

## **FOCUS ON VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE**

### **Social Thinking**

*Page 675:* Happily married couples attribute a spouse's *tart-tongued remark* to a temporary situation ("She must have had a bad day at work"). How we make attributions can have serious consequences. Couples who think their partner's sarcastic or unkind comment (*tart-tongued remark*) is due to a cruel personality (a *mean disposition*) are more likely to be dissatisfied with their marriages than couples who believe the same remark was simply a result of some situational influence, such as a stressful day at work.

*Page 675: . . . freeloaders.* This term refers to people who voluntarily live off of other people. Those who believe that people are poor and/or unemployed because of personal dispositions tend to underestimate the influence of situational variables. Thus, they might call someone on welfare a *freeloader* rather than simply a victim of circumstances.

*Page 675: Better to drain the swamps than swat the mosquitoes.* The idea here is that it is better to attack the source of a problem, rather than its effects. Eliminating insect breeding grounds (*draining the swamps*) is more productive than trying to kill the insects (*swatting the mosquitoes*) after they have hatched. Similarly, when explaining poverty or unemployment, those who tend to blame the situation, rather than individual personality traits, are likely to suggest changing the circumstances that give rise to poverty, unemployment, terrorism, and so on.

*Page 676:* Not only will people sometimes *stand up for* what they believe, they will also come to believe in the idea they have supported. Not only will people support (*stand up for*) their strong convictions by taking appropriate action, but they will also develop convictions about things that they have taken action to support. Many lines (*streams*) of evidence confirm the principle that beliefs can be changed to correspond with people's actions (*attitudes follow behavior*).

*Page 676: . . . "brainwashed" . . .* This term refers to a person's beliefs, values, and attitudes being changed by relentless indoctrination and mental torture. One component of this mind-changing process (*"thought-control"*) involves use of the **foot-in-the-door phenomenon**, whereby a person is first coerced to agree to a small request, then to comply with a much greater request. Frequently, people will change their attitudes so that they are consistent with their new behavior.

*Page 676:* This *chicken-and-egg spiral*, of actions-feeding-attitudes-feeding-actions, enables behavior to escalate. Whether used for good or bad, the foot-in-the-door strategy involves starting with small requests, then slowly increasing the level of demand. The new behavior will be followed by a change in attitude which, in turn, will make the behavior more likely, and that will then lead to more change in belief, etc. (*the chicken-and-egg spiral*).

*Page 678:* So also, when put in with *rotten apples*, some people, but not others, become *bad apples*. It has been said that one rotten apple in a barrel of good apples can turn them all bad—someone who is a “*rotten apple*” has a corrupting influence on others. Circumstances (*social control* or *the power of the situation*) interact with the power of the individual (*personal control*). Sometimes the unpleasant or nasty predicaments people find themselves in (*rotten situations*) can lead them to behave in unacceptable or unethical ways (can turn them into *bad apples*). However, other people in similar circumstances might be able to resist corruption and do the opposite of what is expected.

*Page 679:* The attitudes-follow-behavior principle has a *heartening implication* . . . When our attitudes and behaviors are inconsistent, we feel a certain amount of tension (**cognitive dissonance**) and we want to do something to reduce this uncomfortable state. Thus, if we are feeling depressed (*down in the dumps*) and we behave in a more outgoing manner, talk in

a more positive way, reduce self-criticism (use *fewer self-put-downs*), and act as though we are happy, we may, in fact, start feeling much better. As Myers notes, the notion that feelings follow actions has positive ramifications (*heartening implications*).

### **Social Influence**

*Page 682: Fish swim in schools. Birds fly in flocks.* Many animals congregate and travel in groups. For example, fish form groups (they *swim in schools*) and so do birds (they *fly in flocks*). Humans are similar in many ways (*we are social animals*). We often, without conscious awareness, imitate and copy the actions, emotional expressions, verbal intonations, and attitudes of other members of our particular reference group (*we are natural mimics*). The tendency to automatically transmit behavioral patterns from one person to another is called the *chameleon effect* and helps us to empathize, to feel what others feel (*behavior is contagious*).

*Page 683:* When influence supports what we approve, we applaud those who are “*open-minded*” and “*sensitive*” enough to be “*responsive*.” We can be influenced by others because they provide useful knowledge (**informational social influence**) or because we want them to view us favorably and not ignore us (**normative social influence**). **Conformity** that is consistent with what we believe is true will be seen in a positive light (the conformists are “*open-minded*,” etc.), while conformity that is inconsistent will be viewed negatively (“*submissive conformity*”).

*Pages 683–684:* You and another person *draw slips from a hat* to see who will be the “teacher” (which your slip says) and who will be the “learner.” In Milgram’s famous obedience experiments, participants were deceived into believing they were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (“teacher” or “learner”) by picking a piece of paper out of a container (*drawing slips from a hat*). All the subjects were actually “teachers” and were asked to “shock” the “learners” whenever they made mistakes on a memory task. A majority of the participants complied with the experimenter’s request.

*Page 684:* Hearing these pleas, you *draw back*. But the experimenter *prods* you: “Please continue—the experiment requires that you continue.” If you were a participant (a “teacher”) in Milgram’s experiment, the research assistant would pressure (*prod*) you to carry on with the experiment even though you might show great reluctance (*you draw back*) after hearing the “learner’s” cries of distress at being “shocked.”

*Page 686:* With *kindness and obedience on a collision course*, obedience usually won. Milgram’s research on obedience showed that social factors that foster conformity are powerful enough to make almost any one of us behave in ways inconsistent with our beliefs. When subjects were in a conflict over (*torn between*) whether to refuse to harm an individual or to follow orders (when *kindness and obedience were on a collision course*), they usually did what they were asked to do.

*Page 686:* Milgram did not entrap his teachers by asking them first to *zap* learners with *enough electricity to make their hair stand on end*. Milgram used the foot-in-the-door tactic to persuade participants (*teachers*) to comply with his requests to shock (*zap*) the learners with larger and larger voltages of electricity (*enough electricity to make their hair stand on end*). He started by asking the teacher to use a small amount (*a little tickle*) of electricity on the learner; after obtaining compliance (*obedience*), he asked them to increase the level, and so on. Subjects tended to rationalize their behavior; for some, their attitudes became consistent with their behavior over the course of the experiment.

*Page 686:* Contrary to images of *devilish villains*, cruelty does not require *monstrous characters*; all it takes is *ordinary people corrupted by an evil situation* . . . We tend to think that pain and suffering (*cruelty*) are always caused by inhumane, brutal, and nasty people (*devilish villains* or *monstrous characters*). However, social psychology research shows that almost anyone

(ordinary people) can be led to behave badly given the right (or wrong) circumstances (they can be *corrupted by an evil situation*).

*Page 688:* In a team *tug-of-war*, for example, do you suppose your effort would be more than, less than, or the same as the effort you would exert in a *one-on-one tug-of-war*? *Tug-of-war* is a game in which opponents pull on each end of a rope. When two individuals compete (*one-on-one tug-of-war*), they work much harder (*exert more effort*) than if they were members of a team competing on the same task. This lowering of individual effort when part of a group is called **social loafing**. (Note that the term *to loaf* means *to work less hard, to slack off, to take it easy, or to free ride*.)

*Page 691:* They repeatedly found that a minority that unswervingly holds to its position is far more successful in *swaying* the majority than is a minority that *waffles*. Committed individuals and small groups of individuals can convince (*sway*) the majority to their point of view if they adhere strictly to their agenda and do not appear to be uncertain or unsure (*to waffle*).

### **Social Relations**

*Page 693 (Close-Up): . . . explicit—on the radar screen of our awareness . . . implicit—below the radar, out of sight.* While some thoughts are processed at a conscious level (*on the radar screen of our awareness*), more frequently our thoughts are unconsciously processed (they are *below the radar*). These unconscious (*implicit*) responses appear to be *reflexive*, much like the way our knee responds with a quick, automatic movement (*a knee-jerk response*) when our patellar tendon is tapped. Similarly, **prejudice** is often an automatic, unthinking attitude rather than a conscious (*explicit*) decision.

*Page 693 (Close-Up): . . . gut check . . .* A close examination of our inner feelings (*a gut check* or *checking our gut feelings*) sometimes reveals covert prejudices. Researchers have detected bodily responses—facial muscle responses and activation of the amygdala—that seem to reflect implicit prejudice (*they give off telltale signs*) in people who consciously express little prejudice. But as Myers notes, it is not our inner feelings but what we do with them that is important.

*Page 696:* Even arbitrarily creating an us-them distinction—by grouping people *with the toss of a coin*—leads people to show favoritism to their own group when dividing any rewards. One of the factors affecting prejudice is our propensity to define ourselves through identification with a particular group (**ingroup bias**). This propensity in turn creates an **outgroup** of people who do not belong to our group (*the ingroup*). Even if the groups are artificially created by random assignment (created *with the toss of a coin*), we will tend to see our own group as more deserving, superior, and so on.

*Page 696:* Prejudice springs not only from *the divisions of society* but also from *the passions of the heart*. Prejudice can arise from emotions we experience and feel deeply (*from the passions of the heart*), as well as from societal circumstances (*the divisions of society*). When things go wrong, we may feel anger, frustration, or aggression, and these feelings (*the heart's passions*) are often directed toward those perceived to be responsible (**scapegoat theory**). For example, negative **stereotypes** about particular ethnic groups developed rapidly (*blossomed*) after the events of 9/11, and some very angry (*outraged*) people violently attacked (*lashed out at*) innocent members of these groups.

*Page 699:* A *raging bull* will become a gentle *Ferdinand* when castration reduces its *testosterone* level. Biological explanations of **aggression** examine the influences of genes, clusters of neurons in the brain, and biochemical agents in the blood, such as hormones and alcohol. Levels of the male sex hormone (*testosterone*) can be reduced by castration; thus, an aggressive, ferocious bull (*a raging bull*) can be reduced to a playful, friendly animal similar to the fictional character (*Ferdinand*) of children's stories.

*Page 702:* In less graphic form, the same unrealistic script—*she resists, he persists, she melts*—is commonplace on TV and in romance novels. A common theme in certain types of films and books is the idea that, if the main male character overcomes (*he persists*) the lovely female character’s reluctance to be romantically or sexually involved (*she resists*), then she will be totally devoted to him (*she melts*). This depiction of male-female relationships, in both pornographic and non-pornographic media, has little to do with reality and may, in fact, promote sexual aggression.

*Page 702:* Contrary to much popular opinion, viewing such *depictions* does not provide *an outlet* for *bottled-up impulses*. Laboratory studies have demonstrated that watching media that show sexual violence against women does not decrease the acceptance and performance of aggression against females. In contrast to what many believe, such portrayals (*depictions*) do not allow vicarious expression (*an outlet*) for pent-up hostile urges (*bottled-up impulses*), and instead may have the opposite effect. As Myers points out, the *catharsis hypothesis* is not supported; we do *not* feel better when we openly express (*vent*) our emotions and display anger and hostility (“*blow off steam*”).

*Page 706:* Within certain limits, *familiarity breeds fondness*. Under some circumstances, the more often we see someone (become *familiar* with him), the more likely it is that we will grow to like that person (to become *fond* of him). This is called the **mere exposure effect**. This effect suggests that the popular saying “familiarity breeds contempt” may not be completely accurate.

*Page 706:* . . . “*beauty is only skin deep*” . . . This saying suggests that physical attractiveness (*beauty*) is only a superficial quality (*skin deep*). Research, however, has shown that how we look influences our social interactions, how frequently we date, our popularity, how we are perceived by others, etc.

*Page 708:* Rather, *beauty is in the eye of the culture*—our standards for beauty reflect our time and place. The old saying “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” suggests that our subjective perceptions are more important than objective measures when determining who is physically attractive and who is not. These perceptions are influenced by cultural values or ideals, which change over time (*beauty is in the eye of the culture*). For example, in the United States, the full-figured movie star idol of the 1950s (*the soft, voluptuous Marilyn Monroe ideal*) has been replaced by the more fit and athletic (*lean*), yet large-breasted (*busty*), stars of today

*Page 709:* In real life, *opposites retract*. The old saying “*opposites attract*” has not been supported by social psychology research. In fact, we tend to *dislike* those we do not perceive as similar to ourselves (*opposites retract*). Rather than fostering *contempt*, Myers humorously suggests that similarity “*breeds content*.”

*Page 710:* To be *revved up* and to associate some of that arousal with a desirable person is *to feel the pull of passion*. Research has shown that one component of romantic or **passionate love** is physiological arousal; a second aspect is some cognitive interpretation and labeling of that feeling. So, if a person is in an aroused (*revved up*) state, and if the arousal is easily linked to the presence of an attractive person, then attributions of romantic love may be made (*to feel the pull of passion*). As Myers cheerfully notes, rather than *absence*, “*adrenaline makes the heart grow fonder*” (intensifies love).

*Page 712:* At each step, the presence of other *bystanders turns people away from the path that leads to helping*. Darley and Latané displayed their findings in a flow diagram (See Figure 16.15, p. 713). At each decision point (i.e., noticing the event, interpreting it as an emergency, and assuming responsibility), the presence of others who appear to have observed the event (*bystanders*) causes people to be less likely to give assistance to someone in need (*they are turned away from the path that leads to helping*).

*Page 712:* . . . *blasé* . . . This means to be indifferent or uncaring. We arrive at the decision to help or not to help (especially in ambiguous situations) by watching the reactions of others.

If they appear to be unconcerned (*blasé*), we may conclude that there is no emergency and thus may not intervene or help. This **bystander effect** means that the presence of others decreases the probability that any particular observer will provide help.

*Page 715:* Psychologists have noted that those in conflict have a curious tendency *to form diabolical images of* one another. We have a propensity to perceive (*to form images of*) our enemies in a very distorted manner, often categorizing them as evil, cruel, untrustworthy, and devilish (*diabolical*). They, of course, view us in the same way, and each party in the conflict tends to perceive evil or wickedness in the other (*each demonizes the other*). These biased pictures we form of each other are called **mirror-image perceptions**.

*Page 717:* Before long, each group became intensely proud of itself and hostile to the other group's "sneaky," "smart-alecky stinkers." In Sherif's experiment, competitive conditions were created in order to foster the formation of two antagonistic groups. Each group soon saw itself as superior to the other group's "dishonest and sly" (*sneaky*) "rotten know-it-alls" (*smart-alecky stinkers*). Sherif then used shared objectives and common problems (**superordinate goals**) to create reconciliation and cooperation.

*Page 719:* Conciliations allow both parties to begin edging *down the tension ladder to a safer rung* where communication and mutual understanding can begin. Social psychologist Charles Osgood has developed a tactic called **GRIT** (*Graduated and Reciprocated Initiatives in Tension-Reduction*) for increasing cooperation and trust between parties in conflict. When one side makes a small gesture or offer of goodwill (*a conciliatory act*), the other side has the opportunity to reciprocate. Thus the conflict moves toward some resolution (*down the tension ladder to a safer rung*) and the process of mutual respect and understanding begins.