

# SOCIAL

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# PSYCH OLOGY

second edition

Gilovich • Keltner • Nisbett

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**Scientific Method** illustrations carefully and consistently lead students through the steps of some of the most interesting experiments and studies.

**FIGURE 10.4 Scientific Method: Mere Exposure and Musical Preferences**

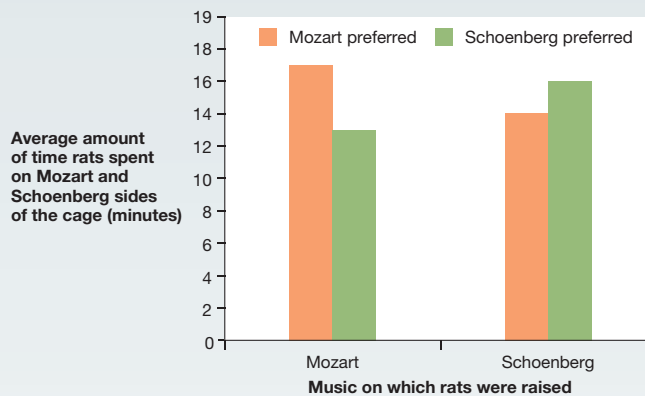
**Hypothesis:** Exposure leads to liking.

**Research Method:**

- 1 One group of rats was raised for the first 52 days of life in an environment in which Mozart was played for 12 hours each day (specifically, *The Magic Flute*, Symphonies 40 and 41, and the Violin Concerto No. 5).
- 2 A second group of rats was exposed to an analogous schedule of atonal music by Schoenberg (specifically, *Pierrot Lunaire*, *A Survivor from Warsaw*, *Verklärte Nacht*, *Kol Nidre*, and Chamber Symphonies 1 and 2).
- 3 The rats were then placed individually in a test cage that was rigged so that the rat's presence on one side of the cage would trip a switch that caused previously unheard selections of Mozart to be played, whereas the rat's presence on the other side would generate new selections of Schoenberg.



**Results:** Rats raised on a musical diet of Mozart moved significantly more often to the side of the cage that led to Mozart being played, whereas those raised on a diet of Schoenberg moved more often to the side that led to Schoenberg's music being played.



The height of the bars represents the average number of minutes the rats who had earlier been exposed to either Mozart or Schoenberg chose to inhabit a side of their cage that led to Mozart or Schoenberg being played.

**Conclusion:** Exposure leads to liking. Being exposed to Mozart led to a preference for Mozart's music. Being exposed to Schoenberg led to a preference for Schoenberg's music.

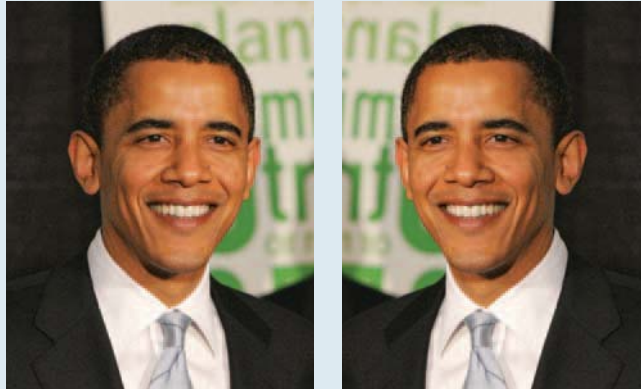
Source: H.A. Cross, Halcomb, & Matter (1967).

- 1.1 The Power of the Situation and Helping
- 2.4 Honor Experiments
- 3.6 Comparison and Self-Esteem
- 4.5 Counterfactual Thinking among Olympic Medalists
- 5.4 Selective Attention
- 6.3 Induced Compliance and Attitude Change
- 7.1 Universality of Facial Expressions
- 8.4 Normative Social Influence
- 8.6 Interpretive Context and Conformity
- 9.8 Attitude Inoculation
- 10.4 Mere Exposure and Musical Preferences
- 10.6 Attraction to Average Faces
- 11.1 Harlow's Monkeys and Their "Mothers"
- 11.2 The Relational Self and Interactions with Others
- 11.9 Contempt and Marital Dissatisfaction
- 12.5 Distinctiveness and Illusory Correlation
- 12.7 Stereotypes and Categorization
- 13.6 Priming of Anger-Related Aggression
- 13.9 Empathy and Altruism
- 14.2 Social Facilitation on Simple and Complex Tasks
- 15.3 Health Benefits of Social Connection
- 15.6 Mental Accounting

**You Be the Subject** figures allow students to be their own research subjects and to experience the methods of social psychology.

**FIGURE 10.3** You Be the Subject: The Mere Exposure Effect

Which image do you prefer, the one on the left or the one on the right?



**Results:** People prefer true photos of others, but mirror-image photos of themselves. (The one on the right is the true image.)

**Explanation:** People see themselves when they look in the mirror, which means that they are familiar with a reverse image of themselves—and this is the image they generally prefer. They see others, however, as they truly are and usually prefer this true image to a mirror image.

- |     |   |      |  |
|-----|---|------|--|
| 1.6 | Self-Definition                         | 9.4  | Central and Peripheral Persuasion Tactics  |
| 2.2 | Attitude toward Violence                | 10.3 | The Mere Exposure Effect                   |
| 3.5 | Possible Selves                         | 11.5 | Power Differences                          |
| 4.2 | Personality Ratings Based on Appearance | 12.1 | An Implicit Association Test (IAT)         |
| 5.5 | Cognitive Reflection Test               | 13.4 | Neo-Associationistic Account of Aggression |
| 6.7 | Self-Perception Affected by Movement    | 14.7 | Spotlight Effect                           |
| 7.5 | Emotions and Moral Judgment             |      |  |

**Focus On** boxes in every chapter allow students to make connections between social psychology and a variety of areas like culture, government, sports, and business.

BOX 10.4 FOCUS ON POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

## The Basis of Beauty

What makes the Golden Gate Bridge so aesthetically pleasing? Why do mathematicians describe certain proofs as “beautiful”? And why are pandas and harp seals considered more adorable than mollusks and vultures? Thinkers throughout the ages have pondered and argued about the nature of aesthetic beauty. Those who have taken the *objectivist* view, the ancient Greeks especially, argue that beauty is inherent in the properties of objects that produce pleasant sensations in the perceiver. Their goal has been to try to identify the stimulus features that have such effects—balance, proportion, symmetry, contrast, the Golden ratio. All of these and others have been put forward as important elements of beauty. Other scholars, those who subscribe to the *subjectivist* view, argue that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” and therefore the search for general laws of beauty is futile.

Psychologists have recently offered a different view, one that attributes aesthetic pleasure to perceptual and cognitive fluency (Reber, Schwarz, & Winkielman, 2004). Fluency refers to the ease with which information can be processed. Some objects are more easily identified than others (perceptual fluency), and some are more easily interpreted, defined, and related to one’s existing semantic knowledge (cognitive fluency). The core idea is that the more fluently one can process an object, the more positive one’s aesthetic experience. An important part of this argument is that people experience pleasure when processing fluent stimuli. Electromyography (EMG) recordings of people’s faces reveal more activation of the zygomaticus major (the “smiling muscle”) when they are exposed to fluent stimuli rather than disfluent stimuli (Winkielman & Cacioppo, 2001). And another critical part of the argument is that all of the features that objectivists

regard as inherently pleasing—symmetry, contrast, and so on—tend to increase perceptual fluency.

Symmetrical patterns are processed efficiently and, as we have seen, symmetrical faces are considered particularly good looking—as are symmetrical structures like the Eiffel Tower, the Chrysler Building, and the Golden Gate Bridge. Objects characterized by high figure-ground contrast can be recognized especially quickly, and studies have found that laboratory stimuli with high contrast are judged especially attractive—as are flowers, goldfinches, and the photographs of Ansel Adams (Reber, Winkielman, & Schwarz, 1998). In addition to the impact of these classic aesthetic features, this perspective maintains that anything that increases the fluent processing of an object ought to increase its aesthetic appeal. Previous exposure to a stimulus makes it easier to process, and as we have seen, mere repeated exposure leads to greater liking. Prototypical members of a category are processed fluently, and as we have seen, people find “average” faces attractive—as well as average automobiles, birds, and fish (Halberstadt & Rhodes, 2000, 2003).

But how does this explain people’s aesthetic appreciation of complicated stimuli, such as Beethoven’s 9th symphony, the Bilbao Museum, or the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel? Simple stimuli are surely processed more fluently than complex stimuli, but the simplest things are not always the most pleasing. True enough. What seems to

be particularly appealing is “simplicity in complexity.” People seem to like those things that are processed more easily than one might expect given their overall complexity. Processing a simple image fluently is often unsatisfying; but a complex image or sound pattern that is made accessible by some underlying structure often yields the greatest sensation of aesthetic pleasure. This also explains why experts in a given domain—music, architecture, painting—often have more elaborate aesthetic tastes than novices. Their expertise allows them to process complex material more fluently.

This fluency perspective on aesthetic beauty thus occupies a middle ground between the objectivist and subjectivist views. Beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, but not in the sense that it is completely arbitrary and variable from person to person. Rather, beauty lies in the processing experience of the beholder, experience that is strongly determined by how objective stimulus properties influence perceptual and cognitive fluency.



**Positive Psychology** Symmetrical stimuli are easy to process (i.e., they’re fluent) and, like fluent stimuli in general, tend to be experienced as aesthetically pleasing. The symmetry of the Golden Gate Bridge may be one reason it is regarded as one of the most beautiful bridges in the world.

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- 2.1 **Focus on Intuitive Social Psychology:** Predicting the Results of Social Psychology Studies
- 2.2 **Focus on Scientific Method:** Thinking about Correlations
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# Social Psychology

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# Social Psychology

SECOND EDITION

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*We dedicate this book to*

*Karen, Ilana, and Rebecca Dashiff Gilovich*

*Mollie McNeil and Natalie and Serafina Keltner-McNeil*

*Sarah Nisbett*

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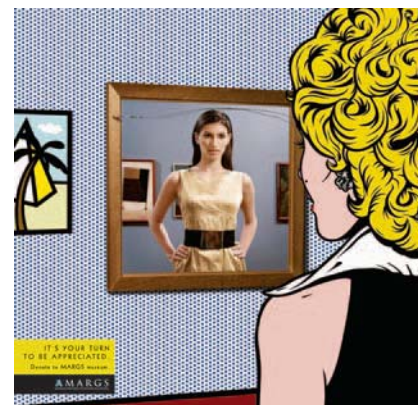
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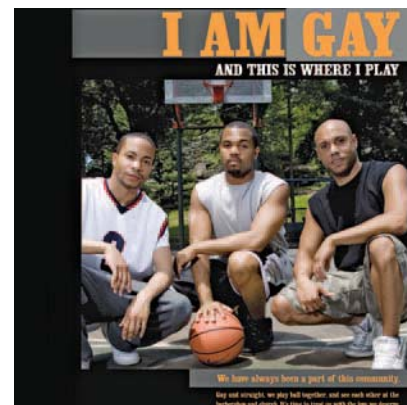
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# Preface

## A FRESH PERSPECTIVE IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Social psychology illuminates and clarifies the nature of human beings and their social world. It is a science that offers novel insights into the foundations of moral sentiments, the origins of violence, and why people fall in love. It offers basic tools for understanding how people persuade one another, why people are so prone to mass phenomena, and how people rationalize their undesirable actions. It offers science-based answers to questions humans have been thinking about since we started to reflect upon who we are: Are we rational creatures? How can we find happiness? What is the proper relationship of the individual to the larger society?

After decades of collective experience teaching social psychology, we decided in 2000 to put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) and write our own vision of this fascinating discipline. It was a great time to do so. Many new developments in the field were reshaping social psychology. Ten years of study had revealed how different kinds of culture—country of origin, regional culture, social class—shape human thought, feeling, and action. Insights from evolutionary theory were increasingly guiding how social psychologists study things such as homicide and cooperation. Social psychologists were making inroads into the study of the brain. Specific areas of interest to us—judgment and decision making, emotion, and relationships—had emerged as well-defined areas deserving full treatment. And the findings of social psychology had become recognized as more relevant than ever before. Social psychological studies were making their way into best sellers, written by journalists such as Malcolm Gladwell and psychologists such as Dan Ariely and Dan Gilbert. Social psychology had begun to shape political campaigns and is currently having an influence on the policies of the current U.S. administration (for example, through the social psychological ideas advanced in the book *Nudge*).

The lure of writing a textbook, and the challenge in doing so, was to capture all of these new developments and integrate them with the timeless classics of social psychology that make it such a captivating discipline. We also wanted to convey to the student that social psychology is a productive *scientific* enterprise. Much of the subject matter of social psychology—attraction, conformity, prejudice—readily engages the student's attention and imagination. The material sells itself. But in most textbook summaries of the field, the presentation comes across as a list of unconnected topics—as one fun and intriguing fact after another. As a result, the students often come away thinking of social psychology as all fun and games. That's fine up to a point. Social psychology *is* fun. But it is much more than that, and we have tried



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