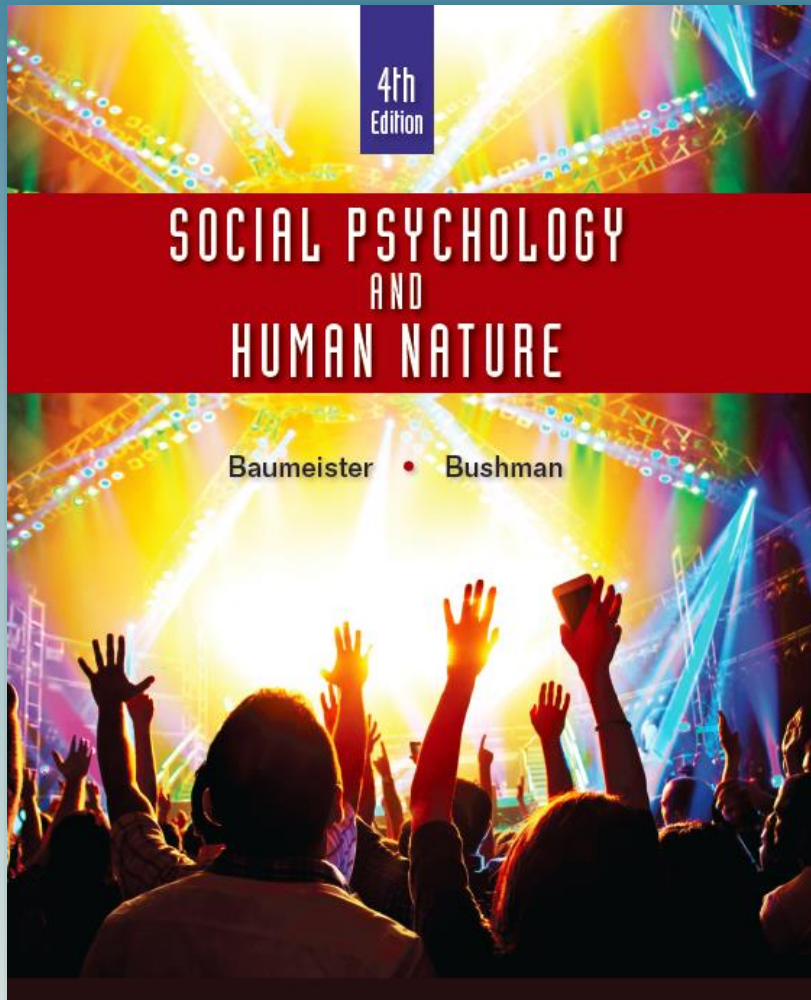




Social Psychology: Global Perspectives

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3

Social Cognition

Learning Objectives

- Summarise the unique perspective of social cognition
- Describe the five elements that distinguish automatic from deliberate processes
- Explain how attributes affect our thinking and our behaviour
- Describe how the four main heuristics affect the way we think
- Identify the biases and fallacies that cause errors in thinking
- Explain why the shortcuts and styles of thinking are called biases and errors

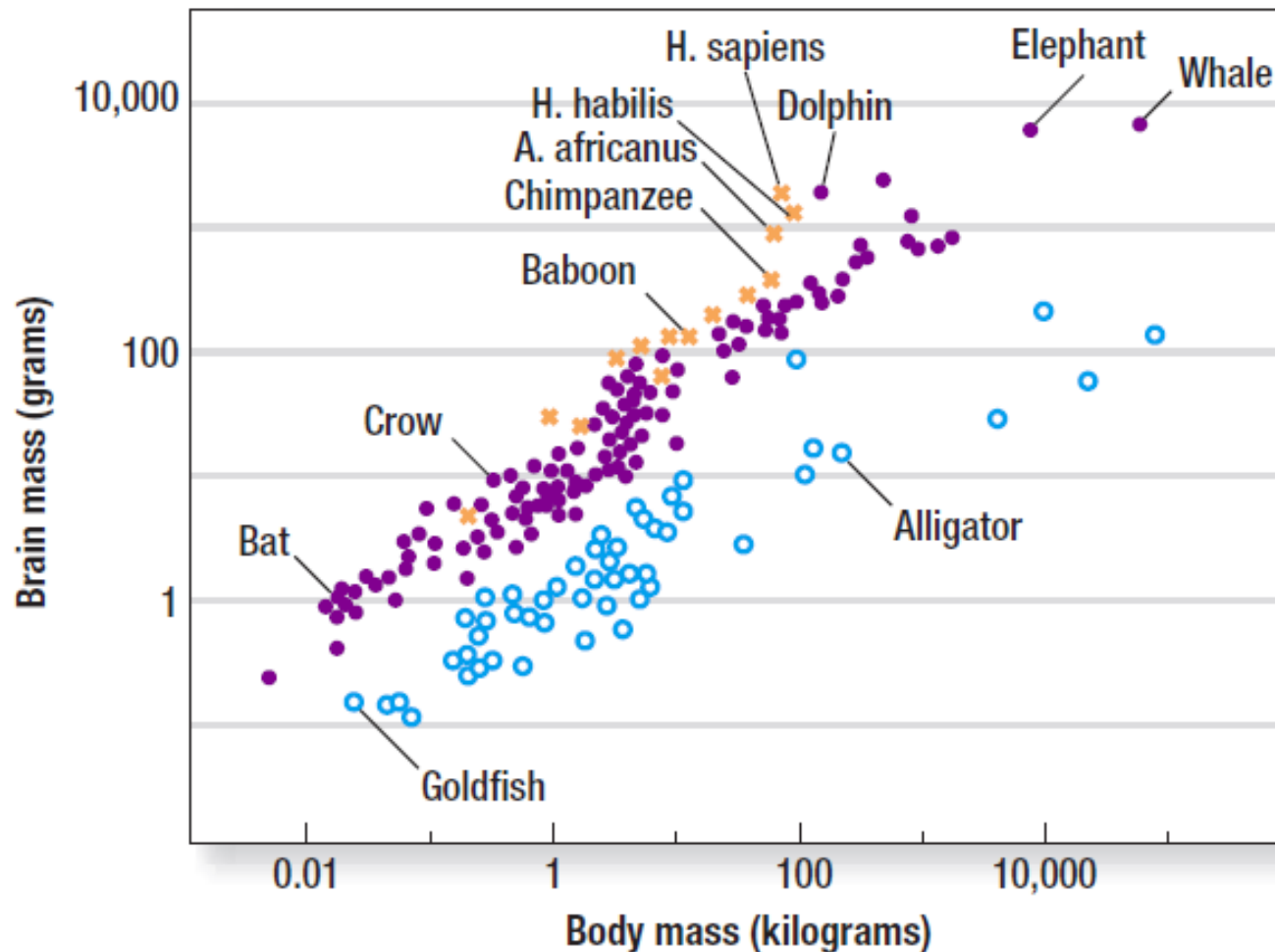
Introduction

- Vaccine-autism connection
 - “Most damaging medical hoax of the last 100 years”
 - Misinformation is “sticky”
- Rejecting information requires cognitive effort
 - Accepting messages is easier

What is Social Cognition?

- Social psychology: study of how people think and feel
 - Began in the 1970s
 - Attitudes and motivations were the first to be studied
- Social cognition: thinking by people about people and social relationships
 - What is unique about thinking about people as opposed to thinking about something else, like frogs or computers?

Brain Mass versus Body Mass



From "Cosmic Evolution - Epoch 7 - Cultural Evolution," Fig. 7.13 located at http://www.tufts.edu/as/wright_center/cosmic_evolution. Copyright © 2005 by Eric J. Chaisson, Wright Center for Science Education. Reprinted by permission.

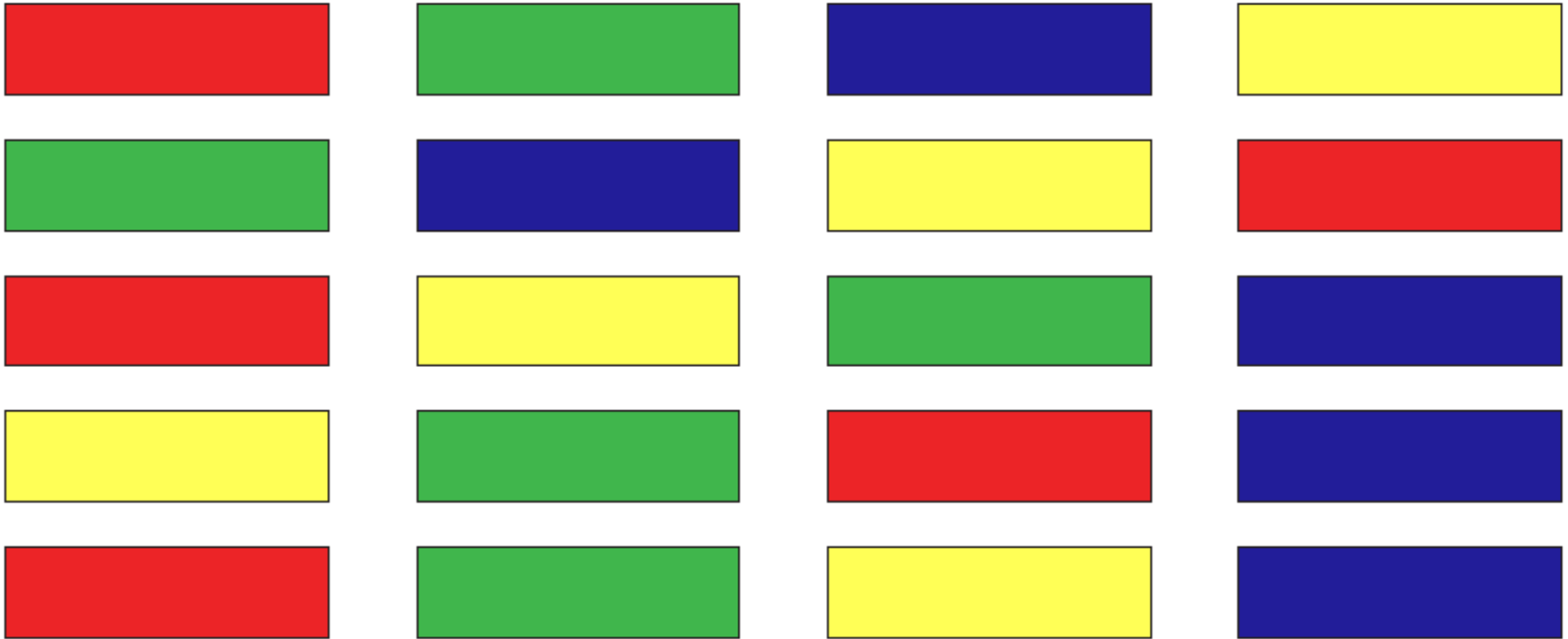
What is Social Cognition? (cont'd.)

- Why people think, and why they don't
 - Human brain: size of a grapefruit
 - Research shows people are lazy about thinking
 - Cognitive miser: reluctance to do extra thinking
 - People do think at great length about things that are interesting to them
 - Deliberate thinking requires more effort than automatic thinking

Automatic and Deliberate Thinking

- Stroop effect: people have difficulty overriding the automatic tendency to read the word rather than name the ink color
 - Illustrates automatic versus deliberate thought
- How do we know if a thought is automatic?
 - Requires no awareness, not guided by intention, not subject to deliberate control, requires no effort, and is highly efficient

Stroop Test 1



<http://www2.b3ta.com/clickthecolour/>)

Stroop Test 2

BLUE	GREEN	BLACK	RED
RED	BLACK	GREEN	BLUE
RED	BLUE	BLACK	GREEN
BLUE	RED	GREEN	BLACK
BLACK	BLUE	GREEN	RED

Name the colour of each word as quickly as you can, ignoring what the word says.

Stroop Test 3

RED	BLUE	GREEN	BLACK
BLACK	BLUE	RED	GREEN
BLUE	BLACK	GREEN	RED
GREEN	BLUE	BLACK	RED
BLUE	BLACK	RED	GREEN

As in Test 2, name the colour of each word as quickly as you can, ignoring what the word says.

Automatic and Deliberate Thinking (cont'd.)

- Knowledge structures
 - Schemas: represent information about a concept, its attributes, and relationships
 - Scripts: define situations and guide behavior
- Priming: activating an idea in someone's mind so related ideas are more accessible
 - Wakening associations
- Framing: whether messages stress potential gains or losses

Thought Suppression and Ironic Processes

- Process of thought suppression
 - Lookout for reminders of unwanted thought
 - Redirect attention away from unpleasant thought
- Distraction and rumination (or contemplation) are more effective than suppression
 - Mental control is a form of self-regulation

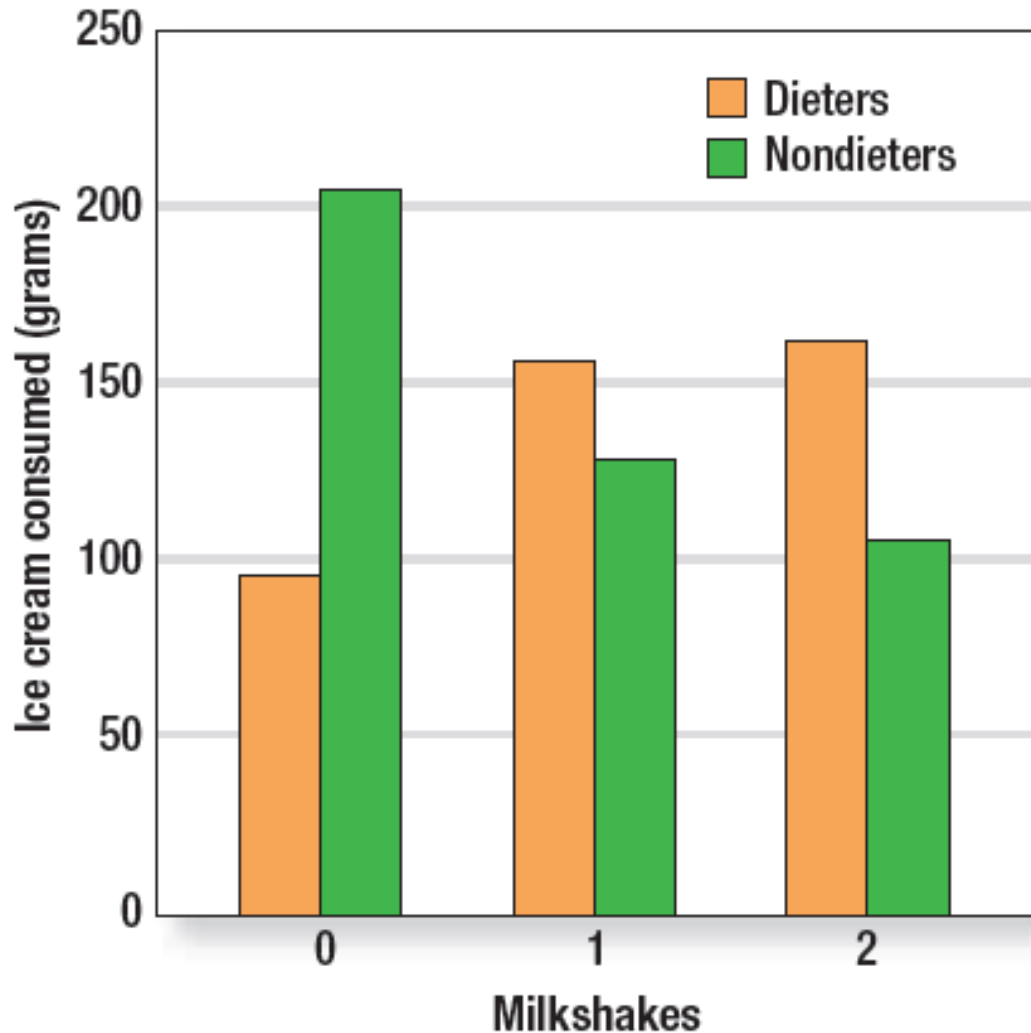
Trade Offs

- Conscious and unconscious thought
 - Both processes have important and valuable functions
 - Unconscious thought: helps sort through information and come to good decisions
 - Conscious thought: vital to logical reasoning

Food for Thought

- Dieting requires self-regulation
 - Dieters and nondieters will eat different amounts of food based on eating patterns
 - Milkshakes and ice cream test (see next slide)
 - Counterregulation: “what the heck” effect
 - Driven by cognition, not bodily needs
 - Type of food, not calorie content, affects whether dieters suffer from counterregulation

Dieters versus Nondieters

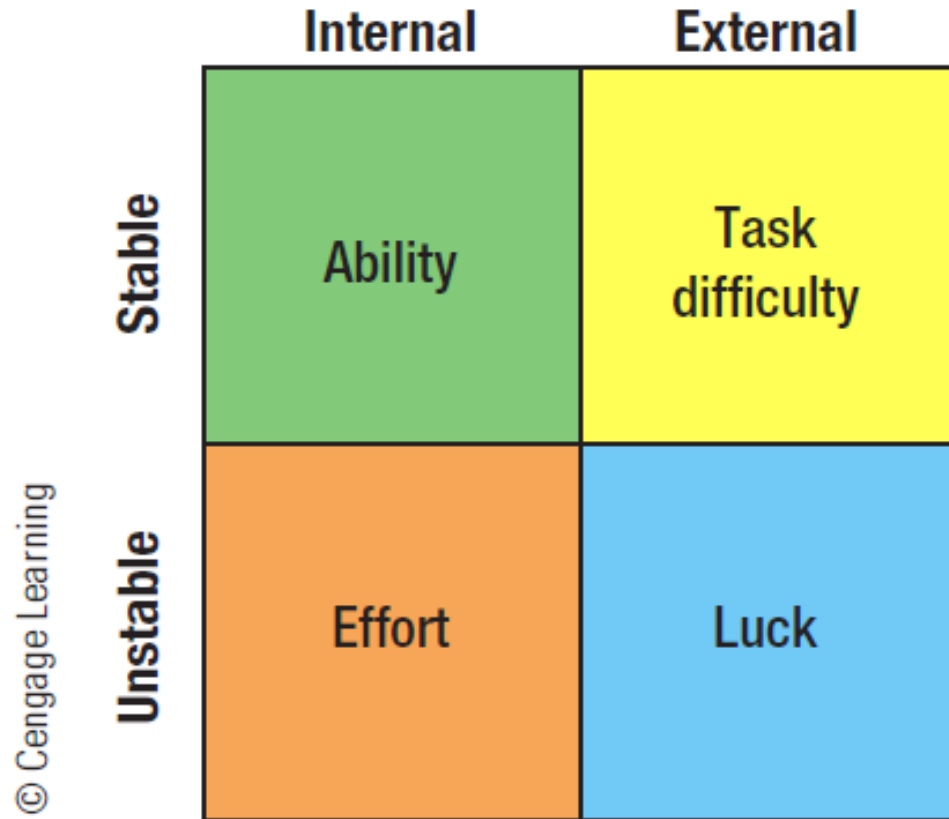


Nondieters who had had a milkshake ate less ice cream; dieters who had a milkshake ate *more* ice cream (Herman & Mack, 1975).

Attributions and Explanations: Why Did That Happen?

- Attributions: inferences people make about events in their lives
 - Help determine behaviour
- “It’s not my fault”
 - Two-dimensional attribution theory
 - Possible attributions types: internal–external and stable–unstable

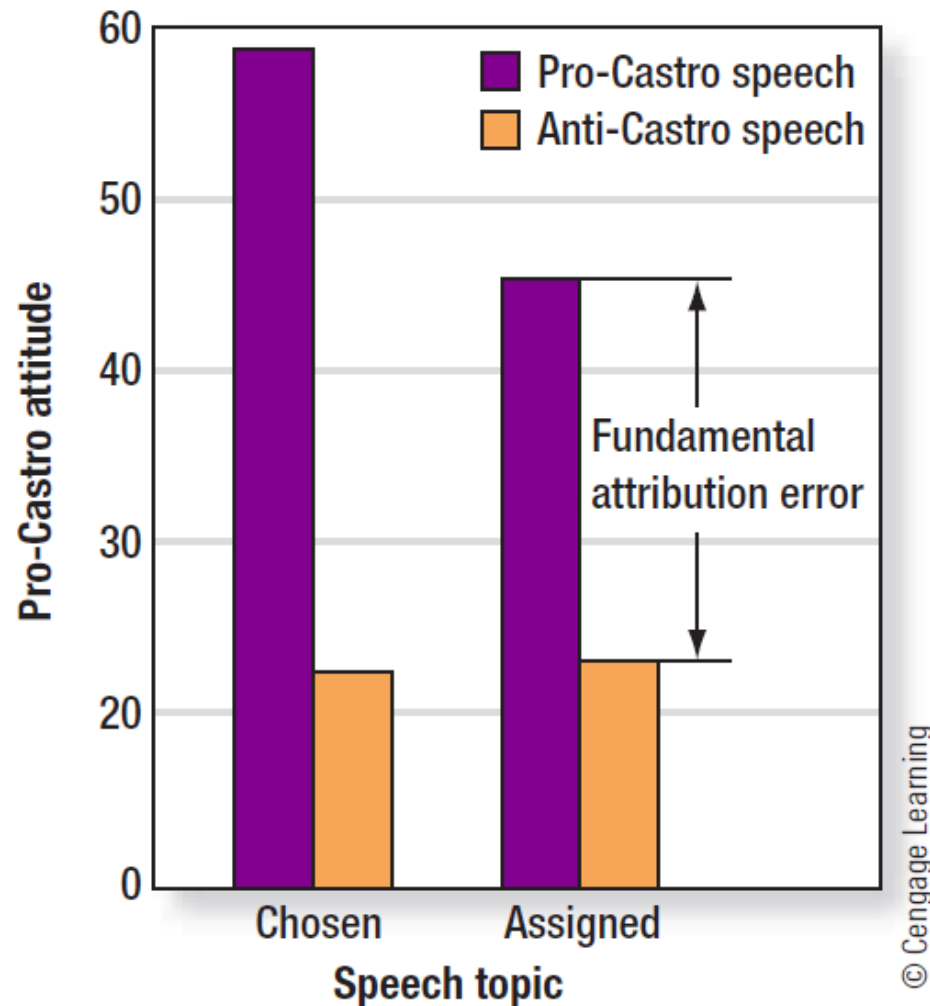
Two-Dimensional Attribution Theory



Attributions and Explanations: Why Did That Happen? (cont'd.)

- “You know I’m right”
 - Actor/bias: tendency for actors to make external attributions and observers to make internal attributions
- Fundamental attribution error (correspondence bias)
 - Tendency for observers to attribute other people’s behaviour to internal or dispositional causes and to downplay situational causes

Fundamental Attribution Error



Jones and Harris (1967)

Attributions and Explanations: Why Did That Happen? (cont'd.)

- Challenging attribution theory
 - Malle: observers did not consistently make more dispositional attributions than actors
- Explaining actions: a different approach
 - Malle examined people's explanations; concluded people distinguish between intentional and unintentional action
 - Intentional behaviour: explained by reasons
 - Unintentional behaviour: explained by causes

Heuristics: Mental Shortcuts

TABLE 5.1

The Most Common Mental Shortcuts (or Heuristics) That People Use

Heuristic	Definition	Example
Representativeness	The tendency to judge the frequency or likelihood of an event by the extent to which it “resembles” the typical case	In a series of 10 coin tosses, most people judge the series HHTTHTHTTH to be more likely than the series HHHHHHHHHH (where H is heads and T is tails), even though both are equally likely.
Availability	The tendency to judge the frequency or likelihood of an event by the ease with which relevant instances come to mind	People overestimate the frequency of dramatic deaths (e.g., dying in an airplane crash) and underestimate the frequency of less dramatic deaths (e.g., dying from lung cancer).
Simulation	The tendency to judge the frequency or likelihood of an event by the ease with which you can imagine (or mentally simulate) an event	In the Olympics, bronze medalists appear to be happier than silver medalists because it is easier for a silver medalist to imagine being a gold medalist.
Anchoring and adjustment	The tendency to judge the frequency or likelihood of an event by using a starting point (called an anchor) and then making adjustments up and down from this starting point	If one party in a negotiation starts by suggesting a price or condition, then the other party is likely to base its counteroffer on this anchor.

The Availability Heuristic

		Dream recalled	
		Yes	No
“Key” event happened	Yes	Available	Unavailable
	No	Unavailable	Unavailable

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ESP beliefs. People remember salient events, but forget nonsalient events.

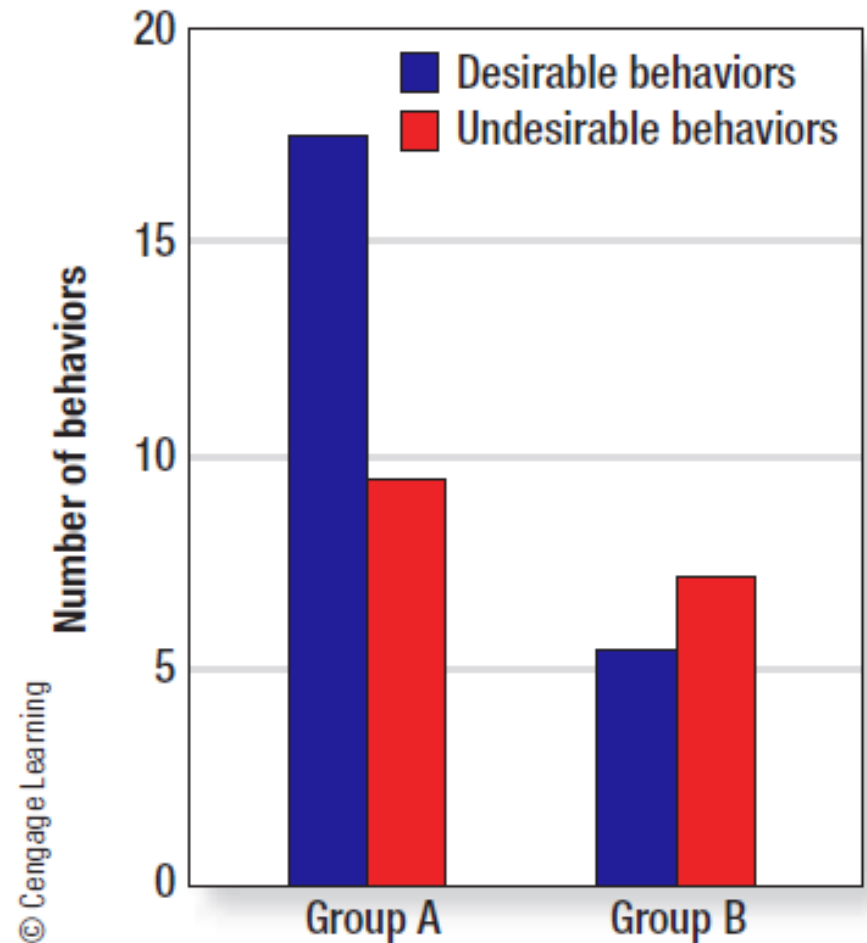
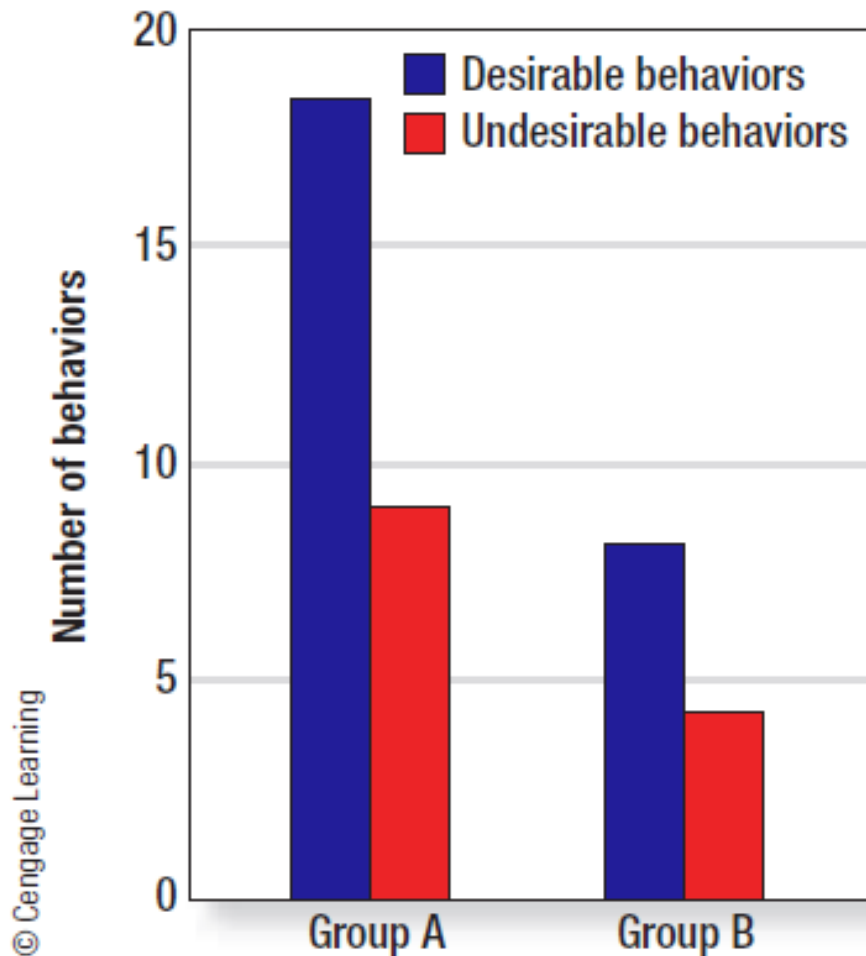
Flawed or Clever Thinking?

- Standard view
 - People think in order to find the truth
 - Thinking suffers from mistakes and shortcomings (e.g., laziness and motivated biases)
- Alternate view
 - People think to argue with others and convince them of their side, rather than figure out the truth alone
 - Shortcuts and heuristics actually work well

(So-Called) Errors and Biases

- Two types of information
 - Statistical information and case history
- Confirmation bias: tendency to search for information that confirms one's beliefs
 - Ignore information that disconfirms it
- Illusory correlation: tendency to overestimate link between variables that are related only slightly or not at all

Actual and Illusory Correlation Studies



Hamilton and Gifford (1976)

(So-Called) Errors and Biases (cont'd.)

- Base rate fallacy: ignore or underuse base rate information
 - Be influenced by distinctive features of the case being judges
- Gambler's fallacy and the hot hand
 - Hot hand: luck will continue
 - Gambler's fallacy: chance event is affected by previous events and will “even out”

(So-Called) Errors and Biases (cont'd.)

- False consensus effect
 - Overestimate the number of people who share one's opinions, attitudes, values, and beliefs
- False uniqueness effect
 - Underestimate the number of people who share one's prized characteristics or abilities

(So-Called) Errors and Biases (cont'd.)

- Perseverance of theories
 - Theory perseverance: once a conclusion is drawn, it is only changed by overwhelming evidence
- Statistical regression
 - Tendency for extreme scores or behavior to be followed by others closer to average

(So-Called) Errors and Biases (cont'd.)

- Illusion of control
 - A false belief that one can influence events
- Counterfactual thinking
 - Imagining alternatives to past or present events or circumstances
 - First instinct fallacy
 - Upward and downward counterfactuals

Common Cognitive Errors

Error or Bias	Definition	Example
Confirmation bias	The tendency to notice information that confirms one's beliefs and to ignore information that disconfirms one's beliefs	Looking for evidence that your horoscope is true if you believe in astrology, and ignoring evidence that is inconsistent with your horoscope
Illusory correlation	The tendency to overestimate the link between variables that are related only slightly or not at all	Believing that mentally ill individuals are violent and dangerous
Base rate fallacy	The tendency to ignore or underuse base rate information and instead to be influenced by the distinctive features of the case being judged	Thinking that it is equally likely to have 60% of births be male in a small or a large hospital
Gambler's fallacy	The tendency to believe that a particular chance event is affected by previous events, and that chance events will "even out" in the short run	Believing that one is more likely to get a <i>heads</i> on a coin toss after the sequence TTTTTTTTTT than after the sequence THHTTHTHT
Hot hand	The tendency for gamblers who get lucky to think they have a "hot" hand and their luck will continue	Believing that one is more likely to get a <i>tails</i> on a coin toss after the sequence TTTTTTTTTT than after the sequence THHTTHTHT
False consensus effect	The tendency for people to overestimate the number of other people who share their opinions, attitudes, values, and beliefs	Believing that most people have the same religious beliefs as you do

Common Cognitive Errors (cont'd.)

Error or Bias	Definition	Example
False uniqueness effect	The tendency for people to underestimate the number of other people who share their most prized characteristics and abilities	If a person exercises regularly, underestimating the number of other people who also exercise regularly
Theory perseverance	The tendency to stick with a conclusion unless there is overwhelming evidence to change it	Continuing to dislike someone because you heard she was mean to your friend, even though you later find out she was not mean to your friend
Statistical regression	The statistical tendency for extreme scores or extreme behavior to return toward the average	The " <i>Sports Illustrated</i> jinx," in which athletic performance usually declines after appearing on the cover of <i>Sports Illustrated</i>
Illusion of control	The belief that one can control totally chance situations	For gamblers, throwing dice softly for low numbers and hard for high numbers
Counterfactual thinking	Imagining alternatives to past or present factual events or circumstances	After getting in a car wreck, thinking "what if" I had gone home using a different route

Are Most People Really Just Stupid?

- People make many cognitive errors
 - Not random; quite predictable
- More important decisions
 - Deliberate system is used and less errors occur
- Reducing cognitive errors
 - Debiasing: deliberate processing
 - Meta-cognition: reflection

Summary

- Social cognition examines how people think about other people and about relationships
 - Much thinking is done by the automatic mind, as opposed to deliberately thinking through things
 - What were traditionally thought of as errors in thinking may have advantages for human life

Social Influence and Persuasion

- Persuasion attempts can be described by “who says what to whom,” , but which factors of each element are most likely to elicit successful persuasion?
- Two routes to persuasion, applying the concept of the duplex mind
- Normative and informational influence
- Categorised in terms of the four basic principles

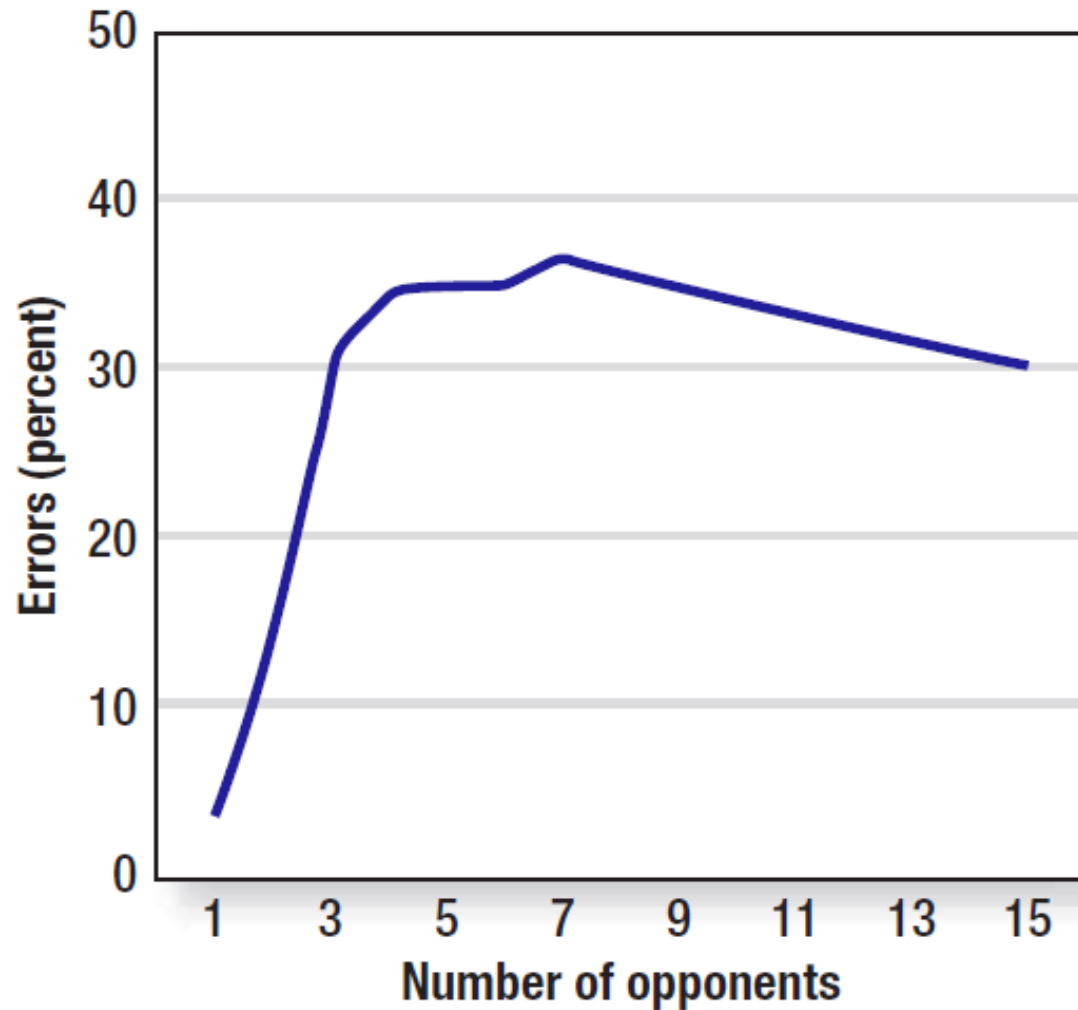
Introduction

- Consider the case of James Warren Jones and his followers at Jonestown
 - How could he have influenced his followers to such a deep level that more than 900 committed revolutionary suicide?
 - People are exceptionally responsive to each other
 - People rely on each other for information about the world and for guidance

Two Types of Social Influence

- Normative influence: being liked and accepted
 - Going along with the crowd
 - Solomon Asch: group acceptance is more important than being correct
 - http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/normative_social_influence.htm
- Informational influence: being correct
 - Muzafer Sherif: informational influence
 - Going along with the crowd because you think they know more than you

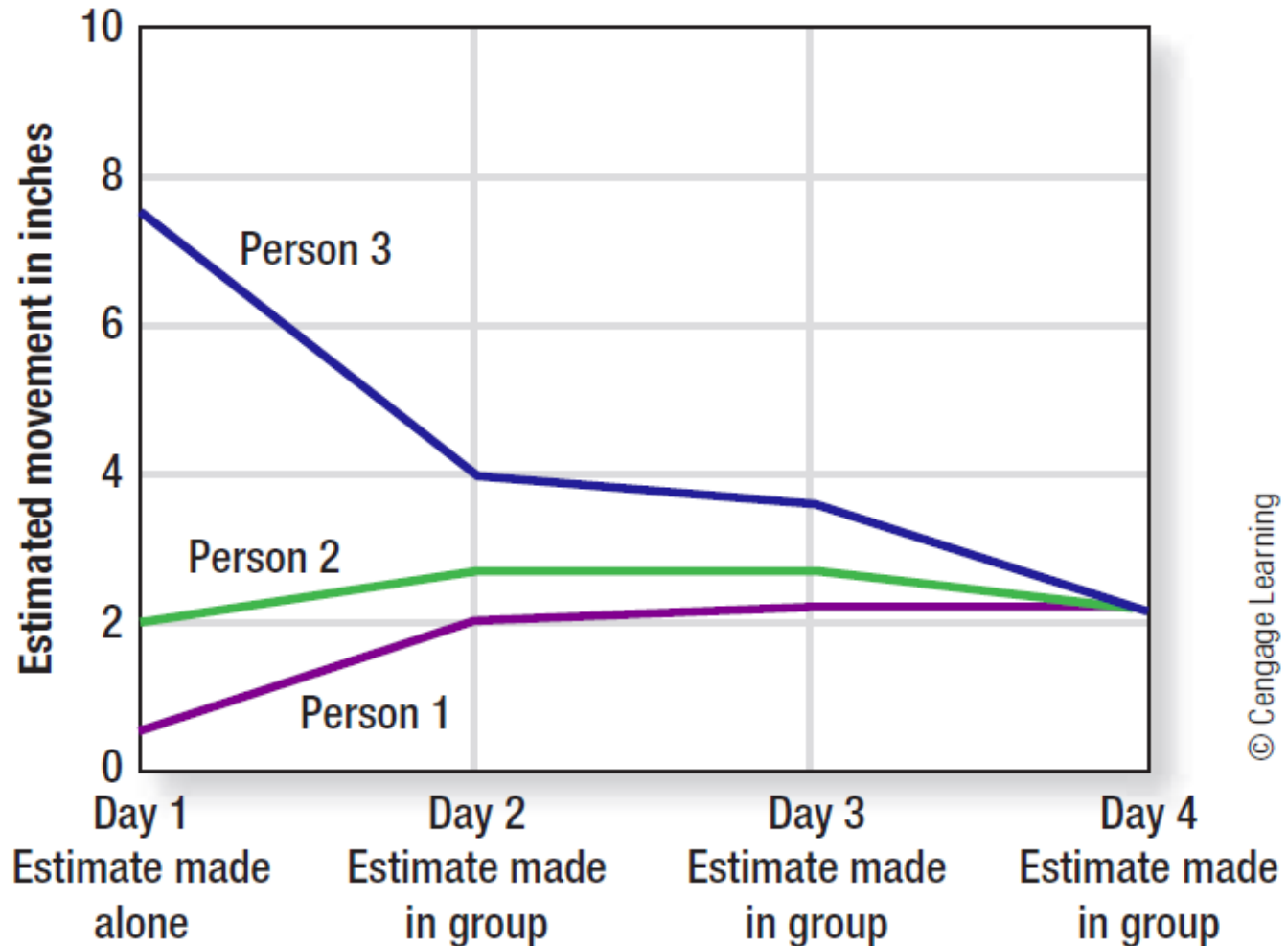
The Effect of Group Size on Conformity



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Effect of group size on conformity in the Asch experiment: As the number of confederates increased from one to four, conformity increased dramatically; as more confederates were added, conformity leveled off (Asch, 1955).

The Autokinetic Effect



Autokinetic effect to study the development of group norms (Sherif, 1935)

Two Types of Social Influence (cont'd.)

- Informational influence produces private acceptance
 - Genuine inner belief that others are right
- Normative influence produces public compliance
 - Inner belief that the group is wrong

Techniques of Social Influence

- Principles of influence
 - Commitment and consistency
 - Reciprocation
 - Scarcity
 - Capturing and disrupting attention
 - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/persuaders/view/>

Techniques Based on Commitment and Consistency

- Foot-in-the-door technique
 - Start with small request to gain eventual compliance with larger request
- Low-ball technique
 - Start with low-cost request and later reveal the hidden costs

The Low-Ball Technique



"Would you like to super-size that?"

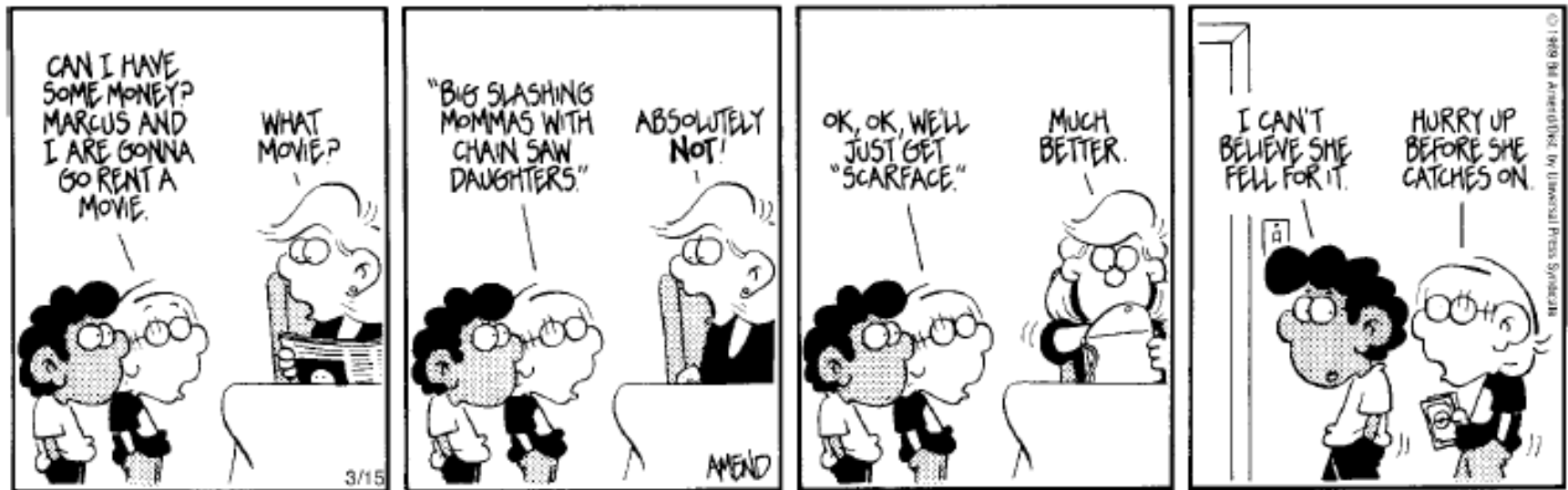
Techniques Based on Commitment and Consistency (cont'd.)

- Bait-and-switch technique
 - Draw people in with an attractive offer that is not available, and then switch to a less attractive offer that is available
- Labeling technique
 - Assign a label to an individual and then make a request consistent with that label

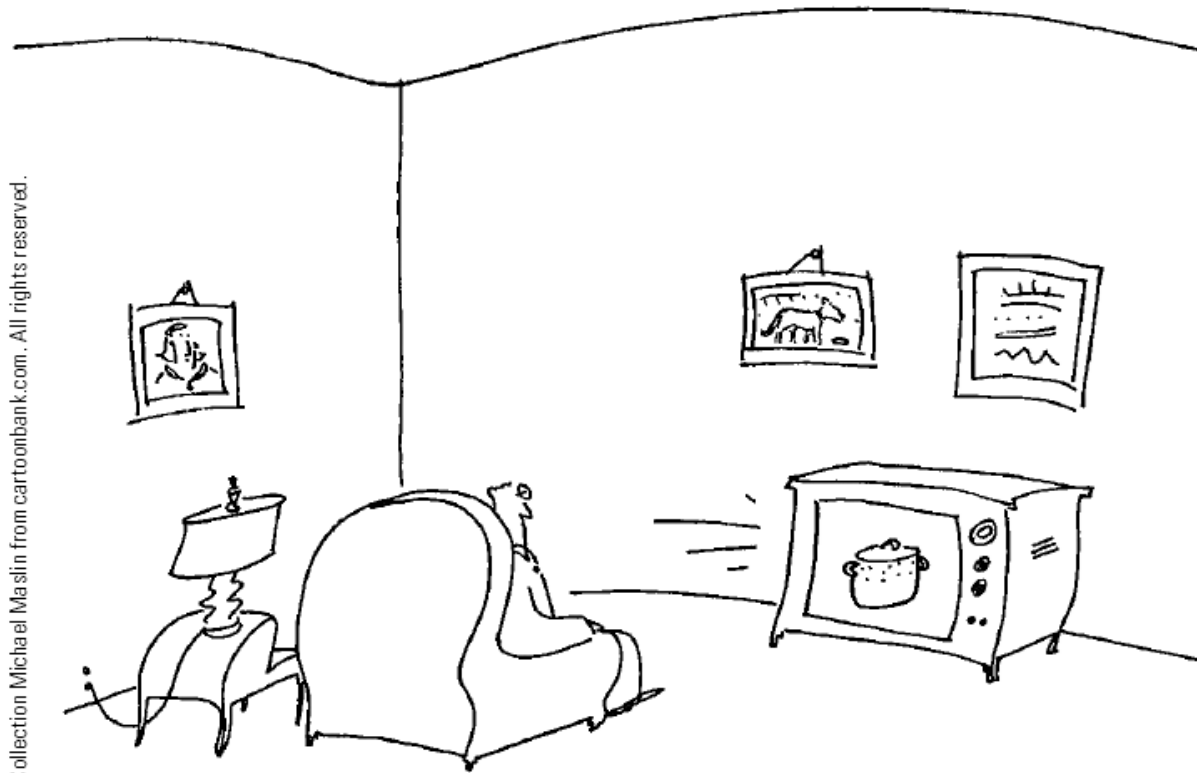
Techniques Based on Reciprocation

- Door-in-the-face technique
 - Start with an inflated request, then retreat to a smaller one that appears to be a concession
- That's-not-all technique
 - Begin with inflated request, but immediately add to it by offering a bonus or discount

The Door-in-the Face Technique



The That's-Not-All Technique



MASLIN

*"How much would you pay for all the secrets of the universe? Wait, don't answer yet.
You also get this six-quart covered combination spaghetti pot and clam steamer.
Now how much would you pay?"*

Techniques Based on Scarcity

- Scarcity principle: rare opportunities are more valuable than plentiful opportunities
 - Limited-number technique: only a limited number available
 - Fast-approaching-deadline technique: only available for a limited time

Techniques Based on Capturing and Disrupting Attention

- Pique technique
 - Capture people's attention by making a novel request
- Disrupt-then-reframe technique
 - Introduce an unexpected element that disrupts critical thinking and then reframe the message in a positive light

Persuasion

- An attempt to change a person's attitude
- Components of persuasion
 - Who: message source
 - Says what: message
 - To whom: audience

Who: The Source

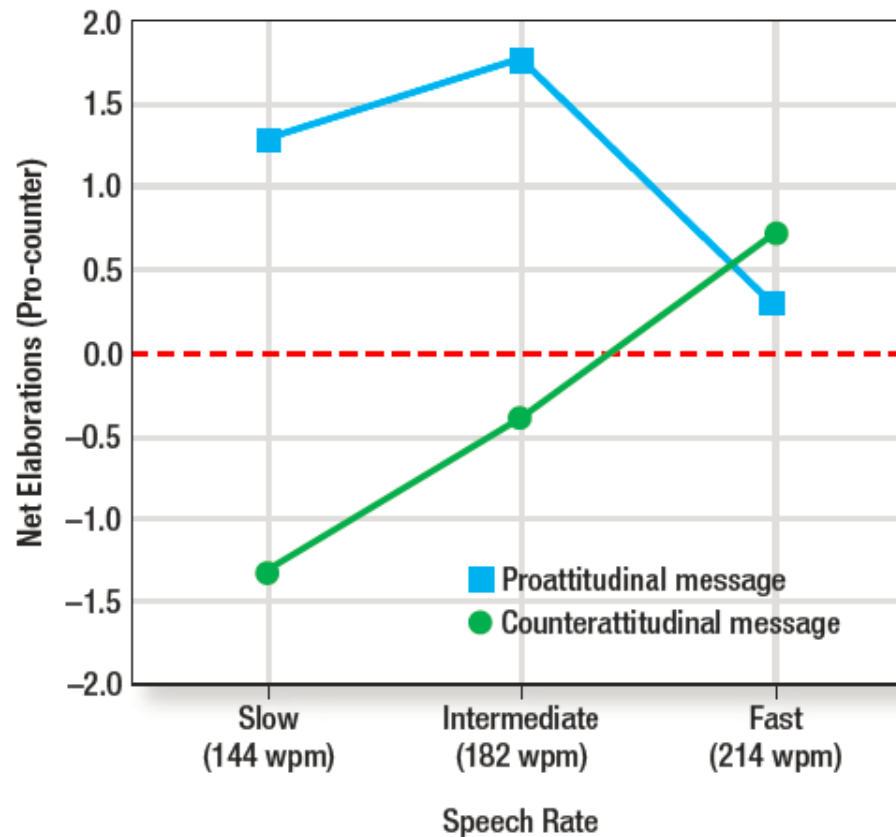
- Source credibility
 - Source: individual who delivers the message
 - Credible or not: expertise and trustworthiness
- Source likability
 - Influenced by similarity and physical attractiveness
 - Halo effect: assumption that people with one desirable trait (e.g., attractiveness) possess many other desirable traits (e.g., intelligence)

Food for Thought

- Convert communicator characteristics
 - Likability: similar to their audience
 - Credibility: succeeded in overcoming obstacles
- Convert communicators argue against their past transgressions
 - Jared Fogle lost 235 lbs by eating low-fat, low-calorie Subway sandwiches, and then became a spokesperson for Subway

Trade Offs

- People talk fast when trying to persuade



The Message

- Reason versus emotion
 - Cold hard facts or emotional responses (e.g., good mood, humour, and fear)
- One-sided versus two-sided messages
 - One-sided messages: more effective when audience members are less educated or have already made up their minds
- Repetition: repeat exposure influences memory
 - Advertisement wear-out

To Whom: The Audience

- Intelligence
 - Receptivity: understanding
 - Yielding: acceptance
- Need for cognition
 - Tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful thinking, analysis, and mental problem solving
- Concern about public image
 - Self-monitoring and self-consciousness

To Whom: The Audience (cont'd.)

- Cultural differences
 - Individualist versus collectivists
- Overheard messages
 - People are more persuaded by messages that do not seem to be designed to influence them
- Distraction
 - Gets the conscious mind out of the way

Persuasion Research

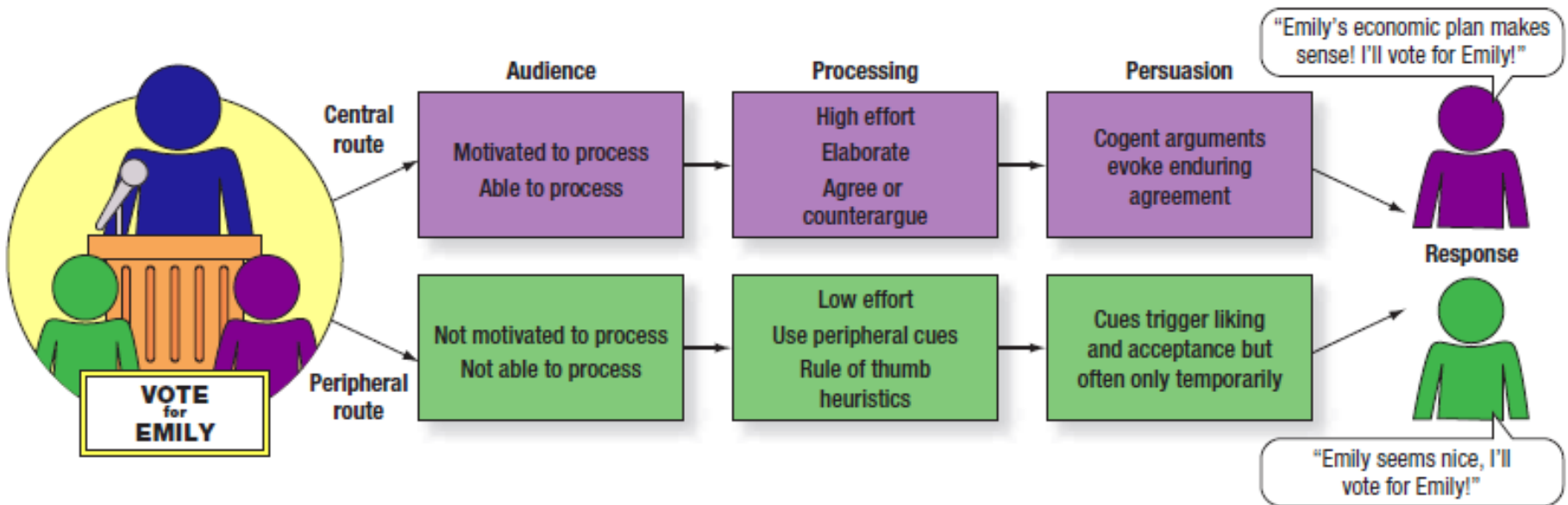
TABLE 8.1 Major Findings of the Line of Persuasion Research Conducted by Hovland and His Colleagues

What Types of Sources Are Most Persuasive?	What Types of Messages Are Most Persuasive?	Who Is Receptive to Persuasive Messages?
Highly credible sources	Logical messages—mainly with educated, analytical people	People who are in a good mood
Likable sources	Moderately fear-inducing messages	People of average intelligence and self-esteem
Convert communicators	Two-sided messages	People concerned about their public image (high self-monitoring, high public self-consciousness)
Sources who argue against their own self-interest	Moderately discrepant messages	Very young or very old people
	Messages that are repeated (but may backfire)	

Two Routes to Persuasion

- Elaboration likelihood model and heuristic/systematic model
 - Both propose automatic and conscious processing are involved in persuasion
 - Central route involves the deliberate mind: careful and thoughtful consideration
 - Peripheral route involves the automatic mind: influenced by some simple cue

ELM



Two Routes to Persuasion (cont'd.)

- Peripheral cues
 - Experts know best
 - The more arguments, the better
 - Expensive products are good
 - Rare products are good
 - What is beautiful is good

Resisting Social Influence Techniques

- Attitude inoculation
 - Exposure increases strength
- Forewarned is forearmed
 - Allows for defence preparation
- Stockpile resources
 - Physical, cognitive, and social

Summary

- People's ideas and beliefs are influenced by others around them
- Many techniques are used to influence and persuade other people
- People are susceptible to persuasion, but can be taught to resist it