

19. Social Psychology: Behavior

Objectives

- Identify the influences that society and other groups can have on behavior
- Explain the factors involved in conforming
- Examine reasons for cooperating and competing with others
- Explain factors involved in group dynamics, authority, and obedience
- Understand factors that contribute to aggression and violent acts

Vocabulary

aggression	deindividuation	groupthink	peer pressure
altruism	diffusion of responsibility	individuation	social dilemma
catharsis	group	norms	social responsibility
conformity	group polarization	obedience	

Background

Since humans are social beings, their behavior often is affected by interactions with other people. The behavior of people in groups is the topic of this chapter. Since students are particularly prone to group influences, this chapter should help them to understand and analyze their own behavior as well as to interpret acts of others in society.

Students begin by learning about groups, considering the definition of a group and ways in which being part of a group can affect their behavior. Students also review social norms regarding how to dress, talk, act, and more, as these appear in their own and in other cultures.

Students move on to examine conformity, which is an important issue to people in their age group. They examine reasons that people conform and choose not to conform and instances in which people are most likely to conform. They'll find useful tips for handling peer pressure in a chapter sidebar.

Students next consider two important dimensions of human interaction, cooperation and competition. They review incentives that people have to cooperate

and to be competitive, along with the social dilemmas created by cooperation and competition. They also are encouraged to work with others in socially responsible ways.

Students next consider group dynamics, including ways in which decisions are made and issues of group polarization and groupthink. They also learn about group roles and group leadership traits and styles.

Students always are interested in issues relating to authority and obedience, the next topic in the chapter. This chapter section considers reasons for obedience to authority and the effects of personality characteristics on obedience and authority. The chapter closes with consideration of helping behavior, aggression, and violence.

Further Resources

Argyle, Michael. *The Psychology of Interpersonal Behavior*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1985.

Homans, George C. *The Human Group*. New York: Transaction Publications, 1992.

For Discussion

Review

1. In social psychology, what must two or more individuals have to be in a group?
2. What incentives do people have to live or work together cooperatively?
3. What are the factors involved in group dynamics?
4. What are some reasons that people are aggressive?

Critical Thinking

1. What are some social norms in American society that most people try to live by?
2. What is the importance of Solomon Asch's research on reasons for conformity?
3. What do you have to gain by being competitive? Can you think of any negatives to being competitive?
4. In group decision making, describe the principles that can be used to arrive at a decision. Cite some examples from your own experience.
5. Have you ever been in a situation in which you felt that you should have helped someone and didn't? Did other people around you influence your response? Explain.

Activities

1. Follow the Leader

Divide students into groups to discuss their experiences with peer pressure. Have them list ways in which they have experienced peer pressure and analyze reasons that they have conformed or not conformed with it. Compare their findings with material on peer pressure in the chapter.

2. Do As I Say and Not As I Do

Ask students to carry notebooks for a week to observe conformist behavior. Ask them to note any behavior they see that they consider conformity to a group's behavior, ideas or attitudes. Ask them to analyze this data on the basis of material on conformity in this chapter.

3. Internet: Follow the Rules

Ask students to use the Internet to research social conformity in other nations. Ask them to print out relevant site pages and to analyze the data in written reports.

4. Special Sources: Social Aggression

Ask students to choose an instance—contemporary or historical—of group violence and aggression and research it in the library. Ask them to relate information they find to that given in the chapter.

Name _____

19. Social Psychology: Behavior

As you read Chapter 19, write an answer to each question below.

1. What is individuation and how is it important to conformity?

2. What are social responsibility and social dilemma and how are they related? Give some examples of both.

3. Why is minority influence important to group decision making?

4. Give some examples of ways in which obedience to authority may or may not be beneficial.

5. What role do you think that violence on television and in movies plays in our society in terms of causing aggressive behavior?

Name _____

19. Social Psychology: Behavior

Find the best answer for each item. Then circle that answer.

1. What is social responsibility?
 - a. tendency of groups to adopt a unified opinion
 - b. responsibility assigned to one person
 - c. acting for the good of the group
 - d. being in charge of a party
2. What is aggression?
 - a. exerting oneself physically
 - b. behavior that is meant to harm another person or group of people
 - c. asserting oneself but with no intent to harm
 - d. acting out verbally with no intent to harm
3. What is peer pressure?
 - a. the pressure to conform to others like yourself
 - b. a group's tendency toward extremism
 - c. aggressive behavior toward friends
 - d. pressuring oneself to behave a certain way
4. What is catharsis?
 - a. ability to control one's behavior in a group setting
 - b. release of tension and anxiety associated with pent-up emotions
 - c. lack of control in an aggressive way
 - d. warm group feelings
5. What is the definition of group polarization?
 - a. two or more individuals acting together
 - b. disagreement among three or more individuals
 - c. tendency for a group's decision to become more extreme than those of the individuals in the group.
 - d. a decision based on very little information
6. What is individuation?
 - a. the act of emphasizing individuality
 - b. a process by which group members lose their individuality
 - c. rules of behavior based on group feeling
 - d. asserting oneself with no intention to harm others
7. What are norms?
 - a. rules made by local governments
 - b. rules made by the national government
 - c. spoken or unspoken rules that tell us how others expect us to behave
 - d. consequences of a person's actions
8. What is conformity?
 - a. taking responsibility for other people's behavior
 - b. the act of adopting attitudes or behaviors that reflect the social norms of a group
 - c. helping others without expectation of reward
 - d. rebellion against group norms
9. What is obedience?
 - a. the act of listening and acting in a reasonable manner
 - b. the act of following orders given by someone in a position of authority
 - c. a code of behavior established by tradition
 - d. acting as a person with authority
10. What is a social dilemma?
 - a. the conflict between wanting what is best for the group and what is best for oneself
 - b. acting for the benefit of the group
 - c. acting for the detriment of the group
 - d. a process of evaluating social norms

Name _____

19. Social Psychology: Behavior

Read each description, and write the letter of the correct term on the line.

1. We rely on social norms to _____.
 - a. help us act appropriately in social situations
 - b. help us compete with others
 - c. encourage aggressive interaction
 - d. support political candidates
2. Social behavior varies among cultures because _____.
 - a. laws in different countries vary
 - b. different cultures have different social norms
 - c. people have different economic levels
 - d. people's behavioral norms change often
3. Solomon Asch's conformity experiment is important because _____.
 - a. people usually don't conform
 - b. people always give in to other people's ideas
 - c. it shows how powerful the desire to conform is
 - d. the experiment was unfair to participants
4. In the Bay of Pigs invasion, the president and his advisors _____.
 - a. failed to act
 - b. consulted the United Nations
 - c. convinced themselves that the invasion could not fail
 - d. submitted the decision to Congress
5. Having group roles allows for a _____.
 - a. way for members to evade responsibility
 - b. clear assignment of blame
 - c. continuous flow
 - d. effortless system that flows easily
6. Strong physiological or emotional arousal may contribute to _____.
 - a. conformity
 - b. aggressive behavior
 - c. business success
 - d. a sense of powerlessness
7. A positive outcome of obedience to authority is that it _____.
 - a. ensures happiness for the majority of people
 - b. contributes to a sense of power
 - c. helps a society maintain order
 - d. ensures that a society acts justly
8. Milgram's experiment had volunteers deliver electric shocks to learners to prove that _____.
 - a. people want to hurt other people
 - b. human nature is basically good
 - c. people usually defy authority figures
 - d. most people have the capacity for blind obedience
9. Researchers doing a staged emergency experiment found that people were less likely to respond to the emergency when _____.
 - a. there were things distracting them
 - b. they felt angry and aggressive
 - c. they felt threatened by the experimenter
 - d. they thought that others knew about the situation
10. Cultures stressing individual rights and accomplishments over group harmony are likely to _____.
 - a. produce citizens with more aggressive behavior
 - b. produce citizens that obey authority
 - c. have lenient laws
 - d. encourage conformity

Essay Question

What do you think causes aggressive and violent behavior in U.S. society?