

Introduction: Adaptive Motives for Social Situations, via Cultures and Brains

What are your major concerns? What do you think about in the shower, discuss with friends after midnight, or ponder on the way to school? If you are like many students, various thoughts, both trivial and life-shaping, come to mind: Who am I, and who will I become? Do I look better in a sweater or a sweatshirt? How will I get that reading done in time? Should I go into clinical psychology, teaching, law, business, or some other field? How can I support myself in a career that makes sense to me? Who loves me, and whom do I love? Will that attractive person in my social psychology class be there today? What groups are mine? Should I join the campus drama club or do some community service? Am I safe here? Why do people hurt and kill each other? Are people basically loving, good, and helpful or self-serving, amoral opportunists? How can we make the world a better place? Although social psychology won't tell you whether you look good in a sweatshirt, it can help you answer some of these questions about your life and the world around you.

To introduce social psychology, this chapter tackles several issues. First, what is social psychology all about, and how does it relate to everyday concerns? Second, what is social psychology's main intellectual contribution? Third, what core social motives help people adapt to living with other people? Fourth, how does culture shape these general motives? Fifth, what key features characterize social psychology's scientific approach?

What Is Social Psychology?

To illustrate social psychology at work, try this exercise. Take a clean sheet of paper, and fold it in half the long way. Now open it up, and fold one top corner down to meet the center crease. Then fold down the other top corner the same way. Now fold the paper in half again along the center crease. Fold one of the long sides backward to the outside of the crease, making another fold parallel to the central one. Flip the paper over and repeat this last step on the other side. What is this shape? What does it look like?

If you are like most readers, you have probably read this far and not done what I just asked you to do; you are reading on ahead to see if it is really necessary to put the book down, find a piece of paper, think through each instruction, fold the paper, and so on. No one will know whether you do it or not, so why bother until you find out if you really have to? You are especially unlikely to have followed these instructions if you are sitting someplace where other people can see you.

Now, try a thought experiment: Compare your reactions to those of students in my social psychology classes. In large and small classes alike, to a person, they all obediently take their pristine course syllabus, fold it in half, fold down the top corners, and construct ... what? A paper airplane.

I never quite have the nerve to ask my students to take off their shoes and put them on their desks, or to stand up and face the back of the classroom and wave at the projection booth, but I suspect that if I did, they would probably comply. Why? Would they normally take off their shoes and put them on the desk in front of them? Would they normally fold their syllabus into a

paper airplane? Then, why do they do it, semester after semester, year after year? Because I ask them to. But that's not the only reason. They comply because everyone else does. And why did you *not* fold the paper airplane when I asked you to? Because your professor is not standing over you, in person and in authority. Because you are not sitting in a classroom full of other students doing the same thing. (If you did do it, you are a remarkably cooperative and active learner; congratulations!) In the classroom—as opposed to your room, the library, the lounge, the café, or wherever you are reading this—two simultaneous forms of social pressure occur: the professor's request and other people going along with it.

Consider a second example. Eight male college students participate in a perception experiment, judging one standard line against three comparison lines (see Figure 1.1). Given a standard line of 10", they choose the comparison line that is closest in length, stating their choice aloud, each in turn. The task is easy, and the first two judgments are unanimous. On the third trial, a 3" standard appears beside comparison lines of $3\frac{3}{4}"$, $4\frac{1}{4}"$, and 3". Seven participants all choose the first comparison line as equivalent to the standard, and the eighth student finds himself a minority of one in the midst of a unanimous and erroneous majority. This experience is repeated in 11 of the remaining 15 trials.

This strange circumstance occurs because seven members of the group are confederates of the experimenter, who is studying group pressure on judgments (Asch, 1956). And indeed, three-quarters of the participants go along at least once with the conspirators' mistakes, blatant

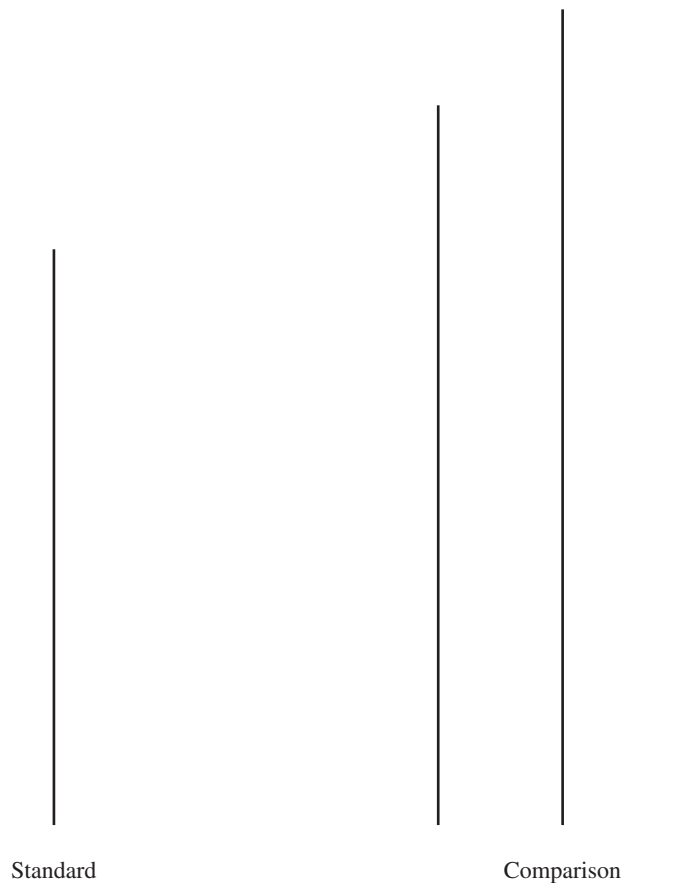


FIGURE 1.1 Sample standard line and comparison lines judged in Asch Study of Group Conformity (as described by Asch, 1956).

errors of $1\frac{1}{2}''$ to $1\frac{3}{4}''$ on lines ranging from $2''$ to $10''$. Conversely, no participant making private judgments in a control condition makes any mistakes. On average, a third of the trial judgments are erroneous, with no other cause than conformity to the group, in direct violation of the participants' senses.

Consider a third and final example. Jennifer King, a student at a small private college, wanted to make the world a better place. Along with many other students, she joined an organization called Western Massachusetts Labor Action. This group recruited students to chop wood for the poor, attend educational meetings, and canvass for new members; the group was known on campus as "a sort of Salvation Army with a political edge" (Rabinovitz, 1996). Indeed, lots of students participated as a way to fulfill a community service requirement for one particular course. Jennifer soon left college to become a full-time volunteer at the group's Brooklyn office, the National Labor Federation. She had a dream of organizing the poor to create a more just world, and she was willing to work hard toward her vision.

Instead, she spent all her time confined inside a cramped apartment building, filing and telephoning; every minute was scheduled. Each evening, everyone in the group had to attend political lectures, which would sometimes last until 4:00 or 5:00 a.m. Jennifer and about 50 other recruits would stagger off to bed, only to wake up to commands from a loudspeaker six hours later. She was exhausted and had no time to think. Also, she was not allowed to chat with other recruits; she was isolated from family and friends; and she was not allowed outside. The group's stated goal was mobilizing the poor to challenge the economic system, but they never seemed to get around to it, although they did collect a supply of rifles, shotguns, ammunition, and explosives. Jennifer became terrified, and after a few weeks, she escaped. Many other people never did.

The social-psychological question is this: Why did someone with such ideals choose to stay in such a useless, dangerous psychological prison? Some people would call this a cult, especially as its charismatic founder, Eugenio Perente-Ramos, had kept many people enthralled until his death a few years before. But why were people trapped by this group even now? Why were they afraid to leave the building? Most people never knew about the guns, so they were not physically coerced. The simple answer is the same one that causes my students, year after year, to fold their syllabi into paper airplanes and the same one that caused the Asch experiment's participants to conform in violation of their senses: People influence other people.

A Classic Definition

Social psychology is all about people influencing other people. **Social psychology** is the scientific attempt to explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of other human beings. This is a classic definition of social psychology; it dates back decades to Gordon Allport (1954a, p. 5), one of the field's pioneers. This definition describes social psychology as the study of social influence: all the ways that people have an impact on one another. Social influence affects not only trivial behavior, such as making paper airplanes in class. It also affects important behavior, such as yielding to majority opinion over one's own judgment, as the research participants did; allowing oneself to be imprisoned doing useless paperwork, as Jennifer did; or torturing innocent people, as soldiers sometimes have done (Fiske, Harris, & Cuddy, 2004). These behaviors have one feature in common: people doing what others around them are doing.

If we unpack the classic definition of social psychology, we can overview the key elements of this science. First, people are influenced by *other people's* presence to do something that they would not have done otherwise. As noted earlier, students in my classes are influenced both by my presence making a request and by the presence of other students complying. The experiment's participants were primarily influenced by their peers' erroneous but unanimous public judgments. Jennifer was influenced both by the leaders of the group who were telling her what to do and by the unquestioning cooperation of the other recruits.

Second, the terms *actual*, *imagined*, and *implied* differentiate among three degrees of perceived human presence. In the situation with the paper airplanes, students are influenced by the *actual* presence of other people making airplanes. Ditto for the conforming participants in the experiment, Jennifer and the other volunteers, and the soldiers just following orders. Other people's actual presence is enormously powerful, as anyone knows who has consumed too much alcohol by just going along with the crowd.

The *imagined* presence of others also matters: When you show up for class on time, you are influenced by your imagination. As you are running to class, you envision walking in late, which can be a little or a lot embarrassing, depending on the door's location relative to the teacher and the eyes of the class. As another example, you may imagine other people's reactions when you get dressed in the morning. What are other people going to think of you in yoga pants? Most people don't attend class in a business suit, a bathing suit, or their birthday suit. Why not? Because people monitor their own behavior against the imagined reactions of other people: You do not have to have firsthand experience to avoid showing up in a clown suit.

The *implied* presence of others refers, for example, to the ways that social artifacts (human-made objects) in the environment imply the interests and presence of other people. Upon driving up to a red light at 3:00 a.m., most people stop. Even if no one else is coming—not for miles—people wait for it to turn green. Why is that? The light is a social artifact implying that people should obey traffic signals even when nobody is monitoring them. Of course, natural objects endowed with social meaning (a solar eclipse, a black cat crossing your path) can elicit socially learned behavior, implying the presence of others. But artifacts more directly imply other people's shared intentions.

Unlike the imagined presence of others, the implied presence of others does not require that you think about the other people, just as you might be socially trained to stop at a red light without explicitly thinking about specific people. However, the traffic light also raises the imagined possibility that a police officer might suddenly materialize. Whatever the specific circumstances, we are social creatures even when alone.

In the classic definition, another cluster of words—*thought*, *feeling*, and *behavior*—distinguishes, respectively, among cognition, affect, and behavior. **Cognition** is thought, **affect** (note well, with an “a”) is feeling, and **behavior** is action. This tripod underlies many phenomena in social psychology. To be able to separate them affords a more complete view of all the facets of social behavior.

Finally, notice how the definition divides up into a cause (the actual, imagined, or implied presence of other human beings), a verb (influence), and an effect (note well, with an “e”) or result (the thought, feeling, and behavior of individuals). Think of it as an equation:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{actual, imagined, or implied presence of others} \rightarrow \\ \text{individual thought, feeling, and behavior} \end{array}$$

Or, for short,

$$\text{other people} \rightarrow \text{individual}$$

Alternatively, consider it a fill-in-the-blank template, as in the party game Mad Libs: _____ [something about other people] influences _____ [something about an individual]. The next chapter will come back to this cause–effect template, but for now the point is that the definition has a causal side (other people) and an effect side (the individual).

Levels of Analysis

Notice that individuals are on the effect side of the classic definition. Social psychology primarily analyzes what happens to people as individuals. When social scientists investigate the behavior

Table 1.1 Social Psychology's Level of Analysis, Relative to Other Psychological and Social Sciences, from Relatively Macro Disciplines to Relatively Micro Disciplines

Field	Level of causes	Level of effects
Sociology	Social structure, groups	Groups, neighborhoods, institutions
Social psychology	Groups, individuals	Individual affect, cognition, behavior
Clinical psychology	Individual disorders	Individual emotional distress
Developmental psychology	Age, stage	Individual life-cycle change
Cognitive psychology	Mental structure	Individual thinking, deciding
Neuroscience	Brain systems	Individuals' neural responses

of groups of people, they move toward the sociological end of social psychology; indeed, some social psychologists work in sociology departments.

Scientific explanations operate at different levels of analysis (see Table 1.1). For example, one can analyze the fine-grained level of neurons or neural systems; move up a level to individual thought, feeling, and behavior; move up to face-to-face pairs; or move up further to entire groups. Each approach constitutes a different level of analysis, from **micro** (small-scale) to **macro** (large-scale). Trying to explain neurons is neuroscience's typical level of analysis; trying to explain larger groups is sociology's typical level of analysis. Social psychology borders at one end on the social sciences, but at a more micro level of analysis. Sociology examines society, at levels from small groups, families, neighborhoods, institutions, cities to nations. Other social sciences focus respectively on political institutions or political behavior, economic institutions or economic behavior, but all typically at a more macro level than psychology. Social psychology borders, at its other end, on psychology's other subfields, which tend to look at an individual (or parts of an individual) in isolation.

Of all psychology's subfields—clinical psychology, social psychology, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, and neuroscience—social psychology most concerns interaction among people. Social psychology lies at the more sociological end of psychology, going from micro to macro. Thus, social psychology does not usually try to explain the individual completely alone without examining other people (actual, imagined, or implied). Research in other subfields, such as cognitive psychology, does not usually examine thought in the context of social interactions. For instance, measuring someone's memory for nonsense words or geometric shapes does not directly implicate other people. Social psychologists are concerned primarily with the individual (affect, behavior, and cognition), as influenced by interactions with others.

On the causal side of the definition of social psychology, other human beings constitute the **social situation** that influences the individual. Sometimes the relevant social situation might be the artifacts or traces of other people (a trash barrel, a shortcut worn in the grass); sometimes the situation might consist of a single other person (a bystander glaring after you drop some litter or trample the grass), and sometimes the situation consists of several other people (campus security officers beckoning you).

Social psychology is the psychology of the individual, as influenced by one or more other people, who make up the social situation. Let's examine the social situation more closely.

Situationism

Social psychology argues for the often-unappreciated importance of the social situation. This section first addresses the concept of **situationism**—scientific belief in the significance of context.

Then, the section describes the surprising influence of situations, compared to laypeople's reliance on personality explanations. Finally, the section explores precisely why the social situation is so psychologically important, given people's evolutionary history as adapting social creatures.

The Major Intellectual Contribution of Social Psychology

Let's begin with a formal statement of situationism: Social behavior is, to a larger extent than people commonly realize, a response to people's social context, not a function of individual personality. This concept comes from Kurt Lewin (1951), one of the founders of the field, and has been elaborated by Lee Ross and Richard Nisbett (1991), two major thinkers in social psychology. Situationism, a remarkably simple premise, opens up a number of ideas that people commonly take for granted. It contrasts insights gained from social psychology with the ways people ordinarily explain their own and other people's behavior.

People usually explain other people's behavior in terms of personality. "Why did he do that?" "Well, he's just that kind of person." ... "Why did she turn her paper in late?" "You know, she's a procrastinator." ... "Why would he choose to live alone for the third year in a row?" "He just isn't very social." People credit (or blame) other people's personalities all the time, especially when talking to others. Yet, social psychology shows, over and over, that the social situation, not just unique personality, dramatically controls people's behavior.

Lewin and his students designed compelling experiments showing the power of the situation. For example, during World War II, ordinary kinds of meat were scarce, and persuading people to eat unusual kinds of meat would stretch the nation's supply of protein more efficiently. Lewin tackled the problem of persuading people to consume organ meats (beef hearts, tripe, and kidneys). First, he identified the wife as the gatekeeper who channeled food to the rest of the family in the 1940s. Then he analyzed the barriers to their buying organ meats.

If one considers the psychological forces that kept housewives from using these intestinals, one is tempted to think of rather deep-seated aversions requiring something like psychoanalytical treatment. Doubtless a change in this respect is much more difficult than, for instance, the introduction of a new vegetable, such as escarole. There were, however, only 45 minutes available. (Lewin, 1952, pp. 463–464)¹

The most obvious way to change people's minds is to lecture them, and the researchers arranged an attractive lecture, linking the organ meats to the war effort, good nutrition, and household budgets. Speaking before groups of 13 to 17 women, the lecturer provided recipes and vivid personal stories. A follow-up showed that only 3% of the lecture attendees served the new foods to their families.

Lewin then harnessed the power of the social situation to persuade women to buy the unfamiliar food. Instead of hearing a lecture, other women participated in a small group discussion about "housewives like themselves," receiving the same information but without high-pressure tactics. At the end of the meeting, the women were asked to raise their hands if they would try one of the new meats that week. Lewin describes this as the crucial group decision (not unlike the moment when my students see other people start to fold their syllabus). At the follow-up, 32% had served one of the new meats, fully ten times the number doing so after hearing the lecture. A later study showed the same effects for feeding babies cod liver oil (see Figure 1.2).

Lewin credited the face-to-face group setting with creating a psychological group, securing involvement, and motivating a decision. As he points out, although a lecture audience puts people in a physical group, people find themselves "psychologically speaking, in an 'individual situation'"

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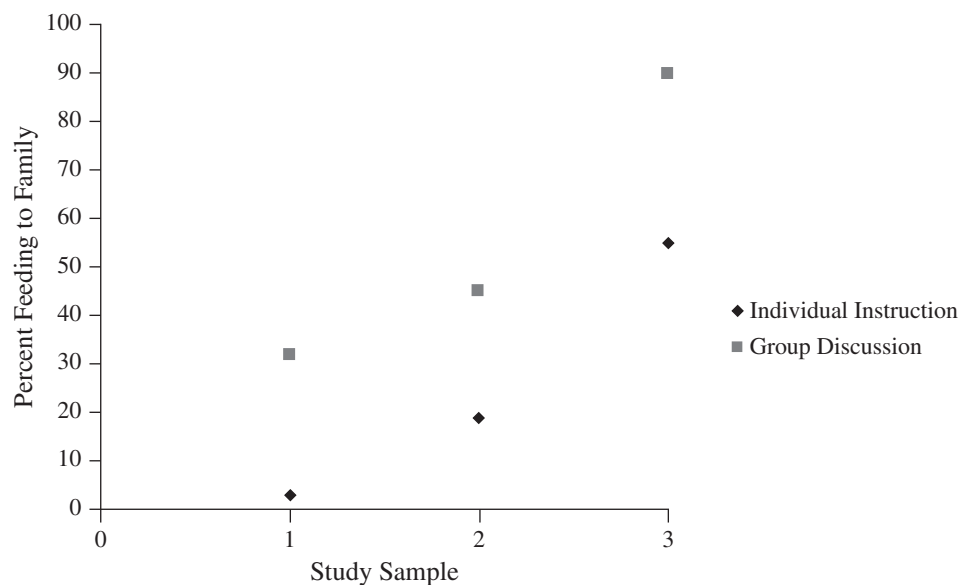


FIGURE 1.2
 The Power of Group Decisions,
 in Samples 1 (Unfamiliar
 Meats), 2 (Cod Liver Oil, after
 2 weeks), and 3 (Cod Liver Oil,
 after 4 weeks).
Source: Author, after
 description in Lewin, 1952.

(p. 465). In the situation that feels more like a group (i.e., the discussion), the individual is reluctant to depart too far from the rest of the group. This shows the power of the social situation.

In one sense, the impact of the situation is democratic; it brings everyone to the same level. My classes, across public and private universities, consist of incredibly varied people, but they all make the paper airplane. And you, too, have a unique personality, but you are almost certainly reading this chapter in response to a course assignment. The social situation (the class) dramatically influences all its members, regardless of individual personality. For traditional social psychologists, people’s personalities are often simply “noise in the system”; they distract from the goal of recognizing powerful but subtle influences of the situation. The social situation by itself can predict people’s behavior. Of course, individuals are unique, and people’s personalities interplay with situations. Indeed, Lewin argued that behavior is a function of the person *and* the environment, but his empirical work and his legacy primarily concern the social psychology of the situation, not the individual’s disposition. Social situations are the crucible of social-psychological inquiry.

Situations versus Personalities

Why do social psychologists emphasize situations as opposed to personalities? At least four reasons matter (see Table 1.2). First, ordinary people rely too much on personality in explaining behavior; a later chapter will explain why. But for the moment, think of presidential elections. How do reporters and voters discuss the candidates? Usually, the discussion centers on personality traits (Abelson, Kinder, Peters, & Fiske, 1982). Is this candidate honest? Is that candidate

Table 1.2 Why Social Psychology Emphasizes Situations over Personalities

Ordinary people overemphasize personalities
Ordinary people underemphasize situations
Complexity of personality judgments requires separate subfield
Personality explanations are incomplete

competent? Is this candidate caring? Is that candidate a little crazy? Notice that voters judge a candidate's personality instead of considering the situations that might make the candidate appear dishonest (being framed by political opponents) or incompetent (a tough economic situation that no one truly understands or could have anticipated).

Second, ordinary people underestimate—or never even consider—the power of situations. That is what makes social psychology fun. Researchers can set up studies that manipulate the social situation in tiny ways that have a huge impact on people's behavior. For example, an event as trivial as finding a coin in a public place can make people more helpful to the next stranger they meet. Many years ago, researchers planted dimes in the coin-return slot of public phones in San Francisco and Philadelphia shopping malls. The next caller almost invariably checked the coin-return slot, retrieved the coin, and emerged to find a woman walking in the same direction; the woman dropped a manila folder full of papers in the caller's path. In the control condition, others did not find a planted dime but did encounter the same woman.

The critical measure was the number of people helping, depending on whether or not they had just found a dime. Of those who did not find a dime, only 4% (1 of 25) helped the woman pick up her spilled belongings. Of those who had just found the dime, fully 88% helped (Isen & Levin, 1972). The implied presence of another person (the one leaving the coin) and the utility of a coin as part of an imagined social exchange (buying something) created a social situation that influenced individual behavior.

Why should an event as tiny as finding a bit of change make people's behavior so decidedly different? An observer of the behavior would doubtless say that the person is helpful or generous (a trait description). If a social psychologist said, "This person is helping because she just found a coin in the phone booth," the observer would not believe it. The impact of this tiny feature of the social situation is counterintuitive; the power of situational happenstance flies against what people think would occur. Try asking a friend what percentage of people would normally help, and then ask the friend how much the percentage would increase if the person had just picked up a coin. I'll wager your friend will not give odds of 5% versus 90%, as the data indicate. To be sure, this study shows an unusually large effect, but general, irrelevant affect reliably influences decisions (Lerner, Li, Valdesolo, & Kassam, 2015) in unexpected ways, and people underestimate such power of situations.

A third reason why social psychologists emphasize situations rather than personality in explaining behavior is that, as scientists, they know that personality is complex enough to require its own separate subfield, with its own methods. Personality theorists sometimes disagree about how to measure personality. Nonscientists think personality is easy to assess, so they routinely use it to predict and explain behavior. But from a scientific perspective, personality defies easy measurement, which explains why it requires a separate field. Personality psychologists focus on accurately measuring individual differences and their implications for behavior. Measuring helpfulness—or any other aspect of personality—is not easy; even personality psychologists cannot always agree. Despite considerable progress, personality assessment still generates intense debates (Cervone, 2005; Funder, 2001; Mischel, 2004; Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006). Social psychologists choose to bite off a different piece of the problem because one cannot study everything.

The fourth point is that laypeople's relying on personality instead of situations is not exactly a mistake; explanations based solely on personality are simply incomplete. Personality cannot be the whole explanation for behavior because it does not usually predict specific behavior in one random situation. Some social-personality psychologists (e.g., Mendoza-Denton, Ayduk, Mischel, Shoda, & Testa, 2001; Snyder, 2006) have demonstrated that the *combination* of situation and personality can predict behavior. Others (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005; Epstein, 1980) have proposed looking at personality as predicting *average* behavior, aggregated across situations (and therefore downplaying any particular situation). In both cases, the point is that ordinary people's strategy of predicting one particular, specific behavior just from someone's general personality is

misguided. Either one must think of the person in a specific situation to predict a specific behavior, or one must think of a person's overall personality as predicting an average pattern of behavior across situations. Both solutions acknowledge the joint power of personality *and* situations.

As scientists, social psychologists have opted to explain behavior more in terms of the social situation precisely because the role of the social situation is so often underestimated. This book aims to convince you of the adaptive significance of the social situation, that is, other people.

The Power of Situations as an Evolutionary Adaptation

Why does the social situation matter so much? Because social situations are so powerful, we need to understand why people so readily respond to them. Situations matter because people need other people in order to survive and thrive. Evolution has an important role to play in explaining the impact of social situations on people. People attune to social situations for functional, adaptive reasons. This book argues that people respond to other people and seek social acceptance through social motives that have evolved to help them survive and thrive in groups—and more generally. The power of social situations may be one of people's most important evolutionary adaptations.

But before we examine this approach more closely, a note of caution: Evolutionary explanations can easily be misused. For example, some writers (e.g., Rushton, 1992) have implied the existence of “inferior” and “superior” races and claimed that environmental challenge creates evolutionary pressures that result in genetically based racial differences in intelligence. Rushton also alleges that sex differences in brain size determine intelligence. Similarly, men have historically held more power than women, so some writers (e.g., Goldberg, 1973; Pratto, Sidanius, & Stallworth, 1993) might argue that patriarchy has inevitably evolved because of male and female biological differences.

This kind of biological determinism weakens some evolutionary explanations because they fail to acknowledge the integral role of social factors (Maccoby, 1973, 2000; Wood & Eagly, 2002, 2010). Moreover, determinism suggests to some critics that the current evolutionary outcomes were inevitable. Evolutionary explanations can be misused to justify the status quo, as if humans were not still evolving and as if change were not part of evolution. People also think that evolutionary pressures minimize the importance of culture, but as this chapter discusses, evolution predisposes people to participate in their culture.

Despite such problems, scientists generally agree that selective pressures clearly operate on human behavior, including social behavior. Consequently, theories based on principles of selection require empirical testing. **Evolutionary psychology** focuses on the inherited design of the mind, especially functions that improved our ancestors' success in passing on their genes (Buss, 2005). Evolutionary social psychology focuses on the parallel implications for social reactions (Schaller, Simpson, & Kenrick, 2006).

Various theorists have described evolutionary pressures at various levels, and this section considers four (see Table 1.3) that help us locate the relevant level for responsiveness to the social situation. First, when people think of evolution, they usually think about Darwin's classical theory of **natural selection** or “survival of the fittest”: The strongest, wildest, best-adapted individual

Table 1.3 Levels of Evolutionary Pressures

Name of approach	Alternative term	Level of reproduction
Natural selection	Survival of the fittest	One individual's genes
Kin selection	Inclusive fitness	Genetic relatives
Group selection	Group-level adaptation	Unrelated members of social unit
Social survival	Core configurations	Individual in group

survives to reproduce and thus to pass on his or her strong, wily, well-adapted genes. That was Charles Darwin's original idea. It focuses on the selfish reproductive ambitions of individuals and their genes.

At a second level, and more recently, scientists suggested that evolutionary processes might operate at the level of genetically related kin. Even if a particular individual does not survive, if several of that person's siblings survive, some of the individual's genes will be passed on. This **kin selection** idea—related to **inclusive fitness**—operates at a higher level than the individual (Hamilton, 1964).

For a gene to receive positive selection it is not necessarily enough that it should increase the fitness of its bearer above the average if this tends to be done at the heavy expense of related individuals, because relatives, on account of their common ancestry, tend to carry replicas of the same gene. (p. 17)²

Kin selection thus favors the genes of those who promote the survival of their closest genetic relatives. The principle of preserving shared genes, rather than only one's own genetic material, explains why individuals might sacrifice themselves for their immediate family (Caporael, 2001). Most versions of evolutionary psychology work at one of these first two levels, and these analyses focus heavily on human reproductive strategies (Buss & Kenrick, 1998), which the chapters on attraction, close relationships, and helping discuss.

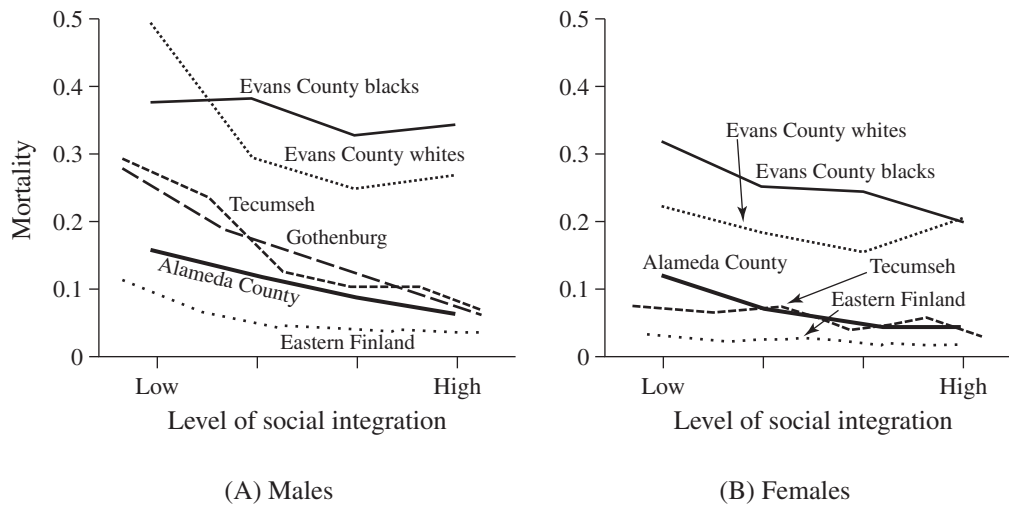
At yet another level comes the idea of **group selection**, which suggests that some groups might survive better than others (e.g., Wynne-Edwards, 1965). For example, perhaps some groups can evolve into adaptive units, compared with other groups, if they function effectively. Certain kinds of group structure (e.g., having a leader and shared goals) might well prove more effective than others (e.g., having constant battles over leadership and letting each individual go his or her own way); in other words, the survival of the well-coordinated group is encouraged by its organization as a unit. While this is undoubtedly true, the selection of one whole group instead of another has not received much empirical support (Williams, 1966; but see Wilson & Sober, 1994).

Finally, consider the social psychology of the individual *within* a group. Cutting across all these levels—individual, kin, group—one can think of individuals as surviving within groups of people, some related and some not. The key is people's ability to survive *as group members* (Caporael, 1997). Humans are adapted to fit into face-to-face groups; groups are important to survival. People are not adapted to survive as isolated individuals, as we will see.

As classic work on social support has shown, people who are more socially integrated survive better (Figure 1.3). Men live longer if they report more social ties, such as marriage, contacts with extended family and friends, church membership, and other formal or informal affiliations. This relationship holds, even controlling for physical health, smoking, alcohol consumption, activity, obesity, social class, race, age, life satisfaction, and use of preventive health services. The benefits of social ties for women, although weaker, are still significant (House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988). According to one study (Lett et al., 2007), people who report high social support live longer after a heart attack than people who report low social support or high depression. Negative emotions—such as those resulting from social isolation—demonstrably harm the immune system and even survival (Kiecolt-Glaser, McGuire, Robles, & Glaser, 2002). Although the pathways are complex and likely to include both behavior and physiology, the point is that people's very life is affected by their social ties.

The history of human beings and related primates (as well as certain other animals) can easily justify the argument that people need social groups for survival. Social groups defend people against environment hazards, predators, and hostile outsiders. Human beings also go through long vulnerable periods as children, when they need to be protected; not all those adults protecting the young ones can be out hunting or foraging for food. People share tasks, and they

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**FIGURE 1.3**

The power of social ties: Age-adjusted mortality rate, depending on social integration, across several studies.

Source: From House et al., 1988. Copyright © American Association for the Advancement of Science. Adapted with permission.

share information—exploring the environment and returning to convey information and coordinate actions. Even a simple action such as grinding grain into flour works better when people do it together in a coordinated way, and so does gathering berries or hunting large animals, planning a party, or reviewing for an exam. Compelling evidence supports the idea that people are, in effect, adapted for living in social groups.

Although of course adults can survive alone and sometimes choose to do so, even hermits and monks usually depend on others for financial support and physical sustenance. Most people do not choose to live alone: Survival is easier in groups, and physical health is better in relationships (see Chapter 8). And in some environments at some times, surviving alone is nearly impossible. Hence, it makes sense that people have a built-in responsiveness to others and orient toward groups. As Aristotle said, humans are social animals, or as I would say, humans are social beings, social to the core.

Summary of Situationism

Responsiveness to other people runs through all of social psychology: Situationism describes our orientation to social contexts, which consist of other people. Our responsiveness to social situations—and therefore their considerable impact—results from evolutionary pressures for individuals to survive in groups. An emphatically social theory of evolution holds that people are adapted at various levels. While adaptation certainly operates at the level of the individual, one's genetic relatives, or maybe the entire group, none of these quite fits the shape of a social-psychological analysis. Just as the social psychologist analyzes the person as influenced by others (i.e., the social situation), so the *social* evolutionary perspective analyzes the person as adapted to living with others in that social situation. According to this theory, other people constitute our evolutionary niche.

A Note on the Social Brain

Because social beings have long solved similar problems over our collective history, the social brain presumably has developed to facilitate this. Indeed, the social brain hypothesis specifically links the historically ever-increasing complexity of social life to increases in brain volume—especially in the human neocortex (Adolphs, 2009; Barrett & Henzi, 2005; Dunbar &

Schultz, 2007). Adaptively attuned to the social situation, people have needed more gray matter to deal with it.

Over evolutionary history, humans have needed to track geometrically increasing numbers of social relationships as our social groups expanded (Massey, 2005). Human pair-bonding specifically demands extraordinary social sensitivity, as do all complex forms of human interaction described in this book. The importance of the social situation suggests that a search for relevant brain systems will be useful. Indeed, related to the importance of our social niche, social neuroscience shows that social exclusion activates similar systems to physical pain (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003). In this book, we will note social neuroscience data.

Core Social Motives

Given that we need other people for our basic survival, over time we should have developed some core motives that interact with the social situation, to help us survive in groups. Strategies that aid our group roles themselves become rewarding. We are motivated to get along with other people because it is adaptive to do so. **Motives** in general are the motor for behavior. **Core social motives** describe fundamental, underlying psychological processes that propel people's thinking, feeling, and behaving in situations involving other people. This section soon will describe those motives as belonging, understanding, controlling, self-enhancing, and trusting.

Five Unifying Themes in Social Psychology

Motives result from the interplay of person and situation; they are not general personality dispositions that consistently predict behavior regardless of the situation. These core social motives characterize a social-psychological analysis precisely because they result from the interaction (unique combination) of the person and the situation. Lewin argued that a motive creates a psychological force for a person, who is located in a particular situation or **life space**. From the person's perspective, certain features of the environment facilitate or inhibit important goals, so they are motivating. Thus, the features acquire what Lewin (1951/1997) calls a **valence**, that is, a positive or negative value. If you want to mail a letter, a mailbox acquires a positive valence. If the mailbox potentially contains a bomb, it acquires a negative valence. If you want to acquire a mate, an attractive, available person of the appropriate gender acquires a positive valence. Because current goals shape your experience of the situation, what is meaningful is not necessarily the literal physical environment but this psychological environment, the situation as you experience it. Thus, social motives operate as person-in-situation principles.

The core social motives thus connect to situationism, the central intellectual contribution of psychology. The person's motives determine the psychological situation for that person; the person-in-situation combines what is out there with the person's own motives. Thus, the core social motives determine the nature of the situation, filtered through the person's interpretations. Social psychologists broadly agree on situationism and acknowledge that what matters is people's own interpretations of the situation. In this way, the social motives fit into situationism, social psychology's focus.

Accordingly, core social motives describe, unify, and explain seemingly unconnected lines of research. The core social motives about to be discussed in this section will help track the more specific theories and research across later chapters. These linking motives have been repeatedly identified by personality and social psychologists over the decades, so they are not my idiosyncratic invention. Describing them this way, however, is my own perspective on how to unify the

varied contributions of social psychology. While the field has not explicitly adopted them as a framework, the job of textbook authors and other reviewers of scientific literature is to detect themes that organize the field. Hence, in this text, the core social motives serve as a set of unifying principles.

As a person new to the field, you should know some of the intellectual forebears of this enterprise. Listing motives is a risky enterprise. Social and personality psychologists listed and relisted basic motives early in the 20th century, arguing about how many, how necessary, and how prioritized they are. McDougall (1908), in one of the first textbooks on social psychology, undertook such a project, using the term *instincts* (Boring, 1950, reviews this era). Unfortunately, an instinct developed to explain every behavior, and “instincts” proliferated beyond what was scientifically useful.

So, as a newcomer, bear in mind that these five are not the only possible interpretations of core motives that could organize this field. Indeed, I am tempted to call these “five plus or minus five” core motives. Nevertheless, in the experience of my students, this framework offers a manageable number of organizing themes that recur across areas. Each chapter highlights certain motives, depending on the emphasis of the theories and research in a given area. All five motives reappear throughout the book, helping to make sense of what might otherwise seem a staggering array of theories and findings. Indeed, in practice, social psychology is scattered; different researchers stake out problems they find interesting and work in subareas that do not necessarily relate to one another. However, in my experience as a teacher, writer, and consumer of social psychology, people cannot make sense of the material if reviewers do not offer a framework. Each new idea will therefore relate to familiar themes encountered before, because some fundamentals do run through the field.

Over decades of theories and research, many major personality and social psychologists have developed ideas about people’s basic motives. Five come up repeatedly (Fiske, 2008): *belonging, understanding, controlling, enhancing self, and trusting others*. (I like to think of these as a BUC(K)ET of motives.) All five motives orient toward making people fit better into groups, thus increasing their chances for survival. This idea that *a small number of essential, core social motives enhance people’s survival in social situations* offers a unifying framework for understanding the field of social psychology.

The first core motive, belonging, unifies the other four core social motives (Table 1.4). Two of the remaining motives, understanding and controlling, are relatively cognitive in nature. That is, they concern thinking processes, as we will see, but one is more reflective (understanding) and the other is more active in the world (controlling). The other two remaining motives, self-enhancing and trusting, are relatively affective in nature, but one is more self-directed (self-enhancing) and the other is more other-directed (trusting). Let us now turn to a detailed description of each of the five core social motives.

Table 1.4 Relationships among Core Social Motives

Belonging			
Need for strong stable relationships			
Relatively cognitive motives		Relatively affective motives	
Understanding	Controlling	Self-enhancing	Trusting
Need for shared meaning and prediction	Need for perceived contingency between behavior and outcomes	Need for viewing self as basically worthy or improvable	Need for viewing others as basically benign

Belonging

When you first entered college, if you didn't know anyone, one of your first goals doubtless was to meet people. What drove you to find friends, groups of people who seemed like you in important ways? Wasn't it so that you could feel comfortable, having people to explain things, to support you, to make you feel less alone? Across the country, student affairs offices have discovered that students are happier and more likely to complete their degrees if they form affinity groups based on living situations, majors, sports, language, cultural identity, interests, or politics. This common experience illustrates the motive to have a stable sense of belonging.

I suggested earlier that people are adapted and motivated to belong in groups, but now let us examine some initial evidence for **belonging**, the idea that people need strong, stable relationships with other people. People seek ongoing, secure relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In fact, some classic social psychology experiments have shown that people form social bonds incredibly easily. For example, researchers in a summer camp (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961/1988) divided previously unacquainted young boys into two random groups. On the basis of these arbitrary groups, they rapidly formed intense team loyalties. In another well-known study (Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950), families of returning World War II veterans who were haphazardly assigned to campus housing formed friendships with whomever happened to live the closest to them.

Having some close social ties is about the only objective factor found to correlate with subjective well-being (Baumeister, 1991b, p. 213). Being ostracized threatens people's sense of belonging, of course, but also their mood (Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000). The hormone oxytocin may mediate the stress response that accompanies disrupted social relationships, sometimes resulting in reparative tend-and-befriend behavior (Taylor, 2006). Problems in close relationships predict poor health (Stansfeld, Bosma, Hemingway, & Marmot, 1998). And in states where fewer people join voluntary groups, more violent crimes with firearms occur (Kennedy, Kawachi, Prothrow-Stith, Lochner, & Gupta, 1998). As Durkheim (1951) suggested, people with poor social networks are more likely to kill themselves (Berkman, Glass, Brissette, & Seeman, 2000). Many of these studies are correlational (belonging and health go together), so they do not guarantee causality (i.e., that belonging causes health; more on that in the next chapter). Nevertheless, a variety of evidence suggests that belonging is good for your health.

The motive to belong benefits the group also. If people generally cooperate with one another and want to be accepted, it helps the group coordinate its actions and operate effectively (Levine & Kerr, 2007). As mentioned earlier, ancestral examples include hunting and gathering; modern ones include networking, celebrating, and studying. An organization with a strong corporate culture encourages its employees to learn "how we do things around here" in order to fit in; one large retail company schedules a daily pep talk and group cheer to motivate its sales force each morning, and the employees view themselves as one big family, bleeding the corporate colors for each other. The power of employees' need to belong explains the loyalty built up through these daily reminders, and the company expects sales associates to work more effectively if they feel they all are in it together. Similarly, in Burkina Faso, West Africa, people cultivate their fields together, sometimes to the beat of a drum, which helps them get the job done more efficiently and pleasantly than if each worked alone. Traditional American barn-raising worked in much the same way, with collective activity, music, and reciprocal effort. A wide variety of group activities thrive best when people are motivated to cooperate, to get along, and to be accepted.

People's motive to belong may help the group survive, but the main point here is that *belonging to a group helps individuals to survive* psychologically and physically, whether on a college campus, the Burkina Faso savanna, or the Kansas prairie. Belonging may be more valued in some cultures than others, as we will see, but it remains a core motive. More evidence comes up in chapters devoted to specific topics that especially emphasize belonging. As the relevant chapters indicate, this book argues that people's need to belong reflects some kinds of attitudes, prejudices, and social influence, but belonging especially motivates close relationships, helping, and groups.

As noted earlier, belonging forms the core motive that unifies the other four. Of those, two are more cognitive in nature; that is, they concern thinking. They are the motives to understand and to control. The other two motives are more affective in nature. They are the motives to self-enhance and to trust.

Understanding

Of the cognitive motivations, the most fundamental one encourages people to **understand** their environment—whether campus, prairie, or savanna—to predict what is going to happen in case of uncertainties and to make sense of what does happen. People are uncomfortable when meanings are incoherent (Festinger, 1957; Heine, Proulx, & Vohs, 2006).

Most important, people prefer to develop meanings that are shared with other people. For example, if in a given year more people accept offers of admission than a college expects, quite a few students end up living in dorm lounges or the campus hotel. It is easy to understand why living in the lounge is problematic (no closet, for one thing). But what is wrong with a room at the campus hotel? After all, students in a hotel get private bathrooms, their own TV, and larger rooms. In fact, living in the hotel is problematic because the student residents are not a part of a stable group with people who will be their neighbors for the year; they must wait in limbo before finding their social niche. The uncertainty itself is the problem. Hotel residents lack a shared social understanding, normally developed from membership in a stable group.

People in temporary housing or any other uncertain situation immediately wonder, “why?” and “why us?” They may develop all kinds of theories to explain what is going on: “A housing clerk retired and left a thousand checks in her desk, so they didn’t realize how many housing deposits they really had.” Or, “The school is greedy, overbooking its rooms to get more money.” Or, “Have you noticed, all the Latino [or rural or scholarship] students don’t have rooms? Maybe they did it on purpose because they don’t want us here.”

The motive to understand is not limited to unexpected events (housing crises, school shootings, tornadoes); it applies to any significant event that affects us in important ways (inconvenient exam schedules, recurring potholes, tick-borne diseases, terrorist attacks). Whatever the phenomenon, if important, people have theories about it. Harold Kelley (1967) described how a loss of information, below acceptable levels, sets in motion the process of explaining and attributing causality, a major topic in Chapter 3.

As people struggle to understand and make sense of their world, they share their theories with other people in an effort to reach agreement. Serge Moscovici (1988) called these shared understandings **social representations** (for an integrative overview, see Augoustinos, 2001). Robert Zajonc called them **group meaning** (Zajonc & Adelman, 1987).

One aspect of socially shared meaning emerges when groups convene to make decisions. Most often, they discuss already-shared information, rather than passing along new information. In one study, interns and medical students individually viewed videotapes of a patient describing a variety of symptoms; some information appeared on every version of the videotape (shared information), while some was unique to a particular version of the videotape (unshared information), just as might occur if several doctors separately interviewed a patient. Even though all the information was relevant to making a diagnosis (in this case, Lyme disease vs. mononucleosis), when the diagnostic teams convened, they discussed shared information earlier and more often. As Table 1.5 indicates, shared information came up 24% more often and 1.5 topics sooner than the equally valuable unshared information (Larson, Christensen, Franz, & Abbott, 1998). Whether or not they know which information is shared, it has a higher probability of being discussed because more people possess it. But it means that even the simple odds favor the group learning nothing new. For good or ill, this illustrates the power of shared understanding in groups, in this case dealing with important real-world problems.

Table 1.5 Pooling of Shared Information by Medical Decision-Making Teams

Variable	Type of information	
	Shared	Unshared
Previously obtained information mentioned at least once in group	78%	54%
Timing of first mention (high numbers = later)	5.55	7.09

Source: From Larson et al., 1998. Copyright © American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission.

What's more, the information that people share causes them to forget the information they do not share. When people communicate information—as in recounting their own memories of September 11—they especially remember what they communicate, but they also grow to forget what they do not communicate, as do their listeners (Coman, Manier, & Hirst, 2009). This is one social-psychological mechanism for producing collective memories, that is, shared social representations.

Shared understanding is adaptive for survival as a group member. Being able to understand and make sense of situations, especially to share social representations, group meaning, and other social knowledge, enables people to function in groups. Even if the group meaning is not fully accurate, if it will serve the group's purposes, it enables people to coordinate with other group members. For example, in a famous study of a doomsday cult (Festinger, Reicken, & Schachter, 1956), group members followed the instructions from extraterrestrial guardians, relayed by Marian Kreech with the help of Dr. Thomas Armstrong and Daisy Armstrong. Convinced of an impending flood, cult members met, proselytized, and planned for their rescue by flying saucer. Not only did they remove from their bodies all metal objects (zippers, watches, jewelry, coins), which had been deemed dangerous to their flight (pre TSA!), but Dr. Armstrong reported that group members felt: "I've had to go a long way. I've given up just about everything. I've cut every tie; I've burned every bridge. I've turned my back on the world" (p. 168). All this occurred because of personal conviction about the group's prophecy and commitment to the group's task of coordinating their rescue from the coming cataclysm.

Even under less exotic circumstances, shared understanding explains why people try to resolve random events and mysteries ("We sent in our dorm deposits the same day, so how come you have a room and I don't?") and share their understanding with other similarly situated people. For example, if students feel that the college procedures are unfair, they may envy those who seem to be singled out for special treatment, and student morale will suffer. Wise college administrators know that they cannot afford to have students resenting each other, so they provide information promptly.

Shared understanding aims at knowing quickly and predicting well enough to function in ordinary life. People's motive to understand adapts them to group life and its shared view of reality (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). As later chapters indicate, in social psychology, the motive to understand describes why people bother to make sense of each other, themselves, and various attitudes. Easy understanding and prediction also drive both attraction to similar others and prejudice against dissimilar others, as well as certain kinds of social influence.

Controlling

What caused the fights you had with your parents in high school? Curfews? Car? Clothing? Hair? Friends? Whatever the specifics, control was likely the main issue: Who was going to decide, who was going to get their way? A motive related to understanding, and like it, having a cognitive flavor, the motive to control encourages people to feel effective in dealing with their social environment and themselves. **Control** entails a relationship between what people do and what

they get, or in more technical terms, a contingency between behavior and outcomes. People want to be effective, to have some sense of control and competence, and a lack of control provokes information-seeking, in an effort to restore control (Gleicher & Weary, 1995; Pittman, 1998).

In one study, researchers (Pittman & Pittman, 1980) decreased participants' sense of control and observed their tendency to seek control by becoming more sensitive to social information. Participants experienced a loss of control during a learning task with no right answer, about which they received only random feedback. Participants struggled to find the "correct" pattern in pairs of letters that appeared in varying combinations of black or red, uppercase or lowercase, with circle or square borders, and with solid or dotted underlining. Over six problems, the experimenter gave them predetermined feedback, not contingent on their actual response; this random feedback occurred with all six problems (high helplessness) or two problems (low helplessness), or no feedback occurred (baseline condition).

Then, in a second apparently unrelated experiment immediately afterward, participants read about an expert on nuclear power plants who wrote an essay opposing their placement near populated areas; the expert wrote the essay either for payment (external motivation) or in his personal journal (internal motivation). When asked about the expert's motivation for writing the essay, people in both helpless conditions were more sensitive to the writer's circumstances than were the people in the baseline condition (Table 1.6). That is, control-deprived participants thought harder about another person. Thus, lack of control motivates people to use socially available information, in an effort to regain a sense of control.

To the extent that people consistently feel that they are in control, they may be healthier, feel happier, and live longer (Taylor & Brown, 1988). Research suggests that health and longevity follow from social environments (Taylor, Lerner, Sage, Lehman, & Seeman, 2004) that afford more control to some races and social classes than others. And control over one's experiences improves health status. Specifically, a study of 10,308 British civil servants identified the ratio between effort and reward at work (i.e., the perceived contingency between what one does and what one gets, or perceived control). An imbalance between effort and reward (i.e., lack of control) predicted poor mental and physical health (Stansfeld et al., 1998). Other measures of control, such as decision latitude at work, job demands, and work support, also correlated with health.

Needing control, wanting to be effective, is an early, basic motive even in young infants—for example, when they discover they can have an impact on their families by crying, smiling, or babbling. This is the beginning of social control and effectiveness: When the infants make faces or noises, the family reacts accordingly. Robert White (1959) identified **effectance**, a need for competence—essentially identical to the control motive being discussed here—which children display when they learn to grab, walk, or talk. They show "joy in being a cause" (Groos, 1901, p. 385).

Competence and control enter adult social interactions as well, as when students try to persuade friends to room with them, have dinner at their preferred spot, or take social psychology during the same semester. If friends negotiate such matters successfully, they are controlling each other's behavior. But this is natural. Mutual control helps people fit into social groups, in several ways. It encourages cooperative behavior within the group; it also deals effectively with the social

Table 1.6 Sensitivity to Social Information, as a Function of Control Deprivation

	Level of control deprivation		
	High helplessness	Low helplessness	No helplessness
Sensitivity to other's circumstances	3.55	4.88	1.41

Source: From Pittman & Pittman, 1980. Copyright © American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission.

environment. If people experience a contingency between what they do in a group and what happens to them, that sense of control contributes to their psychological, social, and physical survival. If they know how to ask for certain kinds of help and then receive it (i.e., the group will help them meet their own goals), that constitutes social control and effectiveness.

As an alternative to personal control, people may entrust control to their group. If they know that their group can have some control over their individual outcomes, they may accept such indirect control and thus feel more secure (Morling & Fiske, 1999). Thus, control may operate at the level of the individual (as in some Western societies) or at the level of the group (as in many other societies). For example, in many traditional Asian, African, and Latino societies, one's family might have much more impact on one's choice of college major than is typical in many European American societies. Interdependent selves accept other people deciding for them, more than independent selves do (Pöhlmann, Carranza, Hannover, & Iyengar, 2007). In a group-oriented setting, the family takes care of its own, but as part of the bargain, family members cede some individual control. Similar bargains occur in traditional small businesses in the United States and in traditional corporations in Japan. Either way, when people feel that someone (including themselves or a trusted group) is in control, they feel more secure.

The control motive encourages people to feel competent and effective at dealing with their social environment and themselves. Later chapters apply it to describe how people make sense of one another, how relationships cause emotions, why aggression sometimes occurs, and how prejudice operates.

Control is the third motive discussed so far. Recall that belonging, the first one, is the fundamental motive that runs through all five core social motives (Table 1.4). Indeed, it overlaps with the motive to control. In describing the role of social relations in health promotion, Berkman (1995) notes, "For social support to be health promoting, it must provide both a sense of belonging and intimacy and must help people to be more competent and self-efficacious" (p. 245), that is, in control.

As described so far, understanding and control, the second and third motives, focus on getting information, thinking, believing, and problem solving; thus, they are relatively cognitive in nature. The last two motives—self-enhancing and trusting—are relatively affective in nature; that is, they emphasize feelings and emotions. Of course, the distinction between the cognitive and affective social motives is not absolute but a matter of degree.

Self-enhancing

The fourth basic motive, **self-enhancement**, involves either maintaining self-esteem or being motivated by the possibility of self-improvement. All else being equal, people basically like to feel good about themselves (Taylor & Brown, 1988); they like to feel that they are good and lovable. People feel instantly good when they receive positive feedback about themselves (Swann, Hixon, Stein-Seroussi, & Gilbert, 1990). For example, two experiments placed college students under mental overload, either by asking them to remember a telephone number and extension or by putting them under time pressure. Compared with other students who had more time to think, these mentally overloaded students presumably were more likely to use their spontaneous reactions. Their spontaneous reaction was to prefer interacting with someone who had evaluated them favorably (left column in Table 1.7). In contrast, people with more mental space chose to interact with someone who evaluated them more in line with their own self-concept, whether favorable or not. A later chapter discusses this and related studies. For now, the point is that the first, spontaneous reaction of American college students is to prefer interacting with someone who views them favorably.

Apart from the fact that self-enhancement makes a person feel good, why would individual self-esteem be useful for a group? Because people who feel truly terrible about themselves are

Table 1.7 Impact of Cognitive Load and Self-concept on Desire to Interact with Favorable Instead of Unfavorable Evaluators

Self-concept	Cognitive load	
	Load (spontaneous response)	No load (thoughtful response)
Negative	5.00	.50
Positive	4.56	4.00

Higher numbers indicate a greater desire to interact with a positive (vs. negative) evaluator.

Source: From Swann et al., 1990. Copyright © American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission.

not motivated to do even the most basic things, such as get out of bed in the morning, undertake challenges, or meet social obligations. But if people feel good about themselves, they feel optimistic enough to make the effort to be a useful and pleasant group member.

Low self-esteem can emerge through the lens of anticipated rejection by important social others (Leary, 2005). People who feel socially excluded also feel bad and engage in a number of socially destructive and self-destructive behaviors: substance abuse, irresponsible sexuality, aggression, and eating disorders. All of these behaviors further undermine the person's adaptive functioning in a socially constructive group. If instead the people in a group feel good about themselves and one another, then they want to cooperate, which cements the group together. In short, as long as it is not overdone, self-enhancement helps maintain the group.

Note that people may gain self-esteem or enhance themselves in different ways. For example, one could feel pride in oneself as a special individual, which is the usual meaning of self-esteem in the United States. But one could also feel pride in oneself as a good member of a group (team, family, neighborhood) or for wholeheartedly performing a certain role in a group. Self-esteem lets people monitor how well they are doing socially as group members (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995); in that sense, it might result directly from the belonging motive. A later chapter will come back to the different senses of self-esteem. Note that my use of the term **self-enhancement** deliberately includes the possibility of self-improvement, whereas **self-esteem** includes the undesirable perception of self as better than others. The more balanced form of this motive (self-enhancement) will prove more adaptive than the more self-centered form (self-esteem).

In short, people need to feel good about themselves; self-enhancement comprises both self-esteem and self-improvement. Some people emphasize putting oneself first and viewing oneself in a positive light, but others emphasize the humble self, always striving to improve and putting others first. As a later section explains, cultures vary in the same way. The term **self-enhancing** captures both senses, which of course will explain many aspects of the social self. Self-enhancing also explains some aspects of attribution, attraction, helping, aggression, and prejudice, all topics appearing in later chapters.

Trusting

Trusting means seeing the social world as a benevolent place. Just as people enhance the self, to some (lesser) extent they enhance others. Trust involves “confidence or faith that some other, upon whom we must depend, will not act in ways that occasion us painful consequences” (Boon, 1995, p. 656). A predisposition to trust others, given appropriate circumstances, facilitates important human behavior, from bargaining to loving. Certainly, trust makes us vulnerable, and sometimes people do not trust other people, but those occasions are exceptions. All else being equal, people do expect fairly good outcomes (Parducci, 1964), especially from other people. When people are making sense of other people, they are biased to see the best in them (Matlin & Stang, 1978;

Sears, 1983). Although people differ, on average, they trust other people, expecting them to be basically benign.

Trust facilitates daily life. It makes people both liked and likable, and with good reason. Trusting people deserve trust; they are unlikely to cheat or steal. They are more successful socially, being less suspicious, vindictive, resentful, and lonely than distrusting people (Gurtman, 1992; Murray & Holmes, 1993; Rotenberg, 1994; Rotter, 1980). Trusting people go with the flow (Morling & Fiske, 1999). Distrusting people always search for nonobvious alternative explanations for other people's behavior (Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011). A trusting orientation, compared with a paranoid or depressive orientation, facilitates people's interactions with others. Think how socially ineffective people are when they always expect the worst from other people. Trust is social glue.

Indeed, researchers have studied participants in two-person games that simulate real-world choices between cooperative trust and exploitative self-interest (Orbell & Dawes, 1993). In some games, people had the choice to play or not to play, in each trial, depending on their own judgment of how they would fare if they did play; in other games, people had to play every time. In the games allowing a choice, people intending to cooperate—that is, people high in trust—usually offered to play (81% of the time); this was more often than people intending to exploit the other person (54%). Trustful people cooperate and expect others to cooperate, more so than would-be exploiters. When they have a choice about whether to participate, as often true in real-world relationships, the pairs gain more often than they lose (16 of 18 groups gained points in the game). Trust and cooperation reinforce each other (Balliet & Van Lange, 2013; Ferrin, Bligh, & Kohles, 2007), but they differ. For example, Americans may tend to trust more widely (take optimistic risks), whereas Japanese are better at building durable cooperation (Cook et al., 2005).

Trust is a form of social intelligence (Yamagishi, 2002). Trust facilitates group cohesion because it is rewarding, but trust is also efficient. A society's trust correlates with its level of economic market participation (Balliet & Van Lange, 2013). Purchases and contracts depend on trust. What's more, trust averts harm. If people can basically trust others who, for example, tell them to expect rain or to avoid a poisonous mushroom, then group life works better. People can rely on other people to share information and resources and to avoid harm. In contrast, places where many people lack trust (believing, e.g., that “most people would take advantage of you if they got the chance”) also have more violent crime (Kennedy et al., 1998).

Trust operates through emotional channels. People choose to trust for reasons more emotional than calculated (Dunning, Fetchenhauer, & Schlösser, 2012). We automatically detect trustworthiness in other people's faces through both fixed features (Engell, Haxby, & Todorov, 2007) and dynamic expressions (Krumhuber et al., 2007). Social talk that shares emotions (e.g., funny or endearing anecdotes) also establishes trust (Peters & Kashimia, 2007). Cooperative exchanges have instrumental value, of course, but also create sentiments of trust (Molm, Schaefer, & Collett, 2007).

People's view of the (social) world as a benevolent place is most obvious when that core motive has been shattered, as when their lives are devastated by trauma, especially trauma caused by other people. Although surrounded by news reports of murder, rape, and other crime, most people “assume other people are benevolent . . . basically good, kind, helpful, and caring” (Janoff-Bulman, 1992, p. 6). People essentially believe that their world is safe and decent. For example, when that world is disrupted by parental divorce, children rebuild their general view of the world as benevolent. Moreover, their assumptions about people's benevolence make them optimistic about their own marriages (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, & Roberts, 1990). People are motivated to restore their sense that the world is trustworthy.

The potential damage caused by betrayal, exploitation, or hostility certainly makes people sensitive to signs of negative behavior by others, as a later chapter indicates. Indeed, evolutionary psychologists posit special cheater-detection modules designed to watch for untrustworthy behavior (Cosmides & Tooby, 1992). This focus on detection and monitoring is inversely related

to trust (Ferrin et al., 2007), so it might characterize earlier than later stages of a social bond. In conditional trust, when they are initially still monitoring the other person, people use demonstrably different neural systems to evaluate rewards from others, compared with unconditional trust, when they are maintaining an established social attachment (Krueger et al., 2007). Thus, different processes underlie vigilant monitoring and an established trusting baseline.

As with the other motives, the motive to trust returns in later chapters to help describe various social phenomena. Trusting appears in people's general positivity bias in perceiving others, but trust also makes people hypersensitive to negative information about others. Trusting facilitates attachment and interdependence in close relationships. The general predisposition to expect good things from most people (until or unless proven otherwise) enables people to adapt to their groups, encouraging mutual helping, social influence, and group loyalty.

Summary of Core Social Motives

The five core social motives—belonging, understanding, controlling, self-enhancing, and trusting—serve as key themes in this book. Belonging, as the motive that makes us emphatically social beings, underlies the other four and aids our social survival. Understanding propels us to make sense of our social situation, and controlling compels us to be effective in acting on that situation; both also make us more adaptive group members. Trusting others and enhancing the self make us better group members as well. The five motives provide continuity throughout the book. A subset of these core motives particularly relate to each chapter.

To be sure, other authors can and do generate other lists of motives, add a motive (justice-seeking has been suggested), subtract a motive (some people argue against trusting), or reject the whole concept of core motives. Evolutionary social psychologists might argue that survival or reproduction should be listed as the sole original motive. Nevertheless, the emphatically *social* survival perspective taken here argues that surviving in the social situation determines one's ability to survive at all and to reproduce. In any case, social psychologists constantly seek to improve our collective thinking by advocating different frameworks. Thus, while I do not claim that these five motives are the only way to organize the field, they do provide one workable framework and a starting point for discussion. The motives constitute not a theoretical model that predicts outcomes but a description of what social psychologists do in practice.

Culture and the Core Social Motives

Most of the research supporting the five core social motives was conducted in Western cultures. However, the motives take different forms in different cultures. For example (Triandis, 1990), North American and European cultures are more **individualist** on the whole—they emphasize the autonomous person—but Asian, African, and South American cultures on average are more **collectivist**, which means that they emphasize groups such as the family, the community, the organization, and the country. Cultures differ overall on these dimensions (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Table 1.8). On average, Asians and Asian Americans are more collectivist and less individualist than Europeans and European Americans. Also, Latinos and Latino Americans are more collectivist than Europeans and European Americans. Africans are likewise more collectivist and less individualist. However, African Americans are *more* individualist than European Americans. (Social psychologists need to collect more data here.)

Similarly, even within the United States, although the predominant orientation is individualist, various regions differ in degrees of individualism and collectivism (Vandello & Cohen, 1999). For example (Figure 1.4), collectivism is extremely high in Hawaii (which borders on collectivist Asia) but also in California (with many ethnically Asian immigrants), Utah (strong religious

Table 1.8 Meta-analysis of Individualism and Collectivism across Cultures and American Subcultures

Compared to European Americans	Individualism	Collectivism
Asians	Lower	Higher
Asian Americans	Lower	Higher
Latinos	Same	Higher
Latino Americans	Same	Higher
Africans	Lower	Higher
African Americans	Higher	Same

Table entries indicate cultures' standing, relative to European American culture.

Source: Summary of Oyserman et al., 2002.

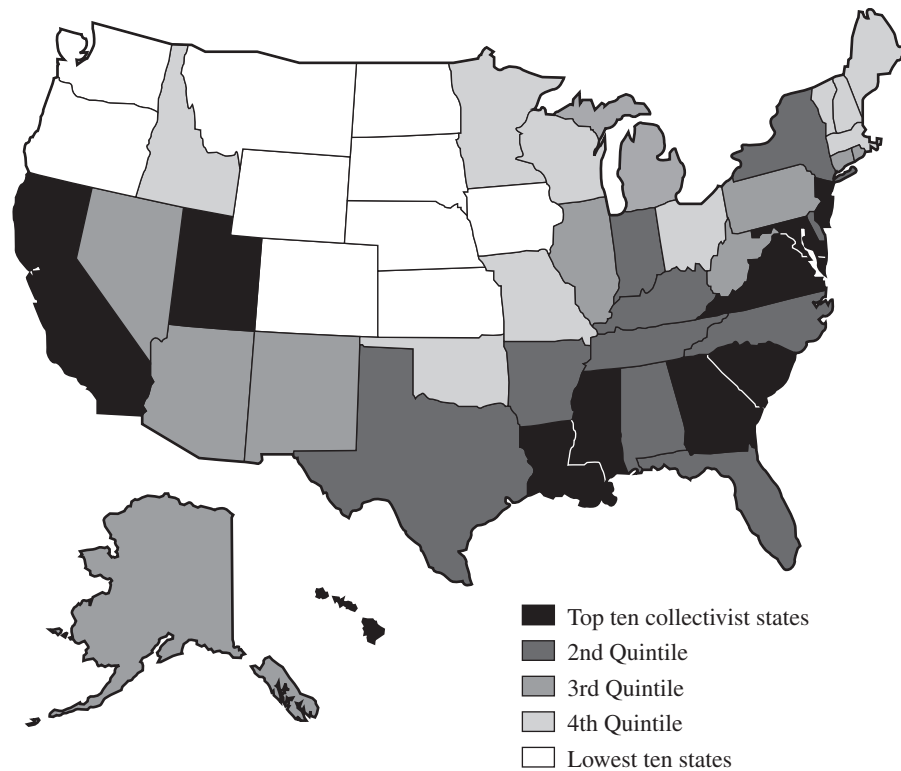


FIGURE 1.4 The distribution of individualism and collectivism across the United States.

Source: From Vandello & Cohen, 1999. Copyright © American Psychological Association. Adapted with permission.

identity), the deep South (strong regional and church identity), and New York City and New Jersey (many immigrants from Asian and Latino cultures). The most individualist regions by far are the Rocky Mountain and Great Plains areas, encompassing recent frontier and livestock-herding societies. In more individualist cultures, people put each person's own needs over the group's needs, whereas in more collectivist cultures, people put group needs over individual needs.

We can reconsider the five social motives in terms of cultural variation. The core motive of belonging, for example, is even more important and basic in a collectivist culture than in an

individualist one. In Latin cultures, the expression *mi casa es su casa* (my house is your house) illustrates this idea. European Americans traveling in Asia, Africa, and Latin America often remark on other cultures' hospitality. Respect for people's ties to one another permeates collectivist cultures more than individualist cultures.

The other four motives may also differ across cultures. Although people everywhere seek to understand their surroundings and function competently, their ways of doing so may vary (Triandis & Suh, 2002). For example, in some parts of rural Africa, the ways people gather information differ from those in mainstream society in the United States. Because direct questions are impolite, one cannot necessarily obtain local information that way. If a traveler asks whether a bus leaves town today, the answer may well be "yes," regardless of whether the bus actually leaves today or tomorrow. People prefer not to disappoint the stranger, and they assume that the person will eventually discover when the bus in fact leaves. One maintains the relationship at the cost of precision. In the same way, both in the United States and elsewhere, refusing a party invitation directly would be impolite. Thus, one may accept the invitation, regardless of one's plans, and then simply not show up. Information is gained and conveyed differently, depending on the social context. In certain cases (e.g., "Do you like my new haircut, sweetie?"), the consequences of brutal honesty are not always socially desirable.

People's need for control also is expressed differently across cultures. For example, in North American culture, people value control over the environment, believing that an individual can have a major impact on the surrounding social and nonsocial world (Strickland, 1989). Many North Americans show greater mental health if they score high on tests of need to control the environment. But some minority cultures in the United States—such as Asian Americans and Latino Americans, as well as some traditional cultures in Asia, Africa, and Latin America—may operate from a quite different sense of control, almost the opposite, in fact; they adjust themselves to their social environment and adapt their individual needs to those of the group. A person who instead places individual control over group control would be seen as immature.

Reflecting these cultural distinctions, a form of **harmony control** operates even in the United States (Morling & Fiske, 1997); harmony control contrasts with the environmental control so familiar to people in North American society. In this alternative form of control, people choose to give control over their own outcomes to other people, a higher power, or luck. Here are some expressions of harmony control:

- "I feel secure knowing that my friends will take care of me, should I need it."
- "Most of my own needs are met when I meet other people's needs."
- "Sometimes when I am with others, I seem to lose track of what I personally want."
- "Periods of good and bad luck even out in the end."
- "I know that a higher power ultimately decides the good and bad times in our lives."

Rather than controlling the environment, they harmonize with other people and intangible forces. This form of control is somewhat higher in women and Latinos than in men and Anglos. Thus, different subcultures and groups, even within the United States, express their control needs differently, in ways that may be just as adaptive as individually trying to control other people or the environment. Control matters in both cases, but the expression differs.

As indicated earlier, cultures vary in self-enhancement, too: A person can feel good as a unique individual—which would be more appropriate in individualist and independent cultures—or a person can feel good as a group member in certain roles—which would be more appropriate in more collectivist and interdependent cultures. The chapter on the self considers this issue in detail.

Trust—expecting the world to be benevolent—probably depends on culture as well. In more interdependent cultures, such as Japan, people expect to take care of each other and to trust their immediate family, friends, colleagues, and associates, although they may not trust outsiders

(Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In the more independent culture of the United States, trust and benevolence are more individually based; people believe, “Good things will happen to me personally; other people will probably treat me well.” Americans trust people in general, believe reputation important, and consider themselves honest and fair (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). In U.S. society, people move a lot, in and out of different groups all the time, so this kind of generalized trust in others and in the self is adaptive. In Japan, people are less generically trusting of others but see dealing with others through personal relations as useful; people form committed, safe, but confined relationships with few others (Yamagishi, Cook, & Watanabe, 1998). In the Japanese case, trust is confined to a small group; in the American one, trust is directed toward many more people in a more diffuse manner.

Cultures differ on more dimensions than individualism–collectivism or interdependence–independence (Bond & Smith, 1996; Triandis & Suh, 2002). For example, some cultures have high **power distance**, emphasizing the distinctions between those at the top and bottom of a hierarchy, whereas others minimize the difference between them. Some cultures are **tighter** (i.e., strictly organized), whereas some are looser and more flexible. Individualism and collectivism (or their cousins, independence and interdependence) simply reflect the most commonly studied dimensions to date.

Summary of Culture and the Core Social Motives

Later chapters come back to all these issues; for now, just note these cultural variations. Although varying across cultures, the core social motives fit social evolutionary pressures that locate people in relationships, groups, and communities. People survive and thrive if they want to belong, to develop socially shared understandings, to be effective and have some sense of personal or social control, and to enhance themselves, as well as to trust others. All these motives, despite cultural variations in their expression, facilitate living as a social being. Cultures solve similar problems in different ways (Cohen, 2001).

Key Features of Social Psychology’s Approach

As noted, social influence forms the main scientific business of social psychology. Social influence works because people are motivated to belong and to comply with the influence of others. This holds true for most people, although we tend to ignore or deny it. Social influence includes trivia such as fashion and hairstyles (for guys, crew cuts, Afros, ponytails, shags, preppie cuts, Mohawks, mullets, and shaved heads each have had their day; for women, curly, straight, bangs over the eyes, no bangs, pulled back, big hair, up-dos, and close-cropped styles have each in turn been popular). Social influence more importantly includes whether you feel comfortable telling people you want to be a nursery school teacher, a construction worker, a lawyer, a veterinarian, an investment banker, or a professor. Social influence affects choice of major, career, sports, politics, friends, mate, and haircut.

To give a scientific example, look at social influence in what is called the **autokinetic effect** (“auto” meaning self and “kinetic” meaning movement). This optical illusion creates the impression that a point of light in a dark space is moving. After the sun goes down, if you stare at the first star that comes out, without anything else nearby, you cannot tell whether it is a star or a satellite, moving or stationary. A single point of light in an otherwise dark space appears to move; this is called the autokinetic effect.

Muzafer Sherif (1935) capitalized on the autokinetic effect by bringing groups of people into a darkened room where he generated a point of light. Sherif then asked them to estimate how far it had moved on four separate trials; all participants assumed that the light had moved. Some people

gave one judgment alone and then voiced the three other judgments in the presence of one or two other people; others first made three judgments in a group and then made one judgment alone. Whenever people gave their judgments in the group or merely after hearing the group's judgments, they influenced each other's estimates. Some groups converged on the judgment that the light had moved several inches, while other groups converged on an inch or so. People's individual judgments, which started out quite different, were "funneled" (Sherif's term) to converge with the group (Figure 1.5[A]). Also, people who first made judgments in the group (Figure 1.5[B]) continued to follow the group decisions even when judging alone. Both patterns reflect social influence. The groups developed **norms** (implicit social rules) about how far the point of light was moving.

In a later version of the study, researchers (Jacobs & Campbell, 1961) replaced members of the group one by one over time, such that after a "generation" no one from the original group was still there; the norms nevertheless perpetuated themselves. In the groups that had converged on a couple of inches, the next generations still claimed that the light had moved a couple of inches, and in the groups that had converged on almost a foot, the next generation still claimed almost a foot, even though no original group member was still there. This perpetuation of an arbitrary tradition through several generations illustrates the scientific study of social influence over time.

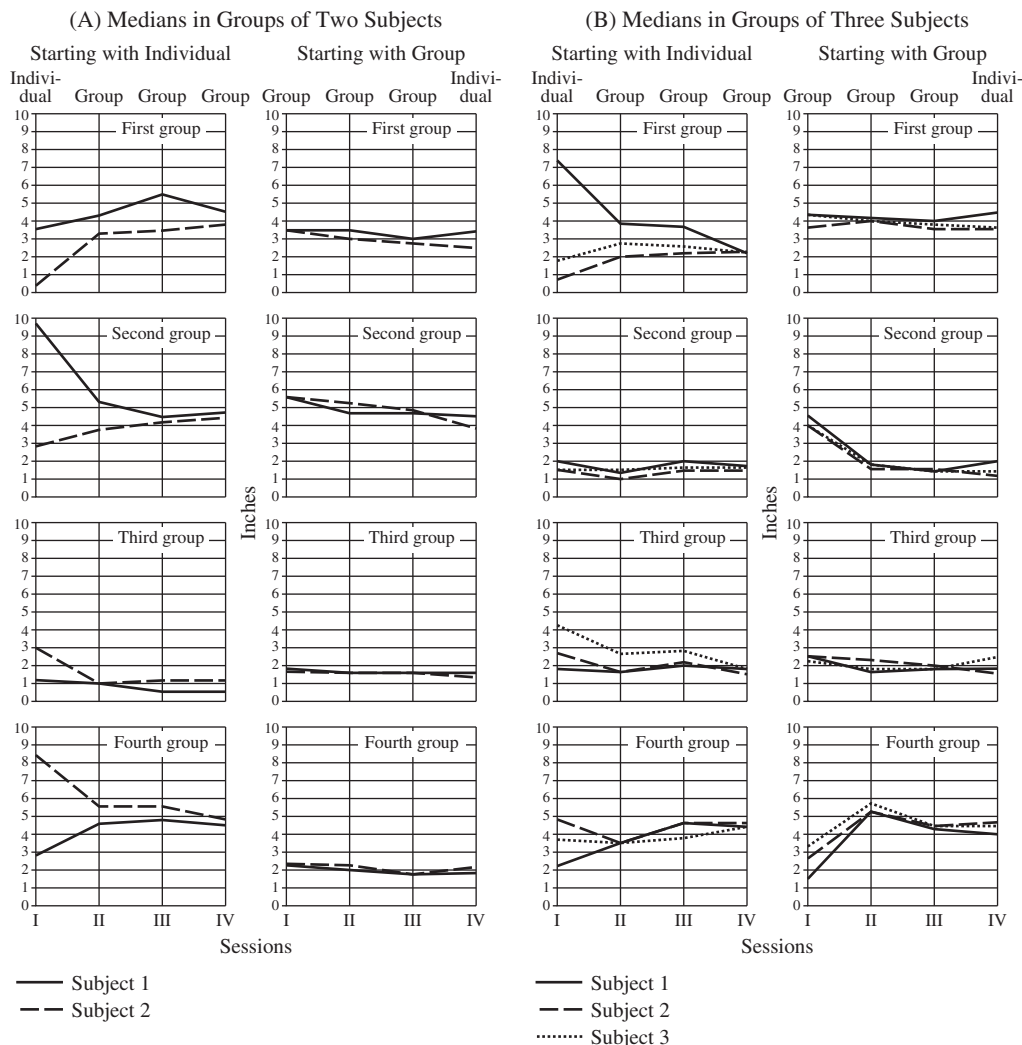


FIGURE 1.5
Median judgments of
illusory movement of a
point of light, starting
with individual (A) or
group (B) judgment.
Source: Adapted from
Sherif, 1935.

Such results have successfully applied to real-world problems, as in Lewin's wartime study that persuaded people to eat organ meats. The phenomenon of influence through social norms comes up again in the chapters on attitudes and on conformity and obedience.

Research on social influence and the autokinetic effect also exemplifies the unexpectedness and importance of some social-psychological findings: People influence each other on a judgment that seemingly should be objective. As you might imagine, such social factors in judgment have implications for obviously subjective norms as trivial as what label people wear on a baseball cap, or whether they wear one at all, as well as for more important issues such as deciding whether and where to go to college. Which opportunities seem possible when one is coming out of high school and entering adult life depends on one's social setting, and social psychology has a lot to say about these life-changing effects of social influence.

The Sherif experiments on social influence illustrate some key characteristics of social psychology as a field of knowledge. The rest of this final section characterizes the intellectual territory covered by social psychology, as described by Phillip Brickman (1980). This chapter has claimed, not modestly, that social psychology relates to just about everything important in life. Many social psychologists love their field, as I do, and Brickman's perspective captures for me exactly why this is so. As the Sherif experiments show, social psychology is broad in scope, constitutes a culturally mandated source of knowledge, follows scientific methods, and reflects an ongoing search for wisdom.

Broad Scope

The domain of social psychology is indeed broad; it provides a vantage point on major human concerns, such as conformity and deviance, altruism and aggression, loving and hating, self and groups, attitudes and action. It addresses, in some sense, all of human behavior. It discusses everything from private emotions to public trials. Social-psychological principles are eagerly borrowed by economists, political scientists, management researchers, health scientists, legal scholars, education researchers, and colleagues in all the other branches of psychology (e.g., personality, clinical, developmental, cognitive, and neuro). The breadth of social psychology goes back to the crucial role of other people in our lives, which we have traced back to the human social group as the foundation of people's biological survival.

One example of an area that spans issues from close relationships to political clout is **nonverbal behavior**—all the action in a communication that is not words. Chapter 3 notes that people imitate other people's nonverbal behavior. Notice, for example, that when two people talk to each other, they often end up mirroring each other's gestures: crossing their arms at the same time, leaning their chins on their hands at the same time. Similarly, each person often reflects the other's facial expressions (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993).

Over time this can have a permanent effect on one's appearance. People do look more like their spouses after many years of marriage (Table 1.9; Zajonc, Adelman, Murphy, & Niedenthal, 1987). One explanation suggests that as they talk to each other and mimic each other's facial

Table 1.9 Resemblance Values for Photographs of Young and Old, Married and Random Pairs

Status of pairs	Years married	
	1	25
Married	3.57	3.89
Random	3.77	3.40

Higher numbers indicate greater resemblance.

Source: From Zajonc et al., 1987. Copyright © Klumer. Adapted with permission.

expressions, certain facial habits and muscle groups develop, with the result that the spouses eventually look more alike. Facial mimicry works even when people watch political leaders on television. Researchers (McHugo, Lanzetta, Sullivan, Masters, & Englis, 1985) attached electrodes to people's faces and found that they made tiny facial imitations of the person they were watching. So one explanation for the success of someone like President Reagan, who had a warm personality and was pleasant to watch, was that viewers subtly mimicked his facial expressions—for example, forming the ghost of a smile when he smiled. Smiling along with Reagan made people feel good. That too is a form of social influence, illustrating the broad scope of social psychology.

Cultural Mandate

Second, and perhaps most important, social psychology is:

a culturally mandated translation of our understanding of human behavior from an older language into a newer one. The older language was a language of religion and custom and law and etiquette. In the not too distant past, if we wanted to predict what someone would do or explain why they would do it, we would speak in religious terms or in terms of tradition. This would tell us quite well what kind of occupation a person would follow or what kind of person they would marry. ... We demand an explanation of human behavior in language we find compelling, and this is now the language of science. (Brickman, 1980, p. 8)³

Social science in general (and social psychology in particular) supplies an explanation that modern culture values. Think of all the best-selling books being published by and about social psychologists! Just as some times and some cultures rely on tradition to explain people's lives, social psychology supplies a scientific expertise sought by modern courts, lawmakers, educators, policy analysts, health-care providers, managers, businesspeople, and journalists. Social psychology is culturally accepted as a source of significant understanding, in the same way that tradition, religion, or fortune-telling has in other times and places. In a traditional society, if your small business is failing, you might consult an oracle to tell you whether your competitor has put a spell on it (Evans-Pritchard, 1972). In an American city, if your small business is failing, you might consult a social psychologist to design alternative marketing strategies. In the United States, people who think they have been the target of discrimination might go to court, calling a social-psychological expert on stereotyping and prejudice to testify; in another society, people might simply accept their place as a matter of tradition. Cultures mandate various forms of expertise. In the modern world, social psychology is culturally mandated as an accepted form of knowledge.

Scientific Methods

Scientific methods are integral to social psychology in three major ways, which the next chapter will explain in detail. First, social psychologists develop systematic theories and then investigate their validity to advance scientific understanding. As the next chapter indicates, scientific theories attempt to predict causality, create coherence, focus thought, and facilitate investigation.

Second, social psychology relies on the scientific method—its techniques, procedures, analyses, and standards—to create scientifically reliable knowledge. Knowing about research methods will clarify how the data help fit together pieces of the human social puzzle. The methods aim to be precise, public, and accurate.

Third, social psychologists choose appropriate research strategies. They conduct experimental, observational, and survey research, adhering to rigorous standards before making assertions about

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how people influence each other. Whatever the strategy, research outcomes attempt to predict the social world and to analyze people's responses.

The alternative to scientific explanation, namely, common sense, can seduce you into believing that you understand the material in this book. Beware common sense. (It will fail you on the exam!) You will frequently think that a given point is obvious or easily understood. Be careful. It may *seem* obvious because social psychology deals with face-to-face interactions, and we all are experts at face-to-face interactions, because we have them all the time. Common sense will provide a comfortable familiarity with the material.

Nevertheless, common sense cannot be trusted in learning social psychology. Often, common sense is neither common nor sensible. Common sense is contradictory and unreliable. Don't simply read a theory and say, "Yes, I get this." Study social psychology as you would any other subject, even though many social-psychological concepts may make quick intuitive sense. For example, if you encounter the theory that people are attracted to people similar to themselves, you may think, "Of course, birds of a feather flock together." No doubt you can think of some examples. But what about "opposites attract" or "exotic is erotic?" Common sense might also tell you that people are attracted to others whose personalities complement theirs. Both alternatives cannot be right. Common sense thus contains a lot of truths, but also their opposites. Whereas common sense is not required to be consistent, science is. Social psychology goes beyond common sense to build a scientific understanding of human social behavior.

Search for Wisdom

Social psychologists study practical social issues, in an effort to make the world a better place. Application to real-world problems is a key goal. Many people go into social psychology to help others. Social psychologists believe that if we understand how people influence one another, then perhaps we can understand and ameliorate some of the negative influences. Social psychology is in some ways a field for idealists.

In the end, social psychology searches for wisdom, not just knowledge. "Knowledge is an essential component of wisdom, but it is not by itself enough. Wisdom requires a fusion of moral and intellectual concerns, and also a fusion of direct and indirect experience" (Brickman, 1980, p. 12). Wisdom comprises knowledge about people and the world, combined with enduring moral, intellectual, and societal concerns, that together make sense in the social context of people's lived experience. I hope you get from this book little pieces of wisdom that you can carry with you for life.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter began by defining social psychology as the science explaining how people influence other people. The actual, imagined, or implied presence of others influences the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals. Social psychology's level of analysis relative to other psychological and social sciences emphasizes individuals affected by other individuals or groups. As such, it highlights the often-underestimated power of the social situation, compared with individual personalities. Moreover, people are so acutely attuned to others because we survive better in groups than as isolated individuals; evolutionary adaptation apparently favors the group-oriented person.

Our core social motives suit us to be good group members. People are motivated to belong to groups, to develop socially shared

understanding, to control their interpersonal outcomes effectively, to enhance (esteem or at least improve) themselves, and to trust others by default. Not all people exhibit these motives under all circumstances, and they vary across cultures, but these five motives crop up repeatedly as organizing themes throughout social psychology, and they suit people to group life.

Social psychologists tackle the motives of the person in the situation by examining thoughts, feelings, and behavior across a broad scope, within the person, between people, within groups, and between groups. As a form of culturally mandated understanding, it is scientific, as opposed to tradition or common sense. At its best, social psychology is a search for wisdom about the human condition.

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