

1. Explain what can go wrong if you make an unwarranted assumption in an argument. Illustrate your answer with an example of an unwarranted assumption in an everyday situation.
2. Explain how a scientist would use deductive reasoning to make two separate predictions—one from social learning theory and the other from drive theory of aggression—concerning the level of aggression that would be expected based on each theory while following one group that watches a violent American football game and a second group that watches a gymnastics competition. Comparing the two predictions, which theory would you predict would be supported by the outcome of the experiment?

Answer Key

1. An unwarranted assumption is a premise of an argument that is taken for granted and assumed to be true; however, it is not supported by evidence and may not be true. If it is not true, it can lead to a faulty conclusion or judgment. A good example is the stereotyping of individuals based on the group to which an individual belongs—that is, assuming that a person has a characteristic of the group of which he or she is a member. Note also that the assumption that the group has certain characteristics is often unwarranted. As an example, suppose that a man who is well qualified for a job is evaluated poorly because it is assumed that he has some characteristic associated with his ethnic group. If he does not get hired for this reason, the employer may be missing out on hiring a good employee, and the man experiences an injustice. Moreover, the employer has likely violated civil rights laws.
2. Social learning theory predicts that people observing aggressive behavior will be more likely to subsequently behave more aggressively than people observing a non-aggressive activity. Drive theory predicts just the opposite: People observing a violent sport are predicted to vent their aggression and behave less aggressively than people observing a nonviolent sport. A scientist could use conditional deductive reasoning to make predictions from each theory about the performance of two groups. Based on social learning theory, if one group watched a violent football game and another watched gymnastics, then the group watching football would be expected to behave more aggressively than the group watching gymnastics. In contrast, according to the drive theory of aggression, if one group watched a violent football game and another watched gymnastics, then the group watching football would be expected to behave no more aggressively than the group watching gymnastics. You would predict that the results of an experiment would support social learning theory and the group watching the football game would be more likely to behave aggressively than the group watching gymnastics, as several studies making similar comparisons have shown.