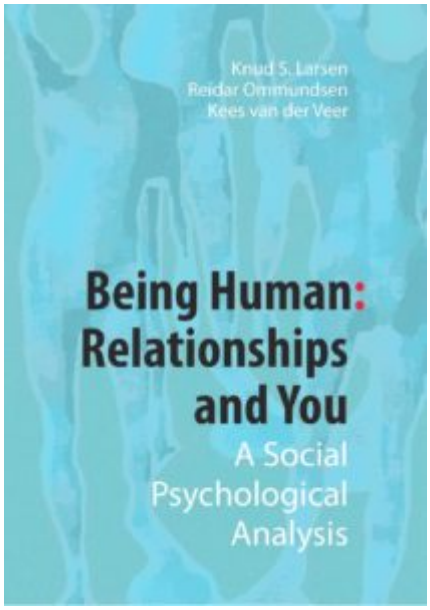
Being Human: Relationships And You ~ A Social Psychological Analysis – Preface & Contents



Preface

This book represents a new look at social psychology and relationships for the discerning reader and university student. The title of the book argues forcefully that the very nature of being human is defined by our relationships with others, our lovers, family, and our functional or dysfunctional interactions.

Written in easy to follow logical progression the volume covers all major topical areas of social psychology, with results of empirical research of the most recent years included. A common project between American and European social psychologists the book seeks to build a bridge between research findings in both regions of the world. In doing so the interpretations of the research takes a critical stand toward dysfunction in modern societies, and in particular the consequences of endless war and repression.

Including topics as varied as an overview of the theoretical domains of social psychology and recent research on morality, justice and the law, the book promises a stimulating introduction to contemporary views of what it means to be human.

A major emphasis of the book is the effect of culture in all major topical areas of social psychology including conceptions of the self, attraction, relationships and love, social cognition, attitude formation and behavior, influences of group membership, social influence, persuasion, hostile images, aggression and altruism, and moral behavior.

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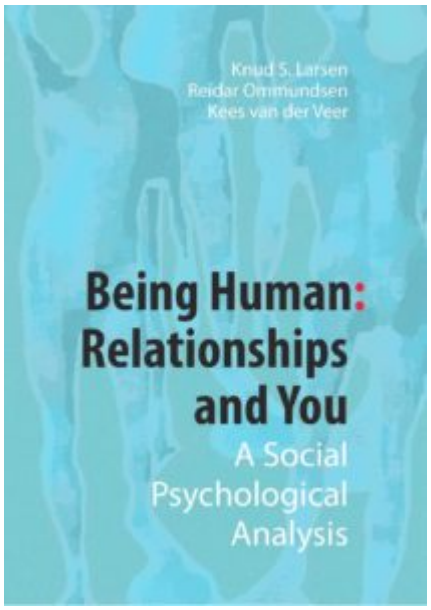
ISBN 978 90 5170 994 0 – NUR 770 – Rozenberg Publishers – 2008

"Therefore this reading has a rare and valuable feature, that of making a link between American and European social psychology: "Being human: Relationships and you" is an excellent example of how the two lines of thought are actually articulated…it is clearly written, using a professional yet assessable language and therefore easy to read by even the non-specialist public…always pointing to the fact that social psychology is not "just a science" but it deals with issues that constitute the substance of our existence as humans".

Being Human: Relationships And You. A Social Psychological Analysis ~ Introduction



The roots of Psychology are international, but so is psychology. A major figure in the history of psychology was the Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov. The premier pioneer in the study of childhood development was the Swiss biologist Jean Piaget. The father of the psychoanalytic movement was an Austrian medical doctor Sigmund Freud. Modern European social psychology has made major contributions, for example in the field of social categorization theory. Henri Tajfel and his collaborators made signal contributions to the understanding of group behavior during his tenure at Bristol University, as did collaborators from other European countries.

However, Moghaddam (1987; 1990) described the United States as the "superpower" of academic psychology. In support of this claim he cites the volume of resources available to American scholars. Other observers have also described the US as the major source of academic social psychology, and the "center of gravity" for professional development (Bond, 1988). It would not be inaccurate to state that the vast majority of social psychological research is conducted in North American settings, including Canada. This might therefore be described as the "first world" of social psychology in terms of production and influence on the world scene.

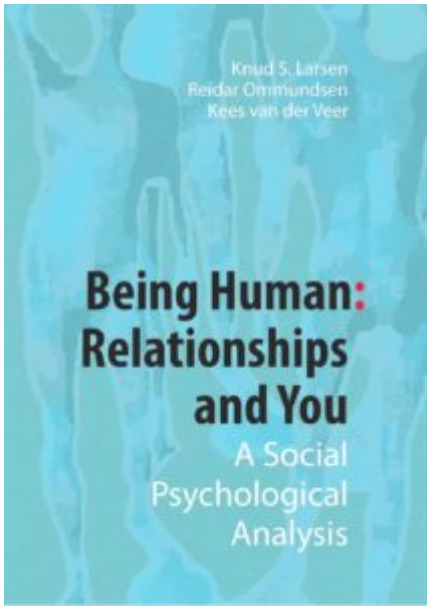
Europe, with Great Britain and France leading in social psychological research, may be considered the second world of social psychology. Generally the university settings are smaller, and funds available not as large as those in the US, but social psychologists in Europe have made distinctive contributions of their own in the development of theory. In particular European scholars give more attention to intergroup behavior (e.g. Doise, Csepeli, Dann, Gouge, Larsen, & Ostelli, 1972), and the wider social context like social structure, and culture (e.g. ideology) (Jaspars, 1980; Doise, 1986). European and some American colleagues tend to criticize American scholars as being too individualistic (e.g. Sampson, 1977) and culture-blind in their orientation, having mainly developed theories that reflect the salient values, goals and issues of the United States that may not be equally valid in other societies, and neglecting other social phenomena like minority influence and social change (Moscovici, 1972).

European social psychologists have developed unique laboratory methodology, the minimal group situation to study the effects of social categorization on intergroup relations (Tajfel, Flament, Billig, & Bundy, 1971), along with observation studies of how people communicate attitudes in natural settings and create shared social representations (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Van Dijk, 1987; Moscovici, 1981).

The third world of social psychology is found in the developing nations. Psychology in these countries is greatly hampered by lack of funding, and therefore has to rely to a large extent on psychology developed in other countries and cultural settings. There are many problems in these countries, which could benefit from a mature research based social psychology. The social problems of developing countries are to some extent distinctive as they involve issues of poverty, ethnic conflict, and lifestyles very different from the urban lives of the western world (see e.g. Kim, Yang and Hwang, 2006).

In the future we must look to the development of social psychology from all three worlds. There is much in the human experience that we have in common. We are all born into the world as dependent beings, all have to face developmental tasks, including forming families, and finding our social niche. We all face the great existential issues including the transitory nature of life. World psychology can provide insights that are helpful to all societies on these and other problems we all face. There are also specific problems unique to each society and culture. This is where the third world must make its contributions based on patient theoretical development, and empirical research. Reliable and valid empirical findings are superior to any armchair theorizing, regardless of the quality of the theoretical ideas. Only by empirical means can we eventually develop a significant world social psychology. Such a social psychology would describe the processes of social relations, thinking and social influence which would be common to all human beings. May this book be a step toward that noble quest, and stimulate the next generation of students, scholars, and all those interested in the field.

Being Human. Chapter 1: The Theoretical Domain And Methods Of Social Psychology



Social psychological thinking is ancient, but the science described in these pages is modern. There are those who would say "there is nothing new under the sun". It is true that we owe a great deal to philosophers like Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and many others, who thought about society, and made astute observations. Later scholars however have since put many of these early ideas, to the empirical test. We all have a cultural heritage to which we are indebted for many contemporary ideas.

However, social psychology as a separate field commenced with the publication of two books at the beginning of the twentieth century. William McDougall was the author of An *introduction of Social Psychology* published in 1908, and in the same year E.A. Ross published *Social Psychology: An outline and source book*. McDougall was a psychologist and Ross a sociologist, so it's right to say that these two fields were the parents of social psychology. In fact, typically social psychology is taught in both fields, but with a somewhat different emphasis.

The major issue confronting those early thinkers was how the influence of others affects our behavior. Social psychology often reflects salient concerns in history, a fact that is easily ascertained by examining the major research topics in a given time period. In the early years of the twentieth century, the French revolution was still in the mind of many social thinkers and therefore social psychology placed an emphasis on such questions as why people behave less rationally in crowds. Le Bon said in affect "as individuals people are civilized, in crowds they are barbarians" (Larsen, 1977, p.iix).

Does the environment cause behavior; for example are some cultures more aggressive and war like than others? (Chagnon, 1997). McDougall felt that social

behavior could be explained by social instincts, and therefore favored the "nature" explanation. In turn McDougall was influenced by Charles Darwin whose evolutionary theory proposed that the explanation of behavior is found in its contribution to survival. Others, however, suggested that we learn to behave in altruistic or aggressive ways through imitation of others and by the power of suggestion. For example, William James (1890), another influential pioneer, believed that the primary explanation for social behavior is "habit"; we learn our social behavior through repetition, thus emphasizing "nurture". John Dewey (1922), another early thinker in social psychology, advanced the idea of the environment as a determinant and emphasized situational influences on behavior. These varying ideas contributed directly to the dominant theories which today influence and direct social psychological research and concepts.

1. Theories in social psychology

These early thinkers proposed major all embracing concepts in turn advocated as explaining all social behavior (Allport, 1985). For example, some proposed that hedonism (pleasure seeking) explain all that we do? Other thinkers suggested that we understand human behavior simply as a function of imitation or instincts. This emphasis on all embracing concepts, introduced the problem of "nominalism" into psychology. Do we really understand more by just labeling behavior? Eventually, social psychologists recognized the inadequacy of all encompassing principles and began the development of theories based on the scientific method.

What defines social psychology as a discipline? Allport (1985) suggested that social psychology is "an attempt to understand and explain how thought, feeling, and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others" (p.3). In other words, social psychology is the scientific study of social cognition (how people think about each other), how people are influenced by the behavior of others (for example conformity processes), and how they relate to each other through cooperation or aggression.

Some scholars distinguish between a psychological and a sociological version of the discipline (see Hewstone & Manstead, 1995). The latter is said to address more explicitly the interface between the individual and the wider social structure. We think this is an unnecessary and outdated distinction. In fact, Allport also added to his definition that "The term 'implied presence' refers to the many activities the person carries out because of his position (role) in a complex social structure and because of his membership in a cultural group". (Allport,

1985, p. 3). Hence, we agree with Jones (1985) that social psychology is "an excellent candidate for an interdisciplinary field" (p.47). The present book seeks to realize this standpoint. This rationale suggests that the definition of social psychology may be found in the major explanations it has produced of social behavior. This effort resulted in four major theories within psychology, and several within sociology and related social sciences.

1.1 Learning theories

Social psychology, like other fields in psychology, benefited greatly from general learning theories (Lott & Lott, 1985). These theories include classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning. Of these approaches the most salient for social psychology is observational learning. For example, we learn to be aggressive, we learn to fight, to hurt one another, by observing significant others behaving in these ways. We develop our attitudes, our feelings of aggression, and other social behaviors through the subtle and not so subtle observation of others. Parents are role models in early development, but others including teachers and peers also influence children. In recent decades the media has played an important role, and a great deal of research has been conducted on the influence of television on human behavior. The early pioneers in observational learning (Bandura, 1979) provided convincing evidence that the mere observation of aggressive models could and did produce more aggression in children, and that this aggressive behavior was lasting. They also demonstrated that if the model was punished, it reduced aggression somewhat, whereas if rewarded the aggression increased. So we all learn through observation of significant others and by observing the consequences of their behaviors (Bandura, 1973; Bandura and Ross, & Ross, 1961; Bandura, & Walters, 1959, 1963). However, there is obviously more to the human experience than simply observing others. Some of us also have a tendency to think!

1.2 Social cognition

Cognitive consistency theories are very influential perspectives in social psychology. These perspectives propose the idea that human beings have an essential need for cognitive consistency and balance. Festinger (1957) and Heider (1958) both influenced what would become very productive areas of research and theory building. Festinger's for example suggested that when people become aware of beliefs and attitudes inconsistent with their behavior this contradiction is experienced as an unpleasant emotional state. Dissonance in turn motivates

behavioral change, and a reorganization of beliefs and attitudes.

Today we all know that cigarette smoking has terrible consequences for peoples' health. According to Festinger's theory that knowledge should produce dissonance in the mind of the smoker, and a change in habit. Some smokers do quit, but others simply reorganize their beliefs about the health risk. For example a smoker may say that he knows of many who smoked, who haven't died yet. Through rationalizations smokers bolster beliefs that smoking is not harmful and thereby remove dissonance.

Heider's balance theory proposes that the internal consistency of our likes and dislikes matters in our social behavior. From this theoretical perspective we have a fundamental need to hold consistent patterns of likes and dislikes. If your friend dislikes another person who is your friend, your relationship is not in balance, and according to Heider you would do something to restore balance. You may change your liking of the other person, or you may think your friend is unreasonable and restore balance by removing him from your life as a friend.

1.3 Information processing

Further theory development in social cognition was influenced by advances in general information theory in the natural sciences (Markus & Zajonc, 1985). Social cognition theories find the causes of human behavior in the processing of information, and in our attempts to understand others and ourselves. The basic idea is that we function like human computers (Fiske, 1993; Markus and Zajonc, 1985) as we encode information, store it in memory, and retrieve it at a later moment in time. Why do we attend to certain information while completely ignoring other resources? The field of social perception takes note of those individual differences, and more recently cognitive theories on social categorization have made signal contributions to the understanding of prejudice, aggression as well as cooperative behavior (see e.g. Spears, 1995).

1.4 Equity and Exchange theories

It should not surprise us that social psychological theories reflect our economic system, although that remains an unstated assumption of equity and exchange theories. Seeking equity and fair outcomes reflect optimal economic relations in a capitalist society. Among the most influential thinkers are Homans, 1974; Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; and Walster, Walster, & Bersceid, 1978. Essentially these theories explain human social behavior in terms of rewards, costs, and profit

suggesting that all relationships contain these three elements. Raising a child can be rewarding, but also contain many costs not immediately apparent to young parents. The rewards may include the psychological pleasure of creating and nurturing life. The costs can include the obvious economic expenditures, but also psychological costs if the child is difficult and chooses a disapproved path of behavior. At some level, we mentally compute a balance sheet and subtract the costs from the rewards, leaving us with a relative profitable or unprofitable relationship.

An underlying assumption of equity and exchange theories is that lasting relationships always involve profitable outcomes. This assertion does not describe altruistic behavior. People may choose to behave in ways that are not only nonprofitable, but may even risk their very existence in an effort to help others. Do equity and exchange theories emerge solely from our contemporary culture? Social norms based on equity principles is in fact also described in ancient Confucian thinking (Hwang, 2006). This finding indicates that equity thinking not only reflects the present day economic system, but perhaps also more basic and universal tendencies in human psychology. In order to test for the universality of equity principles more research needs to be conducted cross-culturally.

2. The place of social psychology as a level of explanation

These Social psychological theories have had great heuristic value in generating and directing research, and have also led to theory building in major research areas. Social psychology's interest in social thought, feelings and behavior has led to research on such varying topics as aggression (e.g. Larsen, 1977a), persuasion, conformity, and (the destructive influences of) obedience. Research developments on these and other topics are discussed in the chapters to come.

To the overriding question what causes human social behavior there is no simple answer. For example, what causes prejudice? Is it the social environment? Is it a function of the culture that produces hatred, or dislike of ethnic or minority groups? Is it the social ideology of fascism that produces bigotry? Further, social psychology seeks also to understand mediating variables or cognitive processes within the person. How do beliefs or attitudes of the individual influence the construal of a given situation? (Ross and Nisbett, 1991). These varying levels of influence must be integrated before we can present an overall theory of prejudice or of any other important social behavior (Doise, 1986).

An overall social psychological theory must also integrate information from related fields. Currently the "publish or perish" norm of world psychology and world social sciences encourage the ownership of psychological constructs, where labeling of concepts is in the domain of the individual investigator and those that follow in the particular research niche. This labeling process makes it difficult to interpret research from related fields, although varying terminology may in fact represent the same social phenomena. At some point in the future, after more maturing of our sciences, attempts will undoubtedly be made to integrate the social sciences.

Currently, social psychology is mainly interested in mediating variables like beliefs, attitudes, attribution of causality and responsibility, and social categorization. These factors are intriguing to social psychologists because they appear to be linked to important social behaviors like conformity, aggression, and altruism. Other mediating variables considered of great importance are the related concepts of authoritarianism (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950**;** Altemeyer, 1988), dogmatism, (Rokeach, 1960), and more recently social dominance orientation (see Pratto, Sidanius & Levin, 2006) which have influenced research on prejudice and aggression.

Social psychology is history, and two Jews responding to the genocide of the Second World War in fact initiated the research on authoritarianism. Another, more recent researcher Milgram (1965, 1974), also Jewish, investigated the willingness to obey commands to hurt others which led to great controversy over ethics in social psychology. Further investigations (Larsen, Coleman, Forbes, & Johnson, 1972; Larsen, 1974a; Larsen, 1974b; and Larsen, 1976a) showed that the willingness to shock innocent victims could be produced by social learning models and were motivated by need for social approval (more in chapter 7)**.** This research on aggression reflected our concerns with understanding the history of the genocide of the Second World War and the experience with fascism.

Furthermore, it may be useful to think of the study of social psychology within the behaviorist model of stimulus and response. There are stimuli explanations, for example the effect of the social environment that explains much behavior. Those born into racial ghettos differ from those born rich and privileged. The environment explains some of the behavior, however we have many examples of people who have risen above their social circumstances. Therefore our beliefs, values, and attitudes also account for significant portions in the explanation of

behavior. Beliefs, values and attitudes are the mediating variables within the stimulus -response model. Finally, the actual behavior can also be studied. What are differences in for example aggression between social groups, and to what extent can the social environment, and/or the mediating variables of beliefs, values, and attitudes explain these differences. The S-R model provides a framework for different levels of explanation.

2.1 Levels of explanation of social behavior

Social psychology is only one level of explanation in understanding human behavior. We are not in competition with other scientific disciplines, therefore if our results are valid they should fit the insights from other scholarly approaches. Human emotion for example may also be explained by physiological variables emphasizing chemical concomitants. Emotion may also be explained in terms of the characteristics of the individual. Culture and social norms define how national groups differ in emotional display and communication (e.g. Edwards, 1999). Philosophers furthermore try to integrate emotions into an overall viewpoint of life. Therefore social psychology explains some of the human experience, but not all. That fact does not make social psychology less valuable; only it recognizes that the complexity of human behavior requires different levels of explanation

The same variability of explanation holds true for theories *within* the field of social psychology (see Doise, 1986). As was mentioned before, learning theories explain some of social psychology. We learn many behaviors, for example to love, and also to hate. Learning theories, however, do not cover the entire range of explanations. Human beings for example also behave in accordance with the economic model of exchange proposed by equity theory. Further, we also evaluate our relationships, and seek balance and harmony as proposed by cognitive theories. Thus only by taking into account all possible theories, can we get closer to understanding of love or hate, and by recognizing as scholars that we still have much to learn.

An eclectic approach must take into account different levels of explanation from other disciplines, and also different theories within social psychology. Finally, a world psychology must evaluate the results from cross-national and cross-cultural psychology. Is it possible to develop a sound social psychology based on only western societies? Today we know that culture matters in behavior. Psychology as a discipline is dependent on the expectations of society and its cultural history. However, the other extreme, that we must only search for information that is

contextually bound to specific cultures is also misleading, because there is much in the human experience that is similar in all cultures. Therefore we can learn from empirical studies from any specific culture as long as we recognize the context, and try to verify the results where possible. Different cultural perspectives are not exclusive, but rather complimentary. All cultures represent different views into the reality that is life. Social psychologists value the exchange of ideas, and the search for the principles that someday will provide more answers within a world psychology.

2.2 The related disciplines

Sociology is often confused for social psychology. Like sociology, social psychology is interested in groups, but the focus of sociology is on group behavior. Groups can behave many different ways. Some might express racist behavior like the Ku Klux Klan did in the persecution and lynching of Blacks in the United States. Other groups like the American Civil Liberties Union have in turn opposed discrimination, as have political parties on the left of the political spectrum. A social psychologist however is more likely to study racist attitudes within the individual, while of course being aware of the social and situational environment that contribute to these anti-social attitudes.

So there are many other fields that study people and groups. In addition to sociology, anthropology, political science, and economics all make contributions to the understanding of social behavior. What makes social psychology different is the focus on the individual within the group setting. An anthropologist would seek group level explanations, for example focuses on the cultural traditions as a major cause for behavior. Sociology also focuses on group level explanations within a given society. Economics, as a field of study examines peoples' behavior as primarily economic forms of transactions. Political science on the other hand seeks to understand power relations between groups in a given society.

Social psychology, on the other hand, tries to integrate all this information, in the attempt to understand the individual as a unit of analysis. Why do people conform? Why are they excluding or including in relationships towards minorities? Social psychology is cognizant of the influence of the situation and environment**,** and in research therefore studies possible influence of situational variables on behavior. At the same time we also examine possible moderating effects of personality. Personality may in some cases neutralize, and for other behaviors exacerbate the effects of situational variables. In fact the study of the

self or personality has been considered an integral part of social psychology and a fundamental focus from the beginning of our discipline. The clearest evidence for this is the presence of journals from the American Psychological Association that reflect this integration including *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.

2.3 The social self

As early as the work of William James (1890) social psychology focused its attention on the self, thought to comprise two aspects the "me" and the "I". The self as an object of knowledge comprises all that we know about ourselves. We are or are not intelligent or we are or are not good parents, etc. All this information constitutes the "me" component. The "I" component refers to the executive function of the self, the part of us that makes and executes decisions. This focus has led to a great interest in decision-making processes in social psychology, in learning how and why we make decisions. The self is of crucial importance, because there are many obvious connections between the self and social behavior for example how we present our selves in social situations (see Goffman, 1959). While personality psychologists focus on personality and self, their focus is on development of individually unique patterns, and internal dynamic of personality traits, and less on how these factors are linked to situational influence. The social self is discussed in chapter 2.

In short, the subject matter for social psychology is social behaviors and the combined social and personal influences on such behavior. The level of explanation is the individual level, e.g. individual cognition, attitudes and behavior. These individual processes are studied by either correlational or experimental methods.

The methods of social psychology

How do we study social behavior? Social psychology as a science is built on two major methods. The first methodology is correlation, i.e. examining the strength and direction of relationships between variables on topics of interest. The second is experimental research in the laboratory, based on manipulations of independent variables observing for effects on dependent variables.

3.1 Correlational research

For example we can survey the incidence of lung cancer among smokers. If smoking increases the risk of cancer we should expect a correlation between the

level of smoking and the incidence of cancer. Correlations vary from plus and minus 1.0, the larger the correlation the stronger the relationship between the two variables. A minus correlation means that a high score on one variable has a relationship to a low score on another variable, and visa versa. A positive correlation indicates that high or low scores follow the same pattern on the two variables.

It is important to remember that correlations do not imply causal affects. Correlations simply detect association between two variables A and B. A may cause B, or B may cause A, or the relationship may be caused by a third variable that is not examined. For example assuming there is a relationship between lung cancer and smoking, a third variable (perhaps some personality factor) may be responsible for both smoking and the bodily weakness producing cancer. There is a relationship between education and income in western societies. Does that mean that education causes higher income? Not necessarily. Perhaps a personality variable called achievement motivation causes both a desire for income and education.

It is an error to confuse correlation with causation. To answer questions about causation we would have to conduct an experiment where we would compare a group of subjects who smoke say thirty cigarettes a day for ten years, to a control group which is similar in every way except they do not smoke. An experiment would give us a definitive answer about cause and effect. However, we cannot carry out such an experiment on smoking for obvious ethical reasons. It would be highly unethical to encourage subjects to smoke when they may develop a deadly disease as a consequence. Perhaps we could train a sample of apes or monkeys to smoke? However, if you were in favor of the ethical treatment of animals you would no doubt object to an experimental treatment producing suffering in animals.

The ethical alternative is the survey, whereby we obtain information by asking questions to a written form with a standard or open-ended set of questions, or through an interview. Researchers can use two basic formats in either the interview or the written survey. For open-ended questions the respondents are asked to supply their own answers that can afterwards be subjected to content analysis for common categories of responses. In the survey with standard response categories the researcher supplies several alternatives from which the respondent must choose that which most closely correspond to his attitudes or

behavior. For example in Likert scaling the respondent chooses whether he agrees strongly, just agrees, is uncertain, disagrees, or disagrees strongly with a given question. Questions with standard response categories allow for comparisons between groups and individuals, and facilitate the interpretation of the results.

The major problem with surveys is the question of validity, is the respondent truthful in providing his/her answer? Some issues surveyed create social desirability motivation in the respondents, so the answer provided may be socially appropriate, but not necessarily truthful. Questions about intimate issues are often affected by social desirability and it is important to control for response sets. The possibility of social desirability responses should encourage the researcher to view survey results with measured skepticism, and try alternative wording or methods.

Another problem in survey research is the variable meaning of the actual words used to survey opinion. What appears to the observer to be small differences in meaning can produce profound differences in responses. In developing statements for attitude scaling there are a number of criteria that should be followed to ensure that the statements are not ambiguous, and therefore clearly understood by the respondent. For example, questions should be simple sentences, contain only one idea, and be clearly understood by the targeted audience. In one study in the US only 7 percent of those sampled would abolish government programs aimed at helping the “needy”, whereas 39 percent would oppose programs going to support public welfare (Marty, 1982). One would think the support for “needy” is very closely related to “public welfare”, but in the US “public welfare” is a negative concept provided encouragement to the lazy and unworthy. Questions may produce biased results, because of their wording. For example, responses to particular questions depend somewhat on the context of what preceded it in the survey. If a question on demographic information, e.g. income and education comes at the beginning of the survey, this information may bias subsequent responses.

The response options also critically affect the outcome. If the response categories are open-ended the respondent may say anything that comes to his mind. This procedure produces a different result from that produced when the respondent is guided by a standard set of response categories. The nature of the response categories may provide guidance or bias of which the researcher is unaware.

Therefore pre-testing of questionnaires is highly advisable (Van der Veer, 2005).

Interviews are very useful in obtaining the initial framework of the study that of identifying the key issues or topics. The interview procedure also contains problems. We know that the interviewer may produce biased results by simple nonverbal behaviors, like clearing his throat after a socially desirable response. Interviewers must have serious training to produce standardized interviews results. Surveys have the advantage of being relatively cheap, quick to administer and analyze. Today one can even administer surveys via the computer and the Internet. To summarize, the position of the question may affect the responses, the actual wording may contain hidden biases not immediately clear to the investigator (Schwarz and Strack, 1991), and the response and the interviewer options might guide or bias the response. Apart from careful preparation of the survey questions, an additional problem is found in the sampling process to which we turn now.

3.1 Random versus biased sampling of respondents

Research has shown that it is possible to represent a population of 100,000 with a sample of just a few hundred participants if proper random sampling procedures are followed. Random sampling is based on the idea that each member of a population has an equal and independent chance of participating in the sample. In voting behavior, social scientists can predict election outcomes with great accuracy after polling a few respondents who are representative of the voters from a few polling stations that are representative of all polling stations. It is this efficiency that attracts researchers to the use of the survey method.

Random sampling is however time consuming and expensive to perform so researchers often use biased samples. Consequently, the results of the research may also be biased. For example, if you studied attitudes toward homosexuality the results would be very biased if respondents are primarily conservative members of religious organizations with well formed negative opinions. Another problem is the so-called non-response: the number of people who refuse to participate, or who just don’t respond. If say 30-40 percent of the sample do not participate, we need to know how that affects the results. To learn the effect we must obtain a representative sample of those who refused and then determine how they are different from the participating respondents.

There is some middle ground in sampling procedures. For example college

students are often participants in surveys. They are easily available and often have opinions on a variety of topics. They also come from a variety of backgrounds and may therefore give us a rough approximation of broader social opinion and attitudes. In addition there are some issues where it matters little if the sample is representative, issues that are believed to reflect broad human behaviors. Van der Veer, Ommundsen, & Larsen (2007) found that attitude scales produced with college students produced scales that could be validly applied to representative samples. In the obedience to authority studies (Milgram, 1965, 1974; Larsen et al, 1972; 1974a, 1974b, 1976a) on the willingness to shock innocent victims, similar behavior was found in every group and nationality studied. Such broad behaviors can therefore be studied in more narrow samples. However, for more specific issues random sampling enables the researcher to draw conclusions about opinions in the general population.

The survey method remains a very important tool for social psychology within fields of opinion research and attitude scaling. It is most popular within the branch of social psychology found in sociology. However, the experimental method searching for cause and effect still has the attention of the majority of social psychologists within psychology.

*3.2 Experimental researc*h

This type of research is typically conducted in a controlled environment like a university laboratory. From the very beginning psychology was build upon the natural sciences with aspirations to eventually becoming also a mature discipline. Given the short historical time since the beginning of social psychology it is too early to evaluate its success as a natural science, but the aspiration to become an acceptable scientific discipline explains the methods employed by most social psychologists (Higbee, 1972).

An experiment involves simulations of real life situations presented in such a way as to be believable to the participating subjects. Social psychologists manipulate some part of the situation (called the independent variable) in order to observe the effect on another variable (called the dependent variable). For example social psychologists have studied the effect of violence in the media on subsequent violent behavior (Liebert & Baron, 1972). In one study boys and girls were exposed to excerpts of an extreme violent episode of a police drama, or alternatively to excerpts of a film showing the excitement of a sporting event. The sporting event sample was the control group since emotional excitement was

created in both conditions, but only violence in the police drama. The children who viewed the violence in the police drama (experimental group) were subsequently observed behaving with more violence compared to the children who saw the sporting event film. In experiments the researcher seeks to control some aspect of a simulation believed to reflect real life, in order to observe the effect of the experimental treatment. Later in this chapter we shall examine the effect of media violence on aggression as a form of applied psychology, and its function as a social learning theory. In chapter 10 we shall more fully discuss the research on exposure to violence, as it remains a salient area of social psychology.

If the groups are different on some salient dimension other than the one studied we have no way of ascertaining if it is that difference, or the experimental treatment that is responsible for the observed effect. For example if we included only boys in the experimental group and girls in the control sample perhaps gender differences were responsible for the higher level of observed violence. Random assignment is therefore considered essential in drawing valid conclusions. All the subjects in the population of interest must have an equal chance of appearing in either the control or the experimental group. In using random sampling inferences can be drawn that it is the experimental treatment that is responsible for the observed differences. Random sampling is probably not observed frequently, since most experiments are not conducted on general populations. Choice of the population to be included in an experiment is dictated by practical concerns including the greater availability and willingness of university students to participate. That is not necessarily a negative factor since research often is directed toward topics that university students have in common with the rest of society.

3.3 Bias in experiments

One source of bias in experiments refers to the demand characteristics of the study. Biases refer to cues that are unwittingly provided to the subject by the experimenter, by which the experimenter reinforces certain behaviors to the exclusion of others. “Good” subjects want to cooperate with the experimenter and therefore seek to “understand” the experiment and behave in accordance with these perceived expectations. In other words the experiment has demand characteristics for appropriate behavior. Orne (1962) pointed to compliant subject behavior as a major problem for the validity of experimental results.

The experimenter himself may also unintentionally influence the outcome of an

experiment. For example Rosenthal (1966) showed that when laboratory assistants were told that some rats were bred for higher intelligence (maze bright) these rats performed better than rats that were described as “maze dull”. In fact, there was no inbred difference between the two groups of rats, only the expectations of their handlers for the learning curve of “bright” versus “dull” rats. The expectations of the experimental assistants probably translated to more careful and rewarding handling of the rats described as “bright”, which in turn produced faster learning. Demand characteristics may appear in any experiment, and therefore repetition (replication) of the experiment under the same, as well as different conditions, is warranted.

The laboratory setting as such may also affect results. For example Milgram conducted his experiments at Yale University. Perhaps the research participants were willing to deliver shocks not because they obeyed authority, but simply because they trusted a researcher at this prestigious university not to allow serious harm being done to research participants (Mixon, 1971). However, Milgram being aware of this possible bias moved his experiments to a regular office building in a small town to avoid any association with a prestigious university. The willingness to deliver shocks continued, lending support to an obedience interpretation. However, in this new setting willingness to shock was reduced, indicating that the setting where an experiment is conducted may also make a difference.

3.4 The ethics of experimental investigations

A significant problem already referred to in the previous discussion occurred when social psychology became involved in an intense debate over the ethics of manipulation of experimental subjects in the 1960’s. The aforementioned obedience experiments by Milgram, Larsen, and others produced contention within psychology initiated by Baumrind (1985). The above experiments sought to understand why people were willing to obey an experimenter’s commands to shock innocent victims, and were seen as the laboratory equivalent of the holocaust. Since most subjects were willing the experiments were thought to make statements about essential human nature. Most people like to think of themselves as kind and humane, and yet here apparently “normal” people participated in what could have been lethal behavior in the laboratory.

Questions were raised as to the long-term effect of such participation on the subjects’ self-esteem, and if such a risk was justified. The resulting debate

produced a revision of the ethics of experimental psychology including the requirement of informed consent. Informed consent has many components, but essentially means that the subject must be sufficiently informed so they can choose whether or not to participate in the experiment. In addition professional ethics demand that the investigator be truthful. Deception can only be used in those circumstances where the information to be obtained is valued higher than the temporary discomfort of the participant. In all cases the experimenter must try to protect the participant from harm and discomfort, ensuring anonymity of the participants and their behavior. Since participants are not identified by name there should be no social consequences for participating in experiments. Finally, at the conclusion of the experiment, all procedures must be explained to the participant, including any deception, and efforts be made to reconcile the subjects' feelings

These ethical requirements would exclude the Milgram type experiment or similar manipulations from future study. Current ethics would also exclude many experiments on conformity and other significant social behaviors. The debate was overblown in the opinion of the authors of this book, and has had serious negative consequences for social psychological research. Others researchers have shown that there were no long-term negative consequences for subjects from participating in the Milgram experiment (Clark and Word, 1974; and Zimbardo, 1974)**.** Most participants did not object to the manipulation when researchers explained the reasons for the deception (Christensen, 1988). These subject responses were entirely consistent with the anecdotal evidence collected at the conclusion of the aforementioned Larsen experiments.

3.5 A balance between ethical concerns of subject, society, and discipline

An important protection for the participant must be the anonymity of the participant, and the experimenter's ethical responsibility to keep all related information confidential. Anonymity is guaranteed by the inability of the experimenter to identify who provided what results in the experiment. No data should be kept which could identify individual participants, unless the subject gives informed consent for the purpose of some follow up at a later time. That ethical responsibility means that the experimenter must remove names and other identifying information from any records. Anonymity is not a problem in research since social psychologists are not interested in individual responses, but rather in the overall results. How many subjects were willing to shock the learner in the

Milgram experiment, at what level did they stop administering shock, and how intensely did they shock? In cases where information is needed for some follow up it is incumbent on the experimenter to keep records confidential. To obtain honest responses it is necessary to create experimental conditions where the respondent feels safe, and ensure that there will be no personal repercussions for his honesty. The investigator may know the identity of the subject, but takes steps to ensure that this information is not used against the participants.

Clearly there are also ethical obligations to the larger society. Professional ethics require honesty in reporting the results, and not making inferences that are not supported by the data. At the same time society also has a responsibility toward the researcher. Instead of encumbering research, society should respect academic freedom to discover new and useful information. It is only on the basis of such information that society can respond to the human condition, and take steps to improve society.

Clearly there should be ethical considerations in social psychology, but they should include a more serious and balanced evaluation of the importance of the information obtained, and possible positive and negative consequences for the participants. For example, some of the participants in the Larsen shock experiments told the researcher that they learned a great deal about themselves, and were resolved not to find themselves committing similar behavior in the future.

4. The role of human values

Up to now we have acknowledged problems that have arisen from the experimental or survey procedures. There is also the larger problem that is not unique to social science when the results of scientific investigations are not "objective", but reflect contemporary values and biases. Does social psychology simply reflect history without an enduring set of transhistorical principles of human behavior? For example the Ash conformity experiment was conducted in the 1950s when the proto fascist senator McCarthy created anti-communist hysteria in the United States, and the fearful majority kept their collective mouths shut and conformed. It was an age of great conformity that was reflected in the experiments conducted by Asch (1956). Subsequently, Larsen replicated the experiment over several decades, and found that conformity in the laboratory varied with the social conditions. The Asch experiment (see also chapter 7) yielded a great deal of conformity in the 1950s, less in the 1960s and 1970s, and

again more in the 1980s (Larsen, 1974d, 1990). Thus behavior in the laboratory was shown to vary with the historical conditions in society (for a detailed discussion see chapter 7).

Yet at the same time our discipline is often presented as ahistorical (see Gergen, 1978). Following in the footsteps of the natural sciences the research in our journals is often presented as if representing some unvarying truth. The natural sciences, of course, discover new information as nature gives way to careful experimentation. Underlying scientific research is the idea that the fundamental laws of nature that do not change or vary. We understand much more about space now since the Hubble telescope sent back useful information, and new scientific principles may be formed as more data is gathered. But the underlying laws of nature are immutable, we just lack information to understand the complexity of nature. Can we discover similar laws of society in social psychology? The complexity of human nature almost seems to be too prohibitive in such a quest. However, if social psychology is primarily the history of society we must give careful consideration to ideology and contemporary values when discussing research results rather than assuming the permanence of these findings.

4.1 Values and history

Values inform both the content of our investigations as well as the topics that are studied. As already noted, Jewish social psychologists like Rokeach, Adorno and Milgram were in the forefront in examining both the type of personality that committed genocidal behavior and the behavior itself. It would seem reasonable to assume that personal experiences with loss, the investigator's human values, directed this research interest.

In fact as we examine the research literature we can observe a direct correlation between change in social values and the type of research focus developed. World war II, and the horrors perpetrated by the Nazi's, gave impetus to research on authoritarianism and genocide. This was followed by the McCarthyite period that engendered paranoia and conformity in U.S.A. This happened during the height of the cold war, and of course it was in the US government's interest to sustain such fear and conformity in order to keep the population mobilized for the confrontation. During this time of broad social conformity we observed the developments of studies on conformity as that found in the Asch paradigm. During the 1960's the war in Vietnam and wars of liberation elsewhere, gave rise to an interest in conflict and aggression. It is not surprising that this period saw the

foundation of peace research institutes like the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo, Norway, where the first and third author spent significant time as research fellows (e.g. Larsen, 1993). The dooms day clock ticked and the world was perceived as close to an all-consuming nuclear catastrophe. These broad social concerns inspired many social psychologists to study conflict, and try to develop knowledge on how to prevent war.

In the aftermath of student rebellion within the US and Western Europe, social norms were being challenged. This was especially true with respect to sexual behavior and gender roles. Women demonstrated and demanded equal treatment on the job and in all other significant social relations. In social psychology this became a time that saw the rise of gender studies, and an increase in research on sexual behavior. During the 1980s the relations between the big powers turned worse, and the news described the militarization of space creating an unstable world, with renewed concerns about nuclear catastrophes. This was reflected in social psychology by more research on topics related to the arms race. Although justice and peace are closely interrelated concepts, clearly the nuclear arms race presented an overriding threat of annihilating the human race or at least civilization, and controlling that threat constituted prominent value for social science researchers. In the 1990s we saw a continued effort to make the world more tolerant of diversity, since it was assumed that in the lack of tolerance lies at the foundation of conflict. So, we can see that social psychology is history. It is clear that researchers, like other thinkers in society, direct research toward what is seen as the most relevant topics and major concerns of their times

However the natural science model also had a strong hold on scientific imaginations. To some degree research reflected the concern with the scientific paradigm in wanting to control variables in a laboratory setting. In social psychology some psychologists began moving away from social issues to more abstract or theory driven studies. In social psychology we saw imaginative researchers develop very sophisticated and abstract studies as found in the minimal group design (Tajfel & Billig, 1974) that did not at face value translate easily to the human condition but nevertheless has yielded new and important theoretical understanding of causal effects of social categorization. The development toward more theory-driven research has characterized research into the 21st century.

A further factor affecting research topics is the internal ethical debate that

ensued after the obedience experiments. Researchers, like to be thought of as ethical people, and this concern (and professional injunctions) may have directed research away from the burning issues of the day that required deception, toward more socially approved research. Regardless whether research is determined by social values or internal conflict, social psychological research faithfully reflects human values, and therefore differs from the natural sciences that are less encumbered. We say less, because in the Soviet Union we saw ideology also affecting physical scientific research as in the case of the Lysenko scandal, where the Marxist emphasis on the environment caused researchers to overlook the essential genetic basis of agriculture. Also the values expressed in the arms race led to many scientific developments so the physical sciences are not independent of human ideology.

Values may also play a role in who is attracted to psychology as a "helping profession". The two fundamental values in psychology are the pursuit of truth and helping others. Although psychological knowledge may also be used to manipulate others, the majority of those attracted to the profession, are people who want to express the fundamental values in their lives honoring for example Human Rights, and sustainable development on our planet. Research in social psychology is developing as a normative science (Larsen, 1980). The emerging discipline reflects our specific historical time and what we think, hope and fear.

4.2 A critique of the natural science paradigm

Kuhn (1980) stated that scientific paradigms continue to exist until they no longer have useful answers to scientific problems. The historical development outlined above suggested to many social psychologists, that our discipline could not meet the requirements of a natural science. Social psychology should at the very least be conscious of the effect of values and ideology on ongoing research. The so-called "crisis" literature continued for some time suggesting both an identity crisis, or that social psychology lacked a coherent direction (Larsen, 1980). Gergen (1978) suggested further that the continued commitment to the natural science paradigm would result in a myopic and irrelevant social psychology. These criticisms were echoed by Marxist social psychologists, who felt that social psychology uncritically reflected the ideology of society (Larsen, 1980).

Scholars often share common views that are not challenged because they are basically assumed or taken for granted. Social psychologists called these "social representations" (Moscovici, 1988; Augoustinos & Innes, 1990). Social

representations refer to the subtle biases that exist without examination in much of the research literature. Feminists for example take note of the political conservatism of many scientists who prefer a biological interpretation of gender differences that may have a cultural origin. The emphasis on biology in turn is believed to hamper the quest for sexual equality. Marxists have further noted how much of our research is directed toward social harmony and middle class values. The middle class has a real stake in the status quo and in static social relations, however the poor in society need change. Research funding, and acceptance of articles for publication is limited by the ideological bias of powerful individuals as to what is considered important to study, and how it is to be studied. Despite this debate research in social psychology has not changed substantially as we move into the 21st century.

Yet social psychology has also made other important contributions. These include raising the consciousness of students in psychology (and virtually everyone in the United States getting a college degree today takes the introductory psychology course). As students read about or participate in studies like the Milgram experiment they are often "socially inoculated", and come to an awareness of the dangers of social manipulation. Those who participated in the historical genocides, including the most recent in Rwanda and the Darfur, were apparently "normal " people, the only major distinguishing factor being their willingness to obey commands to kill and destroy. Social research can encourage higher levels of consciousness by focusing on the irrationalities and injustice of the social system. This assertion depends on academic freedom to tell the truth fearlessly as required by our findings. In addition, social psychology is also a practical science that can make useful suggestions helpful to the development of economic, and other social organizations. Organizational and applied psychology developed out of this desire to produce findings that generate efficiency and harmony in social organizations.

4.3 Psychological labels are the fruit of psychological values

Our unstated assumptions of what constitutes the good life, i.e. psychological health, also direct how we label psychological concepts. For example Maslow's description of the "self-actualized" person was largely a reflection of his own bias and values. How we label personality traits is likewise a consequence of our hidden values since there is no set of absolute standards to guide the categorization. Social psychology seeks to understand the world through the

commonly accepted value system. One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. In Palestine those who attack the Jewish state are labeled terrorists by the Israelis, and described as freedom fighters by the Palestinians. Researchers are not different in the categorization of behavior; their labels also reflect unstated assumptions about what they consider to be optimal psychological functioning. The authoritarian personality described by Adorno et al. (1950) as "rigid" implies a negative evaluation. However, some years earlier the Nazi psychologist Jaensch used the positive word "stability" to describe a quite similar personality profile (Brown, 1965, p. 478). We all have a tendency to view happenings from the perspective of our society and culture. In doing so we have part of the picture, but only part. In trying to understand our world we must also try to understand the unstated assumptions that underlie all research, both that of the natural sciences, but also that of social psychology. In that regard it is important to remember that what is defined as "normal" is not necessarily good. Genocidal societies throughout history have made brutality normal. The concentration camp directors lived "normal" lives with social support of culture and family relationships. In many cases participants in genocide have not only viewed their behavior as normal, but also morally correct. Participants in genocide may reason that killing others is a painful duty, but necessary for the greater good. Being normal is not always good from a moral perspective.

4.4 The ideology of the major theories in social psychology

Keeping the previous discussion in mind, how are we to interpret the dominant theories in social psychology? Is it not natural in a capitalist society, and perhaps other societies, to believe that learning proceeds from a program of rewards and punishments that is central to learning theories? The unstated assumption here is that human beings are under such strong influence of the environment that it allows little room for individual volition and consciousness. Do people act according to self-interests, and it is "rational" to go for things considered rewarding and to avoid punishment? In capitalist society incentives are mostly material and economic rewards, and yet many people don't act according to principles and values that carry an economic cost. Social psychologists are also developing a literature on altruistic behavior that challenges learning based solely on rewards. Reward based learning theory is dominant in attitude research, prejudice and aggression, but also in research on prosocial behavior. Yet, human beings are more than reward driven, capable of unselfish and noble behavior.

Cognitive theories imply there is a fundamental need for consistency that motivates people in search for balance and internal peace. Is that a consequence of a society that stresses logical consistency as a virtue? Would cognitive balance also be a need among all cultures? These are questions yet to be explained in an emerging world psychology. Cognitive consistency theory has also guided research in attitude formation and change (see chapters 3 and 5), in how people are attracted or repelled by others, and in prejudicial behavior.

As mentioned earlier **t**he information processing theories are of a more recent development, and not coincidentally emerged along with computer science. The unstated assumption of information processing is that people seek to understand and make sense of the world. People are described as social computers that evaluate, observe, and encode information. We wonder how much effort people place in understanding the world? People often live habitually and display robotic conformity even to events that have serious impact on their lives. Many people are guided by the minimum knowledge required to get through life, seeking lives of minimum effort, and are mainly motivated by the desire to avoid negative consequences? As long as the essential levels of life are met, most people seem happy for the diversion provided by television without reflecting on their lives or the meaning of the human condition? Of course information processing theories note that much thinking is automatic or unconscious, and people are unable to describe their own thinking processes (Wegner & Bargh, 1998; Wilson, 2002). Research shows that information processing often occurs at a low level of consciousness, and the human desire to understand and make sense of the world may even be processed at unconscious levels.

Equity or exchange theories fit our dominant economic system as hand in glove (see chapter 3 for more detailed discussion). These economic models of exchange argue that all human development is guided by relative costs and rewards. Implied is the assumption that relationships are only stable if the rewards exceed the costs. While it may be true that people strive for fair exchanges in social interactions, we have many examples of people who act unselfishly, without apparent personal advantage. Many parents provide a very selfless pattern of assistance to their children without apparent or expected reward. Equity theorists would say that many rewards are psychological, and parents obtain pleasure by seeing children grow into productive citizens. But often children bring grief to parents without changing parental love and affection. History reveals many cases

of absolute altruism where people sacrifice their lives to help others. Is such behavior also to be understood as some part of psychological reward and balance? Equity and exchange theories that integrate elements of other theories are very prominent in research on group conflict, bargaining, negotiation, and organizational behavior, and much of that we think of as applied social psychology. These theories have been strongly influenced by contemporary society. Whether there is a basic human need for equity (Hwang, 2006) must be explored in cross-cultural studies. The differences between interdependent and independent societies (Triandis, 1989) however suggest that social exchange is a culturally defined concept.

Finally, one other theory from social psychology has influenced thinking in modern psychology. Lewin (1935,1936) initially fled to the United States during the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany. He developed the concept of ”field”, by which he meant a person’s life space. Lewin suggested that all psychological happenings could be understood as a function of this life space. Life space is composed of the immediate situation and the environment. Behavior is the outcome of the interaction between these two components. From this conceptual viewpoint, life space consists of all time dimensions, the past, the present as well as the anticipated future. The emphasis on the immediate situation was a particular important emphasis as it was neglected in other theories.

In Lewin’s theory, we can again see the hand of history in social psychology. Since he came out of a society with brutal authoritarianism and with a strong emphasis on the hierarchical nature of leadership in the Nazi dictatorship, it is no wonder that one of the enduring research projects by Lewin was his study of the effect of authoritarian leadership or democratic leadership on productivity (Lewin, Lippit, and White, 1939). In general he found that democratic leadership was associated with greater individual contentment, more group focused behavior, and greater productivity.

5. Social psychological theories emerging from related fields

Early psychologists like William James (1890) and John Dewey (1922) sought to explain behavior as a function of habits. They assumed we develop predictable patterns of behavior by repeated practice. Some habits are collective referred to as the customs of society. In modern social psychology customs of society is defined by our social structure, i.e. how our culture and society demands certain behaviors and habitual forms of interaction. An early sociologist, Robert Park

(1922), advanced the concept of roles. We are in effect our roles in modern times as defined by the concept of impression management discussed in chapter 2 (Baumeister, 1982), and we come to know who we are through the roles we play in society. What are the roles of a teacher, a student, a mother, a manager of economic enterprises? We are our roles whether these refer to familial relationships, religious functions, or broader social roles of citizen and voter in society.

Linton (1936) advanced role theory further. In Linton's theory social interaction describes actors in society playing assigned roles as required by their culture. These role expectations are understood by everyone in society, and make social interaction predictable. We know a mother will act to protect and nurture children. This expectation is so strong that nearly all mothers comply, although in any society there are those who deviate from the norms. Role demands and expectations vary according to gender and also age. Females have different role demands than males, although much has changed in this regard over the last few decades. Growing maturity also assigns different roles depending on age. We expect children to play, but adults to make some contribution to life through employment or other achievements. Such age categories can divide our lives into stages of childhood, adolescence, young adults, mature adults, and older age. Each life stage describes a time of significant human development, and establishes timetables for accomplishments of learning or social interaction such as raising a family.

Role theory has also been developed within more narrow confines such as employment. Within employment groups roles are assigned based on specific task expectations by management. Furthermore, within task groups there are specific role expectations about abilities and task competency (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch, 1972; Berger, Wagner, & Zelditch, 1985). In general members of groups with valued competence are expected to make higher contributions to the common goals of the group.

In post modernism theory, social psychologists seek to go beyond contemporary group expectations, and take into account the effect on behavior of historical changes in the capitalist world. According to post modern theory people have gradually lost their ability to be autonomous, as their individual characteristics have been suppressed by the need for an efficient society (Murphy, 1989; Gergen, 1991). The rise of capitalism produced conformity pressures and people gradually

came to be viewed as commodities. Members of modern societies are primarily valued for their productive efforts, and not as persons with individual qualities. Personal relations become less important in such a society, and individuality gradually erodes as people seek to find a niche in an increasingly impersonal world. Conformity to clothing styles and food habits are manifestations of this historical era, together with social diversions that ensure that people do not think too much. Mindless television programs and styles of music perpetuate impersonal behavior. According to post modernism theory, dancing as a form of social interaction has changed drastically from couple symmetry, balance, and finesse to an activity that emphasize a collection of movements where individuals have only a vague idea about who the partner is in a sea of modulating individuals.

So the structural perspective adhered to by psychologists takes into account the influence of societal expectations on behavior, the power of role expectations and requirements, and the conformity pressures as a result of these demands. Theories about social structures form a necessary addition to those proposed by social psychologists from within the psychological field that seek to understand behavior primarily through an understanding of individual behavior in the group context. Obviously there are many habits and expectations, which produce culture, another word for commonly expected behaviors. These are largely formed in the mind as unstated assumptions about life, and are therefore most often carried out more or less automatically with little reflection. The structural perspective does not take into account possible interactions between the individual and role demands.

More recently, identity theory (Stryker and Statham, 1985) has placed emphasis on the reciprocal interaction between the individual and society. Identity theory argues that role theory does not provide the whole picture, as the individual has some power to select which role to play, and can therefore shape what type of interaction he/she has with others in society. Goffman originally (1959) took that view a step further by asserting that we are not assigned roles by culture, but often select one from several choices presented by society in order to achieve our own personal goals. The above ideas are reflections within sociology about the importance of cognition and personal volition, understood as part of social cognition in social psychology. Role and identity theories emphasize very important aspects of the human experience: Whatever we become psychologically

is circumscribed by role expectations. What is required by our culture is mediated further by gender and age and other cultural requirements. The above structural views differ therefore from those developed in social psychology by their emphasis on the social structure, and the power of individuals in shaping the many roles played in society. Individuals have some choice in negotiating role related behavior.

From these can we select any one theory that is best? The answer is that each represents some important view of social knowledge, and we would do best to take an eclectic approach that recognizes that fact. Each perspective is a window into social psychological reality and the "truth" of human behaviors is found in some integration of all these viewpoints, although such an integrated effort is still a task for the future.

6. Applied social psychology

As the student will observe, there are many applications of social psychology that can be useful as long as we keep in mind the aforementioned discussion. As has been shown, social psychology is interested in a whole range of social issues. What are the currently important social questions? As noted earlier a recent social issue of importance is the effect of violence in the media on aggression in society (Johnson, Cohen, Smailes, Kasen, & Brook, 2002). In the United States tens of thousands are murdered each year. Sometimes the debate on violence is simplified for instance by the argument of the gun lobby that guns do not kill people, but people kill people. Such reasoning is simplistic and overlooks the fact that the availability of guns is a stimulus that routinely leads to fatal encounters in a society where violence is taken for granted. The effect of television violence remains an important social issue, and applied research into this topic might produce useful and important social solutions.

Although it is difficult or impossible to create a pure science as observed in the natural sciences, many research findings can inform and produce useful applied knowledge. Research described in the following chapters, show that even studies not inspired by social concerns (in other words that fall within a pattern of "pure" research) contain useful results applicable to individual and group behavior. Research on attitudes may for instance be useful in marketing and in persuading public opinion. Of course, we have to be cognizant of the line between persuasion and manipulation, a line that is frequently violated in the advertising world of today. Moreover, research on prejudice may be useful in addressing and resolving

issues of ethnic and national hostility. Countries that have many minorities within its borders may benefit from an examination of the major theories on prejudice. These and other research findings will be discussed in following chapters.

6.1 Action research is applied psychology

Much of the aforementioned social psychological research addresses interest in theory development. Applied social psychology also addresses specific issues in the form of action-oriented research. Action research seeks to illuminate social issues from which one can infer the need for and how to improve the social condition. In Australia the Aboriginals is historically a displaced people. Larsen studied the presence of discrimination toward aborigines in the areas of employment, housing, and access to public facilities (1977b). The high levels of discrimination found in the research were published in a government report that subsequently led to a debate in parliament on the adequacy of the 1975 Civil Rights Act. Other research on land rights, and alcoholism also sought to improve the conditions of the aboriginal population and could therefore be considered applied research.

There are then the two major ways in which social psychology has made applied contributions to contemporary problems. The first contribution is in the building of social psychological theories that have applied implications. The second contribution is applying research directly to social problems, with the aim of understanding these problems and changing the underlying social condition.

7. Toward better theories in social psychology
Social psychology employs theories to specify the basic assumptions underlying research and topical interests. Theories identify the behavioral domains that are considered important for study, and therefore also what areas are considered irrelevant. There are scholars in the history of social psychology, who have dominated the debate about what is or is not important. Leaders in the profession decide what gets published, based on their own unstated assumptions. The professional hierarchy also acts as gatekeepers controlling access to funding, and without funding little work gets done. The end result is the social psychological literature presented on the following pages. The influence of a professional hierarchy is not necessarily a negative situation for social psychology as long as topics considered important for study are derived from open debate and not based on unstated assumptions. For example, is all conflict bad? Well, if it is in

your interest to maintain the social status quo, then conflict is indeed bad. But if your objective is to be critical of the status quo and you have a desire to improve the world, then conflict can be useful. Conflict can facilitate better thinking and improve functioning of groups and society.

Each theory has a unique perspective, but consists of man made concepts not necessarily related to any absolute truth about the human condition. The best path for all science is the eclectic, taking from each theory that which is valuable, that which experience has shown to be useful, and leaving behind dogma. Theories are merely tools that enable us to describe and analyze social behavior. A good theory will provide insights enabling us to have a better vision of reality, to understand the world better. Different theories often draw attention to different phenomena of the same topic or issue. Learning theory may emphasize the role of parents in the imitation of behavior, or in teachers providing rewards for achievements. Cognitive psychologists on the other hand seek to understand how people perceive and understand behavior, and social exchange theories focus on the profits of interaction. Each theory says something that is useful, and all are required to understand more of social reality.

7.1 The cultural relevance of theories developed in one culture to that of other cultures

Cultures differ in behaviors, beliefs, and values (Kitayama & Markus, 1994). These differences, however, are not absolute differences as there is also a common human experience. For example all cultures appreciate good parents, although they differ in what may be considered good child rearing. In some dogmatic societies good child rearing may involve ritualized behavior including praying several times a day toward Mecca, female circumcision, or in Western societies demonstrating other forms of social obedience like waving the national flag. In yet other cultures child rearing takes other paths, but at the end of the day there is a similar concern for the welfare of the child. In all cultures people display common human personality traits like shyness, only to varying degrees (John & Srivastava, 1999). Some cultures encourage modesty, others encourage boasting and self-enhancement, but in all societies some people display shyness. It is part of the human condition. Likewise in all cultures we can observe aggressive individuals. Some societies may encourage aggression, other cultures will discourage this behavior. Interpersonal violence remains partly a predisposition of all humanity because it has from an evolutionary standpoint

made a contribution to survival (Lore & Schultz, 1993).

Although the content of beliefs and attitudes may vary in different societies the process of forming these attitudes is similar. We obtain our attitudes through watching our parents and other significant people (learning by imitation), or through being rewarded or punished (reinforcement theories), or through other well known psychological principles. It is important to keep this distinction in mind. Our cultures define the content of our psychology, but our common human condition produces a similar process of acquiring this psychological knowledge or content. Therefore in evaluating the findings of this book in terms of relevance to different cultures, we must recognize that differences obviously exist in the frequency and intensity of certain behaviors. However, the presence of particular behaviors, or the process by which these behaviors are acquired may be very similar in all cultures.

7.2 From research to "real" life

An important issue in social psychology is whether findings found in the simulation of life in laboratories can in fact be relevant to real life experiences. Do people behave in similar ways in real life situations as under the contrived conditions set by the experimenter? For example, in the Milgram -Larsen experiments so-called "normal" people shocked innocent victims when the situation made such demands (discussed further in chapter 7). In evaluating this issue we have only to remember past wars, and the genocide of the holocaust where apparently normal people participated in atrocious acts of murdering millions of people. We don't have to revert to the example of in the concentration camps of the Second World War as similar atrocious acts are being committed as these words are written. What Milgram, and subsequently Larsen found seems to correspond very well with what is happening in the real world. All educated people are also aware of the war crimes committed during the American war on Vietnam. My Lai was not unique, except what happened there came to the knowledge of the world. This action was carried out by a group of "normal" American soldiers, who proceeded to murder women and children of an entire village. In more recent times we have the sad example of torture at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, and the disappearance of innocent people into the Black Hole of the U.S. prison at Guantanamo, Cuba. So we see we can apply many of the findings of the laboratory to real life, and such utility must be the overall criterion of a valuable research finding and theory in social psychology.

7.3 Building theories, pure versus applied research in social psychology

Pure research is carried out to meet the basic need of understanding our world, to pursue understanding of our existence. As Søren Kierkegaard said ”we live life forward, but understand it backward”. Some of our research findings may seem like common sense, but that is generally only after the fact, after we know the results of research. Of course many people are satisfied with simple or simplistic explanations, but for those Socrates said, ” The unexamined life is not worth living”!

So a great deal of our research is pure in the sense that we seek to illuminate the human condition, without necessarily having a practical goal in mind. Some of these findings may also, upon reflection, have practical consequences for many social issues. Is school integration helpful in overcoming racial bias? Well, some findings suggest that this depends on the conditions of contact between the racial groups (Allport, 1950; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2000). If these contacts facilitate more egalitarian relations and have the support of society, integration may indeed produce better relations. Research that seeks to understand such very specific social issues, may not make obvious contribution to building theory, but still have important practical applications.

Experimental research is primarily carried out to test hypotheses derived from one or more of the theories in social psychology. Theories are a collected set of principles that integrate findings in a logical and consistent manner. We develop such an integrated set of principles because we are interested in furthering our ability to predict and explain social behavior. With the hundreds of journals and thousands of investigators our research efforts would have no coherence if we did not have some theoretical framework with which to integrate our findings. Today we are literally drowning in our data, with tremendous resources being put to work to understand the human condition. Some of the research is of such importance that it can stand by itself, but the light it sheds on some aspect of social psychological theories justifies by far the great majority of current research projects. Theories are the principles, assumptions and hypotheses that explain our data; a good theory seeks to reduce the complexity of the research data, by placing the research within a common framework, much like classification seeks to reduce the complexity of seemingly different objects by searching for a common denominator which bring order and explain the results.

8. The functions of social psychological theories

One function of social psychological theories is to produce hypotheses that can be tested in a laboratory or real life situation, thus either verifying the theory or disconfirming the hypothesis. Hypotheses are specific predictions that we make on the relationship between variables and behavior, e.g. do children learn to be aggressive by watching violence in the media as discussed previously in this chapter (Johnson et al, 2002). This hypothesis is in turn based on social learning theory that children learn by imitation. From this general hypothesis we can make more specific predictions. Is aggression facilitated if the model displaying aggression on television receives social approval like that accorded "heroes" in war films, or to police when subduing criminals? Another hypothesis might assert that television violence will produce less aggression if the person who models the behavior is punished? Such research would then shed light on social learning theory (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963), i.e. that we learn by imitating models. Social learning theory contains important ideas for a society that wants to reduce violence.

Research findings determine what may be considered a "good" or "bad" theory. Does the theory help integrate related research data and results? Can the theory produce testable hypotheses that can be examined in the laboratory or in real life situations? A theory is not useful if it cannot be confirmed or disconfirmed. Is the theory heuristic in the sense that it produces a wealth of exploratory studies? The utility of a theory is demonstrated when many researchers become interested in the same problems. However, dominant research paradigms also indicate conformity to professional norms and expectations reflecting a desire to be published in journals and receive research funding. At the end of the day a theory's utility must be established by its applications to the human condition. What recommendations can we make to reduce violence and promote cooperation among ethnic groups? What specific steps can be recommended based on these integrated ideas that we call a theory in social psychology?

So to summarize, the function of theories is to step by step develop principles that explain significant social behavior. Social psychologists are not looking for some overriding philosophical principle that explains all life, like pleasure seeking or the denial of desire. The primary function of theories is to direct research, to offer a framework to integrate the results, and to explain social phenomena. Theories may constantly suggest new hypotheses, which can either be confirmed or disconfirmed thus advancing our knowledge of human behavior. For many keen

social psychologists theories provide the underpinnings of their research programs.

Theories give meaning to what might otherwise be a chaotic and bewildering set of empirical data. The hundreds of studies produced yearly can be brought together and given meaning when analyzed within a theoretical framework. The use of meta-analysis is a step toward theoretical integration. Finally, theories not only explain social behavior, but also help to predict social behavior. The complexity of human behavior makes prediction of behavior a goal for the future. We still have much to do before our science has matured to the level where we can say with assurance that these scientific criteria have been met.

8.1 Applications of social psychology to contemporary society
In this chapter we have observed examples of some applications of social psychological research to problems of society. Each of the chapters that follow present another set of applications. Banduara's social learning theory showed how "pure" research can have applications to violence. The wars of the past century motivated much social psychological research including Lewin's concern about democratic leadership and the advantages of consensual governance. The horrors of genocidal behaviors motivated Milgram's significant research into violence as "normal" behavior. The questioning of authority that followed the war on Vietnam also produced a revolution of thinking on gender related issues. Gender related research contributed to many changes in social policy, and today women expect equal treatment in education and on the job. Although significant progress has been made in treating the sexes equally in employment, this does not hold true for equal pay for equal work. Nevertheless, both issue oriented and "pure" research has produced many findings which if applied could improve life and society.

There are also specific fields within social psychology that can be considered applied. Generally the fields of organizational or industrial psychology are domains devoted to improving efficiency and motivation within social organizations. Industrial psychology deals with many varying issues including assessments of jobs and job performance. How do we determine aptitudes, and how do we go about finding the right people for a given profession? Other practical issues are those related to training employees. Organizational and industrial psychology examines the problems of learning, how the transfer of learning takes place, and the adequacy of various learning methods. Other

important issues include job satisfaction and worker commitment. Under what conditions will the worker make his best efforts, what needs must be fulfilled by the social organizations to produce the best efforts. Also what work environment is related to productivity? Labor unrest generally derives from poor or insensitive working conditions, so a smart manager would also be aware of employee morale, and take steps to meet needs that go beyond survival and minimum wage. Findings from social psychology have direct application. How are values and attitudes related to job satisfaction? What basic motivational theories have utility to the organizational setting? Are these theories limited by culture or are they of general utility in the increasing global community?

8.2 Where are social psychologists employed?

For students interested in a career in social psychology it may be of interest to see where our colleagues are employed. The vast majority of those who obtain PhD's in North America and Europe are employed in the academic field (75 percent), although some 17 percent find employment in business or government (Lippa, R.A., 1994). Students who have completed master degrees are also working in these and other fields, including social clinics, health agencies, and probation departments. The world is not getting less complicated, so it may be expected that there will be a need for social psychologists as long as they can produce ideas useful to the larger society, and provide training leading to improvement in social organizations. Currently we see more concern about the health of the world environmental system, where social psychologists may produce useful consultations to overcome denial, and other defense mechanisms which retard much needed reform. Directly related to that issue is the growing field of health psychology. How to create a social environment that is productive of maximum health? That is an issue of the social environment, as well as other health obstructions, like how to help people to quit smoking.

Beyond these major fields there is also the use of the specific skills of the social psychologists. For example an important field is opinion research since that is directly linked to behavior. How do we go about completing useful market research, how can we poll opinion in society so the results represent genuine and informed public opinion (as contrasted with manipulated views)? How can we evaluate progress in government functioning, and the effect of social change derived from these programs?

These are all issues to which social psychologists can make contributions with

appropriate training and social support. The future is exciting, and especially for the keen students of social psychology who want to make a contribution and carve out a niche for themselves in improving society.

Summary

This chapter outlined the domain, methods, and major issues of the field of social psychology. A consistent thread running through this discussion is that social psychology is actually history. From the earliest thinkers to the present, our field reflects the major concerns of our times. The parent disciplines are psychology and sociology, although social psychology, as an integrating discipline has also been influenced by other social sciences. The major social psychological theories reflect history and our theoretical debt to those who came before. Contributing ideas include those that are derived from learning theories, e.g. classical and operant learning with a special emphasis on imitation or observational learning. The second theoretical perspective is social cognition based on the assumption that human beings have a need for cognitive consistency and balance and that this requirement motivates behavior. A third perspective is information processing in which people are seen as having a need to understand the world. Finally, the chapter examined equity and exchange theories that reflect the dominant economic system in the world. Equity and exchange theories propose that human interaction involves costs, rewards and profits to the participants.

What is the place of social psychology? There are many social sciences seeking to explain human behavior. Therefore only an eclectic viewpoint is useful eventually leading to more accurate views about human behavior from a cross-cultural perspective. We can learn from research conducted in other societies since after all, people from all cultures share common demands of the human condition. In Western societies much of the focus has been on mediating variables of beliefs and values used to explain a variety of behaviors like aggression and conformity. Eastern societies display more interdependence affecting their psychological responses.

Social psychology is history, because the historical experiences of individual researchers, as well as of historical changes in society, have both to a large extent determined the focus and content of our studies. Like other disciplines our work reflects what is considered urgent in society, although there is also the influence of powerful individuals who through control of funds and publication access define what is important. All sciences are important in explaining human

behavior. Likewise all theories within social psychology are salient for an eclective perspective and integrated theory. Culture also provides a framework for understanding behavior, although there is much to the human experience that is common in all cultures. Stimulus response theory helps in providing an overall theoretical framework since all behavior is elicited by social stimuli that include mediating variables like beliefs and attitudes, resulting in actual behaviors produced by the stimuli and mediating variable. This chapter recognizes the contributions of the related fields, and notes that social psychology is the integrating field which has its utility in combining the findings and overlap from these fields.

The methods of social psychology include correlational techniques that the researcher employs to investigate how variables co-vary. Is there an association between smoking and cancer? Correlational work typically uses surveys in either written form or in interviews. The chapter also discusses common problems in surveys that affect the truthfulness of the responses. These problems of validity show that social desirability may confound the results, and motivate socially acceptable responses. Interpretation of survey data must be cautious as related words may have very different social meanings to our respondents, and the order of questions in the survey affect the results. What precedes a question may influence the responses that follow. Problems in interviews show that the interviewer may have subtle, yet powerful effects through nonverbal behavior like smiling or nodding at different times. This evidently reinforces certain responses and therefore presents a problem of validity.

The importance of representative sampling is stressed for all methods used in social psychology. Random sampling is the only scientific method. Using this scientific procedure requires that each member of the population of interest have an equal and independent chance of appearing in the sample. Biased sampling and the refusal to participate have effects that are not easily understood.

The majority of social psychologists employ the experimental method, exclusively or in combination with survey efforts. In the research situation the experimenter seeks to control some aspect of a simulated environment in order to study the effects of independent variables on dependent variables. This procedure require the use of two groups from the same population, one of which is given some experimental treatment (like observing violence in the media), and then compared, to a control group which does not get any treatment. The overall intent

is to observe if the treatment had an effect on the dependent variable. As shown televised violence (the independent variable) did that have an effect on increased aggression (the dependent variable). Bias that occurs in the experimental situation often results from the demand characteristics of the experiment. Here too the experimenter can influence the outcome through subtle yet powerful expectations and reinforcement.

A very important issue in social psychology is that of ethics. The Milgram experiments and those that followed created a large debate in psychology about the possible effects of experimentation on the participating subjects. This controversial issue produced many changes that have influenced the content and direction of investigations of social psychology. Subsequent research on participating subjects however showed that subjects' self concept was not damaged by participation, and the ethical debate might have been overblown. The ethical changes include informed consent for participation, and limitations on deceit used by the experimenter. In most cases however, the participant is well protected if assured anonymity or confidentiality, both essential in order to obtain valid results. As social psychologists we have an obligation to be truthful with society, in turn society has an obligation to support academic freedom in order to allow investigators to pursue useful information.

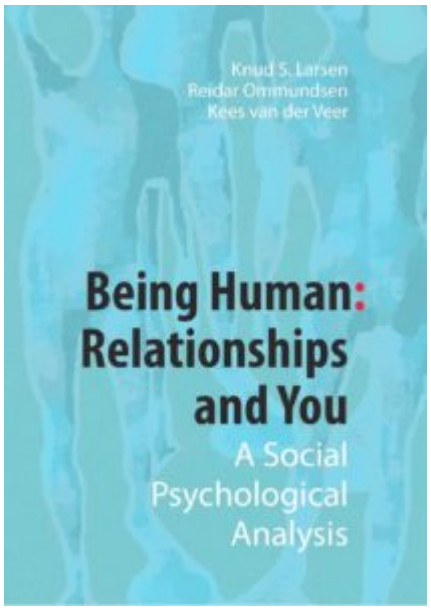
Ideology and human values play important roles in providing frameworks for social psychology. While psychology aims at being an objective natural science, human values produce a discipline that is circumscribed by the prevailing ideologies and values. Social psychology is history that can provide useful information. In disseminating results from social psychological research we can raise human consciousness, and provide practical applications to social problems. Many of the major research thrusts in social psychology relate to important events in society including the women's movement and studies of gender. The internal debate we had on ethics also influences research, and the values expressed by such investigations. There are always unstated assumptions involved in all human endeavors including research. The labels used by social psychologists in describing behavior are but a reflection of the author's own unstated views of the behavior being considered. What for example is the ideal human condition? Maslow's concept of the self-actualized person was developed from the comfort of middle class society that assumed that people had the luxury of pursuing fulfillment rather than struggle for survival. Dominant theories in

psychology also reflect many unstated assumptions about human values and ideology. There are unstated assumptions understood by everyone, but never discussed.

We build theories because of fundamental human needs to understand the human condition partly reflected in so-called pure research, which does not necessarily have practical goals in mind. But theories are also useful in generating hypotheses that may shed light on the validity of concepts. A good theory helps reduce the complexity of our findings which otherwise is overwhelming in quantity. Whether a theory is good or bad depends on whether it helps in answering important questions. Is it heuristic and does it generate useful research? Does it have applications to the human condition? If the theory helps direct research and offers a framework for understanding human phenomena, then it is considered a good theory

A major value of social psychology is the application of its findings to pressing social issues. In applied psychology we seek solutions to problems of society like violence, or improvement in the work of important social organizations. Applied social psychology aims to improve the life of individuals and the functioning of society. As the world is becoming increasingly complex there will be employment for social psychologists for the foreseeable future assisting society in overcoming salient problems, and facilitating solutions.

Being Human. Chapter 2. Cultural And Social Dimensions Of The Self



A group of international students is sitting around the dinner table discussing the television menu for the evening. A Norwegian woman student says, “let’s watch the soap, exciting things are happening to the relationships in the show”. A student from Asia disagrees since soaps “show disrespect for social values and relationships”. Someone from the States suggests watching a boxing match since that “demonstrates personal courage and achievement of the up and coming athletes”. The Asian student replies that rather than boxing, watching a team sport like soccer is more interesting. Another supporter of the soap option however, suggests that soap dramas are much more exciting as they deal with relationships, and “that is all there really is to life”.

Cultural and gender stereotypes that are parodied above are addressed in this chapter. Our social selves are partially defined by gender and cultural values, and much else. How do we come to be who we are? How is the self formed and what function does it play in the psychological economy of the individual? Are we motivated to behave in certain ways depending on our social selves? What is the route to well-being; does it help to have illusions about life? Why do we spend so much time and effort trying to impress others, and is impression management adaptable? These and many other issues are discussed in this chapter.

Who we are and where we come from has engaged the attention of philosophers and psychologists for generations. In more recent times the methods of experimental social psychology have been employed in the quest to understand the self and its dominant attributes. The self is defined as a set of beliefs we hold about our attributes and ourselves. We think of ourselves in terms of important personal characteristics like our career choice, our level of competence, and our plans for the future. The latter defines our possible selves. The continuity we feel in life is due to the self-concept. Similarity in personality with siblings, and especially identical twins, is based on common biological heritability that also contributes to self-hood.

Everything important about our lives, our family relationships, our development, the cultural and social context of our lives, all contribute to the topic of this chapter. Self-knowledge provides direction and order in our lives. Since we all fall

short in goal attainment, there is a balance between flaws and self-efficacy. These discrepancies directly impact how we feel about ourselves, our self-esteem. Since feelings of self-esteem are also bound up with how others think about us, we perform in the great theater that is life, playing out roles of self-presentation. We want to convince others of our positive qualities and therefore have strong motives to manage the impression we make. We know how to react appropriately to varying situational demands because culture creates the parameters of appropriate conduct.

1. The beginnings of the social self

Self-awareness begins early in life. By about nine months of age the average child begins to differentiate the self from others (Harter, 1983). At the age of 18 months the typical child will have a developed sense of self-awareness such as reacting more to pictures of themselves than to those of unrelated people. Gradually as our self-knowledge grows, the primitive sense of self takes on other attributes. Our environment may nurture positive self-attributes leading to feelings of competence or self-efficacy. Others not so fortunate live in restrictive environments that place early limits on what is considered possible, and therefore affect plans for career and development. We are not the only species to demonstrate self-awareness (Gallup, 1977; 1997). The experimenter initially placed a mirror in the cage of chimpanzees until it became a familiar object. Afterwards the experimenter placed an odorless red dye on the animals' ear or brow. The animals recognized that something had changed and responded with immediately touching the area dyed. Studies with dolphins and other animals demonstrate a similar pattern of self-recognition (Mitchell, 2003).

1.1 Self-knowledge

Using similar techniques with toddlers, researchers found that self-recognition is present at around age two (Lewis, 1997; Povinelli, Landau, & Perrilloux, 1996). Over time the child begins to incorporate psychological attributes including more complex feelings and thoughts. Our social self is inseparable from how we are evaluated by others (Hart & Damon, 1986). As we develop more complex beliefs and feelings about the self, we also begin to project ourselves to some degree into the future. From these initial experiences with the family, educational system, and the broader culture the social self gradually emerges. The self-concept is the knowledge we have of ourselves, that we exist separately from others, and have our own unique properties. As part of our self-knowledge we develop a belief

system that governs behavior. Do we live in a world of chaos or order? Do we believe we can accomplish important goals? Can other people be trusted? Is it a dog-eats-dog world, or are there valid altruistic behaviors. This complex web of beliefs in turn contributes to whether we approach or avoid others, our feelings of self-esteem, and whether we have a concept of what we could become in the future, a possible self. In this process of maturation children gradually place less emphasis on concrete physical descriptions of the self, and place more emphasis on complex psychological states including thoughts, feelings, and the evaluations of others (Harter, 2003; Hart & Damon, 1986).

1.2 Self-esteem

The second aspect of the self-concept consists of our self-evaluations or self-esteem. Self-esteem is evaluative based on very basic judgments of personal morality, and whether in our own eyes we are satisfied or dissatisfied with our performance. Global self-esteem can be measured by surveys and is related to our need for approval (e.g. Larsen, 1969). The lower our self-esteem the more we have a need for affirmation and approval by others and society. High self- esteem on the other hand is associated with setting appropriate goals, using feedback from others to progress, and enjoying positive experiences to the fullest extent possible (Wood, Heimpel, Michel, 2003). When experiencing rejection or frustration, those with high self-esteem will find a silver lining. High self-esteem is adaptable and is associated with goal persistence and the ability when frustrated to envision alternative goals (Sommer & Baumeister, 2002). High self-esteem people will look at the past through rose-colored glasses, and this selective positive memory bias may in turn support higher self-esteem (Christensen, Wood, & Barrett, 2003).

On the other hand those people with low self-esteem not only think poorly of themselves, but the negative self-conceptions have other unfortunate consequences. Low self-esteem persons are more pessimistic about the future, tend to obsess about their negative moods, are more concerned about the opinions of others, and have higher needs for approval (Heimpel, Wood, Marshall, & Brown, 2002). Low self-esteem is also reflected in negative estimations of competence or self-efficacy, and in self-loathing. On the other hand, those with positive feelings toward the self, like themselves and have feelings of competence (Tafarodi, Marshall, & Milne, 2003). As we shall see throughout this chapter and what follows, the cultural context matters. Members of Asian cultures, for

example, are less self-enhancing in explicit ways, but enhance more in implicit ways (Koole, Dijksterhuis, & Van Knippenberg, 2001).

2. Building blocks of the emerging self

Children are not truly a tabula rasa when entering the world. Scientists have for some time found traits that seem to be universal in all cultures. Traits typically describe cross-situational consistency; i.e., the consistent way people act, think or feel despite changing circumstances. Researchers point to five traits as basic to our self-understanding. These characteristics include relative openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, also known as the Big Five (Costa & McCrae, 1995; John & Srivastava, 1999).

People use these basic traits in describing themselves, and in judging other people. The descriptions of others tend to be accurate in the sense that they match self-descriptions (Funder, 1995; John & Robins, 1993; Watson, 1989). Many psychologists believe that the Big Five traits are the basic building blocks of personality. Is there a biological basis for these fundamental traits? The evidence is pointing in that direction since people from a variety of countries and cultures use these same traits in describing the self and other people (Buss, 1999).

2.1 The heritability of personality traits

Evidence has been produced that supports at least the partial heritability of personality traits (Plomin & Caspi, 1998). Studies of identical and fraternal twins show conclusively that trait similarity is based on shared genes. For example, studies of the personalities of identical twins show a greater similarity in traits compared to fraternal twins. Those trait similarities are reliable even when identical twins are reared apart, strongly suggesting a genetic component to some aspects of personality (Loehlin, 1992).

Often traits found early in development are consistent over the lifespan. Longitudinal studies have shown that children identified as shy at nine months develop elevated levels of stress hormone cortisol associated with fear (Kagan, 1989). Neuroticism is associated with a heightened activation of the autonomic nervous system involved in subjective stress (Zuckerman, 1996). On the positive side extraversion is related to higher levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine that is in turn predictive of approach related behaviors (DePue, 1995). Clearly the self cannot be understood apart from our biological inheritance. People react consistently to the varying manifestations of these traits. These reactions in turn

play a significant role in how we develop as persons and how we develop more complex self-identities (Malatesta, 1990).

2.2 Genetics and social behavior

The relationship of genetics to complex social behavior is an exiting new frontier. Social behavior is complex and both genes and the social environment play a role. Some genes require specific environments to have an effect on behavior so interactions matter. In a study on violence (Caspi, McClay, Moffitt, Mill, Martin, & Craig, 2002) the researchers tested for the presence of the Monoamine oxidase A gene responsible for metabolizing neurotransmitters in the brain, and for promoting smooth communication between the neurons. The absence of the gene by itself had little effect. However, when combined with abuse and maltreatment the men in the study were three times as likely to have been convicted of violent crimes by age 26. Low levels or absence of the MAOA gene combined with maltreatment developed anti-social behavior in 85 percent of the boys. As we begin to see the complex interaction between our biological inheritance and complexities of the social context the interdependence of both is clear. Many of these traits were adaptive in response to evolutionary requirements. As society has also evolved many of these traits are no longer functional. Being a little fearful and neurotic might have been very functional in the days of saber tooth tigers, but create interpersonal problems for those who have inherited an excess of these traits today.

3. The nature of the self-concept: the hard and easy problem

William James (1890) is today recognized as a founder of American Psychology. In his early writings he described the essential duality of the self-concept. The first aspect of the self-concept is composed of all the thoughts and beliefs we hold about our self, also called the "known self" or "me". The second component of the self is the "knower". The "knower" refers to the observatory function of the self, or now more commonly called self-awareness. We come to know who we are by becoming aware and thinking about ourselves.

Today the aspect of the self defined as the self-concept or "me "is gradually being understood through experimentation. The self-concept and its relationship to brain functions is what might be called the "easy" problem. The hard problem that remains is somewhat of a mystery, is what is called the "knower". Those with religious inclinations would refer to the "knower" as the immaterial soul. The scientist does not find that construct convincing as the soul construct explains

everything and in reality nothing. The soul definition is a form of nominalism that simply puts a label or name to a process, and we do not advance much in our understanding by just placing another label on the "knower".

3.1 The easy and the hard problem in self-definition: Me versus the knower
Freud wrote a great deal about conscious and unconscious processes. Much of our thinking is in fact accessible to our awareness. We make plans for the future, decide on what to have for dinner, save up for children's college. These and much more are conscious in the sense that they are accessible thoughts that we can think about and evaluate. Other processes like the functions of the autonomic nervous system are largely unconscious. We know they are present in the body, but they are generally not available to the reasoning or planning functions of the brain.

The hard problem is trying to understand why it feels like we have a conscious process to begin with, that we are aware of a first person very subjective experience, the executive "I" or the decision maker (Pinker, 2007). The scientist finds it difficult to explain how this subjective feeling of the self arises from neural computations in the brain. Do you believe that all our joys and pain can be reduced to neurological activity in the brain? The hard problem is: does consciousness exist in an ethereal soul or is consciousness purely a brain function defined as the activity of the brain.

Today some cognitive neuroscientists claim that by using MRI we can practically read people's thoughts from blood flow in the brain**.** Through electrical stimulation of certain areas of the brain we can cause hallucination such as hearing music played long ago, or experiencing childhood memories. Anti-depressants like Prozac can profoundly affect feelings and thoughts. Also, whenever the brain function ceases so far as we can see our consciousness comes to an end. No reliable reports of contacts with the dead have been produced. Even near death experiences where the soul purportedly departs the body only to return are probably caused by oxygen starvation of the eyes and brain. Some Swiss neuroscientists (Pinker, 2007) have managed to turn out-of-body experiences off and on by stimulating the part of the brain overlapping vision and bodily sensations. The fact that all observable psychological activity has a physiological concomitant lends little support for a soul construct.

Many visions or "miracles can be attributed to how the brain developed to meet

survival needs. It appears, for example, that we posses a template for the recognition of faces in a variety of objects. Some years ago a woman made herself a cheese sandwich and experienced a vision, as she perceived the Virgin Mary in the brown skillet marks. She eventually sold the sandwich on eBay for $28000.00 probably to someone who wanted a vicarious vision. In another case people saw a three dimensional face on the surface of Mars after an orbiter captured images from the Cydonia region of Mars. That image ignited enthusiasm, and encouraged conspiracy theories about denial of life on our sister planet. All of us have had the experience of gazing into the sky and finding faces in the moving clouds. These experiences appear to be functions of three regions of the temporal lobe of the brain that is involved in the recognition of faces. The tendency to see faces is a result of neural architecture with obvious evolutionary advantages (Svoboda, 2007) In our distant past some faces or images should be avoided like that of the saber tooth tiger; others should be approached like that of family or beneficent higher powers.

The materialist explanation is advanced by the argument that the "knower" or "executive I" is an illusion. From this perspective consciousness consists of numerous or even an overwhelming amount of external events that compete for attention. As an evolutionary adaptation the brain developed decision-making functions to discriminate between important and non-essential input. Subsequently the brain rationalizes the outcome after it has occurred giving us the impression that someone was in charge. Information overload requires the decision making function of the self, and those who developed better neural webs were the ones who survived. Pinker believes that the "knower" is nothing more than "executive summaries of the events and states that are most relevant to updating an understanding of the world and figuring out what to do next" (p.65).

Damasio (2007) argues that self-awareness is a function of evolutionary biology and psychology. Initially gene networks organized themselves to evolve complex organisms with brains. Further evolution enriched the complexity of brains by developing sensory and motor maps to represent the environmental context. Eventually with more evolutionary complexity different parts of the brain developed the ability to communicate, and generate sophisticated maps of the organism interacting with the environment. From this natural knowledge the basic self emerges, and the brain's sensory-motor maps change from non conscious mental patterns to conscious mental images. Scientists are gradually

developing the ability to find neural correlates of conscious activity of the self.

However, what of the inner experience we called the hard problem? Some would simply call it information processing thereby making it an “easy” problem. Others would say that since there is no test that could distinguish between a well-designed robot, and a human, we should just let the problem go away as irrelevant (Dennett, 2007). Still others will say that our failure to understand the hard problem is a function of the limitation of our brain. After all we have many other limitations like failing to grasp the existence of spheres greater than three. Brain limitations include the difficulty of understanding how stimuli from the outside produce subjective feelings on the inside.

Many fear the loss of a moral perspective if we come to believe in a material self. After all if we do not have an immortal soul why worry about salvation in an unseen world to come? Others would argue that believing in the materialist self would increase empathy as we are all in the same existential boat. To be aware of how temporary life and consciousness is should give poignant meaning to all life and sympathy for all who struggle with the same reality. Keep in mind that belief in the immortal soul did not prevent believers from engaging in gross defiance of morality by committing genocide and cruelty. The crusades conquered land with great cruelty still remembered by Muslim zealots today. In the dark ages half a million women were burned at the state by the inquisition in an attempt to save their immortal souls. The destruction of 9/11 and what followed was largely motivated by religious morality on both sides including the belief in the immortal soul. Religious ideology often provides heavenly rewards for killing and destruction. Perhaps we would all be better off believing in a fragile and temporary existence.

3.2 The hard problem remains

At the end of the day the hard problem remains unsolved. It seems particularly difficult to understand deep feelings as solely a consequence of brain activity. Some of us have experienced awe in the presence of the truly noble and good. How can one attribute these feelings as an interpretive consequence of brain activity? The sense of unspeakable joy that comes in the wake of love, the truly altruistic behavior of others resonates in our minds in ways not easily understood by the material self. The cynic can of course reduce altruism to reward expectations, but the “knower” knows the difference. The feelings of grandeur in the presence of nature, the emotions experienced from certain types of music are

examples of the presence of a “knower”. The drumbeats of the Nazi’s reflect the robotic self that resonates with martial spirit and aggression and self-aggrandizement. However, music may also cause meditation and bring to us harmony and peace. Understanding meditative feelings, altruism, and the noble as brain functions remains a hard problem.

Perhaps viewing consciousness from the perspective of brain functioning is good science, but philosophically unsound? Science has made great progress in breaking objects into atomic and subatomic particles. Is there a bias in that perspective? Are there other routes to the factual and truth? At least we know that the whole is always more than the sum of its parts. Human attributes create questions as many people feel compassion towards others. Where does that come from? If we can’t find the answer in neurons firing, then is consciousness a primary principle? Are we really illusions caused by 100 billion simmering neurons? What is the locus for experiencing ideas and intentions temporally? Do we perceive time because it is separate from us? Some parts of the self remain for life, we can recognize our basic components, but we are also aware of time and change. If we were caught up in time could we perceive it? These and many other issues remain for the most intriguing and fundamental issue of human existence.

There is a mysterious aspect to life that even the greatest minds cannot understand. Einstein too was in a state of awe by what he saw as a causal and ordered nature. Perhaps he was affected by the certainty of the subjective “I” when he wrote his credo ” The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion that stands at the cradle of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead, a snuffed-out candle. To sense that behind anything that can be experienced there is something that our minds can not grasps, whose beauty and sublimity reaches us only indirectly: this is religiousness. In this sense, and in this sense only, I am a devoutly religious man” (Isaacson, 2007). Did Einstein address the common human limitation of our brains? Did he attribute religiousness to our inability to understand what is after all natural stimuli? Or did Einstein acknowledge with certainty that the hard problem remains, and will not easily yield a solution.

4. The development of the Social Self

How do we come to know who we are? The sources of the self-knowledge are primarily other people, although we can also learn by observing our own

behavior, and by thinking about ourselves. Socialization is the context in which we form our self-attributes. It is through family and other socialization agents that we learn about our level of competence, success in achieving important goals, and whether we are evaluated positively. From that we derive self-esteem. Through socialization we acquire our standards for behavior, and we incorporate the values of our family and culture. The way we are consistently treated in early socialization forms the core of what we come to believe about ourselves that guides us throughout life.

Cooley (1902) developed a concept called the "looking glass self". From his perspective we learn about ourselves through the reactions of other people. This is called reflected appraisals. Those who experience constant praise come to believe they are valuable; those who experience maltreatment grow up thinking their lives are worthless. So feedback from others is a basic key to understanding the social self. The importance can be seen in a study on parental perceptions and children's self-perceptions (Felson & Reed, 1986). In general there is close similarity between parent's beliefs about children's abilities, and the children's self-concept.

Later of course, we encounter peers and these have profound importance during adolescence (Leary, Cottrell, & Phillips, 2001). Most of us know intuitively our social standing from the preferences of our peers. The order in which children are chosen for athletic teams tells a lot about the person's perceived contribution to a team, and value to his peers. Whether a girl gets asked out for dates also tells her a great deal about how peers perceive her in terms of physical attractiveness and her personality. Teachers give feedback on school performance that is either encouraging or discouraging in competitive educational environments. Competitive educational experiences using the normal curve for grading feedback do not foster growth in all children. Some children will always occupy low or failing comparative standing. These early experiences contribute to whether the individual's possible self is optimistic or pessimistic. If we are encouraged in childhood and adolescence we form plans about what we can become, what contribution we can make to society, and how we can find self-fulfillment. We have more to say about self and motivation in section 9.

4.1 Forming the possible self through family socialization

A family has influence not only through parental guidance, but also through relationships formed with siblings. In societies with scarce resources, sibling

conflict is frequent and violent. Human history bears witness to violent outcomes from Cain and Abel to current news stories. Even very young children engage in frequent conflict (Dunn & Munn, 1985). Birth order matters because children learn to adjust to certain niches in the family that is functional and rewarding. Older siblings tend to be more dominant and assertive as well as more achievement oriented and conscientious (Sulloway, 1996; 2001). The larger size of older siblings would naturally make them more dominant, and at the same time give them a greater share of responsibility to look after the younger sibling.

On the other hand, younger siblings tend to be more open to new ideas, and experiment with novel thoughts. In Suloway's study of thousands of scientists, younger siblings were more open to novelty and thinking outside the box. On the negative side, they were also more likely to endorse pseudoscientific ideas like phrenology. Later born scientists possessed the consistency to make many scientific discoveries, whereas younger siblings were risk takers traveling far away in search of novel ideas. Darwin, for example, was the fifth sibling in his family, and developed a theory that changed physical and social science forever. He risked a great deal in his search for scientific data, traveling to unknown parts of the world to collect information in support of evolution, a theory that challenged the very fabric of our religiously founded beliefs about the origin of man.

4.2 The social self and group membership

Our social identity becomes part of our self-concept as we learn the values associated with the group membership, and its emotional significance in our lives (Tajfel, 1981). Much work has been completed in recent decades that show that mere membership even in meaningless groups attaches profound significance to behavior and self-conception (e.g. Doise, Dann, Gouge, Larsen, & Ostell, 1972). Since membership in nonsensical groups produces significant influence on behavior, how much more powerful is the influence of group identity if based on memberships in real social groups that produce attitudinal reactions by society? Members of minority groups often have confusing demands made by membership in both the minority and in coping with the larger society (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997). Some minorities develop bicultural competence and identity; others are assimilated into the dominant culture, and yet others are marginalized from both societies (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000; Phinney, 1991).

Minority status has important consequences for the self-concept and esteem. As socialization takes place, the individual often engages in self-stereotyping identifying with the attributes thought positive in the group (Biernat, Vescio, & Green, 1996). Bicultural identification seems to produce the best results for self-esteem (Phinney, 1991). High self-esteem in minorities is a function of strong ethnic identity combined with positive attitudes toward the mainstream culture. It stands to reason that those with bicultural identities and competence will experience life as more rewarding, and will function more successfully in society.

*4.3 Culture as a source of the self-concep*t

In chapter 1 we introduced the concept of independent and interdependent cultures. It is now time to apply the concept to the formation of the social self. We shall see that this cultural difference has applications throughout this chapter and in the chapters that follow. Culture has profound effects in socializing people. It produces predictable differences in self-concepts between members of different cultures. Western societies found in North America and Europe have inculcated social values significant to adaptation and survival in the capitalist model. The term "rugged individualism" points to a person who is first and foremost independent, and able to cope with the hazards of life in early United States. In this cultural environment the values of individual rights and freedoms were promoted at least formally. Each man was a king in his own house, and society was preoccupied with individual self-actualization.

In Asian societies, on the other hand, we have ancient cultures that had to adapt to high levels of physical density. Physical density is not experienced as crowding the way it would be experienced in the west, because of the highly developed structures of courtesy that meet the need for personal space and privacy. These cultural differences have been summarized in the terms "independent " and "interdependent" societies introduced in chapter 1. Hall (1976) thought of independent societies, as "low-context cultures" where social roles while not unimportant mattered less. Therefore a person from independent cultures would more or less act the same regardless of the changing context of behavior or the situation. In interdependent cultures on the other hand, the social context matters a great deal, and the individual's behavior will change dependent on the specific role played by the participant. In interdependent cultures the self would differ depending on role expectation. The person would behave differentially depending on whether the behavior involves a relationship with parents, peers, or

colleagues. As we shall see, in western societies the bias toward independence leads to attribution errors where we underestimate the influence of the situation, and attribute behavior primarily to individual traits.

In recent years social psychologists have carried out many cross-cultural studies on how motivations, emotions, and behaviors are shaped by cultural conceptions of the self. (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Rhee, Uleman, & Roman, 1995; Triandis, 1995). From this accumulated research the independent cultures are identified primarily in the West. In these societies the self is seen as autonomous, as distinct and separate from other members of society. The focus of the independent self is on what makes the self distinctive or different from others. Consequently explanations for behavior are sought within the individual's personality. Not only is independence a fundamental value, but also westerners believe that the main object of socialization is to create independent children (Kitayama, 1992). The self is therefore described as composed of individual attributes (Trafimow, Triandis, & Goto, 1991). Achievements are seen as primarily the result of individual and distinctive efforts, where family or society played at best peripheral roles.

In the interdependent cultures of Asia and countries in the developing world the self is perceived as part of the larger social context. The self is not construed apart from other people, but rather as connected to family and larger social organizations. The willingness of people to go on suicide missions like the kamikaze pilots of Japan is related to the interdependent self-construal where country and emperor are part of the self. Western combatants may also fight with great courage, however that is best elicited when there is some possibility if not probability of survival. In interdependent societies the self is completely embedded in the roles and duties of social relationships. Culture therefore determines to a large extent self-knowledge and self-esteem, as well as self-presentations and impression management. The self is connected to the attributes of others, is not seen as distinctive, but associated with common traits (Bochner, 1994). These cultural differences are thought to profoundly affect how individuals think about themselves, how they relate to others in society, and what motivates their behavior (Markus & Kitayama, 1994).

Studies have shown that Americans achieve primarily for personal reasons, whereas those from interdependent societies strive to achieve group goals (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). It is the personal nature of tasks and objectives that motivate behavior in the West, whereas Asian students are motivated more by

group goals. Consequently students in the West are more likely to select careers or tasks in which they have experienced previous competence or which had been positive and rewarding in the past. The career choices of Asians on the other hand are not based on such personal expectations or prior performance (Oishi & Diener, 2003).

As we can imagine, these cultural differences in self-construal also affect how we organize information in memory (Woike, Gershkovich, Piorkowski, & Polo, 1999). People in independent cultures disregard the social context in memory formation, or think of events in personal terms. Elections in the United States are typically about the personal attributes of candidates where the social context matters little. Typically this process manipulates the indifferent electorate to disregard political programs in the search for the "right" person.

There are some researchers who feel these cultural differences in self-construal make intercultural communication very difficult (Kitayama & Markus, 1994). Yet, at the end of the day we must remember that these cultural differences are abstractions. There are always more differences to be found within than between social groups. In independent cultures there are many with interdependent self-construal, particularly among women (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000; Cross & Vick, 2001). In interdependent societies there are those who's self-construal are independent. Further, migration is changing the world. For example within United States and Europe there are many immigrants who think of themselves with interdependent self-construal. Many migrants work hard in western societies just so they can send most of their earnings back to the home country. Globalization is also producing more converging values for example an emphasis on human rights in nearly all societies, and as that takes its course in the future we must reevaluate the cultural differences discussed above.

4.4 Gender and the social self

Gender is the most obvious parameter in our self-concept. In every society males and females are treated differentially with life-long consequences. Women are more interdependent as they tend to view themselves connected to relationships as mother, daughter or wife. Their behavior therefore tends to be more influenced by the thoughts and feelings of others because relationships are construed as central to self and life (Baumeister & Sommer, 1997; Cross & Madson 1997;Cross, Bacon, Morris, 2000; Gabriel & Gardner, 1999). Women display relational interdependence in close relationships especially within the family. On

the other hand men display relational interdependence within larger collectives such as political parties, athletic teams, or in feelings of national identity. (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Consistent socialization processes throughout the world lead females to focus more on intimacy and to have a greater willingness to discuss emotional topics than men (Davidson & Duberman, 1982). These gender differences in self-construal appear consistent across cultures (Kashima, Siegal, Tanaka, & Kashima, 1992), and reflect the different functions of the sexes in the historical and evolutionary struggle for survival.

When women define themselves they use references to other people and relationships. For example when asked to show photographs they are more likely to include intimate others in the photos (Clancy & Dollinger, 1993). Women spend more time thinking about their partners (Ickes, Robertson, Tooke, & Teng, 1986), are better judges of other peoples personality, and more empathetic (Bernieri, Zuckerman, Koestner, & Rosenthal, 1994; Hall, 1984). In directing their attention toward others women also demonstrate greater alertness to situational clues and the reactions of other people, whereas men focus better on internal processes such as increase in heart rate (Roberts & Pennebaker, 1995).

How does socialization encourage gender differences in self-construal? All the agents of socialization are at work. The media portray women differently from men encouraging interdependent stereotypes. The educational system forms different expectations for appropriate goals and behaviors. Parents treat girls differently than boys from the very beginning. All these socialization agents work consistently together to establish reliable gender differences (Fivush, 1992). Throughout childhood girls and boys play in separate playgroups with girls playing more cooperatively, and boys engaging more in competitive games (Maccoby, 1990). In early human history these gender differences most likely evolved in response to evolutionary demands that rewarded survival to those who developed gender specific traits. As we are the most dependent of all species we are lucky for women's innate desire to love and look after defenseless infants, and their very personal interests in the survival and well-being of their babies. In the following sections we will consider two theories explaining the development of the social self.

5. Social comparison theory: learning about the social self from others

Festinger (1954) proposed a theory for understanding self-knowledge. He asserted that people have a drive to accurately evaluate their beliefs and

opinions. Since there are no explicit physical standards for psychological constructs we learn by comparing our thoughts with those who are similar to us. This original model has been worked over a great deal since first proposed (Goethals & Darley, 1987; Wood, 1989; Suls & Wheeler, 2000). Research has shown that people compare themselves across all imaginable dimensions including emotional responses, personality traits, and objective dimensions like equity in salary. Any relationship that makes the self salient would evoke the comparison process, our marriage as compared to other couples, our racial group compared to others for evaluating fair treatment, our fellow students for correct answers to test questions and grades, all comparisons contribute to relative satisfaction depending on comparison outcomes.

5.1 Comparing for self-enhancement or achievement

How do we get a sense of who we are without reference to the accomplishments or failures of other people in similar situations? Sometimes we seek self-enhancement by comparing downward, to someone not doing as well, and to those less fortunate. By comparing ourselves to those who earn lower grades, get less salary, or are hungry, many can at least temporarily feel better (Lockwood, 2002). Downward comparisons are especially strategic when one has experienced failure. By comparing downward and emphasizing one's positive qualities the damage to self-esteem is reduced (Mussweiler, Gabriel, & Bodenhausen, 2000).

At other times we are interested in improvement trying to reach a relevant and lofty goal. In that case successful others can serve as models for achievement comparisons. Most of us, perhaps all of us, would not achieve the mathematical insight of Albert Einstein. However, the aspiring scientist may be inspired by his example and seek a related self-relevant high achievement. At times upward comparisons are discouraging. When the goal is truly unreachable the comparison can result in envy and feelings of inadequacy (Patrick, Neighbors, & Knee, 2004). Anorexia and bulimia are large problems in today's society, many believe caused by the emphasis in thinness for women in the media. Nearly all models of women's clothing are super thin, and in fact look unhealthy. Perhaps worse they set an unattainable standard for most women. (See also discussion of social influence in chapter 7). Women who place high value on physical appearance suffer in self-esteem from such social comparison (Patrick et al, 2004). In summary some comparisons can be inspirational if the goals are possible and realistic in a person's future, but discouraging and demoralizing if they involve

impossible goals or dreams.

Some people also compare from a desire to bond with others in the same straits (Staple & Kooman, 2001). How do we react to a crisis like hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters? Most of us will look to others to find the appropriate mixture of fear and courage in dealing with the situation. We also compare to similar people to enhance a sense of solidarity and common fate (Locke, 2003). When experiencing common fate people compare their responses to others to feel the strength of the community in facing crisis situations.

Social comparisons may occur in any situation of uncertainty when we are trying to find some appropriate response (Suls & Fletcher, 1983). You find yourself invited to a formal dinner party for the first time, a situation of some anxiety. Being uncertain how to dress appropriately, you ask the host for some helpful guidelines. At the dinner party chances are that you will let others more experienced carry the conversation until you get your bearings.

5.2 Social comparisons in summary

In general we seek comparisons from similar others, but if we want to enhance the self we compare downwards, if we are motivated by desire for improvement we find more successful models. (Goethals & Darley, 1977; Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons, & Kuyper, 1999). Sometimes we enhance the self-concept by comparing temporally with our former self (Ross & Wilson, 2002; Wilson & Ross, 2000). Most of us can find events from our earlier life that are more negative than our current situation. For example, perhaps we have fewer friends when we get older, but we believe that the quality of relationships has improved. To enhance we can compare our lives temporally and conclude that although the quantity of relationships has declined, life long friendships have a higher value than those formed in our youth.

6. Self-perception theory: self-knowledge by self-observation

Experience produces familiarity and most of us know how to react in situations we have visited previously. You listen to a political leader and from the storehouse of memories have ready feelings about the message and the messenger. Most people have established attitudes about a variety of topics like hip-hop music, jazz, or classical music and know how to react based on these schemas. At some point, however, you may experience the novel or unfamiliar and you are uncertain of how to respond. A stranger hands you a $100 bill, how should you react?

Should you be happy or offended? If you react with joy, you may examine your reaction and conclude that you are happy. Self-perception theory (Bem, 1972) asserts that when our attitudes or feelings are ambiguous we infer their meaning by observing our own behavior as well as the situation. In other words, when we are unsure of our feelings we infer our feelings from our own behavior, how we actually respond,. You find yourself laughing in the presence of another person and conclude from that he/she makes you happy. You observe yourself kissing the person and from that and the other's behavior conclude that you are in love. When a person is in a situation not previously evaluated, and feelings are somewhat of a mystery, often our objective behavior becomes a guide to explain these feelings (Andersen & Ross, 1984; Chaiken & Baldwin, 1981).

Secondly, in deciding the meaning of the behavior it is attributed to either the person or the situation. Is the situation compelling your behavior or is the "executive I " in charge? If we are in control of the situation and feel in charge we may attribute the feelings to our dispositions. If, however, there are compelling pressures in the situation we are likely to attribute feelings to the situation rather than to the self. In short self-perception theory argues that we infer our feelings by observing our own behavior and infer either a personal cause or a situational reason for our behavior (Albarracin & Wyer, 2000; Dolinsky, 2000). We have more to say about self-perception and attitude formation in chapter 5.

Self-perception theory has important consequences for education and learning. For example does learning occur because of some extrinsic reward like grades? Such extrinsic reward is likely to produce short-term learning since the student feels justified to forget the learning once the reward is achieved. All the anxiety and cramming that occur in American universities is not for any intrinsic pleasure of learning, but just to pass a course or get good grades. Some children however, learn because of the intrinsic pleasure of mastering a subject. Students who are intrinsically motivated engage the subject matter because they find it interesting and enjoyable. (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Senko & Harackiewicz, 2002). Self-perception theory would argue that rewards could inhibit intrinsic motivation and destroy the pleasure of mastering the subject matter. When students come to believe that they are learning to obtain rewards it leads to an underestimation of the role played by the intrinsic motives (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 1999; Lepper, Henderson, & Gingras, 1999). So although rewards can be motivational in the short run, they may produce external attribution that overlooks the intrinsic pleasure of learning.

It is obvious that any significant achievement occurs only where the self attributes intrinsic pleasure to the pursuit of knowledge. Students may pass courses, but little of the information learned from the reward of grade incentives will be stored in long-term memory. When the rewards cease so does the motivation to remember which is why the vast amount of information learned is lost within weeks. In one study on math games children's performance was compared between a reward program and the follow up during which no rewards were provided. The reward program did initially produce more interest and the children played more. However, those who initially had enjoyed the games lost interest during the follow-up and played less after the reward program ended (Greene, Sternberg, & Lepper, 1976). The researchers determined that it was the reward program that caused the children to like the games less. Related research (Tang & Hall, 1995) should cause us to think about what we do to the minds of children in an obsessive grade competitive educational system.

For parents rewards can be a two-edged sword. Praise for work well done can increase the child's self-esteem and sense of self-efficacy. It can also convey something about parental expectations for future work. But it is important that the child believes that their performance is not for external rewards but for reasons that are intrinsic and enjoyable. The child must have some control in the educational process where teachers and parents can nurture intrinsic motivation by doing enjoyable learning activities (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002). Otherwise the child comes to attribute reasons for performance to the reward system with resulting loss of motivation.

6.1 Schacter's two-factor theory of emotion

Schacter (1964) proposed a theory of emotion using self-perception ideas. Essentially the theory proposes that we learn to infer our emotions the same way as we learn about our self-concept by observing our own behavior. In Schacter's theory people observe their physiological internal experiences and try to make sense of these by looking for the most plausible explanation. The theory is called two-factor because we first experience the physiological reaction and then look for a reasonable cause to explain it. One now classic experiment was carried out to test this theory (Schacter & Singer, 1962). When the subject arrived for the experiment he was told he was participating in a study on the effect of a vitamin compound called Suproxin on vision. After the injection the subject was led to a waiting room to let the drug take effect. While there the subject was asked to fill

out a survey containing some very insulting personal questions including one asking the subject about his mother's extramarital affairs. Another participant present, an experimental collaborator, also read the questions and angrily tossed the survey on the floor and left the room.

In fact the real purpose of the experiment was not to study vision, but to understand people's reaction to physiological arousal and the meaning attached. The participants were not given a vitamin compound but were injected with epinephrine, a hormone produced by the body that causes increased heart and breathing rates. How would you feel in a similar situation? You would have noticed the physiological change that occurred from the epinephrine. Your breathing rate would have increased and you would have felt aroused. Then the other participant reacts with anger at the survey. What is the most plausible explanation for the arousal that you feel? Since you have no information that you have been injected with epinephrine the most plausible explanation is found in the situational context of the survey and the other participant's anger. In fact that is what happened, and the participants injected with epinephrine were much more angry than the participants given a placebo.

In an extension of this work the researchers demonstrated that emotions are somewhat arbitrarily defined depending on what is the most plausible explanation found in the situational context (Schacter & Singer, 1962). For example, the emotion of anger could be aborted by offering a non emotional explanation for the arousal. The researchers accomplished this by telling the participants that they could expect to feel aroused after being injected. When the subjects then began to feel aroused they inferred that it was the injection that caused the change and they did not react with anger. In yet another condition Schacter and Singer demonstrated that they could create a very different emotion by providing an alternate explanation for the arousal. In this condition the experimental collaborator acted as if euphoric and happy. The subjects began to feel the same way and inferred that they too were feeling happy and euphoric. In short Schacter and Singer showed that emotions are part of the self-perception process where people seek the most plausible reason for internal bodily changes.

6.2 Misattribution for arousal

Since we have no explicit standard to determine what causes our emotions we can misinterpret the cause (Savisky, Medvec, Charlton, & Golovich, 1998; Zillman, 1978). We know now that the same physiological arousal occurs in a variety of

circumstances and to varying stimuli. In some situations there may be more than one source to which we can attribute the arousal. To what do we attribute the increased heartbeat, shallow breathing, and the rise in body temperature? If next to another person could the physiological changes be the effect of that person? What about if you are next to the other person during a parachute jump? Is it the fascination with the other person or is it that you are approaching the Earth at great speed that causes the increased heartbeat? There is no standard that will tell for certain, and the possibilities of misattribution of the cause exist in all such circumstances.

In the classical Dutton & Aron study (1974) the researchers demonstrated the ease by which misattribution of arousal can occur. The experimenters had an attractive young woman approach males with a survey purportedly for a project for her psychology class. When they completed the survey she explained that she would be happy to explain more about the project at a later time, and she wrote her phone number on a corner, tore it off and gave it to the participant. This procedure was followed under two independent experimental conditions. In the first condition the men were approached after they had crossed a rickety 450 feet high footbridge over a river in Canada. Most of us would after the crossing experience all the symptoms of the epinephrine injection found in the study of Schacter and Singer. Most people have hard wired brains preferring low and safe altitudes, and this bridge was very high and did not give the appearance of safety. As the men were approached immediately after crossing their hearts were still racing and they experienced physiological arousal. In the second condition the men were allowed to rest for a while after crossing, and had a chance to calm down somewhat, before the woman approached. They too were also given the phone number and the opportunity to call later for more information.

What would we predict would be the outcome from Schacter's two-step theory? In the first condition the men had just experienced physiological arousal and were primed to find a plausible explanation. The most plausible cause for what they felt was the crossing of the bridge, but the beautiful woman made the stronger impression. Was the arousal due to the presence of the woman? In fact the results showed that significantly more men who were approached having just crossed the bridge called the woman subsequently to ask for a date, whereas few did if they were approached after resting. In other words the men misattributed the cause of their arousal from the true source, the crossing of the bridge, to the more

powerful stimuli found in the lovely woman. Misattribution of arousal has also been found in other studies (Sinclair, Hoffman, Mark, Martin, & Pickering, 1994).

6.3 Cognitive appraisal theory: Emotion follows cognitive interpretation

Some researchers have noted that we sometimes experience emotion when there is no physiological arousal (Roseman & Smith, 2001; Russell & Barrrett, 1999; Scherer & Schorr, 2001). Cognitive appraisal theories explain that sometimes emotions follow cognition, after we determine the meaning of the event or situation. We appraise the event in terms of implications being good or bad, and what caused the event. A colleague is given a promotion, how do you interpret that event. If you live in a professional world of zero sum game behavior where someone's promotion gives you less of a chance to advance, you may feel envy and later anger. However, if you are already at the top of the game and can advance no further you might feel happy. Suppose you have helped the colleague? Then perhaps you can attribute his or her success to your advice and assistance and feel pride (Tesser, 1988).

The main point is that in cognitive arousal theories the arousal comes after cognition, after attributing meaning and cause to the event. Arousal does not always precede emotion. Sometimes we feel the emotion, as we begin to fully understand the implications of what has happened and how the situation has changed. The two-step theory and cognitive appraisal theories complement each other as previous arousal is explained by the two-step theory, and interpretation followed by arousal explains emotion from the cognitive appraisal perspective.

7. Introspection: An unreliable source of self-knowledge

We can also learn about ourselves by "looking inside" and examining our own thoughts and feelings. You find yourself in an emergency situation when a man is drowning and immediately jump in the water to save him. Afterwards you think about the event, and come to the conclusion that the reaction was consistent with who you are, with your self-concept. Sometimes looking for inside knowledge can provide accurate responses, other times it can be misleading. You may think introspection is so obvious a source of self-knowledge that it is routine for most people. In fact we spend little time thinking about ourselves (Wilson, 2002). Even when we do introspect, the true reasons for behavior may not be part of the conscious process. In one study (Csiszentmihaly & Figurski, 1982) the participants wore a beeper that sounded off some 7 –9 times a day. Each time the beeper sounded the respondents were asked to record their thoughts and moods

that were subsequently content analyzed. From all these responses the investigators determined that only 8 percent of all responses were about the self. Since life is about survival it is not surprising that much more thought was given to work, but nevertheless it suggests that the self is not a favorite object of contemplation.

Self-awareness theory contains the idea that people focus attention on the self in order to evaluate behavior in terms of meeting internal standards and values (Carver, 2003; Duval & Silvia, 2002). Only the psychopath would spend no time in being self-conscious and trying to objectively evaluate the self. Bundy, the serial killer spent the very last moments of his life trying to rationalize his behavior attributing his deeds to pornography. Of course the opposite is also true, some people have rigid moral systems and spend much time in self-accusation and self-blame. Most of us fall in-between, and from time to time become aware of discrepancies between behavior and moral beliefs. At times such self-awareness can be very unpleasant and motivate improvement and changes in life (Fejfar & Hoyle, 2002; Mor & Winquist, 2002). When self-awareness becomes too unpleasant we seek escape. Is that the reason so many people spend a good part of their lives watching television (Moskalenko & Heine, 2002)? The popularity of soaps could be understood as a way of solving personal problems by identifying with characters outside the self. Some escape is necessary in a stressful world. It becomes non adaptive when it substitutes for real answers to the person's life and challenges.

At times escape takes the route of alcohol or drug abuse. When people drink to excess they can at least temporarily divert attention away from the self, although the day after may bring back unpleasant anxiety. The fact that so many people worldwide are involved in drug abuse is a testimony to how unpleasant self-awareness can be (Hull, Young, Jouriles, 1986). Religious devotion can also be a way to escape self-focus, and find forgiveness for not living up to moral standards. Like drug abuse, some religious focuses are self-destructive when the well-being of the self is totally ignored. What comes to mind are the suicide bombers who seek total escape to "paradise" in acts of self-destruction. At other times self-awareness can be pleasant. When you graduate from the university or professional school, or complete other significant achievements you may rightly feel enhanced in your self-awareness (Silvia & Abele, 2002). Sometimes self-awareness can help us avoid moral pitfalls when we are tempted to ignore some

moral prompting. So self-awareness can serve both positive as well as aversive roles in human psychology.

One problem with introspection is that it may not tell us the real reasons for our feelings since these may lie outside our awareness. (Wilson, 2002). You find yourself instantly attracted to someone, how do you explain such feelings to yourself? Is it purely physical stimuli, or is it something else? Have you discussed important issues and found yourself in agreement, and you believe the attraction is based on similarity? People at times feel an instant chemistry (called that because we have no other explanation), but the real reason for our feelings escapes self-awareness. Introspection may not be able to access the causes of many feelings because we are simply unaware of the reasons. Most people will come up with plausible explanations, but these may in fact be untrue or incomplete.

Growing up in our societies we all have causal theories about feelings and behavior. For example many people believe that mood is affected by the amount of sleep, whereas mood is in fact independent of preceding sleep (Niedenthal & Kitayama, 1994; Wegner, 2002). Our legal system gives women custody of children based on the common belief that they are the best custodians. Yet we know that women also commit infanticide, and child abuse. Often causal theories are simplifications or simply not true, and we can make incorrect judgments about our behavior or actions. Sometimes influences that are under the screen of awareness are the deciding factor in behavior. In one study of clothing preference people evaluated clothing of identical quality. Whereas their causal theories might promote the idea that choice was based on quality, the investigators showed that it was the position of the clothing on the display table that mattered. The clothing that was placed farther to the right was preferred (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Most people would intuitively reject that idea, but it was the causal factor, perhaps dictated by brain hemispheric dominance. In all, this research shows that we should use caution in accepting causes derived from introspection about our behavior. We may come up with very plausible reasons, but they may be incorrect, and unimportant in the final analysis.

8. Organizational functions of the Social self

Self-knowledge takes on many forms including the beliefs we have of ourselves, our self-esteem, our memories, and especially in the west of what we think are distinctive attributes. Self-knowledge describes our social beliefs, our roles and

obligations, and our relational beliefs that refer to our identity as part of families and community. Furthermore it describes our personal beliefs with respect to our traits, abilities and other attributes (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Ethier, 1995). Self-knowledge performs primarily a constricting and narrowing influence on perceptions. We construe the current situation with information from previous history thereby overlooking what might be novel. Information and experiences are made to fit our preconceived ideas about the self. In general information that can be integrated into what we already know about ourselves, our schemas, is more easily recalled. This self-reference effect has been demonstrated in several studies (Klein & Kihlstrom, 1986; Klein & Loftus, 1988). So self-knowledge not only shapes what we are likely to remember, but makes recall more efficient (Rogers, Kuiper, & Kirker, 1977).

8.1 Self-schemas: Structured cognitions about self-relevant concepts

What are the dimensions you use to think about important matters? Do you consider yourself an independent person? Do you want to do everything on your own rather than rely on assistance from parents or spouses? Are you hardnosed about immigrants in your country? Then you might think the country's future depends on how global migration is solved. Self-schemas is defined as our organized thinking about important matters that are readily available in memory.

If peace as a concept was an important dimension you would have a storehouse of memories and beliefs readily available to comment on the ever-growing conflicts in the world. Some of the beliefs might explain the causes of conflict as for example derived from greed, intolerance, or the desire to control oil resources. One schema might define the solution to conflict is to treat everyone equitably. For each relevant issue your preexisting knowledge is organized for readily available responses. When we possess schemas it allows us to quickly identify and recognize situations that are schema relevant (Kendzierski & Whitaker, 1997). We judge other's behavior and essence according to their similarity to our own personality. One study asked the respondents to rate themselves and twenty other people. The results showed that the dimensions the respondents found important in rating themselves were also employed in rating others. The execution of Saddam Hussein was a grim affair. However, you may have noted that he went to his death with great personal courage and dignity. If you value bravery in the face of annihilation your opinion of Saddam Hussein might have changed somewhat, independent of your evaluation of his policies as a political leader. We tend to use

self-knowledge in an egocentric fashion when evaluating others. If scholarship is important to you, you may apply strict standards in judging the scholastic work and ability of others (Dunning & Cohen, 1992).

We cannot attend to everything in the environment. We selectively attend to those situations that are most relevant to the self. Self-schemas allow us to access information quickly and respond efficiently (Markus, 1977). Self-schemas also are restrictive and prevent information from being evaluated if it is seen as inconsistent with what we already believe.
Most people display self-image bias (Lewicki, 1983). Again culture may play a role. In the west the self-bias exists, because the self is construed independently. Asian students, on the other hand, are more likely to say they are similar to others rather than others are similar to them. Therefore in Asian self-construal, the other person becomes the standard for comparison. In one study on being the center of attention (Cohen & Gunz, 2002) the researchers showed that self-knowledge among Asian people use the perspective derived from others. In comparing Asian students with those who were native to Canada they found that Canadians were more likely to assess the situation from their own independent perspective, whereas Asians took the perspective of other persons in describing similar situations.

An important property of self-schemas is the sense of stability that they confer on the self-concept. The feeling that we have that we are essentially the same person over time, that the core of the self remains the same (Caspi & Roberts, 2001). For example children who are identified as shy as toddlers still remain shy at age 8 (Kagan, 1989), and have problems with social interaction later in life (Caspi, Elder, & Bem, 1988). Whatever we are in early life is likely to remain over time as we behave consistent and selectively to our self-schemas. Consistence is true for functional and alas also for maladaptive behavior. We are likely to remember information that is consistent with early self-schemas and disregard disconfirming events. As we review the past, self-schemas are employed to confirm our present self-concept and we resist thinking about discrepant or novel information (Ross, 1989).

8.2 Self-regulation
An important aspect of self-schemas is the concept of the possible self. Possible selves are our conceptions that propel us into the future in search of goals and achievements (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Some of us grow up thinking that we like

a particular career. Envisioning ourselves as doctors, trade people, or mechanics leads us to the training required and sustains the motivation necessary to reach the goals. Those who have a vision of future possible selves work harder at accomplishing relevant tasks (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). Self-schemas have obvious adaptive value. They not only allow us to quickly identify relevant situations and recall appropriate and effective behaviors from memory. They also guide our behavior as we think of what is possible in the future.

So the self serves regulatory functions determining people's choices, and their plans for the future (Baumeister, & Vohs, 2003; Carver & Scheier, 1998). We appear to be the only species capable of long-term planning. Plans for our educational goals, or for family related matters like acquiring an ideal home, requires a self capable of self-regulation. In self-regulation a finite amount of energy is available. If we spend much self-regulative energy during the day we have less left over at night. Is that why couples have more arguments after a long hard day at work? (Baumeister, & Hetherington, 1996; Vohs & Hetherington, 2000). Research shows that dieters are more likely to fail at night when they are tired. Previous smokers are more likely to take up the habit again after experiencing adversity, bulimics are more likely to binge eat after a long day of self-control. With only so much energy available self-control has limits. We all need rest periods to develop the energy necessary to achieve health related goals.

Our self-regulation is determined to some extent by the culture in which we were socialized (Dhawan, Roseman, Naidu, Thapa, & Rettek, 1995). A study comparing Japanese with American college students demonstrated a cultural difference consistent with interdependent and independent societies. Typically American college students perceive of themselves in terms of personal traits. The independent self-construal emphasizes that which makes the person distinct. Self-regulation pertaining to personal achievement would rank high as an important trait in independent cultures. On the other hand Japanese students defined themselves much more in terms of social roles recognizing their relationship to family and society.

8.3 The stable versus the working self-concept

A stable concept is the sense of self-continuity from early memories to the present. However, some situations call for specific attributes that are part of a temporary working self-concept. The citizen soldier may have a stable self-concept that includes a working career and family life. However, when he goes to

war the situation requires different attributes that become part of a working or temporary self. This working self-concept may involve a willingness to engage in violent behavior guiding action while in the war zone. Sometimes behavior in the war zone may permanently change a person, and the temporary self becomes part of the stable self. Many members of the Armed Forces returned from the war in Vietnam with permanent scars affecting their relationships and trust in other people in their civilian life. The temporary self guides what goes in a specific situation, but may itself become part of the stable self (Ehrlinger & Dunning, 2003).

In less traumatic circumstances the working self-concept may operate on the periphery of the self, and when the individual returns to normal circumstances the stable self takes over (Nezlek & Plesko, 2001). In one study (Crocker, Sommers, & Luhtanen, 2002) the investigators studied applicants to graduate school. The respondents were asked to complete self-esteem measures on days when they received acceptance or rejection notices from graduate school programs. For those respondents whose self-esteem depended a great deal on scholastic achievement acceptance to programs increased self-esteem significantly, whereas rejection decreased self-esteem. In one graduate program rejections and acceptances were noted on a comparative poster for all students applying for Ph.D. programs (KSL). A similar enhancement reaction occurred. Those who were accepted enhanced the self. Whose idea do you think it was? Probably those applicants who were very confident of acceptance and sought further evidence for self-enhancement in the eyes of fellow students!

9. Motivational properties of the self-concept

A major function of the self-concept is its relationship to motivation (Higgins, 1999; Sedikides & Showronski, 1993). What is it that causes us to make plans for the future? Our possible selves refer to our possibilities, what we can become or hope to be in the future (Cross & Markus, 1991; Markus & Nurius, 1986). The self-concept also includes social and cultural, and religious standards that we utilize in deciding on our behavior. Feelings of shame or guilt are associated with these aspects of the self (Higgins, 1987; 1999). We compare our actions not only to the actual self, who we believe we are, but also to the ideal self, what we should be including all our aspirations. The “ought” self also has motivating properties which refers to the duties and obligations we feel from family and society, and whether we behave appropriately. These various aspects of the self

have proven to have motivational properties both in terms of cognition as well as behavior (Shah & Higgins, 1991).

*9.1 Discrepancies and motivatio*n

When we observe discrepancies between the actual self and what we think we ought to be we often experience fear or anxiety (Boldero & Francis, 2000). Loss of self-esteem might be defined as a discrepancy between real and actual compared to the ideal or ought selves. The greater the discrepancy the more dejected the person feels (Higgins & Bargh, 1987; Moretti & Higgins, 1990). These effects arrive from what Freud would call the superego, the early socialization that incorporates parental standards into the self-concept. The ideal self has a special influence when warm and accepting parents raise children. Children, on the other hand who have been raised by more rejecting parents think of behavior primarily in terms of meeting standards and avoiding rejection (Manian, Strauman, & Denney, 1998).

In recalling scenes of embarrassment Asians saw it through the eyes of other persons rather than from the perspective of personal feelings. (Chau, Leu, & Nisbett, 2005). People raised in independent cultures are more likely to look to the ideal self for guidance in regulating behavior, and be motivated to reduce discrepancies. People who are raised in interdependent environments pay more attention to the demands made by family and society as expressed by the "ought self" concept (Lee, Acker, & Gardner, 2000). The route to well-being is to regulate behavior to reduce or eliminate discrepancies between these aspects of the self and the goals they pursue in life (Bianco, Higgins, Klem, 2003).

9.2 Motivated by consistent and accurate selves

We all experience a sense of the self that is stable from childhood through the varying stages of life. Perhaps consistency in the self-concept is partially a cultural need as our rationalized society expects consistency in behavior to plan life-sustaining activities. Without consistency, a factory could not plan a work program, without a sense of continuity in traits and abilities the individual could not plan for the future, and society would be unable to educate. We need to believe that there is something within us that is consistent over time (Swann, 1983).

The motivating properties of self-consistency can be observed in a study by Swann and Read (1981). The participants were given feedback that was either

consistent or inconsistent with their self-conceptions. Results showed that the students spent more time studying feedback consistent with the self-concept than inconsistent information. The need for self-affirmation can also be observed in our selective behavior. We tend to interact only with those who confirm our self-concepts. If we have a high estimation of our scholarly abilities we probably make friends with other students who also think we are good students and affirm our self-concept (Katz & Beach, 2000). We remember information better that confirms our self-concept (Story, 1998), and holds consistent self-beliefs as members of groups (Chen,Chen, & Shaw, 2004). This search for self-affirmation is modified by self-esteem. People who possess high self-esteem are willing to entertain both positive and negative self-affirming information. Those with low self-esteem want mainly positive self-affirming information whether accurate or not (Bernichon, Cook, & Brown. 2003).

Having an accurate self-concept has obvious adaptive value. To make plans for the future and experiencing success requires a fairly accurate self-concept including realistic assessments of our traits and abilities. Many of the tasks we choose are based on self-assessment of aptitudes. As discussed later all people are motivated by a desire to save face and impress others, so we are likely to pick objectives closely related to what we think we can do (Trope, 1983).

9.3 Our Self-worth: Motivated by the desire to elevate self-esteem

Culture also affects self-esteem. Those living in independent cultures experience primarily ego-based emotions. Accomplishments are a source of personal pride. Those who live in interdependent cultures experience satisfaction or frustrations based on their connectedness to others. (Mesquita, 2001). Parents and their children are for example, connected intimately in the children's scholastic achievement. Self-esteem is likewise dependent on the interdependent form of self-construal. (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994; Yik, Bond, Paulhus, 1998; Diener & Diener, 1995). Social approval is a primary motivator in interdependent cultures, and a better predictor of life satisfactions. In independent cultures life satisfaction is more a function of individual emotions (Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998).

Our self-esteem is a major dimension of our self-concept. Self-esteem is a global evaluative assessment we make of our worth. Most psychologists employ simple surveys to assess self-esteem (e.g. Larsen, 1969). Those who have high self-esteem feel relatively good about their self-worth, those with low self-esteem feel

some ambivalence, and a relatively few feel self-loathing. Trait self-esteem refers to consistent levels of self-esteem over time probably determined from early experiences with success or failure. Trait self-esteem is defined by self-conceptions of competence and efficacy in various areas of achievement. Trait self-esteem feelings remain consistent over time (Block & Robins, 1993).

We also experience momentary changes in self-esteem as a result of development or from the impact of significant events (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). Male self-esteem tends to increase during adolescence, whereas female self-esteem falls during the same time (Block & Robins, 1993). At various times in our lives we may experience enhancing events that improve self-esteem. A large raise in salary or promotion at work may improve self-esteem. On the other hand we can also experience failure. If you find yourself competing against contemporaries with higher levels of ability the comparison may have negative consequences for your self-esteem (Brown, 1998; Marsh & Parker, 1984).

How comparisons are experienced depend on the relative centrality of the domain of achievement. Is the area of competition central to your self-worth or peripheral (Crocker & Park, 2003)? Professional achievement is central to many people's sense of self-worth. If achievement is appreciated and work is progressing generally in the right direction, self-esteem will enhance; otherwise the blows of misfortunate will probably impact the self-esteem negatively (Crocker, Sommers, & Luhtanen (2002).

Central to a person's self-esteem is the human need to be included. There is probably no more serious punishment in society than solitary confinement. Many prisoners can endure other forms of torture and denigration, but to accept isolation is very difficult. Some researchers assert that self-esteem is simply an index measuring relative inclusion-exclusion (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). From an evolutionary perspective it is easy to understand the power of social approval. Those who obtain approval from significant others are more likely to survive and thrive. Approval seeking affects a variety of behaviors (Larsen, 1974a; Larsen, 1974b;Larsen, Martin, Ettinger, & Nelson, 1976; Larsen, 1976a). Those who feel excluded are likely to report low self-esteem. Even our changing feelings correspond to the approval by others (Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002).

Self-esteem responds also to temporary conditions. Our moods change from time

to time, and the reasons why are not always clear. Temporary mood swings affect self-esteem in either positive or negative directions (Brown, 1998). Even setbacks that have very little real meaning can temporarily reduce self-esteem. For example if your favorite athletic team loses an important game, self-esteem may decline (Hirt, Zillman, Erickson, & Kennedy, 1992).

As noted self-esteem is closely related to the domains we consider most relevant to our self-concept. Most people derive self-esteem from selected human activities. For some self-esteem is based on competence in scholarship or career. For others self-esteem is built on athletic prowess. Yet other people think that success in family and human relationships is of greatest significance. It is really a question of what we value in life. What domains are significant to you, and have you experienced success or failure?

Crocker & Wolfe (2001); and Crocker & Park (2003) have proposed a theory of self-esteem based on domains of self-worth. Self-esteem rises or falls with experiences of success or failure in key areas. Societies and cultures will vary as to what domains are considered important. Independence is a significant value in Western societies and is related to achievement of economic independence and reaching career goals. In interdependent Asian cultures the respect of others and maintenance of successful relationships may be more of a central value. Self-worth is to some degree selected by cultural emphasis and values. Regardless of culture it is important that we do not base self-worth on one or few domains since failure will be less salient if we have many domains of interest and achievement. Failure can be devastating for those who seek achievement in a single domain since they have no fallback position for self-worth.

9.4 Cultural boundaries of self-esteem and self-enhancement

The preoccupation with self-esteem is largely a Western phenomenon. It derives from our cultural values focusing on the individual and personal distinctions. It seems ironic that the rugged individualist valued in the West is vulnerable to feelings of low self-esteem. Westerners do self-report higher levels of self-esteem as compared with interdependent peoples (Dhawan, Roseman, Naidu, Thapa, & Rettek, 1995; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). That finding however, may be attributed to the greater modesty of interdependent peoples, and the greater preoccupation with the self in Western societies. A great deal of energy is spent in Western societies trying to enhance the self, and also supporting the impression management and face work of others to enhance their self-esteem. Americans and

Canadians insist they have comparatively more positive qualities than others (Holmberg, Markus, Herzog, & Franks, 1997). The very nature of social interaction in the West, including but not limited to education, media effects, and socializing, encourages a preoccupation with self-esteem.

Being rewarded and praised for achievement is much more common in the West where people as noted seek distinctiveness, whereas in interdependent cultures people are motivated by common goals and self-improvement (Heine, 2005; Crocker & Park, 2004; Norenzayan & Heine, 2004). In Asian cultures self-criticism is common in the pursuit of social harmony and self-improvement. A student from the West who is invited to criticize himself may perceive that invitation as a threat to the self-concept and self-esteem. Cultural differences are rooted in either a preoccupation with self-esteem in the West, or self-improvement in interdependent societies.

Finally, we should keep in mind that cultural differences are abstractions. There are within societies more individual differences than can be found between cultures. Furthermore societies change over time. The individualism of Western societies is a product of recent centuries and the advancement of capitalist economies (Baumeister, 1987; Twenge, 2002). Each generation struggles with the issues related to adaptation, and in a broader sense values that lead to reproductive success. Globalization has produced values held in common by more and more people. In the new world order many countries accept the values of independence promoted in the West. Furthermore, there is evidence that many cultures are becoming more convergent in values and what is required for self-esteem (Heine & Lehman, 2003).

9.5 Preoccupation with self-enhancement

Since self-esteem in Western societies is largely based on independent egos and achievement based distinctions, most people are motivated to enhance self-esteem (Tesser, 1988). We like to see ourselves in the most favorable light possible given the constraints of reality. According to Tesser we accomplish this vicariously by reflection where we enhance ourselves by associating with those who have accomplished significant goals. The pride of parents in their children's achievements is of this type, as is associating with those of social status. Much effort in Western societies goes into convincing others of our value by relating to those who possess status.

According to Tesser we also seek to enhance by social comparison. Social comparison can be used either upward for achievement or downward to enhance our self-esteem. Even in failure one can compare downward for self-enhancement. One is reminded of some countries where students noted a university degree in their vita followed by the word “failed”. Just the mere fact that a student entered a university program attributed higher status compared with those who never started!

On a more personal basis we select friends outside our most salient domains so we can always compare downward. Since these friends may perform well in other areas, the downward comparison can be in both directions. As a general rule we select friends we outperform in our salient domains, but who are talented in other areas. Self-esteem in competitive societies is based on this fundamental idea of ranking higher than someone else. In one study (Tesser, Campbell, & Smith, 1984) the researchers asked grade school children to identify their closest friends, their own most and least important domains or activities, and how good their friends were in these activities. As evidence of self-enhancing Tesser et al found that students rated their own performance as better in the salient areas, whereas they related their friends’ performance as better in areas less self-relevant (the reflection process). In other words the students overestimated their own performance in self-relevant areas, and overestimated their friends’ performance in other domains lending support to both social comparison and reflection processes.

Self-enhancement needs are important, and perhaps of overriding importance for most people (Sedikides, 1993). They are especially important when life has struck a blow in the important domain area. Being refused entrance to a favorite university may be very painful to the aspiring scholar. Threat or failure leads to self-enhancement efforts trying to shore up of self-esteem (Beauregard & Dunning, 1998; Krueger, 1998). Self-enhancement means that we evaluate ourselves more favorably than others (Suls, Lemos, & Stewart, 2002). Our efforts at enhancing self-esteem also affect the memory process. We remember the good and positive features about ourselves, and forget the negative (Sedikides & Green, 2000). We believe we are more altruistic than others (Epley & Dunning, 2000), we think we are happier than others, and less biased (Klar & Giladi, 1999; Pronin, Lin, & Ross, 2002).

There may be times when we acknowledge that we are less than perfect.

However, in our efforts to maintain self-esteem we tend to think that the negative in our performance is less important than the positive (Campbell, 1986; Greve & Wentura, 2003). Not surprisingly we are less likely to falsely enhance when we can get caught in our little self-enhancing lies. If we are poor students we are less likely to boast to our professors about our previous achievements, if we are poor lovers our partners will eventually know. When the truth can not be hidden permanently we are more likely to be modest in our self-aggrandizement (Armor & Taylor, 1998).

9.6 Self-enhancement and stress

The exaggerated self-conceptions produced by self-enhancement can encourage better mental and physical health (Taylor, Kemeny, Reede, Bower, & Grunewald, 2000). That illusions can have positive consequences runs counter to many ideas in psychology. From the perspective of existential psychology self-enhancement is a form of defensive neuroticism, and distorts the real world. Since neurotic behavior is associated with continuous anxiety and stress, self-enhancement should be maladaptive. In one study (Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage & McDowell, 2003) students were asked for their self-assessed personal traits like intelligence and physical attractiveness as compared to their peers. Participants who self-rated higher than their ratings of peers were considered self-enhancing. Later the participants performed tasks designed to create stress as manifested by higher heart rates and blood pressures measures. The results showed that the self-enhancing group had lower heart rates and blood pressure responses, and recovered to normal measurements more quickly. Self-enhancers also had lower cortisol levels than did the comparative group of non-enhancers. In short the self-enhancers had healthier responses, tended to be more optimistic, had feelings of personal control, and a supportive social group that all contributed to the lower cortisol levels. These experimental results support the contention that self-enhancement leads to healthier physiological and endocrine functions.

9.7 Threat and self-enhancement

When people are confronted with threats to self-worth they typically shore up self-worth by reaffirming in other unrelated attributes of the self (Steele, 1988; Aronson, Blanton, & Cooper, 1995; Koole, Smeets, van Knippenberg, & Dijksterhuis, 1999). Self-affirmation theory applies only to those respondents who have high self-esteem. In one study students high and low in self-esteem were led to believe they had either failed or succeeded on a test of intellectual ability.

Respondents who were high in self-esteem, but who had been led to believe they had failed, exaggerated their positive social qualities. Respondents with low self-esteem generalized their failure experience as one already consistent with what they believed about themselves. Since those with high self-esteem believe they have many other positive traits they immediately seek to reaffirm their strengths in an unrelated area after perceived threat (Dodgson & Wood, 1998). The healthy nature of self-affirmation can be observed by the fact that the respondents feel good about themselves in the aftermath, and are strong enough to entertain potential negative information about the self. (Sherman, Nelson, & Steele, 2000).

There is no greater threat than that of personal annihilation. Terror management theory asserts that the threat of death leads people to seek ways to minimize or manage this vulnerability (Greenberg, Porteus, Simon, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1995). The threat of personal annihilation is kept in control by two mechanisms. First of all self-esteem helps the individual feel a valued person in a meaningful universe and this controls to some degree the threat of death. In the face of imminent death people have a need to reaffirm the importance of their lives, and the legacy they have created including assessments of meaningful work, and personal relationships.

Secondly, in a world-view that provides hope for the future, or at least makes some sense of the present assists in controlling threats to mortality. Conformity to cultural expectations and values is another means by which people control fear (Greenberg, Lieberman, Solomon, Greenberg, Arndt, & Simon, 1992). The familiar is soothing and allows the individual to see continuity even when personal existence is ending. At the same time when confronted with the fear of death, people also seek affiliation (Wisman & Koole, 2003). We can observe that need in the increasing popularity of the hospice movement. From anecdotal experiences (KSL) death threat is lowered when the patient is under the care of hospice, and the individual feels less lonely or isolated through the efforts of volunteers accompanying the patient on the last journey.

When people are scared by threats to mortality they are also more likely to act with aggression toward those who challenge their world-view (McGregor et al, 1998). Hostile reactions can be observed in the anger displayed by people who are related to soldiers serving the US army in Iraq or other theaters. The slogan “support the troops”, flag waving, and shrill denunciations of war opponents, emerge most likely from the perceived threat to mortality to the loved one.

Nations mobilizing for war have known how to manipulate the threat of mortality in order to energize the war effort, and demonize the enemy. That story continues throughout the world today.

9.8 Group membership and false self-esteem

The German people after the First World War were a morally defeated people, on the battlefield, and in estimation of the international community. The great depression that followed created economic insecurity and a loss of faith in contemporary society. It was a perfect time for the great manipulators of history to gain power by appeals to false self-esteem and false pride. The Nazi's sought to restore false self-esteem by use of in-group symbols and by being willing to find scapegoats for social frustrations. Although the Nazi's appearance on the stage of history was extreme in destruction and victimization, fundamentally they were no different than any other genocidal group. The genocide in Rwanda and Darfur were caused by similar in-group identification and the demonization of adversaries. The concentration camp that the Palestinian people have lived in the past half a century is motivated by the similar fears that caused the victimization of the Jewish people by the Nazi's. We seem to have learned nothing from history and so repeat the crimes derived from in-group based false self-esteem.

In contemporary society the phenomenon of gang violence takes a similar path. Gang members typically come from poor and deprived environments ripe and ready for exploitation by misleaders. Typically gang membership is compensation for all that is missing in a young person's life. As a result self-esteem is derived from gang pride emphasized by the use of symbols and colors. The Bloods (red color) and the Crips (blue color) are common criminal gangs in the US. Typically gang members display an elevated sense of self-worth and grandiosity not supported by achievements or good works (Wink, 1991). The fact that gang members possess false self-esteem can be observed in their sensitivity to any perceived insult or denigration. Children are shot dead in the streets of the US for imagined insults to the colors of another gang, revealing the fundamental insecurity underlying gang enhancement.

In fact psychopaths possess the same grandiose sense of self-worth (Hare, 1993) and are responsible for a majority of violent crimes. Psychopathic criminals also have inflated views of self-worth combined with hypersensitivity to perceived threats or denigration. The murders and bullies emerging out of gang culture have no genuine self-esteem, but rather are narcissistic and arrogant individuals.

Is it a coincidence that members of the White prison gang "Aryan brotherhood" use Nazi symbols? This false sense of self-esteem is historically responsible for genocidal deeds whether slavery, modern forms of terrorism, or other forms of violent behavior (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). In fact all gangs of history, from those led by Hitler to the military fascists led by Pinochet, have in common grandiose feelings of superiority and arrogance and a deficit in real genuine self-esteem.

10. A sense of well-being: How do we reach that blessed state?
In traveling to other countries one can often observe the apparent sense of well-being expressed by people poor in material possessions. Yet in our modern world we are taught that consumption is the road to happiness, and having money to consume produces life satisfaction. However, even in modern capitalist societies money makes little difference to a sense of well-being (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). People adjust to whatever the economic and social circumstances that are present within some degree of latitude. Of course, if people live with deprivation from poverty in the form of hunger or untreated health issues, well-being is impacted. Well-being is related to the quality of our life experiences (van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). The here and now is important to the enjoyment of life. Many people delay living to some point in the inaccessible future. They perpetually look for the joy of weekend, the vacation, the retirement, and eventually a place in heaven, but fail to enjoy the journey itself.

Realistic expectations play an important role in well-being. If expectations are too high, or if you do not have the resources necessary, frustration may follow. Being able to withdraw from unrealistic goals and move in a different direction is related to satisfaction (Wrosch, Scheier, Miller, Schulz, & Carver, 2003). A sense of well-being probably is a consequence of the person you are. Some people see a glass half empty; others see the wine bottle next to the glass is still nearly full. We can focus on aspects of life that are going well for us, or we can concentrate on reliving all our failure. Important to well-being is the pursuit of goals that reflect who we are, and which are consistent with basic human values.

Those who live in poverty in third world countries may never have the same degree of freedom that we possess, but that in and of itself does not prevent a meaningful life. Regardless of where we live in the World we all have basic needs for self-directed lives, for autonomy, for establishing competence in mastering the social environment, and having supportive social network (Kang, Shaver, Sue,

Min, & Jing, 2003). Being optimistic obviously matters, and maintaining positive emotions over time is associated with a greater sense of well-being (Updegraff, Gable, & Taylor, 2004).

10.1 The route to well-being: Complexity of attributes and self-efficacy
Central attributes have a significant affect on the sense of well-being. Some of us put all our achievement eggs into one or few baskets. For students whose self-esteem is bound up with academic performance and little else, a low grade may be devastating. Others look to achievements in a number of areas to sustain positive feelings about the self. Students can also have hobbies, special talents, a wide-ranging mind, may participate in athletics, and much more. As noted for respondents with complex self-concepts setbacks in any one area produce less vulnerability since they have other achievements to sustain positive feelings. On the other hand respondents with simple self-concepts are vulnerable when experiencing setbacks, as they have nothing else to sustain their self-concept (Linville, 1985). People with simple self-conceptions may feel good when successful, but are likely to be depressed in cases of failure (Showers & Ryff, 1996). Self-complexity produces a buffer against the inevitable setbacks and adversity of life. That is true for those holding complex positive self-concepts. Those with negative self-views are not going to feel better by having more complex negative self-concepts, since that just provides more reasons to stay depressed.

Having feelings of self-efficacy also creates a sense of well-being. The lack of self-efficacy is probably the reason that most dieters fail to stay with the program. Many people have little confidence that they can achieve the weight loss they want, and they then behave appropriate to these expectations of failure. Others have had experiences of success upon which to build self-efficacy. This is the time of year when one of the authors goes on an annual diet called the " keep your mouth shut diet". Based on past success experiences there is confidence that this approach will work again and bring down weight to a more optimal level. There is no doubt that this success story will be repeated.

Self-efficacy probably grows out of early experiences with parents and teachers. Early success leads to stable self-conceptions of efficacy in a variety of areas. Self-efficacy produces a sense of personal control giving encouragement to a person's planning for the future. Feelings of self-efficacy also help in coping with possible setbacks by self-regulating and changing behavior (Pham, Taylor, & Seeman,

2001).

Self-efficacy reduces the stress of life and produces more optimism about the future. In the long run self-efficacy produces basic approach or avoidance orientations to life. Some develop a behavioral activation system based on positive happenings of the past. Others with negative experiences develop an inhibition system that prevents the individual from undertaking important challenges for lack of confidence (Gable, Reis, & Elliott, 2000). Some think of these basic approaches as stable personality traits. For example, extraversion is a behavioral activation based on social intelligence and success. On the other hand neuroticism is an extreme example of avoidance (Carver, Sutton, & Sceier, 2000).

10.2 Positive illusions: Another road to well-being

Self-knowledge can affect our well-being. We need realistic self-conceptions to make good decisions and be successful. However, positive illusions about the self can be enhancing, and encourage and motivate behavior (Taylor & Brown, 1988; 1994). Many psychologists in humanistic and existential psychology (including Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow) have encouraged us to accept life as it is and believe that self-illusions are fundamental in neurotic behavior.

Contrary to existential views it appears that unrealistic positive self-concepts are in fact related to well-being. Most people think that positive traits describe them better than negative dimensions. In accepting negative self-descriptions we dilute the effect on the self-concept by asserting that we share these negative attributes with many others. We reason that the flaws we possess are not important since we share them with many people, whereas our positive traits are distinctive.

Those who are well adjusted tend to have an exaggerated sense of control over their lives. People often think that ritual will affect the outcome of life. On game shows one can hear the player “command” the game to perform in the winning direction when it in fact the outcome is based on randomness. In a study on lottery tickets (Langer, 1975) the experimenter tried to buy back lottery tickets which all had the exact same probability of yielding a winning result. Those buyers who had chosen their lottery ticket based on some superstition, held out for a larger return when asked to sell the ticket prior to the drawing. On the other hand depressed people are more accurate in their appraisals of control, but are of course less happy (Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989).

Self-enhancing perceptions are adaptive (Taylor, Lerner, Sherman, Sage, & McDowell, 2003). Even if our optimism is not justified we feel better about the future based on positive illusions. Positive illusions give us feelings of control where in fact we have none. Believing in the heaven to come may be a positive illusion that nevertheless helps the believer cope with randomness and absurdity. Should we encourage people to have positive beliefs even if they are illusionary? Some research has supported the idea that optimism and false sense of control may help people feel better about themselves and feel happier (Regan, Snyder, & Kassin, 1995). Do we need a new psychology based on positive illusions since at least in some areas they are adaptive and not neurotic?

When we feel good about ourselves it has positive consequences for our social relationships. You must have noted that when you feel good about life you are more open and agreeable. Positive self-regard fosters relationships, within some limits (Taylor et al, 2003). However, people will get tired of the self-promoter, and self-aggrandizement can also lead to alienation. As in the cases of most other behavior, self-enhancement is an issue of balance. Have you ever met perpetually happy people so self-enhancing that you shake your head and tell yourself "that can't be for real"?

People living in the West are likely to have unrealistic optimism about the future (Aspinwall & Brunhart, 1996; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997; Seligman, 1991). The optimism is personalized since they believe positive events will happen to them, but not necessarily to others. Unrealistic optimism emerges out of people's egocentrism, where most people focus on their own outcomes and ignore happenings to others (Kruger & Burros, 2004).

In any event, having unrealistically positive self-perceptions lead to exaggerated sense of control and unrealistic optimism. Overall these illusions improve well-being by creating positive moods, healthier social relationships, and by promoting goal directed behavior. Few of us would start any journey, even an easy one, if we did not believe the outcome would be positive. In struggling against tyranny like in Burma where the state holds all the power, few people would work for reform or change unless they had the positive illusions that in the near future or historically their efforts would be crowned with success.

The ego-centrism can go too far (Colvin & Block, 1994). The narcissist typically endorses extreme self-enhancement illusions. However, self-promotion turns off

most people in the long run. Narcissists have the tendency to blow their own horn too long and people reject such behavior (Paulhus, 1998). Longitudinal studies have shown a further downside of positive illusions. Students who exaggerate their academic abilities eventually come up against reality and experience failure at school and loss of self-esteem (Robins, & Beer, 2001; Colvin, Block, & Funder, 1995). So not all forms of positive illusions serve the function of well-being. It would appear that we need some positive illusions to become motivated to reach goals, but not so illusionary that we experience constant failure. A balance must be created between the positive illusions and accurate self-concepts.

10.3 Culture and positive illusions

Cultures show significant differences in the endorsement of positive illusions. Westerners are more likely to endorse these when compared to Asian peoples (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999; Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997). In considering academic abilities Japanese hold fewer positive illusions compared to Western students, and display less unrealistic optimism when compared to Canadian students (Heine & Lehman, 1995; Heine, Kitayama, Lehman, Takata, Ide, Leung, Matsumoto, 2002). In a study of 42 nations Sastry and Ross (1998) found that Asians were less likely to feel they had complete control over their lives, whereas people from Western societies displayed unrealistic optimism.

So from a cultural perspective we must conclude that positive self-delusions do not automatically lead to well-being. In independent societies well-being is a construct closely tied to positive views of self, control, and optimism. In Asian societies well-being is tied more to interdependent self-conceptions. The fulfillment of social roles and expectations is fundamental to self-construal in Asia, and satisfaction in these areas is more likely to bring a sense of well-being (Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998).

11. Impression management: We are actors on the stage of life

Have you noticed that your behavior changes depending on the person with whom you converse and the objectives of the interaction? With your parents you act with a measure of love and social obligation, with teachers you are courteous trying to produce a favorable impression, with a baby you are natural and feel no need to impress. These varying responses can also be called situational conformity. Before interaction we have an awareness of the person, the situation and the objectives. We mold our behavior to make a correct and useful impression,

especially on those who have status and power. The psychopath is perhaps the most skillful in impression management. How did Bundy, the serial killer, create enough trust in young women, so they accompanied him to his car where they were overpowered. He did it by putting his arm in a sling, and looking helpless he appealed for help from sympathetic coeds.

In a broader way we want to be accepted by others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). As noted there is psychologically nothing more painful than social exclusion. Some societies use that knowledge to torture prisoners whether at Guantanamo in Cuba, or in special penitentiaries in the US, where prisoners sit in a cage like cells for 23 hours a day with no social interaction. We can think of the death penalty as the ultimate form of social exclusion and torture that on the face is both cruel and rather unusual. As noted earlier in this chapter social exclusion is related to self-esteem. Researchers have also demonstrated that social exclusion is among the most painful and stressful conditions known to humanity (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003; Twenge, Cantanese, & Baumeister, 2003). We self-monitor so that our behavior is acceptable and we will be included.

We can see by these examples that there is a significant difference between people's public and private selves. Much that we have discussed in this chapter pertains to the private self, the executive "I" as decision maker or regulator of behavior and how it is influenced by the social context. We operate in a social context of no small importance, and learn early that others have power to make life better or worse. The public self is devoted to impression management, where we try to convey an image and convince others that this image is our true self. We work hard to get other people to see us the way we want to be seen (Goffman, 1959; Knowles & Sibicky, 1990; Spencer, Fein, Zanna, & Olson, 2003).

We are actors on the stage of life concerned with self-presentation and the monitoring of our behavior. Impression management is about convincing others to believe in the "face" we are presenting. We try to control what others think of us because doing so has utility in terms of material, relational, and self-relevant advantages. Goffman was probably the first to systematically examine how we construct our identities in public. He maintained that much of our public behavior is governed by claims we make in an effort to maintain a positive face. The image we want to convey Goffman calls face (see also Baumeister, 1982; Brown, 1998; Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Impression management follows a certain script we have memorized to be used whenever we interact with others. We also expect others to play their roles and to respect the identity we convey. This is a mutual support society since other people depend on us to honor the claims they make. To lose face is very painful, and in Asian cultures can be unbearable. We want other people to respect, not the private self, but the one we present to the world. We are all actors trying to be convincing to our audience.

11.1 Ingratiation

In the process of impression management we can employ several strategies (Jones & Pittman, 1982). The term "brownnosing" is used to describe those who try to ingratiate themselves to gain advantage with powerful others. Ingratiation is a frequently used strategy to make ourselves more likeable with the powerful (Gordon, 1996; Vonk, 2002). Nothing is more effective than sincerely meant praise in promoting liking relationships. On the other hand if the praise is for ulterior motives, and most of us can feel that, the ingratiation may backfire (Kauffman & Steiner, 1968).

11.2 Self-handicapping

Another strategy to protect face is self-handicapping. Our face is so important that we often engage in self-defeating behaviors to avoid losing face. In self-handicapping we set up excuses prior to any performance, so if we do poorly we have an excuse that exonerates the public self (Arkin & Oleson, 1998; Thill & Curry, 2000). Students may self-handicap prior to an important exam. Spending the night drinking with friends provides the alibi for poor test performance, and therefore does not reflect on the image created among fellow students. In one study (Berglas & Jones, 1978) students were offered a chance to either take a performance enhancing drug, or one that would impair test taking. The respondents were placed in one of two conditions. One group was led to believe that they were going to succeed on the test, the other group were led to believe that failure was likely. The participants who thought failure was likely preferred the performance-inhibiting drug even though that would result in poor test performance. From the point of view of self-handicapping, students would rather fail, but have a good alibi for failure, than take the chance for success, but have no excuse if they failed.

Self-handicapping can have serious consequences for health. Condoms have proven an effective preventive of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases,

yet from 30 to 65 percent of respondents reported that they were embarrassed when buying these health-promoting devices. Somehow buying condoms violates many people's self-presentations as perhaps non-sexual or at least not promiscuous. In this day of increasing skin cancer many continue to sunbathe to excess to meet a self-presentation of beauty and ironically of health. Social approval continues as a basic motivation for impression management (Leary & Jones, 1993).

Some self-handicapping is not so obvious. We may simply prepare within ourselves ready-made excuses for poor performance. We know the material, in fact we feel that we are experts, but we attribute poor performance on tests as due to test anxiety, headaches or being in a bad mood on the day of performance. In the process of self-handicapping we may become self-fulfilling prophecies and come to believe in our excuses. Self-handicappers may become permanent poor performers and fail to establish the parameters for a successful life. It is ironic that the concern underlying self-handicapping, i.e., to be liked for the face being conveyed, may in fact have opposite results. Most people see through the charade and do not like those who spend their efforts at self-handicapping rather than working (Hirt, McCrea, & Boris, 2003).

11.3 Self-promotion

Impression management is all about making a "good" impression (Schlenker, 1980). Some people use the direct route and self-promote, never tiring in telling others of their many and varied accomplishments. The self-promoter is primarily interested in other people's perceptions of their competence (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Self-promotion depends on the norms of social interaction. In athletic competition a norm of modesty prevails. Therefore it is not in good form to boast of one's own performance, but rather attribute success to the efforts of teammates, coaches, and fans. Normative modesty works best when it is false, and the athlete has cause to boast. Then modesty is a strategy of positive impression management (Cialdini & De Nicholas, 1989).

Other forms of self-promotion are vicarious. We like to enjoy "the reflected glory of others". By associating with successful others we obtain positive associations (Cialdini & De Nicholas, 1989). Oregon State University had a terrible record in football across many decades. During that time few fans attended the games or wore clothing identifying with the team. That all changed when a new coach created a team with a wining record. Now thousands of cars approach the city on

game day, with banners, and team symbols. Vicarious self-promotion contributes to positive impressions associated with winning and status, at least in the western world.

11.4 Private versus public self-consciousness

The aforementioned discussion supports the difference between a public self (known to others) and a private self (known only to the self), (Fenigstein, Sceier, & Buss, 1975). Being publicly self-conscious encourages people to engage in face saving and impression management. The ironic aspect about public self-consciousness is that nearly everyone is conscious of his or her audience and painfully aware that others are observing. However, since everyone is focused on the affect of the audience there is really little time left over to actually observe others. A lot of face saving and impression management efforts are wasted because while we are aware of others the focus is on the effect internally. There are individual differences. Those with fragile egos are overly concerned about what others might think about them (again a wasted effort). Insecure people tend to think of themselves in terms of social popularity and approval (Fenigstein, 1984). In public self-consciousness awareness is directed toward what others think, however since everyone shares that attribute, the focus is internally on the effects of the audience and people really do not observe others. Then why be publicly self-conscious?

Some people have private self-consciousness and a greater awareness of internal feelings and thoughts. Those with a private self tend to think of themselves more in terms of their own independent thoughts and feelings. Those with private self-consciousness care little about what others think, but are a rare breed. Due to the long dependency period of humans beings, and the nature of the social self formed by social interactions, private self-consciousness is not only rare, but probably also affected by what others think.

Since we want to be accepted we spend energy and time on self-monitoring (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). Most people want to be socially acceptable and therefore monitor behavior to see if they fit the requirements of the situation. People high in self-monitoring are the true actors on the stage of life. They are situational conformist, switching behavior as required from one situation to the next. Low monitors are more likely to respond to internal impulses or demands, and are less dependent on the social context. Is monitoring adaptive? In one study (Snyder, 1974) patients in a mental hospital scored low on self-monitoring. That

finding suggests that to cope effectively with life requires at least some awareness of surroundings and the social demands for appropriate behavior.

11.5 Cultural differences in impression management

In all cultures the social self emerges from social interactions and is formed by the socialization of varying social values. The fundamental difference in cultural values as noted previously is the predominant emphasis on independence in Western cultures, and interdependence in Asian and some other developing societies. The term "saving face" has been associated with Asian cultures and reflects a special sensitivity in maintaining face in these societies. To lose face is to lose identity for interdependent people. Appearance is of great importance. For example, if it is important to have many wedding guests, and if one has an insufficient number of friends attending, one can rent guests (Jordan & Sullivan, 1995). If there are insufficient lamenters at a funeral one can hire professional lamenters to produce appropriate grief display.

In Asian cultures, impression management concerns the measuring up to social roles and expectations whereas in the West there is a greater desire for individual enhancement (Heine & Renshaw, 2002; Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003). In fact self-enhancement is ubiquitous in all Western societies while relatively uncommon in interdependent cultures. The various terms discussed in this chapter like self-consciousness and self-regulation take different forms depending on culture (Simon, Pantaleo, & Mummedy, 1995). Yet these cultural differences must be taken with a grain of salt. Culture may account for small amounts of the behavioral variance, and societies are changing as the world is becoming more convergent. At the same time if we want to improve intercultural communications we must have some awareness of cultural values.

Summary

This chapter discusses several dimensions of the social self, self-knowledge and self-esteem. Self-awareness starts at an early age, perhaps as early as nine months, and certainly by age two the child recognizes the self as distinct. Over time we accumulate knowledge about the self from experiences with family, school, and culture. As our interactions become more complex, a belief system about the self emerges, and along with that an understanding of our more complex attributes. Self-esteem is our judgment of personal morality, and the satisfaction with our performance relative to ideal and ought selves. People who are low in self-esteem need constant approval and reaffirmation. High self-esteem

is functional in setting goals and persisting in our goal directed behaviors. Those with low self-esteem are more pessimistic and do not believe they have self-efficacy.

The building blocks of the self point to five basic traits as being universal: namely conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The research literature supports the heritability of personality traits. We use these traits in judging others and ourselves. Since the traits are understood everywhere they must a biological evolutionary basis growing out of needs to adapt and survive. The heritability of traits is supported by studies of fraternal and identical twins. Also, traits identified early in children, like shyness, tend to have lifelong consequences. Neuroticism is associated with subjective stress, and on the opposite side extraversion is associated with the presence of the neurotransmitter Dopamine. It is impossible to separate the self from biological inheritance. Recent research points to the complex interaction between genetic inheritance and specific environments in producing predictable behavior. Perhaps some traits like neuroticism were adaptable in early human history in the struggle for survival, but are non-adaptable now in our complex society.

Scientists and philosophers have long discussed the nature of the self. As science has progressed we understand more and more the so-called “easy” problem that links thought to brain function. The “hard” problem is trying to understand the “knower” the subjective experience that someone is in charge, an executive “I” or decider. Why does it feel like we have a conscious process, and how does that subjective experience emerge from neural computations in the brain? When scientists use MRI’s they can practically map thought processes in the brain, but there is no convincing evidence of an ethereal soul. Is the “knower” nothing but an illusion required by the information overload in the brain, and the need to evaluate stimuli? Can the knower be understood solely as brain activity? Certainly believing in a soul construct has not supported moral behavior as is evidenced by all human history. The hard problem remains and may never be solved. All we can say with certainty is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The development of the social self is produced by the consistent reactions of socialization agents. These reactions influence the development of self-knowledge and self-esteem. It is the consistent treatment by early socialization agents such as family that is the basis of what we believe about ourselves and that knowledge guides our behavior for the rest of our lives. The family is central in the creation

of the possible self, the self of the future. Other factors that influence the development of self-knowledge and self-esteem are birth order and group memberships. Birth order has an effect as children learn to occupy various niches in the family that are functional and rewarding. Group memberships are also a key to understanding the self because groups socialize values that have motivational significance. Research has shown that even nonsensical groups may have profound effects on decisions and history shows that group categorization itself is responsible for much of the mayhem in the world. Minorities for example have to deal with special challenges as they cope with mainstream cultures. Although in general, strong ethnic identity combined with positive attitudes toward the larger society is associated with high self-esteem.

Culture is a major source of the self-concept. The main differences discussed in this chapter and in what follows are the reliable differences found between interdependent and independent societies introduced in chapter 1. For the interdependent societies of Asia and elsewhere, the social context of family and society matters greatly in the development of the self-concept. The independent societies of North American and Europe have more independent self-construal where the self is seen as autonomous, distinct, and separate from others. Whether we achieve for personal reasons or for group goals is to some extent determined by culture. One's culture might also affect the choice of career; and whether we seek to enhance the self or society. In independent societies self-esteem is ego based, whereas in interdependent cultures it is more related to family and social approval. As always we must remember that cultural differences are abstractions, that people differ within cultural models, and that the world is becoming more convergent.

Gender plays, along with family, groups and culture, a vital role in development of the self-concept. All cultures treat males and females differentially with lifelong consequences. Women become more interdependent and connected to intimate relationships. Men are more affected by larger social groupings. Socialization through the efforts of families, society, and educational processes produce these predictable differences. Gender differences probably evolved early in human history in response to survival demands that required role specialization. A few theories have been discussed in this chapter.

Social comparison theory asserts that we learn about ourselves by comparing our behavior to that of others. We enhance ourselves when we compare downward,

and inspire ourselves for achievement when comparing ourselves to high achieving models. At times, e.g. when facing a crisis or in response to uncertainty, we compare in order to bond with other people.

Self-perception theory suggests that we derive the meaning of emotions from self-observation of our own behavior. At times we meet with novel situations or the unfamiliar and do not know what we are supposed to feel. In these cases our objective behavior becomes the guide for understanding our emotions. We attribute meaning by ascribing the cause for our feelings to either the situation or to personal volition. Self-perception theory has been applied to education, and supports the importance of intrinsic motivation in producing lasting learning. Schacter used self-perception theory in his two-factor model of emotion. He states that people note their internal physiological reactions to stimuli and then look in the environment for a plausible cause to explain these feelings. This has been demonstrated in research that showed that emotional labels may be arbitrary and can be manipulated For example, happiness or anger can be attributed from the same physiological reactions depending on environmental factors. Misattribution of arousal is possible as more than one source can explain what we feel. Research shows that misattribution for arousal can also easily be manipulated. In relation to this cognitive appraisal theories point out that sometimes we experience emotions after we think about and understand the situation. The meaning of the situation, the good or bad it implies for our well-being brings on emotions after we have thought about these consequences.

We can also learn about the self-concept by introspection although introspection is not reliable. Most people spend little time thinking about themselves because it is, at times painful, especially if we are aware of shortcomings in meeting ideal or ought selves. We seek escape in drugs, excessive television viewing, or dogmatic religion that tells us all we need to know. Also, introspection may not tell us the real reasons for our feelings as we may rely on causal theories derived from society that offer plausible but false causes.

A major organizational function of the self is the constricting and narrowing of our perceptions. Research shows that the self affects memory, as recall of material is more efficient if related to self-relevant schemas. Self-schemas refer to the basic dimensions we employ in cognizing about the self, it is our organized thinking about important self-relevant dimensions. Self-schemas are readily available in memory, and are a fundamental organizing tool. We develop self-

schemas because we cannot attend to everything, and therefore focus selectively on information considered most relevant. At the same time self-schemas restrict information by removing from awareness information that is inconsistent from that which we already believe. Self-schemas are stable over time, precisely because we act consistently and selectively to new information.

A major function of self-schemas is self-regulation. We think about the future and envision a possible self, what we can become, and this motivates our planning and behavior. The self serves regulatory functions in determining plans and choices for creating the future that we expect and want. It is important to keep in mind that energy for self-regulation is finite. This fact makes us vulnerable when trying to stay on diets or refrain from taking up bad habits once discarded. The stable self provides a sense of continuity throughout the lifespan. At times we are faced with novel situations like soldiers in wartime, and develop working temporary selves to cope with demands. Sadly, these temporary working self-concepts can become part of the permanent self when the behavior varies widely from the stable self, and the situation is traumatic and powerful in its effects.

The self has motivational properties. Our current behavior is determined by our plans for the future and our possible selves. Possible selves also include religious and cultural standards, and are often associated with feelings of guilt and shame. The ideal self refers to our aspirations in life, whereas our ought self describes our obligations and duties. Discrepancies between ideal and ought and what is real causes anxiety, and produces for some the motivation necessary to change. Most alcoholics feel the discrepancy eventually, and many seek help.

In judging others we use our self-image bias. Whether we accept others is related to how similar others are to ourselves. Culture plays here a role as well. For example in the West others are judged according to criteria of the independent self where the ideal self plays a primary role. In interdependent cultures others become standards for judgment, and the ought self including obligations and duties is the primary evaluative tool.

We are motivated by consistent and accurate self-conceptions. Especially feedback that is consistent with our self-conceptions is motivating. We seek primarily self-affirmation in our interactions with others and this in fact influences our choice of friends. We select those friends who will confirm our self-concepts. This selection is to some degree modified by self-esteem: Persons with high self-

esteem are more likely to be receptive to both negative and positive self-confirming information than persons with low self-esteem. An accurate self-concept is adaptive since plans and success in the future depend on accurate self-assessments.

Most people are motivated to enhance a sense of self-worth. There are components of self-esteem that remain consistent as a personality trait throughout life. Momentary changes in self-esteem, however, may occur from developmental issues and as a consequence of significant events. A central issue in the need for self-esteem is the desire to be accepted and included. Isolation is therefore extremely painful, as penologists know. This preoccupation with approval derives from obvious social and evolutionary advantages. Our self-esteem may rise or fall with experience in domains key to the self. In turn culture determines to some extent what areas are considered salient domains. Research shows that self-esteem is more functional if based on more than one or a few domains. With many domains we can control the inevitable setbacks that life hands us.

Preoccupation with self-esteem is primarily a Western phenomenon. It is derived from the cultural focus on independence and personal distinctions. That Western respondents self-report higher levels of self-esteem, may be attributed to the greater modesty of interdependent peoples. Being rewarded or praised for achievement is more common in the West, whereas in interdependent cultures people are more motivated by common goals and self-improvement. Cultural differences in self-esteem are abstractions as again there are differences within cultures, and globalization is encouraging convergence in values.

False self-esteem is aggrandizement based on group memberships where the group operates by the scapegoating and demonization of outsiders. Gang violence is caused by false aggrandizement as compensation for all that is missing in the gang member’s life. Gang member’s display elevated self-esteem not justified by accomplishments or good works. Their fundamental insecurity is revealed by their sensitivity to perceived insults. Psychopaths posses grandiose conceptions of self-worth, but no genuine self-esteem.

The preoccupation with enhancement influences the way in which we associate with others. It leads to comparison between the self and the other for advantages looking downward or enjoying the reflected glory of the achievements of those

with whom we associate. Friendships are based on the need for enhancement. When we select our friends we ensure that we can compare downward in most salient domains. In Western cultures self-enhancement is of overriding importance, especially when we are threatened by failure. In general most people believe that their positive traits are more important than their negative attributes. Self-enhancement leads, in fact, to better mental health, and better physiological and endocrine functions.

When the self-concept is threatened we shore up self-worth by reaffirming in other unrelated attributes of the self. For example, there is no greater threat than mortality. We control this essential threat through self-esteem, we assert that our lives are worthwhile and we rely on a worldview that makes life meaningful. When people are threatened by mortality they are easily manipulated and provoked to aggression. Threat to world-views or to conventional society undermines the cultural meanings that controls death anxiety.

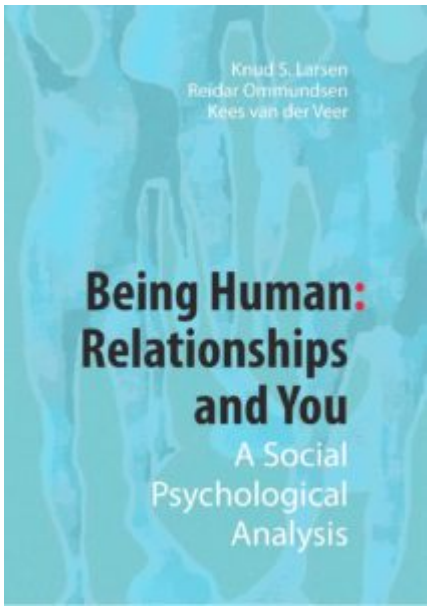
In a complex world how do we find a path to well-being? In Western societies people have been convinced that consumption is the road to follow. However, well-being is related to the quality of life, to the journey of life, and to realistic expectations. Furthermore, our personality also matters. For instance, for some people a glass is half empty, for others the glass is half full and next to a plentiful bottle. It is important to pursue self-relevant goals that reflect that which we value in life. Regardless of cultural differences we all have basic human needs for autonomy, for competence to deal with challenges, and for a supportive social network.

Research shows that a complexity of attributes and self-efficacy is necessary for well-being. Respondents who possess more complex self-concepts are not overcome when facing a setback in a singular dimension. Self-efficacy is the feeling of “can do”, that we have the necessary competence to succeed. Self-efficacy grows out of early experiences with parents and educators. Our early success reduces experienced stress in life. Positive illusions refer to exaggerated optimism and sense of control in life. The well-adjusted often display positive illusions that can enhance, encourage, and motivate behavior. Those with positive illusions are happier and have better social relationships than the depressed that have more realistic conceptions. People in the West are especially likely to display unrealistic optimism about the future. The downside of positive illusions is that at times we must face unpleasant reality. Positive illusions are more likely endorsed

in Western societies. Well-being in interdependent cultures is more related to fulfillment of roles and social expectations.

Impression management suggests that people are actors on the stage of life. Most people mold their behavior according to situational demands, we are chameleons according to need. Psychopaths are especially skilled at impression management. Since we all want to be accepted we work hard to convince others that our self-presentation is true. We encourage others to believe in our public face. Ingratiation is a form of impression management where we try to make ourselves more likeable to the powerful through flattery. Self-handicapping promotes face saving by engaging in self-defeating behaviors prior to performance. Sometimes people take foolish chances with health in order to preserve their face and image. Self-promotion is a more direct path of impression management. We seek to impress others of our competence, and our associations with others of status and power. It is primarily the publicly self-conscious who engage in impression management. People with private self-consciousness are concerned with independent thoughts and feelings. The social self emerges from social interaction in all cultures. The self-concept is therefore a consequence of cultural values. Saving face is of particular importance to Asian cultures. Central to these societies is the concern about roles and expectations, whereas people in the West are more concerned about individual enhancement.

Being Human. Chapter 3: Attraction And Relationships: The Journey From Initial Attachments To Romantic Love



Many years ago two boys were walking home from school. They were seven years old, lived in the same neighborhood, but went to different grade schools. Although living close to each other they had not met before running into each other on this day on the road leading up the hill to their neighborhood. Both seemed quite determined to assert themselves that day, and soon they began pushing each other that gradually turned to wrestling, and attempts to dominate. After what seemed hours, the two little boys were still rolling down the surrounding hills as the sun was going down. Neither succeeded in achieving victory that day. In fact, they never again exchanged blows but became the best of friends. Today it is more than 50 years later, and their friendship has endured time and distance. Friendship is like a rusty coin; all you need to do is polish it at times!

In this essay we shall examine the research on attachment, attraction and relationships. The intrinsic interest in these fields by most people is shared by social psychologists, and attachment, attraction, and love relationships constitute one of the most prolific areas of investigation in social psychology. The early attachment theory advanced by Bowlby (1982) emphasized the importance of the field when he suggested that our attachments to parents to a large extent shape all succeeding relationships in the future. Other research focus on exchange and communal relationships and point to the different ways we have of relating to each other. The importance of relationships cannot be overemphasized since we as humans have a fundamental need to belong. Relationships also contribute to the social self as discussed in the book, and effects social cognition discussed in the same (see: at the end of this article). The variables that determine attraction may be understood theoretically as functions of a reward perspective.

The importance of relationships is demonstrated by findings that show that among all age groups relationships are considered essential to happiness (Berscheid, 1985; Berscheid & Reis, 1998). The absence of close relationships makes the individual feel worthless, powerless, and alienated (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1996). Our very humanity is defined by our relationships (Bersheid & Regan, 2005).

1. Attachment: The start to relationships

This chapter is about the development of attachment, intimate relationships between adults, and the road leading toward love relationships. No greater love has a person than giving his life for another. This idea from the Bible brings to mind the passion of deep commitment and the willingness to sacrifice, even in the ultimate sense. This willingness to sacrifice is one manifestation of love, but as we all know there is much more to relationships and love.

The research described in the following pages concerns early attachment, and attraction and love between adults. These relationships may be institutionalized by marriage, or (registered) partnership, or take some other form (living-apart-together) in relationships. Since the vast majority of romantic relationships exist between heterosexual partners we describe the journey from attraction to romantic relationship from this perspective. There is little research so there is no way to know, however, there is no convincing reason to assume that this journey is completely different for homosexuals.

Most people will experience the delirious feelings of infatuation and love sometime in their lives. What is love? How can we achieve love? And how can we build these feelings into lasting relationships? Are there ways we can improve our chances for satisfying long-lasting and happy relationships? This chapter will show that there are behaviors to avoid, but that we can also contribute much to lasting attachments. Long-lasting romance depends on positive illusions and bringing novelty and renewal to our intimate relationships.

We live in a changing world. Although in many parts of the world couples are still united through arranged marriages, more and more modern communications are changing the ways people relate, for example learning about other culture to value freedom or the individual right to choose one’s spouse. Computers provide platforms from which to initiate relationships, and opportunities to screen for important characteristics prior to any encounter. Does that take away something of the mystery of liking and loving relationships? Some do feel that how we encounter and meet people should remain in the realm of the mysterious.

However, as we shall see in this chapter, learning to like and commit to one another follows predictable patterns. The fact that divorce rates increase in the western world, suggests that we could all benefit from a greater understanding of how relationships develop, and how to make them enduring and satisfying. To

give up one's life for another is a noble commitment, but to live one's life for the beloved is a different, but equally high calling. How do we move from the initial encounter of liking to romance and love and lasting commitment? We shall see that liking and love are universal behaviors, although cultures affect how they are expressed.

In this chapter we shall discuss the research from initial attachments to long lasting relationships. Is there a basic need to belong? Does evolutionary thinking contribute to our understanding of the universality of attachment? There is evidence, as we shall see, that we all need to be connected to others, to experience a network of varying relationships. These needs are universal, present in all cultures and societies. Our needs to belong motivate our unconscious and conscious thoughts, and our behavior in the search for satisfying relationships. Without such relationships we suffer the pangs of loneliness with negative physical and psychological consequences.

1.1 An evolutionary approach to attachment

Many textbooks in psychology refer to feral children as evidence that negative consequences occur when a child grows up without normal human attachments. The child Victor was found in 1800 in the French village of Saint-Sernin. He was believed to have grown up in the forests without human contact, and proved devoid of any recognizable human characteristics. Initially he refused to wear clothes, understood no language, and never showed human emotion. This "wild boy of Aveyron" was taken into the care of Jean Itard, who devoted considerable energy to teach Victor language and human interaction. He did eventually learn some words, but never developed normal human interaction or relationships (Itard, 1801; 1962). Do feral children demonstrate the essence of human nature in the absence of relationships? We can see from the story of Victor, and that of other feral children, that what we describe as human is forged in our relationships with others. Without these interactions there is little discernable human in our behavior. Without relationships provided by parents, family, and society, we are without language with which to communicate, and without civilization to teach appropriate norms for behavior, and we have no "human nature". We are human because of our relationships.

1.2 Early attachment forms the basis for our adult relationships

What are some of the deciding factors that enable us to establish interpersonal relationships? Interpersonal relationships are essential to human satisfaction and

happiness, and refer to the bonds of friendship and love that hold together two or more people over time. Interdependence is manifested by how individuals spend significant time thinking about each other, and engage in common activities, and have shared histories and memories. Although central to our understanding of what it means to be human, social psychology has a short history of studying relationships (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). Since we cannot experiment with relationships among humans, research takes a different form. In research on relationships we face different problems with methodology than encountered elsewhere in experimental social psychology (Karney & Bradbury, 1997). Since research may affect self-awareness and the relationship ethical concerns must dictate sensitivity in the questions asked allowing us to use primarily the interview and survey methods.

Harlow (1959) performed a famous experiment with baby rhesus monkeys that supported the conclusions drawn from the studies of feral children: social isolation is traumatic and prevents normal development. In this classic study baby monkeys were raised without any contact with a mother or other monkeys. They were provided two "mother substitutes"; one was a wire feeder, and the other feeding substitute was softer and covered with terry cloth. The importance of contact was shown by the baby monkeys clinging to the terry cloth "mother", and when frightened rushing to this substitute for comfort. Like the feral children these monkeys were abnormal when they approached adolescence or adulthood. They displayed high anxiety, could not playfully interact with peers, and failed to engage in normal sexual behavior. It would appear that social interaction, particularly with parent figures, is essential for normal functioning in adulthood. What we describe as human nature would evaporate in the absence of relationships as we are socialized by our interactions. The universality of the desire to belong would suggest a biological basis similar to other biological needs.

Some will suggest that the need to belong is indeed part of our evolutionary heritage (Bercheid & Regan, 2005). No other species display a longer dependency period than humans, and we need nurturing relationships to survive. Parents who in the past failed to display essential nurturing behavior did not produce offspring that survived. We are all descendants of relationships that took parenting very serious. It is possible to perceive bonding from the very beginning of life. Initially only the mother establishes relationships by gazing at the infant, who in turn responds by cooing and smiling. That is the beginning of all subsequent bonding

in the child's life. Later as the child grows, other bonds are established with the father and other family members. Throughout life a normal human being will seek out relationships responding to a biological need for companionship.

Baumeister & Leary (1995) proposed five criteria to demonstrate the fundamental biological nature of the need to belong. First, since relationships make a direct contribution to survival, an evolutionary basis is supported (Simpson & Kenrick, 1998). Evolutionary causality would require us to accept that even romantic bonds with all the giddiness and mystery are primarily vehicles that create conditions for reproduction and survival of the infants (Ellis & Malamuth, 2000; Hrdy, 1999). Without that special attachment between mother and infant the child would be unable to survive or achieve independence (Buss, 1994).

A second criterion for the evolutionary basis of relationships is the universality of the mother-child and romantic lover interdependence. As we shall see, such relationships are found in all cultures expressed with some variations. Thirdly, if relationships are a product of evolution, it should have a profound effect on social cognition. There is much support that our relationships to a significant degree define who we are, our memories, and the attributions we make in varying situations (Karney & Coombs, 2000; Reis & Downey, 1999). Fourthly, if need to belong is similar to other biological drives the desire for relationships should be satiable. When deprived we should manifest searching behavior similar to that which occurs for food or water when deprived of these essentials. Once our relationships needs are satisfied, we are no longer motivated to establish new connections (Wheeler & Nezlek, 1977), but if deprived we will seek substitutions for even close family relationships (Burkhart, 1973). Finally, according to Baumeister and Leary, if we are deprived chronically the consequences are devastating. There is a great deal of evidence that relationships are fundamental to our sense of physical and psychological well-being, and to how happy or satisfied we are (Myers, 2000b).

For those deprived, the evidence is uncontroversial. Divorced people have higher mortality rates (Lynch, 1979), whereas social integration is associated with lower death rates (Berkman, 1995). Suicide rates are higher for the divorced (Rothberg & Jones, 1987), whereas breast cancer victims are more likely to survive with support groups (Spiegel, Bloom, Kraemer, & Gottheil, 1989). Other research has shown that social support strengthens our immune and cardiovascular systems (Oxman & Hull, 1997). The literature is very clear on this. With social support we

do better against all that life throws against us, without relationships we are likely to lead unhappy lives and die prematurely.

1.3 Biology versus culture

There is no more controversial issue than deciding in favor of an evolutionary or a cultural explanation of attraction. Evidence will show that women in all cultures tend to prefer partners who possess material resources, whereas men prefer youth and beauty. However, in the human species the male is also physically larger, stronger, and more dominant. This has led to male control over material resources. Since women are more vulnerable, they are naturally more concerned with meeting these material needs. (Eagly & Wood, 1999; Wood & Eagly, 2002). The cross-cultural consistency in gender preference may simply reflect size differences and the gender based control of economic resources.

The evolutionary perspective asserts that gender based preferences have reproductive reasons. Symmetrical men are thought attractive because they signal good reproductive health. Some intriguing studies show that women who ovulate show a preference for the smell derived from "symmetric" men (Gangestad & Thornhill, 1998; Thornstead & Gangestad, 1999). Women in the ovulatory phase also prefer men who have confident and assertive self presentations (Gangestad, Simpson, Cousins, Carvar-Apgar, & Christensen, 2004). There is no definitive solution to the biology versus culture argument. Perhaps what matters is, regardless of the origin, these gender differences exist and persist.

1.4 The experience of loneliness

The psychological distress we feel when deprived of social relationships is loneliness (Perlman & Peplau, 1998). For each individual there exists an optimal number of relationships depending on age, and perhaps other factors. We join clubs, political organizations, special interest groups, and religious organizations in an effort to remove deficit in social relationships. We can have many acquaintances, but still feel lonely. Some of us feel lonely being in a crowd where social relations are plentiful, but intimacy is absent. Clearly, the answer to loneliness is not just the quantity of relationships, but whether the connections satisfy emotional needs. Some people have few relationships, and enjoy the experience of being alone. If we find in ourselves good company, our needs for others are diminished. Those who have rich emotional lives are less dependent on others for satisfaction of emotional needs.

However, many people feel the wrenching experience of loneliness. In our society it is very prevalent (Perlman & Peplau, 1998) with 25 percent reporting feeling very lonely and alienated. Some causes of loneliness are situational due to common life changes in our mobile societies. We move often, and when we do we lose some of our relationships. For example, new opportunities for work require our presence in another part of the country or abroad, and young students attend universities away from family and friends. In these and in many other cases people lose their known social network and support groups. On some occasions we lose relationships permanently due to the death of loved ones, and the resulting grief can produce feelings of prolonged loneliness.

Other people suffer from chronic loneliness. These are people who describe themselves as "always lonely", with continuous feelings of sadness and loss. Chronically lonely people are often in poor health, and their lives are associated with many issues of social maladjustment including alcohol abuse and depression. Loneliness is a form of stress and is associated with increased health problems resulting in death (Hawkley, Burleson, Berntson, & Cacioppo, 2003).

Weiss (1973) described two forms of loneliness. Social loneliness is produced by the absence of an adequate social network of friends. The answer to that kind of loneliness is establishing new contacts, perhaps by involvement in the community. Emotional loneliness, on the other hand is the deprivation felt from the absence of intimacy in our lives. We all need at least one significant other with whom we can share intimate thoughts and feelings, whether in the form of a friend or spouse. An emotionally lonely person may be well connected, but still feel the gnawing disquiet even in the midst of a crowd.

As we noted in the introduction, our childhood experiences predispose us toward a variety of relationship problems or enjoyments of life. Children of the divorced are at risk for loneliness, and may develop shyness and lower self-esteem (Brehm, Miller, Perlman, & Campbell, 2002). On the other hand, being in a satisfying relationship is a primary guard against feelings of loneliness, this is especially true for those who commit themselves to lifelong relationships (e.g. marriage) (Pinquart, 2003).

Demographic variables also have an effect on loneliness. Those who are poor struggle more with all forms of insecurity, and have less possibilities for participating in social relationships. For example due to lack of money poor

people often cannot participate in social activities. Age is also a factor. Most may think that old age is a time of loneliness as people lose relationships to death or other causes. Some research (Perlman, 1990) however, shows that teenagers and young adults suffer most from isolation. Youth is a time when biology is insistent on connecting with others, particularly with a member of the opposite sex, and the absence of intimate relationships is felt most keenly. Some young people feel not only lonely, but rejected and ostracized. When that occurs we see the rejection play out in severe anti-social behavior as in the case of the school shootings of recent years (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001).

Interacting with people affects our emotional lives. We feel better being around others, particularly in close or romantic relationships (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003; Delespaul, Reis, & DeVries, 1996). Unhappiness in lonely people, however, may not be due to the absence of people alone. Unhappy friends are not rewarding to be around, and they might be lonely because they are unhappy, rather than unhappy because they are lonely (Gotlib, 1992).

Our need to belong is manifest in all cultures and societies. It is obviously functional to the infant who needs protection. However, adults also could not function in society without supportive relationships. These needs to belong are universal, and if not satisfied produce many negative results. Further, our relationships help form our self-concept (chapter 2) and our most significant behaviors. Our relationships largely determine how we think about the world, and our emotional well-being.

1.5 The beginnings of attachment

Infants demonstrate stubborn attachments to their primary caregiver. This is sometimes manifested by total devotion to the mother, gazing and smiling when in contact, crying when she leaves the room. As the child gets a little older the pattern may continue, initially having nothing to do with the rest of the family. The attachments of the child may gradually change and she or he becomes fond of the father, grandmother and other relatives, proceeding normally from long attachment to the mother, to establishing new relationships with other people in her or his life. Attachment refers to the positive emotions expressed in the presence of the caregiver, the feeling of security in the child, and the desire to be with the caregiver, initially exclusively, but later with other significant others (Bowlby, 1988; Cassidy & Shaver, 1999).

The personal security and emotional warmth offered to the child is different for each caregiver. Therefore infants develop different attachment styles that in turn have profound effect on adult relationships. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall (1978) proposed three infant attachment styles. *The secure attachment* occurs when the caregiver is available, and the infant feels secure, and when the child's emotional needs are met. *The avoidant attachment* occurs when the caregiver is detached, unresponsive to the infant, and when in some cases the infant is rejected. This type of attachment leads to premature detachment and self-reliance. When the parent figure is at times available, but at other times not, and therefore is inconsistent in meeting the emotional needs of the child, the result is *an anxious-ambivalent attachment* style. This type of infant may be anxious and often feel threatened.

Essentially the three attachment styles develop in response to the caregiver's emotional behavior; i.e., how consistent the emotional needs are met, and how secure the child feels as a consequence. From the perspective of evolutionary theory, attachment has obvious survival value for the infant. If mothers did not find the baby's cooing and smile endearing, and if the infant did not find her presence so reassuring, the lack of attachment could be disastrous for the infant. Infants and small children cannot survive without parental attention, so both the caregiver's behavior and infant's responses are very functional to the survival of the human species.

1.6 Attachment styles of adults

How comfortable are we with our relationships, and to what degree can we form secure and intimate relations with family, friends, and lovers? Hazan & Shaver (1987) found that adults continue with the same attachment styles adopted as infants. Whether an adult is secure in relationships, and can foster shared intimacy, depends on the three attachment styles described above. Psychoanalysis asserted that our childhood experiences have profound effects on adult behavior. The attachment theorist likewise believes that the relationship styles developed as infants are stable across a person's lifetime. Infant attachment styles determine whom we associate with as adults and the quality of our relationships. Some longitudinal studies have in fact demonstrated attachment styles developed early in life determine how we later relate to our love partners, our friends, and eventually our own children (Fraley & Spieker, 2003; Kirkpatrick & Hazan, 1994). Other researchers however, have found changes between infant and adult

attachment styles (Baldwin & Fehr, 1995). The infant's relationship with the primary caregiver is critical to the success of adult relationships. However, there is some hope that we can change from infant maladaptive styles to more functional adult behaviors and relationship satisfaction.

Life events may also influence our ability to form secure relationships. Traumatic events that separate us from beloved family members through death or divorce, affect our ability to develop intimate relations. So does childhood abuse, or family instability (Brennan & Shaver, 1993; Klohnen & Bera, 1998). Within intimate relationships the type of attachment has profound effects (Collins & Feeney, 2000; Fraley & Shaver, 1996). How we say goodbye, for example, at train stations and airports is reflective of our attachment styles. Avoidant romantic partners spent less time giving embraces, whereas those who were anxious expressed sadness and fear when separating. How we express attachment may vary with culture. Being reserved is not universally diagnostic of having an avoidant attachment style.

1.7 Secure attachment styles bring many benefits

Secure individuals bring out the best in others. Even when significant others display negative behaviors such as unjustified criticisms, the secure person will see that behavior in a positive light (Collins, 1996). A secure and positive outlook brings its own rewards. These include, not surprisingly, more relationship satisfaction. Secure partners are less likely to break up the relationship, and more likely to stay married, they experience fewer marital tensions, and generally fewer general negative outcomes (Shaver & Brennan, 1992; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). On the other hand, anxious people are more likely to perceive threat. They view life events in pessimistic ways leading to depression, substance abuse, and eating disorders. Our early bonds with caregivers matter a great deal as we move on in life. These attachment styles have significant effects on our current relationships, and our own sense of well-being. Secure life styles based on a good start in life produce healthier relationships, and good personal health.

2. Culture and socialization produce different relationships

Fiske (1991; 1992) proposed a theory of relationships that suggest that we behave in four distinct ways in defining who we are, how we distribute resources, and how we make moral judgments. A *communal relationship* put the interest of the group ahead of that of the individual. Types of groups in this category include families, or close social allies. In families what we contribute depends on what we

can offer, and what is right to receive depends on the needs of the individual informed by benevolence and caring. In a family, children are different and require different resources. One child may be intellectually gifted, and parental care may be shown by support for education. Disproportionate support for one child may result in fewer resources for another child. In communal groups or families, resource distribution is decided by the needs of each member, and desire to help all.

In the *authority ranking groups* the status and ranking hierarchy is what matters. Members of these groups are aware of the status differences, and roles tend to be clearly specified. Military organizations are examples, but so are modern capitalist organizations that depend on a top down authoritarian structure. Tribal organizations are usually also authoritarian, and the chief determines who does what, and in what way performance is rewarded or punished.

The third type of relationship is *equality matching*. These relationships are based on equality in resources and preferred outcomes. Many friendships and marriages are governed by some norm of equality. Members should have on the average the same rights, constraints or freedoms. The essential question asked in response to any requests or demands is: is it fair? Is it also applicable to the capitalist market system based on the market pricing relationships. Fourth, relationships emerging from the market economy are governed in principle by *equity*, by what is considered fair. Salaries should be based on merit and equity, where the compensation received is proportional to the quality and effort made by the individual (for example if you cannot pay for medical help, then you get none). While Fiske claims these four types are universal, some relationships are emphasized in a particular culture. Capitalist societies rely on market pricing relationships, and increasingly we are seeing similar relationships in current and formerly socialist countries.

2.1 The child in the relationship

Many social psychologists find attachment theory useful in understanding the relationships between adults both platonic and romantic (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). They are interested in what ways adult love relationships are similar to the attachment patterns of infants. It seems that the intense fascination with the love object, parent or lover, is similar. The adult lover may gaze with intense fascination into the eyes of the beloved, much as the infant gazes into the eyes of the mother. Lovers feel distress at separation, as do infants when the mother

leaves the room. In both situations strong efforts are made to be together, spend time together and avoid separation.

Adult love relationships also fall into the three attachment patterns described for children. One study showed that the majority of US citizens (59 %) are securely attached, whereas 25 percent are avoidant, and 11 percent are anxious-ambivalent (Mickelson, Kessler, & Shaver, 1997). There are differences as well, as adult relationships involve reciprocal care, and in some cases sexual attraction. Still, the mother would not gaze at the infant unless she found it very rewarding, and there is some reciprocal behavior there. The mother loves her child and is rewarded by adorable gazing and smiles of the infant.

Some psychologists feel that this early model of love becomes a working framework for later relationships. The infant who has secure attachments with parents comes to believe that similar relationships can be established as an adult, that people are good and can be trusted. On the other hand the anxious-ambivalent attachment may produce fear, rejection of intimacy, and distrust in the relationship in the adult. The burden of the generations occurs when a parent passes on to the next generation the attachment style he developed as an infant. The rejection a mother experienced as an infant may become the working model for her child rearing when she is a parent.

There is hope for victims of dysfunctional attachment styles. Sometimes an adult love relationship is so powerful that it can overcome any negative experiences from childhood. On the whole however, absent any major event affecting attachment, there is great stability in attachment styles across the life span (Fraley, 2002; Collins & Feeney, 2004). Secure adults are comfortable with intimacy and feel worthy of receiving affection from another person. As a consequence, they also perceive happiness and joy in their love relationships built on self-disclosure and shared activities. It should come as no surprise that secure individuals also have positive perceptions of parents as loving and fair. Later in life secure people develop more satisfying relationships. Secure people experience more satisfying intimacy and enjoyment, and feel positive emotions in their relationships (Tidwell, Reis, & Shaver, 1996). When life becomes stressful, secure individuals provide more mutual support, and are more effective and responsive to the partners needs (Feeney & Collins, 2001; Feeney & Hohaus, 2001). Avoidant persons, on the other hand, are often uncomfortable in getting intimate, and never develop full trust in the love partner. They spend much time

denying love needs, do not self disclose, and place more importance on being independent and self-reliant. The anxious- ambivalent person wants to become intimate, but worry that the other person does not feel the same. Anxious adults tend to be obsessed with the object of love, experience emotional highs and lows, feel intense sexual attraction, and jealousy. They often feel unappreciated by their partners, and view their parents as being unhappy.

2.2 The transfer effect in our relationships

The transfer effect is well known in clinical psychology. In the effort to help the patient the therapist allows the patient to transfer feelings from some other significant other to the therapist. Temporarily the therapist becomes the father figure, or some other significant person in the therapeutic relationship. We have all met people who remind us of others. The authors have all had the experience of meeting someone who was certain to have met one of us before, or believed we were closely related to someone they knew. Does the professor of this class remind you of a favored uncle or aunt? Chances are that you will transfer positive feelings toward the professor, and with such an auspicious beginning the outcome may be very good for your study. The relational self-theory is based on the idea that our prior relationships determine how we feel toward those who remind us of such significant others from our past.

Andersen & Chen (2002) developed the idea of relational self-theory to demonstrate how prior relationships affect our current cognitions and interactions with others. They hypothesized that when we encounter someone who reminds us of a significant other from the past we are likely to activate a relational self that determines our interactions with the new person. Meeting people who remind us of past significant others even has emotional consequences. In one study the researchers assessed the participant's emotional expressions after being exposed to information that resembled a positive or negative significant other from the past (Andersen, Reznik, & Manzella, 1996). The participants expressed more positive emotion as judged by facial expressions after being exposed to information about a past positive significant other, and more negative facial expressions after exposure to the information of a negative person.

Our past relationships also determine our current interactions. When we interact with someone who reminds us of someone else it affects our self-concept and behavior (Hinkley & Andersen, 1996). Encountering such a person alters how we

think of ourselves, and the past relationship may affect our behavior at the automatic level (Andersen, Reznik, & Manzella, 1996). This finding helps explain our preference for some individuals, and our rejection of others. Positive emotions result from being in the presence of people who remind us of previous positive relations. However, we should remind ourselves that these gut feelings are not the consequence of actual behavior or interactions. Any immediate dislike may have more to do with unpleasant relations of the past, than the person with whom you are currently interacting.

2.3 Social cognition and previous relationships

We construe the world through processes of social cognition. Previous relationships affect how we come about this construction of the world. This is logical when we realize that relationships form the basis of many of our memories. In one study, for instance, participants were better able to remember information based on relationships than other sources of information (Sedikides, Olsen, & Reis, 1993).

We tend to be optimistic about self and close friends believing that the outcomes of life will be positive for ourselves and those with whom we relate (Perlof & Fetzer, 1986), and we include close others in our attributional biases assessing more positive traits and behaviors to partners in close relationships. Success for self and friends is attributed to dispositional causes, while failures are attributed to the situational environment (Fincham & Bradbury, 1993). Close others become in a very real sense a part of the self-concept (Aron & Aron, 1997; Aron & Fraley, 1999). A relationship helps to expand the self-concept by utilizing the resources and characteristics of the other person. These characteristics then become part of the self-concept. This became very visible to us when a close follower of a prominent leader we knew took on characteristics of the admired leader, even to the point of mimicking his speech patterns. Later this same individual married the former wife of the leader, and served as the director of the leader's institute. Relationships are functional because of the self-concept expansion (Wegner, Erber, & Raymond, 1991). So-called transactive memory is demonstrated when partners know each other so well, that they can complete stories told by the other partner, and remember more information than two randomly paired people. Partners also collaborate in remembering facts. In driving to locations one partner may have good understanding of direction and long distance goals, and the other may remember specific street locations. Collaborative memory is based

on such close relationships. Social cognition is central to an understanding of social psychology and will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

3. Liking someone: the start of relationships

Why do we like some people and not others? Our past relationships with parents and close significant others have profound effects on attachment and liking, but that only partly answers the question of attraction. Another answer to what motivates people to embark on a relationship is its contribution to survival and success. However, the average person probably does not evaluate attraction to others on such a calculating basis. That is to say, when it comes to understanding deeper levels of motivation, we like those who are associated with rewarding events and whose behavior is intrinsically rewarding. We dislike those whose behaviors are a burden to us. At the level of motivation, conscious or unconscious, we seek to maximize our rewards and minimize costs. We seek relationships and continue in these if the rewards exceed the costs and therefore yield a profit (Kelley, 1979; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult, 1980).

3.1 Antecedents of attraction

Propinquity, similarity and physical attraction have been studied extensively by social psychologists. Many would consider these to be obvious variables in interpersonal attraction. Yet, in our culture we say, “beauty is only skin deep”, thereby denigrating the potential influence of physical attractiveness. As we shall see beauty is much more than skin deep, and along with similarity and propinquity have profound effects on whom we like, and on our relationships and social successes.

3.2 Propinquity: we like those living near us

Some of the very earliest research on attraction focused on the proximity of relationships (Festinger, Schachter, & Back, 1950). These early researchers performed a sociometric study in a housing complex for married students at MIT called Westgate West. The residents were asked to name their three closest friends. The majority of the respondents named people who lived in the same building, even though other housing units were nearby. Even within the building proximity was a striking factor, with 41 percent naming their next-door neighbors as best friends, 22 percent named those living two doors away, and only 10 percent pointed to those living at the end of hallways as close friends. The critical factor was the chance of coming in contact. Festinger et al. called this functional distance.

Although there are exceptions when we come to dislike people living next door the result of Festinger and colleagues is a very optimistic finding of social psychology. It suggests that most people have the capacity for friendships if only given the opportunity. This might even be extended to the most intimate relationships. Rather than waiting for the one and only knight on the white horse, or Cinderella, as romantic illusions would have you do, propinquity findings would suggest that there are millions of potential partners if only given the chance for encounters.

3.3 Mere exposure and familiarity

What is it about being given the chance to meet that leads to liking? Some research would indicate that proximity brings on a sense of familiarity that leads to liking (Borstein, 1989; Moreland & Zajonc, 1982; Zajonc, 1968). In the literature it is called the "mere exposure effect". The more we see people the more we like them, so proximity is about familiarity. Then why does familiarity produce liking? Is there some sense of security that comes from knowing that the familiar produces no harm? Is it an evolutionary mechanism where the familiar reduces threat? Do we have an innate fear of the unfamiliar? Are strangers a threat, because we do not know enough about them to predict their behavior? Perhaps it is. Perhaps we like those who are familiar, because we can predict their behavior and they are non-threatening. Milgram (1970) suggested that the fear of living in large cities among strangers was eased by seeing the same faces or "familiar strangers" – as they passed on their way to work.

A study by Moreland and Beach (1992) showed that the "mere exposure" produced liking. They had female confederates attend class sitting in the first row. There was otherwise no interaction between the female confederates, the instructor, or other students. Yet, when asked at the end of the term, the students rated these women highly for both liking and attractiveness. The literature supports the idea that familiarity promotes liking (Bornstein, 1989; Moreland & Zajonc, 1982). There is one caveat. If you find yourself instantly disliking what you consider an obnoxious person, exposure will intensify that effect (Swap, 1977).

Still a large amount of literature has been published supporting the "mere exposure" effect (Borstein, 1989; Zajonc, 1968). For example there are strong correlations between the frequency of exposure to a variety of objects and liking. Flowers that are mentioned more frequently in our literature are liked more than

those mentioned less frequently, e.g., violets are liked more than hyacinths. People, at least in the US, also like pine trees more than birches, and like frequently mentioned cities more than those less well known. Zajonc argues that it is the mere exposure effect. However, on the other hand perhaps people write more about violets than hyacinths because they are liked more? How do we explain the preferences for different letters in the English alphabet that correspond to the frequency of appearance in writing (Alluisi & Adams, 1962)? We also tend to see letters in our own name more frequently, and have a greater liking for these letters (Hoorens, Nuttin, Herman, & Pavakanun, 1990).

In another study the more the participants were exposed to words they did not understand (Turkish words or Chinese pictographs) the more they liked them (Zajonc, 1968). Still, even "mere exposure" effects must have an explanation in term of rewards or the absence of threats that familiarity brings from repeated exposure. Zajonc (2001) recently explained the "mere exposure' effect as a form of classical conditioning. The stimulus is paired with something desirable, namely the absence of any aversive conditions. Therefore over time we learn to approach those objects considered "safe' and avoid those that are unfamiliar.

Computers are often used to make contact these days. Keeping in mind that it is the "functional distance" which is important, how does computer technology contribute to establishing new relationships? (Lea & Spears, 1995). All modern tools of communication can be used either for ethical or unethical purposes. There are predators online who lie or manipulate to take advantage of innocent young people. It is not safe. Online the individual has no way to confirm the truth of what another person is saying. Person-to-person we can check for all the nonverbal signals that we have learned from experience indicating truthfulness and trust. On the other hand, we do not have to worry much about rejection in Internet relationships, so perhaps we have less to loose and therefore can be more honest online? We can more quickly establish intimate relationships, but we may in the process idealize the other person. Only face-to-face can we decide what is real, and even then we may idealize, although as we will see this can be healthy for long term relationship survival.

Proximity effects means that we often marry people who live in the same neighborhoods, or work for the same firm (Burr, 1973; Clarke, 1952). The variable is optimistic about meeting someone because our world of potential relationships is unlimited. If our eyes are open we can find a mate somewhere

close by, certainly within walking distance. Perhaps proximity also points to other forms of interpersonal similarity. Generally people living in the same neighborhoods often also come from similar social classes, ethnic groups, and in some parts of the world from the same religious groups. Proximity may therefore also be another way of pointing to similarity as a basis for liking. Familiarity provides the basis for sharing, and the gradual building of trust (Latané, Liu, Bonevento, & Zheng, 1995). The vast majority of those who have had memorable interactions leading to intimacy lived either at the same residence or within one mile from the trusted person.

The mere exposure effect can also be discerned in peoples' reactions to their own faces. Faces are not completely symmetrical as most of us display some asymmetry where the left side of the face does not perfectly match the right. Our face to a friend looks different from that we see our selves. The mirror image with which we are familiar is reverse from that which the world sees. If familiarity or mere exposure has an effect, our friends should like the face to which they are accustomed, whereas the individual should also like the mirror image with which he is familiar. Mita, Dermer, & Knight (1977) showed that the participants liked best the face with which they were most familiar.

3.4 Proximity and anticipating the cost of negative relationships

Proximity, moreover, reduces the cost of interaction. It takes a great deal of effort and expense to maintain long distance relationships. As a result of our work we have relationships in different parts of the world. As the years go by it is more and more difficult to continue with friendships that when we were young we thought would last forever. When you do not see someone in the course of daily activities it takes more effort, and may be costly in other ways. Long distance relationships take more dedication, time, and expense.

Proximity may exert pressures toward liking. It is difficult living or working with someone we dislike. That cognitive dissonance may cause us to remove stress by stronger efforts of liking the individual. Therefore, even the anticipation of interaction will increase liking, because we want to get along (Berscheid, Graziano, Monson, & Dermer, 1976). When we know we will interact with someone over time we are likely to focus on the positive qualities, as the alternative is too costly. Think of working with a boss you do not like, how costly that could be? Therefore we put our best foot forward when we meet people who may become part of our daily lives. Even the anticipation of interaction with

others produce liking. Why else would people make extraordinary efforts to be nice at "get acquainted parties" at work, or in new neighborhoods? Putting your best foot forward is a strategy to produce reciprocal liking.

4. Similarity: rubbing our back

We like to be massaged, and therefore like those who validate and reinforce who we are and what we believe. The research literature supports this proposition (Bercheid & Reis, 1998; Ptacek & Dodge, 1995; Rosenblatt & Greenberg, 1988). It will come as no surprise that we tend to find our spouse among those who are similar to us on many different characteristics including race, religion, and political persuasion (Burgess & Wallin, 1953). Showing again the opportunistic nature of our most intimate relationships, similarity in social class and religion were the strongest predictors of liking.

Similarity of religion or social class may just be frequency or proximity factors, as the likelihood of exposure is greater for these categories. Similarity in physical attractiveness also plays a role and personality characteristics, although to a lesser extent (Buss, 1984). In a classic study, Newcomb (1961) showed that after a year of living together, student's liking of roommates was determined by how similar they were. In other studies where the participants thought they were rating another participant (in fact a bogus participant) either similar or dissimilar, the similar person was liked more (Byrne, 1961; Tan & Singh, 1995). The similarity effect holds true across a variety of relationships including friendship and marriage.

Similarity in education and even age seems to determine attraction (Kupersmidt, DeRosier, & Patterson, 1995). Not only are friends similar in social class and education, but also gender, academic achievement, and social behavior. A meta-analysis of 80 separate studies showed moderate relationships between similarity and attraction (AhYun, 2002). Today dating services are established on the principle that similarity is good and functional in relationships. A good match means finding someone who is similar. Dating services try to match after background checks and participant surveys of values, attitudes, and even physical appearance (Hill & Peplau, 1998). Those participants who were matched in attitudes toward gender roles and sexual behavior had the most lasting relationships, one year and even 15 years later.

4.1 How does similarity work?

As mentioned above similarity is a potent variable in friendship and mate selection. What are some of the mechanisms that produce this effect? Similarity gives a common platform for understanding, and that in turn promotes feelings of intimacy essential for trust, empathy and long lasting relationships (Aron, 1988; Kalick & Hamilton, 1988). If the issue is important only those with the same or similar values are acceptable. So attraction is selective and we rarely encounter those whose views are different. In relationships where the participant committed to someone with different values, or where the parties successfully hide their views, similarity could still be the outcome. Typically long time married couples have similar views because over time they persuade the partner to change his/her mind. Social influence may also change our views over time and produce more similarity.

We find pleasure in our relationships with similar others because they confirm our beliefs and the value of our person. When we meet with likeminded people, they validate our inner most values and expressed attitudes. The rest of the world may cast doubt on our beliefs, and may question who we are as persons, but the likeminded validate our ideologies and personal achievements. Even our physiological arousal corresponds to our liking someone (Clore & Gormly, 1974). Similarity allows for functional relationships and for more effective communication. When we are with those who are similar, communication is effortless, since we do not have to be on guard for disagreement or rejection.

4.2 A common social environment

Of course the social environment also has a selectivity bias. People meet likeminded people at Church, or those with similar occupational interests at work. In many cases the apparent similarity is caused by the selectivity of our social environment. A politically progressive person does not attend meetings of the Ku Klux Klan (a racist group) in order to find a soul mate. A longitudinal study of married couples showed that couples became more and more similar over time as they continued to persuade and experience a shared environment (Gruber-Baldini, Shai, & Willis, 1995).

We choose our friends from our social environment. In college we find our friends among those who are on the same track academically and can be of mutual aid (Kubitschek & Hallinan, 1998). Being in the same environment produces shared experiences and memories that serve to bond people. We perceive similarity and from that conclude that the other person will like us, thereby initiating

communication (Berscheid, 1985). It is reinforcing to meet someone with similar views, as they validate our feelings of being right (Byrne & Clore, 1970). At the same time and for the same reasons we find those who disagree unpleasant (Rosenbaum, 1986; Houts, Robins, & Huston, 1996). As a result of having a common basis, similarity in personality traits provides for smooth communications and interactions between people, therefore similarity is less costly.

4.3 We like those who like us: reciprocal liking

Reciprocal liking is even a more powerful determinant of liking than similarity. In one study a young woman expressed an interest in a male participant by eye contact, listening with rapt attention, and leaning forward with interest. Even when told she had different views the male participants still expressed great liking for the woman (Gold, Ryckman, & Mosley, 1984). Regardless whether we show by means of verbal or non-verbal responses, the most significant factor determining our liking of another person is the belief that the person likes us (Berscheid & Walster, 1978; Kenny, 1994). When we come to believe someone likes us we behave in ways that encourage mutual liking. We express more warmth, and are more likely to disclose, and behave in a pleasant way. So liking someone works like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Expressing liking elicits pleasant behavior and reciprocal liking (Curtis & Miller, 1986).

4.4 Personal characteristics associated with liking

Physical attractiveness is very culturally bound. In some societies voluptuous women are considered beautiful, while in our society the fashion industry and the media define attractiveness as being thin. When it comes to personality based characteristics two factors lead to liking. We like people who show warmth toward others, and people who are socially competent (Lydon, Jamieson, & Zanna, 1988). Warm people are those who have an optimistic outlook on life and people. We like them because they are a source of encouragement in an otherwise discouraging world. Warm people are a pleasure to be around and therefore rewarding. In one study (Folkes & Sears, 1977) the researchers had the participants listen to an interviewee evaluate a variety of objects including movie stars, cities, political leaders. Sometimes the interviewees expressed negativity toward these objects, in other cases positive views. The participants expressed a greater liking for the interviewee who expressed positive views, i.e. displayed warmth toward the rated people and objects.

4.5 Communication skills

Likewise we like more the socially skilled. Social intelligence can be demonstrated by being a good conversationalist. Skilled speakers were seen as more likeable, whereas boring communicators were not only rated as less likeable, but also as less friendly and more impersonal (Leary, Rogers, Canfield, & Coe, 1986). Obviously communication skills are essential to long-lasting relationships. We are especially fond of people whose ways of relating to others are similar to our own (Burleson & Samter, 1996). Those with high communication skills saw interactions as complex with highly valued psychological components. People with low skill levels saw communications as more straightforward and less complicated. To communicate at the same level is a very important aspect of attraction and liking. Operating at the same skill level is rewarding, as we feel empathy and understanding. Those who do not share the same level of communications are less likely to develop long-lasting relationships (Burleson, 1994; Duck & Pittman, 1994).

4.6 Complementarity: Do opposites attract?

The importance of similarity suggests "birds of a feather flock together". But are we not also told that opposites attract? Do tall dark men not prefer short attractive blonds? What about the assertive person meeting the less dominant individual? Or the person who has a rich fantasy life marrying the realist? Are there not times when opposites attract because in some ways we complement each other? Certainly, for sexual relations the vast majority of humankind seeks the opposite sex, only a minority is attracted to similarity. The masculine and feminine is the supreme example from nature that opposites attract.

Complementary personality traits produce liking for only a few personality traits (Levinger, 1964; Winch, 1955). On the whole, however, most studies fail to find evidence that complementarities attract in relationships (Antill, 1983; Levinger, Senn, & Jorgensen, 1970; Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988). When complementarities lead to attraction, it appears to be a rare exception to the dominant effect of similarity. Even in cases where personalities are complementary on some traits, they have many more similar traits in common.

4.7 Ethnicity and relationships

Ethnic identification is only one dimension of similarity. Interracial couples are similar in other significant ways, in attitudes and values. The dissimilarity is, however, more prominent and is judged more prominently by society which affects an individual evaluation of the dissimilarity. But the significance of

similarity in interethnic friendships is less important today than in former times. For example more and more US citizens are dating and marrying outside their own racial and ethnic groups (Fears & Deane, 2001). Attitudes toward interracial relationships and marriage are becoming increasingly accepted in society, and interracial marriages are on the increase. The vast majority of all racial groups in the US approve of interracial marriages today (Goodheart, 2004).

The studies which support interracial tolerance in intimate relationships appear to differ with the public opinion survey to be cited in chapter 9 which indicated parents prefer similarity of race for their daughters. The conclusion of the public opinion survey was that social norms now favor such relationships. However, when the respondents were asked something more personal namely, how would they feel if their daughter would be part of an interracial marriage, the outcome was slightly different. The respondents preferred that their daughter not be a part of an interracial relationship. People are willing to give the normative correct responses to surveys, but hold private and subtler negative attitudes when it affects members of their own family. It must be said, however, that negative evaluations of interracial relationships occur before a relationship is established. Once an interracial relationship is a fact, many opinions change in favor of family harmony and acceptance.

5. Physical Attractiveness: A recommendation for success!
Physical attraction is a powerful determinant of liking and has lifelong benefits. Attend any social event and who do you first notice? If you are a heterosexual man, you will first notice the attractive women, and if you are a woman your eyes will feast on the handsome men. As we shall see there are little differences between the sexes in the appeal of physical attractiveness. First impressions are important, as without these few people would initiate contact. So while physical attractiveness is important in the early phases of a relationship, the benefits continue in a variety of ways.

Notwithstanding the proverb “beauty is only skin deep”, most people behave strongly to physical attraction. There may even be a biological basis as preferences for attractive appearance occur early in life. Fortunately “love is blind”, and we also tend to find those whom we love to be attractive (Kniffin & Wilson, 2004). Since we idealize the beloved we observe beauty where others fail to see it (Murray & Holmes, 1997). Then there is always the case of the “ugly duckling” that later grew into a beautiful swan. Physical development sometimes

brings beauty later in life (Zebrowitz, 1997).

In a now classic study (Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, & Rottman, 1966) the researchers randomly assigned freshmen at the University of Minnesota for dates to a dance. The students had previously taken a number of personality measures and aptitude tests. Participants had also been rated independently on physical attractiveness. Having spent a short time dancing and talking, the couples were asked to indicate liking and desire to meet the person again. Perhaps there was insufficient time to evaluate the complex aspects of the date's personality, but the overriding factor in liking was the physical attractiveness of the date. It is also common to think that men pay more attention to women's attractiveness than women do to male bodies. However, in this study there were no differences as female as well as males expressed preferences for physical attractiveness.

5.1 Women like attractive men: Imagine!

Despite the common stereotype that women are attracted to the deeper aspects of a person's character, such as intelligence and competence, women, like men, are impressed by physical attractiveness. They pay as much attention to a handsome man as men do to beautiful women (Duck, 1994a; 1994b; Speed & Gangestad, 1997; Woll, 1986). However, a meta-analysis showed a slightly greater effect for physical attractiveness in men than in women (Feingold, 1990), and some studies supported the stereotype of stronger male preferences for physical attractiveness (Buss, 1989; Howard, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1987). The contradictions are easy to explain when we remember the different norms governing the attractiveness issue for men and women. Men are more likely to respond to the common and accepted stereotype that physical attractiveness is important for men, whereas women respond to their stereotype that other traits matter. But in actual behavioral preferences there are few differences. In sexual preferences both men and women rate physical attractiveness as the single most important variable (Regan & Berscheid, 1997).

Physical attractiveness probably has biological roots as both genders think it is the single most important trait in eliciting sexual desire (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, Shebilske, & Lundgren, 1993; Regan & Berscheid, 1995). In one study women participants looked at a photograph of either an attractive or unattractive man, and were led to believe they spoke with him on the phone (Andersen & Bem, 1981). The two photos were used to elicit the physical attractiveness or unattractiveness stereotype. The respondents in both the attractive and

unattractive conditions spoke to the same person.

The purpose here, as in the previous study with men (Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977), was to see if the women's perceptions of likeability would change depending on whom they thought they were speaking with, an attractive or unattractive man. The "beautiful is good" stereotype also worked for women. When they believed they spoke to an attractive man they perceived him to be more sociable and likeable, compared to when they thought they "talked" to the unattractive man. Later meta-analyses across numerous studies (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Feingold, 1992; Langlois, Kalakanis, Rubenstein, Larson, Hallam, & Smoot, 2000) produced convincing evidence that physical attractiveness is an important factor also in women's lives.

5.2 As society sees it: the social advantages of the physically attractive

For both sexes and in nearly all the arenas of life the physical attractiveness of both sexes has profound advantages. The attractive person is more popular with both sexes (Curran & Lippold, 1975; Reis, Nezlek, & Wheeler, 1980). In the new age of video dating, participants show strong preferences for attractive potential dates (Woll, 1986). Are those who seek out video dating more shallow? Have they impossible high standards encouraged by Playboy and Glamour magazine? Perhaps, but attractiveness continues to be a positive trait across many forms of social interactions. When an attractive and unattractive confederate is presented as "author" of a novel, the novel is judged better if the participants believe it written by the "attractive author" (Cash & Trimer, 1984; Maruyama & Miller, 1981). Studies have also demonstrated direct effects in the workplace. Individuals make more money the higher their rating on physical attractiveness (Frieze, Oleson, & Russell, 1991; Roszell, Kennedy, & Grabb, 1989). Good looking victims are more likely to receive assistance (West & Brown, 1975), and good looking criminals to receive lower sentence (Stewart, 1980).

5.3 Some gender differences

However, the physical attractiveness factor may be muted for women, and compromises are sometimes made when evaluating a desirable long-term relationship involving the raising of children and the creation of a family. In the committed partnership women recognize also the importance of other traits like integrity, income potential, and stability. They are therefore more willing to marry a partner who is less than perfect in physical appearance. Perhaps for similar reasons women also prefer older partners, whereas men have a preference for

youthful women. If the goal of the relationship is family development, women also pay more attention to the economic potential of their partners, whereas this is an indifferent issue for most men (Sprecher, Sullivan, & Hatfield, 1994). For men physical attractiveness is a necessity, whereas for women, while still important, it is more like a luxury. A partner's status and access to resources on the other hand were considered a necessity for women, but a luxury for men (Li, Bailey, Kenrick, & Linsenmeier, 2002). In selecting long term partners, women gave more importance to a man's warmth, trustworthiness, and status, whereas men placed more emphasis on the potential partners attractiveness and vitality (Fletcher, Tither, O'Loughlin, Friesen, & Overall, 2004). So there are some consistent gender differences.

5.4 What do gender differences in partner preference mean?

Evolutionary psychology would assert that gender differences exist because they are functional to the survival of the species. "What leads to maximum reproductive success?" is the question posed by evolutionary psychology (Buss & Kenrick, 1998). Women invest much effort and time in bringing a child into the world. To be successful in reproduction requires that women have stable partners with adequate economic and other resources. In the days of the caveman that meant a good cave, warm fire, and ability to provide game. In our day women look for good earning potential. Men on the other hand invest little, and can impregnate several females. For men therefore the key factor is physical attractiveness. In our evolutionary history men learned that youth and attractiveness is more sexually arousing, and incidentally these qualities in women are associated with fertility and health – men are not looking for fertility and health in the first place, but for good sex.

A sociocultural perspective points to the different roles played by the genders historically (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Men have throughout history been the providers and builders of material comfort; women have been the homemakers. The greater interest in a man's economic potential grew from the unfavorable position of women who even today earn less than men for comparable work. As noted some cross-cultural data (Eagly & Wood, 1999), sex differences in preferences for mates have shifted as women have made socio-economic gains. Other research shows that preferences leading to mate selection have changed, especially over the last number of decades of improved socioeconomic possibilities for women (Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, & Larson, 2001). Men in

many Western countries now think it is a good idea that women earn money, and both sexes place more importance on physical attractiveness. So perhaps physical attractiveness was always important for women also, but confounded by the need for socio-economic support.

5.5 Selecting our mates: gender specific wanted ads in newspapers
Evolution has instilled the majority of both sexes with the desire to reproduce with mates who signal good reproductive health. Heterosexual men and women differ however, in the burden of bringing children into the world, and looking after their babies during the most vulnerable period. This gender difference would suggest that women would be more selective in their choices, as they have more at stake. In all societies studied men are more promiscuous, and women exercise more care in selecting partners, especially for long term relationships (Schmitt, 2003).

Men are attracted to fertility and physical qualities that happen to be associated with fertility, and therefore toward feminine features signaling youth (Singh, 1993). Women on the other hand, with a shorter biological clock, intuitively look for men who have the capacity and desire to invest in their children, and have a good economic future. In fact this difference can be observed weekly in the personal ads that appear in many local papers. Typically men seek youth and attractiveness whereas women seek accomplishments and economic resources (Kenrick & Keefe, 1992; Rajecki, Bledso, & Rasmussen, 1991). Support for this gender difference was found cross-culturally in a study of 37 different societies (Buss, 1989). In all cultures men rated physical attractiveness as more important in a mate, and they preferred younger partners. Women on the other hand preferred partners who were older, and who could provide material resources.

Consistent with the sociocultural perspective, gender differences in mate preferences have shifted somewhat across many cultures as women have gained more socio-economic and political power (Eagly & Wood, 1999). However, these recent changes have not removed fully the historical gender preferences. Men still rank good looks and health higher than women, and women rank the financial prospects of potential mates higher than men. These results call for an interactionist point of view. Gender differences are a function of both our evolutionary past, and our socio-cultural heritage, and it is unlikely we can separate one from the other.

5.6 Social attributions: What we believe about the physical attractive

All cultures have stereotypes that attribute positive qualities to the physically attractive. Dion, Berscheid, & Walster (1972) call this the "what is beautiful is good" attribution. Others have also found support for this common stereotype (Ashmore & Longo, 1995; Calvert, 1988). Meta-analyses have demonstrated the common belief that attractive people have higher levels of social competence, are more extraverted, happier, more assertive, and more sexual (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991, Feingold, 1991).

Even young children at a very early age have an awareness of who is and is not attractive. Commonly accepted stereotypes attribute many positive traits and behaviors to the physically attractive. In several experiments the participants were asked to rate a variety of photographs varying in attractiveness (Bar-Tel & Saxe, 1976; Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Feingold, 1992b). Persons rated attractive were perceived to be happier, more intelligent, as having more socio-economic success, and possessing desirable personality traits. This undeserved stereotype is consistent across cultures but varies according to cultural values.

For women more than for men, physical attractiveness is a door opener. Just a look at women's journals, and the obsessive concern with beauty and weight suggests a differential advantage accrues to attractive women. This affects not only personal interactions, but also treatment on the job (Bar-Tal & Saxe, 1976). Over the centuries, physical attractiveness for women was tied to their survival, and social success. It is no wonder then that these historical facts have created a much stronger preoccupation with attractiveness for women (Fredrickson & Roberts (1997).

Some studies show that even from birth babies differ in their relative attractiveness. Mothers provide more affection and play more with their attractive infants than with those babies deemed less attractive (Langois, Ritter, Casey, & Sawin, 1995), and nursery school teachers see them as more intelligent (Martinek, 1981). Many rewards accrue to those deemed attractive in our society. While still infants the attractive child is more popular with other children (Dion & Berscheid, 1974). So very early in life the attractive child is given many benefits, including the perception that he/she posses many positive traits and behaviors (Dion, 1972).

There must be a biological basis when, even before interaction or experience, infants themselves show strong preferences for attractive faces (Langlois, Roggman, Casey, Ritter, Rieser-Danner, & Jenkins, 1987;Langlois, Ritter, Roggman, & Vaughn, 1991). Infant preferences for attractive faces held true for both adults as well as for the faces of other infants. Even when presented to strangers, the infants showed preference for the attractive face, and were more content to play and interact with the attractive stranger. On the other hand they turned away three times as often from the stranger deemed unattractive as from the one rated attractive (Langlois, Roggman, & Rieser-Danner, 1990).

Being given such great advantages at birth, it is no wonder that a person's relative attractiveness has an effect on development and self-confidence. The physically attractive do in fact display more contentment and satisfaction with life, and feel more in control of their fates (Diener, Wolsic, & Fujita, 1995; Umberson & Hughes, 1987). Being treated so nice from birth onward produces the confidence and traits that encourage further positive interactions and rewards (Langlois et al, 2000). Other people by their positive regards create a self-fulfilling prophecy as the attractive person responds with the expected socially skillful behavior.

5.7 The universality of the "beautiful is good" attribution

Is the stereotype present in various cultures? Research would tend to support this contention (Albright, Malloy, Dong, Kenny, Fang, Winquist, & Yu, 1997; Chen, Shaffer, & Wu, 1997; Wheeler & Kim, 1997). Although beauty is a door opener in all cultures, each culture may vary as to what traits are considered desirable. Some traits associated with attractiveness like being strong and assertive are especially valued in North American samples. Other traits such as being sensitive, honest, and generous are valued in Korean cultures. Some traits like happy, poised, extraverted, and sexually warm and responsive are liked in all the cultures studied.

5.8 Physical attractiveness has immediate impact and provides vicarious prestige

Experimental research shows that vicarious prestige is derived from association with an attractive person (Sigall & Landy, 1973). In one study the participant's impression of an experimental confederate was influenced by whether the collaborator was seated with an attractive or unattractive woman. When with an attractive woman the confederate was perceived as both likeable and confident. There are predictable gender differences. Being with an attractive woman has

more positive consequences for a man, than being with an attractive man has for a woman (Bar-Tal & Saxe, 1976; Hebl & Mannix, 2003). US society has coined the term “trophy wife” to demonstrate the appreciation of a man, usually wealthy, being with a young and attractive spouse.

5.9 Cultural differences and consistencies in physical attractiveness: Reproductive health

There are some variations among cultures as to what is considered attractive. Western society has changed over time in evaluation of female beauty. Like mentioned before, just a short historical time ago voluptuous women were considered attractive whereas today the skinny woman is considered more alluring. In different cultures there is also different preferences for skin color and ornaments (Hebl & Heatherton, 1997). In the China of the past, artificially bound small feet of women were thought sexually stimulating and in other cultures women lengthened their necks by adding rings and stretching that body part. So there are cultural variations in what is considered beautiful and attractive. However, there is also considerable cross-cultural agreement on what is physically attractive as there are features of the human face and body that have universal appeal (Langlois et al, 2000; Rhodes, Yoshikawa, Clark, Lee, McKay, & Akamatsu, 2001). Asians, Blacks and Caucasians share common opinions about what are considered attractive facial features (Bernstein, Lin, McClennan, 1982; Perrett, May, & Yoshikawa, 1994).

As discussed previously, even infants have a preference for attractive faces. The appreciation of beauty must derive from something very functional to our survival and hence to reproduction. Physical attractiveness most importantly signifies good health, and reproductive fitness. Keep in mind that those traits that are functional to our survival are also preserved in biology and our genes. If our ancestors had been attracted to unhealthy persons, they would not have had any offspring. Nature informs us by physical attractiveness that the proposed partner possesses good reproductive health.

We are attracted to faces that typify the norm, and stay away from those that are anomalous. Langlois & Roggman, (1990) in fact, found evidence for the preference for the face scored by independent judges to be culturally typical or average. By means of computer technology, they managed to make composite faces of a number of persons (or average faces), and found that these were considered more attractive than different individual faces. Having average

features is one component of beauty. Others have, however, shown that there are also other features (higher cheek bones, thinner jaw, and larger eyes) that contribute to attractiveness (Perett, May, & Yoshikawa, 2994).

Bilateral symmetry is a significant feature in physical attraction (Thornhill & Gangestad, 1993). Departures from bilateral symmetry may indicate the presence of disease, or the inability to resist disease. Average features and symmetry are attractive, from the evolutionary perspective, conceivably because they signal good health to a prospective mate. These cues exist at such a basic level that we have no conscious awareness of their presence. We just know what is attractive to us, and approach the other person depending on that quality, and our own level of attractiveness.

5.10 Attraction variables and first encounters

If we ask people to recall relationships of the past, what do they volunteer as being the cause of initial attraction? In one study, the participants were asked to describe how they had fallen in love or formed a friendship describing a specific relationship from the past (Aron, Dutton, Aron, & Iverson, 1989). These accounts were then categorized for the presence or absence of the attraction variables. For those describing falling in love, reciprocal liking and attractiveness were mentioned with high frequency. To start a relationship many of us just wait to see if an attractive person makes a move that we can interpret as liking. Reciprocal liking and attractiveness in several meanings are also associated with the formation of friendships. Although this holds true for both genders, conversation appears as one additional important quality for females. Women find quality conversation of greater importance than do men in friendship attraction (Duck, 1994a; Fehr, 1996).

Similarity and proximity, on the other hand, were mentioned with lower frequency. Perhaps these variables seem obvious and therefore do not become part of our memory or consciousness. Similarity and proximity may still play very important roles in interpersonal attraction. They respectively focus attention on those deemed eligible and of interest, and on opportunities for encounters. Similar reports emphasizing the importance of the attraction variables, reciprocal liking, attractiveness, similarity, and proximity, have been obtained from memory reports of initial encounters in other cultures as well (Aron & Rodriquez, 1992; Sprecher, Aron, Hatfield, Cortese, Potapova, & Levitskaya, 1994).

5.11 Level of attractiveness

Water finds its own level, and that seems to hold true for relationships. People seek out mates at the approximate same level of attractiveness they possess (Murstein, 1986). We tend to pair off with people who are rated similar in attractiveness whether for dating or for long-term relationships (Feingold, 1988). Similarity in physical attractiveness affects relationship satisfaction (White, 1980). Those similar in physical attractiveness fall in love.

What is an equitable match in the market place of relationships? If one partner is less attractive perhaps he has compensating qualities like being rich. The dating market is a social market place where potential friends or mates sell compensating qualities. Consistent with the previous discussion, men offer social status and seek attractiveness (Koestner & Wheeler, 1988). Since the market place dominates our psychology perhaps that explains also why beautiful women seek compensation if they are to consider a less attractive man. Beautiful women tend to marry higher in social status (Elder, 1969). In the long run market place psychology may also be responsible for our incredible divorce rates. If the exchange of relationship qualities is not satisfactory why not just look for something better? When relationships are based on exchange, and qualities like physical attractiveness deteriorate over the lifespan, no wonder that many become dissatisfied and consider their alternatives.

6. Theories of Interpersonal attraction

In some societies the market place seems to determine all aspects of culture and interpersonal interactions. It is no wonder then that theories of interpersonal attraction emphasize qualities important in the market place: rewards, costs, alternatives, and fairness. All relationships involve interdependence and we have the power to influence outcomes and satisfaction. In chapter1 we briefly discussed the following theories. Now it is time to see their application to interpersonal attraction.

6.1 Social exchange theory

The attraction variables we have discussed all contain potential rewards. Why is it rewarding to be with people who are similar? Similar people validate our self-concept, and that is experienced as rewarding. What are the rewarding aspects of propinquity? If a potential friend lives next door, we do not have to make much of an effort to meet him or her, and that is experienced as rewarding. Is physical attractiveness rewarding? Physical attractiveness brings status to the partner,

and that is rewarding. What about reciprocal liking? That can be experienced as validating our self-concept and our sense of worthiness. So many of the variables we have discussed previously can be interpreted by a theory that has rewards and costs as a basis, one such theory is social exchange theory (Homans, 1961; Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Secord & Backman, 1964; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

According to the economic perspective of social exchange theory people feel positive or negative toward their relationships depending on costs and benefits. All relationships involve rewards as well as costs, and relationship outcomes are defined as the rewards minus the costs. The partner may bring comfort, sexual excitement, support in bad times, someone to share information, someone to learn from, all possible rewards. However, the partnership also has costs. The partner might be arrogant, a poor provider, unfaithful, and have different values. These are the potential costs. Social exchange theory proposes that we calculate these rewards and costs consciously or at the subliminal level. If the outcome is positive, we are satisfied and stay in the relationship; if not, we bring the relationship to an end (Foa & Foa, 1974; Lott& Lott, 1974).

Relationship satisfaction in social exchange theory depends on one additional variable: our comparison level. What do you expect to be the outcome of your current relationship based on your past experiences in other relationships? If you were married to a fantastic man who died you will always have high expectations when meeting potential new partners. On the other hand, at work you have experienced successive poor managers. In transferring to a new department you are pleasantly surprised by an ordinary supervisor, as all your previous work relationships have been negative. Social exchange theory asserts that what we expect from current relationships is laid down in the history of our relationships. Some of us have had successful and rewarding friendships and therefore have high comparison levels. Others have experienced much disappointment and therefore have low expectations. Your satisfaction therefore depends on the comparison level developed from experience.

However, you may also evaluate the relationship from the perspective of what is possible. Perhaps you have friends that have rewarding relationships or rich partners. This provides you with another level of comparison, namely a comparison level of alternatives. If you ditched this partner and started circulating again, you might meet mister right who is rich, attractive and supportive. After all it is a big world so there is a probability that another

relationship will prove more rewarding.

Some people have high comparison levels; they have had good fortune in past relationships. Their comparison level for an alternative relationship may therefore be very high, and not easy to meet. Others have low comparison levels for alternatives and will stay in a costly relationship, as they have no expectation that other attachments will provide better results. Women in abusive relationships, for example, often stay because they do not believe that other relationships will improve life (Simpson, 1987).

6.2 Equity theory: Our expectation of fairness

According to equity theory, we feel content in a relationship when what we offer is proportionate to what we receive. Happiness in relationships comes from a balance between inputs and rewards, so we are content when our social relationships are perceived to be equitable. On the other hand, our sense of fairness is disturbed when we are exploited and others take advantage of us. We all possess intuitive rules for determining whether we are being treated fairly (Clark & Chrisman, 1994). Workers who are paid very little while working very hard feel the unfairness or imbalance between input and reward, especially when others benefit from their hard work. These feelings of injustice constituted the original motivation of the workers movement, the trade unions, and the workers political parties.

At dinnertime do all the children get the same size piece of pie, do we distribute the food in an equitable manner? Equality is the main determinant of our evaluation of the outcome among friends and in family interactions (Austin, 1980). There are of course times when one child's needs are greater than another sibling. Many will recognize that families respond to that issue with "from each according to his ability to each according to his need". One child might be very sick and need all the family's resources. The idea that benefits should be distributed according to need is another aspect of fairness (Clark, Graham, & Grote, 2002).

Equity theory asserts furthermore that people's benefits should equal their input. If we work harder than others we should receive a larger salary (Hatfield, Traupmann, Sprecher, Utne, & Hay, 1985). When people perceive unfairness or inequity they will try to restore the balance. For example, if you work for a low wage you may get together with others who are unfairly treated as well and seek

more compensation. You may also cognitively adjust by reasoning that there are no alternatives, and that you are lucky to have any income at all. Then you can use cognitive strategies to change your perception of unfairness. If neither of the strategies bring satisfaction, then it is time to quit and look for some other career.

In intimate relationships satisfaction is also determined to some degree by equity (Sprecher, 2001). For example, how to distribute the household work fairly is an important issue for many young couples. Those couples that cannot find an equitable balance report more distress (Grote & Clark, 2001). Gender ideology plays a role in relationship satisfaction. Feminist ideology historically reacted to the great unfairness brought on by discrimination toward women at home and at work. Feminist women may therefore be unhappier if they perceive inequity in household work (Van Yperen & Buunk, 1991).

6.3 Equity and power

Partners may prefer different solutions to daily equity problems. Should the resources of the family go toward the husband's education, or to buying a house? In a world of scarce resources there are always decisions that may favor only one party. The power balance decides to what degree either partner in an intimate relationship can influence the feelings, thoughts and behaviors of the other partner. Are all decisions made mutually? How do partners come to an agreement about what type of decision-making is fair and equitable?

What determines power in a relationship? Social norms about gender behavior are a powerful determinant. Traditionally women were taught to respect the dominant role of men as "head" of the family. The man historically had total control over wife and children. Today similar traditional patterns continue throughout the world. There is even the very famous case of a princess in the Saudi Arabian royal family who was executed by orders of her grandfather. Her offense was having a relationship based on romance rather than accepting her father's decision for an arranged marriage. These so-called honor killings, when women are murdered to restore family "honor", follow a similar pattern of absolute male control. In the western world these traditional gender roles are giving way to more equitable relations in society and in the family.

Partners may have different resources. When the man has resource advantages, he also tends to be more dominant. When the wife earns at least 50 percent of the household income, there is more equitable power sharing. Power is also partly

based on the feelings of dependency within the relationship (Waller, 1938). When one partner is more dependent, the other has more power. This holds also for psychological dependency. If one partner has a greater interest in maintaining the relationship than the other, the dependency gives more power to the partner.

So there are variations in how power works out in relationships. In some relationships the man is totally dominant, and some cultures support this sex role resolution. However, we have observed many changes in gender roles and relations over the past decades. Women have gained more social power and more equity in intimate relationships. In one US survey of married couples the majority (64%) claimed equality in power relations (Blumstein & Schawartz, 1983). A large number (27%) reported that the man was dominant, and 9 percent that the wife controlled power in the marriage. In a more recent US study (Felmlee, 1994) 48 percent of the women and 42 percent of the men described their relationship as equal in power, with most of the remaining respondents reporting that the man was dominant. Couples can achieve equality in different ways with a division of responsibilities. Depending on the situation one of the parties may have more power, but overall there is a sense of equality. Some studies find that consensus between a couple is more important than negotiating all the fine details of power sharing, and relationship satisfaction appears equally high in male dominated as in power sharing relationships (Peplau, 1984). In close relationships there is less need to negotiate everything and produce equitable solutions. If the satisfaction level is high, the parties are less concerned with perfect equity. It is whether the relationship is rewarding that counts (Berscheid & Reis, 1998).

7. Exchange among strangers and in close communal relationships

Exchange relationships also exist between strangers or in functional relationships at work. Exchange relationships tend to be more temporary and the partners feel less responsibility toward one another compared to more intimate relationships. Satisfaction in all exchange relationships is as noted determined by the principle of fairness. Did your professor give you a grade that reflected your work? Work related outcomes and satisfactions are determined by application of the fairness principle.

In communal relationships, such as families, on the other hand, people’s outcome depends on their need. In family relationships we give what we can, and receive from the family what it is able to provide. Communal relationships are typically long-lasting, and promote feelings of mutual responsibility (Clark & Mills, 1979).

We look after our children not because we expect a reward, but rather to respond to the needs of our dependants. Likewise children look after their infirm parents, because of feelings of responsibility. In intimate relationships partners respond to the needs of the other, without expecting to be paid back in exact coin or immediately. There may be rewards for both parties in the long run. In short, exchange theory better predicts behavior in relationships where the parties are preoccupied with inputs and rewards, whereas in communal relations the partners are more concerned with meeting the needs of the relationship (Clark, Mills, Powell, 1986).

Mills and Clark (1994; 2001) have defined further differences between exchange in different types of relationships. Among strangers you are not likely to discuss emotional topics whereas that is expected in communal interactions. In communal relationships helping behavior is expected, whereas it would be seen as altruistic in relations between strangers. Moreover, a person is perceived as more selfish if failing to help a friend, than if he failed to come to the aid of a stranger. In real intimate relations between lovers the lines between partners is blurred as a feeling of "we" pervades. When we benefit a loved one, we feel like we are benefiting ourselves (Aron & Aron, 2000). The beloved is seen as part of the self, and terms like "we" is used more frequently than "I" as relations move beyond exchange and equity concerns (Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbolt, & Langston, 1998).

7.1 Culture and social exchange

Cultural differences affect relationships. In Western society some of our relationships reflect market economic values such as exchange and some forms of equity. Asian societies have in the past been based on more traditional, communal standards. Economic companies in Asia often take a paternal role, offering life long job security. How are the new market economies affecting psychology in Asia and Eastern Europe? Assuming a relationship between economic relations and psychology, we might expect a greater shift toward social exchange relations. Social exchange theory also plays a role in intimate relationships in a variety of cultures (Lin & Rusbult, 1995; Rusbult & Van Lange, 1996; Van Lange, Rusbolt, Drigotas, Arriaga, Witcher, & Cox, 1997). Although communal relations are more characteristic of interdependent cultures, there is still a role for social exchange for some relationships in these societies as well as in more independent cultures.

7.2 Evaluation of relationship satisfaction

How committed people are to a relationship depends on satisfaction, on the

potential alternatives available, and on the investment made (Rusbult, 1983). If we are not satisfied in a relationship there are alternatives to be explored. Before we end the relationship we carefully assess one particular factor. Namely, how much have I invested in the relationship? How much would I lose if I left the relationship? Would I be better or worse off, many women in abusive relationships ask themselves. Investment is also a factor the individual considers prior to the commitment to dissolve of a relationship. Investment comprises several things: the money available for a new life, a house that might be lost, the emotional well being of children in the relationship, and of course all the work that has been invested in the relationship. This model also predicts commitment in destructive relationships (Rusbult & Martz, 1995). Women who had poorer economic prospects, and were strongly invested with children present, were more likely to tolerate some forms of abuse.

It is difficult to evaluate equitable outcomes as partners trade different resources. Equity however, remains a factor even in intimate relationships (Canary & Stafford, 2001). In intimate relationships there are few rigid give and take rules. Perhaps the wife does all the housework, does most of the child rising, and is a romantic partner while the husband is only a student. It may seem unfair, but the investment may pay off down the line in higher income and status. In intimate relationships partners have the long view in mind when evaluating equity. The partners trust that eventually everything will work out to the benefit of the whole family unit.

7.3 Self-disclosure: building intimate relationships

Self-disclosure is the bridge to intimacy and liking (Collins & Miller, 1994). When we disclose important information to others we become vulnerable, and so self-disclosure is a form of trust that invites reciprocation. People who self-disclose are therefore seen as trusting people, and trust is an essential component in intimate relationships. When we open ourselves up to another, reciprocation tends to occur (Dindia, 2002). Telling someone something significant is an investment in trust, and if the relationship is to move to another level, a gradual process of reciprocation is required. Reciprocal self-disclosure is a key factor in liking and builds bridges to the deeper and more meaningful part of a person's inner self (Chaikin & Derlega, 1974).

There are of course risks involved in self-disclosure. The other person may not be interested and fail to reciprocate. We may also reveal something about ourselves

that offends the values of the other person thereby causing rejection. Having revealed significant information, we have made ourselves vulnerable to the other person's ability to manipulate or betray our confidence. Many prisoners have after the fact found it unwise that they confessed their crimes to cell mates who later sold the information. For these and other reasons we are often cautious in self-disclosure and will conceal inner feelings (Finkenauer & Hazam, 2000).

In individualist cultures relationship satisfaction is related to self-disclosure. In the more collectivist cultures social relations are often more inhibited (Barnlund, 1989). Japanese students were found to self-disclose much less than American students. Self-disclosure is important to love-based marriages in both American and Indian societies (Yelsma & Athappilly, 1988). However for Indian couples in arranged marriages, marital satisfaction was independent of self-disclosure. Perhaps in these formal relationships satisfaction depends more on completion of agreements and contractual expectations.

Cultural norms determine to a large extent the pattern of self-disclosure across many societies. In western culture emotional expression is normative for women and therefore acceptable. The emphasis on rugged individualism for men suggests that our society suppresses intimacy among men. Hence emotional expression by men is generally directed toward females. In Muslim countries and some societies in Asia, same sex intimacy is encouraged (Reis & Wheeler, 1991).

*7.4 Gender **differences in self-disclosure?***

A meta-analysis of hundreds of studies showed that women disclose significantly more than men (Dindia & Allen, 1992). Although the overall differences were not large they were statistically significant. Within same sex friendships, women reveal more of themselves than men who are more cautious with their male friends. Verbal communication appears especially important to women, whereas men cement their relationships with best friends through shared activities (Caldwell & Peplau, 1992). Women also seem more willing to share their weaknesses, whereas men will disclose their strengths. The sexes also differ in revealing gender specific information. Men like to share their risk-taking behavior, for example their last mountain climbing trip, or when they saved someone from drowning. Women are more likely to share concerns about their appearance (Derlega, Durham, Gockel, & Sholis, 1981). Social psychology is history so perhaps things have changed since the time of this study.

8. Romantic and loving intimacy

Reciprocal liking is the first step on the road to romance and intimacy. Some basic components are common to all love relationships, whether romantic or friendship. Hallmarks of these loving relationships include valuing the partner, showing mutual support, and experiencing mutual enjoyment (Davis, 1985). Romantic love differs from friendship or parental love by its sexual interest, by fascination with the beloved, and by expectation of exclusiveness of affection. Passionate love is deeply emotional and exciting. It is the pervading and overwhelming desire for a union with the beloved (Hatfield, 1988). When reciprocated passionate love brings with it feelings of joy and fulfillment, all life can be managed with such a relationship secured. When the partners are insecure however, passionate love can also bring jealousy and pain (Kenrick & Cialdini, 1977).

8.1 Physiological arousal or emotion of love?

We can feel intense emotional excitement in a variety of situations. The physiological reactions are similar whether you are mountain climbing or being aroused by being physically close to your beloved. The attributions we make are what make some emotions romantic. Anything that arouses us physiologically can also create romantic feelings and more intense attractions (Dutton & Aron, 1989). From their classic experiment in which an attractive young lady approached young men as they crossed on a long suspension bridge high above the river (described in chapter 2) it would appear that the physical arousal produced by the high bridge (probably fear) increased the men's romantic responses.

Are there gender differences in experiencing romantic love? Some findings indicate that men are more likely to fall in love, and are less likely to fall out of love, or break up a premarital relationship (Peplau & Gordon, 1985). Since the experience of love is different from promiscuity this finding is not a contradiction of the male tendency in that direction. Perhaps men are more deprived of intimacy and feel the greater need?

8.2 Intimacy and love

Many people in our world long to experience the feelings of intimacy and love with another person. What is intimacy and love? We may know how it feels, yet find it difficult to understand. Loneliness comes from being disconnected from others, and from feeling misunderstood or unappreciated. Intimacy is the reverse of that coin. Intimacy is that lovely moment when someone understands and

validates us (Reis, Clark, & Holmes, 2004; Reis & Shaver, 1988). We feel intimate when our partner responds and extends to us unconditional positive regard. Intimacy is felt when despite our shortcomings our partner extends full support, and when we can truly "count on the other person" being steadfast despite the trials of life.

Initially intimacy may manifest itself as a giddy feeling of joy. We feel the fascination or infatuation, but do not always understand the experience at any rational level. The process begins by sharing important feelings either verbally or non-verbally. The partner reciprocates and conveys a feeling of understanding and support (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Communication is the key to intimacy, the more partners engage in meaningful conversation the more intimacy is experienced (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000). Sharing deep feelings of love and having these feelings reciprocated is the bridge over the still waters of love (Mackey, Diemer, & O'Brien, 2000).

Men and women experience intimacy in similar ways (Burleson, 2003). We all attach value and meaning to our intimate relationships. Women, however, tend to express more readily the emotions leading to intimacy (Aries, 1996). Women also tend to be more intimate in same sex relationships than men, and place a higher value on intimate relations. Our socialization allows women greater emotional expressiveness, and they become more skilled emotional communicators compared to men. One source of relationship dissatisfaction is the discrepancy between the genders in the desire for intimate interactions.

Romantic relationship brings intimacy to a logical conclusion. When two people fall in love, trust each other, and communicate at a meaningful level of intimacy, sexual relations becomes one more expression of love. Intimacy leads to passion, and if lucky also to commitment (Sternberg, 1986). Intimacy combined with passion is romantic love. In long lasting relationships the passion may fade away. When that occurs intimacy may combine with commitment and form companionate love, or intimacy without sexual arousal.

For those who have long futures together, intimacy, passion, and commitment form what Sternberg calls consummate love, the basis of a life long relationship. The longer a relationship survives the trials of life, the more likely it is to move toward companionate love. Companionate love is based on deep feelings of affectionate attachment derived from mutual history and shared values (Carlson

& Hatfield, 1992). Many couples feel disillusionment when the romantic phase moves to the next step in life. The inability to keep the romantic flame alive contributes to loss of affection and our high divorce rate. People in the US tend to focus on the personal feelings of romance, a luxury of a wealthy society. People in Asia are more concerned with the practical aspects of living together (Dion & Dion, 1991; 1993). Passionate love brings children, but to raise them requires companionate love and not mutual obsession. Companionate love is just as real as the initial passion, and is essential for the survival of families and the species.

Most people experience romantic relationships at some point in their lives. Some will say that these relationships are essential to our sense of well-being (Myers, 2000a, Myers, 2000b). Successful romantic relations contribute to life satisfaction, and to our overall condition of health (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). However, not all romantic relationships are successful. As noted earlier about 50 percent of all marriages in the western world end in divorce, perhaps half of those that remain are unhappy. We need to understand what causes such profound disillusionment (Fincham, 2003).

8.3 Disillusionment and divorce

Many relationships become bankrupt and one or both parties decide to split (Myers, 2000a, Thernstrom, 2003). There are some who feel that if the trend continues eventually two-thirds of all marriages and partnerships will end in divorce (Spanier, 1992). And what of the surviving marriages? We cannot assume that they continue because the parties are happy in their relationship! Some unhappy relationships continue for reasons of dependency or moral requirements. The divorce statistics are a tragic commentary about our inability to adjust to changing sex roles in modern society. Divorce becomes an option for many couples in modern society as women feel less economically dependent on men, and feel they have alternatives.

Many studies indicate that marriages produce less contentment than they did 30 years ago (Glenn, 1991). Conflict in marriages has caused many negative health consequences, for example cardiac illness, and negative effects on the immune system (Kiecolt-Glaser, Malarkey, Cacioppo, & Glaser, 1994). There are always victims in divorce. Children of divorced parents experience many negative outcomes in childhood as well as later in life (Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000). Ending a romantic relationship produces extreme disillusionment in couples, and ranks among life’s most stressful experiences.

8.4 The role of social exchange and stressful negotiations

Why do relationships fail? We live in a world dominated by preoccupations about what is fair in relationships, is it a wonder that couples tire of the constant negotiations? Social exchange theory has helped researchers identify both destructive and constructive behaviors affecting divorce (Rusbult, 1987; Rusbult & Zembrodt, 1983). Contributing to divorce occurs when one party abuses his/her partner and threatens to leave the marriage. Other couples allow the relationship to slowly deteriorate by passively retreating and refusing to deal with issues. When both parties exhibit these destructive patterns, divorce is the typical outcome (Rusbult, Yovetich, & Verne, 1996).

8.5 Fatal attractions

One cause for divorce is what is called "fatal attractions" (Femlee, 1995). Often the qualities that first attract one to another end up being the quality most disliked. The outgoing individual attracts the shy person. However, after enduring constant social activity the shy person feels that enough is enough. Fatal attractions occur when someone is significantly different from the other person. The immature person is attracted to someone much older. Later in the marriage when the older person is not interested in youthful activities, the age difference becomes the cause for conflict (Femlee, 1998). These findings again point to the importance of similarity in the relationship which functions not just to produces initial attraction, but also long-term contentment. Some initial attractions of the socially gifted lead to negative outcomes also labeled "fatal attractions" (Felmlee, Flynn, & Bahr, 2004). An initial attraction to a partner's competence and drive for example, was later in the relationship perceived as alienating and as demonstrating workaholic attitudes that were destructive to the relationship. Some respondents who were initially attracted to a partner's intelligence later were repelled by what they considered a considerable ego.

8.6 Personality differences and demography

Other research has focused on the personality of those who divorce. People who come into a relationship with negative baggage from other relationships are more likely to split. Those who are neurotic, anxious, and emotionally volatile are divorce prone (Karney & Bradbury, 1997; Kurdek, 1992). Neurotics spend much time feeling negative emotions that negatively impacts the partner and the marriage. They are also more likely to bring other types of stress to the relationship including health issues and problems (Watson & Pennebaker, 1989).

Neurotic people react strongly to interpersonal conflict and therefore are less satisfied in relationships (Bolger & Schilling, 1991). If a person is overly sensitive, he or she is more likely to look for rejection and have greater difficulties in establishing or continuing intimate relationships (Downey & Feldman, 1996;Downey, Freitas, Michaelis, & Khouri, 1998).

8.7 Demographic variables and divorce

Some demographic factors are related to dissatisfaction. Generally those who have lower socioeconomic status are more likely to end marriages (Williams & Collins, 1995). Lower socioeconomic status brings stress into a marriage, including money worries and job insecurity. Marrying at a young age is related to lower socioeconomic resources (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Sometimes the very young do not have the education needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive world. If they have no other resources they often depend on minimum wage jobs, in a constant struggle to keep their heads above water. In the US young married couples often have no insurance, poor housing, and few prospects for improvement, but this situation is different in Western Europe. Young couples often lack the maturity to cope, and a willingness to put the interests of the other person first.

8.8 Conflict in intimate relationships

Most people do not care what mere acquaintances think of their preferences in life. Whatever acquaintances believe will have few consequences either good or bad. However, those people who are close to us can have profound effects on our goal attainment and our happiness. The frequency of interaction with intimate friends or family produces more opportunities for conflict. For example, a teenager wants to attend a party, but his parents want him to study. In intimate relationships we feel the stresses of life, and often latch out at those we should love and protect. The birth of a new child is experienced as stress by most couples, as is death in the family or other significant loss (Bradbury, Rogge, & Lawrence, 2001) but these types of stress usually does not lead to conflicts.

Most marriages experience at least occasional unpleasant disagreements (McGonagle, Kesler, & Schilling, 1992). No marriage or partnership is perfect, all relationships reflect varying interests and preferences. As couples become more interdependent, and do more things together, opportunities for conflict increase (McGonagle, Kessler, & Schilling, 1992). Intimate partners fight over a variety of issues from political and religious disagreements, to household responsibilities

(Fincham, 2003).

Conflict occurs when we interfere with someone's preferences, and frustrate goal attainment. One partner thinks it is important to save for a house or children's education. The other partner wants to enjoy life now and use the money for travel. Compromises can often be found, but at times conflicting goals add to tension and disillusionment in the relationship.

Some conflicts are caused by the behaviors of the partner. Drinking to excess or using drugs are causes for conflict. Since we live in a changing world, we may also differ in our perceptions of our responsibilities and privileges in the relationship. A tradition minded man may see household chores as "woman's work", whereas an egalitarian woman may have expectations of an equal division of such tasks. Finally, conflict may also be caused by the attributions we make of the partner's behavior. Do we give the partner the benefit of the doubt, or do we attribute her/his behavior to bad intent? If the partner has difficulty in finding rewarding work do we attribute that to an unpromising work situation and general unemployment, or do we believe the partner is indifferent and lazy?

These three levels of conflict – level of integration, interference and behavior – reflect the three ways that partners are interdependent. At the behavioral level, partners may have different expectations. At the normative level the partners believe in different rules (egalitarian or traditional) for their relationship. Conflict is likely if the wife has an egalitarian perspective, but the husband is traditionally minded. At the dispositional level, conflict may be a result of the partner's disagreement over attributions for the conflictive behavior (Braiker & Kelley, 1979). Most conflicts have the potential to be harmful to marriages, but some relationships can be helped by an open discussion of disagreements and recognition of the possibility for change (Holman & Jarvis, 2003).

Conflict may also occur as a result of the blaming game. Attributions of blame are especially toxic to a relationship (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). Dissatisfied couples blame each other for problems in the relationship. Blaming is another way of attributing negative causes to the partner's behavior. Even when the partner performs a positive act the partner may attribute it to bad intentions. Gifts of flowers may for example not be considered an act of love by the blaming partner, but as designed to serve some ulterior purpose. Dissatisfied couples make attributions that consistently cast the partner's behavior in a negative light

(McNulty & Karney, 2001).

8.9 The interpersonal dynamics of unhappy couples

Studies of married partners have pointed to some significant dynamics that are powerful predictors of divorce (Levenson & Gottman 1983; Gottman & Levenson, 1992). The researchers got married couples to talk about a significant conflict in their lives and then subsequently coded the interaction for negative responses. Based on these observations the researchers identified four types of behaviors that could predict with 93 percent accuracy whether the couple would divorce (Gottman & Levenson, 2000).

The four toxic behaviors include criticism (1). Those who consistently find fault with their partners will have unhappy marriages. The tone of the criticism (2) also makes a difference. Some partners criticize in ways that belittle the other person. Others know how to criticize in a lighthearted or playful way, and the outcome can then be positive (Keltner, Young, Heerey, Oemig, & Monarch, 1998). To solve problems in a relationship requires the ability to talk openly, and without eliciting defensiveness in the partner. Some people are so neurotic that even the slightest criticism elicits anxiety and rejection. Another dysfunctional way of dealing with conflict is to stonewall the issue (3), deny the existence of any problems, or convey the impression that the problem is unworthy of serious discussion. Conflict denial is also related to the final toxic behavior, the emotion of contempt (4). When a partner consistently looks down on the other person as inferior and expresses feelings of superiority that contempt is the ultimate expression of disillusionment and highly predictive of divorce (Gottman & Levenson, 1999).

8.10 The market economy and divorce in China

Chinese society now exhibits similar marital problems to those of long established market economies. Nationwide the divorce rate has skyrocketed 67 percent between 2000 and 2005, and is still increasing (Beech, 2006). It would appear that psychological concepts derived from the market economy have entered marital relations in China with similar consequences to those in western capitalist nations. However, this development might also been explained by an emerging courage by women to break away from traditions and demand justice and an equal say in a relationship. New terms such as “flash divorce” have emerged as it

is now possible to get divorced in China in as little as 15 minutes. The divorce rate is mainly due to women's dissatisfaction with the unfaithfulness of men. Women themselves now have more economic power and do not have to put up with relationships that doomed the happiness of their mothers and grandmothers. Economic independence has increased women's expectations from their relationships and, when not met, disillusionment has led to dissatisfaction. The material underpinnings of this revolution are indicated by female requirements for marriage in Shanghai that now include the necessity of the man owning a car, a nice apartment, and a considerable bank account. There are those who say, "materialism is being pursued at the expense of traditional values like love" (Beach, 2006: 52). Couples have become more skeptical or cynical about the marriage relationship. According to Beach there were 441,000 fewer marriages in 2005 compared to the previous year. The difference in valuing marriage between individualistic and collectivistic cultures is broken down by the relentless march of market economy psychology resulting from globalization (Dion & Dion, 1993; Dion & Dion, 1996).

8.11 The emotional consequences of ending a relationship

A key factor in how people react to a breakup of a relationship is the role each person played in the decision (Akert, 1998). The research showed that the person who decided the breakup coped the best. The partner who decided to split generally found the ending of the relationship less sad, although even in that case there were some negative consequences reported, including higher frequency of headaches. The party who was least responsible for the decision reported more unhappiness and anger. All partners in a breakup situation reported some physical reactions within weeks. The break of deep emotional ties is extremely stressful.

The least negative consequences occur when the couple allow for mutual decision-making. It reduces somewhat the negative symptoms reported, although 60 percent still reported some negative reactions, with women suffering the most (or perhaps being more honest in reporting). Can people stay friends after a romantic breakup? It depends on gender. Men are usually not interested in continuing a relationship on a friendship basis, whereas women are more interested. Again what seems to be a key is whether the breakup is based on a mutual decision; in that case there are stronger possibilities for a continued friendship.

8.12 Forming satisfying and lasting relationships

How can we create relationships that result in happy outcomes? From the perspective of exchange theory, the focus must be on more profit in the relationship. We can increase profit by either reducing the costs of interaction, or increasing rewards to each partner (Rusbult, 1983). The more rewarding a relationship as defined by the individual the more satisfaction it produces. What constitute costs is less well understood. When the wife puts a husband through college while raising their children is that a cost or a sacrifice for a happier future (Clark & Grote, 1998)? In intimate and close relationships costs are simply the willingness to put aside egoistic interest for the sake of the relationship. As noted earlier sacrifice may be perceived as being rewarding in the long-term vision of the future life of the couple.

Since we live in market economies which encourages social comparison and affects our psychology, many partners are tempted to look at the outcomes for other couples as well as their own expectations of satisfaction when evaluating their relationship. A key to happiness is to meet the expectations we had when we married. We can always find those that are doing less well that we are on a variety of criteria. One party may not be happy with the level of emotional intimacy in the relationship, but can point to the neighbor with an alcoholic spouse as a comparison standard (Buunk, Oldersma, & De Dreu, 2001). The satisfaction of downward comparison can be seen in the popularity of the yellow press and the scandal newspapers. Many people enjoy reading about the misfortune of the rich and famous because it makes them feel better about their own less than perfect lives.

Equity theory may also play a role in evaluating satisfaction in relationships. A balanced relationship where each partner contributes a fair share is more satisfying and happy (Cate & Lloyd, 1992). Fairness is always at the perceptual level, and so our evaluation of fairness depends on the quality of the relationship. If the partners are happy, the occasional inequity in contributions will be seen as a minor distraction. For unhappy relationships even minor discrepancies of contributions will contribute to dissatisfaction and conflict.

Cate & Lloyd (1992) also provide some practical ideas for creating lasting relationships. Marrying a little older for example, allows for better preparation and a better socioeconomic platform for marriage. Furthermore, they suggest we try to get over the infatuation stage and evaluate the prospective partners level of

neuroticism and maturity because we all carry some baggage from past relationships, but some people's burdens impact negatively on intimacy. Thirdly, happiness is also somewhat dependent on getting out of the blaming game. We should give our partner the benefit of the doubt and be willing to attribute positive dispositions and intent, and reward all positive acts by word and deed. These steps may avoid the trap and cycle of misery that lead to dissolution of relationships that once promised intimacy.

8.13 Making real commitments

Commitment is discussed in the psychological literature from several perspectives. Can your partner make the commitment and is it for the long haul? There are three variables related to commitment (Rusbult, 1983). The first is the accumulation of all the rewards of the relationship. The rewarding aspects of a romantic relationship are by far the most important determinant of satisfaction (Cate, Lloyd, Henton, &Larson, 1982). The support we receive, sexual satisfactions, home security, adventure and novelty, are all-important rewards that contribute to lasting relationships.

The second variable concerns the temptations of alternative partners. This may decrease commitment. The fewer alternatives that are present the less likely that the relationship will flounder (White & Booth, 1991). When the partners are young there are more temptations and more alternatives, but as time passes there are fewer alternatives. If you see your relationship as the only one possible, and if the feeling is mutual, the relationship will be more satisfying and lasting. Finally, the investments we have made may determine commitment. If we have invested a great deal in our mutual history, children, home, common religion, we are likely to stay within the relationship. More committed relationships produce more interdependent lives where the focus is on the unit and not the individual (Agnew, Van Lange, Rusbult, & Langston, 1998). The more committed can more easily adjust to demands and stresses of life such as the arrival of a new child. Commitment also encourages forgiveness, the feeling that one should never let the sun set on a bad argument (Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002).

8.14 The moral commitment

The foregoing emphasizes the social psychological factors that encourage commitment. For many in permanent relationships, commitment refers to basic integrity. From a moral perspective when you commit to another person your word should mean something, and support for your partner is for the better or

worse of life. For some, moral commitment is a social obligation. It is the right thing to do for the marriage and the family. That does not imply that a relationship built on such commitment is loveless, on the contrary moral commitment may allow greater security and happiness. For some couples, commitment is also reinforced by religious beliefs. They believe that marriage is a religious duty not to be taken lightly. Marriage for some is an existential commitment; there are some things in life that are meant to last in an ever-changing world.

8.15 The positive view of life and the beloved

Much research points to the negative effects of having children on the happiness of marriage partners (Myers, 2000a). The arrival of children creates new conditions as children demand the focus of parents, and the relationship suffers. Partners often fail to return to the pre-child happiness until they are again alone after their children leave home. However, those who fight for their intimacy find it rewarding (Aron, Norman, Aron, McKenna, & Heyman, 2000). The key to marital happiness is to overcome boredom by finding new and exciting things to do as a couple. We all have needs for rootedness, but also for new and novel experiences. Those couples that build occasional excitement into their relationship feel more satisfied (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). However, it takes an effort to do something new and different, and fighting for intimacy is a life long struggle. What novel activities couples can bring into their lives depends on many factors including socioeconomic variables and age. In the end it may be the effort toward renewal that wins over our partners and keeps the flame of intimacy alive. Rewards, pleasure and novelty are the keys to long-lasting romance and satisfaction with love and life.

8.16 Idealizations, positive illusions, and commitment

Romantic partners who feel “totally” in love manifest unrealistic, but delightful illusions about their partner’s behaviors and qualities. In chapter 2 we discussed positive illusions and mental health. Do such positive illusions also contribute to satisfaction and enduring relationships? There is much to support that contention. Partners who have positive illusions can think of nothing negative about the beloved. With powerful positive illusions dominating our perceptions, we experience the behaviors of our partner as rewarding and feel stronger commitment to the relationship. Murray (1999) suggested that satisfaction, and stability of a relationship depended on overstating the positive qualities of the

partner. Those in love look at the behavior and reactions of the partner in the most positive way, consistently giving the partner any benefit of doubt, or not allowing doubt in the first place. The idealization of romantic partners is an essential component in satisfaction of intimate relationships (Murray & Holmes, 1993; 1997;Neff & Karney, 2002).

With positive illusions we overestimate what is good and underestimate the negative. Remember the results of reciprocal liking! In a similar way, idealizing the partner produces mutual liking and more relationship satisfaction. Even when asked about the partner's greatest fault (Murray & Holmes, 1999), romantic participants were likely to refuse to accept the presence of any fault or turn it into a virtue. For example, if the partner was not ambitious, he was still a wonderful husband who helped around the house. If the partner did not express emotions, well it was because he felt so deeply, and expressed his feelings in other ways. So even the partner's emotions were idealized (Hawkins, Carrere, & Gottman, 2002). In a study where the partner rated how much positive affect was expressed in a discussion on conflict, satisfied romantic partners overestimated the positive expressions of their partners when compared to neutral judge's perceptions. In general, romantic couples that are happy see the interactions of their partner in a continuous positive way. There seems to be no substitute for happiness in couples, and it is as if a romantic partner can do no wrong. Having these positive illusions contributes to lasting relationships.

Even though half of all marriages in the US end in divorce, romantic illusions lead to the belief that one's own marriage will succeed. Most people are unrealistic on probability grounds, and think there is little or no chance for divorce in their future (Fowers, Lyons, Montel, & Shakel, 2001). We can also see positive illusions at work when participants were asked about the quality of their relationships and these outcomes are compared to ratings of those who knew them well, such as parents and roommates. The participants were primarily positive and saw fewer obstacles to success than did those who were intimate observers. The observers were more evenhanded and saw both the strengths as well as the problems in the relationship.

Positive illusions are aided by our faulty memory. Many people believe their relationship is getting better all the time (Frye & Karney, 2004). For example although women's satisfactions declined in a longitudinal study, the participants expressed beliefs that their current relationship was better than ever (Karney &

Coombs, 2000). It is of course very useful to longevity of relationships that we do not remember the bad times or believe those days were better than was actually the case. It is helpful to long-lasting marriages that couples see an unbroken path to an ever improving and more intimate relationship. The relationship bias is found in American, European and Asian cultures (Endo, Heine, & Lehman, 2000). Participants consistently rated their own relationships better when compared to those of the "average" students. These results together demonstrate the functional utility of unconditional positive regard. If we want to be successful in love, we must really love the beloved!

Summary

This essay covered the most significant relationships of human life from the initial attachments to long lasting commitments. We introduced evolutionary psychology in an attempt to understand the initial attachments of infants present in all societies and cultures. The examples of feral children in the literature and the absence of discernable human traits in these children support the idea that human traits are forged in the interaction with significant others. There is also much to suggest that early attachment forms the basis for later relationships. The inference from Harlow's studies is that social isolation is traumatic and results in abnormal development and adult personality. Humans have an even longer dependency period than the monkeys studied by Harlow, and need nurturing to survive. The bonding that occurs initially with the mother becomes the basis of all other bonding relationships.

If the need to belong is a biological drive, is that expressed in the universality of the mother-child relationship and romantic love? If the need to relate to other people is a biological drive, the need to belong should be satiable. When not sufficient the individual will reach out to establish new relationships; however, when sufficient there is no longer a motive to do so. Our relationships are essential to our sense of well-being and happiness. Those people who are deprived of supportive relations largely live unhappy lives, and isolation has negative consequences for health. Our relationship history defines largely who we are and the attributions we make.

The role of biology can be observed in the preferences of the two genders for qualities in the opposite sex. In all cultures women prefer men with material resources, and men prefer youth and beauty. Perhaps this finding could reflect the relative size differences between the two genders and the historical control of

males over economic resources. On the other hand the evolutionary perspective suggests that these differences have a reproductive cause. There is no resolution of these varying interpretations, but the gender differences exist.

The experience of loneliness has many negative consequences. People may have an optimal number of relationships and still feel lonely. Perhaps the relationships are not satisfying some basic emotional needs for intimacy. We do know that those who live rich emotional lives are less dependent on others for satisfying emotional needs. There are those who are chronically lonely. Often that is related to the mobility and temporary nature of relationships due to movement, death, and life changes. Demographic variables may also play a role as the poor struggle with many forms of insecurity and have less time for relationships. Youth is a time of special danger of loneliness as biology demands attachments especially in this stage of life.

The initial attachment is with the mother; later in normal development attachment is expanded to include the father, other family members and friends. The caregiver's own sense of security and warmth is of signal importance to the infant's attachment style. If the infant is secure and feels the human warmth of its mother, a similar pattern can be expected in adult attachments. The infant attachment style is stable over the individual's lifetime, and those who were emotionally secure as infants will find it easier to develop similar healthy relationships as adults. Traumatic life events may also affect our ability to establish and maintain secure relationships. The death of a parent or divorce may produce lasting insecurity in the child. Secure attachments bring many benefits to the individual. Secure individuals bring out the best in others as they generally look for the positive even for negative behavior. Consequently there are fewer health problems and divorce among those who possess a basic sense of security.

Cultures produce somewhat different relationships and expectations. Some cultures are communal and put the interests of the family ahead of that of the individual. In these cultures resource distribution depend on the need of the family member at least as perceived by controlling heads of families. In individualist cultures the rights and needs of the individual is primary, and people generally look after number one or themselves. Some societies are authoritarian like the military, and emphasize status and the established hierarchy. In modern society in which individualistic culture dominates we see more emphasis on equality in resource distribution and outcomes. The question that couples seek to

answer is, is the relationship fair.

Relational self-theory is based on the idea that prior relationships provide the framework for understanding our current attitudes and behaviors. If your current lover, boss or other significant person remind you of someone previously significant in your life, you may transfer the feeling you had from that previously significant person to the current relationship. Those who remind us of a positive relationship will have positive feelings transferred to the current relationship. Our past relationships may affect us at the automatic level and we may remain unaware of how these previous relationships affect our current thinking. Previous relationships form the basis of memories and social cognition. We also include family and close friends in our attributional biases, believing that the success of our beloved is due to personal dispositions, whereas failure in those close to us is thought to be caused by unfavorable environmental factors.

Liking someone is the start of relationships. In all its simplicity, we like those who are rewarding to us and we dislike those who are a burden. The literature supports the importance of some antecedents to liking; these include propinquity, similarity, and physical attraction. We tend to like those who live near us because propinquity provides the opportunity to meet, and repeated exposure creates feelings of familiarity. This is an optimistic finding from social psychology that suggests that many relationships are possible in a person's life given the opportunity. The mere exposure effect supports the idea that repeated exposure leads to liking as exposure creates feelings of safety and security. Proximity may mask another variable important to liking relationships, that of similarity, as we often live in social environments where people share common values, or other characteristics. Also long distance relationships are more difficult to maintain and therefore more costly. Similarity is a powerful variable in liking relationships. We marry those who are similar to us in social class, religion and values. The more similar we are to someone, the more we like the other person. Dating services are based on the idea that a good match is with someone who is similar in values, attitudes, and even physical appearance. The reason similarity is central to liking relationships is that it provides a common platform for understanding the other person and therefore promotes intimacy and trust. Of course it is also reassuring to have our values confirmed by another person. Again, the similarity may be caused by selectivity of the social environment which produces shared experiences and therefore bonding. Those who come from the same culture would

have a large set of experiences and values in common not present to outsiders.

Nothing can beat reciprocal liking in eliciting positive feelings; we like those who like us. Reciprocal liking is even more powerful than similarity in producing liking toward someone. Personal traits are also important. The research supports the significance of personal warmth and competence in producing liking in most people. Most members of the sexes are attracted to the opposite sex. Do opposites attract? It seems that opposite attraction holds only for the sexual relationship. Only a few complementary personality traits affect attraction. Although society is moving toward more tolerance on different ethnic relationships, these changing attitudes may only reflect changing norms and may not hold for the individual's own family.

Physical attractiveness is a powerful antecedent to liking. There is in fact little difference between the genders, both like the physically attractive member of the opposite sex. It seems that physical attractiveness is the single most important variable in eliciting sexual desire and arousal. There are some gender differences. Women place greater importance on economic security and stability when considering marriage. They will therefore marry a less desirable male, or an older male, who possesses material resources. Evolutionary psychology would say that these gender differences exist for reproductive reasons. To form family, women must have stable partners. However, as society advances toward economic equality, both sexes place more importance on physical attractiveness.

The physically attractive have many social advantages. All societies subscribe to the "beautiful is good" norm. One consequence is the attribution of positive traits like competence to the physically attractive. It is no wonder they also experience more socio-economic success. Culture determines somewhat the features that are considered attractive. However, there are also universal traits considered attractive in all cultures. Faces that signal reproductive fitness and health are considered attractive in all societies. This lends support to the evolutionary perspective. Faces that typify the norm, and express bilateral symmetry also have universal appeal. From an evolutionary perspective these faces signal reproductive fitness.

In today's world the market place economy dominates in all aspects of culture and interpersonal interactions. Interpersonal attraction is also dominated by market ideas. The theories of interpersonal attraction emerged in western capitalist

societies and reflect therefore common social ideas of rewards, costs, and fairness. Social exchange theory states that relationship liking depends on outcomes that is defined as the rewards minus the costs of a relationship. The theory suggests that relationships have rewards, but also costs and the rewards must be larger for the relationship to be lasting and satisfying. Our satisfaction may also to some degree depend on past relationships that serve as a comparison level. Equity theory states that contentment depends on equity, the give and take in a relationship. Essentially equality and fairness is what governs relationship satisfaction from this perspective. In modern times this perspective in intimate relations leads to tiresome negotiations, issues perhaps better solved by consensus about division of responsibilities.

Theories of interpersonal attraction seem more valid for functional relationships one might find at work or school. Western-based societies are more based on exchange, equity and market economies, whereas societies in Asia are more communally based. In communal relations the outcome for the individual depends on need. Also in close relationships, topics dealing with emotional support and satisfaction are relevant, and altruistic behaviors are expected.

Relationship satisfaction depends also on other factors. First of all the level of investment in the relationship in terms of children, common history, and economic achievements may affect stability. Secondly, what is the level of commitment, and do the partners have alternatives and other prospects? In all these cases, intimate relationships are dominated by the long view, and not just the immediate reward. Thirdly, self-disclosure is an essential factor in building trust and intimate relations. When self-disclosure is reciprocated, such behavior leads to intimacy. Self-disclosure is perhaps more important in individualist societies, as in collectivist societies couples are more inhibited. Women disclose more within same sex relationships, and men are more cautious. Men are more likely to share risk-taking experiences, whereas women will share concerns about appearance.

Romantic love differs from friendship by its emphasis on sexual interest, by the fascination and infatuation with the partner, and the exclusiveness of the relationship. Such relationships are emotional and exciting. Men and women experience intimacy in similar ways, but women are more likely to express the feelings that lead to intimacy. Romantic love can be defined as intimacy combined with passionate feelings. When couples also feel commitment there is the basis

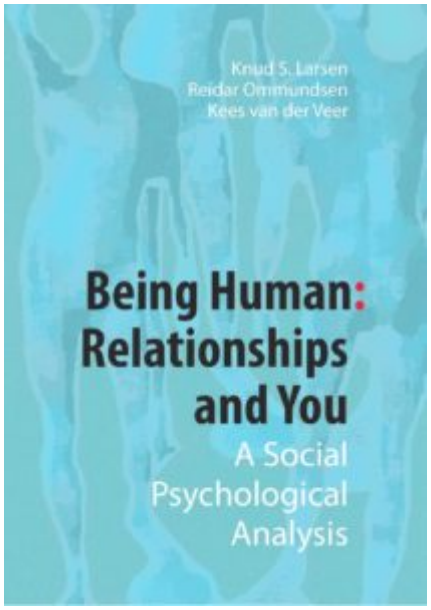
for lasting relationships. Having a successful romantic relationship is basic to feelings of well-being and health.

However, we can observe by the reported divorce statistics that all is not well in marriages. This discontentment appears a tragic commentary on our inability to adjust to changing gender roles as society moves toward more equality. Central to many relationship failures is a preoccupation with fairness and endless negations requiring change in partners. Personality also matters in discontentment. The neurotic individual's preoccupation with negative emotions kills intimate relations. The neurotics bad past experiences influence current expectations, and cause the neurotic to act with strong emotion to any conflict. Stress as represented by socio-economic factors may produce discontentment. The poor are struggling with many forms of insecurity and have little time for intimate relations. Likewise the young are at risk for divorce as lacking the maturity, and struggling with many stresses.

Conflict in relationships comes furthermore about when we interfere with a person's preferences, or frustrate important goals. The behavior of the partner may also have an effect. Drug abuse for example kills the possibility of intimate relations. Attributional blame is also toxic, along with endless criticisms, denying the existence of problems, and displaying the emotion of contempt toward the partner. Breaking emotional ties is extremely painful. The party that is least responsible suffers more unhappiness. What can be done? If we believe in social exchange and equity, we can increase rewards and seek to develop more fairness in the relationship. Presumably the more rewarding and fair our relationship, the more happy. We can also just love more.

Being Human. Chapter 4: Social Cognition: How We Think About

The Social World



Every day we are confronted with situations requiring judgment and decisions. At times, in emergencies, rapid decisions are required allowing little time for reflection. In other situations, the outcome matters greatly and motivates us to carefully evaluate the judgment and consequences of our decision. Social cognition is a fundamental area of social psychology, and refers to how people utilize information in making decisions. Specifically, we will attend to how we select the information, how we interpret the information, and how we organize it to respond to the decision making demand.

In situations involving police or other emergency teams there is little time to evaluate. The police may have fractions of seconds to decide if a suspect is holding a gun or some harmless object and to subsequently decide either to fire to kill, or to pursue another line of action. How does a police officer make such decisions? There are those who would argue that in the case of suspects the police use race to determine whether a suspect is dangerous or not (Singer, 2002). For example, in Cincinnati, USA the police killed 16 black suspects in six years, while no whites were killed in similar circumstances. It seems reasonable to assume that prejudice played a role in these life or death situations in the United States. In other words, faulty decision-making is often a result of rapid response requirements based on often false social stereotypes. We have more to say about stereotypes or cognitive schemas later in this chapter.

On the more positive side, automatic thinking can also save lives. One of the authors recently had an accident, which caused 5 broken ribs, a punctured lung, and the loss of his spleen. He can recall every detail of what happened during the accident, and the efforts made to save his life. The emergency crew went on automatic thinking as soon as they saw his injuries, belting his body in several places, providing oxygen, and after questions about any allergies they started pain medication. In the emergency room there were similar very crisp questions as the surgeon ruled out other problems and directed attention to the needed surgery. This surgeon had a well-established memory of similar injuries and

proceeded rapidly to address the injuries, and stabilized patient's vital signs. As time was of the essence, these professionals were on automatic pilot, as they took steps to administer needed medical services. Automatic decision is rapid and carried to conclusion without a great deal of extended thought and reflection. In this type of social cognition people act as if without thinking, responding to internalized memory and experiences (Bargh & Ferguson, 2000; Sloman, 1996).

There are other occasions when the situation demands a longer and more deliberate evaluation process. How to choose a life partner, what occupation to adopt, what philosophy or ideology to believe in, are best decided on thorough and very careful evaluation. By thinking through all the issues, evaluating potential consequences of our decisions, we can make better decisions, resulting in more contentment over the long run. Although automatic thinking seems to dominate so much of social behavior, we do have the capacity to override the process, and analyze the situation slowly and deliberately.

However, neither type of thinking is error free as important information is often missing. Even powerful nations like the US make basic errors despite heavy investments in intelligence. We can observe that it is not information alone that determines inferences, but also ideology. Ideology allows the individual or group to incorporate and accept information. What comes to mind is the obvious fiasco of going to war in Iraq based on the assumption that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. The intelligence services provided accurate information, that there were no weapons of mass destruction program in Iraq. However, since the decision to go to war had already been made, this inconvenient information was not incorporated in the decision-making. At other times, of course, the information we have is not only inconvenient, but also incomplete, ambiguous or contradictory. How we make decisions given the incompleteness of information is the basic question addressed in social cognition.

1. The process of making inferences from our own experiences

If our inference processes were in fact unbiased, we could all arrive at judgments that reflect reality. Unfortunately, drawing inferences is not such an even handed process, but rather one that is often dominated by errors and biases where we depart from logic and accuracy. To arrive at any inference is a process containing several interrelated cognitions. First, to make any judgment we must gather information. If you are trying to decide whether to work for a certain company you may want to know something about the company's outlook on their workers,

on pay and benefits, on vacation allowances, and in the long term, retirement plans. Some of this information will be more important than other knowledge about the company. For example, if you really need a job now, and you are young, retirement may seem a topic of little interest or concern. Part of drawing an inference therefore is to decide what information is useful, and then try to integrate that information into some judgment or decision.

1.1 Some sources of bias

Actual information gathering is, however, subject to several sources of bias that may affect your judgment. All of us have incorporated expectations into our knowledge base. You have learned from friends or others you trust that this company is very good to its workers. Yet, during your job interview you get the impression that the company has little concern for the well being of its employees, but you refrain from checking the truth of your impression. Prior expectations may cause us to draw wrong inferences (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). We tend to gather and attend to information that is consistent with our expectations. We are less likely to gather information that is inconsistent with what we expect, and because of that bias are therefore more likely to draw inaccurate inferences. Since a person is less likely to gather inconsistent information, prior expectations will bias the information gathering. Prior expectations may cause the individual to completely ignore any contradictory information, or at least to be skeptical of the accuracy of inconsistent information. People favor information that supports what they expect and what they want to believe (Ditto, Scepansky, Munro, Apanovitch, & Lockhardt, 1998).

Often our inferences are based on samples that are small or not representative. It is of course not possible to talk to everyone in the company where you seek employment, but if you talk to only a couple of people it is not likely that useful information will be obtained. In many cases that does not prevent people from making inferences anyway. We utilize what we know, even if that knowledge may be misleading. (Nisbett & Kunda, 1985). Today we live in a world in which statistics can describe just about any aspect of human life. The young person looking for employment can probably look up the company on the Internet and learn much that is useful. For example how profitable is the company, how stable is the management, are jobs secure or not. Here again we can observe a bias that seems characteristic of humans. Although statistics tend to be objectively based on averages or totals (and therefore more accurate), this information is frequently

discarded in favor of anecdotal stories that emphasize information about specific persons or happenings. For example, the statistics about the company may show that they pay very low average salaries, but you have learned that an individual hired by the company managed to get himself promoted to a high position in just three years. Which source will be more powerful in your inferences about the company? Research suggests that the anecdotal information has more influence on judgments (Beckett & Park, 1995).

Another source of bias is the differential weighing given to negative information. More significance is placed on negative as compared to positive information, and it weighs more heavily when decisions are made (Taylor, 1991;Pratto & John, 1991). Illusionary correlations may also produce a bias in inferences. If our prior expectations suggest that two variables should go together they are often seen as correlating, whether that is factual or not. We have stereotypes about minority groups and violence for example. While there may be a little truth to some social stereotypes they never help us understand individual behavior. A minority individual may or may not fit the stereotype, hence illusionary correlations produce inaccurate inferences.

How decisions are framed may also influence judgments. Here the research points to the most basic factor in social cognition; i.e., are the decisions framed in terms of potential losses or gains? People become very cautious if alternatives are framed in terms of potential losses, but far more likely to take risks if framed in terms of potential gains (Kahnema & Tversky, 1982). If you are in charge of hiring our imaginary prospective employee you would emphasize the stability of the company, and a career that can only produce gains, not the fact that a third of the employees leaves the company each year. (Rothman & Salovey, 1997). In other words emphasizing the positive will make it more likely that the employee will take a risk on the company and accept employment.

1.2 Mood and emotion

Many of the errors we make derive from our commitment to evaluative beliefs. If we have a commitment to a particular idea, ideology or religion, then that emotional commitment may override factual information that is contrary to these evaluative beliefs. Emotion overrides rational decision making many times, particularly if the evaluative beliefs are of great significance and serve as a source of psychological balance. Of course emotions have also a very important role to play in accurate decision-making. Emotions may produce warning signals

when a risky decision contains potential disaster. More and more researchers are coming to the conclusion that emotion and cognition go hand in hand, and provide complementary information (Gray, 2004).

Moods are more temporary, but can still have great influence on the decisions. When we are in a good mood we tend to get along better with others, and our inferences are affected. Even though moods may not last long, we can still make decisions in these temporary conditions, which have long lasting effects (Forgas & Ciarrochi, 2002). When people are depressed they tend to be accurate in making pessimistic predictions about the future, but less accurate in anticipating positive events (Shrauger, Mariano, & Walter, 1998). A mood of sadness may impair accuracy since it slows and promotes a more deliberate information processing when the situation requires a more immediate response (Ambady & Gray, 2002).

2. Biases in information presented firsthand and secondhand

We receive information from different sources, which provide bases for social judgment. Some of our information comes directly from our own interaction in society and our own experiences. Our culture, educational system, prevalent ideologies provide filters for direct experience. The discussion so far has already shown that there is unfortunately no one-to-one relationship between our experiences and accuracy in social cognition. What distortion occurs in memory that derives from our own firsthand experiences, and what distortions derive from others in society?

*2.1 Believing everyone else is better informe*d

Most students will have attended a class in which the professor asked, after a particular difficult lecture, if anyone had any questions. Probably some students had questions, but since no one raised his hand they falsely assumed that they were deficient in knowledge since all the other students had understood the material. Afraid to show their ignorance the individual student along with everyone else therefore, did not ask any questions. This scenario is called “pluralistic ignorance” (Miller & McFarland, 1991).

It seems clear that underlying this distortion of information is the fear of rejection by teacher or classmates or not fitting into prevalent classroom social norms. Other researchers (Klofas & Toch, 1982) found similar results for prison guards who typically operate in a macho tough culture and therefore falsely assume that

the other guards have no sympathy for the prisoners. Another study demonstrated pluralistic ignorance in drinking behavior (Prentice & Miller, 1993). One university had a culture of abusing alcohol, and the students generally assumed that this met with universal approval, when in fact their private opinions often clashed with this norm.

2.2 Biases in memory

Memory is not just a register of past events. In fact memory is an active process of cognition, which often changes what is remembered in significant ways. Again our wishes and desires predominate so what is remembered is what we want to remember more than what actually happened. For one, we never remember everything about an event so memory is an underestimate of what happened. More significantly, however, we sometimes remember things that never happened (Conway & Ross, 1984). These phenomena seriously distort judgment based on memory. In recent years there has been a great upheaval in psychology over the phenomena known as "false memories". Typically these memories are about traumatic events, which happened early in life, are then forgotten, and later retrieved under therapy. In one very famous case a young woman, Eileen Franklin, accused her father of sexually abusing and murdering her best friend. Her father was sentenced to prison and served 6 years before it was established beyond any doubt that Eileen's "recovered" memory was false. Still it remained her firm belief that her father was guilty. Many other cases of falsely accusing someone of sexual abuse are now part of the legal case history in the United States, and show convincingly the fallibility of human memory (Loftus, 1993).

Some memories are of events that occurred under dramatic circumstances. For example many people remember where they were exactly when significant events occurred in national or world history. Often even these apparently vivid memories show significant discrepancies from earlier memories of the actual event (Neisser & Harsch, 1992).

We all have ideas of how things should be, beliefs consistent with our beliefs and ethics. Research has shown that ideas about how things should be often change memories of how things were (Ross, 1989). In the US we have seen dramatic shifts in racial attitudes over the past decades. For example, the educational system used busing of students from minority neighborhoods to more integrated schools as a means of overcoming the negative effects of racism. In the early years, there was a great deal of resistance to busing among white students.

However, over time their opinions changed and when they were asked to recall their earlier attitudes results showed considerable distortions in their memory in favor of the new modified opinions (Goethals & Reckman, 1973).

2.3 Information we obtain from other

On most of the large-scale issues of life we have little first-hand information, but rather must rely on others for our opinions. This information too is filtered through our belief systems, and through those who are the sources of information. How accurate is this information? Obviously we can never get a complete picture since describing an event in detail takes too much time. Therefore shortcuts are employed in order to convey that which in the eyes of the communicator is most important. This process of conveying information of the more important or relevant elements is called sharpening. At the same time irrelevant or less interesting information is left out, a process referred to as leveling.

Most of us have never met the president, the queen or the king of our country, or other famous or notorious people. Yet, that does not prevent us from having opinions about these public personalities. We develop our opinions from the views of those we respect, members of our family, television, and other news media. Again, we engage in a process of sharpening and leveling of information in the interest of a consistent image of the other person. Research shows, however, that such second hand derived opinions tend to the extreme. We are stronger in our dislike, and more flattering in our positive evaluations, than supported by our information. For example the opinion polls on president Bush show that currently he is the most unpopular president in the history of the US. Not so long ago (in historical terms) he was very popular. However, ratings not based on personal experience like opinion polls tend toward more extreme views. This tendency toward extreme views based on second hand information has been found in a number of studies (Gilovich, 1987; Inman, Reichl, & Baron, 1993).

2.4 Slanted views provided by the media

One of the major reasons for distortions is the role played by the media. To a large extent television in the western world is primarily mindless entertainment. Therefore the more exaggerated the story the more likely it will be included in the evening news. The news focuses especially on the negative and on catastrophic events. These happenings should of course be included in the overall picture of the world, but other news such as heroic efforts to help others or stories depicting goodwill are often excluded in favor of these distortions. In short the need to

entertain a population, which is thought to have a very short attention span, supports the emphasis on dramatic and scary events, which reflects only a small portion of behavior or events in a country.

This has an effect on how people view the world. When you are bombarded every day with bad news, wars, murders, rapes, is it any wonder that many people become scared and believe that the world is a very dangerous place? The bias toward bad news in fact creates a world that is not realistic. For example, research shows that in television 80 percent of all crime is violent, whereas in the real world only 20 percent can be categorized as such (Windhauser, Seiter, & Winfree, 1991). Going to the movies presents an even more distorted view of the world as the emphasis is again on the violent, dramatic, and negative (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980).

One consequence is that many people believe the world is more dangerous than it really is. A distorted picture of crime produces in people a heightened fear of victimization and insecurity. Although the murder rate dropped a little in the United States in the period from 1990-1998, television shows focusing on homicide increased during the same period by 473 percent (Center for Media and Public Affairs, 2000). Some studies show a relationship between the number of hours a person watches distorted television, and the fear of victimization (Doob & McDonald, 1979), especially by those who live in neighborhoods where crime is present.

2.5 Distortions based on ideology

There are those in society who have a vested interest in providing a slanted story. The objective is not so much in telling the truth as it is about persuading a target population of the justice of a cause. Social ideologies often lead the media and educational system to accentuate certain features of a story while excluding other important aspects. By suppressing inconvenient information an attempt is made to support certain beliefs about reality in the world. All societies in the world have such ideologies operating. Although many would proclaim the presence of press freedom in the Western world, there is much information that never sees the light of day. For example, few people in the US have any information about Cuba, except the very predictable condemnations one hears from time to time from the government. There is no information on Cuba’s achievements such as eradicating illiteracy, providing medical care, and other systems of social security. These ideological distortions are not carried out innocently, but are the consequences of

deliberate policy and the news media conform to these expectations.

A fundamental question is why do people consume so much negative information? Why is there a preference (which we can observe by the popularity of television programming) for the catastrophic and negative news and shows? Does it make the individual feel better when he sees violence, but can say, "thank god it is not me"? Of course negative information may have some survival value. If we are presented with real dangers we are more likely to survive if we attend to these aspects of our environment. Perhaps such survival needs makes people more vigilant to potential threats (Rozin & Royzman, 2001).

Is information equally useful regardless of how or when we obtain the intelligence? Research by social psychologists shows that it matters greatly in what order the information is received. Also, even slight variation in the actual wording can have a great impact on people's responses. The cold war produced mindless conformity in Western countries during which one's own side was considered the repository of all that was good and praiseworthy, and the other side was just evil. Should it surprise us therefore that US respondents had very different views on whether reporters from socialist countries should be admitted to the US to report on the news, or whether US reporters should be admitted to socialist countries to do the same. In fact only 36 percent of US respondents thought that reporters from socialist countries should be admitted to the US, whereas 66 percent thought the socialist countries should admit western reporters. Later, very different results were obtained by merely changing the order of the questions. If the respondents were asked if US reporters should be given free access in socialist countries 90 percent said yes. Since that question was asked first it put some pressure on the respondents to be consistent and 73 percent agreed that reporters from socialist countries should have similar privileges. Still a lower number, but higher than the 36 percent who responded favorably when asked first for press freedom for socialist reporters in the US (Hyman & Sheatsley, 1950). This, and other studies (Haberstroh, Oyserman, Schwarz, Kuhnen, & Li, 2002) show that the order in which information or questions are presented can have a powerful effect on the respondent's judgment.

Some research has shown a primacy effect; i.e., the information that is presented first is most influential. Other studies have demonstrated a recency effect; i.e., the information presented last is most powerful. The studies do not permit any overall conclusion other than it matters what order information and questions are

presented. For an overview of which (primacy or recency) is most effective see Fiske & Taylor (1991).

Consequently, it is important to keep this in mind if one is developing a survey. Even if all precautions are taken by, for example, guaranteeing anonymity, the results can still vary widely. Those who have a vested interest in manipulating public opinion know that if the contents of the question are varied slightly, there will be a different result. Opponents in a political debate know how to spin the questions in order to obtain a desired result. One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.

Some descriptions are key to an overall stereotype. In another classical investigation Asch (1946) showed that just including the words warm or cold in a person description containing many other trait words as well would completely alter the perception of the person described. Obviously we must be very careful in framing questions, knowing that the order asked, and even slight variations in the content can influence the outcome in significant ways.

2.6 Does motivation effect inferences?

We have seen that people often produce information that is largely self-serving, and develop inferences where the relationship of beliefs is coincidental to the truth. We want to believe in what we think will produce personal happiness, and we will take whatever steps necessary to keep incongruent information out. For example even though divorce rates are approaching 50 percent, most of those who marry do not believe these statistics are applicable to their relationship. In general we persist in believing that only good things will happen, and that bad situations can be avoided (Kunda, 1987).

We might think that if we were highly motivated we would make more careful decisions (Pelham & Neter, 1995). In general the results show that motivation is only of benefit if the decision is easy. If the judgment required is difficult, accuracy in decision-making decreases.

Studies have shown the ability to suppress feelings in various circumstances. You want to forget about a painful relationship, or some traumatic circumstance. As soon as the mind becomes aware of the unpleasant thoughts it can reduce the impact on consciousness by thinking of something else more pleasant (Foster & Liberman, 2001). Some studies also show that suppressing thoughts has a cost

attached. Thought suppression requires a very hard effort that not only involves cognition, but indeed physiology as well. Some studies have shown a negative effect on the immune system through chronic thought suppression (Harris, 2001).

In general social inference is at best an imperfect process where we often make errors in favor of what we desire and want, rather than incorporating some standard of objective reality. Still, without the stereotypes and schemas that moderate social cognition, the complexity of information processing would overcome the average person. It is necessary that we remain aware of the cognitive pitfalls.

3. Automatic thinking and our use of schemas

As we have already noted not all social cognition involves careful evaluation. Often we react rather automatically to social stimulus as if we have ready-made responses stored in our memory. Automatic thinking is largely unconscious, and occurs without intentional effort (Bargh & Ferguson, 2000). The ready-made responses are called schemas; referring to mental structures we possess which function to organize our knowledge about social stimuli. These mental structures influence what information we attend to, what we think about, and what we store in long-term memory (Taylor & Crocker, 1981). Schema is a generic term for knowledge structures (e.g. assumptions or preconceptions) that define other people, what we are ourselves, and our social roles in society. What is a student like, what are the characteristics of a teacher or professor? Do students desire knowledge, and are professors those who like to help?

In each case a schema includes all our knowledge about the social category, as well as situations that are common. What is your schema for attending a football match in The Netherlands? Does it include noisy behavior by fans, and perhaps acting out by young people when the national team wins an important game? How do fans behave when The Netherlands wins an important match over archrivals? Are certain expectations in your mind part of your schema about football and fan behavior? What is your schema about the opposite sex? Does it include gender specific behavior, for example expecting more emotionality by females? Are males expected in your schema to be more assertive? In these and all cases we have stored schemas based on our past experience and what we have learned from others.

If we did not have schemas our lives would require evaluation of each new

situation. Can you imagine the confusion of going shopping to buy products without schemas? Perhaps there are a variety of toothpastes. How can you choose one? If you have a schema your thinking would automatically be oriented based on previous trials or perhaps by advertisement. Without these mental structures not only would shopping be a long and painful experience, but also very confusing as a person has to examine all alternatives. Schemas therefore direct our attention in specific ways, and structure our memory for future use (Brewer & Nakasmura, 1984).

3.1 The function of schemas

Schemas are used to complete information that may be lacking in a specific situation. How do you expect people to behave who are members of specific national or racial groups? If you lived in the US you might have schemas of Black people that include your beliefs about their propensity for violent behavior. If you lived in The Netherlands, Norway or some other European country you may have schemas about immigrants that also include potential violence. Hence when you meet someone of a minority background research suggest that you selectively attend to cues suggesting hostile behavior. All cultures have deeply rooted stereotypes not based on personal experience.

The reason we have schemas is that they allow us to complete needed information prior to interaction. Having schemas gives you some clue on how to behave toward a given social group, or how to behave in a given role (like that of a student). Our schemas may of course be prejudicial, and have little to do with social reality. Still schemas are enduring because we want to believe what we want to believe, the truth be damned. However, without schemas our world would be a giant buzzing beehive with no order or direction. Schemas are important because when we are confronted with a new situation we can understand it better – or so we feel – from our stored knowledge of similar situations. They help us process information more efficiently, and help us understand what part of the situation we must attend to, and what is of less or little importance.

Schemas influence memory, what and how we remember a particular situation. In one study the participants were asked to watch a videotape of a husband and wife having dinner together (Cohen, 1981). Half of the students were told that the woman in the videotape was a librarian, the other half that she was a waitress. Subsequently the participants were asked to list what they remembered of the interaction. Interestingly, when the woman was described as a librarian the

participants in the study “remembered” her drinking wine, whereas when she was described as a waitress she was seen drinking beer. In other words memories were influenced by the participant’s stereotypes of people in these two roles. What this and other studies show is that behavior consistent with a preexisting schema is remembered better and enjoys an advantage when it comes to recall (Carli, 1999; Zadny & Gerard, 1974).

3.2 Social stimuli and preexisting schemas

Based on our own experience and that of others we all carry schemas as part of our interpretive mental arsenal. How can these schemas be activated by social stimuli allowing for more efficient judgment and decision-making? One of the significant factors, which determine schema activation, is the person’s expectation in a given situation. If a police officer encounters a Black person in a dark alley is it his expectation that he is confronting a criminal? If so that will activate schemas already existing in the mind of the police officer, and any abrupt or threatening movement by the minority person could lead to an unjustified shooting. Such events have occurred repeatedly (Bargh & Ferguson, 2000; Sloman, 1996). These are all examples of automatic thinking where the minority person was perceived as threatening and the officers opened fire based on their preexisting schemas. As we have seen, some situations require rapid response, and in the US this frequently means shoot first and ask questions later.

Schemas are frequently applied in gender relations to help interpret what to expect from the other gender. For insecure people perceived threat may be part of their schemas. If a threat is perceived the individual will be less likely to take the risk necessary to build intimate relationships. One consequence of this schema is the greater likelihood of living a lonely life. Many studies have demonstrated the ability of expectations to elicit specific schemas which then serve to guide subsequent information processing (Hirt, MacDonald, & Erikson, 1995; Stangor, & McMillan, 1992).

Another critical factor leading to schema activation is similarity between the social stimulus and the preexisting schema. You turn on the television and see a football match in progress. If you are a fan you have seen many matches before, perhaps even by the teams featured. Consequently you possess schemas about the teams, the individual players, and the likely outcome of the encounter. In other words the features of a particular situation, a sporting event, a family gathering, or some other social happening will advise you on what schemas to

enlist, and how to interpret what you are observing (Holyoak & Thagard, 1995; Spellman & Holyoak, 1992). The recency of schemas also leads to activation. If a schema has been employed recently it is more readily available, and therefore more likely to be activated given minimal stimuli. The importance of recent activation has been demonstrated in several studies (Ford & Kruglanski, 1995; Herr, 1986; Todorov & Bargh, 2002).

The importance of a schema determines to some extent activation. Probably every situation is capable of eliciting a number of schemas. Sometimes misapplication occurs as the same situation may elicit different schemas. War related schemas have affected US policies over the past several generations. One schema derived from the surrender to Nazi provocation prior to the Second World War. That schema leads people and decision makers to say, "We must stand up to dictators". Another schema is the quagmire that the American war in Vietnam brought to US forces, and the desire not to repeat that experience. Politicians are constantly evoking schemas of both events in order to support or oppose a particular war related policy. Which of these two schemas do you think American decision makers employed with respect to the Iraq war? It seems clear that the war in Iraq took place regardless of contrary evidence that there were no weapons of mass destruction being produced. Recent reviews of the pretexts for the war showed without doubt that the reasons given for going to war were false. The only rationale left for that war was based on "we must stand up to dictators", the schema of World War II. Thus the past has long arms that affect much of what happens today and in the future. Research has shown that it is not difficult to elicit either of the two war schemas with consequences for decision making (Gilovich, 1981).

When the situation is important it is more likely that several schemas are brought into play, and the individual may evaluate longer and make more careful and complex decisions. Research shows that when the outcome is important, and when some individual's accountability is at stake the inferences produced are more complex and based on several schemas (Chaiken, 1980; Tetlock & Boettger, 1989).

Of course we do not all respond in the same manner to stimuli. There are always individual differences present, and the same stimuli may elicit different schemas. Some people are quite comfortable with ambiguity whereas others become very anxious unless situations are clearly defined. Differences in need for structure

affects the need to create schemas. Intolerance of ambiguity requires that the person has in hand more or less ready-made responses. In short, those who do not tolerate ambiguity are more likely to rely on cognitive structures, whereas those with high tolerance deal with complicated situations with less reliance on schemas (Bar-Tal, Kishon-Rabin, & Tabak, 1997; Neuberg, Judice, & West, 1997; Chui, Morris, Hong, & Menon, 2000).

Is consciousness of stimuli necessary for activation of the schema? Can schemas get primed for action even if the individual is unconscious of the presence of the stimuli? A pioneering study (Bargh & Pietromonaco, 1982) showed that even when stimulus words were presented too rapidly to register, they still could affect the elicitation of specific schemas. Even when the stimulus is subliminal, below the threshold of awareness, the stimulus still functions to prime specific mental structures. This finding has been supported by many other studies (Debner & Jacoby, 1994; Draine & Greenwald, 1998; Ferguson, Bargh, & Nayak, 2005; Klinger, Burton, & Pitts, 2000).

3.3 Cultural differences

We shall in this book continuously apply the cultural concept of interdependent and independent societies outlined in chapter 2, as they have applications in a variety of situations and play a role in many social psychological constructs. Westerners and East Asians vary in how much they depend on the situation and on contextual information to come to conclusions. In general East Asians are more likely to rely on situational cues and environmental factors to explain behavior. Westerners are more likely to attribute behavior to dispositional causes; i.e., behavior is largely a function of the individual's personality and mental structures. East Asians explain events by pointing to the context and the importance of the situation. The individualistic culture in the West predisposes people to attribute blame or success to the individual and thus ignore the social context. The thinking of East Asians seems more complete as attention is paid to the whole social environment, whereas Westerners focus on the acting individual (Ji, Peng & Nisbett, 2000).

Our schemas are to a large extent a reflection of our culture. What is important or significant in a culture is committed to memory, and the resulting schemas are ready for use in daily life. In western cultures there are new schemas related to developments in technology. In rural regions of Africa existing schemas may have to do with the local culture, and farming or cattle transactions. In one early study

an interviewer compared what a Scottish settler and a local Bantu herdsman remembered from a complicated cattle sale (Bartlett, 1932). The Scottish settler remembered little and had to consult his records for specifics, whereas the Bantu herdsman could produce from memory a variety of data such as how many cattle were sold and for how much. One would draw the conclusion that since cattle transactions are a central part of Bantu economy they have developed excellent schemas for these cultural relevant data. In all cultures people are faced with a vast amount of information. Our schemas help us reduce this complexity to manageable proportions, to allow for efficient cognition and decision-making. Schemas are therefore a form of automatic thinking.

Schemas are based on the past but are used to predict the future. In the west prediction of the future is based on continuity. In general the world is seen to continue to move in the same direction it currently moves. East Asians on the other hand emphasize change. The Tao (the way) is an Asian symbol that views the world as being in one of two states at any given moment, always changing. The yin and yang getting better or worse, and stronger or weaker, are dualities that emerge from Taoist thinking. These ideas should predispose East Asians to think that current events are likely to change course, rather than staying on track in the current direction. For example if asked whether a dating couple will continue to date, Americans are likely to say yes (continue course), East Asians thought is less likely. In estimating economic growth rates for the world economy or likely cancer rates, Americans overwhelming believe that current trends will continue whereas Chinese are more likely to think they will reverse course (Ji, Nisbet, & Su, 2001).

3.4 The use of racial stereotypes and schemas

We have mentioned racial stereotypes before. A number of studies have demonstrated the presence of racial stereotypes and how they affect perception. In one study participants would repeatedly see a gun in the hand of a minority person when the individual was just holding a tool (Payne, 2001). In a study of video games the participants were asked to press a button saying shoot if the individual in the video had a gun, and do not shoot if he did not. The results showed that the participants were more likely to pull the trigger when the stimulus person in the video was Black, and whether or not a gun was present (Correll, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2002).These errors in perception are obviously based on schemas that Black people are violent. Our culture contains

very persuasive schemas that link race and violence. These are examples of automatic thinking derived from society. Another example of the cultural direction of thinking were the different reactions to the publishing of cartoons of Mohammed in Denmark in 2006. In a variety of Muslim societies there was an automatic call for death for those who were deemed guilty of offense, which from a different cultural perspective seemed absurd.

In summary, schemas provide certain advantages in the psychological economy of the individual. They help us process enormous amounts of information. Otherwise we would be overwhelmed by the sheer complexity of our world. Schemas also help us recall information, information that is consistent with the schema as well as inconsistent information (Corneille, Huart, Becquart, & Bredart, 2004). We have already seen what might happen to delay shopping if we did not have schemas about products in the supermarket. One function of these mental structures therefore is to speed up processing. Often, schemas assist us in making automatic inferences. Having gender related schemas means that we have a starting point for interaction, and do not need to start over each time we meet someone of the opposite sex. On the whole therefore schemas assist us in interpreting situations and people, and may especially be helpful with ambiguous situations where information is limited.

There are obviously also disadvantages in the use of schemas. Many errors occur as we saw in the case of racial stereotypes. In general schemas lead to simplification resulting at times in wrong interpretations. To that we may add that once present schemas are difficult to change. Since they serve psychological security by making thinking automatic and efficient, we are reluctant to get rid of these ideas, even when they are misleading. People will believe what they are prepared to believe and what they want to believe.

3.5 The self-fulfilling prophecy

We have many schemas, some of which actually become true, because our behavior elicits the expected responses from others. Rosenthal and Jacobson completed the most famous study on what was called the self-fulfilling prophecy in 1968. They initially administered an IQ test to students in an elementary school. Subsequently they returned and identified some of the students as “bloomers”, i.e., some of the students were identified to the teachers as scoring so high that they were sure to “bloom” over the following academic year. In actual fact those identified as “bloomers” were just a random sub-sample, and therefore

in no way different from the other students. The only way they differed had to be in the minds of the teachers who were told of their intellectual, but bogus academic gifts. Keep in mind that the students were not given any feedback, nor were the parents told of the results of the test. In other words an expectation schema was created in the teachers minds about this subgroup, which in actual fact was randomly chosen and had no particular gift. Could the mere fact that the teachers now had new and higher expectations (schemas) affect the students in some way to actually improve their IQ scores? That is what happened. The students labeled "bloomers" showed significantly greater gains in IQ scores when compared to the rest of the students. Similar results have been replicated in other studies (Blank, 1993; Jussim, 1991; Smith, Jussim, & Eccles, 1999).

What happened? Did the teachers just decide to give all their efforts to helping "bloomers" while disregarding the other students? That was clearly not the case in any conscious way. Rather the teachers had incorporated a schema about the "bloomers" abilities, and thus any differential treatment was a consequence of automatic thinking. Is it not amazing? There was no conscious attempt to treat the selected students differently, but that is what happened. This differential, but unconscious treatment was also found in other studies (Brophy, 1983; Rosenthal, 1994; Snyder, 1984). It appeared from analysis that the differential treatment included a warmer emotional atmosphere, more personal attention, and support. The teachers also challenged the "bloomers" to a greater extent with more difficult material, and provided better feedback. The teachers also included more opportunities for bloomers to participate in class. The self fulfilling prophecy operates by first creating an expectation schema, i.e. what is another person like, which in turn influences how the person is treated, which causes the person to act consistently with the original expectation.

Such self-fulfilling prophecies may have very negative consequences. Although girls initially perform better than boys in grade school, as time goes by girls begin to fall behind boys on standard tests (Reis & Park, 2001; Stumpf & Stanley, 1998). There are those who would argue that this change is due to different information processing by male and female brains (Geary, 1996; Witelson, 1992). However, it seems more likely that the change occurs as a result of lower expectations for girls by teachers, and perhaps also in the home, thus establishing a self fulfilling prophecy (Feingold, 1996; Hyde, 1997). If teachers are asked who are their most gifted students they mention boys much more frequently, and parents too believe

their boys are brighter (Jussim & Eccles, 1992; Raety, Vaenskae, Kasanen, & Kaerkkaeinen, 2002). Are the significant people in the lives of girls treating them differently in ways that affect the self-concept, thus leading to lower levels of achievement? Yes, although it is not a conscious process, but a matter of expectations built into automatic thinking with long-range consequences.

Perhaps we also damage boys by having unfounded expectations, which nevertheless produce negative outcomes? Kindlon & Thomson, (2000) suggested that our schemas might well stunt the emotional development of males by expecting macho (violent and forceful) behavior, rather than supporting more healthy ways to express emotions. Violence in our society is at least partially due to such self-fulfilling prophecies. Since the self-fulfilling prophecy occurs automatically we reflect little on the consequences. Most people would be completely unaware that they practiced such discriminatory gender based behavior, as were the teachers in the aforementioned studies. Social psychologists may help by bringing to greater consciousness how schemas operate, and which expectations are thought significant in our culture.

4. Heuristics: mental shortcuts for rapid response

Often we possess mental shortcuts that allow us to make efficient decisions. Heuristics are not always accurate, but still provide for good decisions in a relatively short period of time (Gigerenzer, 2000; Gilovich & Griffin, 2002; Nisbet & Ross, 1980). Schemas often serve such a purpose based on our experience and that of others. There are situations, however, where we have no schemas. In other cases we may have too many, and we would need to try to select which is appropriate. Therefore, at times there are no ready-made schemas to employ. What to do? In these situations people use a mental shortcut called a heuristic in order to make judgments quickly and efficiently.

4.1 The availability heuristic: what comes easily to your mind?

In the case of the availability heuristic your judgment is based on what comes most easily to your mind; i.e., what is available (Schwarz & Vaughn, 2002; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). If you have just read about something having to do with the situation, this recent information may be employed. At times what comes quickly to mind is the right solution. At other times it may lead to an inaccurate judgment. We sometimes use short cuts to describe ourselves. In the experiment by Schwarz et al., the participants were asked to find six examples of assertive behavior in one experimental condition, and another group was asked to find

twelve examples in another condition. Those who were asked to think of 12 examples had difficulty in coming up with so many examples and consequently judged themselves as not assertive. Those who were only asked for six, since these examples came more readily for this group, concluded that they were in fact assertive. The ease by which people could bring examples to mind did determine self-judgment as predicted by the availability heuristic.

When something comes readily to mind it is because there are probably many such examples. Therefore the availability heuristic is often a good estimate of frequency. If you were asked to estimate the number of psychology majors at your university, how would you make an estimate? If you have among your friends or acquaintances many who are psychology majors you may conclude that there are also many enrolled at the university. If you do not know any, and none come to mind, you may conclude that there are only a few students who major in psychology.

The availability heuristic then enables a person to respond to questions about quantity or frequency based on how quickly such information is retrieved from memory (MacLeod & Campbell, 1992; Manis, Shedler, Jonides, & Nelson, 1993). If examples can be brought to mind quickly it must be because there are many of them. We can think of many more male presidents of countries than female, so we can come to the conclusion that there are more male presidents. We see in the news that most large companies have male CEO's; that also comes easy to mind and we draw similar conclusions. The rapidness and ease by which these examples come to mind, i.e. are available, therefore become a relatively accurate guide to overall frequency or probability.

Of course people do make errors with the availability heuristic. Some events make deeper impressions and therefore are more readily available. If you had experienced a hurricane at the Black sea, you might conclude that this inland ocean is stormy. Others, who have only enjoyed sunny days at the beach, may think of the Black Sea as very tranquil. In the Kahneman and Tversky (1973) study the participants were asked if there were more words that began with the letter "r", or more words with the letter "r" in third position. It was easier for the participants to think of words beginning with "r", and they therefore estimated a higher frequency. In actual fact there are more words with the letter "r" in third position in English, but since they do not come readily to mind, the availability heuristic produced the wrong estimate.

We have also seen that when violence is over-reported in the news it leads to many people becoming fearful, a state of mind not justified by real statistics. The violence of video games may lead a young person to see a world of violence in which you strike first to avoid being a victim. In each case there is a misleading emphasis on the frequency of violence that is not reflected in the real world, but nevertheless affects behavior. In the western media reports of murder occur every day. In actual fact the US is the murder capital of the world with tens of thousands of victims each year. On the other hand we seldom hear about suicides in our society as they seem less dramatic, and therefore less newsworthy. This leads people to estimate that the murder rate of murder is higher that that of suicides, when in actual fact suicides outnumber murder by a 3 to 2 margin. Dramatic deaths get more press coverage and are therefore more available. Research shows an overestimation of deaths from accidents and other dramatic death and an underestimate of more silent deaths due to disease (Slovic, Fischoff, & Lichenstein, 1982).

Likewise, we tend to overestimate our own contribution to ongoing projects. Why? Because we are familiar with what we have done, and it comes readily to mind. In general people overestimate their own contributions, and underestimate that of others (Ross & Sicoly, 1979). Often people feel they are under-appreciated for the work they do, and likely this is because of misapplication of the availability heuristic. Essentially then, the availability heuristic helps us judge the frequency of some situations, the probability that certain outcomes will occur, or the size of some category by how readily examples come to mind (Schwarz & Vaughn, 2002). The ease of generating examples seems to guide our judgment.

4.2 The representativeness heuristic

Suppose you are asked if a specific person belongs to or is a representative of the national category Dutch. If you have limited information you might look for characteristics that match or are similar to a prototype you carry in your mind of the typical Dutch. With little information to go on people often use the representative heuristic or trying to judge based on degree of similarity. It is as if this mental short-cut tells you that a member of any population group ought to look similar to the prototype you carry in your mind. Does the person look Vietnamese, or Chinese, or Japanese? What category is the person judged to similar to?

If you think the typical values of psychology are pursuit of truth and the helping

relationship, and you observe these traits in a person you might wrongly predict that the person becomes a psychology major in University. The function of the representativeness heuristic is to look for matching or similar behavior. Do murderers have features in common? If you are faced with such a person could you judge the person a member of that category? Obviously it depends on the accuracy of the prototype you carry in your mind. Many times people are surprised by the clean-cut appearance of serial or mass murderers in the western world. On the other hand we may have a good handle on other categories, such as members of racial or ethnic groups.

The representativeness heuristic also encourages specific correlated assessments between cause and effects. If "like" goes with "like", we would expect that large causes would have large effects. A small earthquake would cause less damage, a large earthquake more. In other words small goes with small, large with large. However, that is not always true. We know that very small organisms can be deadly as in the case of the AIDS virus (Gilovich & Savitsky, 2002). Again, we must use caution when making such estimates or judgments. The symptoms of an illness do not always resemble the cause or cure, although the representativeness heuristic has influenced traditional medicine in that direction. For example in traditional Chinese medicine those who had vision problems were often fed chopped bats because bats were assumed to have excellent vision (Deutsch, 1977). Even today the representativeness heuristic continues to influence thinking about body and health. People are told to avoid milk if they have colds, because milk resembles the phlegm typical of cold suffers. In fact there is no relationship. Many of us have heard the term "you are what you eat". Of course that is sensible to some degree. Eating too many calories will produce fat in the body. However, just because you eat only pork does not mean you will look like a pig or be piggish in your behavior.

Even in the pseudoscience of astrology we can observe a resemblance between the supposed sign and personality. Those born under the sign of Virgo (virgin) are supposed to be modest and retiring; whereas those born under Leo, the lion, are supposed to be forceful leaders of men. Obviously there is no validity to these pseudo beliefs, but that does not prevent people from believing sincerely. Even a powerful person like Reagan, the former president of the US, was a "true" believer (Abell, 1981; Zusne & Jones, 1982). It is kind of scary to think that the leader of the most powerful nation applied the representativeness heuristic and

believed in such nonsense. Himmler, the exterminator in the Nazi empire, and other ranking members of the regime also believed in astrology. History is showed the foolhardiness and stupidity of these beliefs.

Other fields are also influenced by the representativeness heuristic e.g. graphology, the analysis of handwriting. It is a field of continued investigation, in which some reliable relationships have been found between handwriting and behavior (Nevo, 1986). If your handwriting is shaky perhaps it is a clue to a nervous personality or some neurological disorder. Doctor's handwriting in the western world is generally considered unreadable. Does that say something about doctor's personality, or is readability not a priority for busy and hardworking medical experts? If handwriting slants does that reveal anything about the person? Is the person who slants to the left more likely to be a good socialist, and those who slant to the right pro-capitalist? We may all see that these are absurd conclusions that reflect the representativeness heuristic. In short, the representativeness heuristic is a mental shortcut where we categorize something if it is similar to what is believed to be a typical or representative schema.

4.3 The problem of illusionary correlations

At times we may observe the availability and the representativeness heuristics operating together. When events occur together we are often led to believe they are correlated when in fact it is only coincidence we are observing. An illusionary correlation occurs when two variables are believed correlated, but in fact are not related (Chapman & Chapman, 1967). This is an issue of no small importance to psychology. For example clinical psychologists often rely on projective tests like the Rorschach and Draw-a- person tests to make clinical diagnosis of the mentally ill. Other research has demonstrated that these projective techniques fail most standards for reliability. For example in the Draw-a-person test the client is asked to draw a picture which the psychologist then interprets for signs of underlying mental illness. Clinicians report many connections between drawings and specific pathological categories. The drawings and the pathologies seemed to go together in the mind of the clinicians. For example people who suffer from paranoia are thought to draw very large or small eyes on the person depicted.

These illusionary correlations were investigated in the Chapman study. The investigators randomly presented 45 Draw-a-person pictures, 35 reportedly from mentally ill clients, and 10 from graduate students. Each of the pictures had a random description attached. There was no clinical relationship between the

description and the pictures; the descriptions were applied randomly and not connected to the picture in any way. In one case the description was “is very suspicious of others”, or another “is easily frightened”. The results showed that although no relationship between description and picture was emphasized the participants observed the same clinical relationships as those of the clinicians. Large eyes, for example, indicated also to the participants’ paranoia. The participants observed the same illusionary correlations as the clinicians by the mere fact that they (the pictures) presented a joint operation of the availability and representativeness heuristics. In another part of the experiment the investigators asked which different body parts were related to which mental disease category. Again the respondents responded in similar ways as the clinicians employing the same heuristics.

*4.4 Other cognitive short-cut*s

We can also imagine “what could have been in a possible event, if only the conditions had been different”. Kahneman and Tversky (1973) called this the simulation heuristic. This heuristic helps us understand the psychology of near misses, or “if only something were slightly different”. If the couple driving had arrived at the railroad crossing only five seconds later the passing train would not have killed them. We use this heuristic for a variety of mental tasks, to help us understand regret or grief (Seta, McElroy, & Seta, 2001). For example if you go to the airport at the same time as another traveler, but both of you are delayed by traffic jams. The other traveler is told his plane left 30 minutes ago, whereas you are told that your plane left only minutes ago. Who would be the most frustrated? Undoubtedly you who barely missed the plane and who through the simulation heuristic can imagine a different outcome, like, “if you had only left ten minutes earlier”.

Counter factual reasoning is where some negative event leads people to think of more desirable outcomes given different circumstances. You did poorly on a test. You might tell yourself “if I had only studied more I would have passed” (Markman & Tetlock, 2000). Counter factual reasoning involves trying to imagine alternative versions of real events. What if this happened? When something unpleasant takes place does it help us to imagine how things could have been, with a different version of the event? We can in fact feel better if we imagine how much worse the event could have been. The couple was killed at the railroad crossing, but thankfully no one on the train was injured, we might reason (Taylor,

Wood, & Lichtman, 1983). The simulation heuristic might also help you to prepare for future unpleasant events. Consider the following experience of one of the authors. On two separate years I fell from high ladders, and the second time I injured myself seriously, like mentioned before. I have often gone over what happened in my mind. I am standing at the top rung, my chain saw in my right hand, reaching out for a few remaining branches, taking a terrible chance that the ladder being insecure would give way. Well it did. It would have been so easy to avoid, like not standing on the highest rung, waiting until someone could support the ladder, or letting someone younger take charge. Simulating it I also realize I could have easily died as I lay injured on the ground. That from my perspective would be a worse outcome so I am lucky. I can also imagine that I will not find myself in the same position again. That is preparing for the future. I was highly motivated to change, one of the important functions of counter factual reasoning and the simulation heuristic (McMullen & Markman, 2000).

4.5 The anchoring heuristic

When we are asked to judge some event we need some reference point based on previous experience. How far will the Amsterdam Football Club AJAX reach in the coming Champions League? Since we really do not know, how can we come to some assessment? We can start by thinking of past Champions League, whether the AJAX-players this year are the same as last year, and the nature of the other teams in the league. The previous international competition becomes an "anchor" around which points can be added or deducted based on the other variables. The anchoring heuristic is simply a departure point for coming up with some reasonable estimate of some future event. Like in the case of other heuristics, the anchoring heuristic is a device for stimulating our memory, and eliciting the appropriate schema.

The anchoring heuristic may be also used to estimate the average number of supporters who will attend the home matches of Ajax in the Amsterdam Arena. Again you can reference the numbers from the previous competition, let us say 40,000 spectators. This time around you think there will be 56,000 spectators (fully booked stadium), the team is improved, and there is a new coach. The previous event again served as the anchor for estimating the current competition.

5. Intuitive versus controlled thinking

So far we have taken note of the evidence for two types of thinking. The first type is the automatic thinking represented by schemas and heuristic. The second more

controlled thinking is represented by counter factual thinking and thought suppression. The difference between the two forms of thinking is the difference between intuition, which is automatic, and reasoning that is controlled. We seem to have two minds when addressing a problem, or two systems of thought. The presence of these two systems has been reported in many studies (Epstein, 1991; Kahneman & Frederick, 2002; Sloman, 2002). The intuitive system responds quickly to situations that require immediate decisions. Our past experience or cultural influence helps a speedy process via the aforementioned schemas and heuristics. The second reasoning system is controlled by nature and hence slower in processing information. Perhaps the decision is of great significance to the individual, or is perceived to have long term or broad effects, and hence requires a more deliberate process.

Whatever the problem one will always be able to provide an answer through the rapid process of schemas and heuristics. When the answer is not appropriate or useful, it may then be overridden by the more deliberate rational system. The rational reasoning process serves as a censor, or final check, in order to avoid the common pitfalls discussed previously. Tversky and Kahneman's work on heuristics has had a profound influence in several areas including psychology, but also economics, management, political science and other fields (Gilovich, Griffin, &Kahneman, 2002; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). The fact that so many fields have found the concepts of heuristics and schemas useful adds a great deal of face validity to the paradigm. Controlled thinking is defined as conscious cognition, where the evaluations are intentional, and as a consequence voluntary whereas automatic thinking occurs without any conscious effort. The second mode of controlled thinking serves as a check or balance for automatic thinking. If a decision from automatic thinking is not functional or contains problems, and if the issue is important, the individual will be motivated to reevaluate.

Think of the commercials that are played on television. Often these advertisements are on the screen for only a few seconds. The objective is not to have the viewer go through a process of the pros and cons of the product. In selling a particular kind of toothpaste the manufacturer does not want to engage in controlled thinking, or have you go through a serious process of evaluation as to which is best from the point of dental hygiene. All they want is to engage your automatic system to create schemas and name familiarity. Next time you go to the supermarket you will not engage in some dialog with your inner self, "yes, this

product is better, I know the research". No, rather than such a deliberate process the advertiser manipulates the unconscious mind associating the product with simple slogans "will make your teeth brighter", or "9 out of 10 dentists recommend this toothpaste". Neither assertion has to be true, but if they are implanted it may affect your purchasing behavior (Chaiken, 1987; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty, Priester, & Brinol, 2002). In many ways political campaigns are based on similar automatic manipulations.

Suppose however, that the message on television is sufficiently significant to encourage you to turn off your internal automatic pilot and listen carefully. Some studies do show that when people face significant tasks and decisions they will make more complex and accurate decisions (Kruglanski &Webster, 1996). On the other hand, when it does not really matter what the outcome is, your life will not change regardless of the brand of toothpaste you buy, the automatic pilot will dominate (Kruglanski, 1989; Trope & Lieberman, 1996). Even when people make efforts to understand the world they will still make many errors. We are still influenced by wishful thinking, and our belief systems will still override any evidence to the contrary. Training in the scientific mode of thinking, sufficient skepticism, are important defenses against illusionary thinking. We can observe in any culture very intelligent people who still will maintain absurd thoughts and beliefs. Intelligence alone is not a sufficient defense against deluded beliefs and behavior. Rather, we must be skeptical of ourselves, and repeatedly revisit decisions to see if they conform to some objective standard of truth (Wilson & Brekke, 1994).

5.1 Automatic thinking governs much of our behavior

The amount of research on heuristics and schemas should also suggest that these forms of thinking are of great importance to the psychological economy of the individual. In our busy and complex world we could not exist unless we had rapid response systems that might be more or less accurate. There is also a strong need for more complex reasoning as noted above. For example, we have seen how false minority stereotypes can have very negative consequences for individuals and society.

Automatic thinking is so persuasive in all areas of life, and yet we by and large remain unaware of its presence. Technology has brought us to the point that machines mimic the human condition. Just like people modern jetliners manage very complex operations including takeoff and landing by automatic pilot, a

computer based response system. Only in emergencies is the automatic response system is inadequate, and the pilot must take over and save the plane. It is also important to remember that we might think we are controlling our thinking, and our behavior is therefore rational, when in fact we are just rationalizing decisions made previously by automatic pilot. Beliefs in our rational behavior can be just another illusion (Wegner, 2002). In fact despite our beliefs in our rational thinking it might still be controlled automatically or by the environment, we have just placed a more desirable label on it. Even when we believe, sincerely, that our behavior is based on rational thought it may in fact be quite automatic. To develop rational human behavior is perhaps more a goal than a reality for most people.

5.2 Is the development of rational thinking a hopeless project?

Shall we give up or are there some things we can do in education that might improve controlled and deliberate thinking? Many of the problems we have discussed in social cognition could be ameliorated by training in statistics and research methodology (Nisbet, Fong, Lehman, & Cheng, 1987). Training in economics and other forms of logical education may also help (Larrick, Morgan, & Nisbett, 1990). Teaching people basic statistical skills would help the reasoning process as statistics is a system of logic that is the foundation of all scientific enterprise. Such courses would involve the ideas of probability, how to generalize from a small sample to a population, and the nature of random sampling. In fact studies have demonstrated that our reasoning powers may be improved through such courses (Crandall & Greenfield, 1986; Malloy, 2001; Nisbet, Fong, Lehman, & Cheng, 1987). This aforementioned research shows also that students in psychology and medicine improved more than those enrolled in law and chemistry. Among psychology graduate students the improvements were especially impressive. This finding should be an encouragement to all engaged in the psychological enterprise. Perhaps at some point all students at a given university should take statistical courses to reason better, become better scientists, and more informed citizens of the world. If our students are trained well in the sciences, and develop the appropriate skeptical attitude toward all knowledge, there is some hope that mystical, stereotypic thinking might be reduced in favor of better decision making.

We might also ask people to consider whether they might be wrong .In one study people were asked to consider the opposite point of view. When asked to do this

they often realized that there were different ways of construing the world (Lord, Lepper, & Preston, 1984; Hirt & Markman, 1995; Mussweiler, Strack, & Pfeiffer, 2000). People can be trained to use their minds and avoid simplistic and automatic responses. It obviously is a major responsibility of the educational system to inculcate skeptical attitudes in young students from the earliest. Instead in most nations early school is used primarily as a socialization tool to encourage conformity to social ideology and standards. Of course all nations have the right to socialize children and young people. In doing so, however, they create schemas that permit automatic thinking. The call by people in the streets of Afghanistan for death against those who are believed to defame the Prophet are results of such schemas, as is most of the international violence in the world.

6. Social cognition and clinical psychology

All human beings make judgments about others, and as we have seen psychologists are subject to similar errors. We all walk around with "implicit" personality theories in judging other people, yet remain completely unaware of what influences our judgments. Our stereotypes are examples of such theories. We might say "women are emotional" or "athletes are aggressive" or "sales people are extroverted". These are all examples of implicit personality theories that serve as the aforementioned schemas in easing our interaction with others. We often do not have a good handle on what influenced such thinking (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). We also judge ourselves. In general we tend to believe what is said about us, as long as it is positive (Shavit & Shouval, 1980). What guides acceptance of self-descriptions is the degree of positive traits included in the assessment. Up to a point the more favorable the description, the more it is accepted as factual. This low level of cognition can also be observed in cases where people accept fake self-description as equally valid, or in some cases even more valid, than those based on objective testing. People are not able to distinguish between the validity of real descriptions or those that are pure inventions. We seem to have endless capacity for self-delusion.

Professional clinical psychologists are subject to similar errors. Often clinical judgments are based on projective techniques that have little reliability or validity. But the patient is impressed by the clinicians and believes in the diagnosis. The consequence of the diagnosis takes the route of the self-fulfilling prophecy. The clinician believes in the presence of certain pathology. He then treats the patient accordingly. Pretty soon the patient behaves consistent with

these expectations. Professional judgment is subject to illusionary correlations seeing relationships where really there are none. Psychologists often become over confident by searching only for confirming information of the diagnosis rather than keeping an open mind. Followers of Freud will visit and revisit childhood, and will soon enough come up with a host of events which by themselves may have had little effect, but in confirming a diagnosis are seen as evidence for pathology. In believing there is a relationship, we all, including clinicians, are more likely to see confirming than disconfirming evidence. This is true not only for psychologists, but for all those who contemplate human behavior whether economists or political scientists. Even physical scientists who were convinced the earth was flat used considerable energy to maintain that illusion, including sanction by religion.

Hindsight is always right. As we say hindsight is 20/20, meaning that in looking back we have perfect vision. In one famous study Rosenhan (1973) and a number of his associates got themselves admitted to mental hospitals complaining that they heard “voices”. The claims were bogus, but were offered in an attempt to assess the judgment of clinicians. Otherwise the “patients” reported truthfully their life histories and exhibited no further symptoms. Most were classified as schizophrenics. The clinicians, who found “evidence” in the life story told, when in fact the patients had no pathology, then confirmed the mental illness diagnoses of the bogus patients. When Rosenhan later told the mental health workers about the experiment, he also advised them that more bogus patients would seek admittance. During the following three months 193 patients were admitted. Now the mental health staff accused up to 41 of being bogus patients who were in fact in need of treatment. In reality, Rosenhan sent no further bogus patients during the period. These results cast serious doubts on clinical judgment in the case of abnormal behavior.

Clinical psychology often has its findings confounded by diagnoses that are confirmed by looking only for supporting evidence. Snyder (1984) found evidence that clinicians look primarily for information that will confirm the traits they have diagnosed. Our beliefs about what is true generate information that confirms it, based on the process of selective perception (Dallas & Baron, 1985; Snyder & Thomsen, 1988). In several experiments it was shown that people will first look for confirming evidence before seeking disconfirmation. This bias is not at a conscious level. Our questions are biased by our desire to have the diagnosis

confirmed. People who undergo therapy therefore become the persons that their therapists believe they are, having searched and found evidence for their pathology. We can see that intuitive reasoning is very flawed, and may at times do actual harm to the client seeking help.

6.1 Intuition versus statistics

Although most clinicians continue to have confidence in their clinical insights, intuition is a poor second best when compared to more objective methods. For example admission to university or graduate school is often based on a combination of statistical measures. Such objective measures consistently outperform any subjective judgments in predicting student success (Dawes, Faust, and Meehl, 1989; Meehl, 1954; Meehl,1986). We have already noted the superiority of logical and statistical reasoning, although we recognize that clinicians work in very difficult conditions and often in unchartered waters where intuition must play some role. It is important, however, to remember that patients and clinicians are subject to the same errors as other human beings.

In summary, we are often unaware of what particular influences, past or present, which influence our judgment of others. Selective perception may encourage inaccurate assessments. This is particularly true if we rely, as most of us do, on the stereotypes of society. All societies inculcate stereotypes about categories of people, gender, professions, ethnic groups and so forth. While there are elements of truth in stereotypes they are for the most part gross exaggerations. Our self-perceptions are particularly unreliable. Every time people go to eat Chinese food they are given a fortune cookie as dessert. Inevitably the fortune cookie encloses a written fortune. Equally inevitably the fortune is written in such a way as to be applicably to everyone. Some people however, see particular meanings in what is after all random messages. Positive assessments are nearly always accepted, whether justified or not.

Mental health workers are subject to similar problems in social judgment. They may through intuition provide worthless diagnosis, and their clients being convinced of the therapist's professional competence readily accept the judgment. After making the diagnosis the process is essentially one of confirming the decision. In psychoanalysis, for example, the "child is the father of the man", therefore the therapist examines early childhood for clues to current problems. Since all people have experienced some issues in growing up it is not difficult to find the supporting data. Once the judgment is made, these erroneous diagnoses

can easily be confirmed leading to the self-fulfilling prophecy. Again, the proper attitude is always having an open mind. By being skeptical of ourselves we can avoid some of the many errors described in this chapter.

6.2 Social cognition and mental health

Correlated cognitive processes that affirm the patient's maladaptive life perspective accompany mental ill health. We can ask what are the thought patterns of the troubled personality. Some patients withdraw from social interaction, feel unworthy, and lose interest in family or the social environment. Having a very pessimistic outlook on life may therefore affect perception of experiences. What are just normal struggles for a healthy person can become insurmountable obstacles for the troubled person. Cognition plays an important role in perpetuating ill health, and therefore improvement may come about from reassessing how we think about ourselves.

6.2.1 Anxiety and cognition

The most fundamental problems in mental health are related to anxiety, and especially excessive anxiety. Some people are so anxious in social situations that they are unable to converse, effectively meet others, or apply for a job. Such anxiety can have sad consequences for the individual. An anxious person is less likely to lead a successful life, less likely to find a happy relationship, or master possible employment opportunities.

Why are we anxious? In many cases anxiety derives from our desire to make good and acceptable impressions on others. Fearing rejection is a primary cause of social anxiety (Leary,1984; Maddux, Norton, & Leary 1988). The aforementioned research indicated several significant social situations that produce anxiety. Applying for a job where we meet a powerful person who has the power to hire and fire is one cause. Other powerful persons include teachers, police, and other sources of authority. Any situation where we are likely to be evaluated is a primary cause for anxiety. Perhaps when you meet the family of your boy or girlfriend the first time, and you have a high desire to be accepted, perhaps as a student if you make a presentation in class and want to make a good impression on fellow students as well as the professor. Anxiety is also likely if we find ourselves in some new situation for the first time, and are unsure of correct or proper responses.

Shyness is a personality trait since we all vary in that dimension from others who

are very adapted and extroverted to those who are extremely self-conscious. Some people spend all their lives worrying what others think of them (Anderson & Harvey, 1988; Carver & Scheier, 1986). The social cognition of extremely shy people tends toward overestimating events as having personal consequences, and where they feel without evidence that people are evaluating them in some negative direction. Alcoholism is often a consequence for those who are anxious. Sadly it just reinforces feelings of worthlessness, and of course also provides an alibi for failure (Snyder & Smith, 1986). Our lives become what we think they should become.

6.2.2 Cognition and depression

Some form of negative thinking is central to depression. Depressed people view their experiences in very negative terms, and minimize what is good in their lives. Cognition is therefore distorted. Does the distortion antedate the depression, or follow the depressed feelings? Either way social cognition leaves the person in a trap of thinking worthless thoughts which in turn are expressed in lower work output and troubled relations with others. That social inadequacy in turn reinforces the feelings of hopelessness and of being inadequate. More importantly the depressed person's behavior is likely to elicit rejection by others. If your work suffers from depressed feelings and thinking, is that likely to lead to a promotion or demotion? Depressed thinking is very self-defeating because it elicits in others the rejection that the anxiously depressed person wants to avoid in the first place.

Is depression a consequence of having unrealistic views of oneself and others? In severe depressions distortion in thinking is present. However, mildly depressed people often make more realistic judgments than non-depressed people (Alloy & Abramson, 1979). On the other hand non-depressed people are more self-serving and exaggerate their sense of control in life (Dobson & Franche, 1989). Perhaps optimism, even when not warranted helps the individual to cope more effectively.

Among very depressed people thinking is dominated by self-blame, and self-attributions of personal responsibility. Sweeney, Anderson, and Bailey (1986) showed that depressed people compared to others are more likely to develop a negative attributional style, where they attribute failure to internal causes and faults. They tend to think depressing outcomes are going to last and are permanent, and will affect everything in life. Such self-blame leads to a sense of hopelessness (Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989). So perhaps it is useful to be a little delusional, to emphasize the positive in self-presentation. Such distortion in

thinking may help us be happier and lead more productive lives. Of course self-delusion can also have negative consequences when we ignore real problems that need correction, or take unnecessary risks.

Is it negative thinking that causes depression, or does depression cause negative thinking? There is little doubt that our mood effects how we think. If we are depressed the feeling permeates everything in our lives, and the world is a gray and unfriendly place. Depressed people have views of their parents as punitive and rejecting. Once brought out of their depression they tend to view their parents in positive ways as do people who have never been depressed (Lewinsohn & Rosenbaum, 1987). With depression our memory is affected as we recollect childhood events or relationships. Our relations with others are negative, our hopes diminish, and the world seems more sinister (Mayer & Salovey, 1987). Forgas, Bower, and Krantz (1984) used hypnosis to create depressive or positive moods. The participants were then asked to view the same tape under the two conditions of happy or depressed mood. The results demonstrated how mood affects our perceptions and our cognitive judgment, with the same tape being judged differently depending on the induced mood.

One major problem for depressed people is that they often elicit negative reactions from others, and sadly they can also contribute to reciprocal depression in family and those who associate with the depressed person. Depressed people produce depression in those with whom they associate. Hence it is no surprise that they are more likely to be divorced or fired from their jobs. All such rejection of course intensifies the depression (Coyne, Burchill & Stiles, 1991; Sacco & Dunn, 1990). From these findings we can answer our question, yes depression has an effect on cognition and perception.

6.2.3 Can negative cognition produce depression?

Now we come to the second part of the issue. Does negative thinking come before depression, and therefore be a cause? Some research supports this contention (Sacks & Bugenthal, 1987). When we adopt a negative attributional style depression is likely to follow. Lewinsohn, Hoberman, Teri, and Hautziner (1985) describe the process as one of a vicious cycle. The negative attributions and expectations contribute to rejecting experiences that leads to unrealistic self-blame which in turn reinforces the depressed mood (Seligman, 1989). We can see now that depression can be both a cause as well as a consequence of self-blaming cognitions.

7. We live in a lonely world

Loneliness is also related to self-defeating cognitive styles. Lonely people like the depressed are locked into a self-defeating vicious cycle where they blame themselves for their social inadequacy, and generally feel a lack of control in their lives (Anderson & Riger, 1991). Another distorted cognition is a negative view that lonely people have toward other people. You are not likely to establish relationships with others if you somehow convey your general negative views. People will seek company that is reinforcing of their self-perceptions and whose relationship is experienced as rewarding. Lonely people therefore create negative impressions in others that few are likely to test in long term relationships.

7.1 Negative social cognition and our health

Do negative cognitions that are accompanied by negative emotions contribute to poor physical health? Health psychology is a relative new field as the Division of American Psychological Association was formed in 1979. It has long been viewed likely that stressful events, if not handled well by appropriate cognition, may impact a variety of physical diseases. Some diseases thought implicated include heart disease, suppression of the immune system (making the individual more vulnerable to a variety of disorders), and effects on the autonomic nervous system (leading to head aches, and eventually to hypertension).

Heart disease has been linked to the anger prone personality (Friedman, 1991). Under stress it is believed that hormones contribute to the building up of plaque in the arteries bringing on serious heart disease if prolonged. Long-term stress may also compromise the immune system producing vulnerability to a variety of diseases (Cohen & Wiliamson, 1991).

7.2 Optimism: taking control of our lives

Living in the western world today is living in the midst of multiple demands and stress. As globalization proceeds, so unfortunately will also the associated stress of our fast paced lives. In the last couple of decades people have become more aware of the negative health effects of common stress reduction means employed by millions of people throughout the world. These include drinking to excess, smoking, and the pervading drug culture. All these means of escape have very negative consequences and claim each year millions of victims to cancer, heart disease and strokes.

A new health culture has emerged in response to these statistics. More people

today walk or ride bicycles than in the previous decades. Many people have opted for a better life style, trying to maintain vitality as the human lifespan allows. Health clubs have emerged where people in sedentary jobs can get the exercise needed and reduce stress at the same time. Since stress is such a major culprit in health issues there is also more awareness of the need to relax, and in developing supportive relationships to overcome loneliness. Even tobacco companies have become so defensive with their health robbing products that they now also advise on how to cease smoking. These activities are for the most part hypocritical given the highly addictive nature of nicotine. Once they get a young person to smoke they often have a costumer for life.

Over-eating is another attempt to escape stress and associated anxiety. When people feel their lives are not satisfying they often escape into the fast food culture of today. In the Western world many believe that fast food restaurants like McDonalds are mainly responsible for the fat epidemic among children and adults. Currently there is a movement to reduce access of these unhealthy foods in the school system.

However, despite such logical efforts to improve health, many suffer ill health from the self-defeating cognition previously discussed. Negative attributional styles lead to self-defeating behaviors, and a vicious cycle of self-recriminations. Just like pessimism may lead to ill health so too can rethinking and developing a more optimistic assessment help defeat hopelessness.

Early researchers (Visintainer & Seligman, 1983) showed in an animal experiment how one could induce learned helplessness. Rats were given electric shocks in two conditions. One group was given shocks, but with the possibility to escape from the painful stimuli. Another group, however, was tied to the electric grid and not allowed to escape. The latter group developed what the experimenters called learned helplessness. Since it did not matter how much they struggled, the rats could not escape the noxious stimuli, the rats became passive and listless. The experimenters noted many negative health effects of learned helplessness including cancers from compromised immune systems. Stress is a culprit in disease (Dixon, 1986). Peterson & Seligman(1987) suggested that if pessimism brings ill health then perhaps optimism could help reverse these effects. In the study optimists outlived pessimists. In another study on terminal cancer, patients who developed an optimistic cognitive style outlived those who were pessimistic (Levy, Lee, Bagley, & Lippman, 1988). Hopelessness and pessimism compromise

the immune system leading to early death (Kamen, Seligman, Dwyer, & Rodin,1988).

Social psychology has made a contribution to better health by emphasizing that we are what we do, our behavior often produces attitudes and emotions. If we can change behavior perhaps the thinking and emotional consequences will also change. Behavior therapists maintain that inner dispositions simply follow behavior. If a person is shy the behavior requires assertiveness training and the shyness will change or disappear. Rational-emotive therapy states that emotions are the consequence of our thinking. If we consistently and chronically say negative things about ourselves, our emotions will be consistent with this negativity. If we change how we think, it should have positive consequences for how we feel (Mirels & McPeek, 1977).

7.3 Reversing negative attribution

The aforementioned negative attributions are maintained by our negative cognitive styles leading to self-defeating behavior. However, it should be possible to reverse the negativity by reversing negative thinking, and engaging in therapy like assertiveness training that directly confronts the problem. Since the negative attributions are not supported by who the person is, but may be the consequence of negative life experiences, it is possible to reverse these attributions through therapy as suggested by Abramson, (1988). Changing attributions (taking credit for the positive and more realistic assessments of the negative) helps depressed people in achieve higher self-esteem, and lower depression. By changing how we think we can improve our emotional health.

Summary

This chapter reviews some of the research on social cognition. How do people utilize information in making decisions? How do they interpret, and organize responses to stimulation in the social environment? Part of the debate concerns two types of thinking, automatic and controlled thinking. Automatic thinking requires no evaluation, like responses during a crisis. Other decisions, such as choosing a life partner, require more careful evaluation that is controlled thinking. Neither type is error free, as we are influenced in many ways. Still we have to make decisions in spite of this often very incomplete information, errors, and biases.

Information derived from our own experiences reflects many sources of bias. Our

expectations determine what information we gather, and what information we attend to. People favor information that lends support to their expectations. At the same time, we tend to give excessive weight to negative information that leads to illusionary correlations and stereotypes. Furthermore, decisions are often based on very small samples that are highly inadequate. Finally, anecdotal information appears to be a powerful but unreliable influence.

There is also a tendency to believe that other people have information not possessed by the individual leading to a state of pluralistic ignorance. Another bias influencing cognition and decision-making is bias in memory. What we remember corresponds with what we desire and wish at this moment. Memory can also be manipulated by therapists who implant “false memories” and encourage the patient remembers abuse for example that never happened. Even our memories of dramatic events from the past changes with the passage of time. So nothing is permanent in memory, all memory is malleable and how things should be changes to how things are in current memory.

However, many of our memories do not come from our own experience. Most of us will have no personal experience with the powerful people or events that shape the world we live in. Rather we obtain information from significant others, and from the media and use this as reference in our decision-making. Unfortunately the media is not an unbiased source of information. The term yellow journalism comes from the tendency to manipulate the news, and the emphasis on the dramatic and the negative. The media reports more violence and produces more fright than justified by objective statistics. In addition to the media the ideology of society or of powerful groups in society, provide their own unique slant. Often they are not providing information as such but try to persuade the individual.

Motivation and mood also play a role. People believe that what is real in the world is the information that is congruent with their vision of happiness. Being motivated, however, does not necessarily lead to more accurate judgments. Of course we have some ability to regulate our thoughts and feelings. In experiments on thought suppression such exercises often come at a high cost. Moreover, a commitment to powerful evaluative beliefs overrides any appeal to rationality and decisions made under temporary moods, may yet have long-term effects.

Not all thinking involves careful evaluation. In fact we have mental structures called schemas, which organizes our knowledge in preparation for automatic

thinking. If we did not have these mental structures we would have to evaluate each new situation. By directing our attention in specific ways, and by completing lacking information, schemas provide an immediate basis for interaction. How else would we know how to behave when approached by a member of the opposite sex or other social category?

What activates these mental structures? Research point to three factors in activating schemas. First, the expectation of a certain situation or interaction will elicit schemas from our mental, storehouse (e.g. females are more emotional). Secondly, the similarity between the schema and a social situation may trigger the schema (e.g. last year's national cup final, and estimation of the results of this year). Thirdly, how recently the memory was used in cognition may also lead to activation of schemas. Finally, a conscious process does not necessarily elicit some cognitive structures of the mind as subconscious stimuli have been shown to produce schemas.

If the situation is important a more deliberate controlled process may overrule the automatic process of schemas. Individual differences in need for schemas are significant. Those who have little tolerance for ambiguity also have high need for automatic structures.

Research has also demonstrated important cultural differences between Western and East Asian respondents. East Asians are more cognizant of the broader environment of behaviors and their schemas reflect this understanding. Western respondents view behavior more as a function of the individual. These differences can also be observed in the prediction of the future. Western respondents have an expectation of continuity; i.e. the future will be a continuation of the current situation. On the other hand East Asians are more likely to expect discontinuity or change in the future.

Mental structures like schemas have great influence on memory. What we remember is largely a result of what our schemas direct us to attend to in the situation. Prejudice finds easy support by attending only to events that support our stereotypes. The purpose of schemas is to make interaction more efficient, but when predicated on error they obviously cause problems. Sometimes schemas result in actual behavior. The reason is that we often behave consistently with our expectations toward others, and therefore others fulfill our expectations. This self-fulfilling prophecy is a problem in education, with respect to gender issues, and in

the diagnostic process in clinical psychology.

Besides schemas we also have heuristics at our disposal. Heuristics are mental shortcuts that assist in efficient evaluation and judgment. The Availability Heuristic refers to concepts that come most easily to mind. If something comes readily to mind it must be because there are many such examples, and hence is a good estimate of frequency. However, an error in estimation is possible using the availability heuristic. For example, there is a great deal of violence in the media leading people to overestimate the real violence in the world.

The Representative Heuristic allows for judgment of how similar A is to B. For example it is possible to compare a person to the typical representative existing in our minds. How similar is the target person to a Dutchman? If similar, we may interact on that basis. The Representative Heuristic is also demonstrated in the expected correlation between cause and effect. If the earthquake is large we expect the damages to be large. This heuristic can, however, also yield errors. For example, very small organisms like HIV, can cause very large damage.

A possible effect of the Representative Heuristic is illusionary correlations. This is the case when two variables are thought to be correlated, but the association is only a coincidence. Such correlations occur in clinical psychology. For example in projective tests it was thought that large eyes drawn by the client were a sign of paranoia. Illusionary correlations occur at times through selective perception. Other mental shortcuts include simulation and counter factual reasoning, where we imagine some alternative events than that which happened, and thus prepare for similar future events.

Schemes and heuristics are examples of intuitive or automatic thinking. When the issue is of great importance, controlled thinking may override the automatic. Or perhaps the automatic thinking is not working. You are using toothpaste that promises whiter teeth, but it does not happen. You might eventually think about other alternatives, a different toothpaste or some other whitening procedure. Automatic thinking governs most of our behavior although we are not aware of the influence of schemas or heuristics. However, it is possible to encourage rational thinking. In particular courses in statistics and logic may be helpful in overcoming mindless automatic thinking. Inculcating a scientific mode of thinking is very helpful on the road to rational thinking and behavior.

In clinical psychology we see that human beings, including clinicians, have an endless capacity for self-delusions. Often theory guides expectations, which in turn function as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Selective attention plays an important role in this as the clinician will frequently look for confirming evidence, and ignore that which is not congruent. When we take as evidence of pathology illusionary correlations, and search only for confirming evidence, clinical judgment may lead to a false diagnosis.

Cognition plays an important role in mental illness. Consequently, reassessing what we think may serve to improve mental health. We have seen that excessive anxiety has negative consequences for many. The major reason for anxiety is our desire to make a good impression on others, and our fear of rejection. Negative thinking is related to depression. Depressed people emphasize the negative in their lives, and undervalue the positive. This distortion has both emotional and behavioral consequences. This works both ways. Negative feelings lead to depressed thinking, and negative cognition leads to depressed feelings. We often engage in self-defeating cognitive styles that work like vicious cycles producing self-blame, social inadequacy, and feelings of lack of control. On the other hand, optimism allows us to take control of our lives and helps us reverse the effects of negative thinking. Optimism helps improve both physical and mental health.