one of the first systematic studies of persuasive communications. Building on research done during World War II, social psychologists at Yale University conducted a series of studies on factors that make persuasive communications more or less effective. They based their model on “who says what to whom”, meaning that variables related to the source of the message (who), the message itself (what), and the audience (whom) affect the message’s persuasiveness. The text gives examples of some of the findings for each of these types of variables in Figure 7.2.

Rich Petty and John Cacioppo built on this early work by adding a new variable, the route through which persuasion goes. Their Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) suggests that persuasion may occur through two different routes—the central or the peripheral. Depending on the route, different factors may be more or less important in persuasion. People use the central route when the issue is important to them and they are motivated to think about the message. You may have used the central route when deciding what college to attend. The strength of the arguments is the most important factor in inducing central route attitude change. When people aren’t motivated to think about the message, such as when the issue is not very personally relevant, attitude change occurs through the peripheral route. In the peripheral route, surface characteristics, such as the credibility or attractiveness of the source or the number of arguments, become more important than the strength of the arguments in inducing persuasion.

**Practice exercise:** If you wanted to convince students to support a raise in tuition for the next year, what would be more effective—having a well-known and liked spokesperson or having sound arguments in favor of the plan? Why? The answer is shown at the end of this section.

Take this short quiz to see which route to persuasion you are most likely to use.

For each item, answer using the following scale:

-3=disagree very much

-2= disagree pretty much

-1=disagree a little

+1=agree a little

+2=agree pretty much

+3=agree very much

\_\_\_\_1. I would prefer complex to simple problems.

\_\_\_\_2. I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.

\_\_\_\_3. Thinking is not my idea of fun.

\_\_\_\_4. I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities.

\_\_\_\_5. I try to anticipate and avoid situations where there is a likely chance I will have to think in depth about something.

\_\_\_\_6. I find satisfaction in deliberating hard and for long hours.

\_\_\_\_7. I only think as hard as I have to.

\_\_\_\_8. I prefer to think about small, daily projects to long-term ones.

\_\_\_\_9. I like tasks that require little thought once I’ve learned them.

\_\_\_\_10. The idea of relying on thought to make my way to the top appeals to me.

\_\_\_\_11. I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems.

\_\_\_\_12. Learning new ways to think doesn’t excite me very much.

\_\_\_\_13. I prefer my life to be filled with puzzles that I must solve.

\_\_\_\_14. The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me.

\_\_\_\_15. I would prefer a task that is intellectual, difficult, and important to one that is somewhat important but does not require much thought.

\_\_\_\_16. I feel relief rather than satisfaction after completing a task that required a lot of mental effort.

\_\_\_\_17. It’s enough for me that something gets the job done; I don’t care how or why it works.

\_\_\_\_18. I usually end up deliberating about issues even when they do not affect me personally.

You’ve just completed the short-form of the Need for Cognition scale (Cacioppo, Petty, & Kao, 1984; Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Need for cognition refers to a person’s tendency to enjoy thinking. People with high need for cognition are more likely to be persuaded by the central route, whereas people with low need for cognition are more persuaded by peripheral cues. To calculate your score, add your responses to items 1, 2, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 18. Then subtract your responses to items 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 16, and 17.Your score should fall somewhere between –36 and +36. The higher your score, the higher your need for cognition.

We also talked about when fear-arousing communications can be effective. They need to induce a moderate amount of fear and to include information on ways we can reduce the fear (that is, ways we can change the behavior). There are also many subtle ways that advertisers try to persuade us. Subliminal persuasion seems to only work in lab situations where people are paying a lot of attention, but product placements in shows and video games promoting an idea or product can be effective. There are cultural effects on persuasion too, with people in collectivist cultures possibly being more affected by ads that relate to concerns about others vs. the self.

If a behavior is one that we don’t think about much (e.g., what type of snack to eat), the best predictor of what we’ll do is attitude accessibility—how much “in our mind” the attitude or product is at the moment we make the decision. If it’s a more thoughtful behavior, the theory of planned behavior (adding to the theory of reasoned action) predicts that our attitudes and subjective norms (beliefs about what those important to us think) along with how much control we think we have over the behavior will predict our behavioral intentions, which will predict our behavior.

**Answer.** Sound (good) arguments—because it’s a topic that is likely to be important to students, so persuasion should go through the central route.

Objectives

1. Explain the theory of cognitive dissonance, including the causes of dissonance and the ways in which dissonance can be reduced.

2. Explain how people rationalize actions and arguments to maintain their self-concept.

3. Discuss how making a decision can cause us to feel dissonance and the way that dissonance is often reduced. Explain research used to test postdecision dissonance. Identify one factor that increases postdecision dissonance.

4. Explain how salespeople can use dissonance tactics to try to get you to commit to their product.

5. Explain how the need to justify effort can lead to cognitive dissonance and how this is likely to affect our attitudes.

6. Describe the effects of having someone present arguments that are opposite to what he or she actually believes and how this relates to cognitive dissonance theory. Explain the Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) study where people lied about how fun a study was for either a small or large amount of money.

7. Explain how inducing hypocrisy and insufficient punishment can lead to changed attitudes.

8. Define attitude and explain the components of attitudes and how to measure them. Differentiate between cognitively and affectively based attitudes.

9. Identify sources of attitudes (where we get our attitudes from).

10. Describe the components of the Yale Attitude Change Model. Provide examples of research in each of the three areas.

11. Explain the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Differentiate between the peripheral and the central route to persuasion and predict which would be more effective in different situations.

12. Explain the effects of fear-arousing communications on persuasion.

13. Explain the effects of attitudes on behavior. Identify a factor that helps predict whether attitudes will predict spontaneous behaviors.

14. Describe the theory of planned behavior. Discuss the importance of keeping attitudes specific and of measuring subjective norms in predicting behavior.

15. Discuss cultural effects and subtle effects on persuasion and advertising.

16. Evaluate the effectiveness of subliminal persuasion.

### Social Influence

Conformity is another core topic in social psychology. In this assignment you will read about several classic studies in social psychology, including Asch’s conformity study and Milgram’s obedience experiments. You will also read about social impact theory, which integrates much of the social influence literature and on which I have done some research.

If you’re like most people, you probably don’t think that other people influence you very much. While reading this assignment, however, you may be surprised at how socially influenced people really are. You are influenced by people who live near you, people you work with, and things you read and hear on TV every day, often without your even realizing it. Sometimes we are influenced by others because we look to their behavior as a guide for what we should be doing; this is called informational social influence. Other times we are influenced based on a desire to be liked or to go along with the group; this is called normative social influence. In this assignment we’ll talk about three main forms of influence--conformity, compliance, and obedience.

Muzafer Sherif did one of the first conformity studies in the 1930’s. He used the autokinetic effect—the fact that when a person looks at a single stationary point of light in the dark, the light seems to move—to see how much people would be influenced by those around them. The autokinetic effect is different for different people; some people tend to see small movements, whereas others see large movements. Sherif asked people in groups of three to make estimates of the distance the light was traveling. Though people’s initial estimates were different, they began to converge over trials, evidence of conformity.

Solomon Asch, a student of Sherif’s, followed up on this study some years later using non-ambiguous stimuli. He thought that if the judgments people were asked to make had an identifiable correct answer, people wouldn’t conform. He was surprised, however, to find that 2/3 of the people gave what they knew to be the wrong answer, just to go along with a crowd of strangers! Asch’s findings relate to the distinction between public compliance and private acceptance. Most of the people in his study probably did not privately accept the incorrect answers, but they did publicly comply. A later meta-analysis showed that people are more likely to conform to a larger majority, if they are women, if the other people are from the same group as them, if the situation is more ambiguous, and if they are from more collectivist cultures.

Social impact theory (SIT), proposed by Bibb Latané, ties together these and other findings in the social influence literature. Social impact theory is a meta-theory rather than a process theory. Meta-theories explain what occurs in many different types of situations, though they may not explain the exact process through which that change occurs. Cognitive dissonance is an example of a process theory. It describes a specific process (notice inconsistency, feel dissonance, try to reduce dissonance). SIT doesn’t give the steps through which influence occurs, but instead offers three important variables that predict how much influence will occur. It says that influence will be proportional to the multiplicative effect of the strength (persuasiveness, credibility, etc.), immediacy (closeness in space or time), and number of others doing the influencing. The multiplicative part is important because if there is no (0) strength for example, immediacy and number won’t matter. If three very unbelievable people try to convince you of something, you won’t be convinced, even though there are three of them. SIT explains why important groups have more influence (a strength variable), people with high-self-esteem are less persuaded (strength), and neighbors are more influential than those far away (immediacy).

SIT also predicts that there will be decreasing effects of number. For example, two people will be more influential than one person, but the second person won’t add quite as much additional influence as the first person did. By the time you get to 100 people, adding one more probably won’t make much difference at all. In other words, the first few people have the most social impact.

SIT attempts to explain all types of social influence situations. It covers normative and informational influence situations, obedience, and compliance. Look back at the factors the text says are important for informational influence—one of these, expertise, is an important strength variable. Other evidence comes from research conducted in diverse influence situations, including stage fright, bystander intervention in emergencies, and tipping in restaurants.

When people influence each other continuously, dynamic social impact theory predicts that four markers of culture will emerge. These are clustering (people become more similar to those closest to them in physical space—the people they see most often—think back to your “propinquity maps”), correlation (people become more similar to their neighbors on different dimensions as a result of influence, leading to correlations among attributes), consolidation (the majority viewpoint becomes more popular over time), and continuing diversity (despite influence, pockets of different viewpoints or attributes remain). One example is language—there are regional differences (clustering) in language, it’s correlated with food preferences and dress preferences and other attributes (correlation), more popular languages grow and others become less popular (consolidation), but everyone doesn’t speak the same language (continuing diversity).

So why do people conform to others? Stanley Schachter’s (remember him from the two-factor theory of emotion) Johnny Rocko study described in the text offers one explanation. Deviates may be communicated with initially, but eventually they are rejected. One way to avoid this happening is to find allies. Groups of deviates are able to resist pressure much more easily than a single one. The section on minority influence discusses how groups of deviates may in some cases even persuade the majority.

There are 6 influence techniques identified by Cialdini. Make sure you know and understand those.

Moving on, take a moment and imagine that you are a participant in a research study on memory and learning. You arrive at the lab and meet your co-participant, a 47-year old man. You are randomly determined to be the "teacher" and the other participant the "learner". Your job is to teach the other person a list of words, using electric shocks to punish him when he gets one wrong.

The learner is strapped to a chair in the next room and hooked up to the shock machine. You are seated in front of the shock generator, which has 30 switches in 15-volt increments, from 15 to 450 volts. The shocks are labeled from "slight shock" through "danger: severe shock" to "XXX" at the highest levels. Your job is to begin shocking the learner at 15 volts for his first incorrect answer, increasing 15 volts for each subsequent wrong answer.

You start off fine, with the learner getting the first few answers right. Then he starts missing a few. When you get to 75 volts, you hear the learner say "UGH!". As you increase the shocks, the learner continues to complain, more and more emphatically. You look toward the experimenter for a cue on what to do, but he calmly tells you that it is essential that you continue the experiment.

What do you do?

1. What do you think is the maximum level of shock that most people in the United States would continue to (15 volts to 450 volts)?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the highest level you think YOU would continue to? \_\_\_\_\_\_

3. What percentage of people in this situation do you think would go all the way, shocking the learner up to the maximum 450 volts (0 to 100% of people)? \_\_\_\_\_\_

The paragraph above describes one of Milgram’s famous obedience experiments. Milgram gave a questionnaire similar to the one above to people before his study (the main procedure of which is described above). His respondents believed that almost no one, only the 1% most sadistic of people, would continue to shock the learner up to 450 volts. What percentage of people did you believe would go all the way? Milgram was shocked by his results—a full 2/3 of people obeyed the experimenter to the point of shocking the complaining learner all the way up to 450 volts! Be sure to pay attention to the method, results, and explanations for Milgram’s study. This is probably the most talked about study in social psychology, both in terms of its findings and in terms of the possible ethical issues involved in letting people believe that they were causing extreme pain to another person. Ethics boards today might not allow another study like Milgram’s to be done.

Some of the factors that Milgram found to influence obedience in his studies included the proximity of the victim (the closer the victim, the less likely the participant was to send shocks), the power of the institution (people were more likely to obey when the study was conducted by Yale University than when conducted by “Research Associates of Bridgeport”, and the presence of the authority figure (the closer to the participant the more obedience). Note how these effects fit the predictions of social impact theory. Additional research has shown that these effects occur across cultures and time. We also discussed some reasons for these effects in class.

Objectives

1. Identify informational social influence vs. normative social influence.

2. Describe the methods, results, and significance of Sherif’s and Asch’s conformity studies.

3. Identify the types of influence situations predicted by social impact theory and the three factors that are important in the theory. Describe what it means to have decreasing effects of number and that influence is a “multiplicative function.”

4. Explain dynamic social impact theory and what it predicts.

5. Describe how people try to get deviates to conform.

6. Identify and give examples of Cialdini’s influence techniques. 710. Discuss the methods, results, and significance of Milgram’s research on obedience. Identify factors that led people to obey.

7. Distinguish between injunctive and descriptive norms and explain which are more effective and why.

8. Explain what factors seem to increase conformity (e.g., what types of people are more likely to conform).

**Group Dynamics**

Now we turn from the effects that others have on you personally, to the effects of groups as a whole. Remember the first psychology study done by Triplett? His was also a study on the effects of groups on an individual’s performance. Later research found that not only do children wind a fishing rod more quickly when others are watching them, but people eat more and type faster and rats run mazes faster and even copulate more often when being watched by members of their own species. For humans and animals, the presence of others seemed to facilitate performance.

Other researchers eventually began finding the opposite, however. In some conditions, the presence of others actually caused people to perform more poorly, for example, on complex math problems. Bob Zajonc (rhymes with “science”) proposed social facilitation theory to explain these differences. He found that the presence of others increases arousal when we’re doing something that could be evaluated by them. If we’re doing a simple, well-learned task, such as typing for a secretary or running for an athlete, this arousal will help us perform better. If the task is difficult, however, the arousal will make us do worse. His cockroach study (one of the few you’ll find in social psychology) and many studies using other situations have supported this theory. .

There are other times, however, when having other people around makes us try less hard. When we don’t feel that our individual efforts are going to be evaluated, we are likely to social loaf. Social loafing also came out of research from the 1800’s. Max Ringelmann found that when groups pulled on a rope in a tug-of-war, they each put in less effort than they did when pulling alone. This tendency to slack off in groups was first termed social loafing by Bibb Latané (remember him from social impact theory), Kip Williams, and Steve Harkins. This finding seems counterintuitive; we might think that being in a group makes people work harder, because of group morale and cohesion, but a great many studies in different situations and with different types of people have shown this to be a fairly universal tendency. You may have experienced social loafing first hand if you’ve participated in group projects for classes.

There are some situations in which social loafing is less likely. To decrease the chances of social

loafing in a group, you should:

1. Make individual inputs identifiable.

2. Make the task relevant and interesting.

3. Make sure group members know each other well.

4. Keep the group size small.

5. Give the group a complex task.

6. Use group members who don't trust each other. (If they all know that Person X will come through

for the group in the end, they will be more likely to slack off and let Person X do all the work.)

Social loafing is not the most dangerous group phenomena, however. Groups can also make us feel deindividualized. This occurs when we feel anonymous; we lose our own identity and take on that of the group. Deindividuation often leads people to commit deviant acts that they normally wouldn’t do, such as loot in a riot. Arousal, feelings of anonymity, and diffusion of responsibility (a condition where people lose their individual sense of responsibility to respond; more in Assignment 11) all contribute to deindividuation. Phil Zimbardo has conducted some interesting studies showing this effect. Note in particular what occurred in his famous prison study. People took on roles that were assigned to them to the point that they acted in completely different ways than they normally would have.

Take a moment and write what you would do if you knew that you could never be caught.

What type of activity did you describe? Dodd (1985) asked this question of two groups, a group of undergraduate students and a group of prisoners. The responses of the two groups were remarkably similar. Overall, 36% of people wrote that they would do something antisocial. Nineteen percent of the responses were categorized as nonnormative but not antisocial, 36% were neutral, and only 9% said they would do something prosocial or helpful. When people are deindividuated and feel that they won’t get caught, they are more likely to participate in negative behaviors. The situation is very important in determining the type of nonnormative behaviors people will participate in, however, as Zimbardo’s study suggests. When people in a study dressed in masks resembling KKK hoods, they were more likely to deliver shocks to a co-participant than were others wearing their normal clothes and name tags. People wearing doctor or nurse uniforms were actually *less* likely to send shocks than those dressed normally.

The section on leadership discusses the importance of the situation in determining who will be a good leader. Fiedler’s contingency theory of leadership describes two types of leaders—task vs. relationship-oriented and the situations in which each will be more effective.

When (if ever) are groups a good thing? When do groups perform better than individuals? Transactive memory, when groups divide up the things they remember (automatically, not consciously), seems to be one examples.

Process loss and failure to share unique information are two pitfalls to effective group performance. At the extreme, these problems, along with cohesion, can lead to groupthink, where maintaining the solidarity of the group becomes more important than processing the facts in an objective manner. We talked about some examples of groupthink, as well as common antecendents and symptoms. Pay attention to the ways groupthink can be minimized. How could you apply these ideas to groups of which you are a member?

Groupthink describes how groups may make poor decisions, but it doesn’t predict what types of decisions will be made. In 1961, James Stoner found that group’s decisions were riskier than the average prediscussion decisions of individuals. Since then, hundreds of studies have shown what was originally referred to as the risky shift—a tendency for people to make riskier decisions in a group than individually. More recently, however, this effect has been qualified by other research. Sometimes groups make more risky decisions, whereas other times they become more cautious after discussion. This is due to the more general phenomenon of group polarization; groups become more extreme in the direction toward which group members were already leaning. If the group initially favored a slightly risky solution, after discussion they’ll tend to become even more risky. Groups that began cautiously become more cautious in their decisions. The text discusses two reason why this shift occurs.

Objectives

1. Describe social facilitation theory and its predictions for performance on easy vs. difficult tasks. Explain why social facilitation may occur.

2. Define social loafing. Explain factors that may increase or decrease social loafing. Predict when social facilitation vs. social loafing are likely to occur.

3. Identify the concept of deindividuation and what determines whether deindividuation will lead to positive or negative behaviors.

4. Discuss the method, results, and significance of Zimbardo’s prison demonstration. Relate this study to the importance and effects of social roles more broadly.

5. Discuss the effectiveness of personality in predicting leadership.

6. Explain when and if brainstorming is effective. Identify factors that lead to it being less effective and explain why it is popular. What can be done to make it more effective?

7. Explain how process loss and failure to share information can affect group performance.

8. Describe the antecedents, symptoms, and consequences of groupthink and how groupthink can be avoided.

9. Describe what group polarization (when group decisions are more extreme) is and possible reasons for its occurrence.

10. Distinguish between social and nonsocial groups and know which one social facilitation vs. social loafing refers to.

11. Discuss the effects of cohesion and diversity on groups and group decisions.

10. Identify the effects of threats and communication in group conflicts.

### Relationships

This assignment deals with what we know about liking and loving relationships. Most of the chapter discusses romantic relationships, but much of the information is applicable to friendships and other types of relationships as well. Love is a relatively new (but rapidly expanding) area of research in social psychology.

The chapter discusses several factors that affect our attraction to other people, including propinquity, or physical closeness, physical attractiveness, similarity, and reciprocal liking. As we have alluded to earlier in Assignment 1, complementarity (being opposites) does not seem to have much of an effect on liking. We generally prefer similar others as friends and lovers.

Test your knowledge about the effects of attractiveness. Circle true or false for each of these statements.

**Compared to less attractive person, more attractive persons are expected to:**

T F Have more socially desirable personality traits.

T F Be more likely to marry.

T F Be more likely to remarry if divorced.

T F Attain more prestigious occupations.

T F Have better prospects for happy social and professional lives.

T F Be better able to reward you.

T F Have beliefs and values similar to your own.

T F As children, have higher educational potential and IQ.

T F Be more responsible for good things that happen to them and less responsible for bad

things that happen to them.

T F Show greater “marital competence”.

**Compared to less attractive women, more attractive women are expected to:**

T F Be more likely to request a divorce.

T F Be more likely to have an extramarital affair.

T F Have more opportunities and temptations to have an extramarital affair.

T F Be more vain.

T F Be more sexually warm.

How important do you think physical attractiveness is in initiating relationships? Most college students, particularly females, when asked what aspects of a person are important in a dating partner, put physical attractiveness near the end of the list. Researchers studying what attracted students to their randomly paired partners at a “computer dance” found, however, that physical attractiveness was the single most important factor determining how much they liked their date, how much they wanted to date the person again, and whether they actually did ask the person out again. Physical attractiveness was more important than personality, intelligence, grades, or similarity. This effect was the same for men and for women.

This effect of physical attractiveness goes beyond facial beauty. Mark Alicke, Richard Smith, and Marylou Klotz found that body attractiveness was just as important. It also goes beyond heterosexual dating experiences. Children who are physically attractive are punished less and perceived as smarter, more competent, and more sociable by both their teachers and their peers. One study even showed that college professors perceived phycially attractive students as more intelligent and motivated. Physical attractiveness also affects jury and job interview decisions and requests for help. The effect holds across cultures as well, as the research described in the text has shown.

After reading the preceding paragraph, you may no longer be surprised to learn that all of the statements in the T/F quiz were actually true. These factors make up the what-is-beautiful-is-good stereotype. This stereotype may be related in part to the just world hypothesis (Assignment 3). People want to believe that good things come to those who “deserve” them. There are some differences in the content of these stereotypes across cultures though, with beautiful people being associated with what is most valued in a particular culture.

This stereotype does seem to have some truth to it, particularly in the area of social competence. Physically attractive people tend to have better social skills and more satisfying interactions than less attractive people. Again remembering back to Assignment 3, however, this is due at least in part to self-fulfilling prophesies. The attractive are expected to have better social skills and treated that way, causing them in fact to demonstrate better social skills.

But even if you don’t look like a model, there is good news. Recent reviews suggest that, though physical attractiveness is still a significant factor in initial attraction, it may not be as important as originally thought. Different people also find different things attractive, and perceptions of attractiveness are affected by how much you like the other person. Attractive people don’t necessarily have happier lives than the rest of us (you only need to read the celebrity gossip columns to realize this). Finally, how attractive we are is influenced by how attractive we think we are. Posture, smiling, dress, and friendly attitudes go a long way toward making us seem physically attractive. And in the end, research suggests that thinking you are attractive may actually be more important in terms of social outcomes than being born with it.

We also talked about factors that make people more attractive—symmetry, waist-to-hip ratio, certain physical characteristics, and how these might relate to human evolution and biology. The evolutionary perspective also suggests that men and women should tend to look for different things in relationships and that they are likely to be most jealous for different reasons.

Initial attraction was the first area of relationships to be studied in part because because it was the easiest to do. We can’t randomly assign people to be married to this person or the other, to feel love or not, or to remain together. Love didn’t become a topic of much research interest until the 1970’s and 80’s. Companionate vs. passionate love divides love into two types based on whether we feel physiological arousal or not.

Attachment styles provide another perspective on how we love and suggest that the way we think about relationships is based on our experiences with our parents and in previous relationships. People may be more or less anxious and avoidant in relationships. The attachment styles approach proposed by Phil Shaver suggests that the way we respond to romantic relationships as adults is related to the attachments we formed with our parents as children. You may remember the concept of attachment (at least as it pertains to parent-child relationships) from your introductory or developmental psychology courses. The attachment styles approach suggests that there are three types of attachment styles--secure, avoidant, and anxious/ambivalent--and that your attachment style will determine how you react in relationships and to whom you are attracted.

Just as there are several perspectives on how to define love, there are several theories addressing why we fall in love and stay in love. Caryl Rusbult later added a variable to social exchange theory with her investment model. Her model predicts that commitment to a relationship is a function of 1) satisfaction (which in turn is based on rewards minus costs and comparison level, or what the person feels they deserve); 2) the magnitude of investments in the relationship; and 3) the quality of the person’s best alternative. Investments are things that the person has invested in the relationship and can’t get back—time, money, personal sacrifices. Moral imperatives (feeling that you shouldn’t get divorced), children, and joint goals also increase investment size. Alternatives here are not only potential partners, but may include friendships and hobbies as well.

Without the concept of investments, we would have to predict that when satisfaction is low and there is an alternative, people will leave the relationship. All relationships go through low periods, however, and many of them stay together through them. The investments variable predicts which relationships will stay together and which won’t during these down periods. If a person is highly invested in a realtionship, he or she will stay in the relationship even if satisfaction is temporarily low. This theory has received a lot of support, both in traditional dating relationships and in less traditional ones.

#### Investment model

Satisfaction = (Rewards – Costs) – Comparison Level

Commitment = Satisfaction + Investments - Comparison Level for Alternatives

Another perspective on love suggests that part of the reason we’re attracted to who we are is because of biology. This theory is built on the evolutionary concept of reproductive fitness. Those who are able to survive are able to pass on their genes to the next generation. The best reproductive strategy for men is to mate with as many women as possible. Mating with a lot of men isn’t going to increase the likelihood of a woman conceiving, however. Because she has to spend months or years carrying the child and nursing it, her best strategy is to mate with a man who will stick around to help provide for and protect her and the child. (Remember, we’re talking cave person days.) Thus, the evolutionary approach suggests that men and women will look for different things in partners because of different parental investments that each must make.

This perspective predicts that men will primarily look for fertility cues in potential partners, such as health, youth, and physical attractiveness. Women, on the other hand, will look for status cues, such as financial security. Men are expected to pursue more relationships and relationships of shorter duration than women. Men should also show more sexual jealousy, whereas women will show more emotional jealousy. Because men can never be 100% certain they are the father of a child (DNA tests didn’t exist in cave person days), they will be more upset if their partner is having sex (or they think she is) with someone else. They would be wasting their resources to help raise a child that isn’t even theirs. Women always know they are the mother of their child, but they have to worry about having the man stay around and help care for their offspring. Thus they are more affected by emotional betrayals.

We also discussed how to have a good relationship, gender differences in breakups, and research on the best predictors of divorce. Finally, we talked about internet and speed dating and other recent relationship trends.

1. Explain how and why the propinquity effect works.

2. Describe how physical attractiveness, culture, and stereotypes about attractive people affect our liking of others. Explain how self-fulfilling prophesies can lead physically attractive people to be perceived as friendlier and vice versa. Explain what we find attractive and why that might be.

3. Discuss the effects of similarity and complementarity (being opposites) on liking and which one seems to be a more powerful effect.

4. Distinguish between the concepts of compassionate love and passionate love. Discuss the role of culture in conceptions of love.

5. Discuss how the investment model predicts commitment to a relationship.

6. Explain the evolutionary approach to attraction, love, and jealousy. Know what it predicts and why.

7. Describe how attachment styles can affect close relationships and identify the main attachment styles.

8. Discuss ways to build a better relationship.

9. Identify gender differences in relationship breakups.

10. Describe Gottman’s research on predicting divorce. What factors does his research say are most important?

11. Describe how interconnected we are.

12. Identify some problems with internet dating.

13. Identity what speed dating is and why it can be useful in studying relationships.

### Helping and happiness

We now turn to another positive side of human nature, helping or prosocial behavior. Which of these behaviors do you think illustrate prosocial behavior? Which are altruistic?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Prosocial behavior? yes/no** | **Altruism? yes/no** | **Behaviors** |
|  |  | John, a college student, spends two hours per week as a "Big Brother” to a nine-year-old boy whose parents are divorced. |
|  |  | Arnold, a firefighter, rescues an elderly women trapped in a fire. |
|  |  | Sandra agrees to donate her organs for transplant in the event of her death. |
|  |  | Marie makes a $50 contribution to charity and thus gets a chance to attend a banquet with a celebrity. |
|  |  | Bob attempts to save his six-year-old son from drowning. |
|  |  | Tom informs the manager of the bookstore about a college student who shoplifted a book. |
|  |  | Ann makes an anonymous donation of $1000 to her church's building fund. |
|  |  | Marty buys a raffle ticket from a charitable organization. |

Looking over your answers, what factors are important to you in determining whether behavior is prosocial or altruistic? Social psychologists define prosocial behavior as any action done with the goal of benefiting another. Altruism is any action that benefits another but doesn’t benefit (and may even cost) the helper. According to these definitions, which are prosocial and which altruistic?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
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You’ll recognize many of the theories for why people help from the last assignment. Evolutionary psychologiss believe there is a biological element to helping. There are three ways that helping behavior may have been influenced by evolution. First is the notion of kin selection. Because the goal of evolution is to have one’s genes passed on into the next generation, people should be more likely to help relatives than nonrelatives. They should also be more likely to help similar appearing others, who may share some of their genes, than dissimilar others. The norm of reciprocity (from Assignment 8) offers another way that helping behavior may have developed. Because early people needed to band together to survive, people may have developed a norm of helping those who had helped them in the past. Finally, Herbert Simon suggests that those who were able to learn social norms quickly may have been more likely to survive and reproduce. People have been programmed to learn social norms easily, with helping and altriuism as some of those norms.

According to social exchange theory, whether or not you help is simply a matter of rewards and costs. If the rewards of helping (including feeling good and others having a positive impression of you) are greater than the costs, you’ll help. Otherwise, you won’t.

One debate in this area currently is whether there is in fact any such thing as altruism. Social exchange theorists suggest that people are always gaining something from helping others—even if it is as simple as feeling good about themselves or getting positive reinforcement from others. Dan Batson and his research group, on the other hand, suggest that sometimes people do help simply for the joy of helping, without consideration of themselves. His empathy-altruism hypothesis suggests that empathy is the determining factor in whether altruism will occur. If you don’t feel empathy for someone else, you will weigh the rewards and costs of helping and only help if the rewards are greater than the costs. If you feel empathy for the victim, however, you will help regardless of the costs.

It is interesting to consider the seemingly altruistic behavior of animals in light of this controversy. A few years ago, a female gorilla saved a 3-year-old boy who fell into the primate exhibit at the Chicago zoo. The gorilla carefully picked the unconscious boy up and took him to the animal trainers. In 1995, a tourist who was swimming with the dolphins off the Red Sea was attacked by sharks. The dolphins surrounded the man, leaping up and smacking the water with their tails and flippers, successfully keeping the sharks at bay. Were these animals acting altruistically? What do you think? Does true altruism exist, for humans or for animals?

Research on the altruistic personality offers several ways to help children develop prosocial habits. First, you should reward children with praise and smiles when you see them helping. Make sure not to focus on the reward or use too large of a reward, though, or the overjustification effect may occur. Help the child internalize prosocial behavior by pointing out what a good helper he or she is and how he or she likes to help. Children also learn about prosocial behavior by observing adults and others. Model helping behavior, and your children will follow.

Good moods and bad moods both generally increase helping, depending on the circumstances. When we’re in a good mood, we’re motivated to keep that good feeling. If helping others will cause us to continue to feel good, we’ll do it. But if it’s going to bring us down, we may try to avoid it. Cialdini’s negative state relief hypothesis says that the same thing occurs with bad moods—we’ll help if it helps us get into a better mood.

Situational factors affect helping behavior more than personality does. There are several situational factors we’ll discuss. The first of these is the urban overload hypothesis. This hypothesis explains the finding that people in urban areas are less likely to help. Specifically, it suggests that the reason people in cities are less likely to help than people in rural areas is that there is too much stimulation going on in the cities, so people try to keep to themselves. Residential mobility also seems to affect helpfulness. Time has a big effect on whether we help. Finally, there are cultural effects to helping, with people from poorer countries and Hispanic countries tending to be more helpful to a stranger.

Bibb Latané and John Darley’s research, inspired by the murder of Kitty Genovese in New York in 1964, suggests another reason people are likely to get less help in cities. While Kitty was being viciously attacked, 38 people in a nearby apartment complex heard her cries for help, but no one responded. The media explained this inaction in terms of “big city apathy”, but Latané and Darley thought there might be another, more social psychological, reason for people’s nonresponse.

Latané and Darley and their colleagues conducted a series of studies using different types of situations and participant populations, showing that people are less likely to respond to an emergency when others are present. Surprisingly, you may be more likely to get help in an almost empty alley than on a busy city street. They explained this finding in terms of diffusion of responsibility. When people know that others are present, they are likely to think that the others are just as responsible for helping as they are. You may have noticed a form of diffusion of responsibility if you’ve ever shared a telephone with more than one person. When the phone rings, everyone thinks it’s someone else’s turn to answer it. Social influence also plays a role in this bystander effect. If no one else is responding to the emergency, you may wonder whether it actually is an emergency. Finally, we may not help sometimes when others are present because we are afraid of what others may think of us and whether we might be judged negatively (audience inhibition).

Recently we (Harton, Latané, Rockloff, & Bourgeois, 1998) replicated a study (Latané & Rodin, 1969) in which either one or two men heard a female experimenter fall off a chair and cry for help. In our study, participants who were either alone or with an unresponsive confederate heard a male or female (me) experimenter they had just met fall and moan in pain. They couldn’t see the experimenter, however, and had to go around a curtain to check and see if he or she was okay. Regardless of whether it was my colleague or me calling for help, participants (both males and females) were more likely to respond when they were alone than when there was another person in the room. Thus, even though the Kitty Genovese story and research following from it has been discussed in classes and newspapers and on television, the bystander effect still occurs. The effect was smaller in our study than in the original, however. About the same percentage of people helped when alone in both studies (around 70%), but many more of our together participants (41%) as compared to the same situation in the original (7%) gave assistance.

Latané and Darley outlined five steps that people must go through in order to help in a situation. First, they must notice the event. Then they must interpret the event as an emergency, assume responsibility for helping, know how to help, and finally perform the helping behavior. Successful intervention requires a positive response at each step.

Finally, we talked about happiness and what percentage is caused by genetics, etc. We also discussed several ways that we can increase our happiness by doing intentional activities.

Objectives

1. Distinguish between altruism and prosocial behavior.

2. Explain how the evolutionary approach explains prosocial behavior. Relate the concept of kin selection and the norm of reciprocity to this approach.

3. Discuss how social exchange theory explains prosocial behavior.

4. Describe Batson’s empathy-altruism hypothesis. Explain how it differs from social exchange theory. Predict people’s responses to those in need based on this theory.

5. Identify the role of personality and gender in helping behavior. Illustrate ways to increase the likelihood that children will grow to be helpful adults.

6. Describe how and why being in a good or bad mood can affect prosocial behavior. Identify the negative-state relief hypothesis.

7. Explain the urban-overload hypothesis and the effects of residential mobility.

8. Discuss the bystander effect. Identify the five steps to helping in an emergency and explain how problems at any one of the steps could lead to nonintervention. Identify the 3 factors that lead us to be less likely to help when others are present.

9. Identify what makes up our happiness and what situational factors increase it (and don’t). Describe ways that we can increase our own happiness.

### Aggression and rejection

Now we turn to the darker side of social behavior—aggression and rejection. What is aggression? In everyday language, someone may describe a woman who actively pursues a career as “aggressive”, but in social psychology our definition is much more narrow. Aggression is any intentional action aimed at doing harm or causing pain. Thus, accidentally hitting someone wouldn’t be considered aggression, nor would throwing a pillow at someone. Spanking a child, even if done out of love, is considered aggression under this definition. Aggression can be subdivided into hostile aggression, whose goal is to inflict pain, and instrumental aggression, where the pain is just a means to another goal. A football player who sacks the quarterback or a loan shark who breaks a client’s leg to encourage him to pay is performing instrumental aggression. Aggression may also be direct—to someone’s face—or indirect.

Perspectives on the causes of aggression can be divided into evolutionary-based, motivationally-based, learning-based, and thought-based (cognitive). You should already be familiar with one of the biological perspectives, the evolutionary approach. This theory predicts that we will be more likely to hurt dissimilar others (because they are less likely to share our genes) than similar ones. Though aggression does seem to have some evolutionary value, it is certainly influenced by the social situation as well, particularly for humans. The cultural examples in the text illustrate that even among humans, the reasons and frequency of aggression differ among groups.

The text also discusses several situational causes of aggression. Testosterone has sometimes been linked to aggression, though the research has been mixed. One reason for this may be that, while testosterone sometimes increases aggressiveness, feeling competitive or aggressive also increases testosterone levels. Thus there is a bidirectional effect. Alcohol, temperature, noise, crowding, weapons, automatic effects and direct provocation have also been linked to increased aggression.

Aggressive cues in the environment (like a gun or knife on the table) can also increase aggression. Note Len Berkowitz’s clever study on the effects of aggressive cues. What does this research suggest about gun control?

Another external cause of aggression is frustration. Try to think of some situations in which you became frustrated and behaved aggressively. Note the goal and the object blocking fulfillment of that goal. In the next three columns, evaluate the strength of the goal, the degree to which it was blocked, and the number of times it was blocked. Last, describe your aggressive action. Who or what became the object of your aggression? Was it direct or displaced?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Describe the goal and the source of frustration | How strong was the initial drive? (How important was the goal?) | To what degree was the goal blocked? (partially, completely) | How many times was the goal blocked? (once, repeatedly) | Describe the resulting level of aggression |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Motivational theories, such as frustration-aggression theory, suggest that aggression comes from a noninstinctual (not biological) motivational force related to our deprivation of some need. When we are frustrated from reaching a goal, we will be driven to aggress against others. Our frustration level (and thus our level of aggression) will be higher 1) the greater the importance of the goal; 2) the extent to which the goal was impeded (partially vs. fully); and 3) the number of times the goal is frustrated. How do these determinants of frustration level fit with your examples above? Drive theories take a more positive stance on decreasing violent behavior. Frustration will always be with us, as it is impossible to stop all sources for all people. But since the urge is not inborn, we can try to teach people ways to decrease their feelings of frustration.

Social learning theory predicts that we aggress because we have learned to do so from others. Bandura’s classic Bobo doll study illustrates the negative effect of aggressive models on children, but adults can learn through observation as well. This theory is fairly optimistic—if we decrease the number of aggressive models, we should be able to decrease aggression. We also discussed how mirror neurons and social norms may play parts in learning.

I mentioned that some theories address aggression from a cognitive, or thought, perspective—one is the general aggression model. Cognitive models explain aggression in terms of thought patterns. It’s the way we think about and interpret behaviors that leads to aggression. This is the most optimistic perspective so far—if we can change the way people interpret behaviors, we can decrease aggression. Training programs that encourage empathy for victims and perspective taking have had success in decreasing aggressive actions. We also discussed trying to change hostile attributional biases.

We also talked about how violent tv, movies, and videogames can affect aggression.

So aggression is partly biological and affected, among other things, by frustration and the violence-soaked media. What can we do to try to reduce aggressive tendencies? To the extent that aggression is situationally based, there is hope for reducing it. Most of the research on preventing aggression has been on punishment and catharsis. Punishment is commonly believed to be effective in preventing aggression, as the increased emphasis on prison sentences for crimes in recent years illustrates. Research has shown, however, that punishment is not always very effective.

Several factors determine whether threatened punishment will have a deterrent effect. First, punishment will be more effective when the level of anger experienced by the potential aggressor is low. If the person is very angry and emotional, he or she may not consider the consequences of his or her actions. The instrumentality of the aggression also plays a role; if there are large extrinsic rewards for the aggressive act (such as a large life insurance payoff), punishment will be less likely to deter. Ideally there should be a short interval between the time of the crime and the time of the punishment, and punishment should be consistent and certain. For punishment to be maximally effective, everyone who aggresses should have the same certain chance of being punished. Think about the United States criminal justice system in terms of these factors. Is punishment for a crime certain, quick, and consistent? How could we make the system more effective?

Many people also believe that catharsis is effective in reducing aggression. Catharsis is the idea that getting aggressive feelings out in nonharmful ways, reduces the urge to aggress. There is very little support for this notion. In fact, in most cases, playing violent sports, watching violent sports, kicking inanimate objects, and yelling at people lead to increased aggression.

So what is an effective way to reduce aggression? One suggestion is to vent—tell the person that you are angry with them. This can help you to understand your own feelings better and may reduce your aggressive feelings. Apologies are also useful ways to difuse situations, particularly if you appear to be sincere, your reasons are convincing, and you make reference to some event outside of your control. “I’m really sorry I’m late, but my car wouldn’t start this morning” is going to be more effective than “Oops, sorry. You’ll live.”

As social learning theory suggests, nonaggressive models can reduce aggression. If children (and adults) see others modeling nonviolent responses to frustration or provocation, they can learn to respond similarily. As I mentioned when talking about cognitive perspectives, building empathy and perspective taking and teaching people to make more external attributions about others behaviors is also effective. Finally, making someone laugh can decrease their hostile feelings.

Finally we discussed ostracism and how rejection causes us pain, even if it’s done by someone we don’t really care about. Our first reaction to rejection is to feel bad, then we decide whether to be nice, be mean, or just avoid the situation based on how important the person is to us and whether we feel we deserved the rejection (among other factors).

1. Distinguish between hostile and instrumental aggression and direct and indirect aggression. Explain how scientific use of the word “aggression” differs from lay use.

2. Describe the evidence for aggression as in-born.

3. Explain cultural and gender differences in aggression.

4. Explain frustration-aggression theory and factors that increase the likelihood of frustration (and thus aggression).

5. Describe how aggressive objects (weapons) can affect aggression and the implications of this finding.

6. Identify how social learning theory applies to aggression. Describe the famous Bobo doll experiment. Identify what mirror neurons are.

7. Describe the cognitive approach to explaining aggression and what it suggests we should do to decrease it.

8. Describe several situational effects on aggression.

9. Describe the effects of media violence on viewers. How is this research done, and what does it show?

10. Describe several ways that aggression can be reduced.

11. Explain the effects of ostracism and rejection on people.