

CRITICAL THINKING

Does Exposure to Media Violence Cause Aggressive Behavior?

Bandura's early observational learning studies showed preschoolers enthusiastically mimicking the movie actions of an adult pummeling a Bobo doll. His research provided a powerful paradigm to study the effects of "entertainment" violence. Bandura found that observed actions were most likely to be imitated when:

- They were performed by a high-status, attractive model.
- The model is rewarded for his or her behavior.
- The model is not punished for his or her actions.

Over the past five decades, more than 1,000 studies have investigated the relationship between media depictions of violence and increases in aggressive behavior in the real world (see Bushman & Anderson, 2007; Bushman & others, 2014). We'll highlight some key findings here.

How Prevalent Is Violence in the Media?

An alarming amount of violence is depicted on American television and in movies. On average, American youth witness 1,000 rapes, murders, and assaults on television annually (Parents Television Council, 2007). More troubling, much of the violent behavior is depicted in ways that are known to *increase* the likelihood of imitation. For example, violent behavior is not punished and is often perpetrated by the "good guys." The long-term consequences of violence are rarely shown.

Is Exposure to Media Violence Linked to Aggressive Behavior?

Numerous research studies show that exposure to media violence produces short-term increases in laboratory measures of aggressive thoughts and behavior. And, hundreds of correlational studies demonstrate a link between exposure to violent media and aggressive behavior (see Anderson & others, 2010; Bushman & others, 2014; Murray, 2008).

Reviewing the accumulation of decades of research evidence, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association, and the American Medical Association have all issued versions of the following conclusion: "Extensive research evi-

dence indicates that media violence can contribute to aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, nightmares, and fear of being

MYTH SCIENCE

Is it true that viewing violent media is not related to aggression?

harmed" (AAP Council on Communications Media, 2009).

What About Violent Video Games?

Many people wonder about the effects of violent digital games, especially "first-person shooter" games. Two comprehensive meta-analyses concluded that violent digital games increased aggressive

thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Anderson & others, 2010; Grietmeyer & Mügge, 2014).

But other researchers strongly disagree with these conclusions (Ferguson & Kilbourn, 2010; Ivory & others, 2015). For example, some researchers have *not* found an increase in aggression when violent and non-violent games are carefully matched in terms of competitiveness and other factors (see Przybylski & others, 2014; Engelhardt & others, 2015). And, during the era in which video games increased in popularity and graphic violence, violent crime steadily *declined*, rather than increased, as you would expect if digital games were as dangerous as some claim (Ferguson, 2014).

So Does Violent Media Cause Violent Behavior?

Based on their review of the evidence, some psychologists, like Brad Bushman and his colleagues (2009) flatly concluded that "Exposure to violent media increases aggression and violence." But many other psychologists are more cautious in their conclusions (Elson & Ferguson, 2014a, 2014b; Ivory & others, 2015).

It's important to note that the vast majority of studies on media violence and aggressive behavior are *correlational* (Ferguson & Kilbourn, 2009; Savage & Yancey, 2008). As you learned in Chapter 1, correlation does not necessarily imply causation. Even if two factors are strongly correlated, some other variable could be responsible for the association between the two factors. Experimental studies, on the other hand, *are* designed to demonstrate causality. However, most experimental studies involve artificial measures of aggressive behavior, which may *not* accurately measure the likelihood that a participant will act aggressively in real life.

Psychologists on both sides of the debate agree on one important point: Violent behavior is a complex phenomenon that is unlikely to have a single cause. They also generally agree that some viewers *are* highly susceptible to the negative effects of media violence (see Huesmann & others, 2013). Some researchers think that the time has come to go beyond the question of *whether* media violence causes aggressive behavior and focus instead on investigating the factors that are most likely to be associated with its harmful effects (Feshbach & Tangney, 2008 ; Ferguson & Konijn, 2015).

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- Given the evidence, what conclusions can you draw about the effect of violent media and digital games on aggressive behavior?
- Why is it so difficult to design an experimental study that would demonstrate that violent media *causes* aggressive behavior?
- Given the general conclusion that some, but not all, viewers are likely to become more aggressive after viewing violent media, what should be done about media violence?



How to Think Like a Scientist

CRITICAL THINKING

Do violent video games make people aggressive? Are some people "right-brained" and others "left-brained"? What's the best way to lose weight? Do "educational" DVDs and TV shows improve children's language abilities or help them learn how to read? How can you evaluate the claims you encounter? Both in class and out, it's important to engage in **critical thinking**, *actively questioning* statements rather than blindly accepting them.

Critical thinkers are open to new information, ideas, and claims. However, this open-mindedness is tempered by a healthy sense of skepticism (J. C. Smith, 2010). The critical thinker consistently asks, "What evidence supports this claim?"

In this chapter, we've detailed the ways that psychologists conduct research, including the different ways they test hypotheses.

You can think of the claims you encounter in print or in online media, on TV shows, or in conversation as hypotheses, too. In other words, when you encounter an idea or statement that is presented as factual, try to *think like a scientist*.

Like a scientist, you can follow these four steps to determine the validity of a particular claim:

1. Identify the Claim

Some claims are so vague that they are impossible to be tested scientifically. For example, take the statement that "you use only 10% of your brain." Superficially, it *sounds* convincing, but can you imagine an experiment that would actually test this claim? Try to restate the claim in terms of a hypothesis that could be supported or disproved by empirical evidence. How would you define the variables that could be objectively measured?

2. Evaluate the Evidence

As you have learned, the scientific method includes key safeguards in experimental design, such as random assignment, the presence of a control group, and researchers who are "blind" to participants' conditions. So when evidence is offered in support of a particular position, scrutinize it and look for those basic

safeguards.

MYTH SCIENCE

Is it true that when two behaviors are "linked," "related," or "tend to occur together it's safe to assume that one behavior caused the other?"

Consider also the nature of the evidence that may be offered. When words like "link," "tie," or "association" are used, the evidence is probably correlational, rather than experimental. But remember the distinction between correlation and causation. As you have learned, just because two events are correlated does not mean that they are causally linked. For example, consider a recent study that found a positive correlation between the number of outdoor signs and billboards advertising food and non-alcoholic beverages and the rate of obesity in particular urban neighborhoods (Lleser & others, 2013). As the number of outdoor food ads increased, so did the obesity rate. One Internet headline read, "Billboards Make You Fat!" Some commentators advised that policy makers consider restricting outdoor food advertising as a way of reducing obesity in urban areas.

What can you do or say to encourage others to use critical thinking in evaluating questionable claims or assertions?

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- Why might other people want to discourage you from thinking critically?
- In what situations is it probably most difficult or challenging for you to exercise critical thinking skills? Why?
- What can you do or say to encourage others to use critical thinking in evaluating questionable claims or assertions?

Typically, scientific research is reported in a peer-reviewed scientific journal or at an academic conference *before* the results are released to the media. So, when research is reported in the popular media or on the Internet, consider the source of the research. While publication in a scientific journal is no guarantee that the results will prove valid over time, you can at least be certain that the research has been carefully evaluated by other scientists in the field. When a claim has no apparent ties to legitimate educational or scientific enterprises, you should be especially cautious. In general, it's worth considering the researchers' motives. If the people or company making the claim have the potential to profit from its use, the source may not be objective.

4. Consider the Source of the Research or Claim

Whether the claims you encounter come from friends, instructors, or pundits, remember these four steps—and think like a scientist before blindly accepting them.

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3. Consider Alternative Explanations

But is such a conclusion justified? No. You cannot conclude that the correlation found between obesity and advertisements occurred because the higher prevalence of advertising caused higher rates of obesity. The evidence does not support that conclusion. In fact, it could just as likely be that advertisers are more likely to place ads for food in areas where they believe there are higher numbers of obese people (Chabris & Simons, 2013).

Similarly, remember that *testimonials are not evidence* (Coltheart & MacArthur, 2012). Distinguish between empirical evidence that can be objectively observed, measured, and shared—and private opinions, based on feelings or personal experience. For example, the fact that a relative's child had a terrible experience in day care is not evidence that day care is generally bad for all children.

Especially if a claim is highly unusual, seems to contradict accepted scientific theories, or has no plausible explanation, consider *alternative explanations*. A claim demonstrating improvement in a condition or skill could, in fact, have many different explanations. For example, suppose a friend's cold disappeared after he took a special herbal supplement recommended by another friend. The improvement *could* be due to the herbs. But it could also be due to the placebo effect (page 29) or to the natural healing that often takes place with the simple passage of time. A child's improvement in paying attention in class *might* be due to the new, sugar-restricted diet she started. But it could also be the result of normal maturation, or the extra attention she received from her teacher after her parents expressed their concerns.

CRITICAL THINKING

ESP: Can Perception Occur Without Sensation?

ESP, or **extrasensory perception**, means the detection of information by some means other than through the normal processes of sensation.

Do you believe in ESP? If you do, you're not alone (Ridolfo & others, 2010). Recent surveys conducted by the Associated Press and the Gallup Poll have found that close to 50 percent of American adults "believe in ESP" (Fram, 2007; D. Moore, 2005).

Forms of ESP include *telepathy*, which is the *direct* communication between the minds of two individuals; *clairvoyance*, the perception of a remote object or event, such as "sensing" that a friend has been injured in a car accident; *psychokinesis*, the ability to influence a physical object without touching it; and *precognition*, the ability to predict future events.

The general term for such unusual abilities is *paranormal phenomena*. *Paranormal* means "outside the range of normal experience." Thus, these phenomena cannot be explained by known laws of science and nature. **Parapsychology** refers to the scientific investigation of claims of various paranormal phenomena. Contrary to what many people think, very few psychologists conduct any kind of parapsychological research.

Have you ever felt as if you had just experienced ESP? Consider this example: Some years ago, Sandy had a vivid dream that her cat Nubbin got lost. The next morning, Nubbin sneaked out the back door, went for an unauthorized stroll in the woods, and was gone for three days. Did Sandy have a precognitive dream?

Such common instances are sometimes used to "prove" that ESP exists. However, two less extraordinary concepts can explain both occurrences: coincidence and the fallacy of positive instances. *Coincidence* describes an event that occurs simply by chance. For example, you have over a thousand dreams per year, most of which are about familiar people and situations. By mere chance, *some* aspect of *some* dream will occasionally correspond with reality.

The *fallacy of positive instances* is the tendency to remember coincidental events that seem to confirm our belief about unusual phenomena and to forget all the instances that do not. For example, think of the number of times you've had a dream that did *not* come true. Such situations are far more common than their opposites, but we quickly forget about the hunches that are not confirmed.

Why do people attribute chance events to ESP? Research has shown that believers in ESP are less likely to accurately estimate the probability of an event occurring by chance alone. Nonbelievers tend to be more realistic about the probability of events being the result of simple coincidence or chance (Dagnall & others, 2007; Rogers & others, 2009).

Parapsychologists attempt to study ESP in the laboratory under controlled conditions. Many initially convincing demonstrations of ESP are later shown to be the result of research design problems or of the researcher's unintentional cuing of the subject. Another problem involves *replication*. To be considered valid, experimental results must be able to be replicated, or repeated, by other scientists under identical laboratory conditions. Skeptics claim, and most psychologists agree, that to date, no parapsychology experiment claiming to show evidence of the existence of ESP has been successfully replicated (Hyman, 2010).

One active area of parapsychological research is the study of clairvoyance using an experimental procedure called the *ganzfeld procedure* (J. Palmer, 2003; Westerlund & others, 2006). (*Ganzfeld* is a German word that means "total field.") In a ganzfeld study, a "sender" in one room attempts to communicate the content of pictures or short video clips to a receiver in a separate room. Isolated from all contact and wearing goggles and headphones to block external sensory stimuli, the "receiver" attempts to detect the image that is being sent.

Summarizing dozens of ganzfeld studies conducted over 15 years, Lance Storm and his colleagues (2010, 2013) showed a "hit" rate that was well above chance, implying that some sort

MYTH

Is it true that most psychologists study extrasensory perception (ESP)?



Think Like a SCIENTIST

Do you have psychic powers? Go to LaunchPad: Resources to Think Like a Scientist about ESP.



ESP (extrasensory perception)

Perception of information by some means other than through the normal processes of sensation.

parapsychology The scientific investigation of claims of paranormal phenomena and abilities.

(Wertheimer, 1923/2009). The Gestalt psychologists emphasized that we perceive whole objects or figures (*gestalts*) rather than isolated bits and pieces of sensory information. Roughly translated, the German word *gestalt* means a unified whole, form, or shape. Although the Gestalt school of psychology no longer formally exists, the pioneering work of the Gestalt psychologists established many basic perceptual principles (S. Palmer, 2002).

The Perception of Shape

WHAT IS IT?

When you look around your world, you don't see random edges, curves, colors, or splotches of light and dark. Rather, you see countless distinct objects against a variety of backgrounds. Although to some degree we rely on size, color, and texture to determine what an object might be, we rely primarily on an object's *shape* to identify it.

Age Regression Through Hypnosis? Some people believe that hypnosis can allow you to reexperience an earlier stage of your life—a phenomenon called *age regression*. Under hypnosis, some adults *do* appear to relive experiences from their childhood, confidently displaying childlike speech patterns and behaviors. However, when attempts are made to verify specific details of the experiences, the details are usually inaccurate (Spanos, 1987–1988). Just as actual deafness and blindness are not produced by hypnotic suggestion, neither is a true return to childhood. Instead, hypnotic subjects combine fragments of actual memories with fantasies and ideas about how children of a particular age should behave.



neodissociation theory of hypnosis

Theory proposed by Ernest Hilgard that explains hypnotic effects as being due to the splitting of consciousness into two simultaneous streams of mental activity, only one of which the hypnotic participant is consciously aware during hypnosis.

hidden observer Hilgard's term for the hidden, or dissociated, stream of mental activity that continues during hypnosis.

simultaneous streams of mental activity. According to Hilgard's **neodissociation theory of hypnosis**, a hypnotized person consciously experiences one stream of mental activity that complies with the hypnotist's suggestions. But a second, dissociated stream of mental activity is also operating, processing information that is unavailable to the consciousness of the hypnotized subject. Hilgard (1986a, 1992) referred to this second, dissociated stream of mental activity as the **hidden observer**. (The phrase *hidden observer* does *not* mean that the hypnotized person has multiple personalities.)



CRITICAL THINKING

Is Hypnosis a Special State of Consciousness?

Are the changes in perception, thinking, and behaviors that occur during hypnosis the result of a "special" or "altered" state of consciousness? Here, we'll consider the evidence for three competing points of view on this issue.

The State View: Hypnosis Involves a Special State

The "state" explanation contends that hypnosis is a unique state of consciousness, distinctly different from normal waking consciousness (Wagstaff, 2014). The state view is perhaps best represented by Hilgard's *neodissociation theory of hypnosis*. According to this view, consciousness is split into two simultaneous streams of mental activity during hypnosis. One stream of mental activity remains conscious, but a second stream of mental activity—the one responding to the hypnotist's suggestions—is "dissociated" from awareness (Sadler & Woody, 2010). So according to the neodissociation theory, the hypnotized young woman shown on page 157 reported no pain because the painful sensations were dissociated from awareness.

The Non-State View: Ordinary Psychological Processes

Some psychologists reject the notion that hypnotically induced changes involve a "special" state of consciousness. According to the *social-cognitive view of hypnosis*, subjects are responding to the *social demands* of the hypnosis situation. They act the way they think good hypnotic subjects are supposed to act, conforming to

the expectations of the hypnotist, their own expectations, and situational cues (Lynn & Green, 2011). In this view, the "hypnotized" young woman on page 157 reported no pain because that's what she expected to happen during the hypnosis session.

To back up the social cognitive theory of hypnosis, Nicholas Spanos (1991, 1994, 2005) and his colleagues amassed an impressive array of evidence showing that highly motivated people often perform just as well as hypnotized subjects in demonstrating pain reduction, amnesia, age regression, and hallucinations. Studies of people who simply *pretended* to be hypnotized have shown similar results. On the basis of such findings, non-state theorists contend that hypnosis can be explained in terms of rather ordinary psychological processes, including imagination, situational expectations, role enactment, compliance, and conformity (Wagstaff & Cole, 2005).

The Imaginative Suggestibility View

Challenging the social cognitive view, however, are the results of numerous brain-imaging studies showing that hypnosis can produce alterations in brain function (see Oakley & Halligan, 2013). For example, in one study, hypnotized participants were given instructions to "drain" color from a visual image made up of colored rectangles or, conversely, to "add" color to a visual image made up of gray rectangles, like those shown to the right. The brain function of hypnotized participants reflected the hypnosis-induced visual hallucination—*not* the actual images that participants viewed (Kosslyn & others, 2000).

CRITICAL THINKING

Emotion in Nonhuman Animals: Laughing Rats, Silly Elephants, and Smiling Dolphins?

Do animals experience emotions? If you've ever frolicked with a playful puppy or shared the contagious contentment of a cat purring in your lap, the answer seems obvious. But before you accept that answer, remember that emotion involves three components: physiological arousal, behavioral expression, and subjective experience. In many animals, fear and other "emotional" responses appear to involve physiological and brain processes that are similar to those involved in human emotional experience. In mammals, it's also easy to observe behavioral responses when an animal is menaced by a predator or by the anger in aggressive displays. But what about subjective experience?

Darwin on Animal Emotions

Charles Darwin never doubted that animals experienced emotions. In his landmark work *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and*



Argument/Getty Images

Laughing Rats? Rats are sociable, playful creatures. They emit distinct, high-pitched chirps when they play, anticipate treats, and during positive social interactions. They also chirp when they're tickled by researchers like neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp (2000, 2007). But when infant rats are separated from their mothers, or when they're cold, they emit a distress cry that is much lower in frequency than the ultrasonic chirps that are associated with pleasant experiences.



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Foxes in Love? Rather than living in a pack like coyotes or wolves, their evolutionary relatives, red foxes form a monogamous pair bond and often mate for life. They live, play, and hunt together and share in the care of their offspring. It's tempting, but unscientific, to label their bond as "love."

Animals, Darwin (1872) contended that differences in emotional experience between nonhuman animals and humans are a matter of degree, not kind. "The lower animals, like man, manifestly feel pleasure and pain, happiness and misery," he wrote in *The Descent of Man* in 1871. From Darwin's perspective, the capacity to experience emotion is yet another evolved trait that humans share with lower animals (Bekoff, 2007).

One problem in establishing whether animals experience emotion is the difficulty of determining the nature of an animal's subjective experience (Kuczaj, 2013). Even Darwin (1871) readily acknowledged this problem, writing, "Who can say what cows feel, when they surround and stare intently on a dying or dead companion?"

Anthropomorphism: Happy Dolphins?

Despite the problem of knowing just what an animal is feeling, we often *think* that we do. For example, one reason that dolphins are



Video material is provided by BBC Worldwide Learning and CBS News Archives and produced by Princeton Academic Resources

To view footage of Paul Ekman and his groundbreaking research on facial expression in Papua New Guinea, go to **Video Activity: Emotion and Facial Expression**.

hearing children (Goodenough, 1932; Matsumoto & Hwang, 2011b). Similarly, the spontaneous facial expressions of children and young adults who were born blind do not differ from those of sighted children and adults (Galati & others, 1997, 2003).

CULTURE AND EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

Facial expressions for the basic emotions seem to be universal across different cultures (Waller & others, 2008). Ekman (1982) and other researchers showed photographs of facial expressions to people in 21 different countries. Despite their different cultural experiences, all the participants identified the emotions being expressed with a high degree of accuracy (see Ekman, 1998). Even the inhabitants of remote, isolated villages in Papua New Guinea, who had never been exposed to movies or other aspects of Western culture, were able to identify the emotions being expressed. Other research has confirmed and extended Ekman's original findings (see Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Frank & Stennett, 2001).

Other aspects of emotional expression, such as tone of voice and nonverbal expression, also seem to be easily understood across widely different cultures. As anyone who has ever been the target of a sarcastic remark is well aware, the human voice very effectively conveys emotional messages. Several studies have

support for its effectiveness in improving cognitive functioning in late adulthood (Hertzog & others, 2009). The Focus on Neuroscience “Boosting the Aging Brain” provides a look at a new experiment that demonstrated the remarkable effects of a moderate exercise program on the brains of elderly adults.

In contrast, the greatest intellectual declines tend to occur in older adults with unstimulating lifestyles, such as people who live alone, are dissatisfied with their lives, and engage in few activities (see Calero-Garcia & others, 2007; Newson & Kemps, 2005).

Social Development

One theory of social development in late adulthood holds that older adults gradually “disengage,” or withdraw, from vocational, social, and relationship roles as they face the prospect of their lives ending (Lange & Grossman, 2010). But consider your author Sandy’s father, Erv. Even after Erv was well into his 80s, he bowled in a league every Tuesday night and would join about a dozen other retired men in their 70s and 80s for lunch and a monthly poker game.

What Erv and his buddies epitomized is the activity theory of aging. According to the **activity theory of aging**, life satisfaction in late adulthood is highest when you maintain your previous level of activity, either by continuing old activities or by finding new ones (Lange & Grossman, 2010).

Just like younger adults, older adults differ in the level of activity they find personally optimal. Some older adults pursue a busy lifestyle of social activities, travel, college classes, and volunteer work. Other older adults are happier with a quieter lifestyle: reading, pursuing hobbies, or simply putting around their homes. Such individual preferences reflect lifelong temperamental and personality qualities that continue to be evident as a person ages.

For many older adults, caregiving responsibilities can persist well into late adulthood. Sandy’s mother, Fern, for example, spent a great deal of time helping out with her young grandchildren and caring for some of her older relatives. She was not unusual in that respect. Many older adults who are healthy and active find themselves taking care of other older adults who are sick or have physical limitations.

Along with satisfying social relationships, the psychological well-being in old age includes achieving what Erik Erikson called *ego integrity*—the feeling that one’s life has been meaningful (Erikson & others, 1986). Older adults experience ego integrity when they look back on their lives and feel satisfied with their accomplishments, accepting whatever mistakes or missteps they may have made (Torres & others, 2008, 2009). In contrast, those who are filled with regrets or bitterness about past mistakes, missed opportunities, or bad decisions experience *despair*—a deep sense of disappointment in life. Often the theme of ego integrity versus despair emerges as older adults engage in a *life review*, thinking about or retelling their life story to others (Bohlmeijer & others, 2007; Kunz & Solty, 2007).

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The Final Chapter

DYING AND DEATH

KEY THEME

Attitudes toward dying and death are as diverse in late adulthood as they are throughout the lifespan.

KEY QUESTIONS

▶ How did Kübler-Ross describe the stages of dying?

▶ What are some individual variations in attitudes toward death and dying?

It is tempting to view death as the special province of the very old. Of course, death can occur at any point during the lifespan. It’s also tempting to assume that older adults have come to a special understanding about death—that they view the prospect of dying

activity theory of aging The psychosocial theory that life satisfaction in late adulthood is highest when people maintain the level of activity they displayed earlier in life.

CRITICAL THINKING

Freud Versus Rogers on Human Nature

Freud's view of human nature was deeply pessimistic. He believed that the human aggressive instinct was innate, persistent, and pervasive. Were it not for internal superego restraints and external societal restraints, civilization as we know it would collapse: The destructive instincts of humans would be unleashed. As Freud (1930) wrote in *Civilization and Its Discontents*:

Men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbor is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. *Man is a wolf to man.*

In Freud's view, then, the essence of human nature is destructive. Control of these destructive instincts is necessary. Yet societal, cultural, religious, and moral restraints also make people frustrated, neurotic, and unhappy. Why? Because the strivings of the id toward instinctual satisfaction *must* be frustrated if civilization and the human race are to survive. Hence, as the title of Freud's book emphasizes, civilization is inevitably accompanied by human "discontent."

A pretty gloomy picture, isn't it? Yet if you watch the evening news or read the newspaper, you may find it hard to disagree with Freud's negative image of human nature. People *are* often exceedingly cruel and selfish, committing horrifying acts of brutality against strangers and even against loved ones.

However, you might argue that people can also be extraordinarily kind, self-sacrificing, and loving toward others. Freud would agree with this observation. Yet according to his theory, "good" or "moral" behavior does not disprove the essentially destructive nature of people. Instead, he explains good or moral behavior in terms of superego control, sublimation of the instincts, displacement, and so forth.

But is this truly the essence of human nature? Carl Rogers disagreed strongly. "I do not discover man to be well characterized in his basic nature by such terms as *fundamentally hostile, antisocial, destructive, evil*," Rogers (1957a) wrote. Instead, Rogers believed that people are more accurately described as "*positive, forward-moving, constructive, realistic, trustworthy*."

If this is so, how can Rogers account for the evil and cruelty in the world? Rogers didn't deny that people can behave destructively and cruelly. Yet throughout his life, Rogers insisted that people are innately good. Rogers (1981) attributed the existence of evil to cultural factors:

The rough manner of childbirth, the infant's mixed experience with the parents, the constricting, destructive influence of our educational system, the injustice of our distribution of wealth, our cultivated prejudices against individuals who are different—all these elements and many others warp the human organism in directions which are antisocial.

In sharp contrast to Freud, Rogers (1964) said we should *trust* the human organism because the human who is truly free to choose



Are People Innately Good . . . or Innately Evil? A member of Doctors Without Borders administers polio vaccines to children who are among the tens of thousands of refugees fleeing civil war in South Sudan. Doctors Without Borders is an international group of medical workers that won the Nobel Peace Prize for its work in helping the victims of violence and disasters all over the world.

On the one hand, violence motivated by political or ethnic hatred seems to support Freud's contentions about human nature. On the other hand, the selfless behavior of those who help others, often at a considerable cost to themselves, seems to support Rogers's view. Which viewpoint do you think more accurately describes the essence of human nature?

will naturally gravitate toward behavior that serves to perpetuate the human race and improve society as a whole:

I dare to believe that when the human being is inwardly free to choose whatever he deeply values, he tends to value those objects, experiences, and goals that will make for his own survival, growth, and development, and for the survival and development of others. . . . The psychologically mature person as I have described him has, I believe, the qualities which would cause him to value those experiences which would make for the survival and enhancement of the human race.

Two great thinkers, two diametrically opposed views of human nature. Now it's your turn to critically evaluate their views.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- Are people inherently driven by aggressive instincts, as Freud claimed? Must the destructive urges of the id be restrained by parents, culture, religion, and society if civilization is to continue? Would an environment in which individuals were unrestrained inevitably lead to an unleashing of destructive instincts?
- Or are people naturally good, as Rogers claimed? If people existed in a truly free and nurturing environment, would they invariably make constructive choices that would benefit both themselves and society as a whole?