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UNIT IV

THE SELF AND ATTITUDE

DEFINITION OF SELF PRESENTATION

William Shakespeare said long ago in his play As You Like It, “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” In social psychological terms, this means that all of us are faced with the task of presenting ourselves to a variety of audiences, and we may play different roles (be different selves) in different plays (in different contexts). As we’ve discussed, nowhere is the choice of how to present ourselves There are many reasons for assuming that people know themselves better than anyone else does. After all, each of us has access to our internal mental states (e.g., feelings, thoughts, aspirations, and intentions), which others do not (Pronin & Kruger, 2007; Wilson & Dunn, 2004). For this reason alone, it seems intuitively obvious that we must know ourselves best—but is it true? Research evidence suggests that having access to our intentions, which observers do not have, is one reason why we are sometimes inaccurate about ourselves (Chambers, Epley, Savitsky, & Windschitl, 2008). Consider the following example. My friend Shirley is chronically late for everything. Frequently, she’s more than a half hour late. I simply cannot count on her to be ready when I arrive to pick her up, or for her to arrive on time if we are meeting somewhere. Would she characterize herself that way? Probably not. But, you might ask, how could she not know this about herself? Well, it could be precisely because she knows her intentions—she means to be on time and knows the effort she puts into trying to achieve that goal. That information could lead her to believe she actually is mostly on time! So, in this instance, I might claim that I know her better than she knows herself because I can predict her behavior more accurately, at least in this domain. Despite such examples, many people strongly believe that they know themselves better than others know them. Ironically, some of those same people claim they know certain others better than those others know themselves

(Pronin, Kruger, Savitsky, & Ross, 2001). Part of the problem in determining who is most accurate—ourselves or others who are close to us—has been due to people reporting both their own perceptions and behaviors (see Figure 4.3). As you'll probably agree, behavioral self-reports are hardly an objective criterion for determining accuracy. Continuing with the example of Shirley, she'd likely admit to being occasionally late, but she would also say that she always tries hard to be on time. She might even recall a few instances when that was true. So how can the self–other accuracy problem be addressed? Vazire and Mehl (2008) found a clever way to deal with the problem of collecting both self-perceptions and behavior frequencies from the same source. To develop a more objective index of how a person actually behaves on a daily basis, these researchers had participants wear a digital audio recorder with a microphone that recorded the ambient sounds of people's lives during waking hours. Recordings were automatically made approximately every 12.5 minutes for 4 days. Research assistants later coded the recorded sounds according to the categories shown in Table 4.1. Before the participants' actual behaviors were recorded, they provided self-ratings (predictions) concerning the frequency they expected to perform each behavior (more or less than the average person) on a daily basis. For every p articipant, the researchers also recruited three informants who knew the participant well (e.g., friends, p arents, romantic partners). These informants provided the same type of ratings: They predicted the frequency the participant would engage in each behavior, using the same average person as comparison. As you can see in Table 4.1, sometimes the participants' own ratings were more strongly related to the frequency of their actual behavior. However, sometimes others' ratings of the participants were more strongly related to actual behavior. So, at times, other people do seem to "know" us better than we know ourselves. Although people routinely show biases in their self-perceptions, to what extent are they aware they might be biased? Bollich, Rogers, and Vazire (2015) attempted to answer this difficult question in the following way. Participants were asked to rate themselves on 10 desirable traits (e.g., extraverted, warm, dependable, intelligent, funny, and physically attractive). The researchers then e-mailed several of each participant's peers to have them rate the person on those same traits. Four days later, participants were asked to indicate whether they had been biased (e.g., more favorable or more unfavorable) when they previously provided trait ratings about themselves. Virtually everyone reported they had been biased—e ither positively or negatively—on at least one trait they had previously rated. Further, most of the perceived bias was indicated by people who admitted they may have been “overly positive” about themselves. When people’s own self-perceptions were correlated with those of their peers’ perceptions of them, little correspondence was found. However, when people’s own ratings and their perceived bias were correlated, a strong relationship was obtained. So, we appear not to be so accurate about ourselves

First of all, people often try to ensure that others form impressions of them based on their most favorable self-aspects; that is, they engage in self-promotion. If we want others to think we’re smart, we can emphasize our intelligence “credentials”—grades obtained, awards won, and degrees sought. If we want others to conclude we are fun, we can tell jokes, or talk about the great parties we’ve attended or hosted.

If we say we’re really good at something, people will often believe us. Self-promotion may even help convince ourselves that what we say is true! Considerable research from a self-verification perspective—the processes we use to lead others to agree with our own self-views—suggests that negotiation occurs in attempts to get others to agree with our self-claims (Swann, 2005). For example, while trading self-relevant information with a potential roommate, you might stress the student part of your self-concept. That is, you would probably emphasize your good study habits and pride in your good grades and underplay your fun-loving qualities. This potential roommate might even note that “You don’t sound like you’re very interested in having fun here at college.” To gain that person’s agreement with your most central self-perception—serious student—you may even be willing to entertain a negative assessment of your fun quotient, as long as the other person is willing to go along with your self-assessment of the dimension most critical to you. In this instance, it may be especially useful for you to downplay your own partying skills so that the other person can achieve distinctiveness on this dimension. Indeed, in this interaction, the potential roommate might wish to emphasize his or her party side. Through this sort of self-presentational exchange process, you may “buy” the roommate’s self-assessment as a party type, to the extent that it helps you to “sell” your own self-assessment as an excellent student. According to the self-verification view, we may still wish to have other people—particularly those closest to us—see us as we see ourselves, even if it means potentially receiving information that is negative about ourselves (Swann & Bosson, 2010). Suppose you are certain that you lack athletic ability, are shy, or lack math skills. Even though these attributes might be seen as relatively negative compared to their alternatives—athletic star, extroverted, or math whiz—you might prefer to have people see you consistent with how you see yourself. Research has revealed that, when given a choice, we prefer to be with other people who verify our views about ourselves rather than with those who fail to verify our dearly held self-views—even if those are not so flattering (Chen, Chen, & Shaw, 2004). However, there are real limits to this effect. As Swann and Bosson (2010) note, people who fear they are low in physical attractiveness do not appreciate close others who verify this self-view! We can also choose to create a favorable self-presentation by conveying our positive regard for others. It is most assuredly true that we like to feel that others respect us, and we really like those who convey this to us (Tyler & Blader, 2000). To achieve this end, you can present yourself to others as someone who particularly values or respects them. In general, when we want to make a good impression on others, it can be useful to employ ingratiation tactics. Although, as suggested in the cartoon shown in Figure 4.5, it is possible to overdo it. For the most part, though, we can make others like us by praising them. This is generally quite effective unless people suspect our sincerity (Vonk, 1999). To achieve the same effect as ingratiation, we can be self-deprecating— imply that we are not as good as the other person, by communicating admiration or by simply lowering an audience's expectations of our abilities. Self-presentations are not always completely honest. They are at times strategic, and as discussed in Chapter 3, sometimes deceptive. Research indicates that college students report telling lies to other people about twice a day (Kashy & DePaulo, 1996)—frequently to help protect the other person but sometimes to advance their own interests. Consistent with the former possibility, people who tell more lies tend to be more popular. In a study addressing the honesty of self-presentations on the Internet, Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs (2006) concluded that people often attempt to balance the desire to present an authentic sense of self with some "self-deceptive white lies." That is, people's profiles online reflect, to some degree, their "ideal self" rather than their "actual self." Thus there can be a discrepancy between how we might like to see ourselves and what we are actually like. However, the extent of to which people self-enhance on Facebook (versus other online networking sites) is somewhat limited because people are aware that their Facebook friends know them offline and might realize when they are not telling the truth (Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012).

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

We now turn to some of the ways we use to gain self-knowledge. One straightforward method is to try to directly analyze ourselves. Another method is to try to see ourselves as we think others see us— to take an observer's perspective on the self. We will first consider the consequences of both these approaches, and then explore what social psychological research says about how to know ourselves better.

People often assume that introspection—privately thinking about the factors that made us who we are—is a useful way to learn about the self. In a host of self-help books that sell millions of copies per year (see Figure 4.7), we are told time and again that the best way to get to know ourselves is by looking inward. Indeed, many people in our society believe that the more we introspect—particularly the more we examine the reasons why we act as we do—the greater the self-understanding we will achieve. Is this really the best way to arrive at an accurate understanding of ourselves? First of all, considerable social psychological research has revealed that we do not always know or have conscious access to the reasons for our actions. However, we can certainly generate—after the fact—what might seem to be logical theories of why we acted as we did (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Because we often genuinely don't know why we feel a particular way, generating reasons (which might be inaccurate) could cause us to arrive at false conclusions. In a series of introspection studies, Wilson and Kraft (1993) illustrated how this effect can happen. Participants were asked to describe their feelings about a wide range of topics, from "why I feel as I do about my romantic partner" to "why I like one type of jam over another." After introspecting about the reasons for their feelings, people changed their attitudes, at least temporarily, to match their stated reasons. As you might imagine, this can lead to incorrect inferences because the original feelings—based on other factors entirely—are still there. So, thinking about reasons for our actions can misdirect our quest for selfknowledge when our behavior is really driven by our feelings. Another way in which introspection might be rather misleading to us is when we attempt to predict our future feelings in response to some event, what researchers call "affective forecasting." Try imagining how you would feel living in a new city, being fired from your job, or living with another person for many years. When we are not in these specific circumstances, we might not be able to accurately predict how we would respond when we are in them, and this applies to both positive and negative future circumstances. Why is it we have so much difficulty predicting our future responses? When we think about something terrible happening to us and try to predict how we would feel 1 year after the event, we are likely to focus exclusively on the awfulness of that event and neglect all the other factors that will almost certainly contribute to our happiness level as the year progresses (Gilbert & Wilson, 2000). Consequently, people tend to predict that they would feel much worse than they actually would when the future arrives. Likewise, for positive events, if we focus on only that great future event, we will mispredict our happiness as being considerably higher than the actual moderate feelings that are likely 1 year later. In the case of predicting our responses to such positive events in the future, miscalculation would occur because we are unlikely to consider the daily hassles we are also likely to experience in the future, and those would most definitely moderate how we actually feel. Let's consider another important way in which introspection can lead us astray. Think now about whether spending money on a gift for someone else or spending that same amount of money on something for yourself would make you happier. If you are like most people, you are likely to think that buying something cool for yourself would make you happier than using your money to buy something for someone else. But, yet, recent research has revealed exactly the opposite—that spending money on others makes us happier than spending money on ourselves! In a nationally representative sample of Americans, Dunn, Aknin, and Norton (2008) asked respondents to rate how happy they were and to indicate how much of their monthly income they spend on expenses and gifts for themselves versus gifts for others and donations to charity. Overall, of course, people spent more on themselves than on others, but the important question is which actually predicts respondents' happiness? These researchers found that personal spending was unrelated to happiness, but that more spending on others predicted greater happiness. This was true regardless of people's level of annual income—so whether you are rich or poor, there seems to be a happiness bonus for giving to others that has been observed across very different cultures (Aknin et al., 2013). But, you might say, this was a correlational study and therefore we can't be sure that spending on others causally drove respondents' happiness. So, Dunn et al. (2008) performed a simple but telling experiment. They had psychology students rate their happiness in the morning and then they were given either $5 or $20 that they had to spend by 5 p.m. that same day. Half of the participants were told to spend that money on a personal bill or gift for themselves, while the other half were told to spend the money on a charitable donation or gift for someone else. Which group was happier at the end of the day? Regardless of the amount of money they were given to spend, participants reported significantly greater happiness when they spent their windfall on others compared to those who spent it on themselves. This experiment provides clear evidence that how we choose to spend our money is more important for our happiness—and in a counterintuitive direction—than is how much money we make. However, new participants who were asked to simply estimate which condition would bring them greater happiness as I do about my romantic partner" to "why I like one type of jam over another." After introspecting about the reasons for their feelings, people changed their attitudes, at least temporarily, to match their stated reasons. As you might imagine, this can lead to incorrect inferences because the original feelings—based on other factors entirely—are still there. So, thinking about reasons for our actions can misdirect our quest for selfknowledge when our behavior is really driven by our feelings. Another way in which introspection might be rather misleading to us is when we attempt to predict our future feelings in response to some event, what researchers call "affective forecasting." Try imagining how you would feel living in a new city, being fired from your job, or living with another person for many years. 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However, new participants who were asked to simply estimate which condition would bring them greater happiness overwhelmingly thought that spending the money on themselves would make them happier than would spending it on others. And, those who simply estimated how they would feel reported that receiving $20 would bring greater happiness than receiving the $5. But, neither of these self-predictions turned out to be true! What this means is that we often don't know how events will affect us and simply introspecting about it will not help us learn how events actually do affect our emotions and behavior.

SELF-PERSONAL VERSUS SOCIAL IDENTITY

According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), we can perceive ourselves differently at any given moment in time, depending on where we are on the personalversus-social identity continuum. At the personal end of this continuum, we think of ourselves primarily as individuals. At the social end, we think of ourselves as members of specific social groups. We do not experience all aspects of our self-concept simultaneously; where we place ourselves on this continuum at any given moment will influence how we think about ourselves. This momentary salience—the part of our identity that is the focus of our attention—can affect much in terms of how we perceive ourselves, and respond to others. When our personal identity is salient and we think of ourselves as unique individuals, this results in self-descriptions that emphasize how we differ from other individuals. For example, you might describe yourself as fun when thinking of yourself at the personal identity level—to emphasize your self-perception as having more of this attribute than other individuals you are using as the comparison. Personal identity self-description can be thought of as an intragroup comparison—involving comparisons with other individuals who share our group membership. For this reason, when describing the personal self, which group is the referent can affect the content of our self-descriptions (Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Reynolds et al., 2010). Consider how you might characterize yourself if you were asked to describe how you are different from others. You could describe yourself as particularly liberal if you were comparing yourself to your parents, but if you were indicating how you are different from other college students you might say that you are rather conservative. The point is that even for personal identity, the content we generate to describe ourselves depends on some comparison, and this can result in us thinking about and describing ourselves differently—in this example as either liberal or conservative—depending on the comparative context. At the social identity end of the continuum, perceiving ourselves as members of a group means we emphasize what we share with other group members. We describe ourselves in terms of the attributes that differentiate our group from another comparison group. Descriptions of the self at the social identity level are intergroup comparisons in nature—they involve contrasts between groups. For example, when your social identity as a fraternity or sorority group member is salient, you may ascribe traits to yourself that you share with other members of your group. Attributes of athleticism and self-motivation might, for example, differentiate your group from other fraternities or sororities that you see as being more studious and scholarly than your group. For many people, their gender group is another important social i dentity and, when salient, can affect self-perceptions. So, if you are female and your gender is salient, you might perceive the attributes that you believe you share with other women (e.g., warm and caring) and that you perceive as differentiating women from men as self-descriptive. Likewise, if you are male, when gender is salient, you might think of yourself (i.e., self-stereotype) in terms of attributes that are believed to characterize men and that differentiate them from women (e.g., independent, strong). What's important to note here is that when you think of yourself as an individual, the content of your self-description is likely to differ from when you are thinking of yourself as a member of a category that you share with others. Of course, most of us are members of a variety of different groups (e.g., gender, occupation, age, sexual orientation, nationality, sports teams), but all of these will not be salient at the same time, and they may differ considerably in how important they are to us. But, when a particular social identity is salient, people are likely to act in ways that reflect that aspect of their self-concept. So a number of situational factors may alter how we define ourselves, and the actions that stem from those self-definitions will differ accordingly.

SELF-ESTEEM-ATTITUDES TOWARDS OUR SELVES

For the most part, self-esteem has been conceptualized by social psychologists as the overall attitude people hold toward themselves. What kind of attitude do you have toward yourself—is it positive or negative? Is your attitude toward yourself stable, or do you think your self-esteem varies across time and settings? Evidence concerning the average level of self-esteem in American high school students suggests that it has been gradually increasing over time (Twenge & Campbell, 2008). Relative to students in the 1970s, high school students in 2006 report on average liking themselves considerably more. But, are there points at which self-esteem changes for most everyone? How about the self-esteem of students who attend university? New research following students over the 4 years of college indicates that self-esteem drops during the first year, substantially for most students (Chung et al., 2014). This drop during the first year is followed by an increase in self-esteem that continues through the end of college. This post-first year increase is a function of performance: Those who get better grades in college tend to increase in self-esteem across time more than those who receive worse grades. Further, students are fairly accurate in their perceptions of whether their selfesteem changed across the college years—and about which direction. So, as you will see, while self-esteem is often thought of as, and measured, like a stable trait, it can and does change in response to life events.

- **The Measurement of Self-Esteem**

The most common method of measuring personal self-esteem as an overall assessment of self-evaluation is with the 10-item Rosenberg (1965) scale. As shown in Figure 4.16, the items on this scale are quite transparent. On this measure, people are asked to rate their own explicit attitude toward themselves. Given that most people can guess what is being assessed with these items, it is not surprising that scores on this scale correlate very highly with responses to the single item, "I have high self-esteem" (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001). There are also more specific measures of self-esteem that are used to assess self-esteem in particular domains, such as academics, personal relationships, appearance, and athletics, with scores on these more specific types of self-esteem being predicted by performance indicators in those domains (Swann, Chang-Schneider, & McClarty, 2007). As Figure 4.17 illustrates, people's self-esteem is often visibly responsive to life events. When we reflect on our achievements, self-esteem increases and focusing on our failures typically hurts self-esteem (Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2008). For example, when people are reminded of the ways they fall short of their ideals, self-esteem decreases (Eisenstadt & Leippe, 1994). When people with low self-esteem receive negative feedback, their self-esteem suffers further declines (DeHart & Pelham, 2007). Being ostracized, excluded, or ignored by other people can be psychologically painful and cause reductions in self-esteem (DeWall et al., 2010; Williams, 2001). Several research groups have attempted to measure self-esteem with greater subtlety (Greenwald & Farnham, 2000). Self-esteem scores based on explicit measures such as the Rosenberg scale could be biased by self-presentation concerns. Responses also might be guided by norms—for example, people may report high levels of self-esteem because they think that is "normal" and what others do. To bypass such normative and conscious strategic concerns, researchers have developed a number of ways of assessing self-esteem implicitly by assessing automatic associations between the self and positive or negative concepts. The most common of the implicit selfesteem measures assessing self-feelings of which we are not consciously aware is the Implicit Associations Test (Greenwald & Nosek, 2008; Ranganath, Smith, & Nosek, 2008). Responses on these two types of measures of self-esteem—implicit and explicit—are often not correlated with each other, which is consistent with the assumption that they are capturing different processes. An important question is whether implicit self-esteem changes with the circumstances, as we know explicit self-esteem does. To test this idea, Dijksterhuis (2004) used the logic of classical conditioning procedures to determine whether implicit self-esteem can be improved without the participant's conscious awareness. After repeatedly pairing representations of the self (I or me) with positive trait terms (e.g., nice, smart, warm) that were presented subliminally (too quickly for participants to consciously recognize them), implicit self-esteem was found to be significantly higher for these participants than for those in a control group who were not exposed to such self-positive trait pairings. Furthermore, this subliminal conditioning procedure prevented participants from suffering a self-esteem reduction when they were later given negative false feedback about their intelligence. Therefore, and consistent with research on explicit self-esteem (studies using the Rosenberg scale) that shows people with high self-esteem are less vulnerable to threat following a failure experience, this subliminal training procedure appears to provide similar self-protection at the implicit level when faced with a threat to the self. Consistent with this analysis concerning nonconscious influences on self-esteem, DeHart, Pelham, and Tennen (2006) found that young adults whose parents were consistently nurturing of them reported higher implicit self-esteem than those whose parents were less nurturing. Conversely, young adults whose parents were overprotective of them showed lower implicit self-esteem than those whose parents displayed trust in them during their teenage years. Such implicit messages—based on our experiences with our parents—may lay the foundation for implicit associations between the self and positive attributes, or the self and negative attributes. Much in American culture encourages people to think positively about themselves. When you are facing a big challenge, do you follow the advice that Norman Vincent Peale offered in his (1952) book The Power of Positive Thinking (see Figure 4.18)? The advice was simple enough—"tell yourself that you can do anything, and you will"; "tell yourself that you're great, and you will be." Who practices this advice? And, does doing so work? To address these questions, Wood, Perunovic, and Lee (2009) first simply asked college students when and how often they use positive self-talk (e.g., "I will win"; "I will beat this illness"). Only 3 percent of their sample said they "never" do this, while 8 percent said they do so "almost daily," with the majority somewhere in between. As might be expected, their participants were most likely to say they use positive self-talk before undertaking a challenge (e.g., before an exam or before giving a presentation). Wood et al. (2009) suggested that for people with high self- esteem, such self-talk represents a confirmation of their already positive self-views. But for people with low self-esteem, positive self-talk might simply serve to remind them that they might not measure up. These researchers had high and low self-esteem people focus on how “I am a lovable person” and other statements of that sort. After this task, participants’ happiness with themselves was assessed. For those low in self-esteem, this treatment did not appear to work; they remained less happy with themselves than high self-esteem people. So, positive self-talk may not be as beneficial as once believed—at least among those who need it most.

- **How Migration Affects Self-Esteem**

Each year millions of students leave their home state or country to attend university elsewhere. You might be one of them. How does such a move affect psychological well-being, including selfesteem? Research examining the well-being of domestic and international students who have moved within or to the United States finds that adjustment among international students initially is lower than that of domestic students but that both groups improve over a 6-month period (Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen, & Van Horn, 2002). Improvements in well-being were due to two factors: increasing self-efficacy—the sense that one is capable of getting things done, and social support—both from those at home and positive interactions with peers at the new location. Other research with international students has found that self-esteem improves to the extent that they form a new minority identity shared with others who have also undergone the same migration experience—that of “International Student” (Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2002). Developing this new identity is particularly important for the well-being of students who, after arriving in the United States, perceive themselves as discriminated against because they are “foreigners.” Is the self-esteem of students affected when they move to a location where their ethnic group is the majority or to one where their ethnic group is a minority? Recent research has addressed this question with Asian and European American students who moved from California to Hawaii (Xu, Farver, & Pauker, 2015). In their home state of California, European Americans are the numeric majority and Asian Americans the minority, while this is reversed in Hawaii with Asian Americans the numeric majority and European

Americans the minority. How is the self-esteem of these two ethnic groups affected by this numeric change? European Americans' self-esteem levels were lower after their first year in Hawaii where their ethnic group was a minority, suggesting that the change from majority to minority may have challenged their views about themselves. In contrast, for Asian Americans, although their ethnic identity became less salient by the move from a minority to majority context, their self-esteem was unchanged. People also migrate from one country to another not just for a few years as a student, but with the goal of permanently relocating, often becoming citizens of the new country. Indeed, there has been an ongoing mass migration of people from Syria and other locations in the Middle East and North Africa into Europe over the past several years. As shown in Figure 4.19, both adults and children brave treacherous travels on the sea to reach safety. It will no doubt take considerable time for their well-being to improve, given the trauma many have already experienced. But, what are the well-being consequences of immigrating to another country—not as refugees who are fleeing from terrifying conditions, but when this migration is freely chosen? Despite the millions of people who immigrate to another country every year, little research has examined the self-esteem of immigrants both before and after doing so. One valuable study that did so (Lonnqvist, Leikas, Mahonen, & Jasinskaja- Lahti, 2015) found that immigrants from Russia to Finland showed reductions in self- esteem from preimmigration to 3 years postimmigration. Like the student migrants discussed previously, these immigrants had higher self-esteem to the extent that they experienced high social support and high self-efficacy. This research reveals that changing circumstances—even when those are chosen—can have implications for our self-esteem.

- **Do Women and Men Differ in Their Level of Self-Esteem?**

Who do you think, on average, has higher or lower self-esteem—women or men? Many people might guess that men have higher self-esteem overall than women. Why would that be? To the extent that self-esteem is affected by how important others see us and the treatment we receive from them (Mead, 1934), then we might expect that women will have lower self-esteem overall compared to men. Because women have historically occupied lower status social positions and are frequently targets of prejudice, these could have negative consequences for their self-esteem. Self-esteem in girls and women may reflect their devalued status in the larger society, with many feeling that they just cannot measure up to societal standards. In a 14-nation study, Williams and Best (1990) assessed the self-concepts of women and men. In nations such as India and Malaysia, where women are expected to remain in the home in their roles as wives and mothers, women had the most negative selfconcepts. In contrast, in nations such as England and Finland, where women are more active in the labor force and the status difference between women and men is less, members of each gender tend to perceive themselves equally favorably. This research suggests that when women are excluded from important life arenas, they will have worse self-concepts than men. Longitudinal research with employed women in the United States too finds that women in jobs in which gender discrimination is most frequent exhibit increasingly poorer well-being (Pavalko, Mossakowski, & Hamilton, 2003). Harm to women—as a function of employment in a discriminatory work environment—was observed over time in comparison to their health status before such employment began. A meta-analysis comparing the global self-esteem of women and men in 226 samples collected in the United States and Canada from 1982 to 1992 likewise found that men have reliably higher self-esteem than women (Major, Barr, Zubek, & Babey, 1999). Although the size of the effect obtained across all these studies was not large, as Prentice and Miller (1992) point out, sometimes small differences between groups can be quite impressive. Precisely because there are substantial differences within each gender group in level of self-esteem, being able to detect reliable group differences in self-esteem both within and across nations is remarkable. Major et al. (1999) found that the self-esteem difference between men and women was less among those in the professional class and greatest among those in the middle and lower classes. Again, those women who have attained culturally desirable positions suffer less self-esteem loss than those who are more likely to experience the greatest devaluation. Indeed, recent longitudinal research has noted that the substantial gender difference in selfesteem that they observed during the adult working years begins to decline at about 65 years of age, with the gender groups converging in old age (Orth, Trzesniewski, & Robins, 2010). So, is the common sense notion that overall self-esteem suffers for groups that are devalued in a given society correct after all? The research findings offer a straight forward answer for gender: Yes. Likewise, for many other devalued groups, perceiving discrimination has a significant negative effect on a variety of indicators of health (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). How badly self-esteem suffers depends on how much discrimination and devaluation the group that is the subject of such treatment experiences (Hansen & Sassenberg, 2006). In the special feature, "What

Research Tells Us About…Perceived Discrimination and Self-Esteem," we'll see that the negative effects of discrimination on self-esteem, and other forms of well-being, differ depending on what group is the target. All devalued groups do not suffer to the same extent.

SOCIAL COMPARISON: HOW WE EVALUATE OURSELVES

How do we evaluate ourselves and decide whether we're good or bad in various domains, what our best and worst traits are, and how likable we are to others? Social psychologists believe that all human judgment is relative to some comparison standard (Kahneman & Miller, 1986). So, how we think and feel about ourselves will depend on the standard of comparison we use. To take a simple example, if you compare your ability to complete a puzzle to a child's ability to solve it, you'll probably feel pretty good about your ability. This would represent a downward social comparison—where your own performance is compared with someone who is less capable than yourself. On the other hand, if you compare your performance on the same task to a puzzle expert you might not fare so well and not feel so good about yourself. This is the nature of upward social comparisons, which tend to be threatening to our self-image. Clearly, being able to evaluate ourselves positively depends on choosing the right standard of comparison! You might be wondering why we compare ourselves to other people. Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory suggests that we compare ourselves to others because for many domains and attributes, there is no objective yardstick to evaluate ourselves against; other people are therefore highly informative. Are we brilliant or average? Charming or not charming? We can't tell by looking into a mirror or introspecting, but perhaps we can acquire useful information about these and many other questions by comparing ourselves to other people. Indeed, feeling uncertain about ourselves is one of the central conditions that lead people to engage in social comparison and otherwise assess the extent to which we are meeting cultural norms (Wood, 1989; van den Bos, 2009). To whom do we compare ourselves, or how do we decide what standard of comparison to use? It depends on our motive for the comparison. Do we want an accurate assessment of ourselves, or do we want to simply feel good about ourselves? In general, the desire to see ourselves positively appears to be more powerful than either the desire to accurately assess ourselves or to verify strongly held beliefs about ourselves (Sedikides & Gregg, 2003). But, suppose, for the moment, that we really do want an accurate assessment. Festinger (1954) originally suggested we can gauge our abilities most accurately by comparing our performance with someone who is similar to us. But what determines similarity? Do we base it on age, gender, nationality, occupation, year in school, or something else entirely? In general, similarity tends to be based on broad social categories, such as gender, race, age, or experience in a particular task domain (Goethals & Darley, 1977; Wood, 1989). Often, by using comparisons with others who share a social category with us, we can judge ourselves more positively than when we compare ourselves with others who are members of a different social category (especially if that category is more advantaged than our own). This is partly because there are different performance expectations for members of different categories in particular domains (e.g., children versus adults, men versus women). To the extent that the context encourages us to categorize ourselves as a member of a category with relatively low expectations in a particular domain, we will be able to conclude that we measure up rather well. For example, a woman could console herself by thinking that her salary is "pretty good for a woman," while she would feel considerably worse if she compared her salary to that of men, who on average, are paid more (Reskin & Padavic, 1994; Vasquez, 2001). Self-judgments are often less negative when the standards of our ingroup are used (Biernat, Eidelman, & Fuegen, 2002). Indeed, such ingroup comparisons may protect members of disadvantaged groups from painful social comparisons with members of more advantaged groups (Crocker & Major, 1989; Major, 1994). Some suggest that the goal of perceiving the self positively is the "master motive" of human beings (Baumeister, 1998). How we achieve the generally positive self-perception that most of us have of ourselves depends on how we categorize ourselves in relation to comparison others (Wood & Wilson, 2003). Such self-categorization influences how particular comparisons affect us by influencing the meaning of the comparison. Two influential perspectives on the self—the self-evaluation maintenance model and social identity theory—both build on Festinger's (1954) original social comparison theory to describe the consequences of social comparison in different contexts. Self-evaluation maintenance (Tesser, 1988) applies when we categorize the self at the personal level, and we compare ourselves as an individual to another individual. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) applies when we categorize ourselves at the group level (e.g., as a woman), and the comparison other is categorized as sharing the same category as ourselves. When the context encourages comparison at the group level, the same other person will be responded to differently than when the context suggests a comparison between individuals.

For example, another member of our gender group who performs poorly might be embarrassing to our gender identity when we categorize ourselves as also belonging to that group. In contrast, that same poor performing ingroup member could be flattering if we were to compare ourselves personally to that other individual. Let's consider first what happens in an interpersonal comparison context. When someone with whom you compare yourself outperforms you in an area that is important to you, you may be motivated to distance yourself from the person because this information evokes a relatively painful interpersonal comparison. After all, this other person has done better than you have on something that matters to you. Conversely, when you compare yourself to another person who performs even worse than you, then you will be more likely to align yourself with that other person because the comparison is positive. By performing worse than you, this person makes you look good by comparison. Such psychological movement toward and away from a comparison other who performs better or worse than us illustrates an important means by which positive self-evaluations are maintained when our personal identities are salient. So, will we always dislike others who do better than us? No—it depends on how we categorize ourselves in relation to the other. According to social identity theory, we are motivated to perceive our groups positively, and this should especially be the case for those who most strongly value a particular social identity. Other people, when categorized as a member of the same group as ourselves, can help make our group more positive when they perform well. Therefore when we think of ourselves at the social identity level, say in terms of a sports team, then a strong performing teammate will enhance our group's identity instead of threatening it. Therefore, either disliking or liking of the same high performing other person can occur, depending on whether you think of that person as another individual or as someone who shares your group identity. The other's excellent performance has negative implications for you when you compare yourself to her or him as an individual, but positive implications for you when you compare members of your group to those of another group. To test this idea that different responses to a person can occur, Schmitt, Silvia, and Branscombe (2000) first selected participants for whom the performance dimension was relevant to the self; that is, they selected participants who said that being creative was important to them. Responses to another person who performs better or equally poorly as the self should depend on how you categorize yourself—at the individual level or at the social identity level. As shown in Figure 4.15, when participants believed their performance as an individual would be compared to the other person, they liked the poor performing target more than the high performing target who represented a threat to their positive personal self-image. In contrast, when participants categorized themselves in terms of the gender group that they shared with that person and the expected comparison was intergroup in nature (between women and men), then the high performing other woman was evaluated more positively than the similar-to-self poor performing other. Why? Because this talented person made the participants' group—women—look good. Because different contexts can induce us to categorize ourselves as an individual or as a member of a group, it has important implications for the effects that upward and downward social comparisons will have on self-evaluation

ATTITUDE FORMATION-DEVELOPMENT OF ATTITUDES

How do you feel about each of the following: tattoos on people's bodies, the TV programs Game of Thrones and Grey's Anatomy, sushi, the police, Toyotas, graffiti, cats, and Country music? Most people have attitudes about each of these. Did you acquire them as a result of your own experiences with each, from other people with whom you have had personal contact, or through exposure via the media? Are your attitudes toward these objects held with great certainty, or are they flexible and likely to change as conditions do? One important means by which our attitudes are formed is through the process of social learning. In other words, many of our views are acquired by interacting with others, or simply observing their behavior. Such learning occurs through several processes that are outlined in the following subsections.

- **Classical Conditioning: Learning Based on Association**

It is a basic principle of psychology that when a stimulus that is capable of evoking a response—the unconditioned stimulus—regularly precedes another neutral stimulus, the one that occurs first can become a signal for the second—the conditioned stimulus. Advertisers have considerable expertise in using this principle to create positive attitudes toward their products. To use this method for creating attitudes, you need to know what your potential audience already responds positively toward (to use as the unconditioned stimulus). If you are marketing a new beer, and your target audience is young adult males, you might safely assume that attractive young women will produce a positive response. Then, you pair the product repeatedly (the formerly neutral or conditioned stimulus—say, your beer logo) with images of attractive women and, before long, positive attitudes will be formed toward your new beer! Of course, for other target audiences, another unconditioned stimulus might be successfully paired with the new beer logo to achieve the same result. As shown in Figure 5.6, Budweiser and many other manufacturers have used this principle to beneficially affect sales of its product. Classical conditioning can affect attitudes via two pathways: the direct and indirect route (Sweldens, van Osselaer, & Janiszewski, 2010). The more generally effective and typical method used—the direct route—can be seen in the Budweiser advertisement. That is, positive stimuli (e.g., images of different women) are repeatedly paired with the product, with the aim being to directly transfer the affect felt about the women to the brand. However, by pairing a specific celebrity endorser who is already liked by the target audience with a brand, a memory link between the two can be established. With this indirect route, the idea is that by repeatedly presenting that specific celebrity with the product, then whenever that celebrity is thought of, the product too will come to mind. Think now about Michael Jordan; does Nike come to mind more rapidly for you? For this indirect conditioning process to work, people need not be aware that this memory link is being formed, but they do need to feel positively toward the unconditioned stimulus—that is, that particular celebrity (Stahl, Unkelbach, & Corneille, 2009). Not only can classical conditioning contribute to shaping our attitudes—it can do so even though we are not aware of the stimuli that serve as the basis for this kind of conditioning. For instance, in one experiment (Walsh & Kiviniemi, 2014), students saw photos of apples and bananas. While these photos were shown, other photos known to induce either positive or negative feelings were exposed for very brief periods of time—so brief that participants were not aware of their presence. Participants who were nonconsciously exposed to photos that induced positive f eelings (e.g., baby animals) were later more likely to select fruit as a snack than participants who had been exposed to photos that nonconsciously induce negative feelings (e.g., junk cars) or those who had been exposed to neutral images (e.g., baskets). Even though participants were not aware that they had been exposed to the second group of photos, because they were presented very briefly, the photos did significantly influence participants' fruit eating, and this was not the result of conscious changes in beliefs about the nutritional benefits of eating fruit. The repeated pairing of fruits with positive images created affective associations that affected subsequent behavioral choices. These findings suggest that attitudes can be influenced by subliminal conditioning—classical conditioning that occurs in the absence of conscious awareness of the stimuli involved. Indeed, mere exposure—having seen an object before, but too rapidly to remember having seen it—can result in attitude formation (Bornstein & D'Agostino, 1992). We know that this is a case of subliminal conditioning because patients with advanced Alzheimer's disease—who therefore cannot remember seeing the stimuli—show evidence of having formed new attitudes as a result of mere exposure (Winograd, Goldstein, Monarch, Peluso, & Goldman, 1999). It is also the case that even when we can remember being exposed to information, its mere repetition creates a sense of familiarity and results in more positive attitudes. Moons, Mackie, and Garcia-Marques (2009) refer to this as the illusion of truth effect. The studies by these researchers revealed that more positive attitudes developed following exposure to either weak or strong arguments—when little detailed message processing occurred. Although this has substantial implications for the likely impact of advertising on the attitudes we form—as a result of merely hearing the message repeated—it is good to know that this effect can be overcome when people are motivated and able to process the message extensively. Once formed, such attitudes can influence behavior—even when those attitudes are inconsistent with how we are explicitly expected to behave. Consider the child whose attitudes toward an ethnic or religious group such as Arabs or Muslims have been classically conditioned to be negative, and who later are placed in a classroom where such negative attitudes are non-normative (i.e., they are deemed unacceptable). Research conducted in Switzerland by FalomirPichastor, Munoz-Rojas, Invernizzi, and Mugny (2004) has revealed that, as shown in Figure 5.7, when norms are antidiscriminatory, if feelings of threat from that "outsider" group are low, then prejudice can be reduced. When, however, feelings of threat are high, then the child is likely to continue to show prejudice even when the norms are antidiscriminatory. This research illustrates that attempts to change negative attitudes using explicit norms may only be effective when threat is absent.

- **Instrumental Conditioning: Rewards for the "Right" Views**

When we asked you earlier to think about your attitudes toward marijuana, some of you may have thought immediately "Oh, that's wrong!" This is because most children have been repeatedly praised or rewarded by their parents and teachers ("just say no" programs) for stating such views.

As a result, individuals learn which views are seen as the "correct" attitudes to hold—because of the rewards received for voicing those attitudes by the people they identify with and want to be accepted by. This is consistent with the huge gulf in attitudes toward Climate Change held by Republicans and Democrats in the United States. Attitudes that are followed by positive outcomes (e.g., praise) tend to be strengthened and are likely to be repeated, whereas attitudes that are followed by negative outcomes (e.g., punishment) are weakened and their likelihood of being expressed again is reduced. Thus, another way in which attitudes are acquired is through the process of instrumental conditioning—differential rewards and punishments. Sometimes the conditioning process is rather subtle, with the reward being psychological acceptance—by rewarding children with smiles, approval, or hugs for stating the "right" views. Because of this form of conditioning, until the teen years—when peer influences become especially strong— most children express political, religious, and social views that are highly similar to those of their parents and other family members (Oskamp & Schultz, 2005). What happens when we find ourselves in a new context where our prior attitudes may or may not be supported? Part of the college experience involves leaving behind our families and high school friends and entering new social networks—sets of individuals with whom we interact on a regular basis (Eaton, Majka, & Visser, 2008). The new networks (e.g., new sorority or fraternity) we find ourselves in may contain individuals who share our attitudes toward important social issues, or they may be composed of individuals holding different attitudes toward those issues. Do new attitudes form as we enter new social networks—in part, to garner rewards from agreeing with others who are newly important to us? To investigate this issue, Levitan and Visser (2009) assessed the political attitudes of students at the University of Chicago when they arrived on campus and then determined over the course of the next 2 months the networks the students became part of, and how close the students felt toward each new network member. This allowed the researchers to determine the influence of these new peers on students' political attitudes. Those students who entered networks with more diverse attitudes toward affirmative action exhibited greater change in their attitudes over the 2-month period. These results suggest that entering new social networks can be quite influential—particularly when they introduce us to new strong arguments not previously encountered (Levitan & Visser, 2008). The desire to fit in with others and be rewarded for holding similar attitudes can be a powerful motivator of attitude formation and change. It is also the case that people may be consciously aware that different groups they are members of will reward (or punish) them for expressing support for particular attitude positions.

Rather than being influenced to change our attitudes, we may find ourselves expressing one view on a topic to one audience and another view to a different audience. Indeed, such potentially incompatible audiences tend to remain physically separated (e.g., your parents and your friends on campus). For this reason, as suggested in Figure 5.8, we are unlikely to be caught expressing different attitudes to audiences in different networks! One way that social psychologists study the extent to which our reported attitudes depend on the expected audience is by varying who we believe will learn our attitude position. For example, people seeking membership in a fraternity or sorority (e.g., pledges) express different attitudes about other fraternities and sororities depending on whether they believe their attitudes will remain private or they think that the powerful members of the group who will be controlling their admittance will learn of the attitude position they advocated (Noel, Wann, & Branscombe, 1995). When those who are attempting to gain membership in an organization believe that other members will learn of "their attitudes," they derogate other fraternities or sororities as a means of communicating to decision makers that the particular organization they want to be admitted to is seen as the most desirable. Yet, when they believe their attitude responses will be private, they do not derogate other fraternities or sororities. Thus, our attitude expression can depend on the rewards we have received in the past and those we expect to receive in the future for expressing particular attitudes.

- **Observational Learning: Learning by Exposure to Others**

A third means by which attitudes are formed can operate even when direct rewards for acquiring or expressing those attitudes are absent. This process is observational learning, and it occurs when individuals acquire attitudes or behaviors simply by observing others (Bandura, 1997). For example, people acquire attitudes toward many topics and objects by exposure to advertising—where we see "people like us" acting positively or negatively toward different kinds of objects or issues. Why do people often adopt the attitudes that they hear others express, or acquire the behaviors they observe in others? One answer involves the mechanism of social comparison—our tendency to compare ourselves with others in order to determine whether our view of social reality is correct or not (Festinger, 1954). That is, to the extent that our views agree with those of others, we tend to conclude that our ideas and attitudes are accurate; after all, if others hold the same views, these views must be right! But are we equally likely to adopt all others' attitudes, or does it depend on our relationship to those others? People often adjust their attitudes so as to hold views closer to those of others who they value and identify with—their reference groups. For example, Terry and Hogg (1996) found that the adoption of favorable attitudes toward wearing sunscreen depended on the extent to which the respondents identified with the group advocating this change. As a result of observing the attitudes held by others who we identify with, new attitudes can be formed. Consider how this could affect the attitudes you form toward a new social group with whom you have personally had no contact. Imagine that you heard someone you like and respect expressing negative views toward this group. Would this influence your attitudes? While it might be tempting to say "Absolutely not!" research findings indicate that hearing others whom we see as similar to ourselves state negative views about a group can lead us to adopt similar attitudes—without ever meeting members of that group (e.g., Maio, Esses, & Bell, 1994; Terry, Hogg, & Duck, 1999). In such cases, attitudes are being shaped by our own desire to be similar to people we like. Now imagine that you heard someone you dislike and see as dissimilar to yourself expressing negative views toward this group. In this case, you might be less influenced by this person's attitude position. People are not troubled by disagreement with, and in fact expect to hold different attitudes from, people whom they categorize as different from themselves; it is, however, uncomfortable to differ on important attitudes from people who we see as similar to ourselves and therefore with whom we expect to agree (Turner, 1991). Not only are people differentially influenced by others' attitude positions depending on how much they identify with those others, they also expect to be influenced by other people's attitude positions differentially depending on how much they identify with those others. When a message concerning safe sex and AIDS prevention was created for university students, those who identified with their university's student group believed that they would be personally influenced by the position advocated in the message, whereas those who were low in identification with their university's student group did not expect to be personally influenced by the message (Duck, Hogg, & Terry, 1999). Thus, when we identify with a group, we expect to be influenced by those others and, in fact, are likely to take on the attitudes that are perceived to be normative for that group. Consider whether the identity relevance of a message concerning a new product might influence the attitude you form. To address this question, Fleming and Petty (2000) first selected students to participate who were either high or low in identification with their gender group. Then, they introduced a new snack product ("Snickerdoodles") to men and women as either "women's favorite snack food" or "men's favorite snack food." As Figure 5.9 illustrates, among those who were highly identified with their gender group, a more favorable attitude toward this product was formed when the message was framed in terms of their own group liking that food. In contrast, among those low in identification with their gender group, no differences in the attitudes formed toward the new food were found as a function of which gender was said to favor that food. These findings indicate that the attitudes we form are indeed influenced by our identification with groups and our perception of what attitudes are held by members of those groups. For more on the surprising role that modeling plays in our attitudes toward foods—what and how much we should eat—see the special section, "What Research Tells Us About…Social Modeling and Eating."

- **Strength of Attitude**

Consider the following situation: A large company markets a dangerous product to the public for decades, while internally sharing memos about the addictiveness of the product and how to manipulate that addictiveness. Along the way, an executive of the company has serious moral qualms about the rightness of these actions. Eventually, the concerned employee tips off the news media about these practices and an investigation is begun. The "whistle-blower" is eventually found out and is even sued by his former employer (although the lawsuit that was initiated against him is ultimately dropped). You may recognize the person and company being described here because these events were ultimately made into a movie, The Insider. It was Jeffrey Wigand who blew the whistle on the practices of the tobacco industry in general and his former employer in particular—Brown & Williamson. Why might people take such drastic and potentially risky action (i.e., informing on their employer)? The answer is clear: Such persons are passionately committed to the notion that corporations must be honest, especially when there is the potential for damage to the public. Attitudes like these— that are based on moral convictions—can give rise to intense emotion and strongly predict behavior (Mullen & Skitka, 2006). In other words, whether attitudes will predict sustained and potentially costly behavior depends on the strength of the attitudes. Let's consider why attitude strength has this effect. The term strength captures the extremity of an attitude (how strong the emotional reaction is), the degree of certainty with which an attitude is held (the sense that you know what your attitude is and the feeling that it is the correct position to hold), as well as the extent to which the attitude is based on personal experience with the attitude object. These three factors can affect attitude accessibility (how easily the attitude comes to mind in various situations), which ultimately determines the extent to which attitudes drive our behavior (Fazio, Ledbetter, & Towles-Schwen, 2000). As shown in Figure 5.11, all of these components of attitude strength are interrelated, and each plays a role in the likelihood that attitudes will be accessible and affect behavior (Petty & Krosnick, 1995). We'll now take a closer look at each of these important factors.

HOW DO ATTITUDES GUIDE BEHAVIOR?

When it comes to the question of how attitudes guide behavior, it should come as no surprise that researchers have found that there is more than one basic mechanism through which attitudes shape behavior. We will first consider behaviors that are driven by attitudes based on reasoned thought, and then examine the role of attitudes in more spontaneous behavioral responses.

5.3.1: Attitudes Arrived at Through Reasoned Thought In some situations we give careful, deliberate thought to our attitudes and their implications for our behavior. Insight into the nature of this process is provided by the theory of reasoned action, which was later refined and termed the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). This theoretical view starts with the notion that the decision to engage in a particular behavior is the result of a rational process. Various behavioral options are considered, the consequences or outcomes of each are evaluated, and a decision is reached to act or not to act. That decision is then reflected in behavioral intentions, which are often good predictors of whether we will act on our attitudes in a given situation (Ajzen, 1987). Indeed, for a number of behavioral domains—from condom use to engaging in regular exercise—intentions are moderately correlated with behavior (Albarracin, Johnson, Fishbein, & Muellerleile, 2001). Recent research has made it clear that the intention–behavior relationship is even stronger when people have formed a plan for how and when they will translate their intentions into behavior (Barz et al., 2014; Frye & Lord, 2009). Suppose that you form the intention to go to the gym to work out. If you develop a plan for how you will translate your intention into actual behavior—beginning with setting your alarm, preparing your exercise clothes, and so forth—you will be more likely to succeed at doing so. In my own case, because I formed the intention to walk three mornings a week, I made a commitment to do so with my next-door neighbor. The reason that this is a particularly effective implementation plan is that I no longer have to assess whether I really want to go out today—in the cold, rain, or whatever, or rely on having my attitude toward getting more exercise be accessible at that time of the morning. As Gollwitzer (1999) has noted, such a plan to implement our intentions is very effective because it involves delegating control of one's behavior to the situation—in my case, my alarm clock beeping and, if that hasn't worked, my neighbor ringing my doorbell! But, how do you form an intention to change some aspect of your behavior? According to the theory, intentions are determined by two factors: Attitudes toward the behavior—people's positive or negative evaluations of performing the behavior (whether they think it will yield positive or negative consequences), and subjective norms—people's perceptions of whether others will approve or disapprove of this behavior. A third factor, Perceived behavioral control—people's appraisals of their ability to perform the behavior—was subsequently added to the theory (Ajzen, 1991). Perhaps a specific example will help illustrate the nature of these ideas. Suppose an adolescent male is considering joining Facebook. Will he actually take action, and go through the process of joining up on the website? First, the answer will depend on his intentions, which will be strongly influenced by his attitude toward Facebook. His decision of whether to join or not will also be based on perceived norms and the extent to which he feels able to execute the decision. If the teen believes that becoming a member will be relatively painless and it will make him look more sociable (he has positive attitudes toward the behavior), he also believes that people whose opinions he values will approve of this action (subjective norms), and that he can readily do it (he knows how to access Facebook, upload some photos, and he believes he can control how much of his private data are exposed), his intentions to carry out this action may be quite strong. On the other hand, if he believes that joining Facebook might be dangerous because of the exposure of private data, joining might not really lead to more interaction with friends, or his friends will disapprove, then his intention to join will be relatively weak. His intentions are more likely to translate into behavior if he formulates a plan for when and how to join (e.g., "On Friday when I get done with school, I'll log on to Facebook and join up"). Of course, even the best of intentions can be thwarted by situational factors (e.g., an emergency that he has to attend to comes up on Friday), but, in general, intentions are an important predictor of behavior. Reasoned action and planned behavior ideas have been used to predict behavior in many settings, with considerable success. Indeed, research suggests that these theories are useful for predicting such divergent behaviors as soldiers' conduct on the battlefront (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005) and whether individuals drive a vehicle after they have consumed alcohol (MacDonald, Zanna, & Fong, 1995).

- **Attitudes and Spontaneous Behavioral Reactions**

Our ability to predict behavior in situations where people have the time and opportunity to reflect carefully on various possible actions that they might undertake is quite good. However, in many situations, people have to act quickly and their reactions are more spontaneous. Suppose another driver cuts in front of you on the highway without signaling. In such cases, attitudes seem to influence behavior in a more direct and seemingly automatic manner, with intentions playing a less important role. According to Fazio's attitude-to-behavior process model (Fazio, 1990; Fazio & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 1994), some event activates our attitude; that attitude, once activated, influences how we perceive the attitude object. At the same time, our knowledge about what's appropriate in a given situation (our knowledge of various social norms) is also activated. Together, the attitude and the previously stored information about what's appropriate or expected shape our definition of the event. This perception, in turn, influences our behavior. Let's consider a concrete example. Imagine that someone cuts into your traffic lane as you are driving (see Figure 5.12). This event triggers your attitude toward people who engage in such discourteous behavior, and, at the same time, your understanding of how people should behave on expressways. As a result, you perceive this action as non-normative, which influences your interpretation of and your response to that event. You might think, "Who does this person think she/he is? What nerve!" or, perhaps your response is more situational, "Gee, this person must be in a big hurry." Whichever of these interpretations of the event is made, it will shape the individual's behavior. Several studies provide support for this perspective on how attitudes can influence behavior by affecting the interpretation given to the situation. In short, attitudes affect our behavior through at least two mechanisms, and these operate under somewhat contrasting conditions. When we have time to engage in careful, reasoned thought, we can weigh all the alternatives and decide how we will act. Under the hectic conditions of everyday life, however, we often don't have time for this kind of deliberate weighing of alternatives, and often people's responses appear to be much faster than such deliberate thought processes can account for. In such cases, our attitudes seem to spontaneously shape our perceptions of various events—often with very little conscious cognitive processing—and thereby affects our immediate behavioral reactions (e.g., Bargh & Chartrand, 2000; Dovidio, Brigham, Johnson, & Gaertner, 1996). To the extent that a person repeatedly performs a specific behavior—and a habit is formed—that person's responses may become relatively automatic whenever that same situation is encountered (Wood, Quinn, & Kashy, 2002).

PERSUASION: COMMUNICATORS, MESSAGES, AND AUDIENCES

Early research efforts aimed at understanding persuasion involved the study of the following elements: Some source directs some type of message to some person or group of persons (the audience). Persuasion research conducted by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) focused on these key elements, asking: "Who says what to whom with what effect?" This approach yielded a number of important findings, with the following being the most consistently obtained.

- Communicators who are credible—who seem to know what they are talking about or who are expert with respect to the topics or issues they are presenting—are more persuasive than those who are seen as lacking expertise. For instance, in a famous study on this topic, Hovland and Weiss (1951) asked participants to read communications dealing with various issues (e.g., atomic submarines, the future of movie theaters—remember, this was back in 1950). The supposed source of these messages was varied so as to be high or low in credibility. For instance, for atomic submarines, a highly credible source was the famous scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer, while the low-credibility source was Pravda, the newspaper of the Communist party in the Soviet Union (notice how the credible source was an in-group member, but the low credible source for these American participants was an out-group source). Participants expressed their attitudes toward these issues a week before the experiment, and then immediately after receiving the communications. Those who were told that the source of the messages they read was a highly credible in-group member showed significantly greater attitude change than those who thought the message was from the out-group, which lacked trustworthiness and credibility. Members of our own group are typically seen as more credible and therefore are likely to influence us more than those with whom we do not share a group membership and with whom we might even expect to disagree (Turner, 1991).

- Communicators can, though, lose their credibility and therefore their ability to persuade. One means by which credibility can be undermined is if you learn that a communicator has a personal stake (financial or otherwise) in persuading you to adopt a particular position. Consequently, communicators are seen as most credible and, therefore persuasive, when they are perceived as arguing against their self-interests (Eagly, Chaiken, & Wood, 1981).
- Communicators who are physically attractive are more persuasive than communicators who are not attractive (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Frequently, advertisers who use attractive models are attempting to suggest to us that if we buy their product, we too will be perceived as attractive. Another way that communicators can be seen as attractive is via their perceived likeability (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). We are more likely to be persuaded by a communicator we like than one we dislike. This is one reason that famous sports figures such as LeBron James, musicians such as Beyoncé Knowles, actresses such as Jennifer Aniston, and actors such as Brad Pitt are selected as spokespersons for various products (see Figure 5.14)—we already like them so are more readily persuaded by them.
- Communicators who we feel we know already—that is, those in our own social networks—are also likely to be persuasive. When opinions, including recommendations and general product information, are provided in an informal person-toperson manner, it is referred to as word-of-mouth marketing (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). If you have ever told someone about a good restaurant or movie or made some other type of product recommendation, you've engaged in word-of-mouth marketing. People we know and already like will be especially influential, in part because we see them as trustworthy and as having the same interests as ourselves.
- In what has come to be called eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth), Facebook, Twitter, and the other Internet forums have become means by which the transmission of word-of-mouth communications is accomplished. When tracking a conversation on Facebook or just browsing through your daily "news feed," information about which of your friends "like" a particular product is readily available. Marketers know such "recommendations" from friends will be highly persuasive. Cheung, Luo, Sia, and Chen (2009) found that credibility in the online context is a major concern so recommendation ratings from "friends" are particularly important in determining whether consumers will be persuaded to act by purchasing. As Harris and Dennis (2011) indicate, Facebook alone has a membership of

500 million worldwide, and the average user has 130 "Friends." People are spending more time on Facebook than other sites combined and, increasingly, many of our commercial transactions and retail decisions now occur within that site.

- Messages that do not appear to be designed to change our attitudes are often more successful than those that seem to be designed to achieve this goal (Walster & Festinger, 1962). Indeed, a meta-analysis of the existing research on this issue indicates that forewarning does typically lessen the extent to which attitude change occurs (Benoit, 1998). So, simply knowing that a sales pitch is coming your way can undermine its persuasiveness.
- One approach to persuasion that has received considerable research attention is the effect of fear appeals—messages that are intended to arouse fear in the recipient. When the message is sufficiently fear arousing that people genuinely feel threatened, they are likely to argue against the threat, or else dismiss its applicability to themselves (Liberman & Chaiken, 1992; Taylor & Shepperd, 1998). Indeed, there is evidence using neuroscience methods, where event-related brain potentials are assessed, that when people are exposed to a highly threatening health message, they allocate their attention away when the message is self-relevant (Kessels, Ruiter, Wouters, & Jansma, 2014).

Yet Gruesome fear-based ads have been used in an attempt to frighten people about future consequences if they fail to change their behavior. Despite the long-standing use of such fear-based messages, a meta-analysis of studies examining the role of fear in persuasion finds that they are not generally effective at changing people's behaviors (de Hoog, Stroebe, & de Wit, 2007). Might inducing more moderate levels of fear work better? There is some evidence that this is the case—but it needs to be paired with specific methods of behavioral change that will allow the negative consequences to be avoided (Petty, 1995). If people do not know how to change, or do not believe that they can succeed in doing so, fear tends to induce avoidance and defensive responses. Research findings (Broemer, 2004) suggest that health messages of various sorts are more effective if they are framed in a positive manner (e.g., how to attain good health) rather than in a negative manner (e.g., risks and undesirable consequences of particular behaviors). Consider how message framing and perceived risk of having a serious outcome befall the self can affect persuasion following exposure to a message designed to encourage low income ethnic minority women to be tested for HIV (Apanovitch, McCarthy, & Salovey, 2003). Those women who perceived themselves as unlikely to test positive for HIV were more likely to be persuaded to be tested (and they actually got tested) when the message was framed in terms of the gains to be had by doing so (e.g., "The peace of mind you'll get or you won't have to worry that you could spread the virus") than when the message was framed in terms of potential losses they would otherwise experience (e.g., "You won't have peace of mind or you could spread the virus unknowingly to those you care about"). Positive framing can be effective in inducing change—especially when individuals fail to perceive themselves as especially at risk. Early research on persuasion certainly provided important insights into the factors that influence persuasion. What this work did not do, however, was offer a comprehensive account of how persuasion occurs. For instance, why, precisely, are highly credible or attractive communicators more effective in changing attitudes than less credible or attractive ones? Why might positive message framing (rather than negative, fear-based) produce more attitude change? In recent years, social psychologists have recognized that to answer such questions, it is necessary to carefully examine the cognitive processes that underlie persuasion—in other words, what goes on in people's minds while they listen to a persuasive message. It is to this highly sophisticated work that we turn next.

- **The Cognitive Processes Underlying Persuasion**

What happens when you are exposed to a persuasive message—for instance, when you watch a television commercial or see ads pop up on your screen as you surf the Internet? Your first answer might be something like "I think about what's being said," and in a sense, that's correct. But as we saw in Chapter 2 people often do the least amount of cognitive work that they can in a given situation. Indeed, people may want to avoid listening to such commercial messages (and thanks to DVDs and Netflix, people can skip commercials with those formats entirely). But when you are subjected to a message, the central issue—the one that seems to provide the key to understanding the entire process of persuasion—is really, "How do we process (absorb, interpret, evaluate) the information contained in such messages?" The answer that has emerged from hundreds of separate studies is that basically, we can process persuasive messages in two distinct ways. SyStematic VerSuS HeuriStic PrOceSSing The first type of processing we can employ is known as systematic processing or the central route to persuasion, and it involves careful consideration of message content and the ideas it contains. Such processing requires effort, and it absorbs much of our information-processing capacity. The second approach, known as heuristic processing or the peripheral route to persuasion, involves the use of mental shortcuts such as the belief that “experts’ statements can be trusted,” or the idea that “if it makes me feel good, I’m in favor of it.” This kind of processing requires less effort and allows us to react to persuasive messages in an automatic manner. It occurs in response to cues in the message or situation that evoke various mental shortcuts (e.g., beautiful models evoke the “What’s beautiful is good and worth listening to” heuristic). When do we engage in each of these two distinct modes of thought? Modern theories of persuasion such as the elaboration-likelihood model (ELM; e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty, Cacioppo, Strathman, & Priester, 2005) and the heuristic-systematic model (e.g., C haiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989; Eagly & Chaiken, 1998) provide the following answer. We engage in the most effortful and systematic processing when our motivation and capacity to process information relating to the persuasive message is high. This type of processing occurs if we have a lot of knowledge about the topic, we have a lot of time to engage in careful thought, the issue is sufficiently important to us, or we believe it is essential to form an accurate view (Maheswaran & Chaiken, 1991; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In contrast, we engage in the type of processing that requires less effort (heuristic processing) when we lack the capacity or time to process more carefully (we must make up our minds very quickly or we have little knowledge about the issue) or when our motivation to perform such cognitive work is low (the issue is unimportant to us or has little potential effect on us). Advertisers, politicians, salespersons, and others wishing to change our attitudes prefer to push us into the heuristic mode of processing because, for reasons described later, it is often easier to change our attitudes when we think in this mode than when we engage in more careful and systematic processing. Strong arguments in favor of the position being advocated are not needed when people do not process those arguments very carefully! The two routes to persuasion suggested by the ELM model are shown in Figure 5.16. What role might consuming a drug like caffeine have on persuasion? The central route to persuasion works when people attend to a message and systematically process its contents. Given that caffeine intake should increase people’s ability to systematically process the contents of a message, if people have the opportunity to focus on a persuasive message without being distracted, they should be persuaded more after consuming caffeine than after not consuming it. In contrast, when people are highly distracted, it should prevent them from systematically processing the message—and if caffeine works via the central route—distraction should lessen the extent to which they are persuaded. Research findings have supported these ideas: In low-distraction conditions, those who have consumed caffeine agree more with the message (they are persuaded away from their original opinion) than those who received a caffeine-free placebo. In contrast, when people are distracted and systematic processing of the message content is impossible, there is no difference in the attitudes of those who consumed caffeine and those who did not (Martin, Hamilton, McKimmie, Terry, & Martin, 2007). It is the increased thinking about the message when people are not distracted that can result in increased persuasion in caffeine drinkers. So, be prepared to think carefully about the messages you are exposed to when you get your next "caffeine fix"! The discovery of these two contrasting modes of processing—systematic versus heuristic—has provided an important key to understanding when and how persuasion occurs. For instance, when persuasive messages are not interesting or relevant to individuals, the degree of persuasion they produce is not strongly influenced by the strength of the arguments these messages contain. When such messages are highly relevant to individuals, however, they are much more successful in inducing persuasion when the arguments they contain are strong and convincing. Can you see why this so? According to modern theories such as the ELM that consider these dual pathways, when relevance is low, individuals tend to process messages through the heuristic mode, using various mental shortcuts. Thus, argument strength has little impact. In contrast, when relevance is high, they process persuasive messages more systematically and in this mode, argument strength is important (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Similarly, the systematic versus heuristic distinction helps explain why people can be more easily persuaded when they are distracted than when they are not. Under these conditions, the capacity to process the information in a persuasive message is limited, so people adopt the heuristic mode of thought. If the message contains cues that will induce heuristic processing (e.g., communicators who are attractive or seemingly expert), persuasion may occur because people respond to these cues and not to the arguments being presented. In sum, the modern cognitive approach really does seem to provide the crucial key to understanding many aspects of persuasion.

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE: WHAT IS IT AND HOW DO WE MANAGE IT?

When we first introduced the question of whether, and to what extent, attitudes and behavior are linked, we noted that in many situations, there can be a sizable gap between what we feel on the inside (positive or negative reactions to some object or issue) and what we show on the outside. For instance, I have a neighbor who recently purchased a huge SUV. I have strong negative attitudes toward such giant vehicles because they get very low gas mileage, add to pollution, and block my view while driving. But when my neighbor asked how I liked her new vehicle, I hesitated and then said "Nice, very nice," with as much enthusiasm as I could muster. She is a very good neighbor who looks after my cats when I'm away, and I did not want to offend her. But I certainly felt uncomfortable when I uttered those words. Why? Because in this situation I was aware that my behavior was not consistent with my attitudes and this is an uncomfortable state to be in. Social psychologists term my reaction cognitive dissonance—an unpleasant state that occurs when we notice that our attitudes and our behavior are inconsistent. As you will see, when we cannot justify our attitude-inconsistent behavior, we may end up changing our own attitudes. Any time you become aware of saying what you don't really believe (e.g., praise something you don't actually like "just to be polite"), make a difficult decision that requires you to reject an alternative you find attractive, or discover that something you've invested effort or money in is not as good as you expected, you are likely to experience dissonance. In all these situations, there is a gap between your attitudes and your actions, and such gaps tend to make us uncomfortable. In fact, research has revealed that the discomfort associated with dissonance is reflected in elevated activity in the left front regions of our brain (Harmon-Jones, Harmon-Jones, Fearn, Sigelman, & Johnson, 2008). Most important from the present perspective, cognitive dissonance can sometimes lead us to change our own attitudes—to shift them so that they are consistent with our overt behavior, even in the absence of any strong external pressure to do so.

- **Dissonance and Attitude Change: The Effects of Induced Compliance**

We can engage in attitude-discrepant behavior for many reasons, and some of these are more compelling than others. When will our attitudes change more: When there are "good" reasons for engaging in attitude-discrepant behavior or when we lack justification for doing so? Cognitive dissonance theory predicts that dissonance will be stronger when we have few reasons for engaging in attitude-discrepant behavior. When we have little justification and therefore cannot explain away our actions to ourselves, dissonance can be quite intense. In the first test of this idea, participants initially engaged in an extremely boring series of tasks—turning pegs in a board full of holes (Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). After the task was over, the experimenter made an unusual request: He told participants that his assistant had not shown up that day and asked if the participant would "fill in" by greeting the next participant and telling that person that the task to be performed was an interesting one. Half of these participants were told that they would be paid $20 if they would tell this fib to the waiting participant, and the other half were told that they would receive $1 for doing asked to report their own attitudes toward the boring task (i.e., rate how interesting the task was). The participants who were paid $20 rated the task as less interesting than participants who were paid $1. When you were paid $20, you would have had a justification for lying, but not so much when you were paid $1 to tell that same lie. So, when there is insufficient justification for your behavior, a situation that was truer in the $1 condition (than the $20) of the experiment, there is a greater need to reduce your dissonance. So, what do people do to reduce their greater dissonance in the $1 condition? They change the cognition that is causing the problem! Since, in this example, you can't change the lie you told (i.e., deny your behavior), you can decide it wasn't really a lie at all by "making" the boring task more interesting and reporting your attitude as being more positive in the $1 condition than in the $20 condition. As Figure 5.19 illustrates, cognitive dissonance theory predicts that it will be easier to change individuals' attitudes by offering them just enough to get them to engage in attitude-discrepant behavior. Social psychologists sometimes refer to this surprising prediction as the less-leads-to-more effect—less reasons or rewards for an action often leads to greater attitude change—and it has been confirmed in many studies (Harmon-Jones, 2000; Leippe & Eisenstadt, 1994). The more money or other rewards that are offered to people for them to behave in an attitude-discrepant way provides a justification for their actions and can undermine the likelihood that attitude change will occur. Small rewards lead to greater attitude change primarily when people believe that they were personally responsible for both the chosen course of action and any negative effects it produced. However, if ordered by an authority to do a particular behavior that is inconsistent with our personal attitudes, we may not feel responsible for what happens and therefore not experience dissonance.

- **Alternative Strategies for Resolving Dissonance**

As we have described, dissonance theory began with a very reasonable idea: People find inconsistency between their attitudes and actions uncomfortable. But is changing our attitudes the only method by which we can resolve dissonance? No, we can also alter our behavior so it is more consistent with our attitudes—for example, we could resolve to only buy organic products in the future and not change our "green environmental attitudes" after we've made some non-environmental-friendly purchase.so. After doing the "favor" of telling the person waiting this fib about the experiment—the participants were Another option for managing dissonance when inconsistency is salient involves deciding that the inconsistency actually doesn't matter! In other words, we can engage in trivialization—concluding that either the attitudes or behaviors in question are not important so any inconsistency between them is of no importance (Simon, Greenberg, & Brehm, 1995). Each of these strategies can be viewed as direct methods of dissonance reduction: They focus on the attitude–behavior discrepancy that is causing the dissonance. Research by Steele and his colleagues (e.g., Steele & Lui, 1983; Steele, 1988) indicates that dissonance can also be reduced via indirect means. That is, although the basic discrepancy between the attitude and behavior is left intact, the unpleasant or negative feelings generated by dissonance can be still reduced by, for example, consuming alcohol. Adoption of indirect tactics to reduce dissonance is most likely when the attitude–behavior discrepancy involves important attitudes or self-beliefs (so trivialization isn't feasible). Under these conditions, individuals experiencing dissonance may not focus so much on reducing the gap between their attitudes and behavior, but instead on other methods that will allow them to feel good about themselves despite the gap (Steele, Spencer, & Lynch, 1993). Specifically, people can engage in self-affirmation—restoring positive self-evaluations that are threatened by the dissonance (Elliot & Devine, 1994; Tesser, Martin, & Cornell, 1996). This can be accomplished by focusing on positive self-attributes—good things about oneself. For instance, when I experienced dissonance as a result of saying nice things about my neighbor's new SUV, even though I am strongly against such vehicles, I could remind myself that I am a considerate person. By contemplating positive aspects of the self, it can help to reduce the discomfort produced by my failure to act in a way that was consistent with my pro-environmental (and anti-SUV) attitudes. However we choose to reduce dissonance—through indirect tactics or direct strategies that are aimed at reducing the attitude–behavior discrepancy—we all find strategies to help us deal with the discomfort that comes from being aware of discrepancies between our attitudes and behavior.

- **When Dissonance Is a Tool for Beneficial Changes in Behavior**

➢ People who don't wear seat belts are much more likely to die in accidents than those who do . . .

➢ People who smoke are much more likely to suffer from lung cancer and heart disease than those who don't . . .

➢ People who engage in unprotected sex are much more likely than those who engage in safe sex to contract dangerous diseases, as well as have unplanned pregnancies . . .

Most of us know these statements are true, and our attitudes are generally favorable toward using seat belts, quitting smoking, and engaging in safe sex (Carey, MorrisonBeedy, & Johnson, 1997). Despite having positive attitudes, they are often not translated into overt actions: Some people continue to drive without seat belts, to smoke, and to have unprotected sex. To address these major social problems, perhaps what is needed is not so much a change in attitudes as shifts in overt behavior. Can dissonance be used to promote beneficial behavioral changes? A growing body of evidence suggests that it can (Batson, Kobrynowicz, Dinnerstein, Kampf, & W ilson, 1997; Gibbons, Eggleston, & Benthin, 1997), especially when it is used to generate feelings of hypocrisy—publicly advocating some attitude, and then making salient to the person that they have acted in a way that is inconsistent with their own attitudes. Such feelings might be sufficiently intense that only actions that reduce dissonance directly, by inducing behavioral change, may be effective. These predictions concerning the possibility of dissonance-induced behavior change have been tested in several studies. Stone, Wiegand, Cooper, and Aronson (1997) asked participants to prepare a speech advocating the use of condoms (safe sex) to avoid contracting AIDS. Next, participants were asked to think of reasons why they themselves hadn't used condoms in the past (personal reasons) or reasons that people in general sometimes fail to use condoms (normative reasons not involving their own behavior). The researchers predicted that dissonance would be maximized in the personal reasons condition, where participants had to come face-to-face with their own hypocrisy. Then, all persons in the study were given a choice between a direct means of reducing dissonance—purchasing condoms at a reduced price, or an indirect means of reducing dissonance—making a donation to a program designed to aid homeless persons (see Figure 5.20). The results indicated that when participants had been asked to focus on the reasons why they didn't engage in safe sex in the past, an overwhelming majority chose to purchase condoms, suggesting that their behavior in the future will be different—the direct route to dissonance reduction. In contrast, when asked to think about reasons why people in general didn't engage in safe sex, more actually chose the indirect route to dissonance reduction—a donation to aid the homeless project—and didn't change their behavior. These findings suggest that using dissonance to make our own hypocrisy salient can indeed be a powerful tool for changing our behavior in desirable ways. For maximum effectiveness, however, such procedures must involve several elements: People must publicly advocate the desired behaviors (e.g., using condoms), they need to be induced to think about their own behavioral failures in the past, and they must be given access to direct means for reducing their dissonance (i.e., a method for changing their behavior). When these conditions are met, dissonance can bring about beneficial changes in behavior. To understand more about how culture can modify dissonance and other attitude processes, see the special section, "What Research Tells Us About… Culture and Attitude Processes."