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# Social Psychology

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## I. ATTRIBUTIONAL THEORY

### A. THE FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR

#### 1. Definition

- ▶ *The widespread tendency to overemphasize dispositional factors and to underestimate situational factors when making attributions about the cause of another person's behavior.*
- ▶ *Dispositional factors include personality traits, such as level of motivation and willingness to work.*
- ▶ *Situational factors refer to social influences, such as the absence of parents or group pressures to conform.*

#### 2. Causes

- ▶ *The just-world phenomenon—Most people have a need to believe that the world is just and fair. As a result, they believe that people generally get what they deserve. The just-world phenomenon helps explain the tendency of people to blame the victim rather than to look at social causes.*
- ▶ *The saliency bias—Situational factors are less salient or noticeable than dispositional factors. As a result, people focus on visible personality traits rather than the less visible social context.*

#### 3. Examples

- ▶ *In 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast claiming almost 2,000 lives in New Orleans alone. Why did so many residents of New Orleans fail to evacuate the city? Many critics ignored situational factors, such as the shortage of public transportation, and instead*

*focused on dispositional factors, such as residents who foolishly ignored warnings to evacuate the city.*

- ▶ *As you are driving down the road, another car suddenly passes you and speeds through a red light. Most people make the fundamental attribution error by attributing the driver's reckless behavior to dispositional factors, such as drunk driving or aggressive behavior. Few people pause to consider that situational factors may be at work. For example, the driver may be ill and rushing to a nearby hospital.*

## **B. THE SELF-SERVING BIAS**

### **1. Definition**

- ▶ *Most people take credit for their successes while at the same time attributing their failures to external situations beyond their control.*

### **2. Causes**

- ▶ *Most people are motivated by a need for self-esteem and a desire to save face.*
- ▶ *Individuals are more aware of the situational factors that influence their behavior.*

### **3. Examples**

- ▶ *Students who earn high scores on the SAT and ACT attribute their success to dispositional factors, such as hard work and extensive practice. Students who earn low SAT and ACT scores blame situational factors such as inept teachers, poor test-taking conditions, and tricky questions.*
- ▶ *Stockbrokers who produce high returns for their clients attribute their success to dispositional factors, such as exhaustive research and disciplined investing. Stockbrokers who produce low returns for their clients blame situational factors, such as unpredictable actions by foreign governments and surprise decisions by the Federal Reserve Board.*

## **C. CULTURAL AND ATTRIBUTIONAL BIASES**

### **1. Individualistic cultures**

- ▶ *Individualistic cultures, like the United States and Canada, emphasize independence and personal responsibility.*

- ▶ People in individualistic cultures are more likely to commit both the fundamental attribution error and the self-serving bias.
2. Collectivistic cultures
- ▶ Collectivistic cultures, like Japan and China, emphasize inter-dependence and collective responsibility.
  - ▶ People in collectivistic cultures are less likely to make the fundamental attribution error and more likely to be aware of how situational factors influence behavior.



The fundamental attribution error and the self-serving bias have generated more multiple-choice questions than any other social psychological concepts. Questions typically ask you to apply these concepts to a situation from everyday life. For example, when students attribute their high history grades to hours of extra study and their low chemistry grades to impossible test questions, they are exhibiting the self-serving bias.

## II. ATTITUDE FORMATION AND CHANGE

### A. DEFINITION

1. An attitude is a positive, neutral, or negative evaluation of a person, issue, or object.
2. Attitudes predispose our reactions to people, issues, or objects.

### B. ATTITUDE CHANGE

1. Central route to persuasion
  - ▶ When people focus on factual information, logical arguments, and a thoughtful analysis of pertinent details.
  - ▶ For example, a car buyer bases his or her decision on such factual factors as a car's gas mileage, its rating by outside experts, the quality of air bags, antilock brakes, seat belts and other safety features.

2. Peripheral route to persuasion

- ▶ *When people focus on emotional appeals and incidental cues.*
- ▶ *For example, a car buyer bases his or her decision on such incidental factors as the likeability of the car dealer, the car's color, and catchy sales slogans.*

3. Foot-in-the-door phenomenon

- ▶ *The persuasion strategy of getting a person to agree to a modest first request as a set-up for a later, much larger, request.*
- ▶ *For example, a car dealer persuades you to buy a car with upgraded seats and then convinces you to buy the car with a complete upgraded interior. Another common example of the foot-in-the-door phenomenon occurs when volunteers ask you to sign a petition and then follow-up with a request for a donation to their cause.*

## C. ATTITUDE CHANGE: COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

1. Definition

- ▶ *The theory of cognitive dissonance was first proposed by Leon Festinger, a research psychologist at Stanford.*
- ▶ *Cognitive dissonance is the state of psychological tension, anxiety, and discomfort that occurs when an individual's attitude and behavior are inconsistent.*
- ▶ *Festinger explained that, "if a person is induced to do or say something that is contrary to his private opinion, there will be a tendency for him to change his opinion to bring it into correspondence with what he has said or done."*
- ▶ *Festinger believed that human beings are motivated to reduce the tensions resulting from inconsistent attitudes and actions. Although it is possible to reduce dissonance by changing either one's behavior or one's attitude, most people modify their attitudes.*

2. Examples

- ▶ *Kristin is aware that smoking is harmful to her health. According to cognitive dissonance theory, Kristin will most likely resolve the tension between her attitude and her behavior by denying the relationship between*

- smoking and lung cancer or rationalizing that smoking is a social activity that helps her fit in with her friends.*
- ▶ *Austin impulsively buys an expensive pair of sneakers that he really cannot afford. He then rationalizes the purchase by insisting that the shoes were a good buy and they will improve his basketball performance.*

### III. THE INFLUENCE OF GROUPS ON INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR

#### A. SOCIAL FACILITATION AND SOCIAL INHIBITION

1. Social facilitation is the tendency for an individual's performance to improve when simple or well-rehearsed tasks are performed in the presence of others.
2. Social inhibition is the tendency for an individual's performance to decline when complex or poorly-learned tasks are performed in the presence of others.
3. Examples
  - ▶ *James Michaels and his associates (1982) found that the performance of expert pool players improved when they played in front of an audience. In contrast, poor players performed worse when they played in front of an audience.*
  - ▶ *The presence of an audience often inspires well-trained actors and dancers to raise their performance to a new level. However, the pressure of an audience can have the opposite effect upon poorly prepared actors and dancers.*

#### B. SOCIAL LOAFING

1. Social loafing is the phenomenon of people making less effort to achieve a goal when they work in a group rather than when they work alone.
2. Causes
  - ▶ *People believe that their contribution to the collective effort is neither appreciated nor important.*
  - ▶ *People believe they will "get a free ride" since it will be difficult to assess their contribution to the team or group.*

### 3. Examples

- ▶ *An art teacher divides his class into groups and assigns each group the task of preparing an oral report on a famous Renaissance artist. Each group will select one member to present their report. Since all members of the group will receive the same grade, the method invites social loafing.*
- ▶ *The local animal shelter previously published a report listing the names of individual contributors. However, the new shelter director switched to a report that simply listed the total contribution. The change in reporting made contributors feel less appreciated and important, thus inviting social loafing and a decline in individual contributions.*

## C. DEINDIVIDUATION

1. Deindividuation refers to the reduction of self-awareness and personal responsibility that can occur when a person is part of a group whose members feel anonymous.

### 2. Causes

- ▶ *Individuals become immersed in a group and lose a sense of self-awareness.*
- ▶ *The growing sense of anonymity lowers personal accountability so that individuals no longer feel responsible for their actions. The group thus “assumes” responsibility for aggressive or destructive actions that individuals would not commit if they were alone.*

### 3. The Stanford Prison Experiment

- ▶ *In August 1971, psychology professor Philip Zimbardo converted the basement of Stanford University’s psychology building into a mock prison.*
- ▶ *Zimbardo placed ads in local papers offering to pay volunteers \$15.00 a day to participate in a two-week “prison simulation.”*
- ▶ *Zimbardo and his team of research assistants selected 24 middle-class, educated young men. The participants were then randomly assigned to the role of either guard or prisoner.*

- ▶ *Zimbardo deliberately promoted the deindividuation of both the guards and the prisoners. The guards wore identical khaki uniforms and mirror sunglasses that prevented anyone from seeing their eyes or reading their emotions. They also carried billy clubs, whistles, and handcuffs. The prisoners all wore stocking caps and hospital dressing gowns. They were identified by numbers sewn into their gowns.*
- ▶ *The experiment quickly grew out of hand as some of the guards turned sadistic, humiliating the prisoners verbally and physically. Alarmed by the guards' cruel behavior, Zimbardo called off the experiment after just six days.*
- ▶ *The Zimbardo Prison Experiment provides a vivid illustration of the powerful effects of deindividuation. As the guards became immersed in their roles, they developed a strong group cohesion that reduced their sense of personal responsibility. As they stopped viewing the prisoners as individual human beings, the guards' behavior became increasingly aggressive.*

#### D. THE BYSTANDER EFFECT

1. The bystander effect is a social psychological phenomenon in which individuals are less likely to assist in an emergency situation when other people are present.
2. Causes
  - ▶ *Group size is the best predictor of bystander intervention. As the size of a group present at the scene increases, the likelihood that anyone will help a person in need decreases.*
  - ▶ *As the size of the group increases, bystanders experience a diffusion of responsibility. Since responsibility is not explicitly assigned, bystanders assume that someone else will act. Each individual bystander feels less responsible and thus fails to do anything.*
3. The case of Kitty Genovese
  - ▶ *Kitty Genovese was a 28-year-old woman who managed a late-night bar in Queens, New York. At 3:20 a.m. on March 13, 1964, a serial rapist and murderer attacked Ms. Genovese as she approached her apartment building.*

- ▶ *Although Ms. Genovese repeatedly screamed for help, none of the neighbors came to her aid. After 30 minutes, someone finally called the police. The police rushed to the scene only to find that Ms. Genovese had been fatally wounded.*
- 4. Conditions that promote bystander intervention
  - ▶ *Kitty Genovese's tragic death focused public attention on the reasons why bystanders failed to come to her rescue. Initially, editorial writers blamed apathy and the depersonalization of life in big cities.*
  - ▶ *Led by Bibb Latane and John Darley, social psychologists conducted hundreds of investigations into the conditions under which bystanders will help others.*
  - ▶ *Researchers found that bystanders are more likely to help if they see others who are willing to help, if they know or are told how to provide assistance, and if the person in trouble asks a specific person to provide assistance.*

## **IV. GROUP DECISION MAKING**

### **A. GROUP POLARIZATION**

#### 1. Definition

- ▶ *The tendency for a group's predominant opinion to become stronger or more extreme after an issue is discussed.*
- ▶ *It is important to note the difference between group polarization and conformity. Group polarization is an intensification of a group's prevailing opinion. In contrast, conformity occurs when an individual changes his or her attitude to become more like the group's attitude.*

#### 2. Examples

- ▶ *Myers and Bishop (1970) discovered that discussing racial issues decreased prejudice in a low-prejudice group of high school students and increased it in a high-prejudice group.*
- ▶ *Discussions among a stop-smoking self-help group increase the members' resolve to quit smoking.*



## B. GROUPTHINK

### 1. Definition

- ▶ *The tendency for a cohesive decision-making group to ignore or dismiss reasonable alternatives.*
- ▶ *Leaders can counteract groupthink by encouraging divergent views, consulting outside experts, and assigning people to play the role of “devil’s advocate.”*

### 2. Examples

- ▶ *In early 1961, President Kennedy and his team of national security advisors approved an ill-conceived plan to allow 1,200 anticommunist exiles to invade Cuba in an attempt to overthrow Fidel Castro. Castro’s forces easily repelled the invasion, handing President Kennedy a humiliating defeat.*
- ▶ *In 2003, President Bush and his team of national security advisors approved an invasion of Iraq designed to overthrow Saddam Hussein and locate his presumed arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. The United States successfully defeated Saddam Hussein’s forces, but failed to find any weapons of mass destruction.*

## V. SOCIAL INFLUENCE: CONFORMITY

### A. DEFINITION

1. Conformity is the tendency for people to adopt the behavior, attitudes, and beliefs of other members of a group.
2. Conformity can be in response to real or imagined group pressure.

### B. THE ASCH CONFORMITY EXPERIMENTS

1. The Asch conformity experiments are considered the most famous studies of the factors associated with conformity to group pressure.
2. Asch began his experiments by inviting seven to nine male students into a college classroom. One of these students was a “naïve subject” who was unaware of the experiment’s true purpose. All the others were “instructed students” who had

previously met with Asch and had carefully rehearsed their experimental roles.

3. By pre-arranged agreement, the instructed students took their seats, always leaving a seat near the end for the naïve subject. By placing his subjects in this order, Asch insured that the naïve subject would receive “the full impact of the majority trend before uttering his judgments.”
4. When the subjects were in their seats, Asch showed them a series of cards. A standard line was always clearly displayed on the left. Three companion lines numbered 1, 2, and 3 were always on the right. Asch asked each subject to pick the companion line that matched the standard line.
5. Unknown to the naïve subject, on twelve of the eighteen trials the instructed subjects deliberately gave the wrong answer. Thus, on twelve trials the naïve subject was confronted with a contradiction between what he clearly saw and what a unanimous majority reported.
6. Asch found that 76 percent of the naïve subjects agreed with the incorrect majority opinion at least once, while 5 percent conformed every time. All together, the naïve subjects followed the majority by giving the wrong answer on 37 percent of the critical trials.

### C. FACTORS THAT PROMOTE CONFORMITY

1. The size of the majority
  - ▶ *Asch varied the size of the informed majority by using groups of between one and fifteen people.*
  - ▶ *Asch found that the naïve subjects resisted groups of only one or two members. However, conformity increased as the size of the informed majority increased from three to seven members.*
  - ▶ *Interestingly, as group size increased beyond seven members, conformity leveled off and slightly decreased.*
2. The unanimity of the majority
  - ▶ *The unanimity of the majority made a striking impact on the amount of conformity.*
  - ▶ *When Asch planted a “partner” who disagreed with the majority, conformity by the naïve subjects dropped to about one-fourth of its former level.*

3. The characteristics of the majority
  - ▶ *Conforming behavior was greatest among naïve subjects who were attracted to the group.*
  - ▶ *Naïve subjects, who expected to have future interaction with the group and had a relatively low status in the group, demonstrated the highest levels of conformity.*
4. The difficulty of the task
  - ▶ *As the difficulty of the experimental task increased, conformity increased.*
  - ▶ *Asch reported a higher level of conformity when the difference between the standard line and the companion line was smaller.*

## **VI. SOCIAL INFLUENCE: OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY**

### **A. DEFINITION**

1. Obedience is the performance of an action in response to the direct orders of an authority or person of higher status.

### **B. MILGRAM'S OBEDIENCE EXPERIMENTS**

1. Milgram's famous experiments on obedience began in July 1961 at Yale University. Milgram's controversial findings sparked debate about the willingness of ordinary citizens to obey an authority figure who instructed them to perform actions that conflicted with their personal values. In addition, Milgram's use of deception influenced the debate about the proper code of ethics in psychological research.
2. Milgram's basic experimental design involved three people:
  - ▶ *An experimenter played by a 31-year-old high school biology teacher. The experimenter wore a white technician's coat to enhance his status as an authority figure.*
  - ▶ *A learner or victim played by an affable 47-year-old Irish-American accountant.*

- ▶ *A teacher or subject who responded to an ad offering volunteers \$4.00 (equal to approximately \$30.00 today) to participate in a one-hour "memory and learning test." The subjects represented a wide range of educational and occupational backgrounds.*
- 3. The experimenter began by explaining that he was testing the effects of punishment on learning and memory. The learner would be required to memorize a long list of word pairs such as "slow-dance," "nice-day," and "blue-box." The learner was later required to pick the correct match from a list of several words read by the volunteer teacher. For example, the teacher would read: "Blue: sky, ink, box, lamp" and the learner was supposed to respond, "box."
- 4. When the learner gave the correct answer, the teacher would proceed to the next word pair. However, when the learner made a mistake, the experimenter instructed the teacher to punish him with an electric shock delivered by a realistic, but bogus, shock generator.
- 5. The shock generator could supposedly deliver shocks ranging from 15 volts to 450 volts. The 30 switches were clearly labeled from "Slight Shock" up to "Danger: Severe Shock." The 435-volt and 450-volt switches were simply marked "XXX."
- 6. The experimenter instructed the teacher to begin with a 15-volt shock and then raise the voltage one 15-volt level at a time. It is important to note that the volunteer teacher was given a 45-volt sample of "Slight Shock." This was the only real shock given in the entire experiment.
- 7. Milgram carefully rehearsed the responses used by both the learner and the experimenter. The learner's protests were carefully coordinated to the "shock" being administered by the teacher. At 75 volts, the learner was instructed to express "a little grunt." At 125 volts, the learner shouted to the experimenter that the shocks were becoming painful. At 150 volts, he cried out: "Experimenter, get me out of here! I won't be in this experiment anymore! I refuse to go on!" At 180 volts, he cried out: "I can't stand the pain!" At 300 volts, he shouted in desperation that he would no longer provide answers to the memory test. At 315 volts, following

a “violent scream,” he reaffirmed his prior refusal to continue participating. At 330 volts, the learner hysterically demanded, “Let me out of here! You have no right to hold me here! Let me out!” After 330 volts, the learner was not heard from again.

8. When the teacher showed any resistance to the experimenter’s commands, the experimenter responded with one of the following commands:
  - ▶ *Prod 1: Please continue.*
  - ▶ *Prod 2: The experiment requires that you continue.*
  - ▶ *Prod 3: It is absolutely essential that you continue.*
  - ▶ *Prod 4: You have no other choice, you must go on.*

If the subject insisted on stopping after hearing all four verbal prods, the experimenter halted the experiment. Otherwise, the experiment was halted after the subject administered the maximum 450-volt shock.

#### C. MILGRAM’S SHOCKING RESULTS

1. Before conducting the experiment, Milgram asked 39 psychiatrists to predict the results. They guessed that most subjects would stop at 150 volts, that about 4 percent would go as high as 300 volts, and that just one person in 1,000 would go all the way to 450 volts.
2. The psychiatrists were wrong. Twenty-six people, or 65 percent of the 40 teachers in the first experimental version, gave the learner a 450-volt “shock.”
3. Numerous replications by Milgram and other researchers produced almost identical results. It is important to note that female subjects were as likely to inflict pain on a stranger as male subjects.

#### D. FACTORS THAT PROMOTE OBEDIENCE

1. American society places a high value of obedience to people in positions of legitimate authority. We are taught that good children, students, and employees obey instructions and do not cause trouble. Milgram speculated that his subjects’ inability “to invent a disobedient response” may be symptomatic of the pressures in our culture to conform.

2. Milgram believed that the volunteers were decisively influenced by their role of “subject” in a scientific experiment. The role of “good subject” committed them to follow the instructions of a scientist who was seen as a legitimate and trusted authority.
3. Milgram also believed that what he called the “small ignoble emotion—embarrassment” played an important role. His subjects simply couldn’t bring themselves to disrupt what appeared to be a legitimate experiment.

#### E. FACTORS THAT REDUCE OBEDIENCE

1. Milgram conducted variations of his experiment on approximately 1,000 subjects. Taken together, his experiments comprise one of the largest research programs in the history of social psychology.
2. Milgram’s additional experiments identified several conditions that reduced the willingness of his subjects to obey the experimenter:
  - ▶ *When subjects were allowed to freely select the shock level, 95 percent of them did not go beyond 150 volts.*
  - ▶ *When subjects observed other subjects who refused to obey the experimenter’s orders, 90 percent of them refused to continue. It is very important to note that this finding corroborates Asch’s discovery that subjects will stand by their convictions when they are supported by a dissenter or role model.*



*AP Psychology test writers expect students to be thoroughly familiar with Milgram’s classic study of obedience to authority. Be sure you know that 65 percent of participants administered the highest voltage shock, that subjects were least likely to deliver maximum levels of shock when they observed dissenters who refused to obey the experiment’s orders, and that psychiatrists significantly underestimated the subject’s level of obedience.*

## **VII. DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF GROUP MEMBERS**

### **A. IN-GROUPS**

1. An in-group is a group a person identifies with and feels that he or she belongs to.
2. The in-group bias is the tendency to judge the behavior of in-group members favorably and out-group members unfavorably.
3. The in-group bias can hinder the efforts of outsiders to join a new group. In-group members would perceive the new person as different and would not make him or her feel welcome.

### **B. OUT-GROUPS**

1. An out-group is a group with which a person does not identify and does not feel as if he or she belongs.
2. The out-group homogeneity effect is the tendency to see members of the out-group as very similar to one another.

### **C. ETHNOCENTRISM**

1. Ethnocentrism is the tendency to consider other cultures, customs, and values as inferior to one's own.
2. European explorers and Native Americans frequently expressed ethnocentric judgments toward each other's cultures. For example, Amerigo Vespucci insisted that the Native Americans' "manner of living is very barbarous because they do not eat at fixed times, but as often as they please."
3. It is interesting to note that both ethnocentrism and groupthink can lead to inaccurate perceptions and conclusions.

### **D. STEREOTYPES**

1. A stereotype is a mental image of members of a group that exaggerates or oversimplifies their characteristics.
2. The famous journalist Walter Lippman coined the term "stereotype" to refer to "pictures in our heads" that accompany a category of people. Stereotypes can be either

positive or negative. For example, what mental images do you associate with football linemen and beauty queens?

## E. PREJUDICE

### 1. Definition

- ▶ *Prejudice is a learned prejudgment directed toward people solely because of their membership in a specific social group.*
- ▶ *Prejudice can be both positive and negative. However, most research focuses on the causes and consequences of negative forms of prejudice.*

### 2. Social factors that contribute to prejudice

- ▶ *Social divisions based upon in-groups and out-groups promote negative stereotypes and prejudice.*
- ▶ *Inequalities between “haves,” who possess wealth, power, and prestige and “have-nots,” who lack social status, promote prejudice.*

### 3. Emotional factors that contribute to prejudice

- ▶ *Psychological studies and historic examples both indicate that frustration intensifies prejudice. Frustration is often directed toward an innocent target known as a scapegoat. For example, Christians served as scapegoats for Rome’s military defeats in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century; Jews served as scapegoats for Germany’s defeat in World War I; and African Americans served as scapegoats for the South’s defeat in the Civil War.*
- ▶ *Prejudice is often directed at groups perceived as threatening important cultural values. For example, prejudice directed at gays and lesbians is incited by the belief that these groups threaten important family values.*

## F. DISCRIMINATION

1. Discrimination refers to differential treatment, usually negative, directed at members of a group.
2. Remember that prejudice refers to an attitude, while discrimination refers to an action.



## VIII. INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION

### A. DEFINITION

1. Attraction refers to positive feelings toward another person.

### B. FACTORS THAT PROMOTE ATTRACTION

#### 1. Physical attractiveness

- ▶ *Research findings consistently indicate that physical attractiveness is one of the most important factors in explaining why people are initially attracted to others.*
- ▶ *Research findings suggest that men place greater value on physical attractiveness and youthfulness, whereas women place greater value on maturity, financial resources, and ambition. Evolutionary psychologists explain these findings by pointing out that men associate beauty and youth with fertility while women associate financial resources and maturity with responsibility and the ability to be a good father.*
- ▶ *According to the matching hypothesis, two members of a romantic pair are most likely to be judged by others as similar in physical attractiveness.*

#### 2. Proximity

- ▶ *Proximity means nearness. The principle of proximity states that people make more friends among those who live and work nearby.*
- ▶ *Proximity promotes familiarity. Familiar people seem safe and approachable while unfamiliar people seem dangerous and threatening.*
- ▶ *According to the mere exposure effect, repeated exposure to people or products increases the likelihood that we will be attracted to them. Advertisers and politicians use this principle when they regularly repeat the same sales and campaign ads. Repeated exposure to a negative stimulus can decrease attraction.*

#### 3. Similarity

- ▶ *Research findings consistently indicate that we are most likely to be attracted to people who share our interests, values, and experiences.*

- ▶ *Similarity is a major factor in promoting long-term relationships.*

### C. ROMANTIC LOVE VERSUS COMPANIONATE LOVE

1. Romantic love
  - ▶ *Based upon intense feelings of attraction to another person.*
  - ▶ *Typically fades after 6 to 30 months.*
2. Companionate love
  - ▶ *Based upon strong feelings of admiration, respect, and commitment.*
  - ▶ *Strengthened by mutual sharing of decisions and the self-disclosure of intimate details about personal feelings and experiences.*

## **IX. AGGRESSION**

### A. DEFINITION

1. Aggression refers to behavior that is intended to cause harm.

### B. BIOLOGICAL INFLUENCES

1. Evolutionary psychologists believe that humans are instinctively aggressive.
2. Alcohol abuse is a major factor in many forms of aggression.
3. Research studies have linked the male hormone testosterone with aggressive behavior.

### C. PSYCHOSOCIAL INFLUENCES

1. According to the frustration-aggression hypothesis, frustration can ignite anger that may lead to aggression.
2. Over 1,000 studies support the connection between exposure to media violence and the likelihood that someone will behave aggressively.
3. Social rejection, minimal parental control, especially by the father, and parental models of aggression all contribute to aggressive tendencies.

## D. REDUCING AGGRESSION

### 1. Superordinate goals

- ▶ *Shared goals that override differences among people that cannot be achieved without a joint effort.*
- ▶ *In the Robbers Cave Experiment (1966), Muzafer Sherif and his colleagues randomly assigned 11- and 12-year-old boys to two groups nicknamed the Eagles and the Rattlers. Posing as camp counselors, the experimenters used competitive activities to create two tightly knit in-groups. Within a short time, the Eagles and Rattlers became fierce rivals. After lectures about friendship and social events failed, Sherif used superordinate goals to reduce intergroup hostility. For example, Sherif deliberately clogged the camp's water system, thus forcing the boys to work together to fix it.*

### 2. Conciliatory acts

- ▶ *Researchers have found that reciprocal conciliatory acts can begin the process of reducing tensions between hostile groups.*
- ▶ *Diplomats often use reciprocal acts to begin peace talks. For example, negotiations between Israel and Arab nations have often started with an exchange of prisoners.*

### 3. Communication

- ▶ *Communication does not guarantee a reduction in tensions.*
- ▶ *The use of skilled third-party mediators, such as marriage counselors, labor mediators, and diplomats can help hostile parties air their differences and begin the process of establishing cooperative relations.*



*Attraction and aggression typically are covered at the end of social psychology chapters. While students often skim over these topics, AP Psychology test writers do not. Test questions typically focus on the similarity principle as a key to explaining attraction and the frustration-aggression hypothesis as a key to explaining aggression. In addition, be sure you know that superordinate goals can be an effective way to reduce tension and conflict.*