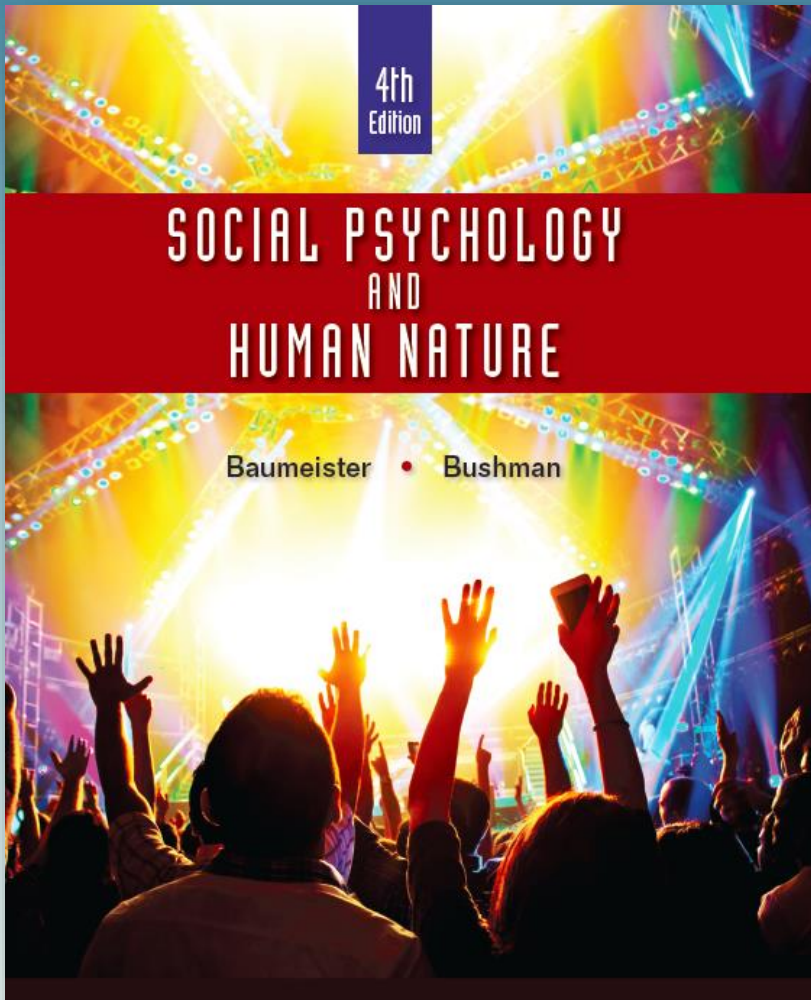


Social Psychology: Global Perspectives



5 Choices and Actions

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish four patterns that influence the choices people make
- Analyse how a belief in free will affects behavior
- Summarise how a hierarchy of goals affects planning and reaching goals
- Explain the TOTE (Test-Operate-Test-Exit) loop
- Identify the two main pathways to self-destructive behaviour

Introduction

- Kim Hyun Hee: blew up Korean Airlines Flight 858
 - Behaviour was guided by values and culture
 - Trusted and obeyed her leaders
 - Optimistic plans adjusted during the mission
 - Worked as a team
 - Focused on steps and details; not moral issues during the mission
 - Had nightmares; felt guilt only afterward

What You Do, and What It Means

- **Culture is a network of meaning**
 - Human beings who live in culture act based on meaning; what you do depends partly on what it means
- Thinking/considering enables people to make use of meaning
 - Make better choices for guiding behaviour

Making Choices

- **Two steps** to making choices
 - Whittle the range of choices to a few
 - Carefully compare highlighted options
- **Influences** on choice
 - Risk aversion
 - Temporal discounting
 - The certainty effect
 - Keeping your options open

Why People Don't Choose

- Decision avoidance
 - The general theme is anticipated regret
 - Postponing, status quo bias, and omission bias
- Reactance theory
 - People desire freedom of choice, and react negatively when freedom is reduced
- Choices or options taken away



Freedom to Change

- **Entity theory:** good and bad traits are fixed
 - People should not be expected to change
- **Incremental theory:** traits can change and be improved upon
 - People can change

Freedom of Action

- More or less free
 - Some choices are made freely
 - External factors may constrain other choices
- Free action comes from inside
 - Self-determination theory: people need some degree of autonomy and internal motivation
- Having an out versus no escape
 - Panic button effect: reduction in stress due to belief that one has an escape

Setting and Pursuing Goals

- **Goals:** ideas of some desired future state
 - Setting goals
 - Choosing among possible goals
 - Evaluating their feasibility and desirability
 - Pursuing goals
 - Planning and carrying out behaviours to reach goals

Mind-Sets and Goals

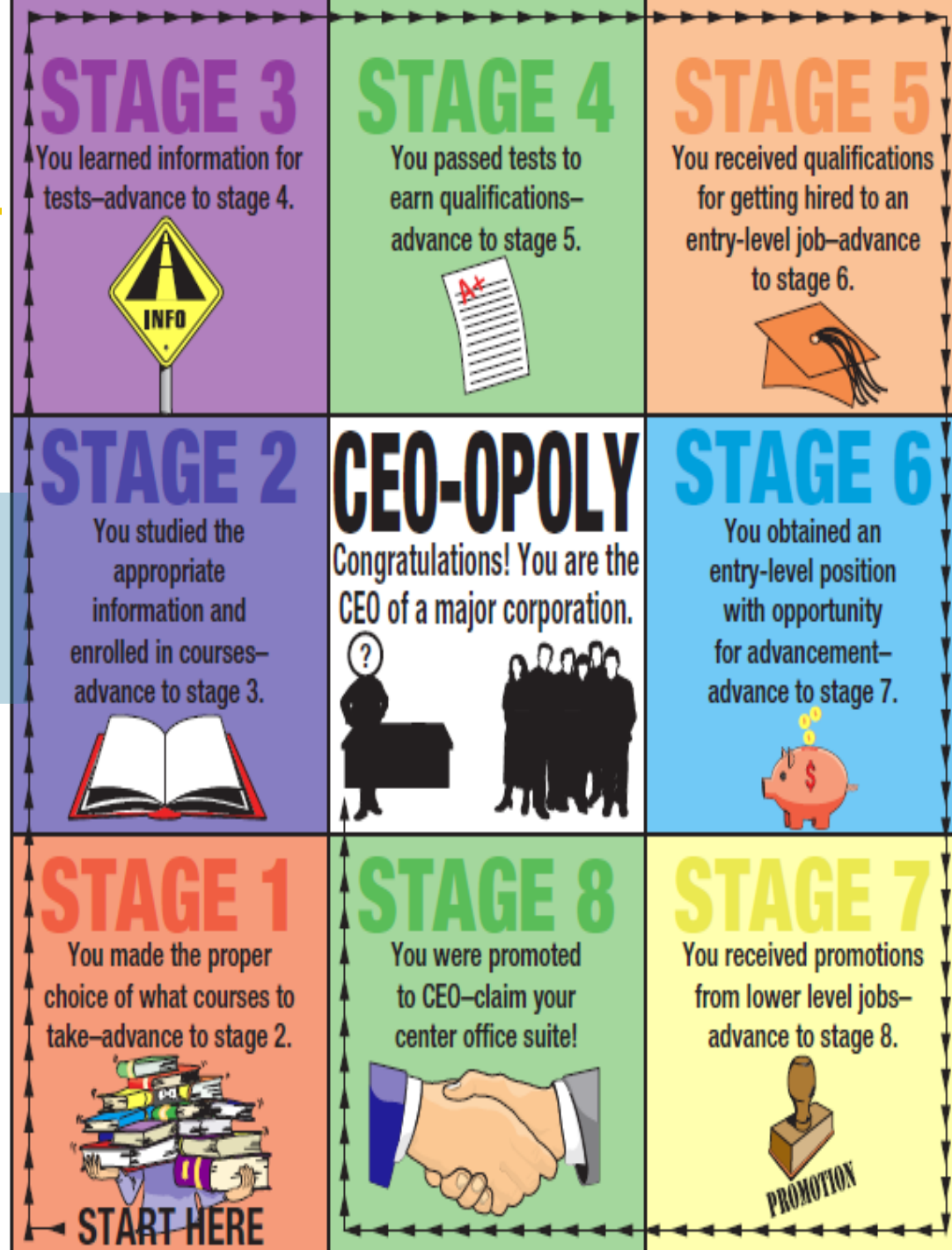
TABLE 4.1 Mind-Sets and Goals

	Mind-Set	
	Goal Setting	Goal Pursuit/Striving
Function	Deciding what to do	Deciding how to do it, and doing it
Attitude	Open-minded	Closed-minded
Mental focus	Feasibility and desirability	Means and obstacles
Core question	Why should I do it?	How do I do it?
Style of thought	Realistic thinking	Optimistic thinking

Setting and Pursuing Goals (cont'd.)

- **Hierarchy of goals**
 - Most people have interlinked sets of goals
- **Duplex mind** is relevant to goal hierarchies
 - Deliberate and automatic systems help us pursue goals
- **Multiple goals and goal shielding**
 - Different goals compete inside your mind
 - Goal shielding: shutting off thoughts of other goals while pursuing a single goal
 - Zeigarnik effect: people remember unfinished or interrupted tasks better than completed tasks (guilty conscience, anxiety)

A Hierarchy of Goals



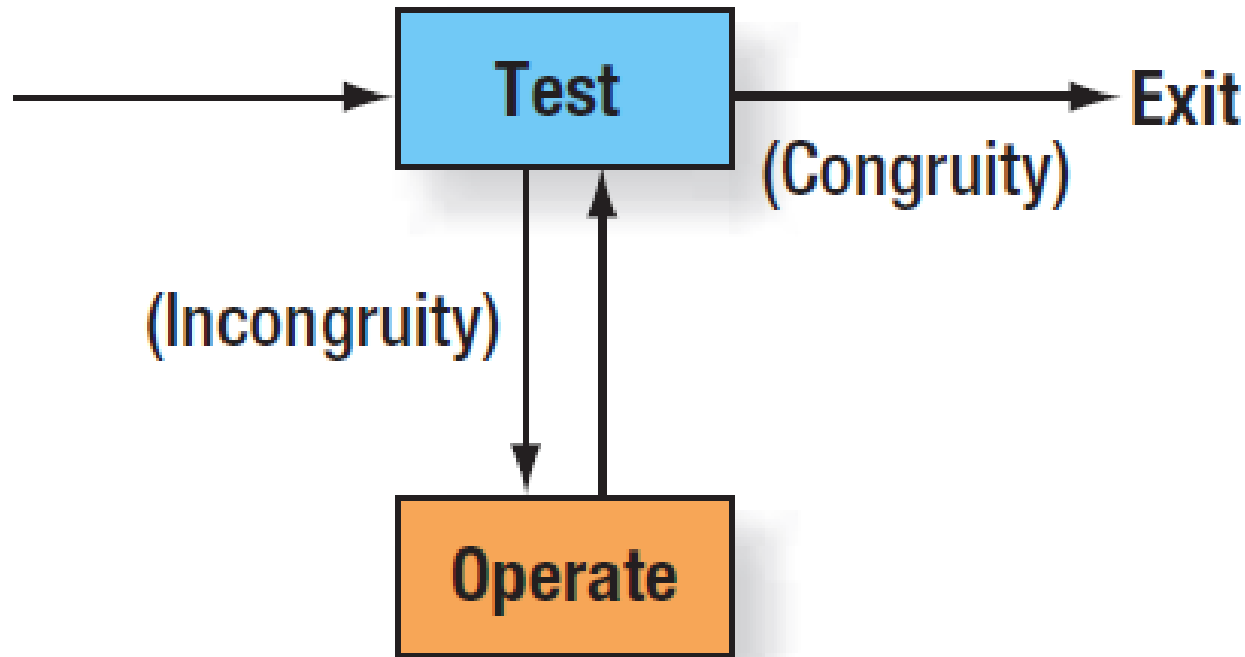
Setting and Pursuing Goals (cont'd.)

- **Reaching goals:** what's the plan?
 - Focus attention on reaching goal
 - Motivates people to start working towards goals
- **Common mistakes** in planning
 - Planning fallacy: tendency for plans to be overly optimistic
 - Planner fails to allow for unexpected problems
 - Monthly plans be more likely to lead to success than daily plans

Self-Regulation and Habits

- **Control and willpower**
 - Self-regulation: self's capacity to alter its own responses
- **Standards:** ideas that guide self-regulation
 - Effective self-regulation components
 - Monitoring: watching what you're doing
 - Willpower needed for change

TOTE



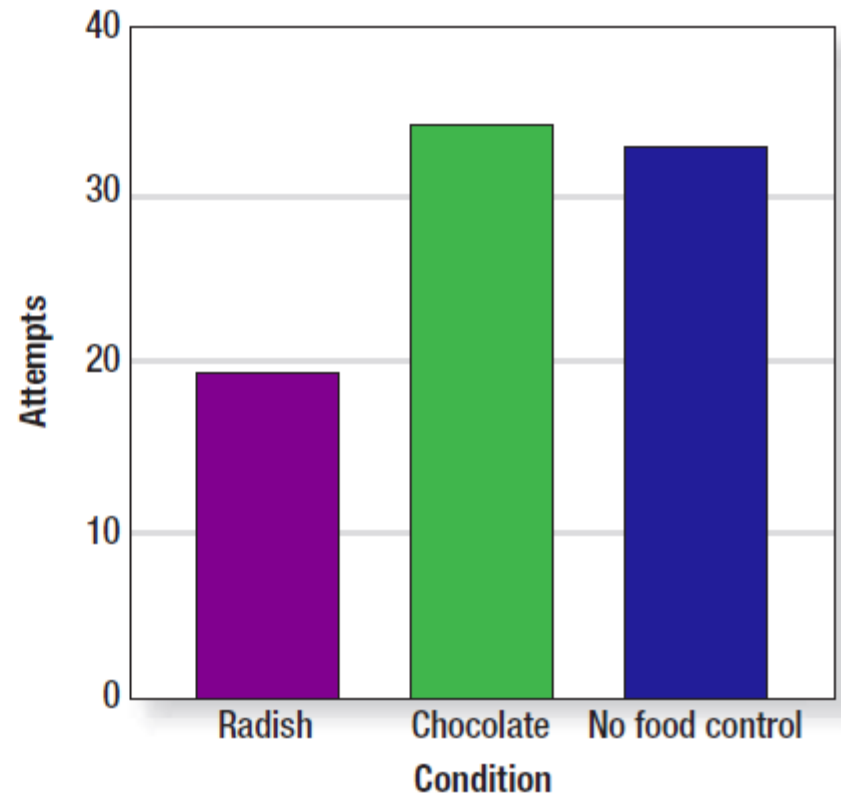
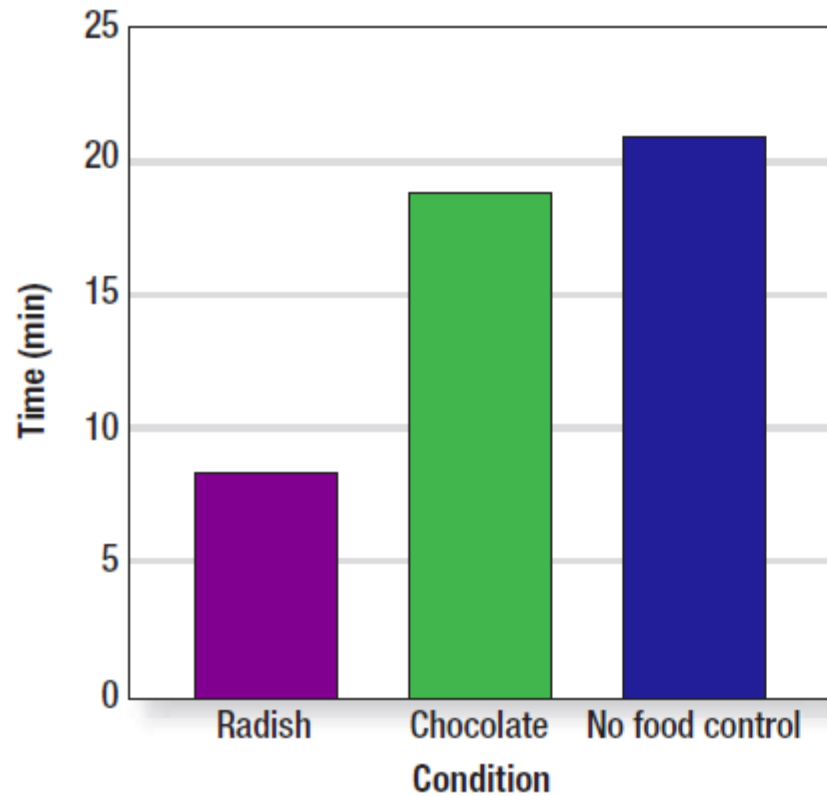
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TOTE (Test, Operate, Test, Exit) model. The first test is a comparison of self against the standard. In the “operate phase, you try to match behaviour to the standard. Test again to see if the match is close enough to reduce anxiety. If it is not close enough, keep trying. If it is close enough, stop changing behaviour. Exit. (Carver & Scheier, 1981, 1982).

Self-Regulation and Habit (cont'd.)

- **Willpower can be depleted**
 - Resisting temptation uses up willpower
 - Depleted willpower can impair decision making
- **Decision fatigue**
 - State of depleted willpower caused by making decisions, which can affect subsequent decisions by failing to think carefully

Self-Control



People who exercised self-control by eating radishes instead of chocolate gave up more easily on difficult tasks (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998).

Food for Thought

- **Self-regulation theory:** how to succeed at dieting
 - Commitment to standards
 - Set high- and low-level goals
 - Monitoring
 - Keep track of what you eat
 - Willpower/Capacity to change
 - Decrease other demands to increase strength for dieting

Habits

- **Habit**
 - Acquired behaviour that, if followed regularly, will become almost automatic
 - Occurs with relatively little control by the deliberate system
 - Goals promote learning of habits
 - Habits can sustain the pursuit of goals
 - Goals can also conflict with habits
 - Self-control is often needed to break habits

Irrationality and Self-Destruction

- **Self-defeat**
 - Being your own worst enemy – undermining ourselves
 - Questioning own decisions and choices
 - Negative thinking
- **Self-defeating behaviour**
 - Any action by which people bring failure, suffering, or misfortune on themselves
 - Includes self-handicapping

- Now versus tomorrow: delay of gratification
 - Inability to delay gratification is one type of self-defeating behaviour
 - Overemphasizing present rather than future
 - Sight of rewards undermines self-control
 - Ability to delay gratification as a child turned into more success as an adult

Suicide

- Fits the now-versus-future pattern
 - Willing to trade away future to end present suffering
- Starts with some discrepancy between expectations and reality
 - Often set in motion by a significant change for the worse
 - Discrepancy between hopes and reality: expectations of chances of improvement
- No single theory can account for all suicides

Summary

- Human behaviour depends on meaning and is guided by many factors
- Humans break complex tasks, such as making a choice or pursuing a goal, into smaller steps
- Self-regulation and self-destructive tendencies often guide human behaviours