The Ultimate AP® Psychology Unit 4 Cheat Sheet

4.1 Attribution Theory & Person Perception

Attributions

Attribution: explaining behavior. **Dispositional** = internal (traits, ability); **situational** = external circumstances.

Bias	Pattern
Fundamental attribution error	Others' acts → traits, not situation
Actor/observer bias	Mine → situation; theirs → traits
Self-serving bias	Wins → me; losses → situation

Explanatory style: predictable way of explaining good & bad events; **optimistic** (bad = temporary, specific, external) vs **pessimistic** (bad = permanent, global, internal).
Culture: FAE stronger in individualist cultures; collectivist cultures weigh situational context more.

Locus of Control

Internal locus: outcomes come from my effort & choices → more persistence, achievement, lower stress. **External**: luck, fate, powerful others control outcomes.
Ex: "I got the job b/c I prepared" (internal) vs "I got lucky with the interviewer" (external locus of control).

Person Perception

Mere exposure effect: repeated exposure to a stimulus → liking it more (songs, faces, brands, ads).
Self-fulfilling prophecy: beliefs about someone → behavior that draws out confirming acts (teacher expectations).
Social comparison: judging self vs others; **upward** (vs better-off) or **downward** (vs worse-off → self-esteem).
Relative deprivation: feeling deprived compared w/ others, even if you're objectively well off (a silver medalist vs gold).

⚠ FAE = judging OTHERS; actor/observer = self vs others; self-serving = explaining your OWN outcomes.

✓ FRQ: name the attribution (dispositional/situational) AND tie it to the scenario's specific behavior.

4.2 Attitude Formation & Attitude Change

Stereotypes, Prejudice & Discrimination

Term	Component	Ex
Stereotype	Belief (cognitive)	"Athletes are bad at math"
Prejudice	Attitude (affect)	Disliking a group
Discrimination	Behavior	Not hiring them

Stereotype: generalized concept about a group; cuts cognitive load but often causes & results from biased perception → prejudice & discrimination.
Implicit attitudes: held w/o awareness; measured indirectly (reaction-time tests like the IAT), not self-report.

Biases Behind Prejudice

Just-world phenomenon: belief that people get what they deserve → blaming victims for misfortune.
Out-group homogeneity: "they're all alike, we're diverse." **In-group bias**: favoring your own group.
Ethnocentrism: judging other cultures by your own culture's standards & seeing your own as superior.

Belief Perseverance & Dissonance

Belief perseverance: clinging to a belief even after evidence shows it's wrong (e.g., after a study is retracted); fed by **confirmation bias** (seeking only supporting info).
Cognitive dissonance: discomfort when actions & attitudes conflict → change one to restore consistency.
Classic study: Festinger & Carlsmith (1959): paid $1 to call a dull task fun → later rated it MORE enjoyable than those paid $20 (too little justification → change the attitude).
Ex: a smoker who knows smoking is harmful either quits (change action) or decides "the risks are exaggerated" (change attitude) to ease the discomfort.

⚠ Prejudice = attitude; discrimination = action. A biased feeling w/o action is NOT discrimination.

✓ Dissonance needs a conflict between what you DO & believe; less external justification → more attitude change.

4.3 Social Situations: Norms & Influence

Norms, Roles & Social Influence

Social norms: expectations & roles a society sets for members; **roles** can reshape behavior (Zimbardo's Stanford Prison study, 1971: heavily criticized for methods & ethics).
Normative influence: conform to be accepted.
Informational: conform b/c others seem to know what's right, esp. in unclear situations (a new school).

Persuasion

Route (ELM)	When	Persuades by
Central	High motivation & ability	Strong arguments, evidence
Peripheral	Low motivation, distracted	Cues: attractiveness, fame, halo

ELM: central-route change lasts longer; **halo effect** (1 good trait → assume others) = peripheral cue.
Foot-in-the-door: small request → larger one. **Door-in-the-face**: huge request refused → smaller one OK.

Conformity & Obedience

Asch (1950s): line-length task; ~37% of answers matched an obviously wrong group; ~75% conformed at least once.
Conformity ↑: unanimous group of 3+, public answers, ambiguous task, high-status group, collectivism.
Milgram (1963): 65% of participants gave the max "450-volt" shocks when an experimenter ordered them to continue.
Obedience ↑: authority is close & legitimate, prestigious institution, distant victim, no defiant models.
Ethics: Milgram & Zimbardo → stress & deception; today need informed consent, debriefing & IRB approval.

⚠ Conformity = matching a GROUP's norm (no order); obedience = following an AUTHORITY's direct command.

✓ AAQ/EBQ: label persuasion techniques by sequence: small → big = foot-in-door; big → small = door-in-face.

4.3 Groups, Culture & Prosocial Behavior

Culture

Individualism: personal goals, independent self.
Collectivism: group goals, interdependent self.
Multiculturalism: valuing many cultures.

Group Effects

Effect	What happens
Group polarization	Talk → more extreme views
Groupthink	Harmony > critical thought
Diffusion of resp.	Crowd → less personal duty
Social loafing	Less effort in pooled tasks
Deindividuation	Anonymity → lost restraint
Social facilitation	Audience boosts easy tasks

Social facilitation: audience → arousal → better on simple tasks, worse on new/hard ones (expert vs novice).
Groupthink ex: Bay of Pigs (1961) advisers stayed silent; prevent it w/ a devil's advocate & outside experts.
Deindividuation ex: online trolls or rioting crowds; anonymity + group arousal lowers self-awareness.
False consensus effect: overestimating how much others share your opinions & behaviors ("everyone cheats").

Conflict, Work & Helping

Superordinate goals unite rival groups (Sherif's Robbers Cave); **social traps**: self-interest → group loses (overfishing).
I/O psychology: workplace behavior: management, teamwork, job satisfaction & **burnout** (chronic work stress).
Altruism: selfless helping; or social debt: **reciprocity norm** (repay help), **social responsibility norm** (help the needy).
Bystander effect: more bystanders → less helping (diffusion of resp.); help ↑ if alone, situation clear.

⚠ Social loafing = less EFFORT in a group task; diffusion of responsibility = less HELPING in an emergency.

✓ Scenario cues: anonymity → deindividuation; audience → facilitation; pooled effort → social loafing.

4.4 Psychodynamic & Humanistic Personality

Psychodynamic Theory (Freud)

Core idea: unconscious processes drive personality; childhood conflicts & hidden desires shape behavior.

Part	Principle	Role
Id	Pleasure	Unconscious drives, wants now
Ego	Reality	Mediates id & superego
Superego	Morality	Conscience, ideals

Levels of mind: conscious (now), preconscious (retrievable), unconscious (hidden thoughts & urges).

Ego Defense Mechanisms

Mechanism	Example
Denial	Ignoring a clear problem
Displacement	Mad at boss, yell at dog
Projection	Cheater accuses partner
Rationalization	"Didn't want it anyway"
Reaction formation	Extra nice to a rival
Regression	Adult throws a tantrum
Repression	Trauma memory blocked
Sublimation	Anger → boxing or art

Projective tests: ambiguous stimuli to probe the preconscious & unconscious: **Rorschach** inkblots, **TAT** (tell a story about a picture); low reliability & validity.

Humanistic Theory (Rogers)

Self-actualizing tendency: drive to grow & reach potential, fostered by **unconditional positive regard**.
Assessment: self-report questionnaires comparing actual self vs ideal self; congruence → healthier personality.

⚠ Out of scope: Freud's psychosexual stages & Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Don't build answers on them.

✓ Defense mechanism Qs: repression = forgetting; denial = refusing reality; displacement = safer target.

4.5 Social-Cognitive & Trait Theories

Social-Cognitive Theory (Bandura)

Reciprocal determinism: personality comes from the interaction of behavior, personal/cognitive factors & environment, each shaping the others.
Ex: a shy student (personal) avoids parties (behavior) → fewer invites (environment) → more shyness.
Self-concept: how you view yourself & yourself in relation to others; built from self-efficacy & self-esteem.

Term	Meaning	Ex
Self-efficacy	Belief you can succeed at a task	"I can solve this proof"
Self-esteem	Overall sense of self-worth	"I'm a worthwhile person"

Self-efficacy rises w/ past mastery, watching similar others succeed, encouragement & calm arousal.

Trait Theories

Traits: enduring characteristics that produce typical responses to stimuli across situations & time.

Big Five (OCEAN)	High scorers are…
Openness	Curious, imaginative, varied
Conscientiousness	Organized, careful, disciplined
Extraversion	Social, outgoing, energized by others
Agreeableness	Trusting, helpful, warm
Emotional stability	Calm, secure (low neuroticism)

Personality inventories: long self-report questionnaires, organized by **factor analysis** (clusters of related items).
Strengths: objective, reliable, predicts behavior averaged over time; weaker for 1 specific situation.

⚠ Self-efficacy = belief in ability for a TASK; self-esteem = overall WORTH. A common MCQ swap.

✓ Compare by assessment: projective tests (psychodynamic), inventories (trait), self-reports (humanistic); each fits its view of the mind.

4.6 Motivation

Theories of Motivation

Theory	Core idea
Drive-reduction	Need → drive → act → homeostasis
Arousal	Seek optimal arousal level
Self-determination	Intrinsic needs: autonomy, competence, relatedness
Incentive	Pulled by external rewards
Instinct	Innate fixed patterns (animals)

Drive-reduction: thirst → drink → homeostasis; explains biological needs but not curiosity or thrill seeking.
Yerkes-Dodson law: performance peaks at moderate arousal; easy tasks need higher arousal, hard tasks lower.
Intrinsic = for its own sake (love of reading); **extrinsic** = for rewards or to avoid punishment (grades, pay).
Instincts: innate, fixed behavior patterns in many non-human animals; humans show little true instinctual behavior.

Conflicts & Sensation Seeking

Lewin: **approach-approach** (2 goods), **avoidance-avoidance** (2 bads), **approach-avoidance** (1 option, good + bad: a dream school that is far from home).
Sensation seeking types: experience, thrill/adventure, disinhibition & boredom susceptibility.

Eating & Belonging

Hunger hormones: **ghrelin** (stomach) ↑ hunger; **leptin** (fat cells) ↑ satiety; hypothalamus regulates both.
External cues: food in view, time of day & social meals also trigger eating, even when you're not hungry.
Belongingness: need for close relationships motivates behavior; exclusion (ostracism) causes real distress.

⚠ Leptin = full (satiety); ghrelin = hungry. Mnemonic: ghrelin makes your stomach "growl."

✓ FRQ: name the theory & show the mechanism: e.g., "incentive theory: the bonus (external reward) pulls effort."

4.7 Emotion

What Emotion Is

Emotion: a psychological process distinct from reasoning; mix of physiological arousal, expressive behavior & conscious experience (the feeling itself).
Internal + external: emotions reflect body states & situations; e.g., a racing heart + a dark alley → fear.

How Emotion Theories Differ

Sequence	Claim
Body → feeling	Arousal comes first, then the emotion
Simultaneous	Arousal & feeling occur together
Arousal + label	Need a cognitive label to feel it

Exam rule: theory NAMES are out of scope; know the sequences & be able to apply them to a scenario.
Facial-feedback hypothesis: facial expressions shape emotional experience (smiling → happier), supporting body-first ideas; research results are mixed.
Broaden-and-build theory: positive emotions widen awareness & encourage new actions; negative emotions narrow thought & action (fight or flight).

Culture & Expression

Universal expressions: anger, disgust, sadness, joy, surprise & fear recognized across cultures (mixed evidence).
Display rules: cultural norms for when & how to show emotion; can vary by gender, age & socioeconomic class within a culture (e.g., "big boys don't cry").
Elicitors: events that trigger an emotion; what elicits disgust or shame can differ among cultures & groups.
Ex: in some cultures, people mask negative emotion in front of authority figures but show it freely in private.

⚠ Don't name emotion theories on the exam; describe the sequence of arousal, appraisal & feeling instead.

✓ AAQ: identify the variables (e.g., expression → mood rating) & whether the study supports facial feedback.