

Social Psychology and Personality

AP Psychology • Unit 4

AP Psychology



Social Psychology and Personality

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

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Explaining Behaviour: Attribution

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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.

Social Psychology and Personality
Explaining Behaviour: Attribution

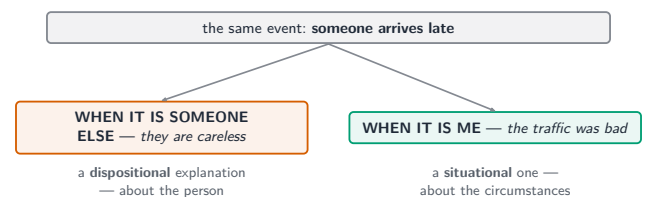
Explaining Behaviour: Attribution, continued

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.

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Explaining Behaviour: Attribution

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

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.

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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,...

Social Psychology and Personality
└ Personality: Psychodynamic and Humanistic

The theories of emotion, side by side

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

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

Two-factor theorySchachter-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-buildBroaden-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.

Social Psychology and Personality
└ Personality: Psychodynamic and Humanistic

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*.

Social Psychology and Personality
└ Personality: Psychodynamic and Humanistic

Personality, motivation, and the group

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

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

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

Reducing conflictSuperordinate 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.

Social Psychology and Personality
└ Personality: Psychodynamic and Humanistic

Four accounts of where personality comes from, in detail

	Psychodynamic	Humanistic	Social-cognitive	Trait
What drives personality	unconscious conflict	drive towards growth	person, situation and environment interacting	enduring characteristics
Key ideas	defence mechanisms, repression, projection, displacement...	unconditional positive regard, self-actualisation	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.

Social Psychology and Personality
└ Personality: Psychodynamic and Humanistic

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** 退化, **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** 无条件积极关注和 **self-actualization** 自我实现 – becoming the fullest version of oneself.

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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

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

Social Psychology and Personality └ Emotion	
Emotion	Worked example – evidence plus a course concept
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.	2025 Evidence-Based Question: “<i>Explain how the evidence from Part B(i) supports your claim using a psychological perspective, theory, concept, or research finding.</i>” ■ 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.

Social Psychology and Personality └ Emotion	
Exam tips	Three theories of emotion
■ Fundamental attribution error applies to explaining <i>others</i>. If the question is about explaining yourself, the answer is usually self-serving bias. ■ Social facilitation improves <i>simple</i> 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).	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

Social Psychology and Personality

└ Emotion

Three theories of emotion, in detail

JAMES-LANGE

see the bear

heart races

therefore I am afraid

CANNON-BARD

see the bear

heart races

feel afraid

at the same time

SCHACHTER-SINGER

see the bear

heart races

label it: *danger*

feel afraid

Three theories, three orderings of the same three events

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Recap

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