Chapter 16: Social Psychology

Key Terms

Writing Definitions

1. Social psychology is the scientific study of how we think about, influence, and relate to one another. (p. 673)

2. Attribution theory deals with our causal explanations of behavior. We attribute behavior to the individual's disposition or to the situation. (pp. 673–674)

3. The fundamental attribution error is our tendency to underestimate the impact of situations and to overestimate the impact of personal dispositions upon the behavior of others. (p. 674)

4. Attitudes are feelings, often influenced by our beliefs, that may predispose us to respond in particular ways to objects, people, and events. (p. 675)

5. The central route to persuasion occurs when people respond favorably to arguments as a result of engaging in systematic thinking about an issue. (p. 676)

6. The peripheral route to persuasion occurs when people are influenced by more superficial and incidental cues, such as a speaker's reputation or appearance. (p. 676)

7. The foot-in-the-door phenomenon is the tendency for people who agree to a small request to comply later with a larger request. (p. 676)

8. A role is a set of explanations (norms) about how people in a specific social position ought to behave. (p. 677)

9. Cognitive dissonance theory refers to the theory that we act to reduce the psychological discomfort we experience when our behavior conflicts with what we think and feel, or more generally, when two of our thoughts are inconsistent. This is frequently accomplished by changing our attitude rather than our behavior. (p. 678)

   Memory aid: Dissonance means “lack of harmony.”

   Cognitive dissonance occurs when two thoughts, or cognitions, are at variance with one another.

10. Conformity is the tendency to change one's thinking or behavior to coincide with a group standard. (p. 681)

11. Normative social influence refers to the pressure on individuals to conform to avoid rejection or gain social approval. (p. 682)

   Memory aid: Normative means “based on a norm, or pattern, regarded as typical for a specific group.”

   Normative social influence is the pressure groups exert on the individual to behave in ways acceptable to the group standard.

12. Informational social influence results when one is willing to accept others’ opinions about reality. (p. 682)

13. Social facilitation is stronger performance of simple or well-learned tasks that occurs when other people are present. (p. 687)

14. Social loafing is the tendency for individual effort to be diminished when one is part of a group working toward a common goal. (p. 688)

15. Deindividuation refers to the loss of self-restraint and self-awareness that sometimes occurs in group situations that foster arousal and anonymity. (p. 688)

   Memory aid: As a prefix, de- indicates reversal or undoing. To deindividuate is to undo one’s individuality.

16. Group polarization refers to the enhancement of a group’s prevailing tendencies through discussion, which often has the effect of accentuating the group’s differences from other groups. (p. 689)

   Memory aid: To polarize is to “cause thinking to concentrate about two poles, or contrasting positions.”

17. Groupthink refers to the unrealistic thought processes and decision making that occur within groups when the desire for group harmony overrides a realistic appraisal of alternatives. (p. 690)

   Example: The psychological tendencies of self-justification, conformity, and group polarization foster the development of the “team spirit” mentality known as groupthink.

18. Prejudice is an unjustifiable (and usually negative) attitude toward a group and its members. (p. 691)

19. A stereotype is a generalized (sometimes accurate but often overgeneralized) belief about a group of people. (p. 691)

20. Discrimination is unjustifiable negative behavior toward a group or its members. (p. 691)

21. The ingroup refers to the people and groups with whom we share a common identity. (p. 696)

22. The outgroup refers to the people and groups that are excluded from our ingroup. (p. 696)

23. The ingroup bias is the tendency to favor our own group. (p. 696)

24. The scapegoat theory proposes that prejudice provides an outlet for anger by finding someone to blame. (p. 696)

25. The other-race effect is our tendency to recall the faces of our own race more accurately than those of other races. (p. 697)

26. The just-world phenomenon is a manifestation of the commonly held belief that good is rewarded and evil is punished. The logic is indisputable: “If I am rewarded, I must be good.” (p. 697)
27. Aggression is any physical or verbal behavior intended to hurt or destroy. (p. 698)

28. The frustration-aggression principle states that aggression is triggered when people become angry because their efforts to achieve a goal have been blocked. (p. 700)

29. The mere exposure effect refers to the fact that repeated exposure to an unfamiliar stimulus increases our liking of it. (p. 706)

30. Passionate love refers to an aroused state of intense positive absorption in another person, especially at the beginning of a relationship. (p. 710)

31. Companionate love refers to a deep, enduring, affectionate attachment to those with whom we share our lives. (p. 711)

32. Equity refers to the condition in which there is mutual giving and receiving between the partners in a relationship. (p. 711)

33. Self-disclosure refers to a person’s sharing intimate feelings with another. (p. 711)

34. Altruism is unselfish regard for the welfare of others. (p. 712)

35. The bystander effect is the tendency of a person to be less likely to offer help to someone if there are other people present. (p. 713)

36. Social exchange theory states that our social behavior revolves around exchanges, in which we try to minimize our costs and maximize our benefits. (p. 714)

37. The reciprocity norm is the expectation that people will help those who have helped them. (p. 714)

38. The social-responsibility norm is the expectation that people will help those who depend on them. (p. 714)

39. Conflict is a perceived incompatibility of actions, goals, or ideas between individuals or groups. (p. 715)

40. A social trap is a situation in which conflicting parties become caught in mutually destructive behaviors because each persists in pursuing its own self-interest. (p. 715)

41. Mirror-image perceptions are the negative, mutual views that conflicting people often hold about one another. (p. 715)

42. Superordinate goals are mutual goals that require the cooperation of individuals or groups otherwise in conflict. (p. 717)

43. GRIT (Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension-Reduction) is a strategy of conflict resolution based on the defusing effect that conciliatory gestures can have on parties in conflict. (p. 719)