

Chapter: You and Groups

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You and Groups

WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

"It was really a surprise! Laurie and I were the best friends all through high school. Then she went west to college, and I went south, and what a difference there was when we met last week!"

"How could you tell, Diane?"

"Well, there isn't any one thing I can point to. It was just that we hadn't seen each other for nine months. When we got back together again she was almost like a different person. Now she's into painting while I've continued pursuing music. We both still love football, but she's also into photography. I don't even own a camera! I just don't know what that school did to her!" *What happened here? Can you explain why two best friends seem to be drifting apart?*

To change people's attitudes, is it better to stir their emotions, or to hit them with facts?

Suppose you're driving along at the speed limit and suddenly you look up into your rear view mirror. So close behind you that you see only two hands on the steering wheel and a heavy set of eyebrows is another driver. You're immediately furious. You slow down, and sure enough, the fellow passes you and immediately starts tailgating the car ahead. You get even madder

At the next traffic light you pull up beside this dangerous driver, all set to give him a piece of your mind. As you roll down your window, he looks over at you and yells, "Hey, thanks for pulling over. If you see a cop, would you get him for us? We need an escort. My wife's in labor . . . I hope we make it!" *Now aren't you ashamed?*

"Hold on, we've just had a blow-out!"

"The road's clear. You can pull over. What a day for a flat tire!"

"I'll pull in right ahead of that car there. They've got a flat too."

"No! We'll need help. Keep going farther down the road. If it won't hurt your car, get several hundred yards past them before you stop; they've already got someone helping." *Who's right here?*

Developing your social skills starts as you gain poise and confidence within the family. Maturity leads to perspective, and your social skills are practiced first in the home and then among friends who become your peer group based on interpersonal attractions. Revealing your "true self" is important in forming any friendship, as are sacrifices made without thought of personal gain. Friendships last as long as each friend gains from the relationship, but they are often ended by distance and changing values.

Likeability and agreement are major determinants of friendship and attraction -- factors we can control. Living or working close together is a very important factor. Once contact is established, we tend to remain attracted to those who complement our strengths. Similarities in race, religion, amount of education, and interests are important in predicting success in romantic love and marriage.

Attitudes include three types of components: Cognitive (value), affective (emotional), and action (behavioral). Attitudes are formed from our personal experience and are usually influenced by our family, friends, and social influences (especially through television). Prejudice is an attitude developed without reference to facts, often involving

stereotypes; discrimination may result. Persuasion is an attempt to change someone's attitude. The source of persuasion, the message, the channel, and aspects of the recipient can all influence success in changing an attitude. Attitude change can result from cognitive dissonance. People find it necessary to reconcile conflicting attitudes or to justify acts that conflict with their beliefs.

Aggression can have several causes. It can be caused by being frustrated or attacked by others, or by seeing others aggress. Modeling can control aggression, by having the basis for someone else's attack explained, or by catharsis. Eliciting an incompatible response is the most successful control. Offering to help someone requires that you notice the situation, interpret it as an emergency, assume responsibility for acting, identify how to give aid, and act. Help is most often offered when "costs" are low, the person is similar to us, the need for help is obvious, and we've just seen others give help.

Your Socialization and Personal Development

Socialization is the word that describes the development of social skills, as we discuss in the Social Behavior of Groups Chapter. By high school age you'd already learned a lot of personal skills -- from math to language, from how to write and mail a letter to how to open and read one -- and in college, you're refining those skills even more. Yet all this education will be of little use to you if you are unable to establish and maintain contact with groups such as your family and friends.

Socialization is a non-stop process. Experience is constantly being enlarged upon as you move from childhood through adolescence into adulthood. Indeed, much of your life, at least up through young adulthood, is spent preparing to move from currently existing roles into new ones. The changes usually involve more responsibilities and increased social contacts.

Personal development, or the development of the "looking-glass self" of which we also speak briefly in the Social Behavior of Groups Chapter, leads to the development of poise and confidence. This assumes, of course, that your impact on the members of your family is positive and that they "reflect" a good image back to you. Moreover, most of the theories of development and personality assume that you will gain skills and abilities as you age. Maturity comes slowly; it can't be rushed. As you mature, you gain what might best be called perspective, or a view of self and others. This perspective lends stability to your social interactions. You come to

understand your own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of others. Understanding both yourself and others is crucial to your success as an adult.

Family experience, then, provides an environment in which you can find comfort and support. Yet your parents (as a favor to you) will usually keep urging you to step out into the world. Try new things, they will say, gain "experience." This world of experience, once gained, is reflected in several ways. It will show up in your attitude. You'll have a certain degree of confidence in yourself and an awareness of your limits. It will show up in your appearance -- a very important factor, as we demonstrate in this chapter. And it will show up in a growing, expanding appreciation for what might be called your inner self as opposed to your outer self. You'll do things in public that are not "really you." You'll gain a collection of inner thoughts, desires, and dreams that you'll not share with just everyone. Yet as that inner reservoir develops, what is really developing is the personality upon which you'll draw in establishing friendships and in finding, perhaps, the mate with whom you'll wish to share your life.

Finally, from the lessons of home life, from childhood experiences at school and at play, and from early adult experiences as a teen-ager, there will come a proper balance of give and take. There will be a sense of knowing when to assert self and when to hold back and give others an opportunity. This description probably sounds rather blissful and ideal. It is, but then that is what theory usually is! The facts are what we discuss in this chapter, and they are not quite so easy to organize and interpret.

Interpersonal Attraction

Whether it concerns becoming "teacher's pet," finding a friend, or falling in love, the issue of interpersonal attractiveness is of central importance. Any time we function in groups we use our judgment of another's attractiveness as a primary basis for establishing friendships in the group

Why are friends needed? Your friends make up the society of which you are a part. With contributions from you, they set social norms by which you are judged "normal" or "abnormal," acceptable or unacceptable. This society is a reference group -- the group whose values, actions, and goals you accept. In the late 1950s such groups considered it best to wear white (athletic) socks to school. In the early 1970s (where school dress codes would permit it) it was fashionable to wear sandals and no socks. But consider the group with whom you would like

to be associated now What would happen to your chances of joining that group if you started wearing white socks . . . or sandals and no socks?

Friends also form a valuable source of information on some subjects; the groups to which we belong help shape -- and are shaped by -- our attitudes. Those against whom we aggress tend to be determined partly as a result of the groups to which we do or do not belong. Adolescents learn much about social values from friends. It is from this group that they are likely to draw a future partner with whom they'll wish to live. So the more experience gained in working and socializing with friends, the better your interpersonal skills and abilities will become.

Forming and Ending Friendships

We humans often tend to divide ourselves along arbitrary lines. North American societies tend to be divided into old and young. We sometimes divide ourselves by race or by national origin, or even by sex. Often these divisions make no sense in terms of the purposes of a group. The result is often to limit the groups from which we can draw friends.

In response to this tendency to divide ourselves into groups our society sets up rules and situations in which exchanges across these boundaries can occur. A dance allows sexes to mix. Scouting codes that encourage helping the elderly allow young to mix with old. Work situations can mix all age levels. Yet when we emphasize our differences and the means by which we can overcome them, we may raise doubts about whether the "real" self or the "social" self is being seen. "Did that 'nice young woman' help me across the street because she is nice, or because I'm old?"

Two key elements impacting those whom you select to be your friends are likeability and the extent to which they agree with you. These and other bases of attraction also are the main determinants of romantic love. These aspects of attraction can be used both in theory and in practice to influence who will want to become your friend. How is a friendship formed? Because of the limits imposed by our society, friendships usually form in situations where you believe you're getting to see the "true self" of an acquaintance. If this is so, then how is the friendship formed?

For one thing, your behavior must be seen as voluntary. It must not appear that you have any higher or hidden goal in mind. Thus, the things you must reveal about yourself in an involuntary setting such as the Dean of Student's office would not qualify here.

Another strategy is to be constantly in the vicinity of the friend-to-be. The fact that high frequency of exposure leads to positive feelings is one of the most basic assumptions of advertising agencies. Products that advertise widely and frequently tend to be rated more positively. The same may be true with friends.

How can we analyze the forming of a friendship in terms of the strength that a happy family life gives to you? Friendship is established on the basis of (1) shared confidences and (2) aid rendered when it was not necessary -- perhaps even at some cost to yourself. It should also involve (3) high frequency of contact, and (4) the absence of alternative explanations for your behavior. In terms of yourself, friendship is the revelation to another of some of your inner self, based on confidence both in yourself and in the trusted "other."

Alas, even as we strive to start some friendships, we find it necessary to terminate others. The loss of a friend is often caused when another even more valued person enters the life of one of our friends. Or it can be caused by an increased distance between good friends. This might happen when you or your friend moves across town, county, or country. Or, gradually as you continue to mature, you change both socially and individually. What attracted you to your friend may no longer exist as described in the Think About It.

Think About It

The question: Have you ever had a friend go away as described in the "WHAT'S THE ANSWER?" section of the first topic in this chapter? And, if so, have you ever visited that friend later and felt less comfortable with him or her than when you were neighbors? How do you explain what's happened?

The answer: One of the major factors that determines who will be our friends and best friends is where we live and where our friend lives. When you and a friend live near each other, you will usually have a lot of contact with each other. You'll share a lot of activities and interests that you both enjoy. This means you'll see each other quite a bit and feel comfortable since each of you can predict the likes and dislikes of the other.

Generally, the farther away a friend moves, the less likely it is that you will remain good friends. As time passes, distance prevents you from seeing the interests of your friend change. Each of you finds other friends with similar but seldom identical interests, and you develop along different paths. It's somewhat like watching a child grow up. If you don't see the child for a year or more, the changes are very obvious to you. The same is true of a friend. As the environment of each of you changes, your interests may grow apart.

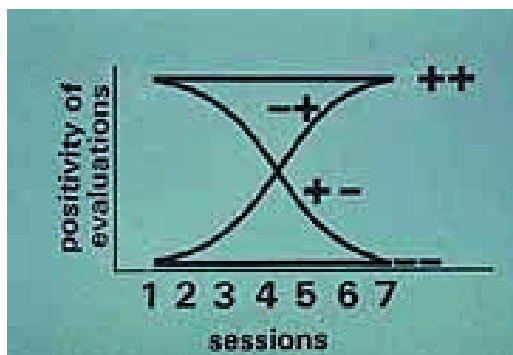
Likability and Agreement

In the long run you will be best friend (and, later on, a better husband or wife) to someone who likes you and agrees with you. It's the reason parents and "experts" are always stressing that you should "marry your own kind" -- an important basis for attraction. Of course there are exceptions that have worked out well, but they're just that, exceptions. A very clever study of this may give you some insight into what we say in several sections of this chapter.

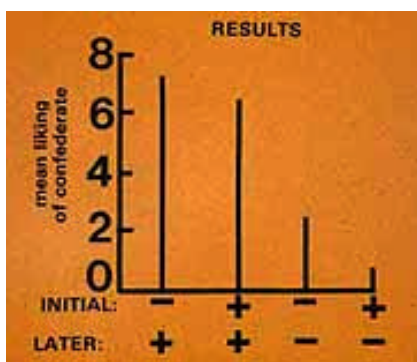
Picture this: You agree to participate in an experimental study of problem-solving with another student at your school. It involves seven sessions of one hour each, working with a person whom you don't know. But, just before the experiment starts, you overhear your new coworker talking about you to the experimenter. The other person comments on what a lazy worker they know you are, and says some other nasty things about you.

Now the experiment starts. You do your best. Each day (you really don't quite understand why the person talks so loudly) you overhear your coworker talking about you to the experimenter, but the comments get better and better. By the last day the other person is very positive in his or her comments about you. After the last session is completed you're asked how well you like the other person in the experiment.

Once you've finished your rating, you are told that this person (the stooge) was cooperating with the experimenter. The stooge's comments about you were designed (written!) to change gradually from very negative to very positive. If your rating of the stooge resembled those ratings of others who participated in a similar experiment, the person's final comments were most important in influencing the rating you made. It turns out that if a stooge's rating of his coworker (in this case, you) goes from low to high, the targeted participant will rate the stooge higher than if the stooge's rating begins and remains high throughout.



How do we explain this? If the ratings are good all along, the participant may come to question the person's skills in judgment. The participant "knows" that not very solid evidence was used at the start. If the high initial ratings drop, the participant tends to blame the other person.



In your case, the person's comments about you steadily improved, so you would be inclined to take (at least most of us would have!) full credit for the improvement. "Obviously" that person had watched you perform and had realized how good you really were! That shows up in the highest ratings in the - to + category -- the one you experienced. Average ratings from this study are summarized in the Figure. In short, we like people who like us, but it isn't only the liking itself that's important, rather the context in which that liking develops. Moreover, if people agree with you, it reinforces your own opinions that you -- and they -- are right. This strengthens even more the bond between you.

The history of a relationship is important too. If someone has always liked you, you tend to like them, but if they didn't like you and now they do, you *really* like them, and vice versa. The peaks and valleys that most relationships experience provide the opportunity to strengthen even further the solidity of the positive feelings between members of a couple.

Bases of Attraction

I expect you've heard the old sayings "Birds of a feather flock together," and "Opposites attract." Which is right? Some data will help lead you to the answer. In the early 1970s, if men and women married without taking into consideration the religious preferences of either, we could expect that 56 percent of all married couples would be of the same religion. Actually, it was almost 94 percent. Also, whites married whites and blacks married blacks more than 99 percent of the time.

There are two hypotheses that capture the spirit of the sayings in the first paragraph. One could be called the similarity hypothesis: in predicting friends and marriages, similarities are of greatest importance. The complements hypothesis could be the second one: strengths in one person may make up for lack of similar strengths in the other member of a friendship or marriage. However, as some have pointed out, these two hypotheses are not really the opposites of one another.

Read about (or think back to) the barriers we talk about in our discussion of forming and breaking friendships: old-young, black-white, and so forth. Similarity seems to be very

important, if we use the way people actually behave (statistically) as the basis for our judgment. Issues of race and religion, perhaps even of age and social class, seem to be very important. Crossing those barriers for friendship is difficult and for marriage almost never done. Here the complements can become very important. A person weak in personal or family economics marries someone who understands banking. A leader and a follower may find happiness. In short, satisfying many other interpersonal needs can be very important in the establishment of a successful friendship or marriage. Collective ability -- where one or the other member of a couple has the required skill -- is important. How is all of this to be handled by an eager young adult? The secret is intelligent selection.

Romantic Love



have someone caring for us and someone for whom we care. Yet, despite the advantages of being in love (the ultimate friendship), it doesn't happen often in a lifetime.

In the Development: Adolescence to death Chapter we defined love as involving three components: a sense of attachment, a sense of caring, and an intense bond of affection and shared interests. Another important element of love is that it provides a sense of security. We all are happier when we



Romantic love involves a complex array of human responses, including some negative feelings such as jealousy, anxiety, and even fear. You read about love in the Emotions Chapter, in the theories of emotion There we speak of passion as too intense an experience to last a lifetime, and true that is. What follows, then? In our society, divorce has become one



ruggedly attractive person may seek and hold a well-to-do and attractive partner. In addition, within a marriage itself, a certain balancing of responsibilities and a meeting of the needs of the other partner must take place.

way by which couples -- about half of them! -- respond to altered feelings. The nature of love changes during the course of a shared life. An equity principle might well describe the actions of a married couple. The principle sometimes applies even to who marries whom. The well-to-do,



partner of whom they don't approve. The usual strategy for this is to point out that the relationship is "infatuation," not true love. Time will tell, but the adolescent to whom that advice is being given really won't know until that time has passed. Experientially, for an adolescent experiencing "puppy love," the feeling is every bit as intense and emotional and personally moving as the "true love" the adolescent's parents believe they themselves have experienced.

When the theory and pragmatics of attracting and being intensely attracted to someone reach fruition, another important question occurs: Should I marry? No amount of advice can help you make that personal decision. Parents sometimes try to discourage a child from marrying a specific

Marriage, generally, is the formation and acceptance by both parties of a moral, religious, and legal commitment. Yet, those making such a commitment do not always recognize the years of sacrifice and common toil to which they may be actually committing themselves.

USING PSYCHOLOGY: Theory of Attraction

How do we attract a person's attention, particularly members of the sex in which we are interested, and will we then fall in love upon meeting this person? Common sense, combined with a little experience, has a lot to do with it. There are two assumptions that are commonly made about attraction. One

assumption can be called the Principle of Least Interest. In any relationship the person who is least interested will determine the fate of the couple.

The second assumption can be called the Principle of Playing Hard to Get. If you make yourself difficult to approach, or if you remain stand-offish to the person in whom you are interested, it will make him or her try harder to "get" to you. How valid are these assumptions? Research has indicated that the first principle is true; but the second one is false!

A team of social psychologists has studied many aspects of what falling in love involves. They suggest that "What ... men and women fail to realize is that any time a person's total hopes for happiness depend on the whim of one, ... that person is in trouble In every case, men and women would do far better if they converted the energy they normally spend on attracting one partner, who may or may not be interested in them, to devising ways to meet twenty potential partners." The message is simple: The most stunning person in the world meets no one by sitting at home.

USING PSYCHOLOGY: Practice of Attraction

All you have to do is to apply what we discuss throughout this book to attract someone with whom you might fall in love. How about showing your interest in attracting others without seeming to do so? You could wear a button supporting some activity or group you favor. If it has small print, people will have to stand very close to read it. Since it's not easy to read without seeming obvious, you've got the perfect opener for a conversation. A button with very small print that says, "94% of Americans need glasses" is a natural for starting a conversation when someone is standing there squinting at your button! Or, carry a recent bestseller; many will have read it, and others will want to. They may ask your opinion. By the way, don't carry it until you've read enough of it to be involved!

Of course, physical attractiveness can also help. Remember, in the Sensation and Perception Chapter we mention some ways in which clothing can be used to emphasize your strengths or reduce the impacts of your problems. The Motivations Chapter gives hints on how you can lose some weight, if that's a problem.

Contact with others is very important, too. The key, again, is to get out and do things. Try to join the "Y" or some other social or athletic club. Go where people are, and natural

social processes will take their course. Learn to be friendly without being forward. The genuinely offered compliment has a way of gaining you many new friends.

And how about getting involved in your community? Probably your parents have already encouraged you along these lines. From snorkeling to photography, from Scottish country dancing to hiking, there must be something that interests you. Sink time into it. Without interests of your own, you'll not appear very interesting to others. And remember the lessons of high frequency of contact.

What do you say after (s)he's said hello? An error some people make is offering complete statements that tend to end a conversation. View conversation more as a volley in tennis: if you drop the ball, your partner has nothing to return! Has something funny happened to you? Talk about it. When responding to a question, finish with one of your own. You love to talk about yourself, of course. But think about the other person, too, because most of us love to talk about us. It's the subject we each know best. Once started, a conversation is kept going simply by keying your reaction -- good, bad, or indifferent -- to what's happening. And we already know what's going to keep a conversation, and ultimately the date, going: common interests, mutual support, and skills offered by each person to benefit the other.

Parents are rightfully concerned about their children. They hope their training of a child during his or her childhood was appropriate. If it was, then by the time adolescence rolls around and social contacts start increasing, there should be little for them to worry about. But that's a lesson most parents learn hard, if at all. They know that by the time most adolescents start dating, the standards of friends tend to replace those of home.

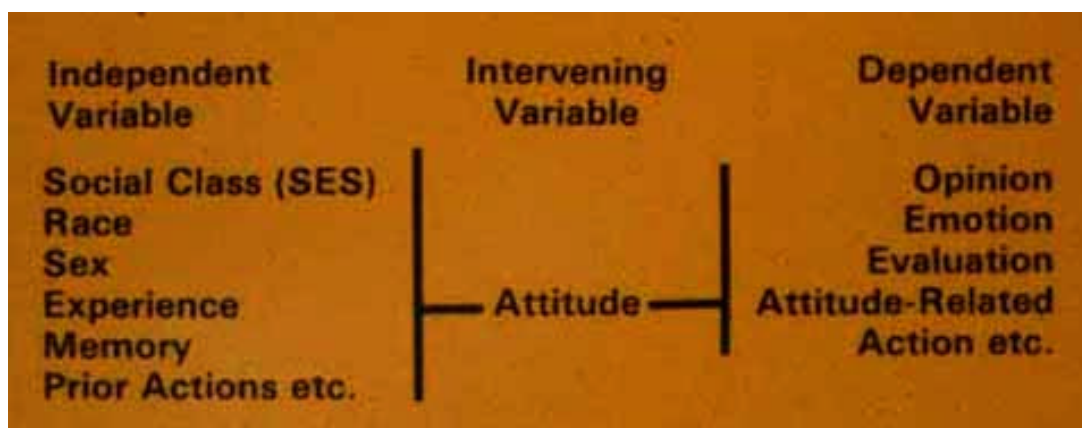
For that reason alone it is important for each of us -- whether as adolescents or adults -- to set our own limits on the activities in which we will participate, even before the opportunities present themselves. The decisions you make reflect your past upbringing and the environment in which you find yourself, but you'll need to think about your personal values and how you feel about yourself. Some rational planning will make it easier to draw the necessary lines.

Attitudes

Attitudes make up a part of human social behavior that is very important to the proper functioning of both groups and society. Understanding the components of attitudes and how

attitudes are formed may well be crucial to the ultimate success of human existence.

"I don't like your attitude!" "Don't mind her. She's just got a bad attitude." "His whole attitude changed when I told him that." Attitudes -- or a specific form, prejudices -- are everywhere. We all have attitudes. What are they? We see them in others. They affect how we behave, and how we behave seems to indicate something about our attitude(s). What are attitudes, exactly? Can we study them? Do attitudes actually have much of an affect on our day-to-day life?



An attitude is a readiness to respond in a positive or a negative way to a class of people, objects, or ideas. Attitudes are often used to convey in a few words an analysis of many different behaviors. If you say you re angry, it may refer to past events that happened to you, current beliefs, and even possible future actions. Attitudes are sometimes thought to cause our behavior. Some people even go so far as to say that all our behavior is caused by attitudes. Yet attitudes -- like behavior -- can be changed. Sometimes the pressures for such change result from internal dissonance when the find ourselves acting inconsistent with our beliefs; other times the pressures for change may be external

Elements of Attitudes

It is assumed that attitudes are composed of three parts: (1) belief, (2) like or dislike, and (3) behavior.

Cognition (value), or the belief dimension, is the total knowledge or information that a person has which bears on the attitude. For instance, are there such things as Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) visiting our planet from outer space? A belief about UFOs might take the form of a statement -- "UFOs

appear only at night and are most likely to be seen in isolated places by single humans or very occasionally by two people at the same time." That is a belief, pure and simple -- one part of an attitude.

Emotion, the like or dislike (affective) dimension, is the affective aspect of your attitude. If you believe in UFOs, then you may also have an emotional reaction to them, expressed as "The thought of ever seeing a UFO makes me feel very uncomfortable."

Action, the behavioral dimension, emphasizes your readiness to respond. "If I ever saw a UFO, I would try to get on board," would be an action statement about UFOs. Public opinion pollsters sometimes have trouble with the action component of an attitude. Why? Because it's very easy to say certain things, but much harder to do them. Actions do speak louder than words, but not always in the same way! Read Feature 1 for additional examples from advertising.

FEATURE 1

HAVE YOU SEEN THE ONE ABOUT. . . .

Companies advertising products typically develop their commercials to emphasize the cognitive, the emotional, or the action component in trying to shape consumer attitudes. Volvo was the first company to stress the safety of its automobiles by showing images of its cars being driven into a brick wall recreating a head-on collision. Then on the screen appeared figures related to the small likelihood of permanent injury to the car's passengers, thus emphasizing the safety of riding in a Volvo.

The all-time second most powerful ad, as rated by a national sample of advertising executives is a Coca-Cola ad featuring Mean Joe Green at the time of the ad, a player for the Pittsburgh Steelers. Walking off the field, dirty, sweaty, and seemingly discouraged, he is offered a Coke by a young fan standing in the tunnel. Mean Joe is 10-15 feet past the youth before he realizes the good-will gesture the kid has offered. He turns around, takes the Coke, pours it into his throat, and drains the whole bottle without swallowing. As he turns toward the locker room, Mean Joe removes his Steelers jersey from his shoulders and tosses it to the youngster. Coke is mentioned once at the beginning and the label is visible on the bottle. Aside from that, the commercial was entirely an attempt to

associate a very positive human-human interaction with the product -- an appeal to emotion.

Any company that advertises a sale featuring 20% off if you buy today is focussing on the action component of attitudes. They are not promising their product is any better, nor are they getting emotional. They are simply boosting their incentives to get you to act by coming into their store. Cognitions, emotions, actions -- the driving forces of modern American advertising efforts to change attitudes.

Forming attitudes

In forming an attitude, the first shift you make is from having no attitude to having some attitude, either positive or negative. Your environment is the main influence on the attitudes you form.

If an incident is personally important to you, then your own early reactions to it are likely to color your attitude toward similar experiences later. If you're hot, thirsty, and uncomfortable the first time you drink papaya juice, and are immediately refreshed, you're likely to form a positive attitude toward it. Repeated exposure is likely to intensify your good (or bad) feelings toward an object. The mere-exposure hypothesis suggests that repeated exposure to neutral objects or situations will increase your liking of them -- a principle well known by advertisers. The mere exposure hypothesis also provides an explanation for the phenomenon described in Feature 2.

FEATURE 2

FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST

In a study of first impressions a Lecturer was described beforehand to one class as follows: "People who know him consider him to be a rather cold person; industrious, critical, practical, and determined." To another very similar class the lecturer (dressed identically and giving the same lecture) was called "a very warm person" instead of "rather cold." The rest of the descriptive words applied to him were exactly the same. Do you think that the change of only two descriptive words would influence how the students reacted to the visiting lecturer?

It certainly did. The group to whom he was introduced as cold rated him as being more self-centered, formal, unsociable, unpopular, irritable, and humorless than the group that was told he was warm. In addition, in the "cold" class only 32 percent of the students made a comment or asked a question during his lecture. In the class where he was introduced as warm, a full 50 percent participated.

Are first impressions important? You bet!



The basic needs -- for food, warmth, protection and security, cleanliness, and training in respecting the rights of others -- are universal. These needs are met almost without exception by parents, who often come to be viewed by their children as all-knowing authority figures. Thus, children turn to their

parents for guidance when more subtle issues develop. Religion, political party affiliation, and attitudes toward strangers or members of other racial or ethnic groups are areas in which parents train children in their mold. Having reached their own decisions based on past experience, they then relay these attitudes to their children. And the evidence is overwhelming that on these issues the training of children by parents is quite effective.

Other groups also impact our attitudes. Schools, our peer group and friends, and the mass media (radio, television, magazines, and newspapers) have an important influence on our attitudes. It has been demonstrated that children's television programs, such as *Sesame Street*, *Barney*, and the *Teletubbies* have a major impact when they reach the very young. Despite the popular tendency to ridicule or poke fun at programs like *Barney*, it is quite clear each of the television programs mentioned here is targeted very effectively at -- and reaches! -- precisely definable age groups: *Teletubbies* plays to 1-2 year-olds, *Barney* plays to 2-4 year-olds, and *Sesame Street* draws viewers most broadly from 4-8 year-olds, depending on the viewers' intelligence. In most other cases it was found that the mass media reinforce existing attitudes.



Attitudes Gone Awry: Prejudice

Prejudice is an attitude formed prior to or without taking into consideration any examination of the objective facts. One example is racism, which involves judgments about all members of a race by a human (typically of another race). It is a widespread form of prejudice, common in many forms of human society. The

same factors that influence the formation of attitudes also influence the development of a prejudice. Associating with people who are racists will encourage such prejudices. Even the mass media may unwittingly encourage maintaining such attitudes.



A stereotype is a rigidly held, usually oversimplified, and often negative belief about most members of an identifiable group. Stereotypes are simple: The Irish are quick-tempered. Germans and Japanese are industrious. Politicians are crooked. Parents are conservative. Stereotypes have developed to help us simplify the amount of information we must process. One psychologist has described stereotypes as a kind of social shorthand that helps us organize our perception of people. We then ignore the individual differences that

always exist even within similar groups of people.

Prejudice is an attitude; discrimination is a behavior. Discrimination involves accepting or rejecting someone -- solely because he or she belongs to a specific, identifiable group. Discrimination can take many different forms. For instance, institutional policies, such as quotas, may preserve the attention directed to the issue of race -- even, in fact, as institutions often preserve societal differences based on race.



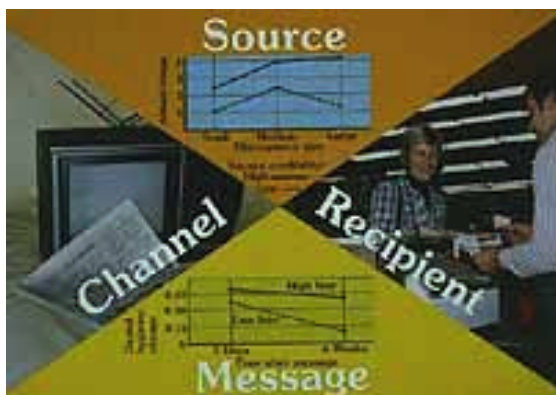
We discussed in the Testing Chapter how tests of intelligence must be standardized very carefully so as not to be applied in a racist manner or with cultural bias.

Even the definition of race has been disputed. As recently as 1960, the United States census considered a person to be of the black race if he or she had any black ancestors. The problems in desegregating United States schools, even almost half a century after the first Supreme Court rulings to do so, show how slowly attitudes change.

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Changing Attitudes

How do attitudes change? Persuasion is one method of attempting to change an attitude. Carl Hovland and Irving Janis have identified four crucial elements of persuasion.



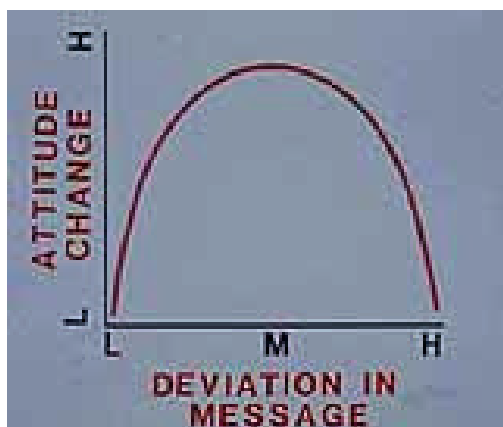
Several factors can influence whether a source will be able to change your attitude. You would be most likely to follow the advice of a person who was both knowledgeable about the subject and apparently trustworthy. Sources most similar to you are often most effective in changing your opinion. For

example, young women, not elderly men, appear in soap commercials. They are trying to appear as similar as possible to the ideal consumer of such products.

The power of the source of information is also important. If you work in an office and your boss recommends a new brand of ballpoint pen, you're much more likely (in most cases) to try it than if a file clerk recommends it.

Several aspects of the message and how it's presented will affect whether people's attitudes change. If an audience is

opposed to the message you want them to hear, you should present both sides of the argument. And in what order should they be presented? Give your views first if the other views will follow immediately. However, if there's a long period of time between the two, then present your views last.



Audiences you address may be in marked disagreement with you, or they may hold opinions only slightly different from yours. How should you move an audience toward your point of view -- by giving them a message similar to their viewpoint, or by giving a markedly different one? A little of both is best. And how much arousal should you

attempt to stir up? Too little arousal (or fear) encourages people to ignore the message; too much causes them to become defensive and reject it. Again, a balance is best, as described in the Think About It section.

Think About It

The question: To change someone's attitude, is it better to stir that person's emotions, or to just give facts?

The answer: If the people to whom you are speaking are opposed to your views, use an emotional appeal when you first present your views, then convey your message. This procedure allows you to get their attention first, so you can then hit them with the facts!

Which has a more powerful effect, advertising on television or in newspaper ads? Think about your own behavior. You're used to having the radio or television on. You may or may not pay attention to it. However, when you read a newspaper or a magazine, you've made a commitment to pay attention to the incoming information. Printed advertising may reach a more receptive audience, so the channel by which information is delivered impacts our attitudes.

There are a number of facts about you, the recipient, that will influence whether someone can change your mind. Your own internal needs and goals clearly have an impact. Most of us are concerned about our personal success -- some more so than

others. Advertisers often try to relate their products to youthful men and women who are obviously successful. It is a rare car commercial that features anyone over 25 doing the driving!

Attitudes and Cognitive Dissonance



We consider how to influence a person in our discussion of changing attitudes. Now let's consider how people can handle conflicts between their attitudes and actions or between two conflicting attitudes (beliefs).

Leon Festinger developed a theory of cognitive dissonance to explain relationships between cognitions (pieces of knowledge). Such relationships may be irrelevant. (Knowing that snow is cold doesn't affect your knowing that basketball is exciting.) They may be consonant, which means that one cognition follows from another. (Since you know that rain makes you wet, you seek protection when it rains). Or they may be dissonant, or conflicting. (You participate in a boring experiment and then are asked to tell the next participant how interesting and valuable the study is.) Cognitive dissonance is considered to be an unpleasant experience, one which we all work to reduce or eliminate. When we experience dissonance, we have three choices: we can (1) change our cognitions, (2) add new cognitions, or (3) alter the importance of various cognitions.

A much-discussed classic study on obedience by Stanley Milgram illustrates cognitive dissonance. Milgram set up an experiment in which a participant was to serve as "teacher" to monitor the performance of a "learner" trying to master new information. Milgram instructed the teacher to apply an electric shock of increasing severity with each error the learner made. As the severity of the shock was increased, the participant -- a stooge out of sight of the "teacher" -- gave responses indicating increasing pain, eventually screamed, and fell silent. Many of the teacher-participants protested, but they obeyed -- continuing to boost the shock level they were told to administer.

Milgram's study illustrates obedience to authority, but it also shows the creation of cognitive dissonance. People were able to overcome their dissonance about inflicting pain or harm

on a helpless stranger by rationalizing that (a) they had been paid to be a "teacher," (b) they had agreed to perform, and therefore (c) they felt obligated to do as they were told. In short, they shifted blame to Milgram as the responsible "authority."

Aggression

Of all the behaviors in which we humans or may engage, the most sinister is aggression. Aggression is behaving with the intent to inflict harm or injury on other humans or groups of humans. What causes it? Can we control aggression? Let's look at the evidence.

What causes aggression? Is the tendency toward aggression inherited? Freud thought that aggression was an inherited, natural instinct of humans. If so, then channeling the aggression to positive acts would be the best we could hope to achieve. But other views have gained popularity in the last twenty years. They stem from research about observational learning.

Is aggression learned? Aggression can be viewed as a learned behavior that responds to the same reinforcers and the same controlling stimuli as other learned behaviors.

Frustration can lead to many forms of behavior, among which is aggression (see the Emotions Chapter). Discovering that someone is willing to do you harm is another important cause of aggression. The same result occurs whether someone actually strikes out against you physically or just does so verbally.

A third cause of aggression is to observe models like yourself get caught in situations similar to the one you're in. If they become aggressive -- and get away with it -- you, too, will tend to become aggressive. This is one of the reasons why people are worried about the level of aggression on television. In television program after television program for children, aggression is used as the ultimate solution to whatever problem is faced by the hero. Even worse, the consequences of aggression are usually depicted in positive terms; certainly the negative consequences of aggression are seldom featured. For instance, for every fist that hits a face, there is usually a sore jaw -- but there is also a sore set of knuckles (almost never shown).

In addition, there are other causes of aggression. One is the "long hot summer" effect. We tend to be more aggressive in hot weather than in cool. However, the causes of aggression are seldom if ever that simple. For instance, in cities there's

another obvious factor also operating -- crowding, as discussed in Feature 3.

FEATURE 3

HIGHWAYS AS "BYE"-WAYS

LOS ANGELES (Chicago Tribune Service)- War has broken out on Southern California freeways. The antagonists are packs of frustrated motorists no longer able to cope with traffic congestion. Their weapons, according to the Los Angeles Police Department, are their cars.

In the past nine months, authorities have recorded almost 400 "vehicular assaults with a deadly weapon" on the 650 miles of heavily traveled freeways that slice through the hills and deserts of greater Los Angeles.

(The) director of behavioral sciences and psychology for the Los Angeles Police Department says, "They get frustrated at the stackups on our freeways, they get angry at other inconsiderate drivers, and their tolerance level overflows. They explode. Their car becomes a weapon, and they strike out with it."

"In one case, four different cars were involved and they battled each other for 50 miles," recalls an accident investigator. "People tend to elongate their body and personal territory to include their cars," (says the L.A.P.D. director). "Then they take it as a personal assault when someone enters their space. They see it as an attack on their person.

"For many people, cars are extensions of their egos. If somebody hits you, you either run away or strike back. It works the same way on the Freeway." (June 1978).

You've now read enough psychology to interpret the behavior discussed here. We've spoken of nonverbal communication and the importance of the distance between people who are talking. Here we see the results when people feel that their personal space has been violated. In addition, apart from license plates, no way existed to identify anyone. The tools were at hand with which to be aggressive. All these factors created the conditions for freeway warfare.

And don't forget the Attribution Theory of Emotion which suggests that environmental cues can cause you to interpret your level of arousal as anger. If crowding is stressful, it's

likely that your anger will increase when you are in crowded situations. A city near riot in the summer would first have symptoms that included heat, crowding, role models of aggression, and rising levels of arousal. Small wonder that riots occur!

Controlling Aggression

Since we've assumed that aggression is a learned behavior, four different possibilities might be considered as providing the effective means by which to control it.

If observational learning is effective, then exposing people to unaggressive models should lead to a lower tendency to aggress. This is much more effective in preventing aggression if some other positive responses can also be offered. There's little evidence that punishing aggression will prevent it from occurring at the next opportunity.

If the reason for aggression can be justified, a person is less likely to be aggressive in return. The success of such efforts, however, depends on a rational exchange of information. Offering a logical explanation is something that can't always be done in aggressive situations, as it is in the Think About It!

Think About It

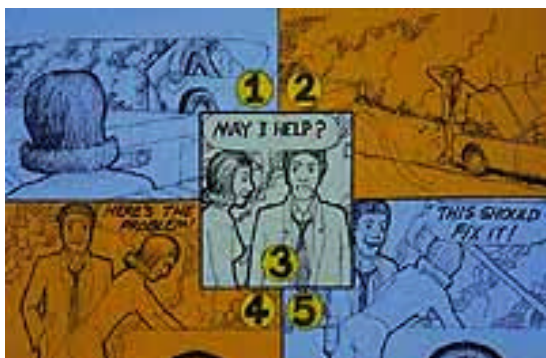
The question: In the "WHAT'S THE ANSWER?" section of the first topic in this chapter we describe what might happen if you were tailgated too closely on the highway. What would've happened if the person tailgating had been able to explain to you that he was rushing someone to the hospital? What would your reaction have been?

The answer: You would probably have felt ashamed. Aggression without apparent cause will cause others to be aggressive in return, but if behavior that seems aggressive can be explained, it is less likely to cause aggression in return.

Freud's theory suggests that aggression may result from high levels of internal arousal. If this arousal can be "taken out" harmlessly -- called "catharsis" -- to release the built-up energy, then less aggression should occur. This has not been supported by recent research. Providing other ways to be aggressive appears to calm people down at first, but later seems to cause even more aggressive behavior

It seems that aggression can be controlled by creating incompatible responses to the stimuli that cause aggression. One incompatible response is humor, which often works well in defusing aggression. It is very difficult to be aggressive when you are laughing.

Altruism: Offering Help to Others



The decision to offer help -- the act itself is called altruism -- to a fellow human in distress is a complex one, more so than it might seem at first look. Many people, perhaps most, hold back. When help is needed, different rules for offering help seem to come into play when we are alone

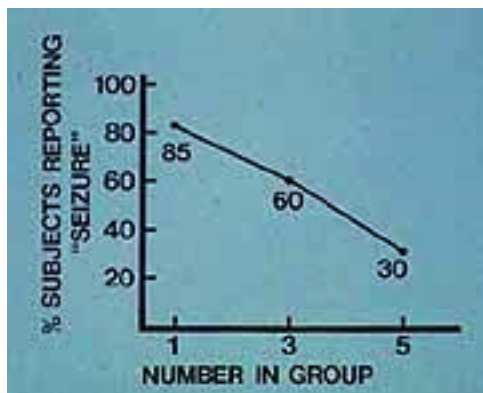
than when we are in a group. Whether alone or with others, those who do act must make five decisions, often in rapid order. Only if the correct decisions are made will the help be offered.

First, the would-be helper must notice the situation. The easiest way to avoid "getting involved" is not to notice a problem.

Second, the passerby must understand the situation and interpret it as an emergency. Two things seem to influence whether or not this occurs. One is correctly perceiving a situation. Haven't you ever noticed the difficulty of separating the sound of a shot from that of a car backfiring? Can you tell the difference between a scream and a laugh? The other is that the helper-to-be must have the motivation to get involved. There are real reasons to avoid becoming involved. These range from potential danger to the threat of a lawsuit if inappropriate help is rendered. As an example, to encourage medical personnel to identify themselves in times of emergency, some states have now removed the threat of lawsuits by injured parties against professionals rendering medical aid at the site of an emergency.

This was where the breakdown occurred in the "Genovese incident," when 38 people watched from apartment windows as a young girl was murdered. Diffusion of responsibility might have led everyone watching to assume someone else had taken care of the problem. If so, then the more people watching an apparent emergency, the less the likelihood any one of them would call for help.

In one experiment a number of people were called together to sit in separate rooms and discuss the biggest problems they were having in adjusting to college life. First time around each person simply introduced him- or herself through the speaker system and stated the problem. A stooge of the experimenter stated that he had troubles with epilepsy.



On the second round (you guessed it) this person staged an attack. The result? The greater the number of people who participated in the experiment, the less likelihood there was of his being helped. Now, it turns out that the critical factor in the failure to offer aid was the isolation of each person in the group.

When people can communicate, the odds of getting help actually go up as the size of the crowd increases, as they do with the obviousness of the problem. The increased likelihood of aid being rendered is especially true if the person requiring help is obviously similar -- whether in style of dress, socio-economic level, or type of employment -- to the observers.

Fourth, a person will offer help only if he or she is able to identify how help should be offered. Many fail to do so simply because they don't know how. If someone even in your own family stopped breathing, would you know how to administer artificial respiration? What if he or she had a heart attack? Can you perform cardiovascular resuscitation?

Finally, suppose the helper-to-be has wended his or her way through all these decisions and has decided to offer help. The decision must still be implemented: the helper-to-be must become a helper in situations such as is described in the Think About It.

Think About It

The question: You need to get help when you get a flat tire while driving on a freeway. Should you pull in near someone else who is getting help fixing a flat or should you stop farther down the highway?

The answer: You should stop several hundred yards down the highway, for two reasons. First, having someone up the highway from you who is already getting help will expose passing motorists to a model who is helping someone in the same situation. Second, the time between seeing the model and noticing your problem will be enough for potential helpers to make and act on

a decision. They must notice the situation, identify it correctly, realize (if true) that they have the skills and tools to help you, and still have time to slow down. A quarter mile should be enough!

Obtaining Help

The people who most frequently get help are likeable. We are most likely to be helped if we're similar to those who might help us. You're much more inclined to help someone start his or her car in your own college's parking lot than on a similar lot downtown. Finally, people are more likely to be helped if they are truly in need, where the problem can't be handled alone but the costs of helping are not too great.

If people have been reinforced for helping previously, your odds of gaining help go up. If they're in a positive mood, and especially if they've viewed a model offering similar help, the same holds true. When social norms permit or encourage helping, when the helper is not preoccupied or busy, and when he or she may be returning a favor, the odds increase even further that you'll get the help you need.

Yet, other factors -- less obvious -- also impact the likelihood that help will be offered. We are more likely to obtain help if we are in a rural situation than in an urban setting. If our possible helpers are not in a rush, if they have been made to feel guilty, and especially if they are in a happy mood. The most important factor here is that the helper-to-be interpret the need correctly.

REVIEW

SOCIALIZATION AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. How do people develop social skills?
2. What is meant by "maturity"?

INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION

1. What factors are important in forming friendships? Which are important in ending friendships?
2. List some of the factors thought to be important in interpersonal attraction. Which of these are important early in the relationship, and which become important later on?
3. Do "birds of a feather flock together" or do "opposites attract?" Explain your answer.
4. What is "puppy love"? How can you tell if a relationship

- is only "puppy love?"
5. How often do people experience love as passion? What happens to passionate love in marriage?
 6. Briefly describe two major principles of attraction based on the difficulty with which contact can be established.
 7. Identify four major strategies to increase your own attractiveness.

ATTITUDES

1. Name and explain the three components of attitudes.
2. What forces in our lives influence and shape our attitudes and opinions?
3. What are some of the problems encountered in measuring attitudes?
4. What is prejudice? Can it be controlled or eliminated?
5. What is persuasion? Name some of the factors that determine whether or not persuasion will be successful.
6. Explain cognitive dissonance, giving an example from everyday life.

AGGRESSION

1. Is aggression learned or inherited? Explain your answer.
2. Describe several ways of controlling aggression.

ALTRUISM

1. What are the five steps involved in offering to help someone?
2. What aspects of a situation increase the likelihood that help will be offered?

ACTIVITIES

1. Who was your best friend in sixth grade? Describe how the friendship formed with that person (if you can remember), or with a more recent best friend. What needs of each person were served by the friendship? What benefits were gained by each person? If the friendship is over now, what factors finally led to its decline or end?

2. As a class project, identify on a map of your city (or your campus, if it's a big college/university) where each in the class lives student (or a sample of 30 if your class is large). Have each student name one other person in school with whom he or she has done something outside of school hours. Consult the map. On the average, how many blocks or miles does each student live from other students in the class? Is the distance greater

or lesser than the average distance between the homes of persons who get together outside of school? What other factors can influence who does what activities with whom?

3. Scan your local newspaper or any family magazine to find advertisements that use facts to appeal directly to the cognitive part of a reader's attitude. Also find ads that appeal directly to the affective, or emotional, part of an attitude, as well as ads that appeal for action. Which techniques are most often used? For which type of appeal was it hardest to find examples? To what component of a buyer's attitude are advertisers most likely to appeal? Do advertisers of different products try to appeal to different parts of buyers' attitudes?

4. Identify an attitude of one of your friend -- perhaps a religious attitude, a political party preference, or an opinion regarding taxes or war or some national issue. Do you agree or disagree with your friend on that attitude? Has your position on the subject changed within the past couple of years? Why? Has your friend's opinion changed? Why? How important have your friends been in shaping the attitudes you now hold? How important was your family in shaping your current attitudes?

5. In your community pick a group -- a racial group, a religious denomination, a political organization, or even people just living in a certain part of town. Interview a number of the students in your school about their attitudes toward the group you've chosen. Assess how much they know about the feelings of that group and their general awareness of the situation of the group. Then also interview members of the group you've identified concerning their own views on how other citizens in the town view them. Assess their feelings and their awareness of others' opinions. What evidences of prejudice, "halo effect," discrimination, or stereotyping do you find? Can any such errors be corrected? How?

6. Have you ever offered help to someone in an emergency situation? Describe the situation in terms of the series of decisions you had to make before deciding to offer help. What aspects of the situation influenced your decision? Have you ever offered help that turned out not to be needed? Analyze that situation in the same way.

INTERESTED IN MORE?

BAILEY, R. H. (1976). *Violence and Aggression*. New York, NY: TimeLife Books. From the "Human Behavior" series, a well-illustrated volume that examines human urges to hurt others. Shows many forms of aggression and examines possible means of curbing these impulses.

BECK, R. C. (1982). *Applying Psychology: Understanding People*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Examines learning and remembering, job performance, emotion, attitude, and communication, among other topics. The emphasis is on practical applications for living that can be drawn from psychology.

BERSCHEID, E. & WALSTER, E. (1969). *Interpersonal Attraction*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. Examines a wide variety of factors that may determine how attractive you are or how attractive you find someone else to be. Covers both romantic love and acceptance or rejection by a group.

EVANS, R. I. (1980). *The Making of Social Psychology: Discussions with Creative Contributors*. Gardner Press. An unusual book of interviews with top-name theorists and researchers in social psychology. An insider's view of how social psychology has grown and changed over the past half century.

FISHER, R. J. (1982). *Social Psychology: An Applied Approach*. St. Martin's Press. Heavy reading, but a nice social-psychological analysis of humans in social situations -- everything from small groups to international relations. Also offers comments on social conflict, environment, and law.

JONES, J. M. (1972). *Prejudice and Racism*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. A far-ranging review of a complex subject. Dissects the social psychologist's view of racial prejudice.

LATANE, B. & DARLEY, J. M. (1970). *The Unresponsive Bystander: Why Doesn't He Help?* Prentice-Hall. A classic study of the factors that influence when help will be offered in emergencies.

MCGINNISS, J. (1968). *The Selling of the President*. Trident. A paperback that takes a United States tradition (electing the President) and shows how it is influenced by another United States tradition (advertising). An exercise in practical attitude change.

RUBIN, Z. (1973). *Liking and Loving: An Invitation to Social Psychology*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. Uses personal relationships as a means of presenting theories and findings of social psychology.

ZIMBARDO, P. G. (1977). *Shyness: What It is, What to Do About It*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. More than 80 percent of an international sample of over 5,000 people say they are or were shy at some point in their life and 40 percent of the same group see themselves as shy now. This book has a lot to offer to about 4 out of 10 readers! It gives constructive suggestions on how to manage or reduce shyness.