Introduction: 
Humans are diverse, and sometimes our differences make it challenging for us to get along with one another. An example is that of Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African American who was shot by a neighborhood watch volunteer, George Zimmerman, in a predominantly White neighborhood in 2012. Zimmerman grew suspicious of the boy dressed in a hoodie and pursued Martin. A physical altercation ended with Zimmerman fatally shooting Martin. Zimmerman claimed that he acted in self-defense; Martin was unarmed. A Florida jury found Zimmerman not guilty of second degree murder nor of manslaughter.

Several groups protested what they deemed racial profiling and brutality against an unarmed Black male. Zimmerman, who has a Peruvian mother and a German father, was accused of being racist. Some media coverage was criticized for inflaming racial politics in their coverage. In spite of conflicts such as these, people also work together to create positive change. For example, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, people rallied together and charitable donations skyrocketed (Brown & Minty, 2006). This chapter explores how the presence of other people influences the behavior of individuals, and groups. Social factors can determine whether human behavior tends toward conflict or harmony.

What Is Social Psychology? 
Social psychology examines how people affect one another, and it looks at the power of the situation. Social psychologists assert that an individual’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are very much influenced by social situations. Essentially, people will change their behavior to align with the social situation at hand. If we are in a new situation or are unsure how to behave, we will take our cues from other individuals.

Behavior is a product of both the situation (e.g., cultural influences, social roles, and the presence of bystanders) and of the person (e.g., personality characteristics). Subfields of psychology tend to focus on influence or behavior. Situationism is the view that our behavior and actions are determined by our immediate environment and surroundings. In contrast, dispositionism holds that our behavior is determined by internal factors. An internal factor is an attribute of a person and includes personality traits and temperament. Social psychologists have tended to take the situationist perspective, whereas personality psychologists have promoted the dispositionist perspective. Modern approaches to social psychology, however, take both the situation and the individual into account when studying human behavior. In fact, the field of social-personality psychology has emerged to study the complex interaction of internal (personality) and situational factors that affect human behavior.
Assignment 1

Directions: Using the introduction, answer the questions below in complete sentences.

1. What is social psychology?

2. What is behavior?

3. Explain what situationism and dispositionism is?

4. In your opinion, is our behavior based on our environment (situationism) or internal factors (what were born with/dispositionism)?

What is Social Psychology?

We tend to think that people are in control of their own behaviors, and, therefore, any behavior change must be due to something internal, such as their personality, habits, or temperament. We tend to assume that the behavior of another person is a trait of that person, and to underestimate the power of the situation on the behavior of others. They tend to fail to recognize when the behavior of another is due to situational variables, and thus to the person’s state. This assumption is called the fundamental attribution error. To better understand, imagine this scenario: Greg returns home from work, and upon opening the front door his wife happily greets him and inquires about his day. Instead of greeting his wife, Greg yells at her, “Leave me alone!” Why did Greg yell at his wife? How would someone committing the fundamental attribution error explain Greg’s behavior? The most common response is that Greg is a mean, angry, or unfriendly person (his traits). This is an internal or dispositional explanation. However, imagine that Greg was just laid off from his job due to company downsizing. Would your explanation for Greg’s behavior change? Your revised explanation might be that Greg was frustrated and disappointed for losing his job; therefore, he was in a bad mood (his state).

You may be able to think of examples of the fundamental attribution error in your life. Do people in all cultures commit the fundamental attribution error? Research suggests that they do not. People from an individualistic culture, that is, a culture that focuses on individual achievement, have the greatest tendency to commit the fundamental attribution error. Individualistic cultures, which tend to be found in western countries such as the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, promote a focus on the individual. Therefore, a person’s disposition is thought to be the primary explanation for her behavior. In
contrast, people from a **collectivistic culture**, that is, a culture that focuses on communal relationships with others, such as family, friends, and community, are less likely to commit the fundamental attribution error.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualistic Culture</th>
<th>Collectivistic Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement oriented</td>
<td>Relationship oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on autonomy</td>
<td>Focus on group autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispositional perspective</td>
<td>Situational perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Interdependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic thinking style</td>
<td>Holistic thinking style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 12.1** Characteristics of Individualistic and Collectivistic Cultures

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**Assignment 2**

**Directions**: Using the information in the packet, answer the questions below.

1. What is fundamental attribution error?
2. What is an Individualistic Culture? Which countries are Individualistic?
3. What is a Collectivistic Culture? Which countries are collectivistic?
4. Give three characteristics of individualism and three characteristics of collectivism.
5. In your opinion, do you and your family fall under the individualistic culture? Or the collectivistic culture? Explain.
Social Roles

One major social determinant of human behavior is our social roles. **A social role is a pattern of behavior that is expected of a person in a given setting or group.** Each one of us has several social roles. You may be, at the same time, a student, a parent, an aspiring teacher, a son or daughter, a spouse, and a lifeguard. Social roles, and our related behavior, can vary across different settings. How do you behave when you are engaging in the role of son or daughter and attending a family function? Now imagine how you behave when you are engaged in the role of employee at your workplace. It is very likely that your behavior will be different. Perhaps you are more relaxed and outgoing with your family, making jokes and doing silly things. But at your workplace you might speak more professionally, and although you may be friendly, you are also serious and focused on getting the work completed.

Social Norms

**A social norm is a group's expectation of what is appropriate and acceptable behavior for its members—how they are supposed to behave and think.** How are we expected to act? What are we expected to talk about? What are we expected to wear? Social norms are everywhere including in families, gangs, and on social media outlets.

Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment

The famous **Stanford prison experiment**, conducted by social psychologist Philip Zimbardo and his colleagues at Stanford University, demonstrated the power of social roles, social norms, and scripts. In the summer of 1971, an advertisement was placed in a California newspaper asking for male volunteers to participate in a study about the psychological effects of prison life. The pool of volunteers was whittled down to 24 healthy male college students. Each student was paid $15 per day and was **randomly assigned** to play the role of either a prisoner or a guard in the study. A **mock (fake) prison** was constructed in the basement of the psychology building at Stanford. Participants assigned to play the role of prisoners were “arrested” at their homes by Palo Alto police officers, booked at a police station, and subsequently taken to the mock prison. The experiment was scheduled to run for several weeks. To the surprise of the researchers, both the “prisoners” and “guards” assumed their roles. In fact, on day 2, some of the prisoners revolted, and the guards stopped the rebellion by threatening the prisoners with violence. Over time the **guards started to harass the prisoners** in an increasingly **sadistic manner**, they took away the prisoners privacy and basic comforts such as mattresses to sleep on, and made the prisoners do degrading chores and late-night counts. **The prisoners**, in turn, **began to show signs of severe anxiety and hopelessness**—they began tolerating the guards’ abuse.

The Stanford prison experiment demonstrated the power of social roles, norms, and scripts in affecting human behavior. The guards and prisoners enacted their social roles by engaging in behaviors appropriate to the roles: The guards gave orders and the prisoners followed orders.
Assignment 3

Directions: Answer the constructed response question below in at least 3-5 sentences.

Question: Name at least one social role and one social norm that define you. Explain what the social role is and how you fit into the norm. Then, describe how social roles, social norms, were evident in the Stanford prison experiment.