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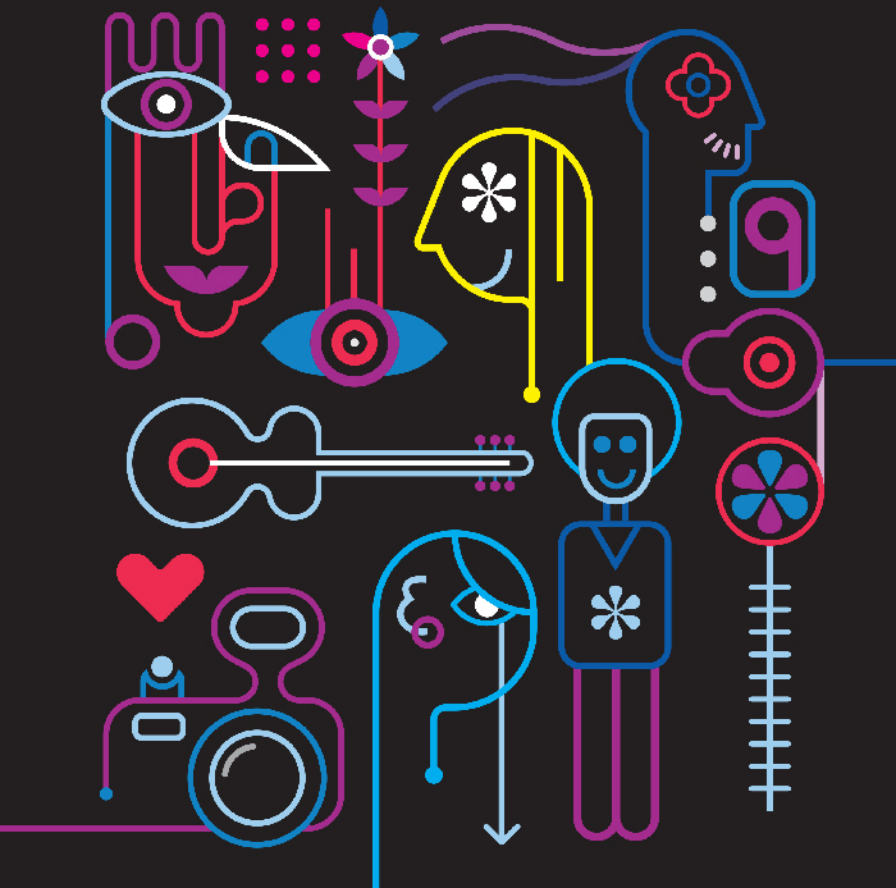
# SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

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# Social Psychology

Ninth Edition

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**Timothy D. Wilson**

**Robin M. Akert**

**Samuel R. Sommers**

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To my grandchildren: Jacob, Jason, Ruth, Eliana, Natalie, Rachel, and Leo.  
My hope is that your capacity for empathy and compassion will help make  
the world a better place.

—E.A.

To my family, Deirdre Smith, Christopher Wilson, and Leigh Wilson

—T.D.W.

To my mentor, colleague, and friend, Dane Archer

—R.M.A.

To my students—past, present, and future—for making coming to work each  
morning fun, educational, and unpredictable.

—S.R.S.

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# Preface

When we began writing this book, our overriding goal was to capture the excitement of social psychology. We have been pleased to hear, in many kind letters and e-mail messages from professors and students, that we succeeded. One of our favorite responses was from a student who said that the book was so interesting that she always saved it for last, to reward herself for finishing her other work. With that one student, at least, we succeeded in making our book an enjoyable, fascinating story, not a dry report of facts and figures.

There is always room for improvement, however, and our goal in this, the ninth edition, is to make the field of social psychology an even better read. When we teach the course, there is nothing more gratifying than seeing the sleepy students in the back row sit up with interest and say, “Wow, I didn’t know that! Now *that’s* interesting.” We hope that students who read our book will have that same reaction.

## What’s New in This Edition?

We are pleased to add new features to the ninth edition that we believe will appeal to students and make it easier for them to learn the material. Each chapter begins with some learning objectives, which are repeated in the sections of the chapter that are most relevant to them and in the chapter-ending summary. All major sections of every chapter now end with review quizzes. Research shows that students learn material better when they are tested frequently, thus these section quizzes, as well as the test questions at the end of every chapter, should be helpful learning aids. Every chapter now has several writing prompts that instructors can decide to assign or not. In addition, we have retained and refined features that proved to be popular in the previous edition. For example, many of the Try It! exercises, which invite students to apply specific concepts to their everyday behavior, have been revised or replaced.

We have updated the ninth edition substantially, with numerous references to new research. Here is a sampling of the new research that is covered:

- A signature of our book continues to be Chapter 2, “Methodology: How Social Psychologists Do Research,” a readable, student-friendly chapter on social psychology research methods. This chapter has been updated for the ninth edition with new references and examples.
- Chapter 3, “Social Cognition: How We Think About the Social World,” has been reorganized to make the structure clearer to students. There are now four major sections: On Automatic Pilot: Low-Effort Thinking; Types of Automatic Thinking, Cultural Differences in Social Cognition, and Controlled Social Thinking. There are also new sections on automatic goal pursuit and decision making. Finally, the chapter has been updated with numerous new references.
- Chapter 4, “Social Perception: How We Come to Understand Other People,” now includes a new section on “First Impressions: Quick but Long-Lasting,” with new coverage of thin-slicing, belief perseverance, and the use of nonverbal communication to personal advantage (e.g., in the form of power posing). The chapter also presents updated research and conclusions regarding the universality of emotional expression, and new popular media examples from programs such as *Breaking Bad*, *Duck Dynasty*, and the podcast *Serial*.
- Chapter 5, “The Self: Understanding Ourselves in a Social Context,” has been reorganized into seven major sections instead of five, which should make the material clearer to students. We also revised the opening example, added a section on affective forecasting, reorganized some of the other sections (e.g., on culture and the self and on mindsets), added two new figures, and deleted or consolidated two other figures. Nearly 50 references to recent research have been added.
- Chapter 6, “The Need to Justify Our Actions,” now includes a revised definition of cognitive dissonance and two dozen new references. These updates include studies examining dissonance and cheating, hypocrisy and its consequences for self-justification, the justification of kindness in very young children, and a field study of justification of effort among participants in a religious ritual in Mauritius.
- Chapter 7, “Attitudes and Attitude Change: Influencing Thoughts and Feelings,” includes some reorganization of section order in response to reviewer suggestions and an updated analysis of advertising, stereotypes, and culture. New Try It! exercises have also been added regarding the role of automatic thought processes in consumer-related attitudes.
- Chapter 8, “Conformity: Influencing Behavior,” now boasts a new section on tactics of social influence, including the foot-in-the-door and door-in-the-face technique. We have also added review of the Bond et al. (2012) election study in which the appearance of an “I Voted” button on Facebook was found to influence users’ own likelihood of voting. This chapter also discusses the role of normative social influence in the polar plunge trend and the ALS ice bucket challenge that went viral on social media in 2014.
- Chapter 9, “Group Processes: Influence in Social Groups,” includes a new section on the relationship between group diversity, morale, and performance. The discussion of deindividuation has also been updated to consider the tendency as it is manifested in on-line contexts.

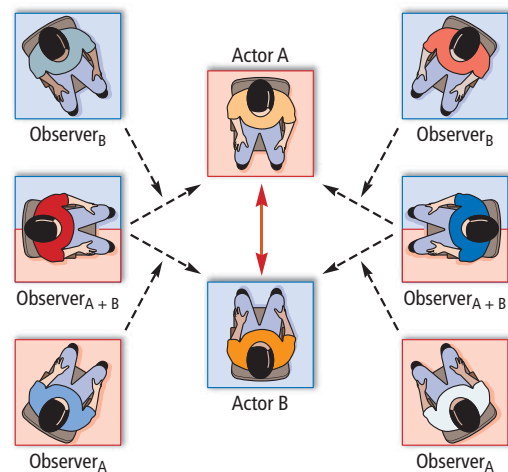
- Chapter 10, “Interpersonal Attraction: From First Impressions to Close Relationships,” has a new opening vignette focusing on Tinder and other dating-related apps/websites. We have expanded the treatment of fertility and attraction in response to reviewer feedback, and also added new research on the relationship between genetic similarity and attraction.
- In Chapter 11, “Prosocial Behavior: Why Do People Help?” we substantially revised the sections on religion and prosocial behavior and on positive psychology. We now discuss recent research by van den Bos on appraisal and bystander intervention and recent media examples, such as a mention of the movie *Kick Ass*.
- Chapter 12, “Aggression: Why Do We Hurt Other People? Can We Prevent It?,” has undergone significant organizational changes across the entire chapter for clarity and narrative flow. The first section now unifies various answers to the question of the origins of aggression—evolutionary, cultural, learned, physiological influences—with special attention to gender and aggression (similarities as well as the familiar differences). We have also added a section, “Putting the Elements Together: The Case of Sexual Assault.” Here we not only updated the references but also added the latest studies about causes of rape and sexual assault; sexual scripts; and a 2015 review of research on sexual miscommunications.
- In Chapter 13, “Prejudice: Causes, Consequences, and Cures,” we have added more on the Implicit Association Test (IAT) as it relates to measuring implicit bias. The chapter also now includes more social neuroscience research on social categorization and expands its discussion of the effects of prejudice on its targets. Several new glossary entries have been added to reflect these updates.
- Social Psychology in Action chapters—“Using Social Psychology to Achieve a Sustainable and Happy Future,” “Social Psychology and Health,” and “Social Psychology and the Law”—have been updated with many references to new research, but remain shorter chapters. When we teach the course, we find that students are excited to learn about these applied areas. At the same time, we recognize that some instructors have difficulty fitting the chapters into their courses. As with the previous edition, our approach remains to maintain a shortened length for the applied chapters to make it easy to integrate these chapters into different parts of the course in whatever fashion an instructor deems best. SPA1, “Using Social Psychology to Achieve a Sustainable and Happy Future,” has a new opening example about the effects of climate change on U.S. cities and a new discussion of how experiences make people happier than material things. In SPA2, “Social Psychology and Health,” we revised the sections on perceived control, “tend and befriend” responses to stress, and behavioral causes of health problems. SPA3, “Social Psychology and Law,” has updated information on the role of post-identification feedback on eyewitness confidence and revised conclusions regarding the repressed memory debate.

## REVEL™

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We are proud to release the ninth edition of *Social Psychology* in REVEL. This version of the book includes integrated videos and media content throughout, allowing students to explore topics more deeply at the point of relevancy. All of the interactive content in REVEL was carefully written and designed by the authors themselves, ensuring that students will receive the most effective presentation of the content in each chapter. Videos were also carefully selected by the author team, and several of them were filmed specifically for the ninth edition in REVEL.

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This edition of *Social Psychology* offers a variety of video types including interviews, as shown here with our lead author Elliot Aronson; news segments; and original lab experiment re-enactments directed by the authors and filmed at Tufts University.

## Teaching and Learning Resources

A really good textbook should become part of the classroom experience, supporting and augmenting the professor's vision for the class. *Social Psychology* offers a number of supplements that enrich both the professor's presentation of social psychology and the students' understanding of it.

### MyPsychLab<sup>®</sup>

- **MyPsychLab (013401264X)** combines proven learning applications with powerful assessment to engage students, assess their learning, and help them succeed.
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- **Media assignments** for each chapter—including videos with assignable questions—feed directly into the gradebook, enabling instructors to track student progress automatically.
- **The Pearson eText (0134012631)** lets students access their textbook anytime and anywhere, and in any way they want, including listening online.
- Designed to help you develop and assess concept mastery and critical thinking, the Writing Space offers a single place to create, track, and grade writing assignments, provide resources, and exchange meaningful, personalized feedback with students, quickly and easily. Thanks to auto-graded, assisted-graded, and

create-your-own assignments, you decide your level of involvement in evaluating students' work. The auto-graded option allows you to assign writing in large classes without having to grade essays by hand. And because of integration with Turnitin<sup>®</sup>, **Writing Space** can check students' work for improper citation or plagiarism.

## Instructor Resources

We know that instructors are “tour guides” for their students, leading them through the exciting world of social psychology in the classroom. As such, we have invested tremendous effort in the creation of a world-class collection of instructor resources that will support professors in their mission to teach the best course possible.

For this edition, new coauthor Sam Sommers guided the creation of the supplements package. Here are the highlights of the supplements we are pleased to provide:

### PRESENTATION TOOLS AND CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- **MyPsychLab Video Series for Social Psychology (0205847021)** Current and cutting edge, the new *MyPsychLab Video Series* for social psychology features videos covering the most recent research, science, and applications. Watch clips from ABC's wildly popular *What Would You Do?* series and discover how real people in real-world scenarios bring to life classic concepts in social psychology. The video series is also available to adopters on a DVD. Contact your Pearson representative for more information.
- **Social Psychology PowerPoint Collection (0134012348)** The PowerPoints provide an active format for presenting concepts from each chapter and incorporating relevant figures and tables. Instructors can choose from three PowerPoint presentations: a lecture presentation set that

highlights major topics from the chapters, a highly visual lecture presentation set with **embedded videos**, or a PowerPoint collection of the complete art files from the text. The PowerPoint files can be downloaded from [www.pearsonhighered.com](http://www.pearsonhighered.com).

- **Instructor’s Resource Manual** (0134012445) The Instructor’s Manual includes key terms, lecture ideas, teaching tips, suggested readings, chapter outlines, student projects and research assignments, Try It! exercises, critical thinking topics and discussion questions, and a media resource guide. It has been updated for the ninth edition with hyperlinks to ease facilitation of navigation within the IM.

## ASSESSMENT RESOURCES

- **Test Bank** (0134012453) Each of the more than 2,000 questions in this test bank is page-referenced to the text and categorized by topic and skill level. Each question in the test bank was reviewed by several instructors to ensure that we are providing you with the best and most accurate content in the industry.
- **MyTest Test Bank** (0134012437) This Web-based test-generating software provides instructors “best in class” features in an easy-to-use program. Create tests and easily select questions with drag-and-drop or point-and-click functionality. Add or modify test questions using the built-in Question Editor, and print tests in a variety of formats. The program comes with full technical support.

## LEARNING CATALYTICS

- **Learning Catalytics™** is an interactive, student-response tool that uses students’ smartphones, tablets, or laptops to engage them in more sophisticated tasks and thinking. Now included with MyLab & with eText, Learning Catalytics enables you to generate classroom discussion, guide your lecture, and promote peer-to-peer learning with real-time analytics. Instructors, you can:
  - Pose a variety of open-ended questions that help your students develop critical thinking skills.
  - Monitor responses to find out where students are struggling.
  - Use real-time data to adjust your instructional strategy and try other ways of engaging your students during class.
  - Manage student interactions by automatically grouping students for discussion, teamwork, and peer-to-peer learning.

## Acknowledgments

Elliot Aronson is delighted to acknowledge the collaboration of Carol Tavris in helping him update this edition. He would also like to acknowledge the contributions of his best friend (who also happens to be his wife of 60 years), Vera Aronson. Vera, as usual, provided inspiration for his ideas and acted as the sounding board for and supportive critic of many of his semiformed notions, helping to mold them into more-sensible analyses.

Tim Wilson would like to thank his graduate mentor, Richard E. Nisbett, who nurtured his interest in the field and showed him the continuity between social psychological research and everyday life. He also thanks the many students who have taken his course in social psychology over the years, for asking fascinating questions and providing wonderful examples of social psychological phenomena in their everyday lives. Lastly, he thanks the many graduate students with whom he has had the privilege of working for joining him in the ever-fascinating discovery of new social psychological phenomena.

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No book can be written and published without the help of many people working with the authors behind the scenes, and our book is no exception. We would like to thank the many colleagues who read one or more chapters of this edition and of previous editions of the book.

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Thank you for inviting us into your classroom. We welcome your suggestions, and we would be delighted to hear your comments about this book.

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# About the Authors

## Elliot Aronson

When I was a kid, we were the only Jewish family in a virulently anti-Semitic neighborhood. I had to go to Hebrew school every day, late in the afternoon. Being the only youngster in my neighborhood going to Hebrew school made me an easy target for some of the older neighborhood toughs. On my way home from Hebrew school, after dark, I was frequently waylaid and roughed up by roving gangs shouting anti-Semitic epithets.

I have a vivid memory of sitting on a curb after one of these beatings, nursing a bloody nose or a split lip, feeling very sorry for myself and wondering how these kids could hate me so much when they didn't even know me. I thought about whether those kids were taught to hate Jews or whether, somehow, they were born that way. I wondered if their hatred could be changed—if they got to know me better, would they hate me less? I speculated about my own character. What would I have done if the shoe were on the other foot—that is, if I were bigger and stronger than they, would I be capable of beating them up for no good reason?

I didn't realize it at the time, of course, but eventually I discovered that these were profound questions. And some 30 years later, as an experimental social psychologist, I had the great good fortune to be in a position to answer some of those questions and to invent techniques to reduce the kind of prejudice that had claimed me as a victim.

*Elliot Aronson is Professor Emeritus at the University of California at Santa Cruz and one of the most renowned social psychologists in the world. In 2002, he was chosen as one of the 100 most eminent psychologists of the twentieth century. Dr. Aronson is the only person in the 120-year history of the American Psychological Association to have received all three of its major awards: for distinguished writing, distinguished teaching, and distinguished research. Many other professional societies have honored his research and teaching as well. These include the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which gave him its highest honor, the Distinguished Scientific Research award; the American Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, which named him Professor of the Year of 1989; the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, which awarded him the Gordon Allport prize for his contributions to the reduction of prejudice among racial and ethnic groups; and the William James Award from the Association for Psychological Science. In 1992, he was named a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. A collection of papers and tributes by his former students and colleagues, *The Scientist and the Humanist*, celebrates his contributions to social psychological theory and its application to real-world problems. Dr. Aronson's own recent books for general audiences include *Mistakes Were Made (but not by ME)*, with Carol Tavris, and a memoir, *Not by Chance Alone: My Life as a Social Psychologist*.*

## Tim Wilson

One day when I was 8, a couple of older kids rode up on their bikes to share some big news: They had discovered an abandoned house down a country road. "It's really

neat," they said. "We broke a window and nobody cared!" My friend and I hopped onto our bikes to investigate. We had no trouble finding the house—there it was, sitting off by itself, with a big, jagged hole in a first-floor window. We got off of our bikes and looked around. My friend found a baseball-sized rock lying on the ground and threw a perfect strike through another first-floor window. There was something exhilarating about the smash-and-tingle of shattering glass, especially when we knew there was nothing wrong with what we were doing. After all, the house was abandoned, wasn't it? We broke nearly every window in the house and then climbed through one of the first-floor windows to look around.

It was then that we realized something was terribly wrong. The house certainly did not look abandoned. There were pictures on the wall, nice furniture, books in shelves. We went home feeling frightened and confused. We soon learned that the house was the home of an elderly couple who were away on vacation. Eventually, my parents discovered what we had done and paid a substantial sum to repair the windows. For years, I pondered this incident: Why did I do such a terrible thing? Was I a bad kid? I didn't think so, and neither did my parents. How, then, could a good kid do such a bad thing? Even though the neighborhood kids said the house was abandoned, why couldn't my friend and I see the clear signs that someone lived there? How crucial was it that my friend was there and threw the first rock? Although I didn't know it at the time, these reflections touched on several classic social psychological issues, such as whether only bad people do bad things, whether the social situation can be powerful enough to make good people do bad things, and the way in which our expectations about an event can make it difficult to see it as it really is. Fortunately, my career as a vandal ended with this one incident. It did, however, mark the beginning of my fascination with basic questions about how people understand themselves and the social world—questions I continue to investigate to this day.

*Tim Wilson did his undergraduate work at Williams College and Hampshire College and received his PhD from the University of Michigan. Currently Sherrell J. Aston Professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia, he has published numerous articles in the areas of introspection, attitude change, self-knowledge, and affective forecasting, as well as a recent book, *Redirect: The Surprising New Science of Psychological Change*. His research has received the support of the National Science Foundation and the National Institute for Mental Health. He has been elected twice to the Executive Board of the Society for Experimental Social Psychology and is a Fellow in the American Psychological Society and the Society for Personality and Social Psychology. In 2009, he was named a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2015 he received the William James Fellows Award from the Association for Psychological Science. Wilson has taught the Introduction to Social Psychology course at the University of Virginia for more than 30 years. In 2001 he was awarded the University of Virginia All-University Outstanding Teaching Award, and in 2010 was awarded the University of Virginia Distinguished Scientist Award.*

## Robin Akert

One fall day when I was about 16, I was walking with a friend along the shore of the San Francisco Bay. Deep in conversation, I glanced over my shoulder and saw a sailboat capsize. I pointed it out to my friend, who took only a perfunctory interest and went on talking. However, I kept watching as we walked, and I realized that the two sailors were in the water, clinging to the capsized boat. Again I said something to my friend, who replied, “Oh, they’ll get it upright—don’t worry.”

But I *was* worried. Was this an emergency? My friend didn’t think so. And I was no sailor; I knew nothing about boats. But I kept thinking, “That water is really cold. They can’t stay in that water too long.” I remember feeling very confused and unsure. What should I do? Should I do anything? Did they really need help?

We were near a restaurant with a big window overlooking the bay, and I decided to go in and see if anyone had done anything about the boat. Lots of people were watching but not doing anything. This confused me too. Meekly, I asked the bartender to call for some kind of help. He just shrugged. I went back to the window and watched the two small figures in the water. Why was everyone so unconcerned? Was I crazy?

Years later, I reflected on how hard it was for me to do what I did next: I demanded that the bartender let me use his phone. In those days before “911,” it was lucky that I knew there was a Coast Guard station on the bay, and I asked the operator for the number. I was relieved to hear the Guardsman take my message very seriously.

It had been an emergency. I watched as the Coast Guard cutter sped across the bay and pulled the two sailors out of the water. Maybe I saved their lives that day. What really stuck with me over the years was how other people behaved and how it made me feel. The other bystanders seemed unconcerned and did nothing to help. Their reactions made me doubt myself and made it harder for me to decide to take action. When I later studied social psychology in college, I realized that on the shore of the San Francisco Bay that day, I had experienced the “bystander effect” fully: The presence of other, apparently unconcerned bystanders had made it difficult for me to decide if the situation was an emergency and whether it was my responsibility to help.

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## Sam Sommers

I went to college to major in English. I only found myself in an Intro to Psychology course as a second-semester freshman because, well, it just seemed like the kind of thing you did as a second-semester freshman. It was when we got to the social psychology section of the course that a little voice in my head starting whispering something along the lines of, *Hey, you’ve gotta admit this is pretty good stuff. It’s a lot like the conversations you have with your friends about daily life, but with scientific data.*

As part of the class, we had the opportunity to participate in research studies for course credit. So one day I found myself in an interaction study in which I was going to work on solving problems with a partner. I walked in and it was clear that the other guy had arrived earlier—his coat and bag were already hanging on the back of a chair. I was led to another, smaller room and shown a video of my soon-to-be partner. Then I was given a series of written questions about my perceptions of him, my expectations for our upcoming session together, and so forth. Finally, I walked back into the main area. The experimenter handed me a chair and told me to put it down anywhere next to my partner’s chair, and that she would go get him (he, too, was presumably completing written questionnaires in a private room).

So I did. I put my chair down, took a seat, and waited. Then the experimenter returned, but she was alone. She told me the study was over. There was no other participant; there would be no problem-solving in pairs. The video I had watched was of an actor, and in some versions of the study he mentioned having a girlfriend. In other versions, he mentioned a boyfriend. What the researchers were actually studying was how this social category information of sexual orientation would influence participants’ attitudes about the interaction.

And then she took out a tape measure.

The tape measure was to gauge how close to my partner’s chair I had placed my own chair, the hypothesis being that discomfort with a gay partner might manifest in terms of participants placing their chairs farther away. Greater comfort with or affinity for the partner was predicted to lead to more desire for proximity.

And at that, I was hooked. The little voice in my head had grown from a whisper to a full-throated yell that this was a field I could get excited about. First of all, the researchers had tricked me. That, alone, I thought was, for lack of a better word, *cool*. But more important, they had done so in the effort to get me and my fellow participants to reveal something about our attitudes, preferences, and tendencies that we never would have admitted to (or perhaps even would have been aware of) had they just asked us directly. Here was a fascinatingly creative research design, being used in the effort to study what struck me as an incredibly important social issue.

Like I said, I was hooked. And I look forward to helping to introduce you to this field that caught me by surprise back when I was a student and continues to intrigue and inspire me to this day.

*Sam Sommers earned his BA from Williams College and his PhD from the University of Michigan. Since 2003 he has been a faculty member in the Department of Psychology at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. His research examines issues related to stereotyping, prejudice, and group diversity, with a particular interest in how these processes play out in the legal domain. He has won multiple teaching awards at Tufts, including the Lerman-Neubauer Prize for Outstanding Teaching and Advising and the Gerald R. Gill Professor of the Year Award. He was also inducted into the Tufts Hall of Diversity for his efforts to promote an inclusive climate on campus for all students. He has testified as an expert witness on issues related to racial bias, jury decision-making, and eyewitness memory in criminal trial proceedings in seven states. His first general audience book on social psychology was published in 2011, titled *Situations Matter: Understanding How Context Transforms Your World*. His next book, titled *Your Brain on Sports*, is coauthored with L. Jon Wertheim of Sports Illustrated and will be published in early 2016.*

# Special Tips for Students

“There is then creative reading as well as creative writing,” said Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1837, and that aptly sums up what you need to know to be a proficient student: Be an active, creative consumer of information. How do you accomplish that feat? Actually, it’s not difficult. Like everything else in life, it just takes some work—some clever, well-planned, purposeful work. Here are some suggestions about how to do it.

## Get to Know the Textbook

Believe it or not, in writing this book, we thought carefully about the organization and structure of each chapter. Things are presented as they are for a reason, and that reason is to help you learn the material in the best way possible. Here are some tips on what to look for in each chapter.

**Key terms are in boldface type in the text so that you’ll notice them.** We define the terms in the text, and that definition appears again in the margin. These marginal definitions are there to help you out if later in the chapter you forget what something means. The marginal definitions are quick and easy to find. You can also look up key terms in the alphabetical Glossary at the end of this textbook.

**Make sure you notice the headings and subheadings.** The headings are the skeleton that holds a chapter together. They link together like vertebrae. If you ever feel lost, look back to the previous heading and the headings before it—this will give you the “big picture” of where the chapter is going. It should also help you see the connections between sections.

**The summary at the end of each chapter** is a succinct shorthand presentation of the chapter information. You should read it and make sure there are no surprises when you do so. If anything in the summary doesn’t ring a bell, go back to the chapter and reread that section. Most important, remember that the summary is intentionally brief, whereas your understanding of the material should be full and complete. Use the summary as a study aid before your exams. When you read it over, everything should be familiar. When you have that wonderful feeling of knowing more than is in the summary, you’ll know that you are ready to take the exam.

**Be sure to do the Try It! exercises.** They will make concepts from social psychology concrete and help you see how they can be applied to your own life. Some of the *Try It!* exercises replicate social psychology experiments. Others reproduce self-report scales so you can see where you stand in relation to other people. Still others are short quizzes that illustrate social psychological concepts.

**Watch the videos.** Our carefully curated collection of interviews, news clips, and research study reenactments is designed to enhance, and help you better understand, the concepts you’re reading. If you can see the concept in action, it’s likely to sink in a little deeper.

## Just Say No to the Couch Potato Within

Because social psychology is about everyday life, you might lull yourself into believing that the material is all common sense. Don’t be fooled. The material presented in this book is more complicated than it might seem. Therefore, we want to emphasize that the best way to learn it is to work with it in an active, not passive, fashion. You can’t just read a chapter once and expect it to stick with you. You have to go over the material, wrestle with it, make your own connections to it, question it, think about it, interact with it. Actively working with material makes it memorable and makes it your own. Because it’s a safe bet that someone is going to ask you about this material later and you’re going to have to pull it out of memory, do what you can to get it into memory now. Here are some techniques to use:

- Go ahead and be bold—use a highlighter! If you highlight important points using the highlighting tool in your toolbar, you will remember those important points better and can scroll back through them later.
- Read the chapter before the applicable class lecture, not afterward. This way, you’ll get more out of the lecture, which will likely introduce new material in addition to what is in the chapter. The chapter will give you the big picture, as well as a lot of detail. The lecture will enhance that information and help you put it all together. If you haven’t read the chapter first, you may not understand some of the points made in the lecture or realize which points are most important.
- Here’s a good way to study material: Write out a key concept or a study in your own words, without looking at the book or your notes. Or say it out loud to yourself—again in your own words, with your eyes closed. Can you do it? How good was your version? Did you omit anything important? Did you get stuck at some point, unable to remember what comes next? If so, you now know that you need to go over that information in more detail. You can also study with someone else, describing theories and studies to each other and seeing if you’re making sense.
- If you have trouble remembering the results of an important study, try drawing your own version of a graph of the findings (you can use our data graphs for an idea of how to proceed). You will probably find that you remember the research results much better in pictorial form than in words. Draw the information a few times and it will stay with you.
- Remember, the more you work with the material, the better you will learn and remember it. Write it in your own words, talk about it, explain it to others, or draw visual representations of it.

- Last but not least, remember that this material is a lot of fun. You haven't even started reading the book yet, but we think you're going to like it. In particular, you'll see how much social psychology has to tell you about your real, everyday life. As this course progresses, you might want to remind yourself to observe the events of your daily life with new eyes—the eyes of a social psychologist—and try to apply what you are learning to the behavior of friends, acquaintances, strangers, and, yes, even yourself. Make sure you use the *Try It!* exercises and visit the Web site. You will find out how much social psychology can help us understand our lives. When you read the news, think about what social psychology has to say about current events and behaviors; we believe you will find that your understanding of daily life is richer. If you notice a

news article that you think is an especially good example of “social psychology in action,” please send it to us, with a full reference to where you found it and on what page. If we decide to use it in the next edition of this book, we'll list your name in the Acknowledgments.

We realize that ten years from now you may not remember all the facts, theories, and names you learn now. Although we hope you will remember some of them, our main goal is for you to take with you into your future a great many of the broad social psychological concepts presented herein—and, perhaps more important, a critical and scientific way of thinking. If you open yourself to social psychology's magic, we believe it will enrich the way you look at the world and the way you live in it.

# Chapter 1

# Introducing Social Psychology



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## Chapter Outline and Learning Objectives

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### Defining Social Psychology

#### **1.1** What is social psychology, and how is it different from other disciplines?

Social Psychology, Philosophy, Science, and Common Sense

How Social Psychology Differs from Its Closest Cousins

### The Power of the Situation

#### **1.2** Why does it matter how people explain and interpret events—and their own and others' behavior?

The Importance of Explanation

The Importance of Interpretation

### Where Construals Come From: Basic Human Motives

#### **1.3** What happens when people's need to feel good about themselves conflicts with their need to be accurate?

The Self-Esteem Motive: The Need to Feel Good About Ourselves

The Social Cognition Motive: The Need to Be Accurate

It is a pleasure to be your tour guides as we take you on a journey through the world of social psychology. The four authors of your book, combined, have taught this course for almost 100 years, so we know the terrain pretty well. As we embark on this journey, our hope is to convey our excitement about social psychology—what it is and why it matters. Not only do we enjoy teaching this stuff, we also love contributing to the growth and development of this field—for, in addition to being teachers, each of us is a scientist who has contributed to the knowledge base that makes up our discipline. In effect, not only are we leading this tour, we also helped create some of its major attractions. We will travel to fascinating and exotic places like prejudice, love, propaganda, education, the law, aggression, compassion, . . . all the rich variety and surprise of human social life. Ready? OK, let's go!

Let's begin with a few examples of the heroic, touching, tragic, and puzzling things that people do:

- After two brothers set off a bomb at the finish line of the Boston Marathon in 2013, killing three people and severely injuring 170 others, citizens of Boston raced to the rescue. Many, in spite of the risk to themselves, ran straight to the site of the bombing to help the injured, putting tourniquets on bleeding wounds until ambulances could arrive. "We're a strong city," said the mayor. "Boston will overcome."
- Kristen has known Martin for 2 months and feels that she is madly in love with him. "We're soul mates!" she tells her best friend. "He's the one!" "What are you thinking?" says the BF. "He's completely wrong for you! He's as different from you as can be—different background, religion, politics; you even like different movies." "I'm not worried," says Kristen. "Opposites attract. I know that's true; I read it on Wikipedia!"
- Janine and her brother Oscar are arguing about fraternities. Janine's college didn't have any, but Oscar is at a large state university in the Midwest, where he has joined Alpha Beta. He went through a severe and scary hazing ritual to join, and Janine cannot understand why he loves these guys so much. "They make the pledges do such stupid stuff," she says. "They humiliate you and force you to get sick drunk and practically freeze to death in the middle of the night. How can you possibly be happy living there?" "You don't get it," Oscar replies. "Alpha Beta is the best of all fraternities. My frat brothers just seem more fun than most other guys."
- Abraham Biggs Jr., age 19, had been posting to an online discussion board for 2 years. Unhappy about his future and that a relationship had ended, Biggs announced on camera that he was going to commit suicide. He took an overdose of drugs and linked to a live video feed from his bedroom. None of his hundreds of observers called the police for more than 10 hours; some egged him on. Paramedics reached him too late, and Biggs died.
- In the mid-1970s, several hundred members of the Peoples Temple, a California-based religious cult, immigrated to Guyana under the guidance of their leader, the Reverend Jim Jones, where they founded an interracial community called Jonestown. But within a few years some members wanted out, an outside investigation was about to get Jones in trouble, and the group's solidarity was waning. Jones grew despondent and, summoning everyone in the community, spoke to them about the beauty of dying and the certainty that everyone would meet again in another place. The residents willingly lined up in front of a vat containing a mixture of Kool-Aid and cyanide, and drank the lethal concoction. (The legacy of this massacre is the term "drinking the Kool-Aid," referring to a person's blind belief in an ideology that could lead to death.) A total of 914 people died, including 80 babies and the Reverend Jones.

Why do many people rush into danger and discomfort to help strangers in trouble? Is Kristen right that opposites attract or is she just kidding herself? Why did Oscar

come to love his fraternity brothers in spite of the hazing they had put him through? Why would people watch a troubled young man commit suicide in front of their eyes, when, by simply flagging the video to alert the Web site, they might have averted a tragedy? How could hundreds of people be induced to kill their own children and then commit suicide?

All of these stories—the good, the bad, the ugly—pose fascinating questions about human behavior. In this book, we will show you how social psychologists go about answering them.

## Defining Social Psychology

### 1.1 What is social psychology, and how is it different from other disciplines?

The task of the psychologist is to try to understand and predict human behavior. Different kinds of psychologists go about this task in different ways, and we want to show you how social psychologists do it. **Social psychology** is the scientific study of the way in which people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the real or imagined presence of other people: parents, friends, employers, teachers, strangers—indeed, by the entire social situation (Allport, 1985). When we think of social influence, the kinds of examples that readily come to mind are direct attempts at persuasion, whereby one person deliberately tries to change another person's behavior or attitude. This is what happens when advertisers use sophisticated techniques to persuade us to buy a particular brand of toothpaste, or when our friends try to get us to do something we don't really want to do ("Come on, have another beer—everyone is doing it"), or when the schoolyard bully uses force or threats to get smaller kids to part with their lunch money.

The study of direct attempts at **social influence** is a major part of social psychology and will be discussed in our chapters on conformity, attitudes, and group processes. To the social psychologist, however, social influence is broader than attempts by one person to change another person's behavior. It includes our thoughts and feelings as well as our overt acts, and takes many forms other than deliberate attempts at persuasion. We are often influenced merely by the *presence* of other people, including perfect strangers who are not interacting with us. Other people don't even have to be present: We are governed by the imaginary approval or disapproval of our parents, friends, and teachers and by how we expect others to react to us. Sometimes these influences conflict with one another, and social psychologists are especially interested in what happens in the mind of an individual when they do. For example, conflicts frequently occur when young people go off to college and find themselves torn between the beliefs and values they learned at home and the beliefs and values of their professors or peers. (See the Try It!)

### Social Psychology

The scientific study of the way in which people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the real or imagined presence of other people

### Social Influence

The effect that the words, actions, or mere presence of other people have on our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or behavior

## TRY IT!

### How Do Other People Affect Your Values?

Think of the major values that govern people's lives: love, money, sex, religion, freedom, compassion for others, security, children, duty, loyalty, and so on. Make three lists of the 10 values that are most important to (1) you, (2) your parents, and (3) your closest friends in college. If there are

differences in your lists, how do they affect you? Are some of your values conflicting with those of your parents or friends, and if so do you find yourself rejecting one set of values in favor of the other? Are you trying to find a compromise between the two?



Our thoughts, feelings, and actions are influenced by our immediate surroundings, including the presence of other people—even mere strangers.



We will spend the rest of this introductory chapter expanding on these issues, so that you will get an idea of what social psychology is, what it isn't, and how it differs from other, related disciplines.

## Social Psychology, Philosophy, Science, and Common Sense

Throughout history, philosophy has been a major source of insight about human nature. Indeed, the work of philosophers is part of the foundation of contemporary psychology. Psychologists have looked to philosophers for insights into the nature of consciousness (e.g., Dennett, 1991) and how people form beliefs about the social world (e.g., Gilbert, 1991). Sometimes, however, even great thinkers find themselves in disagreement with one another. When this occurs, how are you supposed to know who is right? Are there some situations where Philosopher A might be right, and other situations where Philosopher B might be right? How would you determine this?

We social psychologists address many of the same questions that philosophers do, but we attempt to look at these questions scientifically—even questions concerning that great human mystery, love. In 1663, the Dutch philosopher Benedict Spinoza offered a highly original insight. In sharp disagreement with the hedonistic philosopher Aristippus, he proposed that if we fall in love with someone whom we formerly



British soldiers stand near burning vehicles in Kabul, Afghanistan, after a suicide car bomber killed soldiers on a NATO-led peacekeeping mission. What causes a person to become a suicide bomber? Popular theories say such people must be mentally ill, alienated loners, or psychopaths. But social psychologists would try to understand the circumstances and situations that drive otherwise healthy, well-educated, bright people to commit murder and suicide for the sake of a religious or political goal.

hated, that love will be stronger than if hatred had not preceded it. Spinoza's proposition was beautifully worked out, with impeccable logic. But how can we be sure that it holds up? Does it always hold up? What are the conditions under which it does or doesn't? These are *empirical* questions, meaning that their answers can be derived from experimentation or measurement rather than by personal opinion (Aronson, 1999; Aronson & Linder, 1965).

Now let's take another look at the examples that opened this chapter. Why did these people behave the way they did? One way to answer would simply be to ask them. We could ask the people who observed Abraham Biggs's suicide why they didn't call the police; we could ask Oscar why he enjoys fraternity life; we could ask the Boston rescuers why they ran headlong into a potentially dangerous situation. The problem with this approach is that people are often unaware of the reasons behind their own responses and feelings (Gilbert, 2008; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Wilson, 2002). People might come up with plenty of justifications for not calling the police to rescue Biggs, but those justifications might not be the *reason* they did nothing.

After the mass suicide at Jonestown, everyone had an explanation:

- Jones used hypnotism and drugs to weaken the resistance of his followers.
- Jones attracted people who were already clinically depressed.
- Only mentally ill or emotionally disturbed people join cults.

These were the leading "common sense" answers, but they are mistaken. Moreover, if we rely on commonsense explanations of one particular tragic event, we don't learn much that helps us understand other, similar ones.

Thus, in explaining a tragedy like Jonestown—or any other topic of interest—social psychologists would want to know which of many possible explanations is the most likely. To do this, we have devised an array of scientific methods to test our assumptions, guesses, and ideas about human social behavior, empirically and systematically rather than by relying on folk wisdom, common sense, or the opinions and insights of philosophers, novelists, political pundits, and our grandmothers. Doing

experiments in social psychology presents many challenges, primarily because we are attempting to predict the behavior of highly sophisticated organisms in complex situations. As scientists, our goal is to find objective answers to such questions as: What are the factors that cause aggression? What causes prejudice, and how might we reduce it? What variables cause two people to like or love each other? Why do certain kinds of political advertisements work better than others?

To answer questions like these, the first task of the social psychologist is to make an educated guess, called a *hypothesis*, about the specific situations under which one outcome or the other would occur. Just as a physicist performs experiments to test hypotheses about the nature of the physical world, the social psychologist performs experiments to test hypotheses about the nature of the social world. The next task is to design well-controlled experiments sophisticated enough to tease out the situations that would result in one or another outcome. This method allows us to make accurate predictions once we know the key aspects of the prevailing situation. (See Chapter 2.)

Social psychologists are not opposed to folk wisdom—far from it. The primary problem with relying entirely on such sources is that, like philosopher A and philosopher B, they often disagree with one another. Consider what folk wisdom has to say about the factors that influence how much we like other people. We know that “birds of a feather flock together.” Of course, we say, thinking of the many examples of our pleasure in hanging out with people who share our backgrounds and interests. But folk wisdom also tells us—as it persuaded lovestruck Kristen—that “opposites attract.” Of course, we say, thinking of all the times we were attracted to people with different backgrounds and interests. Well, which is it? Similarly, are we to believe that “out of sight is out of mind” or that “absence makes the heart grow fonder”?

Social psychologists would suggest that there are some conditions under which birds of a feather do flock together, and other conditions under which opposites do attract. Similarly, in some conditions absence does make the heart grow fonder, and in others “out of sight” does mean out of mind. But it’s not enough to say both proverbs can be true. Part of the job of the social psychologist is to do the research that specifies the *conditions* under which one or another is most likely to take place.

## How Social Psychology Differs from Its Closest Cousins

If you are like most people, when you read the examples that opened this chapter, you assumed that the individuals involved had some weaknesses, strengths, and personality traits that led them to respond as they did. Some people are leaders and others are followers; some people are public-spirited and others are selfish; some are brave and others are cowardly. Perhaps the people who failed to get help for Abraham Biggs were lazy, timid, selfish, or heartless. Given what you know about their behavior, would you loan them your car or trust them to take care of your new puppy?

Asking and trying to answer questions about people’s behavior in terms of their traits is the work of personality psychologists, who generally focus on *individual differences*, the aspects of people’s personalities that make them different from others. Research on personality increases our understanding of human behavior, but social psychologists believe that explaining behavior primarily through personality traits ignores a critical part of the story: the powerful role played by social influence.

Consider again the tragedy at Jonestown. Remember that it was not just a handful of people who committed suicide there, but almost 100 percent of them. It is highly improbable that they were all mentally ill or had the same constellation of personality traits. If we want a richer, more thorough explanation of this tragic event, we need to understand what kind of power and influence a charismatic figure like Jim



Personality psychologists study qualities of the individual that might make a person shy, conventional, rebellious, and willing to wear a turquoise wig in public or a yellow shirt in a sea of blue. Social psychologists study the powerful role of social influence on how all of us behave.

Jones possessed, the nature of the impact of living in a closed society cut off from other points of view, and other factors that could have caused mentally healthy people to obey him. In fact, as social psychologists have shown, the social conditions at Jonestown were such that virtually anyone—even strong, nondepressed individuals like you or us—would have succumbed to Jones’s influence.

Here is a more mundane example. Suppose you go to a party and see a great-looking fellow student you have been hoping to get to know better. The student is looking pretty uncomfortable, however—standing alone, not making eye contact, not talking to anyone who comes over. You decide you’re not so interested; this person seems pretty aloof, even arrogant. But a few weeks later you see the student again, now being outgoing, witty, and appealing. So what is this person “really” like? Shy or arrogant, charming and welcoming? It’s the wrong question; the answer is both and neither. All of us are capable of being shy in some situations and outgoing in others. A much more interesting question is: What factors were different in these two situations that had such a profound effect on the student’s behavior? That is a social psychological question. (See the Try It!)

## TRY IT!

### Social Situations and Shyness

1. Think about one of your friends or acquaintances whom you regard as shy. (You may use yourself!) Try not to think about him or her as “a shy person,” but rather as someone who has difficulty relating to people in some situations but not others.
2. List the situations you think are most likely to bring out your friend’s shy behavior.
3. List the situations that might bring forth more outgoing behaviors on your friend’s part. Being with a small group of friends he or she is at ease with? Being with a new person, but one who shares your friend’s interests?
4. Set up a social environment that you think would make your friend comfortable. Pay close attention to the effect that it has on your friend’s behavior—or yours.

Social psychology is related to other disciplines in the social sciences, including sociology, economics, and political science. Each examines the influence of social factors on human behavior, but important differences set social psychology apart—most notably in their level of analysis. For biologists, the level of analysis might be genes, hormones, or neurotransmitters. For personality and clinical psychologists, the level of the analysis is the individual. *For the social psychologist, the level of analysis is the individual in the context of a social situation.* For example, to understand why people intentionally hurt one another, the social psychologist focuses on the psychological processes that trigger aggression in specific situations. To what extent is aggression preceded by frustration? Does frustration always precede aggression? If people are feeling frustrated, under what conditions will they vent their frustration with an aggressive act and under what conditions will they restrain themselves? What are other causes of aggression? (See Chapter 12.)

Other social sciences are more concerned with social, economic, political, and historical factors that influence events. Sociology, rather than focusing on the individual, focuses on such topics as social class, social structure, and social institutions. Of course, because society is made up of collections of people, some overlap is bound to exist between the domains of sociology and those of social psychology. The major difference is that in sociology, *the level of analysis is the group, institution, or society at large.* So while sociologists, like social psychologists, are interested in causes of aggression, sociologists are more likely to be concerned with why a particular society (or group within a society) produces different levels of violence in its members. Why is the murder rate in the United States so much higher than in Canada or Europe? Within the United States, why is the murder rate higher in some geographic regions than in others? How do changes in society relate to changes in aggressive behavior?

Social psychology differs from other social sciences not only in the level of analysis, but also in what is being explained. *The goal of social psychology is to identify properties of human nature that make almost everyone susceptible to social influence, regardless of social class or culture.* The laws governing the relationship between frustration and aggression, for example, are hypothesized to be true of most people in most places, not just members of one gender, social class, culture, age group, or ethnicity.

However, because social psychology is a young science that developed mostly in the United States, many of its findings have not yet been tested in other cultures to see if they are universal. Nonetheless, our goal is to discover such laws. And increasingly, as methods and theories developed by American social psychologists are adopted by European, Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and South American social psychologists, we are learning more about the extent to which these laws are universal, as well as cultural differences in the way these laws are expressed (see Chapter 2). *Cross-cultural research* is therefore extremely valuable, because it sharpens theories, either by demonstrating their universality or by leading us to discover additional variables that help us improve our understanding and prediction of human behavior. We will offer many examples of cross-cultural research in this book.

In sum, social psychology is located between its closest cousins, sociology and personality psychology (see Table 1.1). Social psychology and sociology share an interest in the way the situation and the larger society

The people in this photo can be studied from a variety of perspectives: as individuals or as members of a family, a social class, an occupation, a culture, or a region. Sociologists study the group or institution; social psychologists study the influence of those groups and institutions on individual behavior.



**Table 1.1** Social Psychology Compared to Related Disciplines

Sociology	Social Psychology	Personality Psychology
The study of groups, organizations, and societies, rather than individuals.	The study of the psychological processes people have in common that make them susceptible to social influence.	The study of the characteristics that make individuals unique and different from one another.

influence behavior. Social psychology and personality psychology share an interest in the psychology of the individual. But social psychologists work in the overlap between those two disciplines: They emphasize the psychological processes shared by most people around the world that make them susceptible to social influence.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

- A social psychologist would tend to look for explanations of a young man's violent behavior *primarily* in terms of:
  - his aggressive personality traits.
  - possible genetic contributions.
  - how his peer group behaves.
  - what his father taught him.
- The topic that would most interest a social psychologist is
  - how the level of extroversion of different presidents affected their political decisions.
  - whether people's decision about whether to cheat on a test is influenced by how they imagine their friends would react if they found out.
  - the extent to which people's social class predicts their income.
  - what passers-by on the street think of global warming.
- How does social psychology differ from personality psychology?
  - Social psychology focuses on individual differences, whereas personality psychology focuses on how people behave in different situations.
  - Social psychology focuses on the shared processes that make people susceptible to social influence, whereas personality psychology focuses on individual differences.
- Social psychology provides general laws and theories about societies, whereas personality psychology studies the characteristics that make people unique.
- Social psychology focuses on individual differences, whereas personality psychology provides general laws and theories about societies.
- What is the "level of analysis" for a social psychologist?
  - The individual in the context of a social situation.
  - The social situation itself.
  - A person's level of achievement.
  - A person's level of reasoning.
- Which of the following research topics about violence is one that a social psychologist might investigate?
  - How rates of violence change over time within a culture.
  - Why murder rates vary across cultures.
  - Brain abnormalities that produce aggression when a person is provoked.
  - Why some situations are more likely to provoke aggression than others.

See page AK-1 for the answers.

## The Power of the Situation

### 1.2 Why does it matter how people explain and interpret events—and their own and others' behavior?

Suppose you stop at a roadside restaurant for a cup of coffee and a piece of pie. The server comes over to take your order, but you are having a hard time deciding which pie you want. While you are hesitating, she impatiently taps her pen against her notepad, rolls her eyes toward the ceiling, scowls at you, and finally snaps, "Hey, I haven't got all day, you know!" Like most people, you would probably think that she is a nasty or unpleasant person.

But suppose, while you are deciding whether to complain about her to the manager, a regular customer tells you that your "crabby" server is a single parent who