



Introduction to
Psychology

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Flash Forward

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11.5 Prejudice and Discrimination

Human conflict can result in crime, war, and mass murder, such as genocide. Prejudice and discrimination can often be causes of human conflict, which explains how strangers come to hate one another to the extreme of causing others harm. It's also important to realize that prejudice and discrimination affect everyone. In this lesson, we will examine the definitions of prejudice and discrimination, examples of these concepts, and causes of these biases.

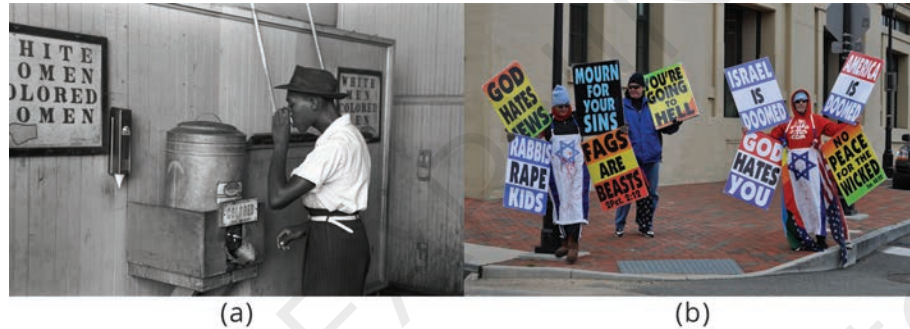


Figure 1: Prejudice and discrimination occur across the globe. (a) An African-American male drinks from a designated “colored” water fountain in Oklahoma in 1939 during the era of racial segregation as a practice of discrimination. (b) Members of the Westboro Baptist Church, widely identified as a hate group, engage in discrimination based on religion and sexual orientation.

Understanding Prejudice and Discrimination

On Your Own

Define *prejudice*, *stereotype*, and *discrimination* in your own words.

Term	Example
Prejudice	
Stereotype	
Discrimination	

As we discussed in the chapter opening story of Trayvon Martin, humans are very diverse, and although we share many similarities, we also have many differences. The social groups we belong to help form our identities (Tajfel, 1974). These differences may be difficult for some people to reconcile, which may lead to prejudice toward people who are different. **Prejudice** is a negative attitude and feeling toward an individual based solely on one's membership in a particular social group (Allport, 1954; Brown, 2010). Prejudice is common against people who are members of an unfamiliar cultural group. Thus, certain types of education, contact, interactions, and building relationships with members of different cultural groups can reduce the tendency toward prejudice. In fact, simply imagining interacting with members of different

cultural groups might affect prejudice. Indeed, when experimental participants were asked to imagine themselves positively interacting with someone from a different group, this led to an increased positive attitude toward the other group and an increase in positive traits associated with the other group. Furthermore, imagined social interaction can reduce anxiety associated with inter-group interactions (Crisp & Turner, 2009). What are some examples of social groups that you belong to that contribute to your identity? Social groups can include gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, social class, religion, sexual orientation, profession, and many more. And, as is true for social roles, you can simultaneously be a member of more than one social group. An example of prejudice is having a negative attitude toward people who are not born in the United States. Although people holding this prejudiced attitude do not know all people who were not born in the United States, they dislike them due to their status as foreigners.

Prejudice often begins in the form of a **stereotype**—that is, a specific belief or assumption about individuals based solely on their membership in a group, regardless of their individual characteristics. Stereotypes become overgeneralized and applied to all members of a group. For example, someone holding prejudiced attitudes toward older adults, may believe that older adults are slow and incompetent (Cuddy, Norton, & Fiske, 2005; Nelson, 2004). We cannot possibly know each individual person of advanced age to know that all older adults are slow and incompetent. Therefore, this negative belief is overgeneralized to all members of the group even though many of the individual group members may in fact be spry and intelligent.



Figure 2: This is a caricature based on a stereotype of Jewish stock-exchange speculators that appeared in the German satirical magazine *Fliegende Blätter* in 1851. The caption reads: “Herr Baron, that lad’s stealing your handkerchief!” “Let him go, we once started small too.”

Reflection Questions

What are some stereotypes and prejudices that you hold about people who are from a race, gender, and age group different from your own? How did this attitude develop?

On Your Own

Choose the term that is defined or represented by the following examples.

Thoughts and generalizations about people

- Prejudice
- Stereotype
- Discrimination

Feelings about groups of people that can be positive or negative

- Prejudice
- Stereotype
- Discrimination

“Yankees fans are arrogant and obnoxious.”

- Prejudice
- Stereotype
- Discrimination

“I would never hire nor become friends with a person if I knew he or she was a Yankees fan.”

- Prejudice
- Stereotype
- Discrimination

Another example of a well-known stereotype involves beliefs about racial differences among athletes. As Hodge, Burden, Robinson, and Bennett (2008) point out, Black male athletes are often believed to be more athletic, yet less intelligent, than their White male counterparts. These beliefs persist despite a number of high profile examples to the contrary. Sadly, such beliefs often influence how these athletes are treated by others and how they view themselves and their own capabilities. Whether or not you agree with a stereotype, stereotypes are generally well-known within a given culture (Devine, 1989).

Sometimes people will act on their prejudiced attitudes toward a group of people, and this behavior is known as discrimination. **Discrimination** is negative action toward an individual as a result of one’s membership in a particular group (Allport, 1954; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). As a result of holding negative beliefs (stereotypes) and negative attitudes (prejudice) about a particular group, people often treat the target of prejudice poorly, such as excluding older adults from their circle of friends. Have you ever been the target of discrimination? If so, how did this negative treatment make you feel?

So far, we’ve discussed stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination as negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors because these are typically the most problematic. However, it is important to also point out that people can hold positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors



Figure 3: In the same way discrimination includes negative treatment of a certain group, it also includes preferential treatments of certain groups.

toward individuals based on group membership; for example, they would show preferential treatment for people who are like themselves—that is, who share the same gender, race, or favorite sports team.

Types of Prejudice and Discrimination

When we meet strangers we automatically process three pieces of information about them: their race, gender, and age (Ito & Urland, 2003). Why are these aspects of an unfamiliar person so important? Why don't we instead notice whether their eyes are friendly, whether they are smiling, their height, the type of clothes they are wearing? Although these secondary characteristics are important in forming a first impression of a stranger, the social categories of race, gender, and age provide a wealth of information about an individual. This information, however, often is based on stereotypes. We may have different expectations of strangers depending on their race, gender, and age.

Racism

Racism is prejudice and discrimination against an individual based solely on one's membership in a specific racial group (such as toward African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, or European Americans). What are some stereotypes of various racial or ethnic groups? Research suggests cultural stereotypes for Asian Americans include cold, sly, and intelligent; for Latinos, cold and unintelligent; for European Americans, cold and intelligent; and for African Americans, aggressive, athletic, and more likely to be law breakers (Devine & Elliot, 1995; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Sommers & Ellsworth, 2000; Dixon & Linz, 2000).

Racism exists for many racial and ethnic groups. For example, Blacks are significantly more likely to have their vehicles searched during traffic stops than Whites, particularly when Blacks are driving in predominately White neighborhoods, (a phenomenon often termed “DWB,” or “driving while Black”) (Rojek, Rosenfeld, & Decker, 2012).

Mexican Americans and other Latino groups also are targets of racism from the police and other members of the community. For example, when purchasing items with a personal check, Latino shoppers are more likely than White shoppers to be asked to show formal identification (Dovidio et al., 2010).

In one case of alleged harassment by the police, several East Haven, Connecticut, police officers were arrested on federal charges due to reportedly continued harassment and brutalization of Latinos. When the accusations came out, the Mayor of East Haven was asked, “What are you doing for the Latino community today?” The Mayor responded, “I might have tacos when I go home; I'm not quite sure yet” (“East Haven Mayor,” 2012). This statement undermines the important issue of racial profiling and police harassment of Latinos while belittling Latino culture by emphasizing an interest in a food product stereotypically associated with Latinos.

Racism is prevalent toward many other groups in the United States including Native Americans, Arab Americans, Jewish Americans, and Asian Americans. Have you witnessed racism toward any of these racial or ethnic groups? Are you aware of racism in your community?

Further Resources

This video ([hawkesbiz.com/discrimination](https://www.hawkesbiz.com/discrimination)) demonstrates the concepts of prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. In the video, a social experiment is conducted in a park where three people try to steal a bike out in the open. The race and gender of the thief is varied: a White male teenager, a Black male teenager, and a White female. Does anyone try to stop them? The treatment of the teenagers in the video demonstrates the concept of racism.



Figure 4: South Carolina Senator Tim Scott spoke about how he experienced racial profiling while driving. “I do not know many African-American men who do not have a very similar story to tell—no matter their profession, no matter their income, no matter their disposition in life.”



Figure 5: This is an anti-conscription leaflet imploring voters to “Keep Australia White.” A horde of Asians bearing a dragon flag is shown to the north.

One reason modern forms of racism, and prejudice in general, are hard to detect is related to the dual attitudes model (Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000). Humans have two forms of attitudes: explicit attitudes, which are conscious and controllable, and implicit attitudes, which are unconscious and uncontrollable (Devine, 1989; Olson & Fazio, 2003). Because holding egalitarian views is socially desirable (Plant & Devine, 1998), most people do not show extreme racial bias or other prejudices on measures of their explicit attitudes. However, measures of implicit attitudes often show evidence of mild to strong racial bias or other prejudices (Greenwald, McGee, & Schwartz, 1998; Olson & Fazio, 2003).

Sexism

Sexism is prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based on their sex. Typically, sexism takes the form of men holding biases against women, but either sex can show sexism toward their own or their opposite sex. Like racism, sexism may be subtle and difficult to detect. Common forms of sexism in modern society include gender role expectations, such as expecting women to be the caretakers of the household. Sexism also includes people’s expectations for how members of a gender group should behave. For example, women are expected to be friendly, passive, and nurturing, and when women behave in an unfriendly, assertive, or neglectful manner, they often are disliked for violating their gender role (Rudman, 1998). Research by Laurie Rudman (1998) finds that when female job applicants self-promote, they are likely to be viewed as competent, but they may be disliked and are less likely to be hired because they violated gender expectations for modesty. Sexism can exist on a societal level such as in hiring, employment opportunities, and education. Women are less likely to be hired or promoted in male-dominated professions such as engineering, aviation, and construction (Figure 6) (Blau, Ferber, & Winkler, 2010; Ceci & Williams, 2011).



Figure 6: In 2016, five women of the U.S. women’s national soccer team filed a law suit against the U.S. Soccer Federation on the basis of wage discrimination. The women’s team, despite more wins and higher viewer ratings, receives lower compensation than the men’s team for friendly and non-friendly matches, base salary, World Cup wins, and Olympic wins.

Reflection Questions

Have you ever experienced or witnessed sexism? Why do you think there are perceptions about certain jobs as being more male- or female-oriented?

Ageism

People often form judgments and hold expectations about people based on their age. These judgments and expectations can lead to **ageism**, or prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based solely on their age. Typically, ageism occurs against older adults, but ageism also can occur toward younger adults. Think of expectations you hold for older adults. How could someone's expectations influence the feelings they hold toward individuals from older age groups? Ageism is widespread in U.S. culture (Nosek, 2005), and a common ageist attitude toward older adults is that they are incompetent, physically weak, and slow (Greenberg, Schimel, & Martens, 2002), and some people consider older adults less attractive. Some cultures, however, including some Asian, Latino, and African-American cultures, both outside and within the United States afford older adults respect and honor.

Reflection Questions

Ageism can also occur toward younger adults.

Have you ever experienced ageism? How did it impact you?

Homophobia

Another form of prejudice is **homophobia**: prejudice and discrimination of individuals based solely on their sexual orientation. Like ageism, homophobia is a widespread prejudice in U.S. society that is tolerated by many people (Herek & McLemore, 2013; Nosek, 2005). Negative feelings often result in discrimination, such as the exclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people from social groups and the avoidance of LGBT neighbors and co-workers. Individuals from the LGBT community often get turned down for jobs they are qualified for because of their sexual orientation.

Reflection Questions

Have you experienced or witnessed homophobia in real life? If not, have you witnessed it portrayed in media? What stereotypes, prejudiced attitudes, and discrimination were evident?

Dig Deeper

Research into Homophobia

Some people are quite passionate in their hatred for non-heterosexuals in our society. In some cases, people have been tortured and/or murdered simply because they were not heterosexual. This passionate response has led some researchers to question what motives might exist for homophobic people. Adams, Wright, & Lohr (1996) conducted a



Figure 7: Here are some protesters at a pride parade in Seattle.

study investigating this issue and their results were quite an eye-opener.

In this experiment, male college students were given a scale that assessed how homophobic they were; those with extreme scores were recruited to participate in the experiment. In the end, 64 men agreed to participate and were split into two groups: homophobic men and non-homophobic men. Both groups of men were fitted with a penile plethysmograph, an instrument that measures changes in blood flow to the penis and serves as an objective measurement of sexual arousal.

All men were shown segments of sexually explicit videos. One of these videos involved a sexual interaction between a man and a woman (heterosexual clip). One video displayed two females engaged in a sexual interaction (homosexual female clip), and the final video displayed two men engaged in a sexual interaction (homosexual male clip). Changes in penile tumescence were recorded during all three clips, and a subjective measurement of sexual arousal was also obtained. While both groups of men became sexually aroused to the heterosexual and female homosexual video clips, only those men who were identified as homophobic showed sexual arousal to the homosexual male video clip. While all men reported that their erections indicated arousal for the heterosexual and female homosexual clips, the homophobic men indicated that they were not sexually aroused (despite their erections) to the male homosexual clips. Adams et al. (1996) suggest that these findings may indicate that homophobia is related to homosexual arousal that the homophobic individuals either deny or are unaware of.

Why Do Prejudice and Discrimination Exist?

Prejudice and discrimination persist in society due to social learning and conformity to social norms. Children learn prejudiced attitudes and beliefs from society: their parents, teachers, friends, the media, and other sources of socialization, such as Facebook (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). If certain types of prejudice and discrimination are acceptable in a society, there may be normative pressures to conform and share those prejudiced beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, public and private schools are still somewhat segregated by social class. Historically, only children from wealthy families could afford to attend private schools, whereas children from middle- and low-income families typically attended public schools.

Reflection Questions

If a child from a low-income family received a merit scholarship to attend a private school, what concerns might her parents have about her treatment by classmates?

Stereotypes and Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

When we hold a stereotype about a person, we have expectations that he or she will fulfill that stereotype. A **self-fulfilling prophecy** is an expectation held by a person that alters his or her behavior

in a way that tends to make it true. When we hold stereotypes about a person, we tend to treat the person according to our expectations. This treatment can influence the person to act according to our stereotypic expectations, thus confirming our stereotypic beliefs. Research by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) found that disadvantaged students whose teachers expected them to perform well had higher grades than disadvantaged students whose teachers expected them to do poorly.

Reflection Questions

Have you ever fallen prey to the self-fulfilling prophecy or confirmation bias? Were you the source or target?

Consider this example of cause and effect in a self-fulfilling prophecy: if an employer expects an openly gay male job applicant to be incompetent, the potential employer might treat the applicant negatively during the interview by engaging in less conversation, making little eye contact, and generally behaving coldly toward the applicant (Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002). In turn, the job applicant will perceive that the potential employer dislikes him, and he will respond by giving shorter responses to interview questions, making less eye contact, and generally disengaging from the interview. After the interview, the employer will reflect on the applicant's behavior, which seemed cold and distant, and the employer will conclude, based on the applicant's poor performance during the interview, that the applicant was, in fact, incompetent. Thus, the employer's stereotype—gay men are incompetent and do not make good employees—is reinforced. Do you think this job applicant is likely to be hired? Treating individuals according to stereotypic beliefs can lead to prejudice and discrimination.

Another dynamic that can reinforce stereotypes is confirmation bias. When interacting with the target of our prejudice, we tend to pay attention to information that is consistent with our stereotypic expectations and ignore information that is inconsistent with our expectations. In this process, known as **confirmation bias**, we seek out information that supports our stereotypes and ignore information that is inconsistent with our stereotypes (Wason & Johnson-Laird, 1972). In the job interview example, the employer may not have noticed that the job applicant was friendly, engaging, and provided competent responses to the interview questions in the beginning of the interview. Instead, the employer focused on the job applicant's performance in the later part of the interview, after the applicant changed his demeanor and behavior to match the interviewer's negative treatment.

Social class stereotypes of individuals tend to arise when information about the individual is ambiguous. If information is unambiguous, stereotypes do not tend to arise (Baron et al., 1995).

In-Groups and Out-Groups

As discussed previously in this lesson, we all belong to a gender, race, age, and social economic group. These groups provide a powerful source of our identity and self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These groups serve as our in-groups. An **in-group** is a group that we identify with or see ourselves as belonging to. A group that we don't belong to, or an **out-group**, is a group that we view as fundamentally different from us. For example, if you are female, your gender in-group includes all females, and your gender out-group includes all males (Figure 9). People often view gender groups as being fundamentally different from each other in personality traits,



Figure 8: Confirmation bias has been described as an internal “yes man” that echoes back existing beliefs.

characteristics, social roles, and interests. Because we often feel a strong sense of belonging and emotional connection to our in-groups, we develop in-group bias: a preference for our own group over other groups. This **in-group bias** can result in prejudice and discrimination because the out-group is perceived as different and is less preferred than our in-group.



Figure 9: Children become aware of their gender in-group and out-group at a very young age.

Despite the group dynamics that seem only to push groups toward conflict, there are forces that promote reconciliation between groups: the expression of empathy, acknowledgment of past suffering on both sides, and the halt of destructive behaviors.

One function of prejudice is to help us feel good about ourselves and maintain a positive self-concept. This need to feel good about ourselves extends to our in-groups: we want to feel good and protect our in-groups. We seek to resolve threats individually and at the in-group level. This often happens by blaming an out-group for the problem. **Scapegoating** is the act of blaming an out-group when the in-group experiences frustration or is blocked from obtaining a goal (Allport, 1954).

On Your Own

Using the following table, identify one in-group and one out-group for your gender, race/ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. For both your in-group and the out-group you listed, identify a stereotype, an prejudiced statement against the group, and an example of discrimination that may be common for that group.

Question	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Religion	Sexual Orientation
Your In-Group				
Your Out-Group				
Stereotype of your in-group				
Stereotype of the out-group you listed				
Prejudiced statement against your in-group				
Prejudiced statement against the out-group you listed				
Example of discrimination against your in-group				
Example of discrimination against the out-group you listed				

Summary

As diverse individuals, humans can experience conflict when interacting with people who are different from each other. Prejudice, or negative feelings and evaluations, is common when people are from a different social group (i.e., out-group). Negative attitudes toward out-groups can lead to discrimination.

Prejudice and discrimination against others can be based on gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, or a variety of other social identities.

In-groups who feel threatened may blame the out-groups for their plight, thus using the out-group as a scapegoat for their frustration.

Flash Forward

Ready to dig into the vocabulary? Get some practice with this Hawkes Verified Quizlet set ([hawkes.biz/psych11q6](https://www.hawkesbiz.com/quizlet/psych11q6))!

11.6 Aggression

Throughout this chapter, we have discussed how people interact and influence one another's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in both positive and negative ways. People can work together to achieve great things, such as helping each other in emergencies: recall the heroism displayed during the 9/11 terrorist attacks. People also can do great harm to one another, such as conforming to group norms that are immoral and obeying authority to the point of murder: consider the mass conformity of Nazis during WWII. In this lesson, we will discuss a negative side of human behavior—aggression.

Aggression

Humans engage in **aggression** when they seek to cause harm or pain to another person. Aggression takes two forms depending on one's motives: hostile or instrumental. **Hostile aggression** is motivated by feelings of anger with intent to cause pain; a fight in a bar with a stranger is an example of hostile aggression. In contrast, **instrumental aggression** is motivated by achieving a goal and does not necessarily involve intent to cause pain (Berkowitz, 1993); a contract killer who murders for hire displays instrumental aggression.



Figure 1: Humans and animals show aggression for many different reasons.

On Your Own

Fill in the following chart with examples of both hostile and instrumental aggression.

Hostile Aggression	Instrumental Aggression
A child hits another child for taking her toy.	A child takes the last cookie, when his other classmates have not had a chance for a cookie.
When challenged about his masculinity, a man hits another in the face to demonstrate his "manliness."	A customer at the Gap, sorts through a stack of sweaters, unfolding each and then leaving them in a large pile on the display table.
	A dog walker does not pick up the dog poop from the neighbor's yard.

There are many different theories as to why aggression exists. Some researchers argue that aggression serves an evolutionary function (Buss, 2004). Men are more likely than women to show aggression (Wilson & Daly, 1985). From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, human male aggression, like that in nonhuman primates, likely serves to display dominance over other males, both to protect a mate and to perpetuate the male's genes (Figure 2). Sexual jealousy is part of male aggression; males endeavor to make sure their mates are not copulating with other males, thus ensuring their own paternity of the female's offspring. Although aggression provides an obvious evolutionary advantage for men, women also engage in aggression. Women typically display instrumental forms of aggression, with their aggression serving as a means to an end (Dodge & Schwartz, 1997). For example, women may express their aggression covertly, for example, by communication that impairs the social standing of another person. Another theory that explains one of the functions of human aggression is frustration aggression theory (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). This theory states that when humans are prevented from achieving an important goal, they become frustrated and aggressive.



Figure 2: Human males and nonhuman male primates endeavor to gain and display dominance over other males, as demonstrated in the behavior of these gorillas.

Bullying

A modern form of aggression is bullying. As you learn in your study of child development, socializing and playing with other children is beneficial for children's psychological development. However, as you may have experienced as a child, not all play behavior has positive outcomes. Some children are aggressive and want to play roughly. Other children are selfish and do not want to share toys. One form of negative social interactions among children that has become a national concern is bullying. **Bullying** is repeated negative treatment of another person, often an adolescent, over time (Olweus, 1993). A one-time incident in which one child hits another child on the playground would not be considered bullying: bullying is repeated behavior. The negative treatment typical in bullying is the attempt to inflict harm, injury, or humiliation, and bullying can include physical or verbal attacks. However, bullying doesn't have to be physical or verbal, it can be psychological. Research finds gender differences in how girls and boys bully others (American Psychological Association, 2010; Olweus, 1993). Boys tend to engage in direct, physical aggression, such as physically harming others. Girls tend to engage in indirect, social forms of aggression, such as spreading rumors, ignoring, or

socially isolating others. Based on what you have learned about child development and social roles, why do you think boys and girls display different types of bullying behavior?

Bullying involves three parties: the bully, the victim, and witnesses or bystanders. The act of bullying involves an imbalance of power with the bully holding more power—physically, emotionally, and/or socially—over the victim. The experience of bullying can be positive for the bully, who may enjoy a boost to self-esteem. However, there are several negative consequences of bullying for the victim and also for the bystanders. How do you think bullying negatively impacts adolescents? Being the victim of bullying is associated with decreased mental health, including experiencing anxiety and depression (APA, 2010). Victims of bullying may underperform in schoolwork (Bowen, 2011). Bullying also can result in the victim committing suicide (APA, 2010). How might bullying negatively affect witnesses?



Figure 3: Bullying can be physical or verbal.

Although there is not one single personality profile for who becomes a bully and who becomes a victim of bullying (APA, 2010), researchers have identified some patterns in children who are at a greater risk of being bullied (Olweus, 1993):

- Children who are emotionally reactive are at a greater risk for being bullied. Bullies may be attracted to children who get upset easily because the bully can quickly get an emotional reaction from them.
- Children who are different from others are likely to be targeted for bullying. Children who are overweight, cognitively impaired, or racially or ethnically different from their peer group may be at higher risk.
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender teens are at very high risk of being bullied and hurt.

Cyberbullying

With the rapid growth of technology, and widely available mobile technology and social networking media, a new form of bullying has emerged: cyberbullying (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009). **Cyberbullying**, like bullying, is repeated behavior that is intended to cause psychological or emotional harm to another person. What is unique about cyberbullying is that it is typically covert, concealed, done in private, and the bully can remain anonymous. This anonymity gives the bully power, and the victim may feel helpless, unable to escape the harassment, and unable to retaliate (Spears, Slee, Owens, & Johnson, 2009).

Reflection Questions

More than half of bullying situations (57%) stop when a peer intervenes on behalf of the student being bullied (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001).

What do you think are the barriers for a peer to stand up to a bully on behalf of another?

Why do you think that bullying ends more easily when another defends the target of the bullying?

Cyberbullying can take many forms, including harassing a victim by spreading rumors, creating a website defaming the victim, and ignoring, insulting, laughing at, or teasing the victim (Spears et al., 2009). In cyberbullying, it is more common for girls to be the bullies and victims because cyberbullying is nonphysical and is a less direct form of bullying (Figure 4) (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009). Interestingly, girls who become cyberbullies often have been the victims of cyberbullying at one time (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009). The effects of cyberbullying are just as harmful as traditional bullying and include the victim feeling frustration, anger, sadness, helplessness, powerlessness, and fear. Victims will also experience lower self-esteem (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009; Spears et al., 2009). Furthermore, recent research suggests that both cyberbullying victims and perpetrators are more likely to experience suicidal ideation, and they are more likely to attempt suicide than individuals who have no experience with cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). What features of technology make cyberbullying easier and perhaps more accessible to young adults? What can parents, teachers, and social networking websites, like Facebook, do to prevent cyberbullying?

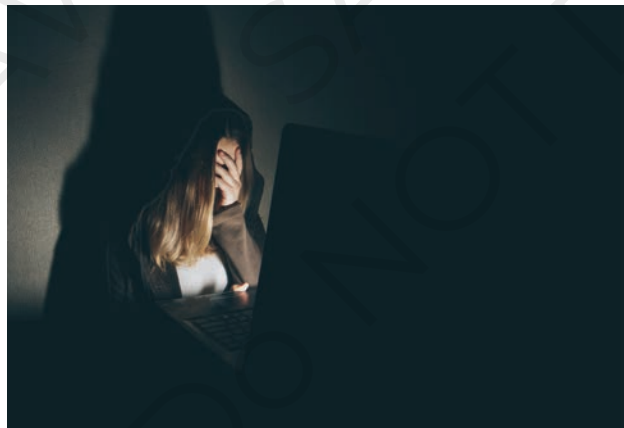


Figure 4: Because cyberbullying is not physical in nature, cyberbullies and their victims are most often female; however, there is much evidence that male homosexuals are frequently victims of cyberbullying as well (Hinduja & Patchin, 2011).



Figure 5: Diffusion of responsibility likely contributes to the bystander effect.

The Bystander Effect

The discussion of bullying highlights the problem of witnesses not intervening to help a victim. This is a common occurrence, as the following well-publicized event demonstrates.

In 1964, in Queens, New York, a 19-year-old woman named Kitty Genovese was attacked by a person with a knife near the back entrance to her apartment building and again in the hallway inside her apartment building. When the attack occurred, she screamed for help numerous times and eventually died from her stab wounds. This story became famous because reportedly numerous residents in the apartment building heard her cries for help and did nothing—neither helping her nor summoning the police—though these facts have been disputed.

Based on this case, researchers Latané and Darley (1968) described a phenomenon called the bystander effect. The **bystander effect** is a phenomenon in which a witness or bystander does not volunteer to help a victim or person in distress. Instead, they just watch what is happening. Social psychologists hold that we make these decisions based on the social situation, not our own personality variables. Why do you think the bystanders didn't help Genovese? What are the benefits to helping her? What are the risks? It is very likely you listed more costs than benefits to helping. In this situation, bystanders likely feared for their own lives—if they went to her aid, the attacker might harm them. However, how difficult would it have been to make a phone call to the police from the safety of their apartments? Why do you think no one helped in any way? Social psychologists claim that diffusion of responsibility is the likely explanation.

Diffusion of responsibility is the tendency for no one in a group to help because the responsibility to help is spread throughout the group (Bandura, 1999). Because there were many witnesses to the attack on Genovese, as evidenced by the number of lit apartment windows in the building, individuals assumed someone else must have already called the police. The responsibility to call the police was diffused across the number of witnesses to the crime. Have you ever passed an accident on the freeway and assumed that a victim or certainly another motorist has already reported the accident? In general, the greater the number of bystanders, the less likely any one person will help.

Summary

Aggression is seeking to cause another person harm or pain. Hostile aggression is motivated by feelings of anger with intent to cause pain, and instrumental aggression is motivated by achieving a goal and does not necessarily involve intent to cause pain. Bullying is an international public health concern that largely affects the adolescent population. Bullying is repeated behaviors that are intended to inflict harm on the victim and can take the form of physical, psychological, emotional, or social abuse. Bullying has negative mental health consequences for youth including suicide. Cyberbullying is a newer form of bullying that takes place in an online environment where bullies can remain anonymous and victims are helpless to address the harassment. Despite the social norm of helping others in need, when there are many bystanders witnessing an emergency, diffusion of responsibility will lead to a lower likelihood of any one person helping.

Group Activity

As you read, the bystander effect can be very powerful, holding people back from helping, especially when someone is desperately in need.

Test out the theory in real life. In pairs or small groups, go out into the community and create a situation in which one of the group member needs assistance, such as carrying a heavy load while trying to open the door. Have the person struggle alone while the other members watch to see if anyone comes to aid. Then, in a different location or time, re-create the situation. Except this time, have the other group members offer to help. See how many strangers offer to help as well.

11.7 Prosocial Behavior

You've learned about many of the negative behaviors of social psychology, but the field also studies many positive social interactions and behaviors. What makes people like each other? With whom are we friends? Whom do we date? Researchers have documented several features of the situation that influence whether we form relationships with others. There are also universal traits that humans find attractive in others. In this lesson, we discuss conditions that make forming relationships more likely, what we look for in friendships and romantic relationships, the different types of love, and a theory explaining how our relationships are formed, maintained, and terminated.

Flash Forward

Ready to dig into the vocabulary? Get some practice with this Hawkes Verified Quizlet set ([hawkes.biz/psych11q7](https://quizlet.com/set/psych11q7))!

Prosocial Behavior and Altruism

Do you voluntarily help others? Voluntary behavior with the intent to help other people is called **prosocial behavior**. Why do people help other people? Is personal benefit, such as feeling good about oneself, the only reason people help one another? Research suggests there are many other reasons. **Altruism** is people's desire to help others even if the costs outweigh the benefits of helping. In fact, people acting in altruistic ways may disregard the personal costs associated with helping (Figure 1). For example, news accounts of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York reported an employee in the first tower helped his co-workers make it to the exit stairwell. After helping a co-worker to safety, he went back in the burning building to help additional co-workers. In this case, the costs of helping were great, and the hero lost his life in the destruction (Stewart, 2002).



Figure 1: In the event of a crisis, people often spring into action and offer immediate help without weighing the costs.

Some researchers suggest that altruism operates on empathy. **Empathy** is the capacity to understand another person's perspective, to feel what he or she feels. An empathetic person makes an emotional connection with others and feels compelled to help (Batson, 1991). Other researchers argue that altruism is a form of selfless helping that is not motivated by benefits or feeling good about oneself. Certainly, after helping, people feel good about themselves, but some researchers argue that this is a consequence of altruism, not a cause. Other researchers argue that helping is always self-serving because our egos are involved, and we receive benefits from helping (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg 1997). It is challenging to determine experimentally the true motivation for helping, whether it is largely self-serving (egoism) or selfless (altruism). Thus, a debate on whether pure altruism exists continues.

Group Activity

In small groups, discuss the difference between apathy, empathy, and sympathy.

Now, have the members of the group think of a situation from your own lives in which empathy may be needed.

- What would an apathetic, sympathetic, or empathetic response be?
- What would the potential impact of each response be?

Forming Relationships

What do you think is the single most influential factor in determining with whom you become friends and whom you form romantic relationships? You might be surprised to learn that the answer is simple: the people with whom you have the most contact. This most important factor is proximity. You are more likely to be friends with people you have regular contact with. For example, there are decades of research that shows that you are more likely to become friends with people who live in your dorm, your apartment building, or your immediate neighborhood than with people who live farther away (Festinger, Schachler, & Back, 1950). It is simply easier to form relationships with people you see often because you have the opportunity to get to know them.

Further Resources

See this excerpt from the popular TV series *Friends* (hawkes.biz/altruism) for a discussion of the egoism versus altruism debate.

Reflection Questions

The mere-exposure effect is a psychological phenomenon by which people tend to develop a preference for things merely because they are familiar with them. This is an extension of proximity effects in regards to attraction. In other words, the more we see it, the more familiar we are with it, the more we like it.

Can you think of a person, a song, TV show, or product that you started to like after being exposed to it several times?

Similarity is another factor that influences who we form relationships with. We are more likely to become friends or lovers with someone who is similar to us in background, attitudes, and lifestyle. In fact, there is no evidence that opposites attract. Rather, we are attracted to people who are most like us (Figure 2) (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001).



Figure 2: People tend to be attracted to similar people. Many couples share a cultural background. This can be quite obvious in a ceremony such as a wedding and more subtle (but no less significant) in the day-to-day workings of a relationship.

Why do you think we are attracted to people who are similar to us? Sharing things in common will certainly make it easy to get along with others and form connections. When you and another person share similar music taste, hobbies, food preferences, and so on, deciding what to do with your time together might be easy. **Homophily** is the tendency for people to form social networks, including friendships, marriages, business relationships, and many other types of relationships, with others who are similar (McPherson et al., 2001).

Once we form relationships with people, we desire reciprocity. **Reciprocity** is the give and take in relationships. We contribute to relationships, but we expect to receive benefits as well. That is, we want our relationships to be a two-way street. We are more likely to like and engage with people who like us back. Self-disclosure is part of the two-way street. **Self-disclosure** is the sharing of personal information (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998). We form more intimate connections with people with whom we disclose important information about ourselves. Indeed, self-disclosure is a characteristic of healthy intimate relationships, as long as the information disclosed is consistent with our own views (Cozby, 1973).

Attraction

We have discussed how proximity and similarity lead to the formation of relationships and that reciprocity and self-disclosure are important for relationship maintenance. But, what features of a person do we find attractive? We don't form relationships with everyone that lives or works near us, so how is it that we decide which specific individuals we will select as friends and lovers?

Researchers have documented several characteristics in men and women that humans find attractive. First, we look for friends and lovers who are physically attractive. People differ in what they consider attractive, and attractiveness is culturally influenced. Research, however, suggests that some universally attractive features in women include large eyes, high cheekbones, a narrow jaw line, a slender build (Buss, 1989), and a lower waist-to-hip ratio (Singh, 1993). For men, attractive traits include being tall, having broad shoulders, and a narrow waist (Buss, 1989). Both men and women with high levels of facial and body symmetry are generally considered more attractive than asymmetric individuals (Fink, Neave, Manning, & Grammer, 2006; Penton-Voak et al., 2001; Rikowski & Grammer, 1999). Social traits that people find attractive in potential female mates include warmth, affection, and social skills; in males, the attractive traits include achievement, leadership qualities, and job skills (Regan & Berscheid, 1997).

Group Activity

Homophily limits our exposure to diversity (McPherson et al., 2001).

Individually, find an example in the news about a hate crime (like a mass shooting at synagogue) or racially based crime movements, such as #BlackLivesMatter.

In groups, introduce the news article you found, and how you think it is an example of the dark side of homophily.



Figure 3: Reciprocity within relationships is a two-way street.



Figure 4: Here are some examples of the matching hypothesis: famous couples (a) Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds and (b) Beyoncé and Jay-Z.

Although humans want mates who are physically attractive, this does not mean that we look for the most attractive person possible. In fact, this observation has led some to propose what is known as the matching hypothesis, which asserts that people tend to pick someone they view as their equal in physical attractiveness, and social desirability (Taylor, Fiore, Mendelsohn, & Cheshire, 2011). For example, you and most people you know likely would say that a very attractive movie star is out of your league. So, even if you had proximity to that person, you likely would not ask them out on a date because you believe you likely would be rejected. People weigh a potential partner's attractiveness against the likelihood of success with that person. If you think you are particularly unattractive (even if you are not), you likely will seek partners that are fairly unattractive (that is, unattractive in physical appearance or in behavior).

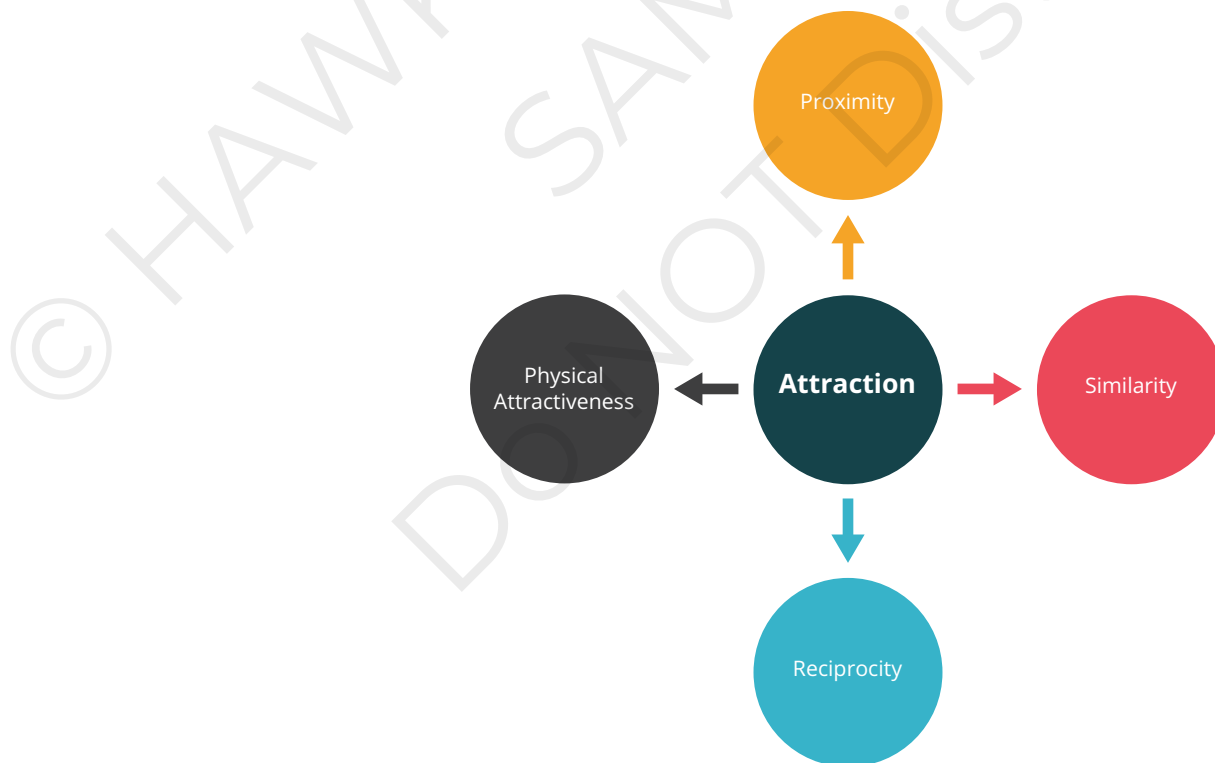


Figure 5: There are several factors that influence attraction.

Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love

We typically love the people with whom we form relationships, but the type of love we have for our family, friends, and lovers differs. Robert Sternberg (1986) proposed that there are three components of love: intimacy, passion, and commitment. These three components form a triangle that defines multiple types of love: this is known as Sternberg's **triangular theory of love** (Figure 6). Intimacy is the sharing of details and intimate thoughts and emotions. Passion is the physical attraction—the flame in the fire. Commitment is standing by the person—the “in sickness and health” part of the relationship.

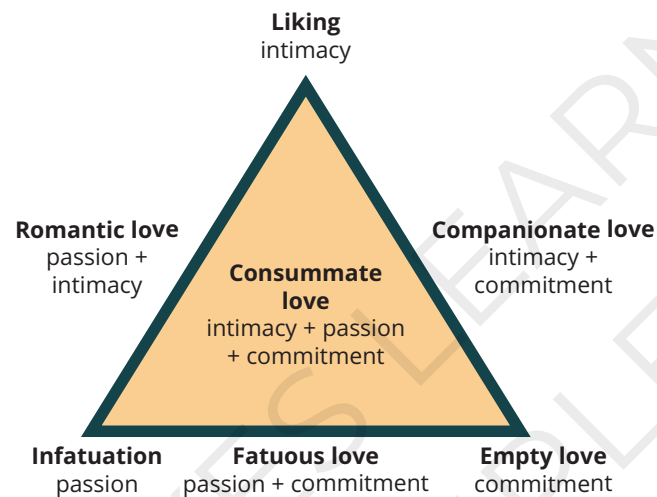


Figure 6: According to Sternberg's triangular theory of love, seven types of love can be described from combinations of three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment.

Sternberg (1986) states that a healthy relationship will have all three components of love—intimacy, passion, and commitment—which is described as **consummate love** (Figure 7). However, different aspects of love might be more prevalent at different life stages. Other forms of love include liking, which is defined as having intimacy but no passion or commitment. Infatuation is the presence of passion without intimacy or commitment. Empty love is having commitment without intimacy or passion. **Companionate love**, which is characteristic of close friendships and family relationships, consists of intimacy and commitment but no passion. **Romantic love** is defined by having passion and intimacy but no commitment. Finally, fatuous love is defined by having passion and commitment but no intimacy, such as a long-term sexual love affair. Can you describe other examples of relationships that fit these different types of love?

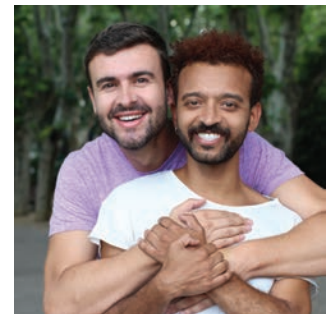


Figure 7: According to Sternberg, consummate love describes a healthy relationship containing intimacy, passion, and commitment.

On Your Own

Read the following examples and determine what type of love is being described.

1. In 2004, Britney Spears and her childhood friend, Jason Alexander, got married in Las Vegas. The marriage lasted for 55 hours.

- Empty Love
- Fatuous Love
- Companionate Love

2. Marcus and Danessa met at a party a month ago and fell in love “at first sight.” They have been together every free moment since.

- Romantic Love
- Fatuous Love
- Consummate Love

Social Exchange Theory

We have discussed why we form relationships, what attracts us to others, and different types of love. But what determines whether we are satisfied with and stay in a relationship? One theory that provides an explanation is social exchange theory. According to **social exchange theory**, we act as naïve economists in keeping a tally of the ratio of costs and benefits of forming and maintaining a relationship with others (Figure 8) (Rusbult & Van Lange, 2003).



Figure 8: Acting like naïve economists, people may keep track of the costs and benefits of maintaining a relationship. Typically, only those relationships in which the benefits outweigh the costs will be maintained.

People are motivated to maximize the benefits of social exchanges, or relationships, and minimize the costs. People prefer to have more benefits than costs, or to have nearly equal costs and benefits, but most people are dissatisfied if their social exchanges create more costs than benefits. Let’s discuss an example. If you have ever decided to commit to a romantic relationship, you probably considered the advantages and disadvantages of your decision. What are the benefits of being in a committed romantic relationship? You may have considered having companionship, intimacy, and passion but also being comfortable with a person you know well. What are the costs of being in a committed romantic relationship? You may think that over time boredom from being with only one person may set in; moreover, it may be expensive to share activities such as attending movies and going to dinner. However, the benefits of dating your romantic partner presumably outweigh the costs, or you wouldn’t continue the relationship.

Further Resources

Want to know more about the social exchange theory and *your* relationship? Check out this animated TedTalk (hawkes.biz/socialexchangetheory).

Summary

Altruism is a pure form of helping others out of empathy, which can be contrasted with egoistic motivations for helping. Forming relationships with others is a necessity for social beings.

We typically form relationships with people who are close to us in proximity and people with whom we share similarities. We expect reciprocity and self-disclosure in our relationships. We also want to form relationships with people who are physically attractive, though standards for attractiveness vary by culture and gender. There are many types of love that are determined by various combinations of intimacy, passion, and commitment; consummate love, which is the ideal form of love, contains all three components. When determining satisfaction and whether to maintain a relationship, individuals often use a social exchange approach and weigh the costs and benefits of forming and maintaining a relationship.

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