

# Social Psychology and Personality

AP Psychology ■ Unit 4

AP Psychology



## What we will cover

- 1 Explaining Behaviour: Attribution
- 2 Attitudes and Attitude Change
- 3 Social Situations
- 4 Personality: Psychodynamic and Humanistic
- 5 Personality: Social-Cognitive and Trait
- 6 Motivation

# 1

## Explaining Behaviour: Attribution

# Explaining Behaviour: Attribution

An explanation is either **dispositional** 内归因 (about the person's personality) or **situational** 外归因 (about the circumstances). People are not even-handed about which they choose:

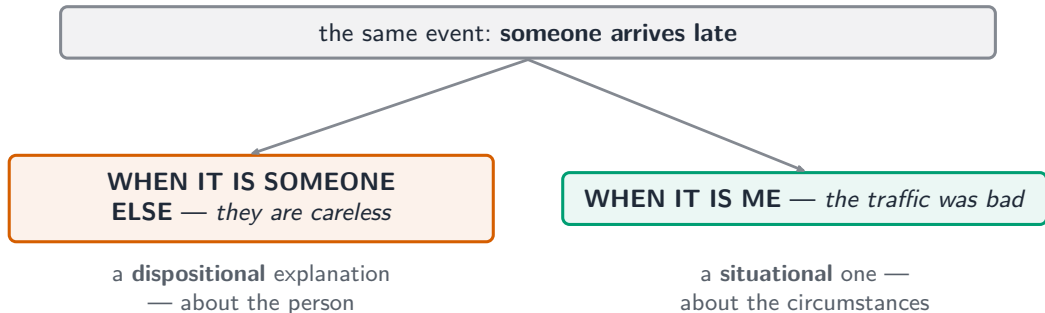
- The **fundamental attribution error** 基本归因错误 is over-using dispositional explanations for *other* people's behaviour.
- The **actor-observer bias** 行动者-观察者偏差 is explaining your own behaviour situationally while explaining others' dispositionally.
- The **self-serving bias** 自利偏差 credits success to yourself and blames failure on the situation.
- The **just-world phenomenon** 公正世界现象 is the belief that people get what they deserve.

## Explaining Behaviour: Attribution, continued

A person's **explanatory style** 解释风格 can be **optimistic** 乐观的 or **pessimistic** 悲观的, and this shapes how they respond to setbacks.

**Social comparison** 社会比较 is judging yourself against others, either **upward** 向上比较 or **downward** 向下比较.

## The attribution asymmetry



Nothing about the **behaviour** changed – only who is explaining it. That asymmetry is the error, and it is what a scenario question shows you

## How we perceive other people

**mere exposure effect** 单纯曝光效应

repeated contact **increases liking**, with no other reason needed

**self-fulfilling prophecy** 自我实现预言

an expectation changes behaviour until it **makes itself true**

**belief perseverance** 信念固着

a belief survives even after the evidence for it is discredited

**confirmation bias** 确认偏误

we seek and notice evidence that **fits** what we already think

All four say the same thing from different angles: the perceiver is not a camera. What we expect shapes what we see and, through the prophecy, what actually happens.

# 2

## Attitudes and Attitude Change

# Attitudes and Attitude Change

A **stereotype** 刻板印象 is a generalised idea about a group; it reduces mental effort but can be inaccurate and harmful. **Prejudice** 偏见 is an attitude, and **discrimination** 歧视 is the behaviour. **Implicit attitudes** 内隐态度 are held without full awareness.

**Confirmation bias** 确认偏差 is seeking evidence that fits what you already believe.

## Two routes to persuasion

### the model

the **elaboration likelihood model** 精细加工可能性模型

### central route 中心路径

uses the **strength of the argument** – works when the audience is motivated and able to think it through, and the change lasts

### peripheral route 外周路径

uses **cues around** the argument – an attractive presenter, a celebrity, a catchy tune – and the change fades

### foot-in-the-door 登门槛效应

a small request first makes a large one more likely to be granted

### cognitive dissonance 认知失调

acting against your attitude is uncomfortable, so the **attitude moves** to match the act

Which route an advert uses tells you what it thinks of its audience – and predicts whether the effect will still be there next week.

# 3

## Social Situations

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# Social Situations

- **Conformity** 从众 is adjusting behaviour to match a group. It rises with group size (up to a point), unanimity, and ambiguity, and falls when even one other person dissents.
- **Obedience** 服从 is following an instruction from an authority. It rises with the authority's perceived legitimacy and closeness, and falls when the victim is close or the authority is distant.
- **Normative social influence** 规范性社会影响 is conforming to be accepted;  
**informational social influence** 信息性社会影响 is conforming because you think others know better.

# Conformity and obedience

## CONFORMITY — matching a group

rises with group size, up to a point  
rises when the group is unanimous  
**falls sharply** with one ally who dissents  
rises when the answer is ambiguous

## OBEDIENCE — following an authority

rises with the authority's legitimacy  
rises with distance from the consequence  
**falls** when someone else refuses first  
falls when responsibility is made personal

One dissenter is the strongest single factor on **both** sides – which is why the scenario nearly always varies that

# Compliance, and how requests are engineered

## Foot-in-the-door

A small request first makes the larger one likelier – consistency with the identity the first agreement created.

## Door-in-the-face

**Door-in-the-face:** an unreasonable request refused, then the real one, which now looks like a concession worth reciprocating.

## Norms do the work

Both exploit **social norms** – consistency and reciprocity – rather than any argument about the request itself.

Name the technique *and* the norm it exploits. The norm is the explanation; the technique is only the label.

# Helping, and why a crowd stops it

**altruism** 利他行为

**selfless** helping, at a cost to the helper

**prosocial behavior** 亲社会行为

the broader category – helping that *may* also benefit the helper

**bystander effect** 旁观者效应

the **more** people present, the **less** likely any one of them helps

**diffusion of responsibility** 责任分散

the mechanism: each bystander assumes someone else will act

**the counter**

naming one person directly (“you, in the red coat”) removes the diffusion and help arrives

The bystander effect is about **number**, not indifference. That is the distinction the free-response question wants drawn.

# What a group does to individual behaviour

## social facilitation 社会助长

an audience **improves** performance on simple or well-practised tasks – and **harms** it on difficult or new ones

## social loafing 社会惰化

individual effort falls when it cannot be identified within a group's output

## deindividuation 去个体化

anonymity in a crowd loosens self-restraint

## group polarisation 群体极化

discussion pushes a group toward a **more extreme** version of its initial leaning

## groupthink 群体思维

the desire for agreement suppresses dissent and produces a worse decision

**Individualism** 个人主义 and **collectivism** 集体主义 modulate every one of these, and **multi-culturalism** 多元文化主义 describes societies holding several such orientations at once.

# 4

## Personality: Psychodynamic and Humanistic

## Four accounts of where personality comes from

The **psychodynamic** 精神动力学 approach holds that **unconscious** 无意识 processes drive personality.

**Ego defense mechanisms** 自我防御机制 protect the person from anxiety, and the examinable set is **denial** 否认, **displacement** 转移, **projection** 投射, **rationalization** 合理化, **reaction formation** 反向形成,...

## The theories of emotion, side by side

### James-Lange theory

**James-Lange theory:** the bodily response comes first, and the emotion is our reading of it – we are afraid *because* we tremble.

### Cannon-Bard theory

**Cannon-Bard theory:** body and emotion happen at once, both triggered by the thalamus.

### Two-factor theory

**Schachter-Singer two-factor theory:** arousal plus a cognitive label. The same racing heart is fear or excitement depending on what you attribute it to.

### Broaden-and-build

**Broaden-and-build theory:** positive **affect** widens attention and builds lasting resources, where negative affect narrows it to the threat.

They differ on *order*: body first, together, or body plus interpretation. Say which order the theory claims.

## Four approaches to personality

### personality 人格

a person's characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling and behaving

### psychodynamic 心理动力学

unconscious conflicts and early experience – historically important, weak on evidence

### humanistic 人本主义

growth toward **self-actualisation** 自我实现, given **unconditional positive regard**

### social-cognitive 社会认知

behaviour from the **interaction** of person and situation – **reciprocal determinism** 交互决定论, **self-efficacy** 自我效能

### trait 特质

the **Big Five**: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, **agreeableness** 宜人性, neuroticism

All four are examinable and each answers a different question. The trait approach *describes*; the other three try to *explain*.

## Personality, motivation, and the group

### Trait theories

**Trait theories** describe rather than explain: the Big Five, of which **openness to experience** is the one most tied to creativity.

### Sensation-seeking

**Sensation-seeking theory** explains why some people need far more stimulation for the same arousal – and take the risks that follow.

### Group polarization

**Group polarization**: discussion among like-minded people moves the group's average view *further* in that direction.

### Reducing conflict

**Superordinate goals** – a task neither group can achieve alone – cut hostility where contact alone does not.

The **false consensus effect** makes us overestimate how many people agree with us; **social norms** then look stronger than they are.

# Four accounts of where personality comes from, in detail

|                         | Psychodynamic                                                 | Humanistic                                        | Social-cognitive                                        | Trait                                                                               |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What drives personality | unconscious conflict                                          | drive towards growth                              | person, behaviour and environment interacting           | enduring characteristics                                                            |
| Key ideas               | defense mechanisms (repression, projection, displacement ...) | unconditional positive regard, self-actualization | reciprocal determinism, self-efficacy, locus of control | the Big Five: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism |
| How it is assessed      | projective tests (weak reliability)                           | interviews, self-report                           | observation in context                                  | self-report inventories                                                             |

all four describe the SAME person from different angles

The **psychodynamic** 精神动力学 approach holds that **unconscious** 无意识 processes drive personality.

## Personality: Psychodynamic and Humanistic

The **psychodynamic** 精神动力学 approach holds that **unconscious** 无意识 processes drive personality. **Ego defense mechanisms** 自我防御机制 protect the person from anxiety, and the examinable set is **denial** 否认, **displacement** 转移, **projection** 投射, **rationalization** 合理化, **reaction formation** 反向形成, **regression** 退行, **repression** 压抑, and **sublimation** 升华. It assesses personality with **projective tests** 投射测验, which present an ambiguous stimulus; these have weak **reliability** and **validity**.

It emphasises **unconditional positive regard** 无条件积极关注 and **self-actualization** 自我实现 – becoming the fullest version of oneself.

# 5

## Personality: Social-Cognitive and Trait

## Personality: Social-Cognitive and Trait

The **social-cognitive** 社会认知 approach explains personality through **reciprocal determinism** 交互决定论: the person, their behaviour, and the environment each influence the other two.

**Self-efficacy** 自我效能感 – belief in one's own ability to succeed at a task – is central, as is **locus of control** 控制点, which is **internal** 内控 or **external** 外控.

# 6

## Motivation

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# Motivation

Several theories explain what drives behaviour:

- **Drive-reduction theory** 驱力减少理论 says behaviour reduces a physical need to restore **homeostasis** 内稳态.
- **Arousal theory** 唤醒理论 says people seek an optimal level of arousal; the **Yerkes-Dodson law** 耶克斯-多德森定律 states that moderate arousal gives the best performance on most tasks.
- **Self-determination theory** 自我决定理论 separates **intrinsic motivation** 内在动机 (from within) from **extrinsic motivation** 外在动机 (from reward), and **incentive theory** 诱因理论 focuses on the pull of rewards.

## Motivation: instincts and conflicts

- **Instincts** 本能 are innate fixed patterns, seen in non-human animals rather than in human behaviour.
- **Lewin's motivational conflicts** 勒温的动机冲突理论 names three: **approach-approach** 双趋冲突, **approach-avoidance** 趋避冲突, and **avoidance-avoidance** 双避冲突.

## Motivation, continued

Eating shows physical and mental processes interacting.

**Ghrelin** and **leptin**, regulated by the hypothalamus, control hunger and fullness, while external factors – the sight of food, the time of day, a shared meal – change how much people eat.

7

Emotion

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# Emotion

Some facial expressions are recognised across cultures, but **display rules** 表达规则 – a culture's norms for showing emotion – and the events that trigger emotion both vary.

## Worked example – evidence plus a course concept

**2025 Evidence-Based Question:** *“Explain how the evidence from Part B(i) supports your claim using a psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding.”*

- **Full marks:** *“Participants performed better on the simple task when observed (Source 1). This supports my claim because social facilitation predicts that an audience improves performance on well-practised tasks and impairs it on difficult ones.”*
- Cite the source, then supply the **course concept** that explains it.

Restating the source is not an explanation. The concept is what turns the evidence into support for the claim.

## Exam tips

- **Fundamental attribution error** applies to explaining *others*. If the question is about explaining yourself, the answer is usually **self-serving bias**.
- **Social facilitation** improves *simple* tasks and harms difficult ones. Say which kind of task the scenario describes.
- Separate **conformity** (matching a group) from **obedience** (following an authority).
- For **cognitive dissonance**, name the conflict and say which side changed – usually the attitude, because the behaviour already happened.
- Learn the **Big Five** as a set; questions often ask you to place a described person on one named trait.
- With emotion theories, the difference is **order**: body first (James-Lange), together (Cannon-Bard), or arousal plus label (two-factor).

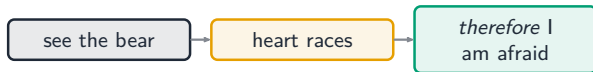
## Three theories of emotion

The difference is **order**:

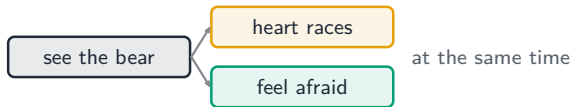
- **James-Lange** 詹姆斯-兰格理论 – the body responds first; emotion is the reading of that response
- **Cannon-Bard** 坎农-巴德理论 – arousal and emotion occur at once
- **two-factor** 两因素理论 (Schachter–Singer) – arousal plus a **cognitive label** 认知标签

# Three theories of emotion, in detail

## JAMES-LANGE



## CANNON-BARD



## SCHACHTER-SINGER



Three theories, three orderings of the same three events

8

Recap

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## Unit 4 – key takeaways

1

### Attribution

FAE for others; self-serving bias  
for yourself

2

### Social

conformity matches a group;  
obedience follows authority

3

### Dissonance

name the conflict; the attitude  
usually changes

4

### Emotion

order: body / together /  
arousal+label

## Check yourself

- 1 Explaining a stranger's crash as "they are careless": which bias?
- 2 Matching a group's wrong answer: conformity or obedience?
- 3 Body first, then emotion: which theory?
- 4 Name one Big Five trait.

**Answers:** fundamental attribution error ■ conformity ■ James–Lange ■ e.g. conscientiousness