AP Psychology
Unit 4: Social Psychology and Personality
UNIT PLAN

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UNIT SYNOPSIS

Social psychology is the study of how other people and groups influence behavior and mental processes, as well as how behavior and mental processes influence an individual's experiences in social situations. This unit explores how external social factors and internal personality variables come into play in a wide variety of everyday situations for people. Psychologists throughout history have proposed different theories that categorize different personalities and explain their connection to behavior and mental processes. Various perspectives in psychology have shaped these theories and how psychologists study personality. Some psychologists study what motivates us and/or our emotional responses to understand our individual differences; other psychologists seek to understand why different personalities exist, how they are developed, and if and how they change. As they explore the content of this unit, students will gain understanding about themselves, their peers, their families, and others whom they may meet in day-to-day life and begin to provide insight into factors that may contribute to mental and physical health issues that they will examine in Unit 5.

As students study attribution theory, attitude formation, and the psychology of social situations (Topics 4.1–4.3), they will continue to uncover areas of the course where they will explain how cultural norms, expectations, and circumstances apply to behavior and mental processes (1.B)—such as the effects of individualism, collectivism, and multiculturalism have on how a person sees themselves and others.

In addition to applying the concepts and perspectives in this unit to different social scenarios and examining associated research—including the evaluation of the appropriate use of research design elements in non-experimental methodologies, such as those seen in studies of personality and motivation (2.C)—students will learn that the history of social psychology is filled with studies that are no longer considered ethical. Through a breakdown of these missteps seen when using both experimental and non-experimental methods, students will have opportunities to recognize how to conduct valid research, identify ethical flaws, and use appropriate data and data collection processes (2.D).

Finally, in their investigation of various research studies, students may encounter data that is presented in various forms—such as specialized personality inventories. To best understand the meaning of the study's results, students may be required to interpret quantitative or qualitative inferential data from a table, graph, chart, figure, or diagram (3.C). Through that interpretation, students will describe trends in and relationships between the variables used in the study, including whether those variables are correlated. In order for students to fully engage with this skill, they may want to return to the work they did with practicing skills 3.A and 3.B in Units 1 and 3, respectively. Applying their data interpretations to claims they have made about social psychology concepts may also help students to further hone their argumentation skills, as these interpretations may serve as evidence that can be used to support, refute, or modify a proposed claim (4.B).

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS AND CONTENT STANDARDS

Below are the standards **taught** and **assessed** in this unit.

Topic, Enduring Understanding, Learning Objectives (*Students will be able to…*)
4.1 Attribution Theory and Person Perception
• **4.1.A:** Explain how attribution theory applies to behavior and mental processes.
• **4.1.B:** Explain how locus of control (internal and external) applies to behavior and mental processes.
• **4.1.C:** Explain how person perception applies to behavior and mental processes.
4.2 Attitude Formation and Attitude Change
• **4.2.A:** Explain how stereotypes and implicit attitudes contribute to the behaviors and mental processes of prejudice and discrimination.
• **4.2.B:** Explain how belief perseverance and cognitive dissonance apply to attitude formation and change.
4.3 Psychology of Social Situations
• **4.3.A:** Explain how the social situation affects behavior and mental processes.
• **4.3.B:** Explain how being in a group can affect an individual's behavior and mental processes.
• **4.3.C:** Explain how prosocial behavior affects behavior and mental processes.
4.4 Psychodynamic and Humanistic Theories of Personality
• **4.4.A:** Explain how the psychodynamic theory of personality defines and assesses personality.
• **4.4.B:** Explain how the humanistic theory of personality defines and assesses personality.
4.5 Social-Cognitive and Trait Theories of Personality
• **4.5.A:** Explain how the social-cognitive theory of personality defines and assesses personality.
• **4.5.B:** Explain how trait theories of personality define and assess personality.
4.6 Motivation
• **4.6.A:** Explain how theories about motivation apply to behavior and mental processes.
• **4.6.B:** Explain how eating and belongingness motivate behavior and mental processes.
4.7 Emotion
• **4.7.A:** Explain how theories of emotion apply to behavior and mental processes.
• **4.7.B:** Explain how social norms and experiences influence the expression of emotions.