e Person in a World of People

part 7

Chapter 13 ● Social Perception and Attitudes

Chapter 14 ● Social Influences on Behavior

We humans are social beings through and through. We are motivated to understand others; we are concerned about what others think of us; and our understanding of ourselves is strongly affected by our perception of what others think of us. This two-chapter unit is on social psychology—the attempt to understand human thought and behavior in relation to the social contexts in which they occur. The first chapter is about the mental processes involved in understanding others, ourselves, and the social world in general. The second is about some of the ways in which the presence or activities of other people, real or imagined, influence our behavior.

cial Perception and Attitudes

Perceiving and Evaluating Other People

- Forming Impressions About People from Their Behavior
- Effects of Prior Information and Physical Appearance
- Effects of Stereotypes
- Person Perceptions as Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

Perceiving and Evaluating the Self

- Seeing Ourselves Through the Eyes of Others
- Comparing and Contrasting Ourselves to Others
- Seeing Ourselves and Others as One: Social Identity

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- Attitudes as Aspects of the Self
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- Attitudes as Rationalizations to Attain Cognitive Consistency
- Attitudes as Guides to Action
- Attitudes as Products of Information Processing

umans are intensely social animals. We are designed, by evolution, to depend e another for even our most basic needs. We are not good, for example, at obng food alone; we need the help of others and the knowledge that is shared by bers of a human community. Throughout our evolutionary history, to be wn out of the tribe was tantamount to death. We are also thinking animals—ing social animals. Most of what we think about is other people, ourselves, our ionships with other people, and the social conventions and norms that are esal aspects of life in any human society.

his is the first of a two-chapter sequence on ***social psychology***, the subfield of hology that deals most explicitly with how people are influenced by each other. chapter focuses on ***person perception***, the processes by which people perceive nderstand each other and themselves, and on ***attitudes***, the evaluative beliefs eople have about their social world and the entities within it. The next chapocuses on the effects of those perceptions and beliefs on the person's emotions ctions.

our themes run through this chapter. The first is that *biases* in social percep s and attitudes can lead people to make judgments that are objectively untrue nfair. The second theme is that social perceptions and attitudes serve lifenoting *functions* for the individual. The third is that *culture* plays a powerful in shaping our social perceptions and attitudes; some social-psychological nomena that occur reliably in North America and western Europe do not r so reliably in other cultures, and vice versa. The fourth theme is that social eptions and attitudes are influenced by both *automatic* and *controlled* mental esses (introduced in Chapter 8). To the degree that a mental process occurs nsciously, quickly, and with little or no apparent effort, we say that the ess is automatic. To the degree that the process occurs consciously and takes and effort, we say that it is controlled. As you read, you might think about in which bias, adaptive function, culture, and automatic versus controlled ssing contribute to your own social perceptions and attitudes.

RCEIVING AND EVALUATING OTHER PEOPLE

of social psychology's pioneers, Fritz Heider (1958), pointed out long ago that ans are natural psychologists—or *naïve psychologists*, to use his term. Heider nded that humans are naturally interested in assessing the personality characics and attitudes of other humans they encounter. From an evolutionary perive, this drive to understand others has clear adaptive functions. Other iduals can help us or hurt us in our life endeavors. Understanding others helps redict their behavior and decide how to interact with them. Consistent with der's general view, researchers have found that people untrained in psychology

1.

What are two reasons for social psychologists' focus on biases in person perception?

are often remarkably accurate and quick at assessing others' personalities by o serving their behavior (Ambady & others, 1995; Funder, 1995).

Yet, as Heider himself pointed out, the accuracy of our judgments of othe sometimes suffers from certain consistent mistakes, or *biases*. These biases occu most often when we are not using our full mental resources, or have only limite information with which to reason, or have unconscious motives for reaching pa ticular conclusions. Such biases interest social psychologists for two reasons. Firs they provide clues about the mental processes that contribute to accurate as well a inaccurate perceptions and judgments. In this regard, social psychologists' interes in biases is analogous to perceptual psychologists' interest in visual illusions, whic (as discussed in Chapter 8) provide clues to understanding normal, accurate visua perception. Second, an understanding of bias can promote social justice. By identi fying and teaching others to recognize psychological tendencies that contribute t prejudice and unfair treatment of people, social psychologists can help improve th social world.

2.

How does the process of attribution contribute to person perception?

Forming Impressions About People from Their Behavior

Actions are directly observable and thoughts are not. Therefore, our judgmen about the personalities of people we encounter must be based primarily on what w observe of their actions. As "naïve psychologists" we intuitively, in our everyday ex periences, form impressions of people's personalities on the basis of their action For example, if a new acquaintance smiles at you, you do not simply register th fact that she smiled; rather, you interpret the smile in terms of its meaning and us that interpretation to infer something about her personality. Depending on the con text and any prior information you have about her, you might decide that the smil represents friendliness, or smugness, or guile. What you carry away from the en counter is not so much a memory that the person smiled as a memory that she wa friendly, smug, or deceitful. That memory is added to your growing impression o her and may affect your future interactions with her.

Any such judgment about another person is, in essence, a claim about causa tion. It is an implicit claim that the person's behavior is caused in part by some more or less permanent characteristic of the person, such as friendliness or decei fulness. In normal English usage, any claim about causation is called an *attributio* In the study of person perception, an ***attribution*** is any claim about the cause o someone's behavior. As Heider (1958) pointed out, a major problem in judging someone's personality on the basis of his or her action is that of determining the de gree to which the action truly represents something unique and lasting about the person or, instead, represents a normal human response to a particular situation o set of circumstances.

The Logic of Attributing Behavior to the Person or the Situation

If you see a man running and screaming and then see that a tiger is chasing him, yo might logically attribute his fear to the situation rather than to any special aspect o his personality; almost anyone would be afraid of a loose and charging tiger. T build a useful picture of a person on the basis of the person's actions, you must de cide which actions imply something unique about the person and which action would be expected of anyone under similar circumstances. Heider noted that whe behavior is clearly appropriate to the environmental situation, people commonly a tribute the behavior to the situation rather than to the behaving person's personali

3.

According to the logic outlined by Kelley, when should an attribution be made to the person and when should it be made to the situation?

In line with Heider's general ideas about attributions, Harold Kelley (196 1973) developed a logical model for judging whether a particular action should attributed to some characteristic of the acting person or to something about th immediate environment. The essence of the model is that the perceiver conside three questions in making an attribution: (1) Does this person regularly behave th way in this situation? (2) Do many other people regularly behave this way in th

Attributional problem: **We are caught in a traffic jam and Susan, the driver, is expressing anger. Does her anger tell us something useful about her personality?**

Logic of solution: Compare the observed behavior with the person's typical behavior in this situation (consistency), with other people's typical behavior in this situation (consensus), and with the person's behavior in other situations (distinctiveness).

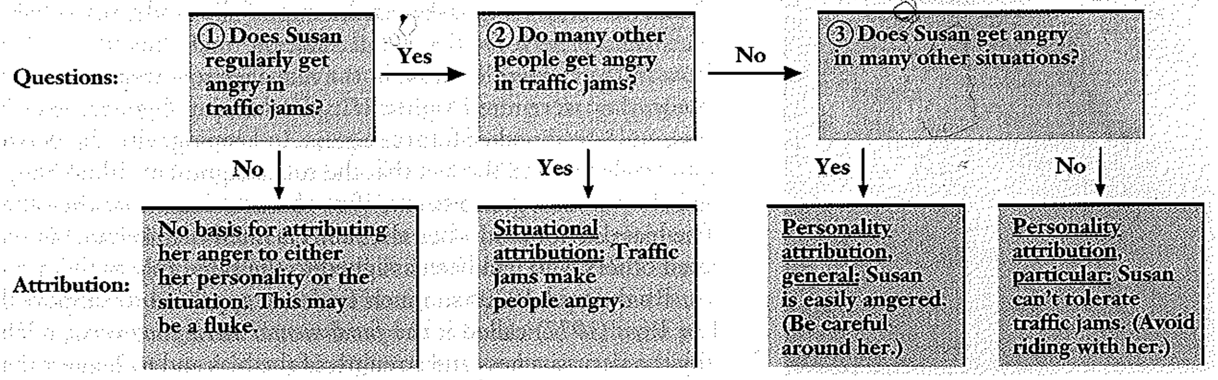

Questions:
① Does Susan regularly get angry in traffic jams?
Yes
② Do many other people get angry in traffic jams?
No
③ Does Susan get angry in many other situations?
No
Yes
Yes
No
Attribution:
No basis for attributing her anger to either her personality or the situation. This may be a fluke.
Situational attribution: Traffic jams make people angry.
Personality attribution, general: Susan is easily angered. (Be careful around her.)
Personality attribution, particular: Susan can't tolerate traffic jams. (Avoid riding with her.)

FIGURE **13.1**

The logic behind an attribution

According to Kelley, our decision to attribute an observed behavior to internal causes (the person) or external causes (the situation) depends, ideally, on our answers to three questions. Although Kelley did not specify a sequence for asking the questions, this flowchart depicts the most efficient sequence and the attribution that would follow each combination of yes and no answers. In Kelley's original model the three questions shown here were described, respectively, as issues of consistency, consensus, and distinctiveness.

situation? (3) Does this person behave this way in many other situations? For a fully worked-out illustration of the model, linking the answers to these questions to the attribution that would logically follow, examine Figure 13.1.

There is nothing surprising in this model. It is simply a statement of the logic that you or I or anyone else—with sufficient motivation and information—would use in deciding whether or not an observed bit of behavior tells us something interesting about the person. It states explicitly the logic that leads us to conclude that a man's repeated fearful reaction to a gentle poodle tells us more about the man than does his fearful reaction to a loose and raging tiger.

Not surprisingly, a number of research studies have shown that when people are asked to explain the cause of a particular behavior and are given sufficient information to answer the three questions, they usually do make attributions that accord with the model just described (McArthur, 1972). But often people lack the information, the time, or the motivation to make a logical attribution. In that case they may take shortcuts in their reasoning, which may result in certain consistent errors, or biases.

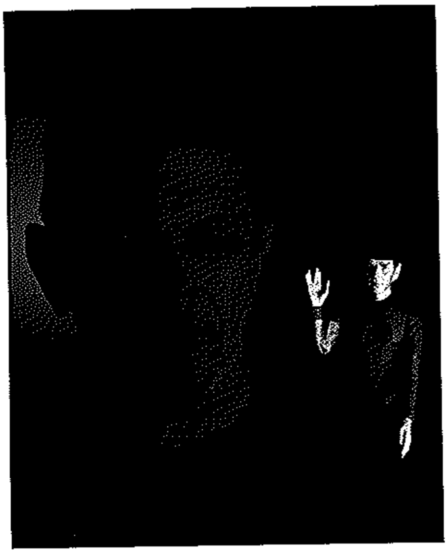
The Person Bias in Attributions

In his original writings about attribution, Heider (1958) noted that people tend to give too much weight to personality and not enough to the environmental situation when they make attributions about others' actions. Concerning the example in Figure 13.1, they tend to ignore the traffic jam and attribute Susan's anger too heavily to her personality. Subsequently, other researchers confirmed the existence of this ***person bias*** in attribution. For instance, in one experiment male college students listened to a student who they were told was assigned to read a political statement written by someone else (Gilbert & Jones, 1986). Even when the assignment was made by the observers themselves, so they could be sure that the reader had not chosen it himself, observers tended to rate the reader as politically liberal when the statement he read was liberal and as politically conservative when the statement was conservative. Although there was no logical reason to assume that the statement had anything to do with the reader's own political beliefs, the students made that attribution.

4.

What evidence supports the existence of a person bias in attributions, and why is the bias often called the "fundamental attribution error"?

Some of the most socially relevant examples of the person bias have to do with the effects of a person's social role on others' perceptions of the person. When we observe a police officer, nurse, teacher, or student carrying out his or her duties, we tend—in accord with the person bias—to attribute the action to the individual's personality and to ignore the constraints that the role places on how the person can



Matt Mendelsohn / Corbis

A victim of bias?

Leonard Nimoy called his autobiography *I Am Not Spock*. He has apparently often encountered the fundamental attribution error.

act. We might develop quite different impressions of the same person if we saw hi or her in out-of-role situations. In an experiment demonstrating this effect of rol Ronald Humphrey (1985) set up a simulated corporate office and randomly a signed some volunteer subjects to the role of manager and others to that of cle The managers were given interesting tasks and responsibilities, and the clerks we given routine, boring tasks. At the end of the study, the subjects rated various a pects of the personalities of all subjects, including themselves. Compared wi those in the clerk role, those in the manager role were judged by others more po itively; they were rated higher in leadership, intelligence, assertiveness, supportiv ness, and likelihood of future success. In keeping with the person bias, the subje apparently ignored the fact that the role assignment, which they knew was rando had allowed one group to manifest characteristics that the other group could n The bias did not hold when the subjects rated themselves, but it did hold when th rated others who had been assigned to the same role as themselves.

By the mid-1970s so much evidence appeared to support the person bias th Lee Ross (1977) called it the *fundamental attribution error*, a label designed to si nify the pervasiveness and strength of the bias and to suggest that it underlies ma other social-psychological phenomena. That label is still in use despite growing e idence that the bias may not be quite as fundamental as Ross and others thought

Conditions That Promote a Person Bias or a Situation Bias

The studies that supported the pervasiveness of the person bias may themsel have been biased. Volunteers for psychological studies tacitly agree to coopera with the researcher. In experiments on attributions, they may believe that their ta is to make some sort of attribution about the performer's personality or attitud even with insufficient information (Leyens & others, 1996). In real life, the sa people might not make judgments about a person's characteristics on the basis such scanty information as the person's reciting of an assigned statement or playi of an assigned role.

When volunteers are invited to explain samples of behavior in whatever te they choose, they most often give explanations that cannot be classed as either p son attributions or situation attributions (Malle & others, 2000). In one such stu (Lewis, 1995), many of the attributions were stated in terms of the goals of the tion, such as "She is typing diligently at the computer in order to finish a te paper that is due tomorrow." A goal lies in both the person and the environme The environment sets the challenge (the paper is due), and the person wants meet the challenge. In real life people are not just interested in judging others' p sonalities; they are also interested in the challenges that are set by various situatio and in the ways that people go about meeting those challenges.

5.

What conditions seem to promote a person bias or a situation bias, and how did an experiment demonstrate the effects of these conditions?

Other research suggests that even in the laboratory the person bias depe very much on the conditions of the study. It occurs most frequently when (a) subjects' task or goal is clearly to assess the personality of the target individual a (b) the subjects are provided with little opportunity or motivation to bring th controlled reasoning powers to bear on the problem, so they rely primarily on tomatic mental processes. In one such experiment, female college students served a silent videotape in which a young woman being interviewed was behav very nervously (Krull, 1993). The subjects were told that the interview topic mi or might not be highly anxiety-provoking (the possible topics ranged from wo travel to sexual fantasies) but were not told the topic of the interview they saw manipulate the subjects' goal, some were told that their task would be to judge anxious the woman was in her everyday life and others were told that their would be to judge the degree to which the interview topic was anxiety-provok To manipulate the opportunity for controlled thought, some subjects in each o two goal groups were kept cognitively busy with another task (rehearsing an ei digit number) as they watched the video and others were permitted to devote t full attention to the video.

After watching the video, all subjects were asked to judge (a) the degree to which the interviewee was an anxious person in her everyday life and (b) the degree to which the topic of the interview was one that would provoke anxiety in most people. Only those subjects who were kept cognitively busy showed evidence of biased reasoning. The others attributed the woman's anxiety about equally to her personality and to the situation. Of the cognitively busy subjects, only those who had been asked in advance to evaluate the person manifested the typical person bias. They judged the woman to be a very anxious person and judged the interview topic to be only moderately anxiety-provoking. Most interesting, the cognitively busy subjects who had been asked to judge the interview topic manifested an opposite bias—a ***situation bias*** rather than a person bias. They rated the interview topic as highly anxiety-producing and the woman as only a moderately anxious person.

On the basis of this and other evidence, the researchers proposed a two-stage model of the process of making attributions (Krull & Erickson, 1995, elaborating on a model proposed earlier by Gilbert, 1989). The first stage is rapid and automatic and typically leads to a judgment that is biased in accordance with the reasoner's goal—a person bias if the goal is to judge the person and a situation bias if the goal is to judge the situation. The second stage is slower, is controlled, and doesn't occur if the person is mentally busy with another task or is not motivated to devote mental resources to the task. At this stage the person corrects the automatic attribution by taking into account the entity (situation or person) that is not the direct target of the attributional goal. The model is illustrated, with a new example, in Figure 13.2.

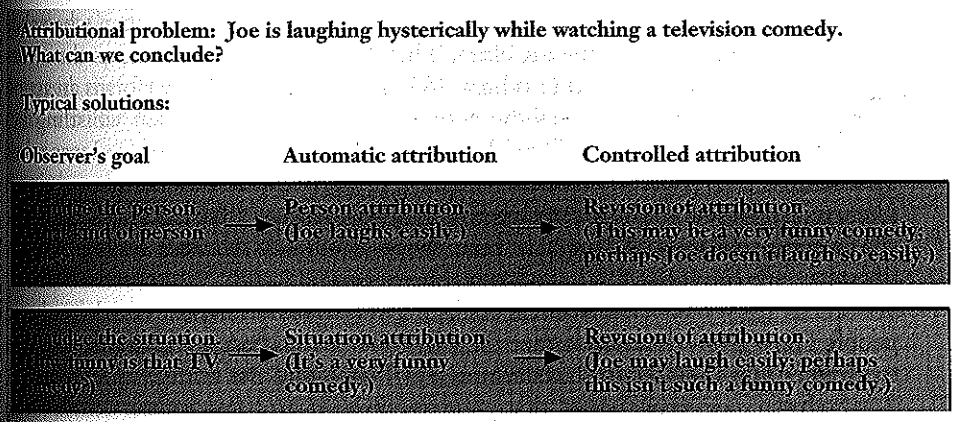

Attributional problem: Joe is laughing hysterically while watching a television comedy. What can we conclude?
Typical solutions:
Observer's goal
Automatic attribution
Controlled attribution
the person:
kind of person
Person attribution
(Joe laughs easily.)
Revision of attribution
(This may be a very funny comedy; perhaps Joe doesn't laugh so easily.)
the situation:
funny is that TV
Situation attribution
(It's a very funny comedy.)
Revision of attribution
(Joe may laugh easily; perhaps this isn't such a funny comedy.)

FIGURE **13.2** *Attributions as products of the observer's goal and mode of mental processing* According to the model of attributions proposed by Krull and Erickson (1995), the person bias and situation bias depend on the observer's goal and the relative absence of controlled thought. Automatic mental processes lead one to attribute an action to the person when the implicit goal is to evaluate the person (Joe in this example) and to the situation when the implicit goal is to evaluate the situation (the television comedy in this example). Controlled processes, if brought to bear, can correct the bias in either case.

A Cross-Cultural Difference in Attributions

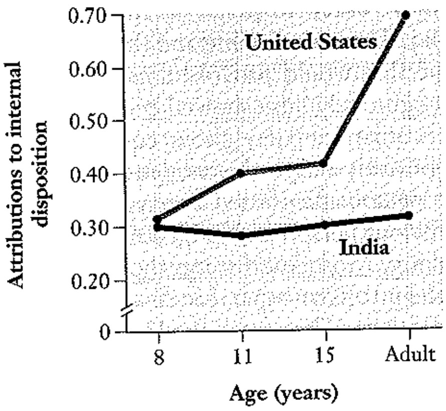
You have just read evidence that people tend to manifest a person bias when their task or goal is to evaluate the person. Other evidence suggests that, other things being equal, people in Western cultures are more inclined toward the person bias than are people in Eastern cultures. Western philosophies, religions, and political ideologies tend to emphasize the idea that people are in charge of their own destinies, so people growing up in Western cultures may learn to attribute behavior more to the person than to the situation (Jellison & Green, 1981). If so, then in Eastern cultures—such as those of India, China, and Japan, where philosophies and religions emphasize the role of fate or circumstances in controlling one's destiny—people might make relatively fewer person attributions and more situation attributions. To test this theory, Joan Miller (1984) asked middle-class children and adults in the United States and in a Hindu community in India to think of an action by someone they knew and then to explain why the person had acted in that way. As predicted, the Americans made more attributions to personality and fewer to the situation than did the Indians. This difference was greater for adults—who would

6.

What is some evidence that the person bias may be partly a product of Western culture?

FIGURE 13.3 *Cultural differences in making attributions*

When asked to explain a particular behavior produced by a particular person, the proportion of attributions to internal disposition (personality or attitude) was greater among people in the United States than it was among Hindus in India, and this difference was greater for adults than for children. (Data from Miller, 1984. The proportions were determined by dividing the number of internal attributions by the total number of internal plus external attributions for each group; the many attributions that were neither clearly internal nor clearly external were ignored.)



presumably have incorporated
cultural norms more strongly—th
it was for children (see Figure 13.3

Similar results have been fou
in comparisons of people raised
North America with those raised
China, Japan, or Korea (Morris
Peng, 1994; Norenzayan & Nisb
2000). As part of their study
Chinese attributional styles, Mich
Morris and Kaiping Peng (1994) a
lyzed the content of every arti
published in the *New York Times* a
every article published in the *W*
Journal, a Chinese-language newspaper published in New York, concerning
specific mass murders that took place in 1991. The researchers found that the a
cles in the *Times* focused most heavily on personality characteristics of the murd
ers—their traits, attitudes, character flaws, mental disorders, and so on. In contr
the articles in the Chinese newspaper focused most heavily on the life situations
the murderers—their living conditions, their social relationships, and the frus
tions that might have provoked their actions.

The Actor-Observer Discrepancy in Attributions

Many studies suggest that the person bias is weaker, and the situation bia
stronger, when people make attributions about their own behavior than when
make attributions about someone else's. This difference is referred to as the *ac*
observer discrepancy (Nisbett & others, 1973). The person who performs an ac
(the *actor*) commonly attributes the action to the situation—"I am whistling
cause it is a beautiful day," or "I read those political statements because I was a
to read them." In contrast, another person (the *observer*) who sees the same actio
likely to attribute it to the actor's internal characteristics—"She is whistling bec
she is a cheerful person," or "He read those statements because he is politic
liberal."

7.

What are two hypotheses as to why people more frequently make person attributions about others than about themselves, and what is some evidence for each hypothesis?

What causes the actor-observer discrepancy? According to one hypoth
people know from experience that their own behavior changes from one situa
to another, but they do not have as much evidence that the same is true of ot
For example, you may assume that your psychology professor's calm demean
the classroom is indicative of his or her behavior everywhere and thus attribute
personality, but this may be only because you haven't seen your professor at ho
in traffic court, or on the softball diamond. Consistent with this "knowle
across-situations" hypothesis, people usually judge the behavior of their
friends as more flexible—more determined by the situation and less by unvar
personality traits—than the behavior of people whom they know less
(Prentice, 1990; Sande & others, 1988).

Another hypothesis holds that the actor-observer discrepancy stems fro
basic characteristic of visual perception: Our eyes point outward, away from
selves. When we watch someone *else* perform an action, our eyes focus on the a
not the environment to which the actor is responding, so we tend to see the
caused by the person rather than the situation. But when we perform an actio
see the surrounding environment, not ourselves, so we tend to attribute
properties to the situation. Consistent with this "visual-orientation" hypot
one experimenter found that the actor-observer discrepancy was reversed whe
actor and the observer watched videotaped replays of the action from reverse
sual orientations (Storms, 1973). When people watched themselves on video
they attributed relatively more of their behavior to their own traits and less t
situation. When people watched a videotape of another person's performance

spective—so that they saw the environment as the person would
buted relatively more of the behavior to the situation and less to

ior Information and Physical Appearance

e been considering how people judge the characteristics of another
e basis of their impressions, accurate or not, of what caused that in-
ior. But judgments relating behavior to character go in both direc-
ot only assess character from behavior; they also interpret behavior
at they already know—or think they know—about the person's

8.

How can a preexisting schema bias interpretations of a person's behavior, and how was such an effect demonstrated in an experiment at MIT? Why do first impressions often resist change?

ema to Interpret a Person's Actions

d set of information or beliefs that we have about any entity or event
by cognitive psychologists as a *schema* (discussed in Chapter 9). Thus,
erson, even slightly, accurately or inaccurately, is to have a mental
hat person. Even before we meet a person, we may already have a
m or her based on what we have heard and supplemented by our imag-
t knowledge can influence our interpretation of the person's behavior
attributions we make.

c experiment demonstrating this biasing effect of prior knowledge in-
eption of a guest lecturer by students in a course at MIT (Kelley, 1950).
guest arrived, half the students received a written biographical sketch of
person, industrious, critical, practical, and determined." The other half
at included the statement, "People who know him consider him to be a
e same sketch except that the words "very warm" were replaced by
d." After the guest had appeared and led a 20-minute discussion, the stu-
e asked to fill out a form evaluating his performance. The main results
the students who had received the sketch containing the words "very
ok greater part in the discussion and rated the guest and his performance
itively than did the students who had received the sketch containing the
ather cold." Thus, the two groups responded differently to the same lec-
d made different attributions about his performance depending on the ini-
ma set up for them.

t impressions are often hard to change because people tend to interpret
ormation so as to make it consistent with those impressions (Asch, 1946;
986). Our smile looks friendly to those who think we are kind, smug to those
ink we are aloof, and deceitful to those who think we are untrustworthy.
e of others' interpretations, our smile tends to confirm rather than dispute
rior impression of us.

9.

How have researchers documented biasing effects of (a) physical attractiveness and (b) facial maturity on the attributions that people make about a person?

ttractiveness Bias

the first impression we gain of others is based purely on their physical ap-
nce, and, like any first impression, it can bias our subsequent judgments.
sistent with folktales in which the good people (the princesses and princes) are
tiful and the bad people (the witches and ogres) are ugly, experiments have
n that physically attractive people are commonly judged as more intelligent,
petent, sociable, and moral than less attractive people (Dion, 1986; Eagly &
ers, 1991). In one experiment, fifth-grade teachers were given report cards and
tographs of children whom they did not know and were asked to rate each
ld's intelligence and achievement. The teachers rated physically attractive chil-
en as brighter and more successful than unattractive children with identical re-
rt cards (Clifford & Walster, 1973). In a similar experiment, adults more
equently attributed a child's misbehavior to environmental circumstances if the
ild was physically attractive and to the child's personality if the child was not

attractive (Dion, 1972). In yet another study, which analyzed actual court cases, judges regularly gave longer prison sentences to unattractive persons than to attractive persons convicted of comparable crimes (Stewart, 1985).

The Baby-Face Bias

Another pervasive bias, although less well known, concerns a person's facial maturity. Some people, regardless of their age, have facial features resembling those of a baby—a round rather than elongated head, a forehead protruding forward rather than sloping back, large eyes, and a small jawbone (see Figure 13.4). In a series of experiments conducted in both the United States and Korea, baby-faced adults were perceived as more naïve, honest, helpless, kind, and warm than mature-faced adults of the same age and sex, even though the perceivers could tell that the baby-faced persons were not really younger (McArthur & Berry, 1987; Zebrowitz & others, 1993). Leslie Zebrowitz and Susan McDonald (1991) found that the baby-face bias, like the attractiveness bias, can influence the outcome of actual small-claims court cases. Baby-faced defendants were much more frequently found innocent in cases involving intentional wrongdoing than were mature-faced defendants, but they were neither more nor less frequently found innocent in cases involving negligence (such as performing a contracted job incompetently). Apparently, judges find it hard to think of baby-faced persons as deliberately causing harm but do not find it hard to think of them as incompetent or forgetful.

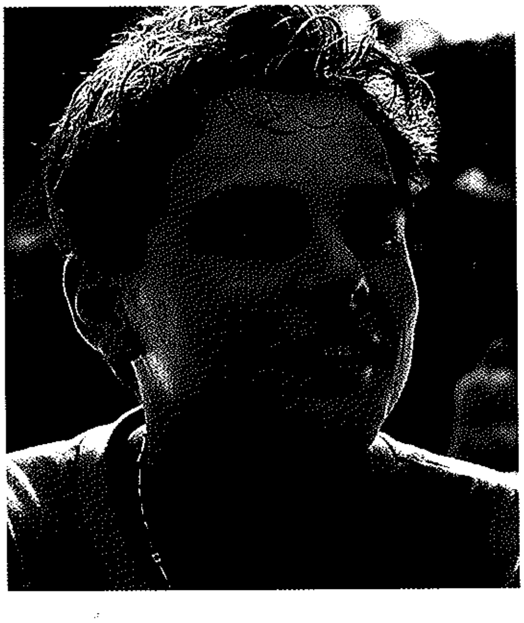
10.

How might a sex difference in facial features contribute to perceived psychological differences between women and men?

Zebrowitz (1996) has also found evidence that differences in facial maturity between men and women may contribute to differences in how the two sexes are perceived. Women, on average, are more baby-faced than men, and women are also, on average, judged as kinder, more naïve, more emotional, and less socially dominant than men. In an experiment, Zebrowitz and her colleagues presented college students with schematic drawings of men's and women's faces in which facial maturity was varied by altering the size of the eyes and the length of the jaw (Friedman & Zebrowitz, 1992). When the typical differences between men's and women's faces were present, students judged the man as more dominant and less warm than the woman. But when the faces were equivalent on the maturity dimensions, the students judged the two as equal in dominance and warmth. Zebrowitz did not suggest that facial features are the sole determinant of the different perceptions people have of women and men under more natural conditions, but she did suggest that such features may contribute to the difference.

The ethologist Konrad Lorenz (1943, 1971) suggested long ago that infants' facial features act as *sign stimuli* (a concept discussed in Chapter 3) to elicit in us an

FIGURE 13.4
Who would deceive you?
Adults whose faces are babyish (left) are commonly seen as more naïve, honest, helpless, kind, and warm than are mature-faced adults (right). The characteristics of a baby face include a round head, large forehead, large eyes, short nose, and small chin.



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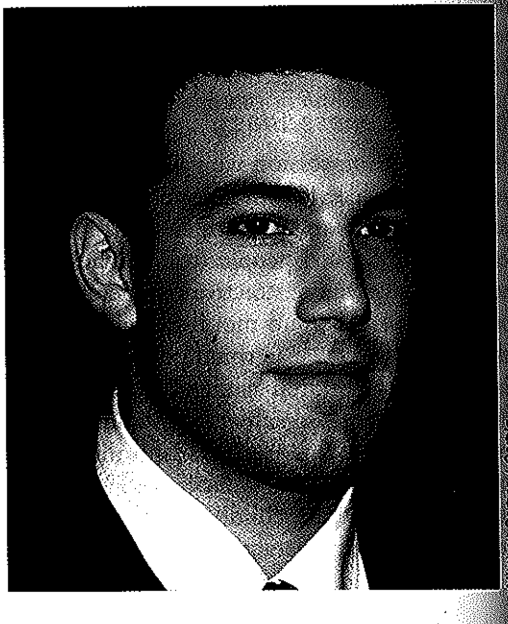

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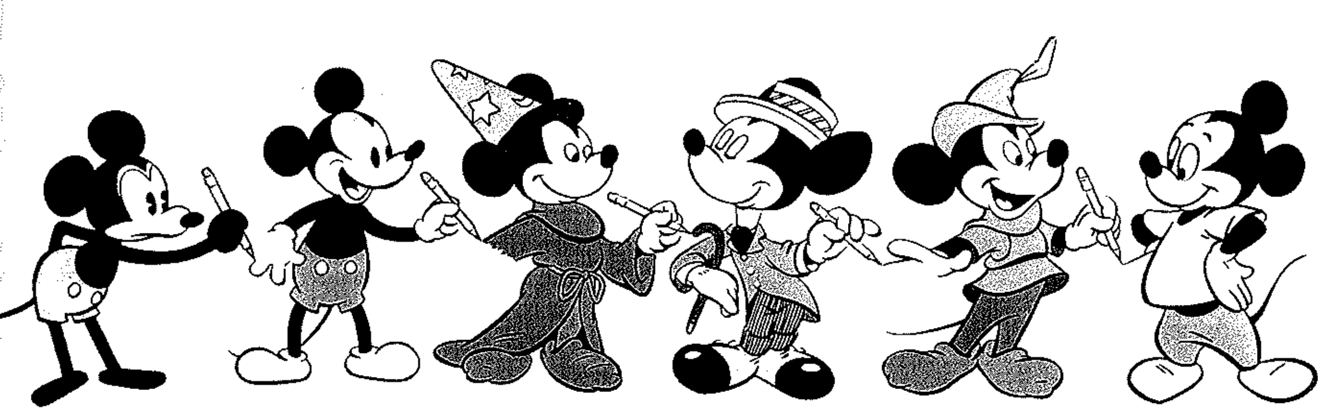

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FIGURE **13.5** *The evolution of innocence in Mickey Mouse*
Mickey Mouse began life, in the 1928 cartoon *Steamboat Willie*, as a mischievous, teasing character who delighted in cranking a goat's tail. In response to social pressure from citizens concerned about Mickey's moral effects on children, the Walt Disney Company made him increasingly innocent over the years. As part of this change, Disney artists made him look more innocent and cute by augmenting his juvenile features. According to measurements made by Stephen Jay Gould, over a 50-year period Mickey's eye size increased from 27 to 42 percent of his head length, his head length increased from 43 to 48 percent of his body length, and the apparent vault of his forehead increased markedly as a result of the gradual migration of his front ear toward the back of his head. (Based on S. J. Gould, 1980, pp. 96–97.)

innate response of compassion and caring. He also noted that the same features lead us to perceive some animal species (such as bunnies and pandas) as particularly cute, innocent, and needing care, regardless of the animals' actual behaviors. Zebrowitz's work suggests that we generalize this response not just to babies and animals but also to adult humans whose faces resemble those of babies. For another example, see Figure 13.5.

From an evolutionary perspective, it is noteworthy that human adults of both sexes are much more baby-faced than the adults of our closest primate relatives. The typical adult human face is more like that of an infant chimpanzee than like that of an adult chimpanzee. This difference is generally attributed to the expanded cranial cavity that came with enlargement of the brain in humans. But I wonder if that is the whole explanation. In the course of human evolution individuals who had babyish faces may have been treated more benignly than those who had more mature faces, and perhaps this helped promote our species' evolution toward baby-facedness. This is speculation, but it is supported by evidence that baby-faced children and adolescents are less often physically abused than are their age mates who have more mature faces (McCabe, 1984). As further speculation, perhaps the protective effect was of greater value for girls and women than for boys and men—for reasons having to do with the general sex difference in strength and aggressiveness—leading to sex difference in baby-facedness observed today. (Can you imagine any ways to test this theory? Send me an e-mail if you can.)

Effects of Stereotypes

We all carry in our heads schemas not just for individual persons but also for whole groups of people. You may have schemas for men, women, Asians, African-Americans, Californians, Catholics, and college professors. Such schemas are called ***stereotypes.*** The first person to use the term *stereotype* in this way was the journalist Walter Lippmann (1922), who defined it as "the picture in the head" that a person may have of a particular group or category of people. Some stereotypes may accurately portray the distinguishing characteristics of a group, others may exaggerate those characteristics, and still others may be total fabrications. Later in this chapter and the next, you will encounter some ideas about how stereotypes are acquired and the psychological and social functions they may serve. For now, however, our concern is with the effects of stereotypes on perceptions of individuals. Whether or not a stereotype accurately portrays the average member of a particular group, it can bias our assessment of any individual member who differs (as everyone does) from the average.

The Problem of Identifying Stereotypes

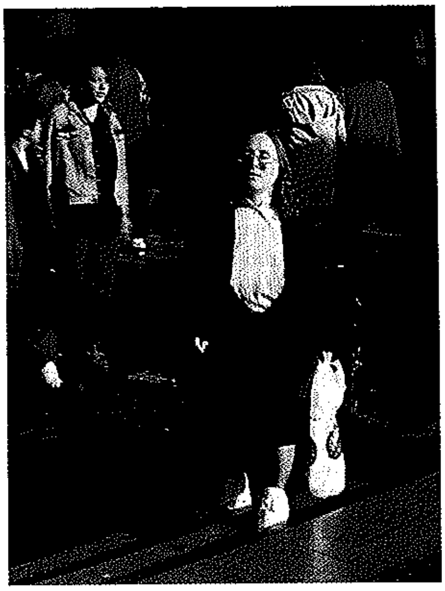
At one time, psychologists in the United States had no difficulty identifying people's stereotypes of various ethnic groups. All they had to do was ask. Typically they asked respondents to check off, on a list of traits, those that best characterized the group in question. In one such study in the early 1930s, Princeton University students described black people as *superstitious* (84 percent checked this trait) and *lazy*

(75 percent), Jews as *shrewd* (79 percent) and *mercenary* (49 percent), and Germans as *scientifically minded* (84 percent) and *industrious* (65 percent) (Katz & Braly, 1933). A decade later, after World War II broke out, the prominent stereotypes of blacks and Jews were little changed, but that of Germans changed to include the traits *arrogant* and *cruel* (Seago, 1947).

11.

What is the distinction among public, private, and implicit stereotypes, and how do psychologists identify implicit stereotypes?

Today it is not so easy for psychologists to assess stereotypes. People in our culture, particularly college students, are sensitized to the harmful effects of stereotypes and are reluctant to admit holding them, especially negative ones about socially oppressed groups. Some social psychologists today distinguish among three levels of stereotypes: public, private, and implicit (Dovidio & others, 1994). The *public* level is what we say to others about the group. The *private* level is what we consciously believe but generally do not say to others. The *implicit* level is the set of learned mental associations that can guide our judgments and actions without our awareness, whether or not the associations coincide with our conscious beliefs. Much recent research on stereotypes has centered on the implicit level.


Linda Haas Photography

Overcoming a stereotype

We tend to stereotype people who look different from us or from what we conceive as the norm. This woman, Barbara Tiemann, has a genetic condition called Turner's syndrome and is a past president of the Turner's Syndrome Society. Because women with this condition look different, many people mistakenly assume that they are intellectually slow. The society serves as a support group to help members deal with this kind of stereotyping.

As you may recall from Chapter 9, cognitive psychologists often use a method called *priming* to learn how knowledge is organized in people's minds. The premise behind this method is that any concept presented to a person activates (primes) in the person's mind the entire set of concepts that are closely associated with that concept. Priming the mind with one concept makes the related concepts more easily retrievable from long-term memory into working memory. For example, the word *apple*, presented as a prime, enables a typical person to respond more quickly to yes-or-no questions about such related concepts as *red*, *round*, *pie*, and *fruit*. A person whose task is to press one button for *yes* or a different button for *no* will respond a few milliseconds faster to the question "Is *red* a color?" after seeing the word *apple* as a prime than after seeing *banana* as a prime.

Social psychologists have adopted the priming method to identify people's implicit stereotypes. So that subjects do not consciously counteract the effects of the primes and suppress their stereotypes, the primes are either presented as irrelevant distractors or flashed so quickly that they are registered unconsciously but are not consciously perceived (a procedure discussed in Chapter 8). The priming stimuli in experiments dealing with stereotypes of black people and white people are in some cases words—such as *BLACK* or *WHITE*—and in other cases pictures of black or white faces.

Such studies reveal that implicit stereotypes are very much alive, even in persons who don't subscribe to the stereotypes in their explicit statements on questionnaires (Dovidio & others, 1996; Kawakami & Dovidio, 2001). Priming the concept of a black person typically leads white subjects to respond more quickly to questions about such concepts as *lazy*, *hostile*, *musical*, and *athletic*; and priming the concept of a white person leads them to respond more quickly to such concepts as *conventional*, *materialistic*, *ambitious*, and *intelligent*. Although positive and negative traits appear in both stereotypes, the experiments reveal that the implicit stereotypes white students have of blacks are significantly more negative than those they have of whites (Dovidio & others, 1986; Fazio & others, 1995). Conversely, in one study black Americans manifested significantly more negative stereotypes of whites than of blacks (Fazio & others, 1995).

12.

How have researchers shown that stereotypes can lead to prejudice and discrimination even in the absence of conscious prejudice? What different roles do automatic and controlled mental processes play in reactions to stereotyped individuals?

Effects of Implicit Stereotypes on Actions and Judgments

Implicit stereotypes can promote prejudicial actions and attributions toward the stereotyped group, even in people who are not consciously prejudiced. In one study, John Dovidio and his colleagues (1997) found that white college students' nonverbal signs of discomfort (rate of eye blinks and failure to make eye contact) when interviewed by black interviewers correlated significantly and quite strongly with their implicit negative stereotypes of black people, which had been assessed using a priming method. In contrast, the same study revealed no correlation between the measures of discomfort and the students' explicit views of black people, which had been assessed with a questionnaire.

In an earlier study, Patricia Devine (1989) worked with white college students as subjects. Half were primed to activate their stereotypes of black men. Then all subjects heard a story about a man named Donald who engaged in actions that might or might not be attributed to hostility. The story did not mention Donald's race. Devine assumed that subjects in the stereotype-primed condition would have in their unconscious mind the image of a black man as they heard the story, and she predicted that they would interpret Donald's actions in terms of that stereotype. Consistent with Devine's prediction, those in the stereotype-primed condition rated Donald higher in hostility and unfriendliness than did those in the unprimed condition. This was as true of subjects who manifested the least prejudice on a questionnaire designed to assess explicit prejudice toward blacks as it was of those who manifested the most prejudice by that measure.

Other studies have shown that college students more often make biased attributions based on stereotypes when they are tired or mentally preoccupied than when they are refreshed and able to bring their full conscious attention to the attributional task (Bodenhausen & others, 1999; Gilbert & Hixon, 1991). Stereotypes apparently provide automatic shortcuts to judgment in situations where we lack the information, time, mental resources, or motivation to evaluate logically the facts of the individual case. Overcoming prejudice, therefore, is like resisting any well-learned habit. Devine and Margo Monteith (1993, 1999) have found that people who consciously dispute the culture's stereotypes feel discomfort or guilt when they find themselves reacting automatically in stereotype-consistent ways. They suggest that this discomfort can lead people to work deliberately at countering their automatic reactions and eventually overcoming them.

Person Perceptions as Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

Our beliefs and expectations—whether they are initially true or false—can to some degree create reality by influencing the behavior of ourselves and others. Such effects are sometimes called *self-fulfilling prophecies* (Merton, 1948). In George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* (upon which the musical *My Fair Lady* was based), the impoverished cockney flower girl Eliza Doolittle becomes a fine lady in large part because of her response to the expectations of others. Professor Higgins assumes that she is capable of learning to talk and act like a fine lady, and Colonel Pickering assumes that she is truly noble at heart. Their actions toward Eliza lead her to respond in ways that transform their assumptions into realities.

13.

What is some evidence that beliefs about a person or a group can affect that person or group in such a way as to become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

A number of experiments have affirmed the "Pygmalion effect." When person A is led to believe that person Z has a particular characteristic, A's behavior toward Z can lead Z to manifest that characteristic. In one such experiment, Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson (1968) led elementary school teachers to believe that certain students would show a spurt in intellectual growth during the next few months, as indicated by a special test that all students had taken. In reality, the students labeled "spurters" had been selected not on the basis of a test score but at random. Yet when all the students were tested 8 months later, the selected students showed significantly greater gains in IQ and academic performance than did their classmates. Subsequent research on this *Pygmalion in the classroom* effect indicates that it occurs through differences in the ways that teachers behave toward students whom they believe will excel compared with the other students. Teachers are warmer toward those students, give them more time to answer difficult questions, give them more challenging work, and notice and reinforce more often their self-initiated efforts (Cooper & Good, 1983; Rosenthal, 1994). In short, either consciously or unconsciously, they establish for those students a better learning environment, one in which the teachers' expectations of the students become self-fulfilling prophecies.

Other researchers have documented self-fulfilling effects of cultural stereotypes. J. Michael Palardy (1969) identified, with a survey, a group of first-grade teachers who believed that boys learn to read more slowly than do girls and another group who believed that boys and girls learn to read at equal rates. Then, 5 months later, he examined the reading achievement scores of students who had subsequently entered the classrooms of the two groups of teachers. The results conformed with the teachers' expectations. The boys scored lower in reading than the girls in classrooms where the teacher believed in the sex difference but not in classrooms where the teacher did not believe in the sex difference. Other research suggests that parents' beliefs about biologically based sex differences in math, sports, and social relationships can influence the development of their sons and daughters in the expected directions (Jacobs & Eccles, 1992).

The perceptions and misperceptions of others can affect not just the behavior of the target person but also that person's *self-concept*, the topic to which we now turn.

SECTION SUMMARY

As intuitive psychologists, people form impressions of others' personalities by observing others' behaviors. In line with Kelley's model, distinctive behaviors (those that differ most from the way that a typical person would behave in similar circumstances) are most informative of personality. Nondistinctive behaviors are more reasonably attributed to the situation than to anything unique about the person. Often, however, people do attribute nondistinctive behaviors to personality. This person bias, or "fundamental attribution error," occurs in experiments in which the subjects' goal is to assess the personality of someone performing an action. When the goal is to assess the situation that provokes the action, the opposite bias—the situation bias—occurs. Both of these biases are especially strong when subjects are kept mentally occupied so that their judgments are based on automatic rather than controlled thought processes.

Other studies indicate that the person bias is more characteristic of people i Western cultures than in Eastern cultures. Moreover, the person bias is weaker, and the situation bias is stronger, when people make attributions about their own behavior than when they make attributions about someone else's. This so-called actor-observer discrepancy might derive from the more extensive knowledge that people have o themselves than of others, or it might derive from the fact that people's eyes are fo cused on the person when they watch another perform an action and on the situation when they themselves perform an action.

Preexisting beliefs about a person can influence the way in which that person's behavior is judged. Physical appearance is one source of such beliefs. For example baby-faced people are viewed as more naïve, innocent, and incompetent than a mature-faced people, and their behavior is judged in that light. First impressions a also affected by cultural stereotypes concerning race, gender, age, and other ways o categorizing people. Experiments involving the technique of priming have revealed that even people who are not consciously prejudiced carry the culture's racial stereotypes in their heads and that those stereotypes can bias judgments about a person's actions.

Preexisting beliefs can sometimes result in self-fulfilling prophecies. In one expe iment, teachers were falsely informed that certain of their students had performed e ceptionally well on a test of academic potential. The teachers subsequently behaved differently toward those students than toward others, in ways that led those studen to achieve more than they otherwise would have.

PERCEIVING AND EVALUATING THE SELF

Self-awareness is often described as one of the hallmarks of our species, though i difficult to judge the degree to which members of other species may be aware o themselves as entities. At about 15 months of age, human infants stop treating th image in a mirror as if it were another child and begin to treat it as a reflection o themselves. If a researcher surreptitiously places a bright red spot of rouge on t child's nose before placing the child in front of the mirror, the 15-month-old sponds by touching his or her *own* nose to feel or rub off the rouge; a younger chi by contrast, touches the mirror or tries to look behind it to find the red-nosed child (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979). The only other animals besides ourselves who have passed the rouge test of self-recognition are the other apes—chimpanzees, bonobos, orangutans, and at least one gorilla and one gibbon (Parker & others, 1994; Ujhelyi & others, 2000). Other animals, including all species of monkeys tested so far, continue to treat the mirror image as another animal—a creature to threaten and try to chase away—no matter what their age or how much experience they have had with mirrors.

Laura Dwight / Corbis

It's me

By pointing to her own nose as she looks at herself in the mirror, this child demonstrates her understanding that the mirror image is indeed of her.

Research with chimpanzees suggests that for them social interaction is crucial for self-recognition. Chimpanzees raised in isolation from others of their kind did not learn to make self-directed responses to their mirror images, whereas those raised with other chimps did (Gallup & others, 1971). Many psychologists and sociologists have argued that the self-concept, for humans as well as chimps, is fundamentally a *social* product. To become aware of yourself, you must first become aware of others of your species and then become aware, perhaps from how others treat you, that you are one of them. In humans, self-awareness includes awareness not just of the physical self, reflected in mirror images, but also of one's own personality and character, reflected psychologically in the reactions of other people.

Seeing Ourselves Through the Eyes of Others

Many years ago the sociologist Charles Cooley (1902/1964) coined the term *looking-glass self* to describe what he considered to be a very large aspect of each person's self-concept. The "looking glass" to which he referred is not an actual mirror but other people who react to us. He suggested that we all naturally infer and imagine what others think of us from their reactions, and we use those inferences and images to build our own self-concepts. As Eliza Doolittle said to Colonel Pickering in *Pygmalion:* "You see, really and truly, . . . the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves but how she's treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will."

From a functionalist perspective, it makes sense that our self-concepts should be founded largely on what others think of us. Our self-concepts allow us to predict how others will respond to us so that we can fit into society in ways consistent with others' expectations. A flower girl who thought she was a fine lady but could convince nobody else of it would be in for a hard time.

Effects of Others' Appraisals on Self-Understanding

The concept of the looking-glass self may help explain the effects that teachers' beliefs have on their pupils' behavior, discussed in the previous section. Children treated as if they have a particular quality may incorporate that quality into their self-concepts and therefore express it more fully in their actions. Studies in which children were asked to describe themselves have confirmed that their self-descriptions change in accordance with evaluations by their teachers and peers (Cole, 1991; Jussim, 1991). Moreover, in experiments where children were told explicitly that they were a certain kind of person, they responded by behaving in accordance with the attribute they were told they had.

14.

What evidence in contemporary psychology supports, and delimits, Cooley's concept of the looking-glass self?

In one such experiment, some children were told in the course of classroom activity that they *were* neat and tidy (*attribution condition*); others were told that they *should be* neat and tidy (*persuasion condition*); and still others were given no special treatment (*control condition*). The result was that those in the attribution condition showed significantly greater gains in neatness, as measured by the absence of littering, than did those in either of the other conditions (Miller & others, 1975). Similarly, children who were told that they were good at math showed greater improvements in math scores than did those who were told that they should try to

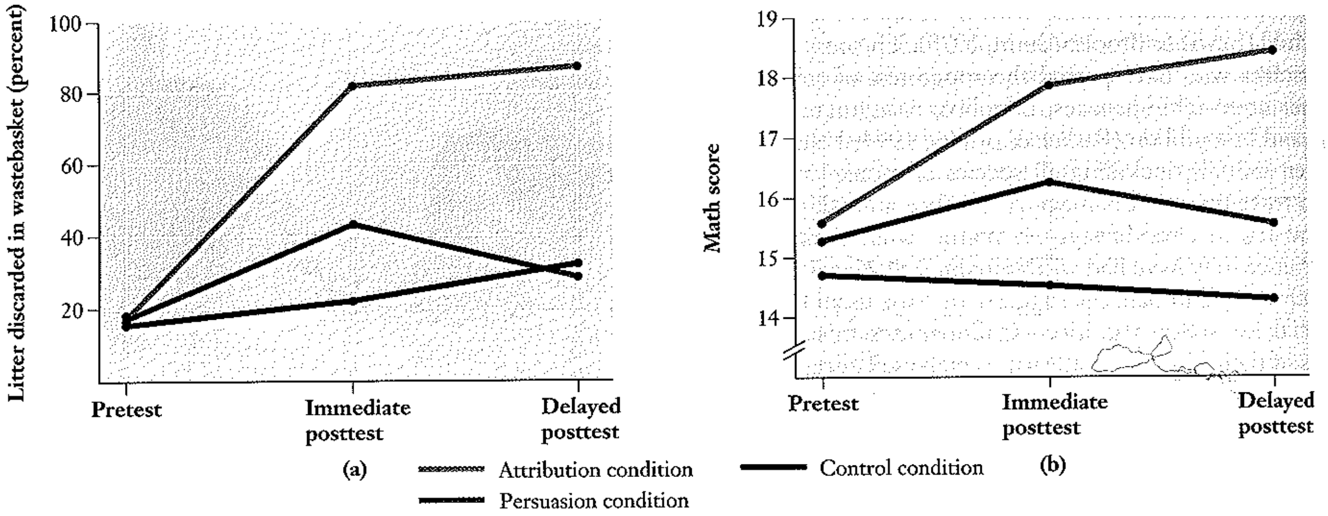


FIGURE 13.6 *Effect of attribution compared with persuasion*

(a) Fifth-graders who were repeatedly told that they were neat and tidy (attribution condition) showed greater gain in use of the wastebasket than did those in the other conditions. (b) Second-graders who were repeatedly told that they were good at math (attribution condition) showed greater improvement in math scores than did those in the other conditions. In each case, the students were tested three times: once right before (pretest), once immediately after (immediate posttest), and once a few weeks after (delayed posttest) the experimental conditions were in effect. (Adapted from Miller & others, 1975.)

become good at math (see Figure 13.6). In these experiments the change in behavior presumably occurred because of a direct effect of the appraisals on the children's self-concepts, which they then strove to live up to.

Of course, people's self-concepts are not always as moldable as the experiments just cited might suggest. The effects are strongest with young children and with characteristics for which people do not already have firm self-beliefs. Adolescents and adults often respond to such appraisals in ways that seem designed to correct what they perceive to be another person's misperception of them (Swann, 1987)—Pygmalion in reverse. In one experiment, adults who perceived themselves as dominant became all the more dominant in their behavior if their conversation partner initially thought they were submissive, and those who perceived themselves as submissive became all the more submissive if their partner initially thought they were dominant (Swann & Hill, 1982). As another example, Zebrowitz and her colleagues (1998) have found that baby-faced teenage boys and young men often behave in ways that seem to be designed to counteract the baby-face stereotype. For instance, in World War II and the Korean War, baby-faced soldiers undertook more dangerous missions and won more military awards, on average, than did mature-faced soldiers, apparently to counteract others' expectations that they lacked courage (Collins & Zebrowitz, 1995).

15.

What might lead us to develop multiple self-concepts, and why might they be useful?

Social Roles and Multiple Selves

You have read of evidence that the raw material for self-understanding lies in one's social interactions with others. But any given person may have quite different kinds of interactions with different groups. As William James (1890/1950) put it long ago, "Many a youth who is demure enough before his parents and teachers, swears and swaggers like a pirate among his 'tough' young friends." From such observations, James argued that each person has not just one self-concept but many, each corresponding to his or her relationship with a different person or set of people. Psychologists who emphasize the relationship between self-concepts and *social roles* have expanded on this idea. Each of us plays a number of different roles in society, and we have a somewhat different concept of ourselves associated with each. I am a *father*, *son*, *neighbor*, and *college professor* to different people. When I think of myself in each role, different sets of traits and abilities come to mind. My understanding of myself in each role is mediated partly by the larger society's stereotype of what fathers, sons, neighbors, and college professors are like and partly by the specific expectations of the individuals to whom I am those things.

Research has shown that people's self-descriptions vary depending on which of their social roles has been mentally activated. Such work has led to weblike odels of the self-concept, in which some self-perceived aits are attached to specific roles (the nodes in the web) hile others are attached to several or all roles, tying the odes together (Hoelter, 1985; Rosenberg, 1988). For ex- mple, a person might see herself or himself as *authoritative* the role of employer, *submissive* in the role of daughter or on, *companionable* in the role of wife or husband, and *caring* all these roles. For this person, the trait of being caring es the roles together and is a source of consistency in the elf-concept (see Figure 13.7). Self-report studies suggest at such consistent traits lead to a general sense of the self at cuts across roles, and people feel most comfortable in ose roles where the role-specific self most closely matches the general self Roberts & Donahue, 1994).

You might expect that having multiple self-concepts, each associated with a dif- erent role, would be psychologically stressful, but research suggests that the oppo- te is more often true (Dance & Kuiper, 1987; Linville, 1985, 1987). The sense of ving multiple roles and a wide variety of traits seems to protect a person from de- ression when one role is lost or diminished in importance—as might happen in a ivorce, or when children grow up and leave home, or when a job is lost. Moreover, e sense of having many roles and traits to draw on apparently adds to a person's onfidence in his or her ability to handle new situations (Sande & others, 1988).

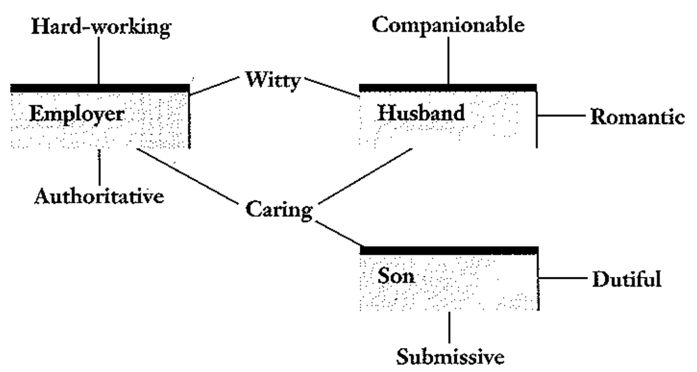


FIGURE **13.7** *The multiple nature of the self-concept*

The self-concept can be represented as a web with different nodes for one's different social roles. Some self-perceived traits may be tied to just one role (such as husband or employer), and others may be tied to several or all of one's roles.

omparing and Contrasting Ourselves to Others

lthough our self-concepts are to some degree sketched out for us by others' per- eptions and the roles we occupy in society, we do not passively accept those etches. Rather, we use the sketches as models, actively selecting from among em and modifying them to build our own self-concepts. As part of that process, e compare ourselves to others.

In perception everything is relative to some frame of reference, and in self- erception the frame of reference is other people. To see oneself as short, consci- ntious, or good at math is to see oneself as those things *compared with other people.* he process of comparing ourselves with others to identify our unique character- tics and evaluate our abilities is called ***social comparison.*** A direct consequence of ocial comparison is that the self-concept varies depending on the ***reference roup,*** the group against whom the comparison is made. If the reference group gainst which I evaluated my height was made up of professional basketball play- rs, I would see myself as short, but if it was made up of jockeys, I would see my- elf as tall.

In one series of studies that illustrates the role of the reference group, chil- ren's self-descriptions were found to focus on traits that most distinguished them rom others in their group (McGuire & McGuire, 1988). Thus, children in racially omogeneous classrooms rarely mentioned their race, but those in racially mixed lassrooms quite commonly did, especially if their race was in the minority. hildren who were unusually tall or short compared with others in their group ore frequently mentioned height, and children with opposite-gender siblings ore frequently mentioned their gender than did other children (see Figure 13.8).

16.

What is some evidence that people construct a self-concept by comparing themselves with a reference group and that a change in reference group can alter self-esteem?

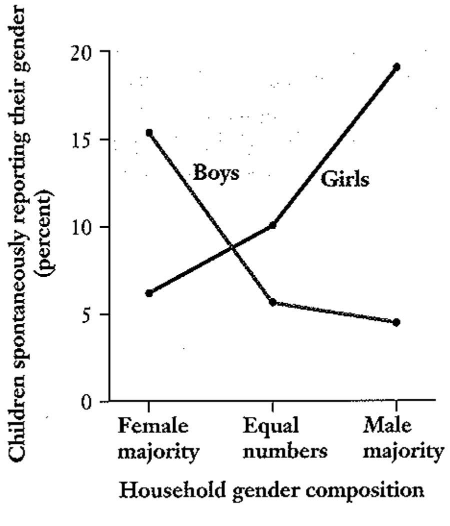
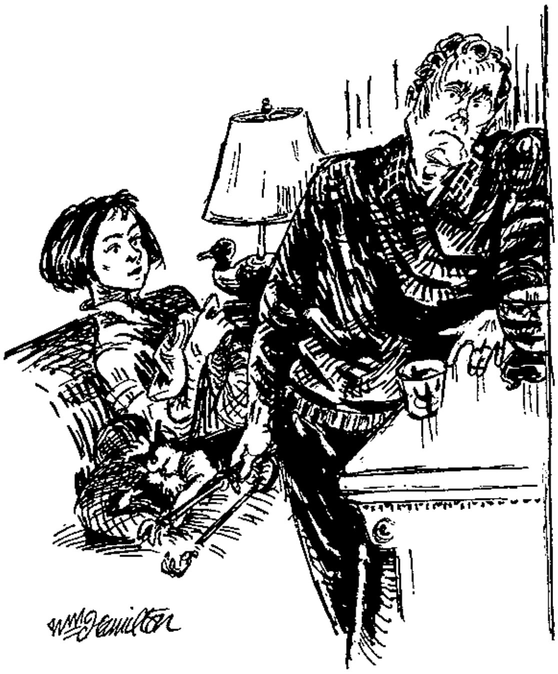


FIGURE **13.8** *Evidence that children define themselves in terms of differences from their reference group*

As shown here, children were more likely to mention their gender when describing themselves if their gender was in the minority in their household than they were if it was in the majority. (Adapted from McGuire & McGuire, 1988.)



William Hamilton © 1991 from The New Yorker Collection. All rights reserved.

"Of course you're going to be depressed if you keep comparing yourself with successful people."

Effect of the Reference Group on Self-Evaluation

The evaluative aspect of social comparison can be charged with We are pleased with ourselves when we feel that we measure reference group and distressed when we don't. A change of group, therefore, can dramatically affect our self-esteem. Many college students who earned high grades in high school feel when their marks are only average or less compared with those new reference group of college classmates. Researchers have fou academically able students at nonselective schools typically have academic self-concepts than do equally able students at highly schools (Marsh, 1991; Marsh & others, 2000), a phenomeno called the *big-fish-in-little-pond effect.* William James (1890/19 flecting on extreme instances of selective comparisons, wrote have the paradox of the man shamed to death because he is only ond pugilist or second oarsman in the world. That he is able to whole population of the globe minus one is nothing; he has 'pitt self to beat that one and as long as he doesn't do that noth counts."

In a follow-up of James's century-old idea, Victoria Medve colleagues (1995) analyzed the televised broadcasts of the 1992 Olympics for the amounts of joy and agony expressed by the si bronze medalists after each event. The main finding was that medalists (the second-place finishers) showed less joy and mor than did the bronze medalists (the third-place finishers), whom defeated. This seemingly paradoxical finding makes sense if we assume groups were implicitly making different comparisons. The silver medalist most come in first, so the prominent comparison to them—after the conte before—was likely that of themselves to the gold medalists, and in that com they were losers. In contrast, the bronze medalists had barely made group that received a medal at all, so the prominent comparison in their m likely that of themselves to the nonmedalists, and in that they were winner

The Better-Than-Average Phenomenon

The radio humorist Garrison Keillor describes his mythical town Wobegon as a place where "all the children are above average." We smil statistical impossibility partly because we recognize the same bias in o Repeated surveys have found that most college students rate themselves students than the average college student, and in one survey 94 percent o instructors rated themselves as better teachers than the average college (Alicke & others, 1995; Cross, 1977). What causes such apparent self-del

17.

How might the better-than-average phenomenon be explained by (a) biased feedback from others, (b) people's differing criteria of success, (c) the self-serving attributional bias, and (d) the inability of the incompetent to assess competence?

One possible cause, which hasn't been pursued by researchers as far a is the complimentary nature of the feedback we typically receive from o ple. Norms of politeness as well as other considerations of self-interest e people to praise each other and inhibit even constructive criticism: "If say something nice, say nothing at all" is one of our mores. Since we build concepts at least partly from others' appraisals of us, we are likely to cons itively biased self-concepts to the degree that the appraisals we hear are that direction.

Another cause of the better-than-average phenomenon may lie in the criteria for success that different people have in any given endeavor. The of people may truly be "above average" if the criteria are allowed to vary son to person in accordance with their unique views of the task. One stud siders himself an above-average scholar because he plays such a construct class discussions, another because he relates what he learns in class to problems in his life, another because he gets high scores on tests, and ye ecause he disdains "grubbing for grades" and spends time reading books that are ot assigned. One instructor sees herself as better than average because she treats er students as individuals, another because she explains the subject matter clearly, nother because she has high standards and is the toughest grader in her department, and yet another because she has never failed anyone. Consistent with this interpretation of the better-than-average phenomenon, researchers have found it to e stronger for endeavors in which the criteria of success are not well defined than or those (such as speed of running) in which the criteria are more uniform Dunning & others, 1989). It is hard to know to what degree people define their riteria differently in order to view themselves in a better light or to what extent heir differing goals and criteria stem from truly differing conceptions of the task. Although psychologists have tended to focus mostly on the former possibility, it eems likely that both factors are involved.

People may also maintain an elevated view of themselves by systematically biasing the attributions they make about their successes and failures. Earlier you read of the actor-observer effect in attributions, the tendency for people to attribute their own actions to the situation and others' actions to the person. That effect is best assessed with actions that are neutral on the dimension of success or failure. When success or failure enters the picture, another bias comes into play, the ***self-serving attributional bias***—the tendency of people to attribute their successes to their own qualities and their failures to the situation. In one study, students who performed well on an examination attributed their high grades to their own ability and hard work, whereas those who performed poorly attributed their low grades to bad luck, the unfairness of the test, or other factors beyond their control (Bernstein & others, 1979). In another study, essentially the same result was found for college professors who were asked to explain why a paper they had submitted to a scholarly journal had been either accepted or rejected (Wiley & others, 1979). My favorite examples of the self-serving bias come from people's formal reports of automobile accidents, such as the following (quoted by Greenwald, 1980): "The telephone pole was approaching. I was attempting to swerve out of its way when it struck my front end." Clearly, a reckless telephone pole caused this accident; the skillful driver just couldn't get out of its way in time.

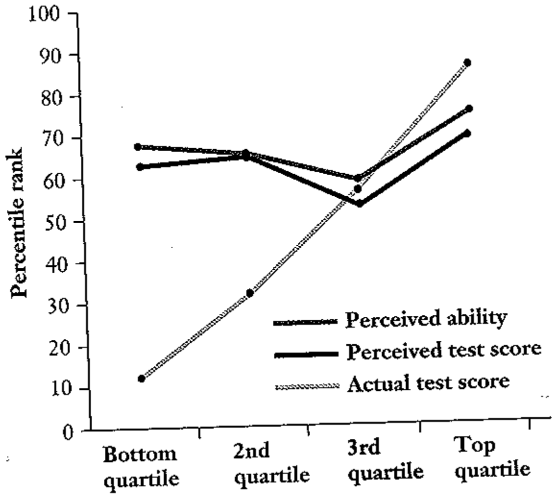


FIGURE **13.9** *Perceived and measured logical reasoning ability*

In an experiment, students took a test of logical reasoning and immediately afterward estimated, on a percentile scale, how well they thought they did on the test and how skilled they were in "general logical reasoning" compared to their classmates. As shown here, those with the lowest scores greatly overestimated their performance and skill. Similar findings occurred in other experiments having to do with sense of humor and grammatical ability. (Kruger & Dunning, 1999, p. 1125.)

The people who most markedly overestimate their own abilities on a task are those who are objectively poorest at that task. Justin Kruger and David Dunning (1999) demonstrated this in experiments in which students evaluated their own abilities, compared to others, in humor, logical thinking, and grammar, and were also given objective tests of their abilities in those realms. In each case, those who were objectively the worst grossly overestimated their abilities, and those who were the best slightly underestimated their abilities (see Figure 13.9). A possible explanation, suggested by Kruger and Dunning, is that those who are most incompetent lack the knowledge necessary to realize that they are incompetent. They can't tell the difference between good performance and poor and therefore don't see that others perform better than they do. As Charles Darwin (1871/1965) put it long ago, "Ignorance more frequently begets confidence than the reverse."

Cultural Dependence of the Self-Serving Bias

The better-than-average and self-serving effects just described are so common in North America that some psychologists take their absence as a sign of psychological depression. Depressed people, according to some reports (Peterson & Seligman, 1984), evaluate themselves more accurately than do nondepressed people: If depressed individuals are average at some task, they see themselves as average; if they cause an accident, they blame themselves. As you will discover in

Chapter 15, some personality theorists believe that certain illusions are normal and healthy.

18.

What evidence suggests that the self-enhancing biases observed in Western culture may not characterize people everywhere?

But what is true in the West is not necessarily true everywhere. Sometimes what Western psychologists report to be human nature is not *human* nature but *Western* nature. Hazel Markus and Shinobu Kitayama (1991) asked university students in the United States and Japan to estimate what percentage of their classmates had higher intellectual abilities than their own. The average response for the Americans was 30 percent, consistent with the better-than-average phenomenon, but the average for the Japanese was 50 percent, which of course is what the average would have to be for both groups if they were estimating accurately.

In another study, Michael Bond and Tak-Sing Cheung (1983) asked university students in the United States, Hong Kong, and Japan to describe themselves in an open-ended way by completing 20 statements, each of which began with the words *I am*. They then analyzed the statements for evaluative content and found that the ratio of positive to negative self-statements was nearly 2 to 1 for the American students, 1 to 1 for the Hong Kong students, and 1 to 2 for the Japanese students. In other words, the Japanese students showed a *self-effacing bias* that was as strong as the Americans' self-enhancing bias. In Japan—according to sociologists and psychologists—the ideal person is not someone who thinks highly of himself or herself but someone who is aware of his or her deficiencies and is working hard to overcome them (Heine & others, 1999).

Seeing Ourselves and Others as One: Social Identity

You have been reading of evidence that the self-concept is social in that others are involved in its construction: We see ourselves reflected in others' reactions to us, and we understand ourselves by comparing our properties with those of others. But the self-concept is social in another sense as well. Others are not just involved in its construction; they are also part of its contents. We describe and think of ourselves not just in terms of our individual characteristics—"I am *short*, . . . *adventurous*, . . . *somewhat shy*"—but also in terms of the groups to which we belong and with which we identify—"I am a *French Canadian*, . . . *Roman Catholic*, . . . *member of the University Marching Band*." Self-descriptions that pertain to the person as a separate individual are referred to as ***personal identity***, and those that pertain to the social categories or groups to which the person belongs are referred to as ***social identity*** (Tajfel, 1972).

19.

What value might lie in our flexible ability to think of ourselves in terms of both personal and social identities?

Adult self-concepts are relatively consistent from situation to situation, but they are not rigid (Oakes & others, 1994). We think of ourselves differently at different times, in ways that help us meet the ever-changing challenges of social life. Sometimes, for some purposes, we find it most useful to think of our unique properties and motives; other times, for other purposes, we find it most useful to think of ourselves as interchangeable components of a larger unit, the group. Our evolution as a social species entailed a continuous balance between the need to compete and assert ourselves as individuals and the need to cooperate with others, which may have selected for a capacity to hold both personal and social identities (Guisinger & Blatt, 1994). In evolutionary history the groups with which we cooperated included some that may have been lifelong, such as the family and tribe, and others that were more ephemeral, such as a hunting party organized to track down a particular antelope. Today the relatively permanent groups with which we identify may include our family, ethnic group, religious affiliation, and occupational colleagues. The temporary groups include the various teams and coalitions with which we affiliate for particular ends, for periods ranging from minutes to years. When we see some interest in common, we can be remarkably adept at forgetting our differences and thinking of ourselves and our group-mates as one (an idea pursued more fully in Chapter 14).

Relationships of Social Identity to Self-Esteem

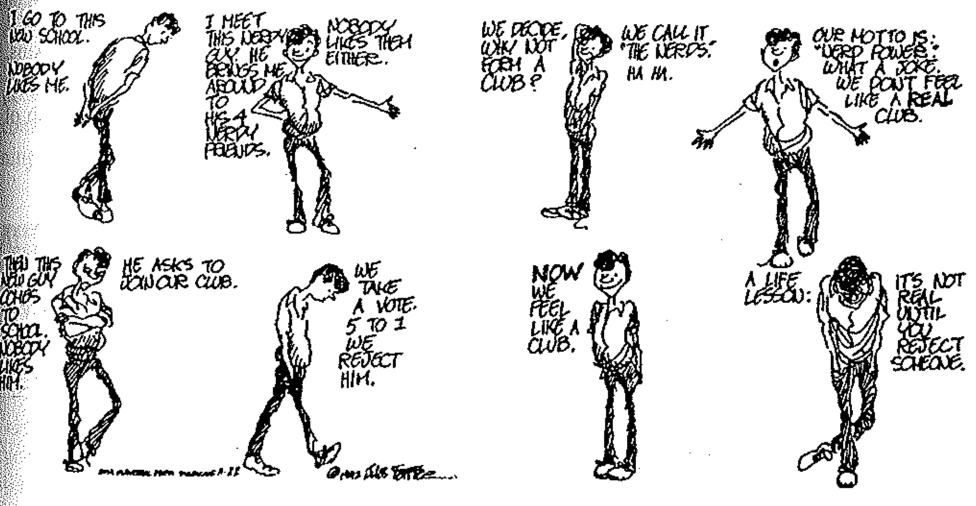
Our feelings about ourselves depend not just on our personal achievements but also on the achievements of the groups with which we identify, even when we ourselves play little or no role in those achievements. Social psychologists have found, for example, that sports fans' feelings about themselves rise and fall as "their" team wins and loses (Hirt & others, 1992). Similarly, people feel good about themselves when their town, university, or place of employment achieves high rank or praise.

In some situations, the very same event—high achievement by other members of our group—can temporarily raise or lower our self-esteem, depending on whether our social identity or personal identity is most active. When our social identity predominates, our group-mates are part of us and we experience their success as ours. When our personal identity predominates, our group-mates are the reference group against which we measure our own accomplishments, so their success may diminish our view of ourselves. Social psychologists have demonstrated both of these effects by priming people to think in terms of either their social or their personal identities as they hear of high accomplishments by others in their group (Brewer & Weber, 1994). You read previously that students at highly selective schools think worse of themselves as scholars than do equally able students at less selective schools because of the difference in their relative standing in their reference group. A subsequent study indicated that this is true for those who think primarily in terms of their personal identities but not for those who think primarily in terms of their social identities (McFarland & Buehler, 1995). When the social identity is foremost, self-feelings are elevated, not diminished, by evidence of group-mates' excellent performances. Graceful winners of individual achievement awards know this intuitively, and to promote good feelings, they activate their group-mates' social identities by describing the award as belonging properly to the whole group.

Other studies reveal that the better-than-average phenomenon and the self-serving attributional bias apply at least as much to our judgments about our groups as to those about ourselves as individuals (Rubin & Hewstone, 1998). In fact, the concept of social identity first became prominent in social psychology when Henri Tajfel (1972, 1982) used it to explain people's strong bias in favor of their own groups over other groups in all sorts of judgments. He argued that we exaggerate the virtues of our own groups to build up the part of our self-esteem that derives from our social identities. Tajfel and others showed that the bias is so strong that we apply it even when we have no realistic basis at all for assuming that our group differs from another. In one laboratory experiment, people who knew they had been assigned to one of two groups by a purely random process—a coin toss—nevertheless rated their own group more positively than they did the other group (Locksley

20.

How does the distinction between social identity and personal identity help explain (a) the two opposing effects that our group-mates' excellent performance can have on our self-esteem and (b) extensions of the self-serving bias to attributions about our group-mates?


I GO TO THIS NEW SCHOOL.
NOBODY LIKES ME.
I MEET THIS NERDY GUY. HE BRINGS ME AROUND TO HIS 4 NERDY FRIENDS.
NOBODY LIKES THEM EITHER.
WE DECIDE, WHY NOT FORM A CLUB?
WE CALL IT "THE NERDS." HA HA.
OUR MOTTO IS: "NERD POWER." WHAT A JOKE. WE DON'T FEEL LIKE A REAL CLUB.
THEN THIS NEW GUY COMES TO SCHOOL. NOBODY LIKES HIM.
HE ASKS TO JOIN OUR CLUB.
WE TAKE A VOTE. 5 TO 1 WE REJECT HIM.
NOW WE FEEL LIKE A CLUB.
A LIFE LESSON:
IT'S NOT REAL UNTIL YOU REJECT SOMEONE.

Jules Feiffer © 1992

& others, 1980). You don't need a degree in psychology to know that the
posing baseball teams see the same plays differently, in ways that allow th
leave the game believing that theirs was the better team, regardless of th
Strike three is attributed by one group to the pitcher's sparkling fastball an
other to the umpire's unacknowledged need for eyeglasses.

21.

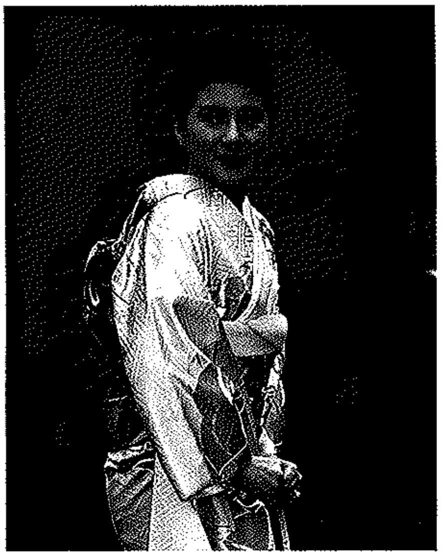
How does Triandis characterize individualist and collectivist cultures, and what differences have been found between the two in people's self-descriptions?

Cross-Cultural Differences in the Balance of Social Identity and Personal Identity

Although both personal and social identities exist among people everywhe
two aspects of the self are differentially strengthened or weakened by diffe
tures. Harry Triandis (1995), one of the pioneers of cross-cultural researc
chology, distinguishes between *individualist cultures,* which strengthe
identities, and *collectivist cultures,* which strengthen social identities. Indiv
tures predominate in western Europe, North America, and Australia, whe
sophical and political traditions emphasize personal freedom, self-de
and individual competition. Collectivist cultures predominate in Asia and in
Africa and Latin America, where philosophical and political traditions
the inherent connectedness and interdependence of people within such
the family, workplace, village, and nation. Whereas people in individualis
tend to define their lives in terms of self-fulfillment, those in collectivis
tend to define theirs in terms of fulfilling their duties to, and promoting th
of, the groups of which they are members.

Each type of culture has its benefits and costs from the perspective of
ual psychology. Individualist cultures may foster personal freedom and crea
a cost of loneliness and insecurity, and collectivist cultures may foster a sens
longing and security at a cost of reduced individual initiative and
Collectivist cultures typically have less conflict within groups but more con
tween groups than is the case for individualist cultures (Triandis, 1995). In
where group identities are strong, the distinction between "we" and
greater than in cultures where group identities are weak.

Consistent with Triandis's view are numerous studies indicating that p
Eastern cultures such as Japan, Korea, China, and India describe themselve
ently than do people in Western cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 19
former describe themselves more often in terms of their social groups and
less often in terms of consistent personality traits that cut across their gro
roles. Asked to describe themselves, they are more likely to make such sta
as "I am a student at University X" or "I am the eldest daughter in my fam
less likely to make such statements as "I am easygoing" or "I am ambitiou
are also more likely to attribute their achievements to their group rather
themselves as individuals (Chen & others, 1998). When they do describ
selves with personality traits, they typically delimit the traits to particula
contexts—"I am easygoing with my friends," "I am ambitious at work" (
1989). William James's idea that people have multiple self-concepts related
multiple roles seems to be even more true of people in collectivist cultures
those in individualist cultures.



Noboru Hashimoto / Sygma

Walking a line between two cultures

Masako Owada was born in Japan, attended a public high school in Massachusetts, graduated from Harvard in 1985, distinguished herself as a brilliant executive in Japanese foreign trade, and then, in 1993, after much hesitation, accepted the marriage proposal of Japanese Crown Prince Naruhito. Her new role required that she give up much of her Western independence and refrain from expressing her own ideas directly and publicly.

SECTION SUMMARY

*Our self-concepts are social constructs. We acquire them in part from other pe
actions to us and beliefs about us. For that reason we may have multiple self-
each related to a different social role and a different group with which we int
also construct aspects of our self-concepts by comparing ourselves to others
see ourselves as good or bad at a given task depending on the abilities of
ence group with which we compare ourselves.*

*People in Western cultures tend to have inflated views of themselves, a
non that may be explained in part by biased feedback from others, by people's
definitions of success, by the self-serving attributional bias, and by the inabili*

ompetent to judge their own incompetence. Some studies indicate that such self-lation does not occur in Asian cultures, perhaps due to cultural traditions that pro-ote a more communal, less individualistic outlook.

In every culture, people describe themselves partly in ways that emphasize their ique personal traits—their personal identity—and partly in ways that emphasize the oups to which they belong—their social identity. Depending on which identity is imed, a person's self-esteem may increase or decrease on hearing of the outstand-g performance of other members of his or her group. Many studies have demon-ated that social identity is stronger, and personal identity weaker, in Eastern tures (and in other collectivist cultures) than in Western cultures.

ATTITUDES: BELIEFS TINGED WITH EMOTION

hus far in this chapter we have been discussing the ways in which people evaluate her people and themselves. In doing so, we have been implicitly discussing atti-udes. An *attitude* is any belief or opinion that has an evaluative component—that mething is good or bad, likable or unlikable, moral or immoral, attractive or re-lsive. Attitudes tie individuals cognitively and emotionally to their entire social orld. We all have attitudes about countless objects, people, events, and ideas, nging from our feelings about a particular brand of toothpaste to those about emocracy or religion. People in our society devote enormous effort to modifying her people's attitudes. Advertising, political campaigning, and the democratic rocess itself (in which people speak freely in support of their views) are, in essence, tempts to change other people's attitudes.

22.

What are four different functions that attitudes may serve?

From a functional perspective, attitudes must exist because they serve certain urposes, or fulfill certain needs, for the people who hold them. Specifically, psy-hologists have proposed that attitudes serve four relatively separable functions Herek, 1986; Katz, 1960; Maio & Olson, 2000). Attitudes serve (a) a *value-expressive nction* to the degree that they are part of a person's self-concept and help give eaning to the person's life; (b) a *social-adjustive function* to the degree that they are hared by one's social group and help the person get along with that group; (c) a *de-nsive function* to the degree that they provide a sense of consistency and harmony nd help calm the person's anxieties or boost the person's self-esteem; and (d) a *util-rian function* to the degree that they actually guide the person's behavior toward or way from objects or events in a useful way that increases rewards and decreases unishments. A given attitude may serve any or all of these four functions. For ex-mple, your attitude about parenthood is value-expressive if it contains your cher-shed beliefs about your own present or future role as a parent; social-adjustive if it elps you get along in a social environment where others share a certain view of par-nthood; defensive if it helps protect you from conscious or unconscious fears of be-oming or not becoming a parent; and utilitarian if it plays a useful role in your ecisions about marriage, conception, and child rearing. In what follows we will onsider some ideas about attitudes that pertain to each of these functions, begin-ning with the value-expressive and ending with the utilitarian.

ttitudes as Aspects of the Self

When people describe themselves, they often include—along with their personality raits and the groups they belong to—their most central attitudes, or values. ***Values*** re the general, relatively abstract attitudes that people claim as guiding principles ehind their more specific attitudes and actions; they can be thought of as the *prin-pled* component of the self-concept. Values pertain to one's sense of right and rong and one's goals for self and society. They pertain to such concepts as freedom, quality, personal achievement, helping others, and respect for tradition.

23.

What evidence led Schwartz to conclude that values can be characterized by a universal structure pertaining to basic human social needs? What are the two dimensions of that structure, and what cross-cultural difference did Schwartz observe?

The Value Wheel: A Universal Structure?

In an extensive cross-cultural study of values, Israeli psychologist Shalom Sch
(1992) surveyed thousands of primary and secondary school teachers in 20 c
tries around the globe. He chose teachers because they are literate (able to fil
questionnaires) and because he assumed that they, as conveyors of values to
dren and adolescents, would hold values representative of the culture at large.
teacher filled out a form rating each of 56 values in terms of its importance
guiding principle" of his or her life. Schwartz then analyzed the responses to
the degree to which each value correlated positively or negatively with each
value in the list. (Two values correlate positively if people who rate one high
tend to rate the other in the same direction. Two values correlate negatively i
ple tend to rate them in opposite directions.) The final result of this analys
the wheel-like structure of values portrayed in Figure 13.10. The wheel i
mented into 10 *value categories*, each representing a cluster of values that co
strongly and positively with each other. The categories are arranged so tha
one is flanked by the categories that correlate most positively with it and lies
site those that correlate most negatively with it. The figure tells you, for exa
that *self-direction* correlates most strongly in a positive direction with *unive*
and *stimulation* (which flank *self-direction* in the wheel) and most strongly in a
tive direction with *security*, *conformity*, *tradition*, and *power* (which lie opposit
direction). This general pattern of correlations occurred within each of the cu
Schwartz studied, suggesting that the pattern is universal.

To explain the universality of the value wheel, Schwartz (1992, 1996) sugg
that the value types derive from basic human social needs and motives that
logically to one another as similars or opposites, as depicted by the wheel. To
the pattern for yourself, make your way around the wheel and consider ho
value could promote a person's survival and how it either supports or oppose
values in the wheel. For example, a decision to act in accordance with self-di

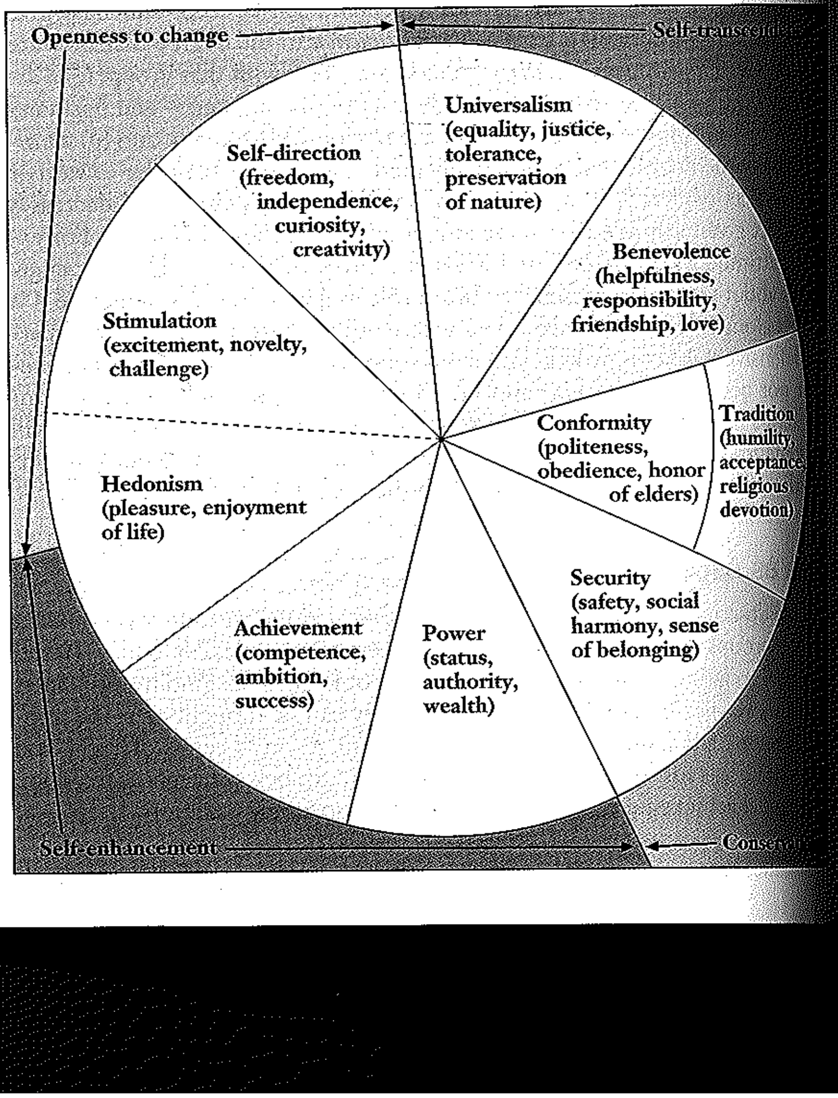

Openness to change
Self-transcen
Universalism (equality, justice, tolerance, preservation of nature)
Self-direction (freedom, independence, curiosity, creativity)
Benevolence (helpfulness, responsibility, friendship, love)
Stimulation (excitement, novelty, challenge)
Conformity (politeness, obedience, honor of elders)
Tradition (humility, acceptance, religious devotion)
Hedonism (pleasure, enjoyment of life)
Security (safety, social harmony, sense of belonging)
Achievement (competence, ambition, success)
Power (status, authority, wealth)
Self-enhancement
Conserv

FIGURE 13.10 *The value wheel*
The universal pattern of values proposed by Schwartz is based on the degree to which values support or oppose one another. Each value category occupies a wheel segment adjacent to the categories that correlate most positively with it and opposite those that correlate most negatively with it. Conformity and tradition occupy the same segment because they each correlate about equally strongly with benevolence and security. The value categories are further grouped into four clusters that define two dimensions of the wheel: self-enhancement versus self-transcendence and openness to change versus conservation. Hedonism is marked off with dashed rather than solid lines because it straddles the openness-to-change and self-enhancement clusters. (Based on Figure 1.1 in Schwartz, 1996, p. 5.)

values is likely to be quite consistent with stimulation and universalism values but inconsistent with security and conformity values.

Schwartz concluded that value types cluster into four general categories (also shown in the figure) that form two polar dimensions. One dimension is *self-enhancement* (promotion of one's personal welfare) versus *self-transcendence* (promotion of the welfare of one's social groups and the larger world). The other dimension is *conservation* (holding on to familiar ways of doing things) versus *openness to change* (exploring new ways of doing things).

Although the overall pattern of correlations shown by the value wheel occurred in every culture, the importance assigned to specific value types varied from culture to culture. As you might predict, teachers in relatively collectivist cultures, such as Taiwan, gave the highest rankings to values that fall under security and conformity (conservation), whereas those in individualist cultures, such as New Zealand, placed relatively more weight on self-direction and stimulation (openness to change). But contrary to what you might predict, collectivist and individualist cultures did not differ reliably on the dimension of self-enhancement versus self-transcendence. This finding is consistent with other studies suggesting that people in collectivist cultures value helping others as a duty arising from tradition and social norms, whereas people in individualist cultures value helping others as a free, personal choice (Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Moghaddam & others, 1993).

Values as Predictors of Actions

24.

What is some evidence that people's values can be used to predict their behavior?

You certainly can't predict everything people will do by knowing their stated values, but you can make some general predictions that are reliable on a statistical basis. In studies of Israeli citizens, Schwartz (1996) found that people's relative ratings of the value types shown in Figure 13.10 correlated significantly with measurable aspects of their behavior. People who rated the openness-to-change values highest most often supported liberal political candidates, and those who rated the conservation values highest most often supported conservative candidates. In a laboratory game pitting people's tendency to cooperate against their tendency to compete, people who rated the self-transcendence values highest chose most often to cooperate with others, and people who rated the self-enhancement values highest chose most often to compete.

In research that preceded Schwartz's, Milton Rokeach, one of the pioneers in the study of values, found similar correlations between people's relative ranking of particular values and their real-world behaviors. For example, he found that white college students who ranked *equality* especially high were more likely than other white college students to make eye contact when speaking with a black person, to join a political group supporting equal rights, and to participate in a rally for equal rights (Rokeach, 1980).

Attitudes as Social Norms

Values and other attitudes are properties not just of the individual person but also of the social groups to which the person belongs. It is not hard to think of many reasons why an interacting group of individuals would have attitudes in common. People living in the same conditions and communicating with one another are exposed to similar information, are subject to the same persuasive messages, may have come together partly because of preexisting similar attitudes, and may have modified their attitudes to gain greater acceptance in the group.

25.

How did a long-term study at Bennington College and follow-up studies of Bennington graduates illustrate the role of social forces in attitude change?

The best-known study of the effects of a social group on attitude change was initiated in 1934, in the midst of the Great Depression, by Theodore Newcomb (1943) at Bennington College in Vermont, which then was a small women's college. Bennington at that time had a politically liberal faculty but drew most of its students from wealthy, politically conservative families. Most first-year students shared their parents' conservative views, but with each year at the college they became more liberal. In the 1936 presidential election, for example, 62 percent of the first-year students, 43 percent of the sophomores, and only 15 percent of the ju niors and seniors favored Alf Landon, the conservative Republican, over the libe Democrat, Franklin Roosevelt. By the time the first-year students became junio and seniors, they too had become politically liberal.

Certainly the economic crisis, the Depression, played a role in the attitu change that Newcomb observed, but more directly influential were the views e pressed by the dominant members of the college. People who occupied the mo prestigious positions—the faculty, older students, and leaders of various campus o ganizations—were politically liberal, and new students could gain social acceptan by shifting their expressed attitudes in that direction. In interviews, many studen said that at first they expressed liberal attitudes at least partly to make friends a gain prestige, but over time the attitudes became part of their private as wel public ways of thinking. The relatively few students who remained conservat throughout their 4 years said that they felt socially isolated and not really par the college community. In follow-ups, 25 years after the initial study and agai years after that, the Bennington graduates whom Newcomb had first studied w located and interviewed again (Alwin & others, 1991; Newcomb & others, 196 The follow-up studies showed that most of the graduates retained their lib views throughout their lives. Their self-reports suggested that they remained l eral at least partly because they continued to associate primarily with people wh views were like their own.

Other researchers have focused on regional differences and generational ferences in attitudes (Cohen, 1996; Duncan & Agronick, 1995; Schuman & Sc 1989). Such work suggests that lifelong attitudes tend to jell during young a hood. Young adults who experience similar events and a shared social environm to help them interpret those events tend to acquire and maintain similar attitu

Attitudes as Rationalizations to Attain Cognitive Consisten

A century ago, Sigmund Freud began developing his controversial theory human beings are fundamentally irrational. What pass for reasons, accordi Freud, are most often rationalizations designed to calm our anxieties and boos self-esteem. You will read more about Freud's view in Chapter 15. A more mo ate view, to be pursued now, is that we are rational but the machinery that mak so is by no means perfect. The same mental machinery that produces logic can duce pseudo-logic.

In the 1950s, Leon Festinger (1957) proposed what he called the ***cognitiv sonance theory***, which ever since has been one of social psychology's most c ideas. According to the theory, we have, built into the workings of our mi 4 mechanism that creates an uncomfortable feeling of *dissonance*, or lack of harm when we become aware of some inconsistency among the various attitudes, be and items of knowledge that constitute our mental store. Just as the discomfo hunger motivates us to seek food, the discomfort of cognitive dissonance mo us to seek ways to resolve contradictions or inconsistencies among our cogni Such a mechanism could well have evolved to serve adaptive functions rela logic. Inconsistencies imply that we are mistaken about something, and mis can lead to danger. Suppose you have a favorable attitude about sunbathin you learn that overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays is the leading cause o cancer. The discrepancy between your preexisting attitude and your new k edge may create a state of cognitive dissonance every time you think about i the sun. To resolve the dissonance, you might change your attitude abou bathing from positive to negative or you might bring in a third cog "Sunbathing is relatively safe, in moderation, if I use a sunscreen lotion."

As with all of our psychological machinery, our dissonance-reducing m nism does not always function adaptively. Just as our hunger can lead us things that aren't good for us, our dissonance-reduction drive can lead us to reduce dissonance in illogical and maladaptive ways. Those are the effects that articularly intrigued Festinger and many subsequent social psychologists.

voiding Dissonant Information

once heard a person cut off a political discussion with the words, "I'm sorry, but I fuse to listen to something I disagree with." People don't usually come right out d say that, but have you noticed how often they seem to behave that way? Given choice of books or articles to read, lectures to attend, or documentaries to watch, eople generally choose those that they believe will support their existing views. hat observation is consistent with the cognitive dissonance theory. One way to oid dissonance is to avoid situations in which we might discover facts or ideas hat run counter to our current views. If we avoid listening to or reading about the idence that ultraviolet rays can cause skin cancer, we can blithely continue to joy sunbathing. People certainly don't always avoid dissonant information, but a onsiderable body of research indicates that they very often do (Frey, 1986; Jonas & thers, 2001).

Paul Sweeney and Kathy Gruber (1984) conducted a study during the 1973 enate Watergate hearings that documented this phenomenon. (The hearings unvered illegal activities associated with then-president Richard Nixon's reelection mpaign against George McGovern.) By interviewing the same voters before, uring, and after the hearings, Sweeney and Gruber discovered that (a) Nixon suprters avoided news about the hearings (but not other political news) and were as rongly supportive of Nixon after the hearings as they were before; (b) McGovern pporters eagerly sought out information about the hearings and were as strongly pposed to Nixon afterward as they were before; and (c) previously undecided vots paid moderate attention to the hearings and were the only group whose attitude oward Nixon was significantly influenced (in a negative direction) by the hearings. o, consistent with the dissonance theory, all but the undecideds approached the earings in a way that seemed designed to protect or strengthen, rather than challnge, their previous view.

26.

How does the cognitive dissonance theory explain people's attraction to some information and avoidance of other information?

irming Up an Attitude to Be Consistent with an Action

We make most of our choices in life with less-than-absolute certainty. We vote for a candidate not knowing for sure if he or she is best, buy one car even though some of the evidence favors another, or choose to major in psychology even though some other fields have their attractions. After we have irrevocably made one choice or the other—after we have cast our ballot, made our down payment, or registered for our courses and the deadline for schedule changes is past—any lingering doubts would be discordant with our knowledge of what we have done; so, according to the cognitive dissonance theory, we should be motivated to set them aside.

27.

How does the cognitive dissonance theory explain why people are more confident about a choice just after they have made it than just before?

For Sale
Longley-Jones
Gloria Barbano
446-2910
Ext. 171
Call Gloria Barbano
& Start Packing
SOLD

Syracuse Newspapers / The Image Works

Dissonance abolished

This couple may have agonized long and hard before signing on the dotted line, but once they signed, they set their doubts aside and focused on the positive qualities of their new home. According to the cognitive dissonance theory, people are generally more confident about the correctness of their choices after those choices are made than before.

A number of studies have shown that people do tend to set their dou after making a decision. Even in the absence of new information, people s become more confident of their choice after acting on it than they were be example, in one study, bettors at a horse race were more confident that the would win if they were asked immediately after they had placed their be they were asked immediately before (Knox & Inkster, 1968). In another stu ers who were leaving the polling place spoke more positively about their candidate than did those who were entering (Frenkel & Doob, 1976).

Changing an Attitude to Justify an Action

28.

How does the cognitive dissonance theory explain why people who behave in a manner contrary to their attitude are likely to change their attitude?

Sometimes people behave in ways that run counter to their attitude and th faced with the dissonant cognitions, "I believe *this*, but I did *that*." They ca their deed, but they can relieve dissonance by modifying—maybe even reve their attitude. More than 200 years ago, the great inventor, statesman, and of practical psychology Benjamin Franklin recognized this phenomenon an it to his advantage. Franklin (1818/1949) describes in his autobiography changed the attitude of a political opponent who was trying to block his a ment to a high office:

> I did not like the opposition of this new member, who was a gentleman of fo and education with talents that were likely to give him in time great influence I did not, however, aim at gaining his favour by paying any servile respect to h but after some time took this other method. Having heard that he had in his lib a certain very scarce and curious book, I wrote a note to him expressing my de of perusing that book and requesting he do me the favour of lending it to me f few days. He sent it immediately; and I returned it in about a week with anot note expressing strongly my sense of the favour. When we next met in the Ho he spoke to me (which he had never done before), and with great civility. And ever afterwards manifested a readiness to serve me on all occasions, so that we came great friends, and our friendship continued to his death. This is anothe stance of the truth of an old maxim I had learned, which says, "He that has o done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another than he whom you yo self have obliged."

According to the cognitive dissonance theory, what might have happ the former opponent's mind to change his attitude toward Franklin? He r Franklin's request to borrow the book, and for reasons of which he may n been fully aware, such as the simple habit of courtesy, he did not turn it dow once he sent the book to Franklin, he was thrown into a state of cognitive nance. One thought, *I do not like Ben Franklin*, was discordant with another *just lent Franklin a very valuable book*. The second of these could not be denie that was objective fact, so dissonance could best be relieved by changing the fi *Franklin isn't really a bad sort. At least I know he's honest. If he weren't honest, I wouldn't have lent him that valuable book*. Such thinking reduced or erased the nance and set the stage for new, friendlier behaviors toward Franklin in the fu

Notice that, according to this analysis, the man changed his attitude t Franklin because he saw the decision to lend the book as his own choice and h no good reason why he should have made that choice if he didn't like Frank Franklin had paid him or threatened him to get him to lend the book, the le of it would not have created dissonance with the belief that he disliked Frankli would say, "I lent the book to Franklin only because he paid me" or ". . . onl cause he threatened me." Since either of these would have been sufficient jus tion, no dissonance would have resulted and no attitude change would have necessary.

The effect illustrated by Franklin's story is an instance of what is now calle ***insufficient-justification effect***, defined as a change in attitude that occurs be without the change, the person cannot justify his or her already completed a Many dozens of experiments have demonstrated this effect and have helped tify the conditions required for its occurrence (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 1999

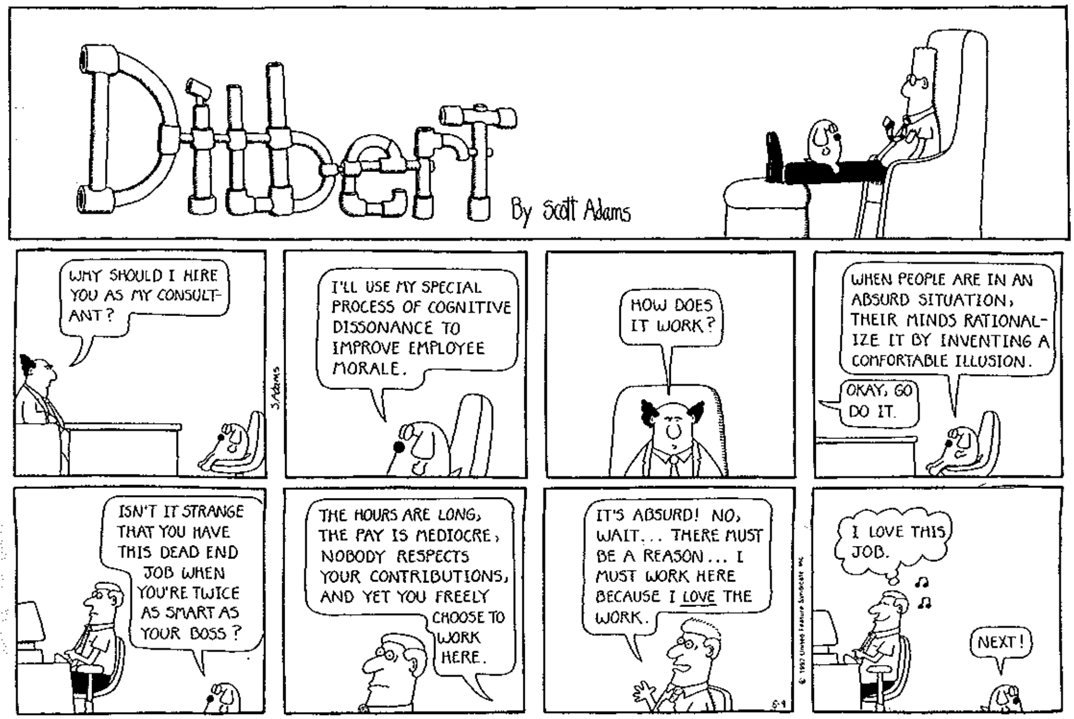
Conditions That Optimize the Insufficient-Justification Effect

29.

How have researchers identified three conditions that increase the likelihood that the insufficient-justification effect will occur?

One requirement for the insufficient-justification effect to occur is that there be no obvious, high incentive for performing the counterattitudinal action. In an early demonstration of this, Leon Festinger and James Carlsmith (1959) gave college students a boring task (loading spools into trays and turning pegs in a pegboard) and then offered to "hire" them to tell another student that the task was exciting and enjoyable. Some students were offered $1 for their role in recruiting the other student, and others were offered $20 (a princely sum at a time when the minimum wage in the United States was $1 an hour). The result was that those in the $1 condition changed their attitude toward the task and later recalled it as truly enjoyable, whereas those in the $20 condition continued to recall it as boring. Presumably, students in the $1 condition could not justify their lie to the other student on the basis of the little they were promised, so they convinced themselves that they were not lying. Those in the $20 condition, in contrast, could justify their lie: "I said the task was enjoyable when it was actually boring, but who wouldn't tell such a small lie for $20?"

Another essential condition for the insufficient-justification effect is that subjects must perceive their action as stemming from their own free choice. Otherwise, they could justify the action—and relieve dissonance—simply by saying, "I was forced to do it." In one experiment demonstrating the requirement of free choice, students were asked to write essays expressing support for a bill in the state legislature that most students personally opposed (Linder & others, 1967). Students in the *free-choice condition* were told clearly that they didn't have to write the essays, but they were encouraged to do so and none refused. Students in the *no-choice condition* were simply told to write the essays, and all complied. After writing the essays, all students were asked to describe their personal attitude toward the bill. Only those in the free-choice condition showed a significant shift in the direction of favoring the bill; those in the no-choice condition remained as opposed to it as did those who had not written essays at all. Using essentially the same procedure, other researchers found that students in the free-choice condition not only changed their attitude more than did those in the no-choice condition but also manifested more psychological discomfort and physiological arousal as they wrote their essays, a finding consistent with the view that they were experiencing greater dissonance (Elkin & Leippe, 1986; Elliot & Devine, 1994).


Dilbert
By Scott Adams
WHY SHOULD I HIRE YOU AS MY CONSULTANT?
I'LL USE MY SPECIAL PROCESS OF COGNITIVE DISSONANCE TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE MORALE.
HOW DOES IT WORK?
WHEN PEOPLE ARE IN AN ABSURD SITUATION, THEIR MINDS RATIONALIZE IT BY INVENTING A COMFORTABLE ILLUSION.
OKAY, GO DO IT.
ISN'T IT STRANGE THAT YOU HAVE THIS DEAD END JOB WHEN YOU'RE TWICE AS SMART AS YOUR BOSS?
THE HOURS ARE LONG, THE PAY IS MEDIOCRE, NOBODY RESPECTS YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS, AND YET YOU FREELY CHOOSE TO WORK HERE.
IT'S ABSURD! NO, WAIT... THERE MUST BE A REASON... I MUST WORK HERE BECAUSE I LOVE THE WORK.
I LOVE THIS JOB.
NEXT!

Dilbert reprinted by permission of United Features Syndicate.

Research also indicates that the insufficient-justification effect is stronge when the action to be justified would, from the viewpoint of the original attitud be expected to cause harm to others or to oneself. In this case, the thought unde lying the attitude change might be, "I would not deliberately do something harm ful; therefore I must believe that what I did is helpful." In one experiment, fo example, students who wrote essays counter to their initial attitude showed grea attitude change if they were led to believe that their essays could influence poli than if they were led to believe that their essays could not influence policy (Sc & Cooper, 1989). Other experiments, however, have shown that some degre dissonance-induced discomfort and attitude change can occur even when subje know that their counterattitudinal statements will be immediately discarded a nobody will know what they had written (Harmon-Jones, 2000).

Taking all this research into account, modern-day Ben Franklins who wan change someone's attitude by inducing the person to behave in a way that con dicts the old attitude are most likely to succeed if they (a) minimize any obv incentive for the behavior, (b) maximize the appearance of free choice, and D choose a behavior that would seem harmful if viewed from the perspective o old attitude.

Using Attitudes to "Justify" Injustice

Perhaps we develop unrealistic attitudes not only to explain our own othe inexplicable actions but also to make sense of the chaos and injustice we obs the world around us. Melvin Lerner (1980) summarized evidence that, at le our culture, people tend to believe life is fair, a tendency he labeled the *jus* D ***bias.*** In line with Freud's general way of thinking, Lerner suggested that we life is fair because to believe otherwise would induce more anxiety than we ca erate. Unconsciously we may reason: "If life is *not* fair, then no matter ho have, or how worthy I am, something terrible could happen to me. I can't b idea, so life must be fair." The just-world bias may motivate us to work ha take precautions that indeed do promote our survival and well-being, and reason it may be adaptive. However, it may promote truly unfair negative a toward people who suffer from mistreatment or misfortune.

To maintain the illusion that life is fair and predictable, we may disto planations of others' misfortunes to make it seem that people deserve what to them, a phenomenon called *blaming the victim* (Lerner & Goldberg, 19 1971). If millions of Jews were killed in the Holocaust, they must have do thing to bring it on or failed to do something to prevent it. If black Ame fer from poverty and discrimination, it must somehow be their fault. If g suffer from discrimination, harassment, and AIDS, homosexuality must b my neighbor contracts Lyme disease, she was foolish to have gone walk woods. Numerous studies have shown that victims of rape, robbery, terr cidents, illnesses, poverty, and social injustice often suffer doubly, once misfortune itself and again from the subtle or not-so-subtle blame th from others for "causing" or "allowing" the misfortune to happen (Miller, 1978; Maes, 1998). In one laboratory experiment, college stud ated another student's character less favorably if they believed she was g ceive a series of painful electric shocks as part of the experiment than they believed she wasn't (Lerner & Simmons, 1966).

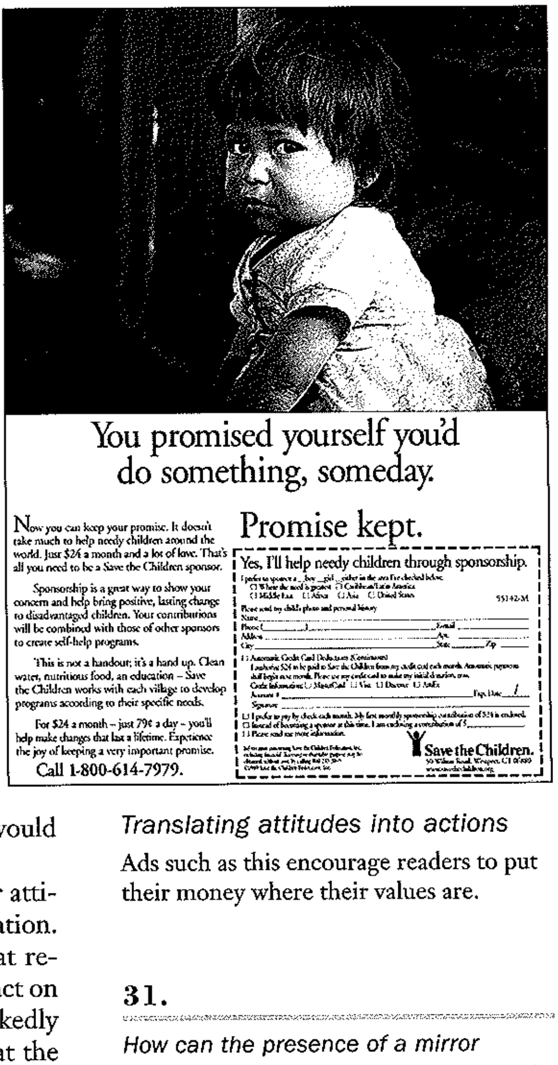
Attitudes as Guides to Action

As you have seen, attitudes can help us define ourselves, adjust to a s and rationalize our actions or beliefs. But common sense tells us that th function of attitudes is to guide our behavior effectively. Presumably, those objects, people, events, and activities about which we have pos and avoid those about which we have negative attitudes.

Social psychologists first became interested in attitudes because they conceived of them as mental guides of behavior (Allport, 1935). But early research on the topic was most remarkable for its failure to find reliable relationships between attitudes and actions. In one classic study, for instance, students in a college course filled out a questionnaire aimed at assessing their attitudes toward cheating, and later in the semester they were asked to grade their own true-false tests (Corey, 1937). The tests had already been graded secretly by the instructor, so cheating could be detected. The result was that a great deal of cheating occurred and no correlation at all was found between the attitude measure and actual cheating. A strong correlation was found, however, between cheating and the student's true score on the test: The lower the true score, the more likely the student was to try to raise it by cheating.

30.

How did an early study demonstrate attitude-behavior inconsistency?


You promised yourself you'd do something, someday.
Promise kept.

Now you can keep your promise. It doesn't take much to help needy children around the world. Just $24 a month and a lot of love. That's all you need to be a Save the Children sponsor.

Sponsorship is a great way to show your concern and help bring positive, lasting change to disadvantaged children. Your contributions will be combined with those of other sponsors to create self-help programs.

This is not a handout; it's a hand up. Clean water, nutritious food, an education – Save the Children works with each village to develop programs according to their specific needs.

For $24 a month – just 79¢ a day – you'll help make changes that last a lifetime. Experience the joy of keeping a very important promise.

Call 1-800-614-7979.

Yes, I'll help needy children through sponsorship.

Save the Children.

Save the Children

Translating attitudes into actions

Ads such as this encourage readers to put their money where their values are.

Subsequent studies, however, have revealed many examples of reliable correlations between attitudes and behavior. Among these are Schwartz's study correlating people's expressed values with their subsequent choice to cooperate or compete and Rokeach's study correlating privileged people's ranking of equality as a value with their subsequent actions toward members of a discriminated-against group. Today essentially all social psychologists agree that attitudes do play a role in people's behavioral choices and the question is, "*When*, or under what conditions, do they play that role?"

Attitudes Must Be Retrieved from Memory to Affect Behavior

Attitudes, like any other cognitions, are stored in long-term memory and can influence a person's behavioral choice only if recalled into working memory at the time the choice is made. Behavior occurs in a continuous flow, and we rarely stop to think about each of our relevant attitudes before we act. In Corey's experiment on cheating, the students who cheated may have been immediately overwhelmed by their poor performance on the test, which reminded them strongly of their negative attitudes toward failing a course but did not remind them of their negative attitudes toward cheating. Perhaps with more time to think about it, or with more immediate inducement to think about it, fewer would have cheated and a correlation would have been found between their anticheating attitudes and their behavior.

This line of reasoning suggests that cues reminding a person of his or her attitudes at the time of action would increase the attitude-behavior correlation. Indeed, experiments have shown that if people are presented with a task that requires them to think about their attitude on an issue shortly before they must act on it, the correlation between the attitude and the behavior increases markedly (Aronson, 1992; Snyder & Swann, 1976). Other experiments have shown that the presence of a mirror can promote attitude-behavior consistency (Wicklund & Frey, 1980). Apparently their physical reflection reminds people of all aspects of themselves, including their central attitudes, or values. In one experiment, for example, trick-or-treaters were told to help themselves to a specific amount of candy, under conditions in which they believed nobody could see them. They took extra candy more often if no mirror was present than they did if a mirror was present behind the candy bowl (Beaman & others, 1979).

31.

How can the presence of a mirror increase attitude-behavior consistency? According to Fazio, what kinds of attitudes are most likely to be recalled at appropriate times to help control behavior?

Russell Fazio (1986, 1990) has argued that the strongest attitude-behavior correlation occurs when the attitude is acquired through direct experience with its object, because then the object automatically reminds the person of the attitude. If you have a negative attitude toward bacon because on one or more occasions you ate it and got sick, then the sight and smell of bacon will automatically elicit your negative attitude and you won't eat it. However, if you have a negative attitude toward bacon only because you read that it is high in nitrates and nitrates are bad for you, your attitude will not be elicited automatically by the sight and smell of bacon. In that case you will need some other cue, extrinsic to the bacon, to remind you of the attitude, or you will need to rely on a habit of checking your set of food-related attitudes whenever you eat. Only after repeated rehearsal would your intellectually de attitude about bacon come automatically to mind when you saw or smelled it

A Theory of Planned Behavior

32.

According to the theory of planned behavior, what two kinds of thoughts might inhibit people from behaving according to their attitudes?

When people make conscious decisions about how to behave, their attitude not the only thoughts they take into account. As a general framework for thin about the decision-making process, Icek Ajzen (1985, 1991) proposed what he a ***theory of planned behavior***. Planned behavior is defined as that which fol from one's conscious intention to behave in a particular way. According to the ory, in developing a behavioral intention, people take into account the follo three types of cognitions: (a) their *attitude*, defined as their personal desire to have that way or not; (b) the *subjective norm*, defined as their belief about what ers who are important at the moment would think about the action; and (c) th *perceived control*, defined as their sense of their own ability or inability to carry the action (see Figure 13.11). Suppose you have a strongly favorable attitude a becoming an astronaut but fail to act on it because others in your social w would think you strange for pursuing that line of work or because you doub you have the ability for it or could raise the funds needed for training. Your ch in that case, is controlled by the subjective norm or by your perceived lack of trol, despite your attitude.

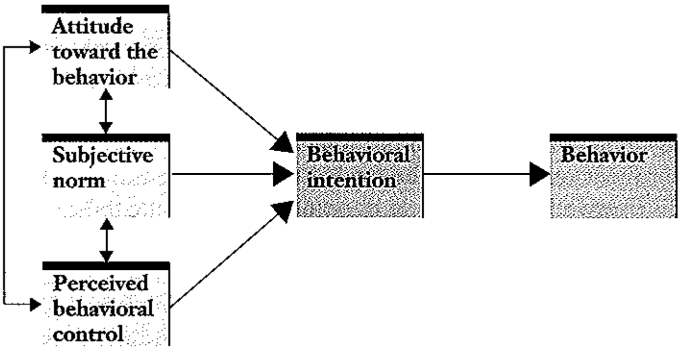


FIGURE **13.11**
A theory of planned behavior
According to Ajzen's theory, the decision to behave in a certain way is a product of three categories of cognitions. (Adapted from Ajzen, 1987.)

Research based on Ajzen's model has shown that, depending on innume factors, any of the three inputs to behavioral intention may account for most variability among people in their behavior. In a study of dieting and weight los instance, perceived control (confidence in the ability to stay on a diet) was a predictor of weight loss than was either attitude (desire to lose weight) or the jective norm (belief about whether others thought one should lose weight or (Schifter & Ajzen, 1985). In a study of decisions about how much time to s studying, some students were most influenced by the subjective norm (their vie what other students believe is an appropriate amount of study time) whereas ot were most influenced by their own attitudes (Miller & Grush, 1986). Not sur ingly, a number of studies have shown that the subjective norm contributes mo behavioral intention among people who identify strongly with the reference g than among those who don't identify strongly (Terry & others, 1999, 2000).

Attitudes as Products of Information Processing

In the previous discussions you have already encountered some ideas abou origins of attitudes. To some degree we inherit attitudes from our sociocult environment. To some degree we manufacture attitudes to create illusion consistency. To the degree that we use attitudes for utilitarian functions guide our behavior toward or away from particular objects and events—it m sense that we would also construct attitudes from actual information availab us about those objects and events. In some cases this construction process is matic, engaging no or little conscious thought, and in other cases the process is deeply thoughtful.

Attitudes Through Classical Conditioning: No Thought

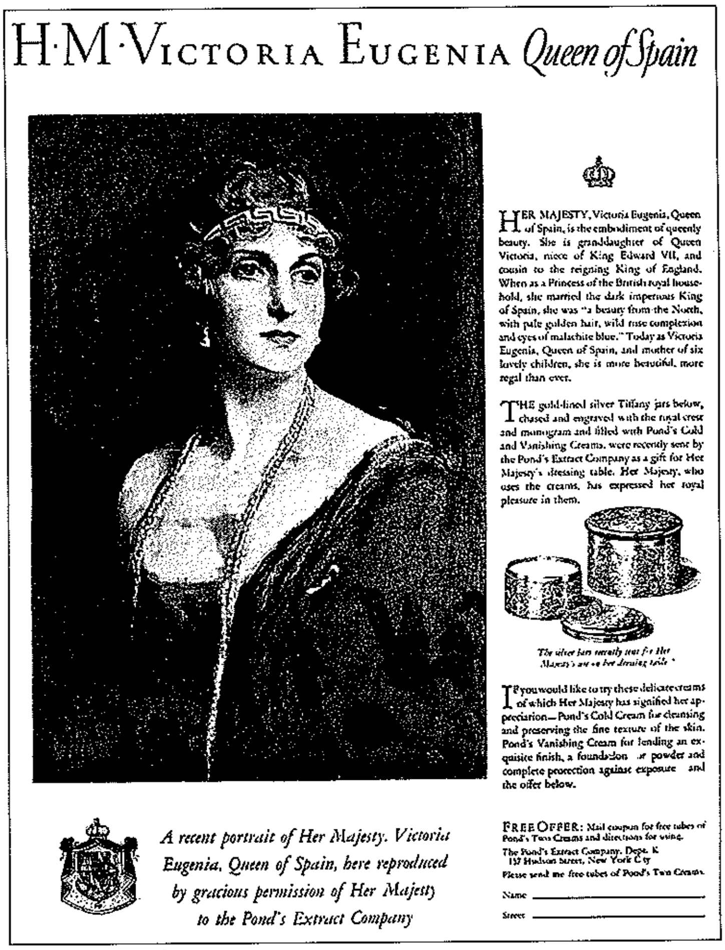
Classical conditioning, a basic learning process discussed in Chapter 4, can be thought of as an automatic attitude-forming system. A new stimulus (the conditioned stimulus) is paired with a stimulus that already elicits a particular reaction (the unconditioned stimulus), and, as a result, the new stimulus comes to elicit, on future presentations, a reaction similar to that elicited by the original stimulus. Using the language of the present chapter, we can say that Pavlov's dog entered the experiment with a preexisting positive attitude toward meat powder. When Pavlov preceded the meat powder on several occasions with the sound of a bell, the dog acquired a positive attitude toward that sound. The dog now salivated and wagged its tail when the bell rang, and if given a chance, it would have learned to ring the bell itself.

The neural mechanisms underlying classical conditioning evolved, presumably, because in evolutionary history such conditioning produced adaptive reactions more often than maladaptive ones. Conditioning leads us to approach objects and events that have been linked in our experience to pleasant, life-promoting occurrences, and it leads us to avoid objects and events that have been linked to unpleasant, life-threatening occurrences. In today's world, however, where many of the stimulus links we experience are the creations of advertisers and others who want to manipulate us, classical conditioning can have maladaptive consequences. All those ads in which cigarettes, beer, and expensive gas-guzzling cars are paired with beautiful people, happy scenes, and lovely music are designed to exploit our most thoughtless attitude-forming system, classical conditioning. The advertisers want us to salivate, wag our tails, and run out and buy their products. Apparently the technique works; if it didn't, they wouldn't continue spending money on such ads. Laboratory experiments have shown that it is easy to condition positive attitudes, in university students, toward a fictitious brand of mouthwash, or other product, by pairing the brand with pleasant, though irrelevant, scenes (Grossman & Till, 1998).

Direct evidence that classical conditioning can create attitudes in the absence of conscious thought comes from experiments in which the unconditioned stimulus is presented too rapidly for conscious detection. In one such experiment, subjects viewed slides of a woman engaged in various mundane activities, such as shopping. Each slide was preceded by a quickly flashed scene (9 milliseconds' duration) designed to induce either a positive or a negative emotional reaction. Among the positive scenes were kittens, a bridal couple, and a child with a Mickey Mouse doll. Among the negative scenes were a werewolf, a bucket of snakes, and a depiction of open-heart surgery. After all the

33.

How do advertisers use classical conditioning to influence our attitudes, and how did one experiment demonstrate that classical conditioning can influence attitudes without requiring conscious thought?



H·M·VICTORIA EUGENIA *Queen of Spain*

HER MAJESTY, Victoria Eugenia, Queen of Spain, is the embodiment of queenly beauty. She is granddaughter of Queen Victoria, niece of King Edward VII, and cousin to the reigning King of England. When as a Princess of the British royal household, she married the dark imperious King of Spain, she was "a beauty from the North, with pale golden hair, wild rose complexion and eyes of malachite blue." Today as Victoria Eugenia, Queen of Spain, and mother of six lovely children, she is more beautiful, more regal than ever.

THE gold-lined silver Tiffany jars below, chased and engraved with the royal crest and monogram and filled with Pond's Cold and Vanishing Creams, were recently sent by the Pond's Extract Company as a gift for Her Majesty's dressing table. Her Majesty, who uses the creams, has expressed her royal pleasure in them.

The silver jars recently sent for Her Majesty's use on her dressing table.

IF you would like to try these delicate creams of which Her Majesty has signified her appreciation—Pond's Cold Cream for cleansing and preserving the fine texture of the skin, Pond's Vanishing Cream for lending an exquisite finish, a foundation for powder and complete protection against exposure and the offer below.

A recent portrait of Her Majesty, Victoria Eugenia, Queen of Spain, here reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty to the Pond's Extract Company

FREE OFFER: Mail coupon for free tubes of Pond's Two Creams and directions for using.

The Pond's Extract Company, Dept. K
137 Hudson Street, New York City

Please send me free tubes of Pond's Two Creams.

Name ____________________

Street ____________________

Courtesy of The J. Walter Thompson Archive, Duke University

Her royal pleasure

John B. Watson, the founder of behaviorism (discussed in Chapters 1 and 4), became an advertising specialist after leaving academia. This ad, created by Watson, helped sell a skin cream by associating it with the wealth and beauty of the queen of Spain. According to the fine print, the queen uses Pond's vanishing and cold creams and "has expressed her royal pleasure in them."

slides had been viewed, the subjects who had been presented with the positive scenes evaluated the woman more favorably than did the other group, even though neither group, when questioned, could recall having seen any of the quickly flashed scenes (Krosnick & others, 1992).

34.

What are some examples of decision rules (heuristics) that people use with minimal thought to evaluate messages?

Attitudes Through Heuristics: Superficial Thought

Beyond simple classical conditioning is the more sophisticated but still relatively automatic process of using certain *decision rules*, or *heuristics*, to evaluate information and develop attitudes (Chen & Chaiken, 1999). Heuristics are shortcuts to a full, logical elaboration of the information in a message. Examples of such rules include the following: (a) If there are a lot of numbers and big words in the message, it must be well documented. (b) If the message is phrased in terms of values that I believe in, it is probably right. (c) Famous or successful people are more likely than unknown or unsuccessful people to be correct. (d) If most people believe this, it is probably true. We learn to use such rules, presumably, because they often allow us to make useful judgments with minimal expenditures of time and mental energy. The rules become mental habits, which we use implicitly, without conscious awareness that we are using them. Advertisers, of course, exploit these mental habits, just as they exploit the process of classical conditioning. They sprinkle their ads with irrelevant data and high-sounding words such as *integrity*, and they hire celebrities to endorse their products.

Attitudes Through Logical Analysis of the Message: Systematic Thought

Sometimes, of course, we think logically. Generally, we are most likely to do so for issues that really matter to us. In a theory of persuasion called the ***elaboration likelihood model***, Richard Petty and John Cacioppo (1986) proposed that a major determinant of whether a message will be processed systematically (through logical analysis of the content) or superficially is the personal relevance of the message. According to Petty and Cacioppo, we tend to be *cognitive misers*; we reserve our elaborative reasoning powers for messages that seem most relevant to us, and we rely on mental shortcuts to evaluate messages that seem less relevant to us. Much research supports this proposition (Petty & Wegener, 1999).

35.

How did an experiment support the idea that people tend to reserve systematic thought for messages that are personally relevant to them and to use decision rules for other messages?

In one experiment on the role of personal relevance in persuasion, Richard Petty and his colleagues (1981) presented college students with messages in favor of requiring students to pass a set of comprehensive examinations in order to graduate. Different groups of students received different messages, which varied in (a) the *strength* of the arguments, (b) the alleged *source* of the arguments, and (c) the *personal relevance* of the message. The weak argument consisted of slightly relevant quotations, personal opinions, and anecdotal observations; the strong argument contained well-structured statistical evidence that the proposed policy would improve the reputation of the university and its graduates. In some cases the arguments were said to have been prepared by high school students and in other cases by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. Finally, the personal relevance was varied by stating in the high-relevance condition that the proposed policy would take effect the following year, so current students would be subject to it, and in the low-relevance condition that it would begin in 10 years. After hearing the message, students in each condition were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the proposal.

Figure 13.12 shows the results. As you can see, in the high-relevance condition the quality of the arguments was most important. Students in that condition tended to be persuaded by strong arguments and not by weak ones, regardless of the alleged source. Thus, in that condition, students must have listened to and evaluated the arguments. In the low-relevance condition, the quality of the arguments had much less effect, and the source of the arguments had much more. Apparently, when the policy was not going to affect them, students did not attend carefully to the arguments but, instead, relied on the simple decision rule that experts (men

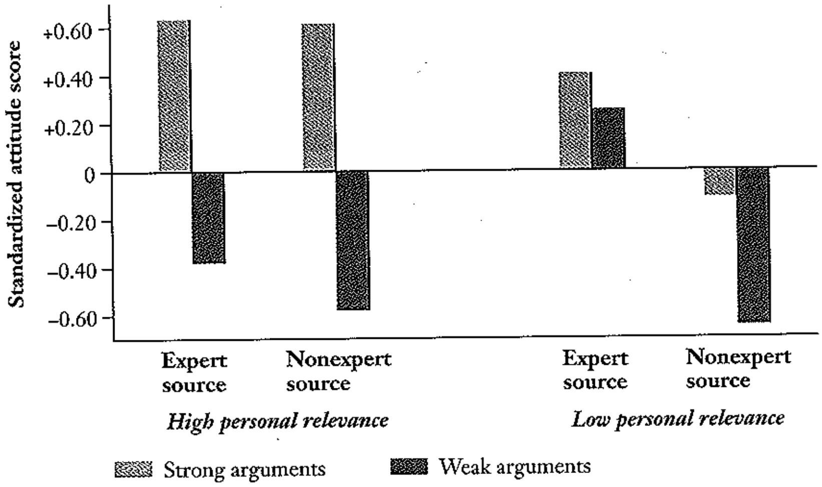


FIGURE 13.12 *Effect of persuasive arguments on attitude under various experimental conditions*

In this graph, movement above the horizontal axis indicates agreement with the persuasive message, and movement below the axis indicates disagreement. When the issue was of high personal relevance (left half of graph), the strength or weakness of the arguments had more impact than did the source of the arguments; but when the issue was of low personal relevance (right half of graph), the reverse was true. (Adapted from Petty & others, 1981.)

bers of the Carnegie Commission) are more likely to be right than are nonexperts (high school students).

There is no surprise in Petty and Cacioppo's theory or in the results supporting it. The idea that people think more logically about issues that directly affect them than about those that don't was a basic premise of philosophers who laid the foundations for democratic forms of government. And, to repeat what is by now a familiar refrain, our mental apparatus evolved to keep us alive and promote our welfare in our social communities; it is no wonder that we use our minds more fully for that than for other purposes.

SECTION SUMMARY

Attitudes can serve value-expressive, social-adjustive, defensive, and utilitarian functions. The value-expressive function is served especially by central attitudes, or values, that are part of one's self-concept. Schwartz found that values tend to cluster into 10 categories that can be arranged in a wheel in which similar values lie adjacent to one another and contradictory values lie opposite one another. This value structure appears to be universal, but the relative importance of each value category varies from culture to culture.

The social-adjustive function of attitudes was demonstrated in a classic study by Newcomb at Bennington College. New students changed their initially conservative attitudes to match the liberal attitudes of the older students and professors as a means of gaining social acceptance.

The defensive function of attitudes is illustrated by studies of cognitive dissonance. To avoid the discomfort that arises from awareness of inconsistency in their beliefs and actions, people will (a) avoid information that contradicts their present attitudes and (b) alter their attitudes to match their actions. People are especially likely to alter an attitude to match an action when they have no easy alternative means of explaining why they did what they did (the insufficient-justification effect). Another example of the defensive use of attitudes derives from the just-world bias: To convince themselves that the world is fair (and they are safe), people develop negative, blaming attitudes toward those who suffer.

Attitudes serve a utilitarian function to the degree that they guide behavior in useful ways. Some attitudes, such as those derived from classical conditioning, automatically come into play in response to the object of the attitude, but attitudes that are acquired intellectually must be recalled and thought about if they are to influence behavior. Anything that reminds a person of his or her attitudes—such as the presence of a mirror—tends to increase the consistency between attitudes and actions. According to the theory of planned behavior, the intention to behave in a particular way is influenced not just by one's own attitude but also by the subjective norm (one's sense of what others would think of one for behaving that way) and perceived control (one's confidence in one's own capacity to behave that way).