

• *The Mechanic and the Web Surfer*

Marcy arrived to pick up her car, which had been in for service, and her mechanic, Wes, explained the repairs that had been made in addition to the routine oil service. One of the reasons Marcy liked this particular shop was that Wes never talked down to her but took the time to explain what was wrong with the car when it needed to be fixed. In this case, Wes said, the steering damper and center link had to be adjusted, and the noise she had reported was coming from worn bushings around the tie rod ends in the suspension. Marcy nodded in understanding. As she prepared to leave, she and Wes chatted about an incident reported in the paper concerning a hacker who had shut down the local Freenet. Wes mentioned that his wife enjoyed using her account to e-mail friends and relatives all around the United States. He, on the other hand, didn't quite understand how the Internet worked and had become concerned after the hacker incident. Marcy, who enjoyed Web surfing herself, stayed a few moments longer to give Wes a basic lesson on the Internet.

Arriving at their respective homes that evening, Marcy and Wes had remarkably similar conversations with their spouses. In response to his question about her car, Marcy told her husband, "Oh, they fixed something on the steering, and that squeak is being caused by some rod rubbing against something or other. Nothing to worry about." Her husband shook his head; why did he even ask? To his wife, Wes said, "One of my customers today told me all about computers and e-mail and that stuff." "What about it?" his wife wanted to know, but unfortunately, Wes couldn't remember anything more specific.

Before proceeding further, reflect momentarily on the behaviorist perspective discussed in the previous chapter. How might a behaviorist account for the behaviors exhibited in these two scenarios? How is a complex behavior such as reading acquired? Why did Marcy and Wes experience such difficulty in recalling to their spouses what they had been told earlier in the day? Questions similar to these pose problems for behaviorism. And although behaviorism had dominated American psychology for half a century, it was to be supplanted by cognitive challenges.

Remember that the study of cognition was not new to psychology. Before radical behaviorism had gained such a stronghold on psychological research and theory, Tolman used cognitive maps to explain purposive behavior in rats, and Hull relied on a number of cognitive mediators between stimulus and response. Pavlov, as well, had introduced the concept of the "second signal system" to account for language learning. Vygotsky had launched his theory of how inner speech functions as a cognitive mediator explicitly in reaction to American behaviorism. Moreover, Gestalt psychologists in Germany had proposed that organizational processes in cognition were important to perception, learning, and problem solving. What was new