**21 Social influence and attraction**

Social facilitation and inhibition

* Social facilitation takes place when behaviour or performance is enhanced by the presence of others.
* In spite of limitations to the classic research social facilitation does appear to be a robust phenomenon.
* Under some circumstances the opposite phenomenon of social inhibition occurs.

Conformity

* There are two major reasons for the existence of conformity: normative and informational influence.
* The classic conformity research by Solomon Asch demonstrated normative influence. There is supporting evidence for the importance of both normative and informational influence.
* Informational influence is important in understanding the echo chamber effect of social media as conformity to the opinions of those sharing our social media groups may make our own views more polarized and contribute to social division.
* Groupthink results from conformity to group membership during decision- making. It can lead to irrational collective decisions.

Obedience

* Destructive obedience occurs when people obey orders from authority figures to harm others. This was demonstrated in the classic studies of Stanley Milgram.
* Broadly, modern research supports Milgram’s findings, but there have been a number of criticisms of his conclusions.
* Modern research has demonstrated the influence of a number of situational and individual differences on destructive obedience.

Social identity

* An emphasis on social identity as an influence on social behaviour is a feature of European social psychology.
* Social identity theory is based on the idea that even minimally different groups with no competition adopt a group identity which in turn affects their behaviour.
* The central idea of social identity theory is that we categorize ourselves and others and that to maintain a positive self-concept we emphasize the positive aspects of our in-group.
* Some of the classic social psychology studies like those of Asch and Milgram have been reinterpreted in the light of social identity theory.

Interpersonal attraction

* A number of factors influence who we are attracted to. These include positive assortment (similarity), propinquity, attractiveness, and self-presentation.

From attraction to relationship formation

Attraction can lead to dating and perhaps love, but there is some debate about the nature of love, with Sternberg putting forward three models.