Module 3: Gender Through a Social Psychological Lens

Module Overview

In our third module we will put on a social psychological lens and tackle the complicated issues of relationships, stereotypes and aggression. We start by covering the need for affiliation that drives relationships and then consider factors affecting who we are attracted to. Loneliness and social rejection are discussed too as they can have a serious affect on mental health, discussed in more detail in Module 8. Mate selection strategies and specific types of relationships round out the first section, moving us into a discussion of stereotypes. We finish with information on aggression and its forms.

Module Outline

- 3.1. Relationships
- 3.2. Stereotypes
- 3.3. Aggression

Module Learning Outcomes

- Describe the need for affiliation and the negative effects of social rejection and loneliness.
- Clarify factors that increase interpersonal attraction between two people.
- Identify types of relationships and the components of love.
- Describe the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse as they relate to relationship conflicts, how to resolve them, and the importance of forgiveness.
3.1. Relationships

Section Learning Objectives

- Define interpersonal attraction.
- Define the need for affiliation.
- Report what the literature says about the need for affiliation.
- Define loneliness and identity its types.
- Describe the effect of loneliness on health.
- Describe social rejection and its relation to affiliation.
- Clarify how proximity affects interpersonal attractiveness.
- Clarify how familiarity affects interpersonal attractiveness.
- Clarify how beauty affects interpersonal attractiveness.
- Clarify how similarity affects interpersonal attractiveness.
- Clarify how reciprocity affects interpersonal attractiveness.
- Clarify how playing hard to get affects interpersonal attractiveness.
- Clarify how intimacy affects interpersonal attractiveness.
- Describe mate selection strategies used by men and women.
- List and describe types of relationships.
- Describe the importance of familial relationships.
- Describe the importance of friendships.
- Define love and describe its three components according to Sternberg.
- Define and describe jealousy.
- Describe Gottman’s Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.
- Propose antidotes to the horsemen.
- Clarify the importance of forgiveness in relationships.
- Clarify one potential factor on dissolution.

3.1.1. Defining Key Terms

Have you ever wondered why people are motivated to spend time with some people over others or why they chose the friends and significant others they do? If you have, you have given thought to interpersonal attraction or showing a preference for another person (remember, inter means between and so interpersonal is between people).

This relates to the need to affiliate/belong which is our motive to establish, maintain, or restore social relationships with
others, whether individually or through groups (McClelland & Koestner, 1992). It is important to point out that we affiliate with people who accept us though are generally indifferent while we tend to belong to individuals who truly care about us and for whom we have an attachment. In terms of the former, you affiliate with your classmates and people you work with while you belong to your family or a committed relationship with your significant other or best friend. The literature shows that:

- Leaders high in the need for affiliation are more concerned about the needs of their followers and engaged in more transformational leadership due to affiliation moderating the interplay of achievement and power needs (Steinmann, Otting, & Maier, 2016).
- Who wants to take online courses? Seiver and Troja (2014) found that those high in the need for affiliation were less, and that those high in the need for autonomy were more, likely to want to take another online course. Their sample included college students enrolled in classroom courses who had taken at least one online course in the past.
- Though our need for affiliation is universal, it does not occur in every situation and individual differences and characteristics of the target can factor in. One such difference is religiosity and van Cappellen et al. (2017) found that religiosity was positively related to social affiliation except when the identity of the affiliation target was manipulated to be a threatening out-group member (an atheist). In this case, religiosity did not predict affiliation behaviors.
- Risk of exclusion from a group (not being affiliated) led individuals high in a need for inclusion/affiliation to engage in pro-group, but not pro-self, unethical behaviors (Thau et al., 2015).
- When affiliation goals are of central importance to a person, they perceive the estimated interpersonal distance between them and other people as smaller compared to participants primed with control words (Stel & van Koningsbruggen, 2015).

**Loneliness** occurs when our interpersonal relationships are not fulfilling and can lead to psychological discomfort. In reality, our relationships may be fine and so our perception of being alone is what matters most and can be particularly troublesome for the elderly. Tiwari (2013) points out that loneliness can take three forms. First, *situational loneliness* occurs when unpleasant experiences, interpersonal conflicts, disaster, or accidents lead to loneliness. Second, *developmental loneliness* occurs when a person cannot balance the need to relate to others with a need for individualism, which “results in loss of meaning from their life which in turn leads to emptiness and loneliness in that person.” Third, *internal loneliness* arises when a person has low self-esteem and low self-worth and can be caused by locus of control, guilt or worthlessness, and inadequate coping strategies. Tiwari writes, “Loneliness has now become an important public health concern. It leads to pain, injury/loss, grief, fear, fatigue, and exhaustion. Thus, it also makes a person sick and interferes in day to day functioning and hampers recovery…. Loneliness with its epidemiology, phenomenology, etiology, diagnostic criteria, adverse effects, and management should be considered a disease and should find its place in classification of psychiatric disorders.” What do you think? Is loneliness a disease, needing to be listed in the DSM?

“Loneliness kills.” These were the opening words of a March 18, 2015 Time article describing alarming research which shows that loneliness increases the risk of death. How so? According to the meta-analysis of 70 studies published from 1980 to 2014, social isolation increases mortality by 29%, loneliness does so by 26%, and living alone by 32%; but being socially connected leads to higher survival rates (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). The authors note, as did Tiwari (2013) earlier, that social isolation and loneliness should be listed as a public health concern as it can lead to poorer health and decreased longevity, as well as CVD (coronary vascular disease; Holt-Lunstad & Smith, 2016). Other ill effects of loneliness include greater stimulated cytokine production due to stress which in turn causes inflammation (Jaremka et al., 2013); greater occurrence of suicidal behavior (Stickley & Koyanagi, 2016); pain, depression, and fatigue (Jarema et
al., 2014); and psychotic disorders such as delusional disorders, depressive psychosis, and subjective thought disorder (Badcock et al., 2015).

On a positive note, Stanley, Conwell, Bowen, and Van Orden (2013) found that for older adults who report feeling lonely, owning a pet is one way to feel socially connected. In their study, pet owners were found to be 36% less likely than non-pet owners to report feeling lonely. Those who lived alone and did not own a pet had the greatest odds of reporting loneliness. But the authors offer an admonition – owning a pet, if not managed properly, could actually be deleterious to health. They write, “For example, an older adult may place the well-being of their pet over the safety and health of themselves; they may pay for meals and veterinary services for their pet at the expense of their own meals or healthcare.” Bereavement concerns were also raised, though they say that with careful planning, any negative consequences of owning a pet can be mitigated.

Being rejected or ignored by others, called ostracism, hurts. No literally. It hurts. Research by Kross, Berman, Mischel, Smith, and Wager (2011) has shown that when rejected, brain areas such as the secondary somatosensory cortex and dorsal posterior insula which are implicated in the experience of physical pain, become active. So not only are the experience of physical pain and social rejection distressing, the authors say that they share a common somatosensory representation too.

So what do you do if you have experienced social rejection? A 2012 article by the American Psychological Association says to seek inclusion elsewhere. Those who have been excluded tend to become more sensitive to opportunities to connect and adjust their behavior as such. They may act more likable, show greater conformity, and comply with the requests of others. Of course, some respond with anger and aggression instead. The article says, “If someone’s primary concern is to reassert a sense of control, he or she may become aggressive as a way to force others to pay attention. Sadly, that can create a downward spiral. When people act aggressively, they’re even less likely to gain social acceptance.” The effects of long-term ostracism can be devastating but non-chronic rejection can be easier to alleviate. Seek out healthy positive connections with both friends and family as a way to combat rejection.

For more on the APA article, see https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/04/rejection.

3.1.2. Factors on Attraction

On April 7, 2015, Psychology Today published an article entitled, The Four Types of Attraction. Referred to as an attraction pyramid, it places status and health at the bottom, emotional in the middle, and logic at the top of the pyramid. Status takes on two forms. Internal refers to confidence, your skills, and what you believe or your values. External refers to your job, visual markers, and what you own such as a nice car or house. The article states that confidence may be particularly important and overrides external status in the long run. Health can include the way you look, move, smell, and your intelligence. The middle level is emotional which includes what makes us unique, trust and comfort, our emotional intelligence, and how mysterious we appear to a potential suitor. And then at the top is logic which helps us to be sure this individual is aligned with us in terms of life goals such as having kids, getting married, where we will live, etc. The article says – “With greater alignment, there is greater attraction.” Since online romance is trending now, the pyramid flips and we focus on logic, then emotion, and then status and health, but meeting in person is important and should be done as soon as possible. This way, we can be sure there is a physical attraction and can only be validated in person.

https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Gender_Studies/Book%3A_The_Psychology_of_Gender_(McRaney_et_al.)/02%3A…
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So how accurate is the article? We will tackle several factors on attraction to include proximity, familiarity, physical attractiveness, similarity, reciprocity, the hard-to-get effect, and intimacy, and then close with a discussion of mate selection.

3.1.2.1. Proximity. First, proximity states that the closer two people live to one another, the more likely they are to interact. The more frequent their interaction, the more likely they will like one another then. Is it possible that individuals living in a housing development would strike up friendships while doing chores? This is exactly what Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) found in an investigation of 260 married veterans living in a housing project at MIT. Proximity was the primary factor that led to the formation of friendships. For proximity to work, people must be able to engage in face-to-face communication which is possible when they share a communication space and time (Monge & Kirste, 1980) and proximity is a determinant of interpersonal attraction for both sexes (Allgeier and Byrne, 1972). A more recent study of 40 couples from Punjab, Pakistan provides cross-cultural evidence of the importance of proximity as well. The authors write, “The results of qualitative analysis showed that friends who stated that they share same room or same town were shown to have high scores on interpersonal attraction than friends who lived in distant towns and cities” (pg. 145; Batool & Malik, 2010).

3.1.2.2. Mere exposure – A case for familiarity?. In fact, the more we are exposed to novel stimuli, the greater our liking of them will be, called the mere exposure effect. Across two studies, Saegert, Swap, & Zajonc (1973) found that the more frequently we are exposed to a stimulus, even if it is negative, the greater our liking of it will be and that this holds true for inanimate objects but also interpersonal attitudes. They conclude, “…the mere repeated exposure of people is a sufficient condition for enhancement of attraction, despite differences in favorability of context, and in the absence of any obvious rewards or punishments by these people” (pg. 241).

Peskin and Newell (2004) present an interesting study investigating how familiarity affects attraction. In their first experiment, participants rated the attractiveness, distinctiveness, and familiarity of 84 monochrome photographs of unfamiliar female faces obtained from US high school yearbooks. The ratings were made by three different groups – 31 participants for the attractiveness rating, 37 for the distinctiveness rating, and 30 for the familiarity rating – and no participant participated in more than one of the studies. In all three rating studies, a 7-point scale was used whereby 1 indicated that the face was not attractive, distinctive, or familiar and 7 indicated that it was very attractive, distinctive, or familiar. They found a significant negative correlation between attractiveness and distinctiveness and a significant positive correlation between attractiveness and familiarity scores, consistent with the literature.

In the second experiment, 32 participants were exposed to 16 of the 24 most typical and 16 of the 24 most distinctive faces from experiment one with the other 8 faces serving as controls. The controls were shown once during the judgment phase while the 16 typical and 16 distinctive faces were shown six times for a total of 192 trials. Ratings of attractiveness were given during the judgment phase. Results showed that repeated exposure increased attractiveness ratings overall, and there was no difference between typical and distinctive faces. These results were found to be due to increased exposure and not judgment bias or experimental conditions since the attractiveness ratings of the 16 control faces were compared to the same faces from experiment 1 and no significant difference between the two groups was found.
Overall, Peskin and Newell (2004) state that their findings show that increasing the familiarity of faces by increasing exposure led to increased attractiveness ratings. They add, “We also demonstrated that typical faces were found to be more attractive than distinctive faces although both face types were subjected to similar increases in familiarity” (pg. 156).

3.1.2.3. **Physical attractiveness.** Second, we choose who we spend time with based on how attractive they are. Attractive people are seen as more interesting, happier, smarter, sensitive, and moral and as such are liked more than less attractive people. This is partly due to the halo effect or when we hold a favorable attitude to traits that are unrelated. We see beauty as a valuable asset and one that can be exchanged for other things during our social interactions. Between personality, social skills, intelligence, and attractiveness, which characteristic do you think matters most in dating? In a field study randomly pairing subjects at a “Computer Dance” the largest determinant of how much a partner was liked, how much he wanted to date the partner again, and how frequently he asked the partner out, was simply the physical attractiveness of the partner (Walster et al., 1966).

In a more contemporary twist on dating and interpersonal attraction, Luo and Zhang (2009) looked at speed dating. Results showed that the biggest predictor of attraction for both males and females was the physical attractiveness of their partner (reciprocity showed some influence though similarity produced no evidence – both will be discussed shortly so keep it in mind for now).

Is beauty linked to a name though? Garwood et al. (1980) asked 197 college students to choose a beauty queen from six photographs, all equivalent in terms of physical attractiveness. Half of the women in the photographs had a desirable first name while the other half did not. Results showed that girls with a desirable first name received 158 votes while those with an undesirable first name received just 39 votes.

So why beauty? Humans display what is called a beauty bias. Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1994) investigated the reaction of 277 male, middle-class, Caucasian college students to a vignette in which they were asked to imagine receiving an uninvited sexual advance from a casual female acquaintance. The vignette displayed different degrees of coercion such as low-touch, moderate-push, high-threat, and very high-weapon. The results showed that men had a more positive reaction to the sexual advance of a female acquaintance who was attractive and who used low or moderate levels of coercion than to an unattractive female.

What about attractiveness in the workplace? Hosoda, Stone-Romero, and Coats (2006) found considerable support for the notion that attractive individuals fare better in employment-related decisions (i.e., hiring and promotions) than unattractive individuals. Although there is a beauty bias, the authors found that its strength has weakened over the past few decades.

3.1.2.4. **Similarity.** You have likely heard the expressions “Opposites attract” and “Birds of a feather flock together.” The former expression contradicts the latter, and so this leads us to wonder which is it? Research shows that we are most attracted to people who are like us in terms of our religious and political beliefs, values, appearance, educational background, age, and other demographic variables (Warren, 1966). Thus, we tend to choose people who are similar to us in attitudes and interests as this leads to a more positive evaluation of them. Their agreement with our choices and beliefs helps to reduce any uncertainty we face regarding social situations and improves our understanding of the situation. You might say their similarity also validates our own values, beliefs, and attitudes as they have arrived at the same conclusions that we have. This occurs with identification with sports teams. Our perceived similarity with the group
leads to group-derived self-definition more so than the attractiveness of the group such that, “… a team that is “crude, rude, and unattractive” may be appealing to fans who have the same qualities, but repulsive to fans who are more “civilized.” The authors suggest that sports marketers could emphasize the similarities between fans and their teams (Fisher, 1998). Another form of similarity is in terms of physical attractiveness. According to the matching hypothesis, we date others who are similar to us in terms of how attractive they are (Feingold, 1988; Huston, 1973; Bersheid et al., 1971; Walster, 1970).

3.1.2.5. Reciprocity. Fourth, we choose people who are likely to engage in a mutual exchange with us. We prefer people who make us feel rewarded and appreciated and in the spirit of reciprocation, we need to give something back to them. This exchange continues so long as both parties regard their interactions to be mutually beneficial or the benefits of the exchange outweigh the costs (Homans, 1961; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). If you were told that a stranger you interacted with liked you, research shows that you would express a greater liking for that person as well (Aronson & Worchel, 1966) and the same goes for reciprocal desire (Greitmeyer, 2010).

3.1.2.6. Playing hard to get. Does playing hard to get make a woman (or man) more desirable than the one who seems eager for an alliance? Results of five experiments said that it does not though a sixth experiment suggests that if the woman is easy for a particular man to get but hard for all other men to get, she would be preferred over a woman who is uniformly hard or easy to get, or is a woman for which the man has no information about. Men gave these selective women all of the assets (i.e. selective, popular, friendly, warm, and easy going) but none of the liabilities (i.e. problems expected in dating) of the uniformly hard to get and easy to get women. The authors state, “It appears that a woman can intensify her desirability if she acquires a reputation for being hard-to-get and then, by her behavior, makes it clear to a selected romantic partner that she is attracted to him” (pg. 120; Walster et al., 1973). Dai, Dong, and Jia (2014) predicted and found that when person B plays hard to get with person A, this will increase A’s wanting of B but simultaneously decrease A’s liking of B, only if A is psychologically committed to pursuing further relations with B. Otherwise, the hard to get strategy will result in decreased wanting and liking.

3.1.2.7. Intimacy. Finally, intimacy occurs when we feel close to and trust in, another person. This factor is based on the idea of self-disclosure or telling another person about our deepest held secrets, experiences, and beliefs that we do not usually share with others. But this revealing of information comes with the expectation of a mutual self-disclosure from our friend or significant other. We might think that self-disclosure is difficult online but a study of 243 Facebook users shows that we tell our personal secrets on Facebook to those we like and that we feel we can disclose such personal details to people with whom we talk often and come to trust (Sheldon, 2009).

This said, there is a possibility we can overshare, called overdisclosure, which may lead to a reduction in our attractiveness. What if you showed up for class a few minutes early and sat next to one of your classmates who proceeded to give you every detail of their weekend of illicit drug use and sexual activity. This would likely make you feel uncomfortable and seek to move to another seat.

3.1.2.8. Mate selection. As you will see in a bit, men and women have vastly different strategies when it comes to selecting a mate. This leads us to ask why and the answer is rooted in evolutionary psychology. Mate selection occurs universally in all human cultures. In a trend seen around the world, Buss (2004) said that since men can father a nearly unlimited number of children they favor signs of fertility in women to include being young, attractive, and healthy. Since they also want to know that the child is their own, they favor women who will be sexually faithful to them.
In contrast, women favor a more selective strategy given the incredible time investment having a child involves and the fact that she can only have a limited number of children during her life. She looks for a man who is financially stable and can provide for her children, typically being an older man. In support of the difference in age of a sexual partner pursued by men and women, Buss (1989) found that men wanted to marry women 2.7 years younger while women preferred men 3.4 years older. Also, this finding emerged cross-culturally.

3.1.3. Types of Relationships

Relationships can take on a few different forms. In what are called communal relationships, there is an expectation of mutual responsiveness from each member as it relates to tending to member’s needs while exchange relationships involve the expectation of reciprocity in a form of tit-for-tat strategy. This leads to what are called intimate or romantic relationships in which you feel a very strong sense of attraction to another person in terms of their personality and physical features. Love is often a central feature of intimate relationships and will be discussed more in a bit.

3.1.3.1. Family. Of course, our first relationships that are formed are with our family members whether it be our mother or father, siblings, grandparents, or other extended family members. Which of these relationships do you think would be considered the most important? If you said the relationship a child has to its mother, you would be correct, and we know more about how this relationship works than we do of the one that exists between child and father. One strategy some mothers use to punish bad behavior is to withdraw displays of affection to the child until he/she behaves again, called love withdrawal. The strategy should be effective, right? Possibly not. A study of 133 first-generation Chinese American mothers who self-reported psychologically controlling parenting of their children, showed subsequent bullying aggressive behaviors by their child in school as reported by preschool teachers. Love withdrawal was compared with another frequently used control mechanism, guilt induction, which was shown to predict less bullying behavior in children six months later (Yu, Cheah, Hart, & Yang, 2019).

Another important relationship that is established in childhood is the one we form with our siblings. Research has shown that a child’s attachment security with mother and father predicts a significant portion of the relationships that are formed with siblings and peers, and that additionally, one’s relationship with siblings predicts later relationships with peers (Roskam, Meunier, & Stievenart, 2015).

3.1.3.2. Friendships. Based on our previous discussion of interpersonal attraction, it should not be surprising to learn that we tend to spend time with people who are similar to us, called homophily, and those who are more available to use likely due to spatial proximity, called propinquity (Echols & Graham, 2013). Friendships are a way for us to self-disclose with the expectation that our friends will do the same, called reciprocity. So, if I tell you my deepest, darkest secret, I expect that you will do the same. One way many adolescents self-disclose is on social media sites such as Facebook. Utz (2015) found that positive and entertaining self-disclosures increased feelings of connection especially for updates posted by their friends but that the most intimate conversations took place in private conversations.

Social constructivist models of gender state that gendered attitudes and subsequent behaviors are context-dependent. One such example is masculinity and femininity. Using a sample of cisgender participants from a small liberal arts college in the northeast, Mehta and Dementieva (2016) found that men reported higher levels of femininity when with women than men, and that both men and women reported higher levels of masculinity when with men and not women. The authors state their results support these social constructivist models of gender.
Finally, a study examining the close friendship patterns of transgender individuals considered the role of gender identity and LGBTQ affiliation on the identity of their friends. Using a sample of 495 transgender individuals, Boyer and Galupo (2018) found that the majority of their friendships occurred in a cross-gender identity context. In general, participants had more cisgender (vs. transgender) friends and more sexual minority (i.e. heterosexual) friends. When the participant was LGBT affiliated, they had more transgender, sexual minority, and LGBT affiliated friends than their non-affiliated counterparts. Trans men had more sexual minority and more LGBT affiliated friends while trans women reported more non-affiliated friends.

3.1.3.3. Love/Romantic. On April 7, 2015, Psychology Today published an article entitled, The Four Types of Attraction. Referred to as an attraction pyramid, it places status and health at the bottom, emotional in the middle, and logic at the top of the pyramid. Status takes on two forms. Internal refers to confidence, your skills, and what you believe or your values. External refers to your job, visual markers, and what you own such as a nice car or house. The article states that confidence may be particularly important and overrides external status in the long run. Health can include the way you look, move, smell, and your intelligence. The middle level is emotional which includes what makes us unique, trust and comfort, our emotional intelligence, and how mysterious we appear to a potential suitor. And then at the top is logic which helps us to be sure this individual is aligned with us in terms of life goals such as having kids, getting married, where we will live, etc. The article says – “With greater alignment, there is greater attraction.” Since online romance is trending now, the pyramid flips and we focus on logic, then emotion, and then status and health, but meeting in person is important and should be done as soon as possible. This way, we can be sure there is a physical attraction and can only be validated in person.

To read the article for yourself, visit: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/valley-girl-brain/201504/the-four-types-attraction

One outcome of this attraction to others, or the need to affiliate/belong, is love. What is love? According to a 2011 article in Psychology Today entitled ‘What is Love, and What Isn’t It?’ love is a force of nature, is bigger than we are, inherently free, cannot be turned on as a reward or off as a punishment, cannot be bought, cannot be sold, and cares what becomes of us). Adrian Catron writes in an article entitled, “What is Love? A Philosophy of Life” that “the word love is used as an expression of affection towards someone else….and expresses a human virtue that is based on compassion, affection and kindness.” He goes on to say that love is a practice and you can practice it for the rest of your life. (https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-is-love-a-philosophy_b_5697322). And finally, the Merriam Webster dictionary online defines love as “strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties” and “attraction based on sexual desire: affection and tenderness felt by lovers.” (Source: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/love).

Robert Sternberg (1986) said love is composed of three main parts (called the triangular theory of love): intimacy, commitment, and passion. First, intimacy is the emotional component and involves how much we like, feel close to, and are connected to another person. It grows steadily at first, slows down, and then levels off. Features include holding the person in high regard, sharing personal affect with them, and giving them emotional support in times of need. Second, commitment is the cognitive component and occurs when you decide you truly love the person. You decide to make a long-term commitment to them and as you might expect, is almost non-existent when a relationship begins and is the last to develop usually. If a relationship fails, commitment would show a pattern of declining over time and eventually returns to zero. Third, passion represents the motivational component of love and is the first of the three to develop. It involves attraction, romance, and sex and if a relationship ends, passion can fall to negative levels as the person copes with the loss.
This results in eight subtypes of love which explains differences in the types of love we express. For instance, the love we feel for our significant other will be different than the love we feel for a neighbor or coworker, and reflect different aspects of the components of intimacy, commitment, and passion as follows:

Table 3.1. Types of Love (According to Sternberg)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Love</th>
<th>Intimacy</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Passion</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonlove</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liking</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Friendships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infatuation</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Experiencing love at first sight or being obsessed with a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Stagnant relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatuous</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Relationships motivated by passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companionate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Relationships lacking passion such as those between family members or close friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Being bonded emotionally and physically to another person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consummate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Complete love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.4. Relationship Conflict

3.1.4.1. Jealousy. The dark side of love is what is called jealousy, or a negative emotional state arising due to a perceived threat to one's relationship. Take note of the word perceived here. The threat does not have to be real for jealousy to rear its ugly head and what causes men and women to feel jealous varies. For women, a man’s emotional infidelity leads her to fear him leaving and withdrawing his financial support for her offspring while sexual infidelity is of greater concern to men as he may worry that the children he is supporting are not his own. Jealousy can also arise among siblings who are competing for their parent’s attention, among competitive coworkers especially if a highly desired position is needing to be filled, and among friends. From an evolutionary perspective, jealousy is essential as it helps to preserve social bonds and motivates action to keep important relationships stable and safe. But it can also lead to aggression (Dittman, 2005) and mental health issues.

3.1.4.2. The four horsemen of the apocalypse. John Gottman used the metaphor of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse from the New Testament to describe communication styles that can predict the end of a relationship. Though not conquest, war, hunger, and death, Gottman instead used the terms criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. Each will be discussed below, as described on Gottman’s website: https://www.gottman.com/blog/the-four-horsemen-recognizing-criticism-contempt-defensiveness-and-stonewalling/

First, criticism occurs when a person attacks their partner at their core character “or dismantling their whole being” when criticized. An example might be calling them selfish and saying they never think of you. It differs from a complaint which typically involves a specific issue. For instance, one night in March 2019 my wife was stuck at work until after 8pm. I was...
upset as she did not call to let me know what was going on and we have an agreement to inform one another about changing work schedules. Criticism can become pervasive and when it does, it leads to the other, far deadlier horsemen. “It makes the victim feel assaulted, rejected, and hurt, and often causes the perpetrator and victim to fall into an escalating pattern where the first horseman reappears with greater and greater frequency and intensity, which eventually leads to contempt.”

The second horseman is contempt which involves treating others with disrespect, mocking them, ridiculing, being sarcastic, calling names, or mimicking them. The point is to make the target feel despised and worthless. “Most importantly, contempt is the single greatest predictor of divorce. It must be eliminated.”

Defensiveness is the third horseman and is a response to criticism. When we feel unjustly accused we have a tendency to make excuses and play the innocent victim to get our partner to back off. Does it work though? “Although it is perfectly understandable to defend yourself if you’re stressed out and feeling attacked, this approach will not have the desired effect. Defensiveness will only escalate the conflict if the critical spouse does not back down or apologize. This is because defensiveness is really a way of blaming your partner, and it won’t allow for healthy conflict management.”

Stonewalling is the fourth horseman and occurs when the listener withdraws from the interaction, shuts down, or stops responding to their partner. They may tune out, act busy, engage in distracting behavior, or turn away and stonewalling is a response to contempt. “It is a result of feeling physiologically flooded, and when we stonewall, we may not even be in a physiological state where we can discuss things rationally.”

Conflict is an unavoidable reality of relationships. The good news is that each horseman has an antidote to stop it. How so?

- To combat criticism, engage in gentle start up. Talk about your feelings using “I” statements and not “you” and express what you need to in a positive way. As the website demonstrates, instead of saying “You always talk about yourself. Why are you always so selfish?” say, “I’m feeling left out of our talk tonight and I need to vent. Can we please talk about my day?”
- To combat contempt, build a culture of appreciation and respect. Regularly express appreciation, gratitude, affection, and respect for your partner. The more positive you are, the less likely that contempt will be expressed. Instead of saying, “You forgot to load the dishwasher again? Ugh. You are so incredibly lazy.” (Rolls eyes.) say, “I understand that you’ve been busy lately, but could you please remember to load the dishwasher when I work late? I’d appreciate it.”
- To combat defensiveness, take responsibility. You can do this for just part of the conflict. A defensive comment might be, “It’s not my fault that we’re going to be late. It’s your fault since you always get dressed at the last second.” Instead, say, “I don’t like being late, but you’re right. We don’t always have to leave so early. I can be a little more flexible.”
- To combat stonewalling, engage in physiological self-soothing. Arguing increase one’s heart rate, releases stress hormones, and activates our flight-fight response. By taking a short break, we can calm down and “return to the discussion in a respectful and rational way.” Failing to take a break could lead to stonewalling and bottling up emotions, or exploding like a volcano at your partner, or both. “So, when you take a break, it should last at least twenty minutes because it will take that long before your body physiologically calms down. It’s crucial that during this time you avoid thoughts of righteous indignation (“I don’t have to take this anymore”) and innocent victimhood (“Why is he always picking on me?”). Spend your time doing something soothing and distracting, like listening to music, reading, or exercising. It doesn’t really matter what you do, as long as it helps you to calm down.”

3.1.4.3. Forgiveness. According to the Mayo Clinic, forgiveness involves letting go of resentment and any thought we
might have about getting revenge on someone for past wrongdoing. So what are the benefits of forgiving others? Our mental health will be better, we will experience less anxiety and stress, we may experience fewer symptoms of depression, our heart will be healthier, we will feel less hostility, and our relationships overall will be healthier.

It’s easy to hold a grudge. Let’s face it, whatever the cause, it likely left us feeling angry, confused, and sad. We may even be bitter not only to the person who slighted us but extend this to others who had nothing to do with the situation. We might have trouble focusing on the present as we dwell on the past and feel like life lacks meaning and purpose.

But even if we are the type of person who holds grudges, we can learn to forgive. The Mayo Clinic offers some useful steps to help us get there. First, we should recognize the value of forgiveness. Next, we should determine what needs healing and who we should forgive and for what. Then we should consider joining a support group or talk with a counselor. Fourth, we need to acknowledge our emotions, the harm they do to us, and how they affect our behavior. We then attempt to release them. Fifth, choose to forgive the person who offended us leading to the final step of moving away from seeing ourselves as the victim and “release the control and power the offending person and situation have had in your life.”

At times, we still cannot forgive the person. They recommend practicing empathy so that we can see the situation from their perspective, praying, reflecting on instances of when you offended another person and they forgave you, and be aware that forgiveness does not happen all at once but is a process.

Read the article by visiting: www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/forgiveness/art-20047692

3.1.5. Dissolution

Relationships end from time to time. We do not tend to pair with the first partner we see and stay with him or her forever. What we thought was attraction at first may not have really been. Maybe we were rebonding from a previous relationship. Maybe we were worried about not finding someone and latched on to someone too quickly. Or maybe the relationship, or in this case, the marriage, failed because there was an imbalance in household chores. Really? Could not doing housework end a relationship? It can and that is what Ruppanner, Branden, and Turunen (2017) found in a sample of 1057 Swedish couples. When women reported having to do more housework, they were less likely to be satisfied with their relationship and more likely to consider breaking up or actually dissolve the union. There is a simple solution. The authors state, “…acknowledging partners’ housework contributions, in particular women’s contributions, has important consequences for relationship quality and stability.” Note that this imbalance in housework has a name. Called the second shift it reflects the fact that often, women come home from a hard day’s work and have to do household chores (Hochschild & Machung, 1989).

3.2. Gender Stereotypes

Section Learning Objectives

- Restate the three components of attitudes.
- Differentiate between stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination.
- Define and describe stereotype threat.
- Contrast explicit and implicit attitudes.
3.2.1. Attitudes About Other Groups

To distinguish the terms stereotype, discrimination, and prejudice we have to take a step back. The tripartite model is used to examine the structure and function of an attitude. It states that attitudes are composed of three components – affective or emotional, behavioral, and cognitive. Affective indicates our feelings about the source of our attitude. Cognitive indicates our thoughts about it and behavioral indicates the actions we take in relation to the thoughts and feelings we have about the source of the attitude. If we consider our attitude towards puppies, the affective component would manifest by our feeling or outwardly saying that we love puppies. We might base this affection for them on thinking about how they are fluffy or cute (the cognitive component). Finally, our thoughts and feelings produce the behavior of petting them whenever one is near. So how does this relate to the current discussion?

3.2.1.1. Stereotypes. A group stereotype is our beliefs about what are the typical traits or characteristics of members of a specific group. Notice the word beliefs in the definition. Hence, in terms of our attitude about another group, our stereotype represents the cognitive component.

The group that is the subject of the stereotype may experience what is called stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995) or the social-psychological predicament that arises from widely-known negative stereotypes about one’s group. Steele & Aronson (1995) state, “the existence of such a stereotype means that anything one does or any of one’s features that conform to it make the stereotype more plausible as a self-characterization in the eyes of others, and perhaps even in one’s own eyes” (pg. 797). Consider the stereotypes for feminists or White males. There is a definite stereotype of these groups which may be true of some individuals in the group, and lead to others seeing them that way too. The exact implications of these stereotypes are often negative and could be self-threating enough to have disruptive effects on the person’s life. In one experiment, the authors gave black and white college students a 30-minute test composed of items from the verbal section of the GRE (Graduate Record Exam). In the stereotype threat condition, the test was described as diagnostic of intellectual ability and in the non-stereotype threat condition it was described as a laboratory problem-solving task that was nondiagnostic of ability. A second nondiagnostic condition was included which told participants to view the difficult test as a challenge. Results showed that black participants performed worse than white participants when the test was framed as a measure of their ability but performed as well as their White counterparts when told that it was not reflective of their ability. Statistical analyses also showed that black participants in the diagnostic condition saw their relative performance as poorer than black participants in the non-diagnostic-only condition. Follow up work found that helping African American students see intelligence as malleable reduced their...
vulnerability to stereotype threat (Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003; Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002).

Schmader (2002) applied a social identity perspective to stereotype threat and hypothesized that when the participant identified highly with the group to which a negative stereotype applies, they be more likely to be inhibited by the performance inhibiting effects of the stereotype. The sample included male and female college students and specifically looked at their gender identity. The results showed that when gender identity was linked to performance on a math test, women with higher levels of gender identification performed worse than men, but for women with lower levels of gender identification, their performance was on par with men. When gender identity was not linked to performance on the math test, there were no gender differences, regardless of the importance either gender placed on gender identity.

One stereotype is that women are not as good as men in mathematics classes such as statistics. This thereby can lead them to avoid taking the class and be underrepresented in many professions, particularly STEM related ones. Kapitanoff and Pandey (2017) proposed that gender of the instructor can play a role too and examined whether a female role model can reduce the negative effects of a gender/mathematics stereotype threat in women as well as improve their academic performance and retention rate. So which types of anxiety might be most relevant to stereotype threat? They found that for women, mathematics anxiety and anxiety about the specific class led to acceptance of the stereotype while for men no significant relationships were found. For women, performance on the first exam was initially lower due to having a female instructor but after some time and additional interaction with her, performance went up on subsequent exams.

3.2.1.2. Prejudice and discrimination. Prejudice occurs when someone holds a negative feeling about a group of people, representing the affective component. As noted above, our thoughts and feelings lead to behavior and so discrimination is when a person acts in a way that is negative against a group of people. What might the effect of such behavior be on the target of the discrimination? According to a 2018 report by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Discrimination affects people’s opportunities, their well-being, and their sense of agency. Persistent exposure to discrimination can lead individuals to internalize the prejudice or stigma that is directed against them, manifesting in shame, low self-esteem, fear and stress, as well as poor health” (For more on the report, please visit https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2018/02/prejudice-and-discrimination/.)

If you think about these terms for a bit, stereotype and prejudice seem to go together. Taking a step back from the current conversation, think about a political candidate. You likely hold specific thoughts about their policies, how they act, the overall likelihood of success if elected, etc. In conjunction with these thoughts, you also hold certain feelings about them. You might like them, love them, dislike them, or hate them. These thoughts and feelings lead us to behave in a certain way. If we like the candidate, we will vote for him or her. We might also campaign for them or mention them to others in conversation. The point is that the thoughts and feelings generally go together and you really cannot have one without the other. Behavior arises as a result of them. The same would be true of stereotypes and prejudice which go together, and these lead to behavior.

Consider this now. Can a person could be prejudicial and adopt certain stereotypes of other groups, but not discriminate against them? The answer is yes. Most people do not act on prejudices about others due to social norms against such actions. Let’s face it. If you make a snide comment about a fellow employee of another race, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnic group this could lead to disciplinary action up to being fired. Outside of work, comments like that could lead to legal action against you. So even if you hold such beliefs and feelings, you tend to keep them to yourself.
Now is it possible to be discriminatory without being prejudicial? The answer is yes, though this one may not be as obvious. Say an employer needs someone who can lift up to 75lbs on a regular basis. If you cannot do that and are not hired, you were discriminated against but that does not mean that the employer has prejudicial beliefs about you, especially if say you were a woman. The same would be said if a Ph.D. was required for a position and you were refused the job since you only have a Bachelor’s degree. One more example is useful. The online psychology students at Washington State University recently were able to establish a chapter of Psi Chi, the Psychology National Honor Society (done in the spring 2019 for context). Based on national chapter rules, students cannot be accepted unless they have at least 3.3 cumulative and psychology GPAs. So if a student has a 3.1, they would be excluded from the group. This is discrimination but we are not prejudicial against students with a GPA under the cutoff. Given that this is an honor society a certain level of performance is expected. These aforementioned types of behaviors occur every day but are not indicative of a larger problem, usually.

3.2.2. Implicit Attitudes

Section 3.1.1. describes what are called explicitattitudes, or attitudes that are obvious and known or at the level of conscious awareness. Is it possible that we might not even be aware we hold such attitudes towards other people? The answer is yes and is called an implicit attitude. Most people when asked if they hold a racist attitude would vehemently deny such a truth but research using the Implicit Association Test (IAT) show otherwise (Greenwald et al., 1998). The test occurs in four stages. First, the participant is asked to categorize faces as black or white by pressing the left- or right-hand key. Next, the participant categorizes words as positive or negative in the same way. Third, words and faces are paired and a participant may be asked to press the left-hand key for a black face or positive word and the right-hand key for a white face or negative word. In the fourth and final stage, the task is the same as in Stage 3 but now black and negative are paired and white and good are paired. The test measures how fast people respond to the different pairs and in general the results show that people respond faster when liked faces are paired with positive words and similarly, when disliked faces are paired with negative words. In another study using the IAT, Dasgupta et al. (2000) found that positive attributes were more strongly associated with White rather than Black Americans and the effect held when equally unfamiliar faces were used as stimuli for both racial groups.

Check out the Project Implicit website at – https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/

So do implicit attitudes exist in relation to sexual preference? A study of health care providers (n = 2,338 medical doctors, 5,379 nurses, 8,531 mental health providers, 2,735 other treatment providers, and 214,110 nonproviders in the United States and internationally) found that among heterosexual providers, implicit preferences favored heterosexual people over lesbian and gay, and heterosexual men over women. Heterosexual nurses had the strongest implicit preference for heterosexual men over gay men. For all groups, the explicit preferences for heterosexual versus lesbian or gay people were weaker than implicit preferences. The researchers suggest future research examine the effect that such implicit attitudes have on care (Sabin, Riskind, and Nosek, 2015).

3.2.3. Types of Prejudice and Discrimination

It is not illegal to hold negative thoughts and feelings about others, though it could be considered immoral. What is illegal is when we act on these prejudices and stereotypes and treat others different as a result. Discrimination can take several different forms which we will discuss now. Be advised that though these forms of discrimination can happen in almost any environment, we will focus primarily on the workplace as guidelines exist at the federal level.
3.2.3.1. Racism. According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), “Race discrimination involves treating someone (an applicant or employee) unfavorably because he/she is of a certain race or because of personal characteristics associated with race (such as hair texture, skin color, or certain facial features). Color discrimination involves treating someone unfavorably because of skin color complexion.” But race/color discrimination also occurs when we treat someone differently because they are married to a person of a certain race or color.

Discrimination on the basis of race can take the form of not hiring, firing, denying or offering lower pay to, skipping for promotion, not training, or laying off a person of another race or color. Harassment on the basis of race/color is said to have occurred if racial slurs are used, offensive or derogatory remarks are made, or racially-offensive symbols are used. The key is that harassment is prevalent when the offensive behavior occurs so frequently, or is so severe, that it creates a hostile environment or in the case of work environments, it leads to an adverse employment decision such as firing or a demotion. How prevalent is race-based discrimination in the workplace? According to EEOC, in 1997 there were 29,199 charges filed with a total of 28,528 in 2017. The highest number of charges filed occurred in 2010 with 35,890. For more on race/color discrimination in the workplace, please visit: https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/race_color.cfm.

A few types of racism are worth distinguishing. First, **old-fashioned racism** is the belief that whites are superior to all other racial groups and lead to segregation and some of the forms of discrimination mentioned above. This is contrasted with **modern racism** which only appears when it is safe and socially acceptable to do so. According to Entman (1990) modern racism is composed of three closely intertwined but distinct components. First, is the “anti-black” effect or a general emotional hostility toward blacks. Second, is resistance to the political demands of African Americans. Third, is the belief that racism is dead and that blacks are no longer denied the ability to achieve due to racial discrimination.

**Aversive racism** occurs when a person denies personal prejudice but has underlying unconscious negative feelings toward another racial group. This could result in uneasiness, discomfort, disgust, and even fear. The person may find a Hispanic person as aversive but at the same time any suggestion that they are prejudiced equally aversive. As Dovidio and Gaertner (2004) wrote, “Thus, aversive racism may involve more positive reactions to whites than to blacks, reflecting a pro-in-group rather than an anti-out-group orientation, thereby avoiding the stigma of overt bigotry and protecting a nonprejudiced self-image” (pg. 4). Another study found that self-reported prejudice was lower in 1998-1999 than it was in 1988-1989. During both time periods, though, white participants did not engage in discriminatory selection decisions when a candidate’s qualifications were clearly weak or strong but did discriminate when the appropriate decision was more ambiguous (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000).

Finally, **symbolic racism** (Sears & Kinder, 1971) occurs when negative views of another racial group are coupled with values such as individualism. It includes four components measured as such (Sears & Henry, 2005):

1. **Denial of continuing discrimination** – Agreement with the following statement would indicate symbolic racism – ‘Discrimination against blacks is no longer a problem in the United States’ while symbolic racism would be evident if you said there has been a lot of real change in the position of black people over the past few years.

2. **Work ethic and responsibility for outcomes** – If you agree with the following statement symbolic racism would be apparent – ‘It’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could just be as well off as whites.’

3. **Excessive demands** – Consider this question. ‘Some say that the Civil Rights people have been trying to push too fast. Others feel that they haven’t pushed fast enough. How about you?’ If you say push too fast you are displaying symbolic racism.

4. **Undeserved advantage** – If you disagree with ‘Over the last few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve’ but agree with ‘Over the past few years, blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve’ you are...
3.2.3.2. Sexism. Sex discrimination involves treating a person unfavorably due to their sex. EEOC states, “Harassment can include “sexual harassment” or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person’s sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general.” The victim and the harasser can be either a man or woman, and of the same sex. In 1997, the EEOC had 24,728 charges filed for sex-based discrimination and in 2017 this number was 25,605. The peak charges filed was 30,356 in 2012. For more on sex discrimination in the work place, please visit: https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/sex.cfm.

3.2.3.3. Aegism. According to the EEOC, age discrimination occurs when an applicant or employee is treated less favorably due to their age. EEOC writes, “The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) forbids age discrimination against people who are age 40 or older. It does not protect workers under the age of 40, although some states have laws that protect younger workers from age discrimination.” Interestingly, it is not illegal for an employer to favor an older worker over a younger one, even if both are over the age of 40. In 1997, the EEOC had 15,785 charges filed for age discrimination and in 2017 this number was 18,376. The peak charges filed was 24,582 filed in 2008. For more on age discrimination in the work place, please visit: https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/age.cfm.

3.2.3.4. Weight discrimination. Discrimination does occur in relation to a person’s weight, or as the Council on Size and Weight Discrimination says, “for people who are heavier than average.” They call for equal treatment in the job market and on the job; competent and respectful treatment by health care professionals; the realization that happy, attractive, and capable people come in all sizes; and state that each person has the responsibility to stand up for themselves and others suffering weight discrimination. The group also notes that the media often portrays the obese in a negative light and promotes people’s fear of fat and obsession with thinness. Finally, they write, “We stand in solidarity with those who experience discrimination based on based on ethnicity, skin color, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other traits. Our mission is to make people aware of discrimination based on size, shape, and weight, and to work to end such discrimination.” For more on the council, please visit: http://cswd.org/.

To read about workplace weight discrimination issues, please check out the Time article from August 16, 2017.: http://time.com/4883176/weight-discrimination-workplace-laws/

3.2.3.5. Disability discrimination. According to EEOC, disability discrimination occurs when an employer or other entity, “treats an applicant or employee less favorably because she has a history of a disability (such as cancer that is controlled or in remission) or because she is believed to have a physical or mental impairment that is not transitory (lasting or expected to last six months or less) and minor (even if she does not have such an impairment).” The law also requires an employer (or in the cases of students, a university) to provide a reasonable accommodation to an employee with a disability, unless it would cause significant difficulty or expense. For more on disability discrimination in the workplace, please visit: www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/disability.cfm.

3.2.3.6. Sexual orientation (LGBT) discrimination. According to the EEOC, sex discrimination is forbidden based on gender identity or sexual orientation Examples include not hiring someone because they are a transgender woman, firing an employee planning to make a gender transition, or denying an employee equal access to a common restroom corresponding to the employee’s gender identity. In 2015, EEOC received a total of 1,412 charges that included
allegations related to sexual orientation and/or gender identity/transgender status. This was a 28% increase over the total LGBT charges file in 2014. For more on sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace, please visit: https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/wysk/enforcement_protections_lgbt_workers.cfm

3.2.4. Stigmatization

Overlapping with prejudice and discrimination in terms of how people from other groups are treated is stigma, or when negative stereotyping, labeling, rejection, devaluation, and/or loss of status occur due to membership in a particular social group such as being Hispanic, Homosexual, Jewish, or a Goth; or due to a specific characteristic such as having a mental illness or cancer. Stigma takes on three forms as described below:

- **Public stigma** – When members of a society endorse negative stereotypes of people from another group and discriminate against them. They might avoid them all together resulting in social isolation. An example is when an employer intentionally does not hire a person because their mental illness is discovered.

- **Label avoidance** – In order to avoid being labeled as “crazy” or “nuts” people needing care may avoid seeking it all together or stop care once started. Due to these labels, funding for mental health services or aid to compromised groups could be restricted and instead, physical health services funded.

- **Self-stigma** – When people from another group internalize the negative stereotypes and prejudice, and in turn, discriminate against themselves. They may experience shame, reduced self-esteem, hopelessness, low self-efficacy, and a reduction in coping mechanisms. An obvious consequence of these potential outcomes is the why try effect, or the person saying ‘Why should I try and get that job. I am not worthy of it’ (Corrigan, Larson, & Rusch, 2009; Corrigan, et al., 2016).

Another form of stigma that is worth noting is that of courtesy stigma or when stigma affects people associated with the person with a mental disorder, physical disability, or who is overweight or obese. Karnieli-Miller et. al. (2013) found that families of the afflicted were often blamed, rejected, or devalued when others learned that a family member had a serious mental illness (SMI). Due to this they felt hurt and betrayed and an important source of social support during the difficult time had disappeared, resulting in greater levels of stress. To cope, they had decided to conceal their relative’s illness and some parents struggled to decide whether it was their place to disclose versus the relative’s place. Others fought with the issue of confronting the stigma through attempts at education or to just ignore it due to not having enough energy or desiring to maintain personal boundaries. There was also a need to understand responses of others and to attribute it to a lack of knowledge, experience, and/or media coverage. In some cases, the reappraisal allowed family members to feel compassion for others rather than feeling put down or blamed. The authors concluded that each family “develops its own coping strategies which vary according to its personal experiences, values, and extent of other commitments” and that “coping strategies families employ change over-time.”

3.2.5. Social Identity Theory and Social Categorization

Social identity theory asserts that people have a proclivity to categorize their social world into meaningfully simplistic representations of groups of people. These representations are then organized as prototypes, or “fuzzy sets of a relatively limited number of category defining features that not only define one category but serve to distinguish it from other categories” (Foddy & Hogg, 1999). This social categorization process leads us to emphasize the perceived similarities within our group and the differences between groups and involves the self. We construct in-groups, or groups we identify with, and out-groups, or groups that are not our own, and categorize the self as an in-group member. From this, behavior is generated such that the self is assimilated to the salient in-group prototype which defines specific cognitions, affect, and behavior we may exhibit. We favor ingroups, called ingroup favoritism,
enhance our own self-esteem and produce a positive self-concept. Another consequence is that we tend to see members of the outgroup as similar to one another while our ingroup is seen as varied, called the **outgroup homogeneity effect** (Park & Rothbart, 1982). One reason why this might occur is that we generally have less involvement with individual members of outgroups and so are less familiar with them. If we have contact, then they are less likely to be seen as homogeneous.

Tajfel et al. (1979) stated that we associate the various social categories with positive or negative value connotations which in turn lead to a positive or negative social identity, based on the evaluations of groups that contribute to our social identity. We also evaluate our group by making a **social comparison** to other groups. They write, “positively discrepant comparisons between in-group and out-group produce high prestige; negatively discrepant comparisons between in-group and out-group result in low prestige” (pg. 60). We desire favorable comparisons between the in-group and some relevant out-groups meaning the in-group is seen as distinct. Our self-esteem can be boosted through our personal achievements or by being associated with successful groups.

### 3.2.6. Socialization of Negative Group Stereotypes and Prejudice

It should not be a surprise to learn that one way we acquire stereotypes and prejudice is to simply learn them in childhood. Three main, complementary and not competitive, learning models explain how this might occur. In fact, they explain how we acquire and then subsequently maintain such cognitions and emotional reactions to other groups. They could also account for why discriminatory acts are committed.

First, **observational learning** is learning by simply watching others, or you might say we **model** their behavior. Albert Bandura conducted the pivotal research on observational learning in which children were first brought into a room to watch a video of an adult playing nicely or aggressively with a Bobo doll. This was a model. Next, the children are placed in a room with a lot of toys in it. In the room is a highly prized toy but they are told they cannot play with it. All other toys are fine and a Bobo doll is in the room. Children who watched the aggressive model behaved aggressively with the Bobo doll while those who saw the nice model, played nice. Both groups were frustrated when deprived of the coveted toy. In relation to our discussion of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, a child may observe a parent utter racial slurs, make derogatory gestures, or engage in behavior intended to hurt another group. The child can learn to express the same attitudes both in terms of cognitions and affect, and possibly through subsequent actions they make. So the child may express the stereotype of a group and show negative feelings toward that group such as the LGBTQ movement, and then later state a slur at a member of the group or deny them some resource they are legally able to obtain in keeping with discrimination…. And all because they saw their parents or other key figures do the same at some earlier time in life. Keep in mind this all can happen without the parent ever actually ever trying to teach the child such attitudes.

Second, **respondent conditioning** occurs when we link a previously neutral stimulus (NS) with a stimulus that is unlearned or inborn, called an unconditioned stimulus (US). With repeated pairings of NS and US, the organism will come to make a response to the NS and not the US. How so? According to respondent conditioning, learning occurs in three phases: preconditioning, conditioning, and postconditioning. Preconditioning signifies that some learning is already present. There is no need to learn it again. The US yields an unconditioned response (UR). It is un-conditioned meaning it is not (un) learned (conditioned). Conditioning is when learning occurs and in respondent conditioning this is the pairing of the neutral stimulus and unconditioned stimulus which recall yields an UR. Postconditioning, or after (post) learning (conditioning) has occurred, establishes a **new** and not naturally occurring relationship of a conditioned stimulus
(CS; previously the NS) and conditioned response (CR; the same response). In Pavlov’s classic experiments, dogs salivated in response to food (US and UR); no learning was necessary. But Pavlov realized that dogs salivated even before they had the food in front of them. They did so when the heard footsteps coming down or at the sound of a bell (the NS which cause no response initially). With enough pairings, the dogs came to realize that the bell (NS formerly and now a CS) indicated food was coming and salivated (previously the UR and now the CR). How does this relate to learning prejudice and stereotypes? Children may come to associate certain groups (initially a NS) with such things as crime, poverty, and other negative characteristics. Now in respondent conditioning these stimuli were initially neutral like the groups but through socialization children learned these were bad making the relationship of such characteristics as being negative a CS-CR relationship. The new NS is linked to a CS and eventually just thinking of a specific racial group (now a new CS) for example will yield the negative feelings (CR) because we have learned that the group consists of poor criminals who may be dirty or vile for instance.

Third, operant conditioning is a type of associative learning which focuses on consequences that follow a response or behavior that we make (anything we do, say, or think/feel) and whether it makes a behavior more or less likely to occur. A contingency is when one thing occurs due to another. Think of it as an If-Then statement. If I do X then Y will happen. For operant conditioning this means that if I make a behavior, then a specific consequence will follow. The events (response and consequence) are linked in time. What form do these consequences take? There are two main ways they can present themselves. First, in reinforcement, the consequences lead to a behavior/response being more likely to occur in the future. It is strengthened. Second, in punishment, a behavior/response is less likely to occur in the future or is weakened, due to the consequences. Operant conditioning says that four contingencies are then possible based on whether something good or bad is given or taken away. Let’s go through each and given an example related to the topic of this module.

- **Positive Punishment (PP)** – If something bad or aversive is given or added, then the behavior is less likely to occur in the future. If you talk back to your mother and she slaps your mouth, this is a PP. Your response of talking back led to the consequence of the aversive slap being delivered or given to your face. In relation to our discussion, if you make a demeaning comment about women at work and are reprimanded by being given a demerit or verbally scolded by HR, then you will be less likely to make one again.

- **Positive Reinforcement (PR)** – If something good is given or added, then the behavior is more likely to occur in the future. If you study hard and earn, or are given, an A on your exam, you will be more likely to study hard in the future. Likewise, if you make a negative comment about a lesbian at home and are praised by your parents, then you will be likely to do this again in the future.

- **Negative Reinforcement (NR)** – This is a tough one for students to comprehend because the terms don’t seem to go together and are counterintuitive. But it is really simple and you experience NR all the time. This is when something bad or aversive is taken away or subtracted due to your actions, making it that you will be more likely to make the same behavior in the future when some stimuli presents itself. For instance, what do you do if you have a headache? You likely answered take Tylenol. If you do this and the headache goes away, you will take Tylenol in the future when you have a headache. NR can either result in current escape behavior or future avoidance behavior. What does this mean? Escape occurs when we are presently experiencing an aversive event and want it to end. We make a behavior and if the aversive event, like the headache, goes away, we will repeat the taking of Tylenol in the future. This future action is an avoidance event. We might start to feel a headache coming on and run to take Tylenol right away. By doing so we have removed the possibility of the aversive event occurring and this behavior demonstrates that learning has occurred. In the case of discrimination, if a transgender individual moved into our apartment building, we might engage in hostile behavior to encourage him/her to move. If the person does so, then this is NR and specifically escape behavior. The apartment building (and maybe complex) may get the reputation of not welcoming a diverse range of people and cause future outgroup members to take up residence elsewhere (avoidance behavior).
• **Negative Punishment (NP)** – This is when something good is taken away or subtracted making a behavior less likely in the future. If you are late to class and your professor deducts 5 points from your final grade (the points are something good and the loss is negative), you will likely be on time in all subsequent classes. Back to the work example for NR, we might also be sent home with pay or lose a promotion.

### 3.2.7. Do Emotions Predict Intolerance?

A 2004 article in the *Monitor on Psychology* notes that though most research points to the fact that intolerance is caused by negative stereotypes, at least in part, research by Susan Fiske of Princeton University indicates that pity, envy, disgust, and pride – all emotions – may play a larger role. Fiske’s research team found that the emotions are not only tied to prejudice, but to discriminatory behavior as well. “It’s not illegal to have a bad thought or feeling in your head,” said Fiske. “What really matters is the behavior.” This behavior can include bringing harm to others or excluding them, and through a meta-analysis she conducted of 57 studies done over 50 years on attitude behavior and racial bias, she found that emotions predict behaviors twice as much as negative stereotypes.

Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu (2002) proposed that the content of stereotypes be studied and argued that stereotypes are captured by the dimensions of warmth and competence. The researchers wrote, “subjectively positive stereotypes on one dimension do not contradict prejudice but often are functionally consistent with unflattering stereotypes on the other dimension” (pg. 878). It is also predicted that status and competition, two variables important for intergroup relations, predict the dimensions of stereotypes such that for subordinate, noncompetitive groups (i.e. the elderly) the positive stereotype of warmth will act jointly with the negative stereotype of low competence to give privileged groups an advantage. They add that for competitive out-groups such as Asians, there is a positive stereotype of competence in conjunction with a negative stereotype of low warmth which justifies the in-group’s resentment of them. Finally, they predicted that different combinations of stereotypic warmth and competence bring about unique intergroup emotions, directed toward various societal groups such that “pity targets the warm but not competent subordinates; envy targets the competent but not warm competitors; contempt is reserved for out-groups deemed neither warm nor competent” (pg. 879).

The data provided from nine survey samples show that perceived competence and warmth did indeed differentiate out-group stereotypes; that many out-groups are perceived as competent but not warm (or warm but not competent); that perceived social status predicted perceived competence and perceived competition predicted perceived lack of warmth; and that pity, envy, contempt, and admiration differentiated the four combinations of perceived warmth and competence. In relation to the last finding, the authors speculated, “Both envy items (i.e., envious, jealous) reflect the belief that another possesses some object that the self desires but lacks; this, then, acknowledges the out-groups’ possession of good qualities and also that the out-group is responsible for the in-group’s distress. In short, envy and jealousy are inherently mixed emotions. In a similar way, pity and sympathy directed toward warm but incompetent out-groups suggest a mixture of subjectively good feelings and acknowledgement of the out-groups’ inferior position. Again, pity is inherently a mixed emotion” (pg. 897). The results of the study fly in the face of the consensus of social psychologists that prejudice involves simultaneous dislike and disrespect for an out-group, but instead, shows that out-group prejudice often focuses on one or the other, but not both.

For more from the Monitor on Psychology article, please visit: [https://www.apa.org/monitor/oct04/prejudice](https://www.apa.org/monitor/oct04/prejudice)

### 3.2.8. Is Intergroup Rivalry Inevitable Due to Competition for Limited Resources?
Another line of thinking does assert that groups will engage in prejudicial and discriminatory practices because they are competing for limited resources. The interesting thing is that competition comes about due to either real imbalances of power and resources, called the realistic group conflict theory (LeVine & Campbell, 1972) or perceived imbalances, called relative deprivation. In the case of the former, groups competing for limited jobs may engage in discriminatory practices or make prejudicial comments about the other group. In the case of the latter, simply believing that your situation is improving but slower than other groups, can lead to instances of intergroup conflict. Using the realistic group conflict theory as a base, Brief et al. (2005) found that the closer whites lived to blacks and the more interethnic conflict they perceived in their communities, the more negative their reaction was to diverse workplaces.

Dominant groups likewise want to maintain the status quo or continue their control over subordinate groups. Those with a social dominance orientation (SDO) view their ingroup as dominant and superior to outgroups and seek to enforce the hierarchy as it exists now. They take on roles that enhance or attenuate inequality; are generally intolerant; are not empathetic and altruistic; express less concern for others; are generally more conservative, patriotic, nationalistic, and express cultural elitism; support chauvinist policies; do not support gay rights, women’s rights, social welfare programs, ameliorative racial policy, and environmental policy; generally support military programs; support wars for dominance but not war unconditionally; and finally the orientation is more present in males than females (Pratto et al., 1994). The orientation was also found to be distinct from an authoritarian personality in which a person displays an exaggerated submission to authority, is intolerant of weakness, endorses the use of punitive measures toward outgroup members or deviants, and conformity to ingroup leaders (Adorno et al., 1950), though Pratto et al. (1994) do indicate that SDO does predict many of the social attitudes conceptually associated with authoritarianism such as ethnocentrism, punitiveness, and conservatism. It is also distinct from social identity theory such that, “Social identity theory posits out-group denigration as a device for maintaining positive social identity; social dominance theory posits it as a device to maintain superior group status” (pg. 757).

The system justification theory proposes that people are motivated to varying degrees, to defend, bolster, and justify existing social, political, and economic arrangements, also known as the status quo, to maintain their advantaged position. These behaviors legitimatize the social hierarchy as it currently exists, even if they hold a disadvantaged place in this system (Jost, 2011). In the case of the disadvantaged, they may assert that the system is fair and just and display outgroup favoritism to those who perform well in the system.

3.2.9. Attribution Theory

Attribution theory (Heider, 1958) asserts that people are motivated to explain their own and other people’s behavior by attributing causes of that behavior to either something in themselves or a trait they have, called a dispositional attribution, or to something outside the person called a situational attribution. We also commit the fundamental attribution error (FAE; Jones & Harris, 1967) which is an error in assigning a cause to another's behavior in which we automatically assume a dispositional reason for his or her actions and ignore situational factors. Related to the current discussion of prejudice and discrimination, we commit the cognitive error of group-serving bias by ignoring an outgroup member’s positive behavior and assigning dispositional attributions to their negative behavior while attributing negative behavior to situational factors and positive behavior to dispositional ones for ingroup members. One study investigated harmful behavior and found evidence of the group-serving bias insofar as members of the Italian Communist party said outgroup actors were more aggressive and intentional in their harmful actions than in-group actors (Schruijer et al., 1994).
Finally, **attributional ambiguity** refers to the confusion a person may experience over whether or not they are being treated prejudicially (Crocker & Major, 1989). Though no one would want to be discriminated against or experience prejudice, knowing this is the cause of negative feedback can actually protect one’s self-esteem. Women in one experiment received negative feedback from an evaluator they knew was prejudiced and showed less depression than women who received negative feedback from a nonprejudiced evaluator. In a second experiment, white and black college students were given interpersonal feedback from a white evaluator who could either see them or not. Black participants were more likely to attribute negative feedback to prejudice than positive feedback. Additionally, being seen by the evaluator protected the self-esteem of Black participants from negative feedback but lowered the self-esteem of those who were given positive feedback (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991).

### 3.2.10. Teaching Tolerance

As a starting point, one way to reduce prejudice and discrimination (or reduce negative feelings rooted in cognitions about another group and negative behavior made in relation to the group) is by teaching **tolerance** or “respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. Tolerance is harmony in difference.” The Teaching Tolerance movement ([https://www.tolerance.org/](https://www.tolerance.org/)), founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center to prevent the growth of hate, provides free resources to teachers, educators, and administrators from kindergarten to high school. The program centers on social justice, which includes the domains of identity, diversity, justice, and action; and anti-bias, which encourages children and young people to challenge prejudice and be agents of change in their own lives. They write, “We view tolerance as a way of thinking and feeling—but most importantly, of acting—that gives us peace in our individuality, respect for those unlike us, the wisdom to discern humane values and the courage to act upon them.”

The group proposes 13 principles to improve intergroup relations. Briefly, they include:

1. **Principle 1** – Sources of prejudice and discrimination should be addressed at the institutional and individual levels and where people learn, work, and live. The group notes that power differences, whether real or imagined, have to be dealt with as they are at the heart of intergroup tensions.

2. **Principle 2** – We have to go beyond merely raising knowledge and awareness to include efforts to influence the behavior of others. Strategies to improve intergroup relations must also include lessons about how one is to act in accordance with this new knowledge. Also, as prejudice and discrimination are socially influenced to change our own behavior we may need to look to others for support and our efforts may involve change the behavior of those who express such negative views of others and who possibly act on it.

3. **Principle 3** – Strategies should include all racial and ethnic groups involved as “diversity provides an opportunity for learning and for comparison that can help avoid oversimplification or stereotyping.”

4. **Principle 4** – There should be cooperative, equal-status roles for persons from different groups. Activities should be cooperative in nature to ensure that people from different backgrounds can all contribute equally to the task.

5. **Principle 5** – People in positions of power should participate in, and model, what is being taught in race relations programs as an example to those being taught and to show that the learning activities matter.

6. **Principle 6** – Positive intergroup relations should be taught to children at an early age but at the same time, we need to realize that these lessons may not stick even though they do make later lessons easier to teach and learn. The group states, “People cannot be inoculated against prejudice. Given the differences in living conditions of various racial and ethnic groups, as well as the existence of discrimination throughout our society, improving intergroup relations is a challenge that requires ongoing work.” The last two words are by far the most important in this principle.

7. **Principle 7** – Building off Principle 6, a one-time workshop, course, or learning module is not enough and there
needs to be “highly focused activities and efforts to ensure that positive intergroup relations are pursued throughout the organization involved.”

8. Principle 8 – Similarities between racial and ethnic groups need to be emphasized as much as differences in social class, gender, and language. Though there are differences between groups, they also have a lot in common. “Making “the other” seem less different, strange, or exotic can encourage positive interactions and avoid stereotyping.”

9. Principle 9 – Most Americans of European descent value the concept of the “melting pot” but expect persons of color and immigrants to assimilate into the dominant white culture and resent them if they do not. Others insist that individuals choose a single cultural identity but by doing so communicate a lack of respect for people with bicultural or multicultural identities and discriminate against them. Hence, we must recognize the value of these varied identities as they represent a bridge to improved intergroup relations.

10. Principle 10 – Oftentimes it is myths and misinformation that sustain stereotypes and prejudices. The inaccuracies of these myths must be exposed to undermine the justifications for prejudice.

11. Principle 11 – Those who are to implement learning activities should be properly trained and their commitment firm to increase the effectiveness of the effort.

12. Principle 12 – The exact problems involved in poor intergroup relations within a setting should be diagnosed so that the correct strategies can be used and then follow-up studies of individual and organization change should follow.

13. Principle 13 – The strategies we use to reduce prejudice toward any particular racial or ethnic group may not transfer to other races or groups. “Since most people recognize that racism is inconsistent with democratic values, it is often the case that prejudiced persons have developed what they think are reasonable justifications for prejudices and discriminatory behavior that are specific to particular groups.”

The group notes that all 13 principles do not need to be included in every strategy, and some effective strategies and intervention programs incorporate as few as two or three. The principles presented above are meant to provide guidelines for action and are not guaranteed to work. Even the best-designed strategies can be undermined by weak implementation. The principles are also meant to focus research and discussion on what an effective program would look like.

Source: [https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/strategies-for-reducing-racial-and-ethnic-prejudice-essential-principles](https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/strategies-for-reducing-racial-and-ethnic-prejudice-essential-principles)

For Your Consideration

So do interventions to reduce prejudice and create an inclusive environment in early childhood work? A systematic review was conducted by Aboud et al. (2012) and provided mixed evidence. Check out the article for yourself: [https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0273229712000214](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0273229712000214)

3.2.11. Intergroup Contact Theory

According to an APA feature article in 2001, to reduce bias among conflicting groups, all you need is contact ([https://www.apa.org/monitor/nov01/contact](https://www.apa.org/monitor/nov01/contact)). In the 1950s, psychologist Gordon Allport proposed his “contact hypothesis” which states that contact between groups can promote acceptance and tolerance but only when four conditions are met. First, there must be equal status between the groups in the situation as if the status quo of imbalance is maintained, the stereotypes fueling prejudice and discrimination cannot be broken down. Second, the groups must share common goals that are superordinate to any one group which leads to the third condition of
intergroup cooperation. The groups must work together and share in the fruits of their labor. Finally, there has to be support at the institutional level in terms of authorities, law, or custom (Allport, 1954).

A 2006 meta-analysis by Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp confirm Allport’s hypothesis. The researchers synthesized the effects from 696 samples and found that greater intergroup contact is associated with lower levels of prejudice. They also found that intergroup contact effects generalize beyond participants in the immediate contact situation. They write, “Not only do attitudes toward the immediate participants usually become more favorable, but so do attitudes toward the entire outgroup, outgroup members in other situations, and even outgroups not involved in the contact. This result enhances the potential of intergroup contact to be a practical, applied means of improving intergroup relations” (pg. 766).


3.2.12. Jigsaw Classroom

The Jigsaw classroom was created in the early 1970s by Elliot Aronson and his students at the University of Texas and the University of California (Aronson et al., 1978). It has a proven track record of reducing racial conflict and increasing positive educational outcomes. These include reducing absenteeism, increasing a student’s liking of school, and improving test performance. Like a jigsaw puzzle, each student represents a piece and is needed to complete and fully understand the final product. So how does it work? According to https://www.jigsaw.org/:

1. The class is divided into smaller groups of 5-6 students, each group diverse in terms of gender, race, ability, and ethnicity.
2. One student is appointed as the group leader and should be the most mature student in the group.
3. The lesson for the day is divided into 5-6 segments. As the website says, if you were presenting a lesson on Eleanor Roosevelt, you would break it up into covering her childhood, life with Franklin and their children, her life after he contracted polio, her work in the White House as First Lady, and her life and work after her husband died.
4. Each student is then assigned to learn one segment ONLY.
5. The students are given time to read over their segment and learn it at least twice. Memorization of the script is not needed.
6. Temporary “expert” groups are next created by having students from each jigsaw group join other students assigned the same segment. The students are given time to discuss the main points with others in the expert group and to rehearse the presentations they will make to their jigsaw group.
7. Students are returned to their jigsaw groups.
8. The students are then asked to present his or her segment to the group and the other group members are encouraged to ask questions for clarification.
9. The teacher is asked to move from group to group and observe the process. If there is a problem in the group such as one member being disruptive or dominating, the teacher will make an intervention appropriate to the situation. With time, the group leader will handle such situations but needs to be trained. The teacher could do this by whispering instructions to the leader.
10. Once the session is over, the teacher gives a quiz on the material. This reinforces that the sessions are not fun and games, but really count.

So does it work? Results show that once a group begins to work well, barriers break down and the students show liking
for one another and empathy too (Aronson, 2002). The same results were observed in a study of Vietnamese tertiary students such that they reported appreciating working with others, getting help, and discussing the content with each other (Tran & Lewis, 2012). Outside of reducing intergroup rivalries and prejudice, an adaptation has been shown to help reduce social loafing in college student group projects (Voyles, Bailey, & Durik, 2015).

For more on the jigsaw classroom, please visit: https://www.jigsaw.org/ 

3.3. Defining Aggression

Section Learning Objectives

• Define aggression.
• Identify and define the three forms aggression can take.
• Clarify what domestic violence is and its prevalence.
• Clarify what rape is and its prevalence.
• Clarify what sexual harassment is and its prevalence.
• Clarify what bullying and cyberbullying are.

3.3.1. Aggression and Its Types

Aggression can be defined as any behavior, whether physical or verbal, that is carried out with the intent to harm another person. The key here is determining the intention or motive for the aggressive behavior. Aggression should also be distinguished from being angry which is an emotional reaction to an event but can just stay that – an emotion. Just because someone is angry does not mean they will necessarily act on it and engage in aggressive behavior. If they do aggress, how intense is the behavior? To understand that, consider that aggressive acts occur along a continuum of least harmful to most harmful. On the extreme side are violent acts or violence. The World Health Organization (WHO) defined violence in their 2002 World Report on Violence and Health, as “The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation” (pg. 5). They state that violence can be self-directed in the form of suicidal behavior or self-abuse, interpersonal and between family members or individuals who are unrelated, or collective in terms of social, political, and economic and suggest motives for violence. They add that violence acts can be physical, sexual, psychological, or involve deprivation or neglect. For more on the report, and to view the 2014 report on violence prevention, please visit:


Aggression has three types. First, instrumental aggression occurs when a person attempts to obtain something but does not intend to harm others. The behavior serves as a means to another end. An example would be if a toddler tries to take a toy from another toddler. Second, hostile or physical aggression occurs when a person intends to harm another person by hitting, shooting, kicking, punching, or stabbing them, or by simply threatening such action. The behavior is an end in itself. Third, relational aggression occurs when efforts are made to damage another person’s relationships and could include spreading rumors, name calling, ignoring a person, or social exclusion.
3.3.2. Behavioral Manifestations of Aggression

3.3.2.1. Domestic violence. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), domestic violence is “the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another.” It can include telling the victim they never do right; complete control of finances; embarrassing or shaming the victim with put-downs; telling the victim how to dress; threatening to kill or injure the victim’s friends, loved ones, or pets; forcing sex with others; preventing the victim from working or going to school; and destroying the victim’s property. They estimate that on average, “nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States” and “1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience severe intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner contact sexual violence, and/or intimate partner stalking with impacts such as injury, fearfulness, post-traumatic stress disorder, use of victim services, and contraction of sexually transmitted diseases.” Finally, intimate partner violence accounts for 15% of all violent crime.

There is an interesting intersection of age, gender, and marital aggression. Bookwala, Sobin, and Zdaniuk (2005) compared conflict resolution strategies, physical aggression, and injuries in a sample of 6,185 married couples, ranging from young to middle to older aged men and women. Younger participants were found to use more maladaptive conflict resolution strategies, had more physical arguments, and sustained more injuries than older participants. To deal with conflict, women used calm discussions less and heated arguments more, but for the young and middle-aged women, they reported more injuries due to their spouse.

For more on domestic violence, please visit: https://ncadv.org

3.3.2.2. Rape. According to womenshealth.gov, rape occurs when there has been sexual penetration, without consent. The U.S. Department of Justice adds that consent involves clearly stating ‘yes’ to any type of sexual activity. Rape also occurs if you are drunk, high, drugged, passed out, or asleep as in these situations you cannot give consent. It is a type of sexual assault and during their life, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men will be raped. NCADV adds that “Almost half of female (46.7%) and male (44.9%) victims of rape in the United States were raped by an acquaintance. Of these, 45.4% of female rape victims and 29% of male rape victims were raped by an intimate partner.” Violence of a sexual nature culminating in rape starts early with as many as 8.5 million women reporting an incident before the age of 18.

For more information, please visit: https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/sexual-assault-and-rape/

3.3.2.3. Sexual harassment. Sexual harassment occurs when unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or sexually charged words or gestures have been made. In the workplace, the sexual harassment comes with the expectation of submission, whether stated implicitly or explicitly, and as a term of one’s employment. It includes unwanted pressure for sexual favors, pressure for dates, sexual comments, cat calls, sexual innuendos or stories, questions about sexual fantasies or fetishes, kissing sounds, howling, hugging, kissing, stroking, sexually suggestive signals, staring at someone, winking, etc. A February 21, 2018 article by NPR (National Public Radio) reported that 81% of women and 43% of men had experienced sexual harassment of some sort during their life.

“The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) is an ongoing survey that collects the most current and comprehensive national- and state-level data on intimate partner violence, sexual violence and stalking victimization...
in the United States.” To view the report and other resources yourself, please visit: https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/datasources/nisvs/index.html.

To read the full NPR article, please visit:


3.3.2.4. Bullying and cyberbullying. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), defines bullying as “…any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths, who are not siblings or current dating partners, involving an observed or perceived power imbalance. These behaviors are repeated multiple times or are highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm.” Stopbullying.gov adds that this behavior can include verbal (teasing, name-calling, taunting, threats of harm, or inappropriate sexual comments), social (spreading rumors or excluding someone intentionally), or physical (spitting on, hitting, kicking, breaking someone’s things, or making rude hand gestures) bullying. The BJS reports that during the 2015-2016 school year, 22% of middle schools reported at least one incident of student bullying each week while 15% of high schools, 11% of combined schools, and 8% of primary schools reported incidents.

Cyberbullying involves the use of technology such as social media, e-mail, chatrooms, texting, video games, Youtube, or photographs to humiliate, embarrass, intimidate, or even threaten someone to gain power and control over them. According to the National Bullying Prevention Center, cyberbullying involves an electronic form of contact, an aggressive act, intent, repetition, and harm to the target (Hutson, 2016) and in 2015 the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) reported that 15.5% of high school students and 24% of middle school students were cyberbullied. Unlike bullying done outside of the online environment, the target may not know who is actually bullying them or why, the cyberbullying could go viral and to a large audience, parents and adults may have difficulty managing it, and the harmful effects of cyberbullying on the target may not be easily seen by the bully, thereby perpetuating it.

For more on bullying, please visit:

• https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/bullyingresearch/index.html
• https://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/index.html

For more on cyberbullying, please visit:

• https://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/cyberbullying/

3.3.3. Explaining Violence Through a Gender Lens

One explanation for violence is the stress that adhering to gender roles causes, called gender role stress. Consider that men experience a great deal of pressure to adhere to masculine norms, of which being aggressive and violence are included. In a study examining the mediating role of male gender role stress for adherence to hegemonic masculinity and being hostile to women, it was found that gender role stress did mediate status and antifeminity norms while being hostile to women was mediated by a toughness norm (Gallagher & Parrott, 2011). Another study found that fearful attachment and gender role stress predicted controlling behaviors in a sample of 143 men court mandated to attend a batter’s intervention program (Mahalik et al., 2005).
Another explanation is gender role conflict (GRC) theory which asserts that to understand aggression and violence, one has to look beyond mere gender role stress and examine sociopsychological factors that influence a man’s conception of masculinity in a patriarchal and sexist society (O’Neil, 1981a, 1981b). Hence, gender role conflict can lead to negative consequences and pressure to conform to social and cultural expectations of masculinity, at times resulting in exaggerated expression and incarceration (Amato, 2012). Well-being can also be affected negatively if a man attempts to subscribe to masculine norms such as power and playboy, though the norm of winning is positively associated with prospective well-being (Kayla et al., 2019). Hence, adherence to traditional masculine norms can have both positive and negative effects on men’s health.

Module Recap

This concludes our discussion of relationships, stereotypes, and aggression, which asked you to apply a social psychology lens to the topic of gender. We hope you found it interesting and are ready to continue examining gender through other lenses. Next up, physiological.