Psychology and Human Relations

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Contents

Textbook: Psychology and Human Relations

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- Chapter 1 Personality Traits
- Chapter 2 Relationships and Well-Being
- Chapter 3 Positive Relationships
- Chapter 4 Positive Relationships
- Chapter 5 Emotional Intelligence
- Chapter 6 Emotion Experience and Well-Being
- Chapter 7 Yoga, Buddhism, Relationships and Personality
- Chapter 8 Happiness: The Empirical Science of Subjective Well-Being and the Philosophy of Tibetan Buddhism
- Chapter 9: Nature and Nurture
- Chapter 10: Self-Regulation and Conscientiousness
- Chapter 11: Self and Identity
- Chapter 12: Conformity and Obedience
- Chapter 13: Prejudice, Discrimination, and Stereotyping
- Chapter 14: Cooperation

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1. Personality Traits

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Personality traits reflect people's characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Personality traits imply consistency and stability—someone who scores high on a specific trait like Extraversion is expected to be sociable in different situations and over time. Thus, trait psychology rests on the idea that people differ from one another in terms of where they stand on a set of basic trait dimensions that persist over time and across situations. The most widely used system of traits is called the Five-Factor Model. This system includes five broad traits that can be remembered with the acronym OCEAN: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Each of the major traits from the Big Five can be divided into facets to give a more fine-grained analysis of someone's personality. In addition, some trait theorists argue that there are other traits that cannot be completely captured by the Five-Factor Model. Critics of the trait concept argue that people do not act consistently from one situation to the next and that people are very influenced by situational forces. Thus, one major debate in the field concerns the relative power of people's traits versus the situations in which they find themselves as predictors of their behavior.

- Big five
- Five-Factor Model of personality
- OCEAN system of traits
- Person-situation debate
- Personality
- Personality traits
- Social learning

Learning Objectives

- List and describe the "Big Five" ("OCEAN") personality traits that comprise the Five-Factor Model of personality.
- Describe how the facet approach extends broad personality traits.
- Explain a critique of the personality-trait concept.
- Describe in what ways personality traits may be manifested in everyday behavior.
- Describe each of the Big Five personality traits, and the low and high end of the dimension.
- Give examples of each of the Big Five personality traits, including both a low and high example.
- Describe how traits and social learning combine to predict your social activities.
- Describe your theory of how personality traits get refined by social learning.

Introduction

When we observe people around us, one of the first things that strikes us is how different people are from one another. Some people are very talkative while others are very quiet. Some are active whereas others are couch potatoes. Some worry a lot, others almost never seem anxious. Each time we use one of these words, words like "talkative," "quiet," "active," or "anxious," to describe those around us, we are talking about a person's personality—the characteristic ways that people differ from one another. Personality psychologists try to describe and understand these differences.

"Are you an introvert"? In popular culture it's common to talk about people being introverts or extroverts as if these were precise descriptions that meant the same thing for everyone. But research shows that these traits and others are quite variable within individuals. [Image: Nguyen Hung Vu, https://goo.gl/qKJUAC, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/BRvSA7]

Although there are many ways to think about the personalities that people have, Gordon Allport and other "personologists" claimed that we can best understand the differences between individuals by understanding their personality traits. Personality traits reflect basic dimensions on which people differ (Matthews, Deary, & Whiteman, 2003). According to trait psychologists, there are a limited number of these dimensions (dimensions like Extraversion, Conscientiousness, or Agreeableness), and each individual falls

somewhere on each dimension, meaning that they could be low, medium, or high on any specific trait.

An important feature of personality traits is that they reflect continuous distributions rather than distinct personality types. This means that when personality psychologists talk about Introverts and Extraverts, they are not really talking about two distinct types of people who are completely and qualitatively different from one another. Instead, they are talking about people who score relatively low or relatively high along a continuous distribution. In fact, when personality psychologists measure traits like Extraversion, they typically find that most people score somewhere in the middle, with smaller numbers showing more extreme levels. The figure below shows the distribution of Extraversion scores from a survey of thousands of people. As you can see, most people report being moderately, but not extremely, extraverted, with fewer people reporting very high or very low scores.

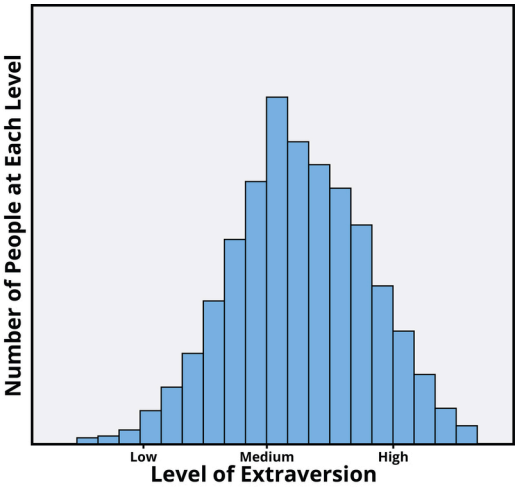

Figure 1. Distribution of Extraversion Scores in a Sample Higher bars mean that more people have scores of that level. This figure shows that most people score towards the middle of the extraversion scale, with fewer people who are highly extraverted or highly introverted.

There are three criteria that are characterize personality traits: (1) consistency, (2) stability, and (3) individual differences.

1. To have a personality trait, individuals must be somewhat consistent across situations in their behaviors related to the trait. For example, if they are talkative at home, they tend also to be talkative at work.
2. Individuals with a trait are also somewhat stable over time in behaviors related to the trait. If they are talkative, for example, at age 30, they will also tend to be talkative at age 40.
3. People differ from one another on behaviors related to the trait. Using speech is not a personality trait and neither is walking on two feet—virtually all individuals do these activities, and there are almost no individual differences. But people differ on how frequently they talk and how active they are, and thus personality traits such as Talkativeness and Activity Level do exist.

A challenge of the trait approach was to discover the major traits on which all people differ. Scientists for many decades generated hundreds of new traits, so that it was soon difficult to keep track and make sense of them. For instance, one psychologist might focus on individual differences in "friendliness," whereas another might focus on the highly related concept of "sociability." Scientists began seeking ways to reduce the number of traits in some systematic way and to discover the basic traits that describe most of the differences between people.

The way that Gordon Allport and his colleague Henry Odbert approached this was to search the dictionary for all descriptors of personality (Allport & Odbert, 1936). Their approach was guided by the lexical hypothesis, which states that all important personality characteristics should be reflected in the language that we use to describe other people. Therefore, if we want to understand the fundamental ways in which people differ from one another, we can turn to the words that people use to describe one another.

So if we want to know what words people use to describe one another, where should we look? Allport and Odbert looked in the most obvious place—the dictionary. Specifically, they took all the personality descriptors that they could find in the dictionary (they started with almost 18,000 words but quickly reduced that list to a more manageable number) and then used statistical techniques to determine which words "went together." In other words, if everyone who said that they were "friendly" also said that they were "sociable," then this might mean that personality psychologists would only need a single trait to capture individual differences in these characteristics. Statistical techniques were used to determine whether a small number of dimensions might underlie all of the thousands of words we use to describe people.

The Five-Factor Model of Personality

Research that used the lexical approach showed that many of the personality descriptors found in the dictionary do indeed overlap. In other words, many of the words that we use to describe people are synonyms. Thus, if we want to know what a person is like, we do not necessarily need to ask how sociable they are, how friendly they are, and how gregarious they are. Instead, because sociable people tend to be friendly and gregarious, we can summarize this personality dimension with a single term. Someone who is sociable, friendly, and gregarious would typically be described as an "Extravert." Once we know she is an extravert, we can assume that she is sociable, friendly, and gregarious.

Statistical methods (specifically, a technique called factor analysis) helped to determine whether a small number of dimensions underlie the diversity of words that people like Allport and Odbert identified. The most widely accepted system to emerge from this approach was "The Big Five" or "Five-Factor Model" (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & John, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1987). The

Big Five comprises five major traits shown in the Figure 2 below. A way to remember these five is with the acronym OCEAN (O is for Openness; C is for Conscientiousness; E is for Extraversion; A is for Agreeableness; N is for Neuroticism). Figure 3 provides descriptions of people who would score high and low on each of these traits.

Big 5 Trait	Definition
Openness	The tendency to appreciate new art, ideas, values, feelings, and behaviors.
Conscientiousness	The tendency to be careful, on-time for appointments, to follow rules, and to be hardworking.
Extraversion	The tendency to be talkative, sociable, and to enjoy others; the tendency to have a dominant style.
Agreeableness	The tendency to agree and go along with others rather than to assert one's own opinions and choices.
Neuroticism	The tendency to frequently experience negative emotions such as anger, worry, and sadness, as well as being interpersonally sensitive.

Figure 2. Descriptions of the Big Five Personality Traits

Big 5 Trait	Example Behavior for LOW Scorers	Example Behavior for HIGH Scorers
Openness	Prefers not to be exposed to alternative moral systems; narrow interests; inartistic; not analytical; down-to-earth	Enjoys seeing people with new types of haircuts and body piercing; curious; imaginative; untraditional
Conscientiousness	Prefers spur-of-the-moment action to planning; unreliable; hedonistic; careless; lax	Never late for a date; organized; hardworking; neat; persevering; punctual; self-disciplined
Extraversion	Preferring a quiet evening reading to a loud party; sober; aloof; unenthusiastic	Being the life of the party; active; optimistic; fun-loving; affectionate
Agreeableness	Quickly and confidently asserts own rights; irritable; manipulative; uncooperative; rude	Agrees with others about political opinions; good-natured; forgiving; gullible; helpful; forgiving
Neuroticism	Not getting irritated by small annoyances; calm, unemotional; hardy; secure; self-satisfied	Constantly worrying about little things; insecure; hypochondriacal; feeling inadequate

Figure 3. Example behaviors for those scoring low and high for the big 5 traits

Scores on the Big Five traits are mostly independent. That means that a person's standing on one trait tells very little about their

standing on the other traits of the Big Five. For example, a person can be extremely high in Extraversion and be either high or low on Neuroticism. Similarly, a person can be low in Agreeableness and be either high or low in Conscientiousness. Thus, in the Five-Factor Model, you need five scores to describe most of an individual's personality.

Traits are important and interesting because they describe stable patterns of behavior that persist for long periods of time (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005). Importantly, these stable patterns can have broad-ranging consequences for many areas of our life (Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi, & Goldberg, 2007). For instance, think about the factors that determine success in college. If you were asked to guess what factors predict good grades in college, you might guess something like intelligence. This guess would be correct, but we know much more about who is likely to do well. Specifically, personality researchers have also found the personality traits like Conscientiousness play an important role in college and beyond, probably because highly conscientious individuals study hard, get their work done on time, and are less distracted by nonessential activities that take time away from school work. In addition, highly conscientious people are often healthier than people low in conscientiousness because they are more likely to maintain healthy diets, to exercise, and to follow basic safety procedures like wearing seat belts or bicycle helmets. Over the long term, this consistent pattern of behaviors can add up to meaningful differences in health and longevity. Thus, personality traits are not just a useful way to describe people you know; they actually help psychologists predict how good a worker someone will be, how long he or she will live, and the types of jobs and activities the person will enjoy. Thus, there is growing interest in personality psychology among psychologists who work in applied settings, such as health psychology or organizational psychology.

Facets of Traits (Subtraits)

So how does it feel to be told that your entire personality can be summarized with scores on just five personality traits? Do you think these five scores capture the complexity of your own and others' characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors? Most people would probably say no, pointing to some exception in their behavior that goes against the general pattern that others might see. For instance, you may know people who are warm and friendly and find it easy to talk with strangers at a party yet are terrified if they have to perform in front of others or speak to large groups of people. The fact that there are different ways of being extraverted or conscientious shows that there is value in considering lower-level units of personality that are more specific than the Big Five traits. These more specific, lower-level units of personality are often called facets.

Trait	Facets of Trait
Openness	• Fantasy prone • Open to feelings • Open to diverse behaviors • Open to new and different ideas • Open to various values and beliefs
Conscientiousness	• Competent • Orderly • Dutiful • Achievement oriented • Self-disciplined • Deliberate
Extraversion	• Gregarious (sociable) • Warm • Assertive • Active • Excitement-seeking • Positive emotionality
Agreeableness	• Trusting • Straightforward • Altruistic • Compliant • Modest • Tender-minded
Neuroticism	• Anxious • Angry • Depressed • Self-consciousness • Impulsive • Vulnerable

Figure 4. Facets of Traits

To give you a sense of what these narrow units are like, Figure 4 shows facets for each of the Big Five traits. It is important to note that although personality researchers generally agree about the value of the Big Five traits as a way to summarize one's personality, there is no widely accepted list of facets that should be studied. The list seen here, based on work by researchers Paul Costa and Jeff McCrae, thus reflects just one possible list among many. It should, however, give you an idea of some of the facets making up each of the Five-Factor Model.

Facets can be useful because they provide more specific descriptions of what a person is like. For instance, if we take our friend who loves parties but hates public speaking, we might say that this person scores high on the "gregariousness" and "warmth" facets of extraversion, while scoring lower on facets such as "assertiveness" or "excitement-seeking." This precise profile of facet scores not only provides a better description, it might also allow us to better predict how this friend will do in a variety of different jobs (for example, jobs that require public speaking versus jobs that involve one-on-one interactions with customers; Paunonen & Ashton, 2001). Because different facets within a broad, global trait like extraversion tend to go together (those who are gregarious are often but not always assertive), the broad trait often provides a useful summary of what a person is like. But when we really want to know a person, facet scores add to our knowledge in important ways.

Other Traits Beyond the Five-Factor Model

Despite the popularity of the Five-Factor Model, it is certainly not the only model that exists. Some suggest that there are more than five major traits, or perhaps even fewer. For example, in one of the first comprehensive models to be proposed, Hans Eysenck suggested that Extraversion and Neuroticism are most important. Eysenck believed that by combining people's standing on these two major traits, we could account for many of the differences in personality that we see in people (Eysenck, 1981). So for instance, a neurotic introvert would be shy and nervous, while a stable introvert might avoid social situations and prefer solitary activities, but he may do so with a calm, steady attitude and little anxiety or emotion. Interestingly, Eysenck attempted to link these two major dimensions to underlying differences in people's biology. For instance, he suggested that introverts experienced too much

sensory stimulation and arousal, which made them want to seek out quiet settings and less stimulating environments. More recently, Jeffrey Gray suggested that these two broad traits are related to fundamental reward and avoidance systems in the brain—extraverts might be motivated to seek reward and thus exhibit assertive, reward-seeking behavior, whereas people high in neuroticism might be motivated to avoid punishment and thus may experience anxiety as a result of their heightened awareness of the threats in the world around them (Gray, 1981. This model has since been updated; see Gray & McNaughton, 2000). These early theories have led to a burgeoning interest in identifying the physiological underpinnings of the individual differences that we observe.

Another revision of the Big Five is the HEXACO model of traits (Ashton & Lee, 2007). This model is similar to the Big Five, but it posits slightly different versions of some of the traits, and its proponents argue that one important class of individual differences was omitted from the Five-Factor Model. The HEXACO adds Honesty-Humility as a sixth dimension of personality. People high in this trait are sincere, fair, and modest, whereas those low in the trait are manipulative, narcissistic, and self-centered. Thus, trait theorists are agreed that personality traits are important in understanding behavior, but there are still debates on the exact number and composition of the traits that are most important.

There are other important traits that are not included in comprehensive models like the Big Five. Although the five factors capture much that is important about personality, researchers have suggested other traits that capture interesting aspects of our behavior. In Figure 5 below we present just a few, out of hundreds, of the other traits that have been studied by personologists.

Personality Trait	Description
Machiavellianism	Named after the famous political philosopher, Niccolo Machiavelli, this trait refers to individuals who manipulate the behavior of others, often through duplicity. Machiavellians are often interested in money and power, and pragmatically use others in this quest.
Need for Achievement	Those high in need for achievement want to accomplish a lot and set high standards of excellence for themselves. They are able to work persistently and hard for distant goals. David McClelland argued that economic growth depends in part on citizens with high need for achievement.
Need for Cognition	People high in need for cognition find it rewarding to understand things, and are willing to use considerable cognitive effort in this quest. Such individuals enjoy learning, and the process of trying to understand new things.
Authoritarianism	Authoritarians believe in strict social hierarchies, in which they are totally obedient to those above them, and expect complete obedience from their subordinates. Rigid in adherence to rules, the authoritarian personality is very uncomfortable with uncertainty.
Narcissism	The narcissistic personality has self-love that is so strong that it results in high levels of vanity, conceit, and ruthlessness. The narcissistic individual often has problems feeling empathetic toward others and grateful to others.
Self-esteem	The tendency to evaluate oneself positively. Self-esteem does not imply that one believes that he or she is better than others, only that he or she is a person of worth.
Optimism	The tendency to expect positive outcomes in the future. People who are optimistic expect good things to happen, and indeed they often have more positive outcomes, perhaps because they work harder to achieve them.
Alexithymia	The inability to recognize and label emotions in oneself. The individual also has a difficult time recognizing emotions in others, and often has difficulties in relationships.

Figure 5. Other Traits Beyond Those Included in the Big Five

Not all of the above traits are currently popular with scientists, yet each of them has experienced popularity in the past. Although the Five-Factor Model has been the target of more rigorous research than some of the traits above, these additional personality characteristics give a good idea of the wide range of behaviors and attitudes that traits can cover.

The Person-Situation Debate and Alternatives to the Trait Perspective

The way people behave is only in part a product of their natural personality. Situations also influence how a person behaves. Are you for instance a "different person" as a student in a classroom compared to when you're a member of a close-knit social group? [Image: UO Education, https://goo.gl/ylgV9T, CC BY-NC 2.0, https://goo.gl/VnKlK8]

The ideas described in this module should probably seem familiar, if not obvious to you. When asked to think about what our friends, enemies, family members, and colleagues are like, some of the first things that come to mind are their personality characteristics. We

might think about how warm and helpful our first teacher was, how irresponsible and careless our brother is, or how demanding and insulting our first boss was. Each of these descriptors reflects a personality trait, and most of us generally think that the descriptions that we use for individuals accurately reflect their "characteristic pattern of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors," or in other words, their personality.

But what if this idea were wrong? What if our belief in personality traits were an illusion and people are not consistent from one situation to the next? This was a possibility that shook the foundation of personality psychology in the late 1960s when Walter Mischel published a book called *Personality and Assessment* (1968). In this book, Mischel suggested that if one looks closely at people's behavior across many different situations, the consistency is really not that impressive. In other words, children who cheat on tests at school may steadfastly follow all rules when playing games and may never tell a lie to their parents. In other words, he suggested, there may not be any general trait of honesty that links these seemingly related behaviors. Furthermore, Mischel suggested that observers may believe that broad personality traits like honesty exist, when in fact, this belief is an illusion. The debate that followed the publication of Mischel's book was called the person–situation debate because it pitted the power of personality against the power of situational factors as determinants of the behavior that people exhibit.

Because of the findings that Mischel emphasized, many psychologists focused on an alternative to the trait perspective. Instead of studying broad, context-free descriptions, like the trait terms we've described so far, Mischel thought that psychologists should focus on people's distinctive reactions to specific situations. For instance, although there may not be a broad and general trait of honesty, some children may be especially likely to cheat on a test when the risk of being caught is low and the rewards for cheating are high. Others might be motivated by the sense of risk involved in cheating and may do so even when the rewards are not very high.

Thus, the behavior itself results from the child's unique evaluation of the risks and rewards present at that moment, along with her evaluation of her abilities and values. Because of this, the same child might act very differently in different situations. Thus, Mischel thought that specific behaviors were driven by the interaction between very specific, psychologically meaningful features of the situation in which people found themselves, the person's unique way of perceiving that situation, and his or her abilities for dealing with it. Mischel and others argued that it was these social-cognitive processes that underlie people's reactions to specific situations that provide some consistency when situational features are the same. If so, then studying these broad traits might be more fruitful than cataloging and measuring narrow, context-free traits like Extraversion or Neuroticism.

In the years after the publication of Mischel's (1968) book, debates raged about whether personality truly exists, and if so, how it should be studied. And, as is often the case, it turns out that a more moderate middle ground than what the situationists proposed could be reached. It is certainly true, as Mischel pointed out, that a person's behavior in one specific situation is not a good guide to how that person will behave in a very different specific situation. Someone who is extremely talkative at one specific party may sometimes be reticent to speak up during class and may even act like a wallflower at a different party. But this does not mean that personality does not exist, nor does it mean that people's behavior is completely determined by situational factors. Indeed, research conducted after the person-situation debate shows that on average, the effect of the "situation" is about as large as that of personality traits. However, it is also true that if psychologists assess a broad range of behaviors across many different situations, there are general tendencies that emerge. Personality traits give an indication about how people will act on average, but frequently they are not so good at predicting how a person will act in a specific situation at a certain moment in time. Thus, to best capture broad traits, one must assess *aggregate* behaviors, averaged over time and across

many different types of situations. Most modern personality researchers agree that there is a place for broad personality traits and for the narrower units such as those studied by Walter Mischel.

Videos

Video 1: Gabriela Cintron's – 5 *Factors of Personality* (*OCEAN Song*). This is a student-made video which cleverly describes, through song, common behavioral characteristics of the Big 5 personality traits.

Video 2: Michael Harris' – *Personality Traits: The Big 5 and More*. This is a student-made video that looks at characteristics of the OCEAN traits through a series of funny vignettes. It also presents on the Person vs Situation Debate.Video 3: David M. Cole's – *Grouchy with a Chance of Stomping*. This is a student-made video that makes a very important point about the relationship between personality traits and behavior using a handy weather analogy.

Vocabulary to Learn for this Chapter

Agreeableness

A personality trait that reflects a person's tendency to be compassionate, cooperative, warm, and caring to others. People low in agreeableness tend to be rude, hostile, and to pursue their own interests over those of others.

Conscientiousness

A personality trait that reflects a person's tendency to be careful, organized, hardworking, and to follow rules.

Continuous distributions

Characteristics can go from low to high, with all different intermediate values possible. One does not simply have the trait or not have it, but can possess varying amounts of it.

Extraversion

A personality trait that reflects a person's tendency to be sociable, outgoing, active, and assertive.

Facets

Broad personality traits can be broken down into narrower facets or aspects of the trait. For example, extraversion has several facets, such as sociability, dominance, risk-taking and so forth.

Factor analysis

A statistical technique for grouping similar things together according to how highly they are associated.

Five-Factor Model

(also called the Big Five) The Five-Factor Model is a widely accepted model of personality traits. Advocates of the model believe that much of the variability in people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors can be summarized with five broad traits. These five traits are Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism.

HEXACO model

The HEXACO model is an alternative to the Five-Factor Model. The HEXACO model includes six traits, five of which are variants of the traits included in the Big Five (Emotionality [E], Extraversion [X], Agreeableness [A], Conscientiousness [C], and Openness [O]). The sixth factor, Honesty-Humility [H], is unique to this model.

Independent

Two characteristics or traits are separate from one another– a person can be high on one and low on the other, or vice-versa. Some correlated traits are relatively independent in that although there is a tendency for a person high on one to also be high on the other, this is not always the case.

Lexical hypothesis

The lexical hypothesis is the idea that the most important differences between people will be encoded in the language that we use to describe people. Therefore, if we want to know which personality traits are most important, we can look to the language that people use to describe themselves and others.

Neuroticism

A personality trait that reflects the tendency to be interpersonally sensitive and the tendency to experience negative emotions like anxiety, fear, sadness, and anger.

Openness to Experience

A personality trait that reflects a person's tendency to seek out and to appreciate new things, including thoughts, feelings, values, and experiences.

Personality

Enduring predispositions that characterize a person, such as styles of thought, feelings and behavior.

Personality traits

Enduring dispositions in behavior that show differences across individuals, and which tend to characterize the person across varying types of situations.

Person-situation debate

The person-situation debate is a historical debate about the relative power of personality traits as compared to situational influences on behavior. The situationist critique, which started the person-situation debate, suggested that people overestimate the extent to which personality traits are consistent across situations.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/humanrelations/?p=34#h5p-2

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Grateful appreciation to the authors for this original chapter. The authors have no responsibility for this edited and adapted version.

2. Relationships and Well-being

This is an adapted chapter from Tan, K. & Tay, L. (2019). Full attribution information can be seen at the end of the chapter.

The relationships we cultivate in our lives are essential to our well-being—namely, happiness and health. Why is that so? We begin to answer this question by exploring the types of relationships—family, friends, colleagues, and lovers—we have in our lives and how they are measured. We also explore the different aspects of happiness and health, and show how the quantity and quality of relationships can affect our happiness and health.

Introduction

One of the most basic human needs is the need to belong. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]

In Daniel Defoe's classic novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the main character is shipwrecked. For years he lives alone, creating a shelter for himself and marking the passage of time on a wooden calendar. It is a lonely existence, and Crusoe describes climbing a hilltop in the hopes of seeing a passing ship and possible rescue. He scans the horizon until, in his own words, he is "almost blind." Then, without hope, he sits and weeps.

Although it is a work of fiction, *Robinson Crusoe* contains themes we can all relate to. One of these is the idea of loneliness. Humans are social animals and we prefer living together in groups. We cluster in families, in cities, and in groups of friends. In fact, most people spend relatively few of their waking hours alone. Even introverts report feeling happier when they are with others! Yes,

being surrounded by people and feeling connected to others appears to be a natural impulse.

In this module we will discuss relationships in the context of well-being. We will begin by defining well-being and then presenting research about different types of relationships. We will explore how both the quantity and quality of our relationships affect us, as well as take a look at a few popular conceptions (or misconceptions) about relationships and happiness.

The Importance of Relationships

If you were to reflect on the best moments of your life, chances are they involved other people. We feel good sharing our experiences with others, and our desire for high quality relationships may be connected to a deep-seated psychological impulse: the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Aristotle commented that humans are fundamentally social in nature. Modern society is full of evidence that Aristotle was right. For instance, people often hold strong opinions about single child families—usually concerning what are often viewed as problematic "only child" characteristics—and most parents choose to have multiple kids. People join book clubs to make a solitary activity—reading—into a social activity. Prisons often punish offenders by putting them in solitary confinement, depriving them of the company of others. Perhaps the most obvious expression of the need to belong in contemporary life is the prevalence of social media. We live in an era when, for the first time in history, people effectively have two overlapping sets of social relationships: those in the real world and those in the virtual world.

It may seem intuitive that our strong urge to connect with others has to do with the boost we receive to our own well-being from relationships. After all, we derive considerable meaning from our relational bonds—as seen in the joy a newborn brings to its parents,

the happiness of a wedding, and the good feelings of having reliable, supportive friendships. In fact, this intuition is borne out by research suggesting that relationships can be sources of intimacy and closeness (Reis, Clark & Holmes, 2004), comfort and relief from stress (Collins & Feeney, 2000), and accountability—all of which help toward achieving better health outcomes (Tay, Tan, Diener, & Gonzalez, 2013; Taylor, 2010). Indeed, scholars have long considered social relationships to be fundamental to happiness and well-being (Argyle, 2001; Myers, 2000). If the people in our lives are as important to our happiness as the research suggests, it only makes sense to investigate how relationships affect us.

The Question of Measurement

One prominent psychological dimension of well-being is happiness. In psychology, the scientific term for happiness is **subjective well-being**, which is defined by three different components: high *life satisfaction*, which refers to positive evaluations of one's life in general (e.g., "Overall, I am satisfied with my life"); *positive feelings*, which refers to the amount of positive emotions one experiences in life (e.g., peace, joy); and *low negative feelings*, which refers to the amount of negative emotions one experiences in life (e.g., sadness, anger) (Diener, 1984). These components are commonly measured using subjective self-report scales.

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

7 – Strongly agree
6 – Agree
5 – Slightly agree
4 – Neither agree nor disagree
3 – Slightly disagree
2 – Disagree
1 – Strongly disagree

____ In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

____ The conditions of my life are excellent.

____ I am satisfied with my life.

____ So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

____ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

Scoring:

31 – 35	**Extremely satisfied**
26 – 30	**Satisfied**
21 – 25	**Slightly satisfied**
20	**Neutral**
15 – 19	**Slightly dissatisfied**
10 – 14	**Dissatisfied**
5 – 9	**Extremely dissatisfied**

The Satisfaction with Life Scale is one of the most widely used

measures of well-being in the world

Presence and Quality of Relationships and Well-Being

If you wanted to investigate the connection between social relationships and well-being, where would you start? Would you focus on teenagers? Married couples? Would you interview religious people who have taken a vow of silence? These are the types of considerations well-being researchers face. It is impossible for a single study to look at all types of relationships across all age groups and cultures. Instead, researchers narrow their focus to specific variables. They tend to consider two major elements: the presence of relationships, and the quality of relationships.

Presence of relationships

The first consideration when trying to understand how relationships influence well-being is the presence of relationships. Simply put, researchers need to know whether or not people have relationships. Are they married? Do they have many friends? Are they a member of a club? Finding this out can be accomplished by looking at objective social variables, such as the size of a person's social network, or the number of friends they have. Researchers have discovered that the more social relationships people have, in general, the more positively their sense of well-being is impacted (Lucas, Dyrenforth, & Diener 2008). In one study of more than 200 undergraduate students, psychologists Ed Diener and Martin Seligman (2002) compared the happiest 10% to the unhappiest 10%. The researchers were curious to see what differentiated these two

groups. Was it gender? Exercise habits? Religion? The answer turned out to be relationships! The happiest students were much more satisfied with their relationships, including with close friends, family, and romantic partnerships, than the unhappiest. They also spent less time alone.

Some people might be inclined to dismiss the research findings above because they focused primarily on college students. However, in a worldwide study of people of all ages from 123 nations, results showed that having even a few high quality social relationships was consistently linked with subjective well-being (Tay & Diener, 2011). This is an important finding because it means that a person doesn't have to be a social butterfly in order to be happy. Happiness doesn't depend necessarily on having dozens of friends, but rather on having at least a few close connections.

Another way of gaining an understanding of the presence of relationships is by looking at the *absence* of relationships. A lack of social connections can lead to loneliness and depression. People lose well-being when social relationships are denied—as in cases of **ostracism**. In many societies, withholding social relationships is used as a form of punishment. For example, in some Western high schools, people form social groups known as "cliques," in which people share interests and a sense of identity. Unlike clubs, cliques do not have explicit rules for membership but tend to form organically, as exclusive group friendships. When one member of a clique conflicts with the others, the offending member may be socially rejected.

Ostracism is a form of social rejection and isolation that has a negative impact on well-being. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]

Similarly, some small societies practice **shunning**, a temporary period during which members withhold emotion, communication, and other forms of social contact as a form of punishment for wrongdoing. The Amish—a group of traditional Christian communities in North America who reject modern conveniences such as electricity—occasionally practice shunning (Hostetler, 1993). Members who break important social rules, for example, are made to eat alone rather than with their family. This typically lasts for one to two weeks. Individuals' well-being has been shown to dramatically suffer when they are ostracized in such a way (Williams, 2009). Research has even shown that the areas of the

brain that process physical pain when we are injured are the same areas that process emotional pain when we are ostracized (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003).

Quality of relationships

Simply having a relationship is not, in itself, sufficient to produce well-being. We're all familiar with instances of awful relationships: Cinderella and her step-sisters, loveless marriages, friends who have frequent falling-outs (giving birth to the word "frenemy"). In order for a relationship to improve well-being it has to be a good one. Researchers have found that higher friendship quality is associated with increased happiness (Demir & Weitekamp, 2007). Friendships aren't the only relationships that help, though. Researchers have found that high quality relationships between parents and children are associated with increased happiness, both for teenagers (Gohm, Oishi, Darlington, & Diener, 1998) and adults (Amato & Afifi, 2006).

Finally, an argument can be made for looking at relationships' effects on each of the distinct components of subjective well-being. Walen and Luchman (2000) investigated a mix of relationships, including family, friends, and romantic partners. They found that social support and conflict were associated with all three aspects of subjective well-being (life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect). Similarly, in a cross-cultural study comparing college students in Iran, Jordan, and the United States, researchers found that social support was linked to higher life satisfaction, higher positive affect, and lower negative affect (Brannan, Biswas-Diener, Mohr, Mortazavi, & Stein, 2012).

It may seem like common sense that good relationships translate to more happiness. You may be surprised to learn, however, that good relationships also translate to better health. Interestingly, both the *quality* and *quantity* of social relationships can affect a person's

health (Cohen 1988; House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988). Research has shown that having a larger social network and high quality relationships can be beneficial for health, whereas having a small social network and poor quality relationships can actually be *detrimental* to health (Uchino, 2006). Why might it be the case that good relationships are linked to health? One reason is that friends and romantic partners might share health behaviors, such as wearing seat belts, exercising, or abstaining from heavy alcohol consumption. Another reason is that people who experience social support might feel less stress. Stress, it turns out, is associated with a variety of health problems.

Types of Relationships

Intimate relationships

Intimate Relationships have been shown to have a strong positive impact on individuals' well-being. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]

It makes sense to consider the various types of relationships in our lives when trying to determine just how relationships impact our well-being. For example, would you expect a person to derive the exact same happiness from an ex-spouse as from a child or coworker? Among the most important relationships for most people

is their long-time romantic partner. Most researchers begin their investigation of this topic by focusing on intimate relationships because they are the closest form of social bond. Intimacy is more than just physical in nature; it also entails psychological closeness. Research findings suggest that having a single confidante—a person with whom you can be authentic and trust not to exploit your secrets and vulnerabilities—is more important to happiness than having a large social network (see Taylor, 2010 for a review).

The most common way researchers investigate intimacy is by examining marital status. Although marriage is just one type of intimate relationship, it is by far the most common type. In some research, the well-being of married people is compared to that of people who are single or have never been married, and in other research, married people are compared to people who are divorced or widowed (Lucas & Dyrenforth, 2005). Researchers have found that the transition from singlehood to marriage brings about an increase in subjective well-being (Haring-Hidore, Stock, Okun, & Witter, 1985; Lucas, 2005; Williams, 2003). Research has also shown that progress through the stages of relationship commitment (i.e., from singlehood to dating to marriage) is also associated with an increase in happiness (Dush & Amato, 2005). On the other hand, experiencing divorce, or the death of a spouse, leads to adverse effects on subjective well-being and happiness, and these effects are stronger than the positive effects of being married (Lucas, 2005).

Although research frequently points to marriage being associated with higher rates of happiness, this does not guarantee that getting married will make you happy! The quality of one's marriage matters greatly. When a person remains in a problematic marriage, it takes an emotional toll. Indeed, a large body of research shows that people's overall life satisfaction is affected by their satisfaction with their marriage (Carr, Freedman, Cornman, Schwarz, 2014; Dush, Taylor, & Kroeger, 2008; Karney, 2001; Luhmann, Hofmann, Eid, & Lucas, 2012; Proulx, Helms, & Buehler, 2007). The lower a person's self-reported level of marital quality, the more likely he or she is to report depression (Bookwala, 2012). In fact, longitudinal

studies—those that follow the same people over a period of time—show that as marital quality declines, depressive symptoms increase (Fincham, Beach, Harold, & Osborne, 1997; Karney, 2001). Proulx and colleagues (2007) arrived at this same conclusion after a systematic review of 66 cross-sectional and 27 longitudinal studies.

What is it about bad marriages, or bad relationships in general, that takes such a toll on well-being? Research has pointed to conflict between partners as a major factor leading to lower subjective well-being (Gere & Schimmack, 2011). This makes sense. Negative relationships are linked to ineffective social support (Reblin, Uchino, & Smith, 2010) and are a source of stress (Holt-Lunstad, Uchino, Smith, & Hicks, 2007). In more extreme cases, physical and psychological abuse can be detrimental to well-being (Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990). Victims of abuse sometimes feel shame, lose their sense of self, and become less happy and prone to depression and anxiety (Arias & Pape, 1999). However, the unhappiness and dissatisfaction that occur in abusive relationships tend to dissipate once the relationships end. (Arriaga, Capezza, Goodfriend, Rayl & Sands, 2013).

Work Relationships and Well-Being

Since we spend so much of our time at work it's essential to our well-being that we get along with our coworkers! [Image: Editor B, https://goo.gl/pnc4G6, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/BRvSA7]

Working adults spend a large part of their waking hours in relationships with coworkers and supervisors. Because these relationships are forced upon us by work, researchers focus less on their presence or absence and instead focus on their quality. High quality work relationships can make jobs enjoyable and less stressful. This is because workers experience mutual trust and support in the workplace to overcome work challenges. Liking the people we work with can also translate to more humor and fun

on the job. Research has shown that supervisors who are more supportive have employees who are more likely to thrive at work (Paterson, Luthans, & Jeung, 2014; Monnot & Beehr, 2014; Winkler, Busch, Clasen, & Vowinkel, 2015). On the other hand, poor quality work relationships can make a job feel like drudgery. Everyone knows that horrible bosses can make the workday unpleasant. Supervisors that are sources of stress have a negative impact on the subjective well-being of their employees (Monnot & Beehr, 2014). Specifically, research has shown that employees who rate their supervisors high on the so-called "dark triad"—psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism—reported greater psychological distress at work, as well as less job satisfaction (Mathieu, Neumann, Hare, & Babiak, 2014).

In addition to the direct benefits or costs of work relationships on our well-being, we should also consider how these relationships can impact our job performance. Research has shown that feeling engaged in our work and having a high job performance predicts better health and greater life satisfaction (Shimazu, Schaufeli, Kamiyama, & Kawakami, 2015). Given that so many of our waking hours are spent on the job—about ninety thousand hours across a lifetime—it makes sense that we should seek out and invest in positive relationships at work.

Fact or Myth: Are Social Relationships the Secret to Happiness?

If you read pop culture magazines or blogs, you've likely come across many supposed "secrets" to happiness. Some articles point to exercise as a sure route to happiness, while others point to gratitude as a crucial piece of the puzzle. Perhaps the most written about "secret" to happiness is having high quality social relationships. Some researchers argue that social relationships are

central to subjective well-being (Argyle, 2001), but others contend that social relationships' effects on happiness have been exaggerated. This is because, when looking at the correlations—the size of the associations—between social relationships and well-being, they are typically small (Lucas & Dyrenforth, 2006; Lucas et al., 2008). Does this mean that social relationships are not actually important for well-being? It would be premature to draw such conclusions, because even though the effects are small, they are robust and reliable across different studies, as well as other domains of well-being. There may be no single secret to happiness but there may be a recipe, and, if so, good social relationships would be one ingredient.

Video 1: Jennifer on Family Differentiation

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the

text. You can view it online here: https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/humanrelations/?p=77

Helen Fisher on Millennials' Dating Trends

https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/504626/tinder-wont-change-love/

Web: Science of Relationship's website on social relationships and health

http://www.scienceofrelationships.com/home/2015/7/10/how-do-romantic-relationships-get-under-the-skin-perceived-p.html

Web: Science of Relationship's website on social relationships and well-being

http://www.scienceofrelationships.com/home/2014/10/20/how-do-important-relationship-events-impact-our-well-being.html

Discussion Questions

1. What is more important to happiness: the quality or quantity of your social relationships?
2. What do you think has more influence on happiness: friends or family relationships? Do you think that the effect of friends and family on happiness will change with age? What about relationship duration?
3. Do you think that single people are likely to be unhappy?
4. Do you think that same-sex couples who get married will have the same benefits, in terms of happiness and well-being,

compared to heterosexual couples?

5. What elements of subjective well-being do you think social relationships have the largest impact on: life satisfaction, positive affect, or negative affect?
6. Do you think that if you are unhappy you can have good quality relationships?
7. Do you think that social relationships are important for happiness more so for women compared to men?

Vocabulary

Ostracism
Being excluded and ignored by others.

Shunning
The act of avoiding or ignoring a person, and withholding all social interaction for a period of time. Shunning generally occurs as a punishment and is temporary.

Social support
A social network's provision of psychological and material resources that benefit an individual.

Subjective well-being
The scientific term used to describe how people experience the quality of their lives in terms of life satisfaction and emotional judgments of positive and negative affect.

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3. Positive Relationships

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Most research in the realm of relationships has examined that which can go wrong in relationships (e.g., conflict, infidelity, intimate partner violence). I summarize much of what has been examined about what goes right in a relationship and call these positive relationship deposits. Some research indicates that relationships need five positive interactions for every negative interaction. Active-constructive responding, gratitude, forgiveness, and time spent together are some sources of positive deposits in one's relational bank account. These kinds of deposits can reduce the negative effects of conflict on marriage and strengthen relationships.

Learning Objectives

- Understand some of the challenges that plague close relationships today.
- Become familiar with the concept of positive emotional deposits.
- Review some of the research that is relevant to positive emotional deposits.
- Describe several ways people make positive emotional deposits.

Introduction

The status of close relationships in America can sometimes look a bit grim. More than half of marriages now end in divorce in the United States (Pinsof, 2002). Infidelity is the leading cause of divorce (Priviti & Amato, 2004) and is on the rise across all age groups (Allen et al., 2008). Cybersex has likely contributed to the increased rates of infidelity, with some 65% of those who look for sex online having intercourse with their "Internet" partner offline as well. Research on intimate partner violence indicates that it occurs at alarmingly high rates, with over one-fifth of couples reporting at least one episode of violence over the course of a year (Schafer, Caetano, & Clark, 1998). These and other issues that arise in relationships (e.g., substance abuse, conflict) represent significant obstacles to close relationships. With so many problems that plague relationships, how can a positive relationship be cultivated? Is there some magic bullet or ratio? Yes, kind of.

Many people consider romantic attachments one of the most significant relationships and invest them with time and resources. [Image: Ly Thien Hoang (Lee), https://goo.gl/JQbLVe, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/BRvSA7]

The Magic Formula

Of course, no research is perfect, and there really is no panacea that will cure any relationship. However, we do have some research that suggests that long-term, stable marriages have been shown to display a particular ratio between positive and negative interactions. That ratio is not 1:1, in fact, 1:1 is approximately the ratio of couples who were heading toward divorce. Thus, in a couple where a spouse gives one compliment for each criticism, the likely outcome is divorce. Happier couples have **five positive interactions for every one negative** interaction (Gottman, 1994).

What can you do to increase the ratio of positive interactions on a regular basis?—through positive relationship deposits. Naturally, making positive relationship deposits will boost your overall positive emotions—so by making positive relationships a priority in your life you can boost your positive emotions, becoming a flourishing individual.

Positive Relationship Deposits

In *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Covey (1989) compared human relationships to actual bank accounts—suggesting that every day we make deposits or withdrawals from our relationship accounts with each person in our lives. He recommended that to **keep an overall positive balance, we need to make regular positive deposits**. This will ultimately help buffer the negatives that are bound to occur in relationships. Keeping this metaphor of emotional capital in mind could be beneficial for promoting the well-being of the relationships in one's life.

Research suggests that if you focus on the positive aspects of a relationship you are more likely to stay in that relationship. [Image: adwriter, https://goo.gl/Hz9BOJ, CC BY-NC 2.0, https://goo.gl/tgFydH]

Some research suggests that people, on average, have more positive than negative experiences (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Thus, there are far more opportunities for deposits than for withdrawals. Conversely, even though there may be fewer negatives, Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, and Vohs (2001) argue quite persuasively that bad events overpower good events in one's life, which suggests that the negative withdrawals are more salient and more impactful. This further accentuates the need to ensure that we have a healthy store of positive deposits that can help to counteract these more impactful account withdrawals. Positive deposits that accumulate over time should provide a buffer against the withdrawals that happen in every relationship. In other words, the inevitable occasional conflict is not nearly so bad for the relationship when it occurs in a partnership that is otherwise highly positive. What opportunities does relationships science suggest are effective opportunities each day to make positive relationship deposits?

Common Opportunities for Daily Positive Deposits

An individual's general sentiment of his or her partner is dependent on ongoing interactions, and these interactions provide many opportunities for deposits or withdrawals. To illustrate how much daily interaction can give opportunities to make deposits in relationships, I will describe research that has been done on capitalization and active-constructive responding, gratitude, forgiveness, and spending time together in meaningful ways. Although there are several other ways by which positive relationship deposits can be made, these four have received quite a bit of attention by researchers. Then I will discuss some evidence on how an accumulation of such daily relationship deposits seems to provide a safeguard against the impact of conflict.

Building Intimacy Through Capitalization and Active-Constructive Responding

Intimacy has been defined as a close and familiar bond with another person. Intimacy has been positively related with satisfaction in marriage (Patrick, Sells, Giordano & Tollerud, 2007) and well-being in general (e.g., Waltz & Badura, 1987; Prager & Buhrmester, 1998). On the other hand, lacking marital intimacy is related to higher severity of depression (Waring & Patton, 1984). Thus, achieving intimacy with one's partner is essential for a happy marriage and happiness in general and is something worth seeking.

Given that 60% to 80% of the time, people disclose their most positive daily experiences with their partner (Gable et al., 2004), this becomes a regular opportunity for intimacy building. When we disclose certain private things about ourselves, we increase the

potential intimacy that we can have with another person, however, we also make ourselves vulnerable to getting hurt by the other person. What if they do not like what I have disclosed or react negatively? It can be a double-edged sword. Disclosing positive news from one's day is a great opportunity for a daily deposit if the response from the other person is positive. What constitutes a positive response?

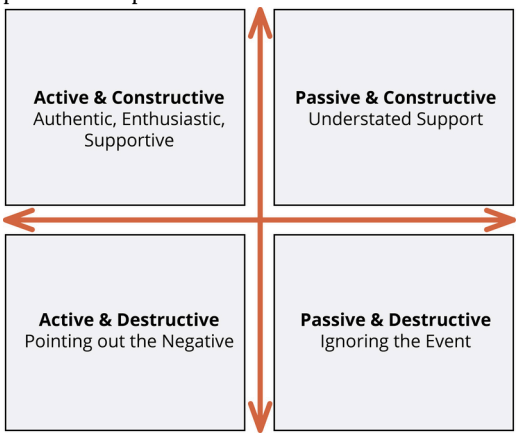

Figure 1. Types of Responding (figure used with permission from thecoachinghouse.ca)

To achieve intimacy we must respond positively to remarks our partner makes. When a person responds enthusiastically to a partner's good news, this fosters higher levels of intimacy (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004). Thus, responding in a positive manner to a relationship partner's good news provides frequent opportunities to make deposits in the relationship bank account. In fact, most people are presented the chance to make this kind of relationship deposit almost every day. Most research has focused on support (partners' responses to negative events), however, one study found that responses to positive events tend to be better predictors of relationship well-being than responses to negative events (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006).

When one person seeks out another person with the intent to share positive news, it has been called capitalization (Gable et al.,

2004). The best, supportive response to someone who shares good news has been termed active-constructive and is characterized by enthusiastic support. These active-constructive responses are positively associated with trust, satisfaction, commitment, and intimacy. On the other hand, when the listener points out something negative about what is said, it is called active-destructive responding. Ignoring what is said is termed passive-destructive, and understating support is called passive-constructive. All of these types of responses (see Figure 1) have been related to adverse relationship outcomes (Gable et al., 2004).

If partners listen and are enthusiastic about the good news of the other, they build a stronger relationship. If they ignore the good news, change the subject, devalue the good news, or refocus the good news to be about themselves, they may make a withdrawal from the account. Being aware of this research and findings can help individuals to focus on better providing helpful responses to those they care about.

Gratitude

Being grateful is one of the ways an individual contributes positively to a relationship. [Image: LarynDawn, https://goo.gl/n1AJwg, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://goo.gl/eLCn2O]

Relationship researchers report that expressing gratitude on a regular basis is an important means by which positive deposits may be made into relationship bank accounts. In a recent study, participants were randomly assigned to write about daily events, express gratitude to a friend, discuss a positive memory with a friend, or think grateful thoughts about a friend twice a week for three weeks. At the conclusion of the three weeks, those who were randomly assigned to express gratitude to their friend reported higher positive regard for their friend and more comfort voicing relationship concerns than did those in the two control conditions

(Lambert & Fincham, 2011). Also, those who expressed gratitude to a close relationship partner reported greater perceived communal strength (e.g., caring, willingness to sacrifice) than participants in all control conditions (Lambert, Clark, Durtschi, Fincham, & Graham, 2010). Similarly, Algoe, Fredrickson, and Gable (2013) found that benefactors' positive perceptions of beneficiaries were increased when gratitude was expressed for the benefit, and these perceptions enhanced relationship quality. These studies suggest that expressing gratitude to someone you are close to is an important way of making positive relationship deposits.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is something else you can do regularly to aid relationship satisfaction (e.g., Fincham, 2000; Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2003) and commitment (e.g., Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; Karremans & Van Lange, 2008). Unresolved conflict can put couples at risk of developing the negative cycle of interaction that causes further harm to relationships. For instance, one study found that lack of forgiveness is linked to ineffective conflict resolution (Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2004). For instance, if Cindy cannot forgive Joe, Cindy will struggle to effectively resolve other disagreements in their relationship. Yet, those who do forgive report much better conflict resolution a year later (Fincham, Beach, & Davila, 2007). It appears that forgiveness can be an important way of building emotional capital in the relationship. Not forgiving the people in your life can block positive deposits to the relationship bank account.

Spending Time in Meaningful Ways

Do you and your romantic partner have similar hobbies? Research suggests that spending time in meaningful ways also positively contributes to your relationships. [Image: Lucky Sunny, https://goo.gl/IADzgz, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, https://goo.gl/FuDJ6c]

Some suggest that the best way to spell love is T-I-M-E. In our fast-paced society, many relationships are time deprived. In the beginning phases of a relationship, this rarely seems to be an issue given the novelty and excitement of the relationship, however, discovering new things about one's partner declines and couples can slump into relationship boredom. The **self-expansion model** (Aron & Aron, 1996) suggests that people naturally seek to expand their capacity and that intimate relationships are an important way by which they accomplish self-expansion. They have

found that couples who engaged in more challenging and novel activities felt more satisfied with their relationship immediately afterward than control couples (Aron et al., 2000). The takeaway message here is that simply watching TV with one's romantic partner will not make nearly the magnitude of a deposit in a relational bank account as would a more engaging or challenging joint activity.

Accumulated Positive Deposits and Conflict Management

When there is a positive balance of relationship deposits this can help the overall relationship in times of conflict. For instance, some research indicates that a husband's level of enthusiasm in everyday marital interactions was related to a wife's affection in the midst of conflict (Driver & Gottman, 2004), showing that being pleasant and making deposits can change the nature of conflict. Also, Gottman and Levenson (1992) found that couples rated as having more pleasant interactions (compared with couples with less pleasant interactions) reported marital problems as less severe, higher marital satisfaction, better physical health, and less risk for divorce. Finally, Janicki, Kamarck, Shiffman, and Gwaltney (2006) showed that the intensity of conflict with a spouse predicted marital satisfaction unless there was a record of positive partner interactions, in which case the conflict did not matter as much. Again, it seems as though having a positive balance through prior positive deposits helps to keep relationships strong even in the midst of conflict.

Don't neglect your relationship bank account. Make daily positive deposits and you'll be better prepared for the inevitable negative interaction. [Image: AndreaPerryAbbott, https://goo.gl/8iTE7t, CC BY-NC 2.0, https://goo.gl/VnKlK8]

Relationships today are riddled with problems including divorce, infidelity, intimate partner violence, and chronic conflict. If you want to avoid some of these common pitfalls of relationships , if you want to build a good relationship with a partner or with your friends, it is crucial to make daily positive deposits in your relationship bank accounts. Doing so will help you enjoy each other more and also help you weather the inevitable conflicts that pop up over time. Some of the ways that have been most explored by researchers as a way to build your positive relationship bank account are through building intimacy by active constructive responding, expressing gratitude to the others, forgiving, and spending time in engaging joint activities. Although these are not the only ways that you can make positive deposits in one's relationship bank accounts, they are some of the best examined. Consider how you might do more to make positive relationship

deposits through these or other means for the survival and improvement of your relationships.

An Experiment in Gratitude

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/humanrelations/?p=80

Positive Psychology Center

http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/videolectures.htm

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the main challenges that face relationships today?
2. How would you describe the concept of an emotional bank account?
3. What are some ways people can make deposits to their

relationship bank accounts?

4. What do you think are the most effective ways for making positive relationship deposits?
5. What are some of the most powerful relationship deposits that others have made into your relationship bank account?
6. What would you consider to be some challenging or engaging activities that you would consider doing more of with a close relationship partner?
7. Are there relationships of yours that have gotten into a negative spiral and could profit from positive relationship deposits?

Vocabulary

Relationship bank account

An account you hold with every person in which a positive deposit or a negative withdrawal can be made during every interaction you have with the person.

Self-expansion model

Seeking to increase one's capacity often through an intimate relationship.

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Learning Objectives

- Understand the theoretical foundations of emotional intelligence and the relationship between emotion and cognition.
- Distinguish between mixed and ability models of emotional intelligence.
- Identify and define key concepts of emotional intelligence (including emotion regulation, expression of emotion, understanding emotion, etc.) and the ways they contribute to decision making, relationship building, and overall well-being.

Introduction

Imagine you are waiting in line to buy tickets to see your favorite band. Knowing tickets are limited and prices will rise quickly, you showed up 4 hours early. Unfortunately, so did everyone else. The line stretches for blocks and hasn't moved since you arrived. It starts to rain. You are now close to Will Call when you notice three people jump ahead of you to join their friends, who appear to have been saving a spot for them. They talk loudly on their cellphones as you inch forward, following the slow procession of others waiting in line. You finally reach the ticket counter only to have the clerk tell you

the show is sold out. You notice the loud group off to the side, waving their tickets in the air. At this exact moment, a fiery line of emotion shoots through your whole body. Your heart begins to race, and you feel the urge to either slam your hands on the counter or scream in the face of those you believe have slighted you. What are these feelings, and what will you do with them?

After a serious disappointment or injustice how hard is it to keep control of your emotions? [Image: DCist, https://goo.gl/o9EZOG, CC BY-2.0, https://goo.gl/zHmGV2]

Emotional intelligence (EI) involves the idea that cognition and emotion are interrelated. From this notion stems the belief that emotions influence decision making, relationship building, and everyday behavior. After spending hours waiting eagerly in the

pouring rain and having nothing to show for it, is it even possible to squelch such intense feelings of anger due to injustice? From an EI perspective, emotions are active mental processes that can be managed, so long as individuals develop the knowledge and skills to do so. But how, exactly, do we reason with our emotions? In other words, how intelligent is our emotion system?

To begin, we'll briefly review the concept of standard, or general, intelligence. The late American psychologist, David Wechsler, claimed that intelligence is the "global capacity of an individual to think rationally, act purposefully, and deal effectively with their environment" (Wechsler, 1944). If we choose to accept this definition, then intelligence is an operational process through which we learn to utilize our internal abilities in order to better navigate our surroundings—a process that is most certainly similar to, if not impacted by, our emotions. In 1990, Drs. Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer first explored and defined EI. They explained EI as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). EI, according to these researchers, asserts that all individuals possess the ability to leverage their emotions to enhance thinking, judgment, and behavior. This module aims to unpack this theory by exploring the growing empirical research on EI, as well as what can be learned about its impact on our daily lives.

History of EI

Perhaps Aristotle might have revised his statement about people not being "defeated by their emotion" if he was ever stuck in rush hour traffic. [CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]

Traditionally, many psychologists and philosophers viewed cognition and emotion as separate domains, with emotion posing a threat to productive and rational thinking. Have you ever been told not to let your emotions get in the way of your decisions? This separation of passion and reason stretches as far back as early ancient Greece (Lyons, 1999). Additionally, mid-20th century scholars explained emotions as mentally destabilizing forces (Young, 1943). Yet, there are traces throughout history where the

intersection of emotion and cognition has been theoretically questioned. In 350 B.C.E., the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote, "some men . . . if they have first perceived and seen what is coming and have first roused themselves and their calculative faculty, are not defeated by their emotion, whether it be pleasant or painful"(Aristotle, trans. 2009, Book VII, Chapter 7, Section 8). Still, our social interactions and experiences suggest this belief has undergone centuries of disregard, both in Western and Eastern cultures. These are the same interactions that teach us to "toughen up" and keep our emotions hidden. So, how did we arrive at EI—a scientific theory that claims *all* individuals have access to a "calculative faculty" through emotion?

In the early 1970s, many scientists began to recognize the limitations of the Intelligence Quotient (IQ)—the standardized assessment of intelligence. In particular, they noticed its inability to explain differences among individuals unrelated to just cognitive ability alone. These frustrations led to the advancement of more inclusive theories of intelligence such as Gardner's multiple intelligences theory (1983/1993) and Sternberg's triarchic theory of intelligence (1985). Researchers also began to explore the influence of moods and emotions on thought processes, including judgment (Isen, Shalker, Clark, & Karp, 1978) and memory (Bower, 1981). It was through these theoretical explorations and empirical studies that the concept of EI began to take shape.

Today, the field of EI is extensive, encompassing varying perspectives and measurement tools. Some attribute this growth to Daniel Goleman's popularization of the construct in his 1995 book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. Generating public appeal, he focused on EI's connection to personal and professional success. Goleman's model of EI includes a blend of emotion-related skills, traditional cognitive intelligence, and distinct personality traits. This embellished conceptualization of EI, followed by an increase in EI literature, contributed, at least in part, to conflicting definitional and measurement models within the field.

Four-Branch Model of EI

In this section, we describe the EI (Four-Branch) model espoused by Mayer and Salovey (1997). This model proposes that four fundamental emotion-related abilities comprise EI: (1) perception/expression of emotion, (2) use of emotion to facilitate thinking, (3) understanding of emotion, and (4) management of emotion in oneself and others.

1. Perception of Emotion

Perception of emotion refers to *people's capacity to identify emotions in themselves and others using facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language* (Brackett et al., 2013). Those skilled in the perception of emotion also are able to express emotion accordingly and communicate emotional needs. For example, let's return to our opening scenario. After being turned away at the ticket booth, you slowly settle into the reality that you cannot attend the concert. A group of your classmates, however, managed to buy tickets and are discussing their plans at your lunch table. When they ask if you are excited for the opening band, you shrug and pick at your food. If your classmates are skilled at perception of emotion, then they will read your facial expression and body language and determine that you might be masking your true feelings of disappointment, frustration, or disengagement from the conversation. As a result, they might ask you if something is wrong or choose not to talk about the concert in your presence.

2. Use of Emotion to Facilitate Thinking

Which emotions would serve you best during a football game? Would the same emotions be useful for a chess match? Matching the emotion to the task at hand is valuable skill to have. [Image: Ian Sane, https://goo.gl/lKuqyz, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/zHmGV2]

Using emotion to enhance cognitive activities and adapt to various situations is the second component of EI. People who are skilled in this area understand that some emotional states are more optimal for targeted outcomes than others. Feeling frustrated over the concert tickets may be a helpful mindset as you are about to play a football game or begin a wrestling match. The high levels of adrenaline associated with frustration may boost your energy and strength, helping you compete. These same emotions, however, will

likely impede your ability to sit at your school desk and solve algebra problems or write an essay.

Individuals who have developed and practiced this area of EI actively *generate emotions that support certain tasks or objectives.* For example, a teacher skilled in this domain may recognize that her students need to experience positive emotions, like joy or excitement, in order to succeed when doing creative work such as brainstorming or collaborative art projects. She may plan accordingly by scheduling these activities for after recess, knowing students will likely come into the classroom cheerful and happy from playing outside. Making decisions based on the impact that emotional experiences may have on actions and behavior is an essential component of EI.

3. Understanding of Emotion

EI also includes the ability to *differentiate between emotional states, as well as their specific causes and trajectories.* Feelings of sadness or disappointment can result from the loss of a person or object, such as your concert tickets. Standing in the rain, by most standards, is merely a slight annoyance. However, waiting in the rain for hours in a large crowd will likely result in irritation or frustration. Feeling like you have been treated unfairly when someone cuts in line and takes the tickets you feel you deserved can cause your unpleasantness to escalate into anger and resentment. People skilled in this area are aware of this emotional trajectory and also have a strong sense of how multiple emotions can work together to produce another. For instance, it is possible that you may feel contempt for the people who cut in front of you in line. However, this feeling of contempt does not arise from anger alone. Rather, it is the combination of anger and disgust by the fact that these individuals, unlike you, have disobeyed the rules. Successfully discriminating between negative emotions is an important skill related to understanding of emotion,

and it may lead to more effective emotion management (Feldman Barret, Gross, Christensen, & Benvenuto, 2001).

4. Management of Emotion

Emotion management includes the *ability to remain open to a wide range of emotions, recognize the value of feeling certain emotions in specific situations, and understand which short- and long-term strategies are most efficient for emotion regulation* (Gross, 1998). Anger seems an appropriate response to falling short of a goal (concert tickets) that you pursued both fairly and patiently. In fact, you may even find it valuable to allow yourself the experience of this feeling. However, this feeling will certainly need to be managed in order to prevent aggressive, unwanted behavior. Coming up with strategies, such as taking a deep breath and waiting until you feel calm before letting the group ahead of you know they cut in line, will allow you to regulate your anger and prevent the situation from escalating. Using this strategy may even let you gain insight into other perspectives—perhaps you learn they had already purchased their tickets and were merely accompanying their friends.

Outcomes

Historically, emotions have been thought to have no place in the classroom or workplace (Sutton & Wheatly, 2003). Yet today, we know empirical research supports the belief that EI has the potential to influence decision making, health, relationships, and performance in both professional and academic settings (e.g., Brackett et al., 2013; Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011).

Workplace

Think of a time when you made a choice to demonstrate emotional intelligence at work – what happened? [Image: Pricenfees, https://goo.gl/8GOJPR, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/BRvSA7]

Research conducted in the workplace supports positive links between EI and enhanced job performance, occupational well-being, and leadership effectiveness. In one study, EI was associated with performance indicators such as company rank, percent merit increase, ratings of interpersonal facilitation, and affect and attitudes at work (Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall, & Salovey, 2006). Similar correlations have been found between EI and a variety of managerial simulations involving problem solving, determining

employee layoffs, adjusting claims, and negotiating successfully (Day & Carroll, 2004; Feyerherm & Rice, 2002; Mueller & Curhan, 2006). Emotion management is seen as most likely to affect job performance by influencing social and business interactions across a diverse range of industries (O'Boyle et al., 2010).

Leaders in the workplace also benefit from high EI. Experts in the field of organizational behavior are beginning to view leadership as a process of social interactions where leaders motivate, influence, guide, and empower followers to achieve organizational goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This is known as transformational leadership—where leaders create a vision and then inspire others to work in this direction (Bass, 1985). In a sample of 24 managers, MSCEIT scores correlated positively with a leader's ability to inspire followers to emulate their own actions and attend to the needs and problems of each individual (Leban & Zulauf, 2004).

Schools

When applied in educational settings, theoretical foundations of EI are often integrated into social and emotional learning (SEL) programs. SEL is the process of merging thinking, feeling, and behaving. These skills enable individuals to be aware of themselves and of others, make responsible decisions, and manage their own behaviors and those of others (Elias et al., 1997; Elbertson, Brackett, & Weissberg, 2010). SEL programs are designed to enhance the climate of a classroom, school, or district, with the ultimate goal of enhancing children's social and emotional skills and improving their academic outcomes (Greenberg et al., 2003). Adopting curricula that focus on these elements is believed to enable success in academics, relationships, and, ultimately, in life (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Catalino, Berglundh, Ryan, Lonczek, & Hawkins, 2004).

Take a moment to think about the role of a teacher. How might emotions impact the climate of a classroom? If a teacher enters a

classroom feeling anxious, disgruntled, or unenthused, these states will most likely be noticed, and felt, by the students. If not managed well, these negative emotions can hurt the classroom dynamic and prevent student learning (Travers, 2001). Research suggests that the abilities to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions are imperative for effective teaching (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012; Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2011; Hargreaves, 2001). In a study that examined the relationship between emotion regulation and both job satisfaction and burnout among secondary-school teachers, researchers found that emotion regulation among teachers was associated with positive affect, support from principals, job satisfaction, and feelings of personal accomplishment (Brackett, Palomera, Mojsa-Kaja, Reyes, & Salovey, 2010).

EI, when embedded into SEL programs, has been shown to contribute positively to personal and academic success in students (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Tayloer, & Schellinger, 2011). Research also shows that strong emotion regulation can help students pay attention in class, adjust to the school environment, and manage academic anxiety (Lopes & Salovey, 2004; Mestre, Guil, Lopes, Salovey, & Gil-Olarte, 2006). A recent randomized control trial of RULER* also found that, after one year, schools that used RULER—compared with those that used only the standard curriculum—were rated by independent observers as having higher degrees of warmth and connectedness between teachers and students, more autonomy and leadership, less bullying among students, and teachers who focused more on students' interests and motivations (Rivers, Brackett, Reyes, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2013).

*RULER – Recognize emotions in oneself and in other people. Understand the causes and consequences of a wide range of emotions. Label emotions using a sophisticated vocabulary. Express emotions in socially appropriate way. Regulate emotions effectively.

Limitations and Future Directions

Future directions for EI research include more study of those in cultures outside North America and Europe, and more attention to the dynamics of EI in the workplace and schools. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]

Although further explorations and research in the field of EI are needed, current findings indicate a fundamental relationship between emotion and cognition. Returning to our opening question, what will you do when denied concert tickets? One of the more compelling aspects of EI is that it grants us reign over our own

emotions—forces once thought to rule the self by denying individual agency. But with this power comes responsibility. If you are enraged about not getting tickets to the show, perhaps you can take a few deep breaths, go for a walk, and wait until your physiological indicators (shaky hands or accelerated heartbeat) subside. Once you've removed yourself, your feeling of rage may lessen to annoyance. Lowering the intensity level of this feeling, a process known as *down regulating.* **Down-regulating** is the general process of reducing or suppressing a response to a stimulus and is an important skill of emotional intelligence. In this sense, emotion regulation allows you to objectively view the point of conflict without dismissing your true feelings. Merely down regulating the emotional experience facilitates better problem solving. Now that you are less activated, what is the best approach? Should you talk to the ticket clerk? Ask to see the sales manager? Or do you let the group know how you felt when they cut the line? All of these options present better solutions than impulsively acting out rage.

As discussed in this module, research shows that the cultivation and development of EI contributes to more productive, supportive, and healthy experiences. Whether we're waiting in a crowded public place, delivering lesson plans, or engaging in conversation with friends, we are the ultimate decision makers when it comes how we want to feel and, in turn, behave. By engaging the right mental processes and strategies, we can better understand, regulate, and manage our emotional states in order to live the lives we desire.

Video 1: Microexpressions and Reading Facial Expressions. *Note – this is an interesting area. More research is needed as some of the reports on how to read facial expressions are not always accurate, nevertheless the video provides a basic idea how humans learn to read expressions.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/humanrelations/?p=5

Discussion Questions

1. What are the four emotional abilities that comprise EI, and how do they relate to each other?

2. Discuss the ways in which EI can contribute positively to the workplace and classroom settings.

Vocabulary

Emotional intelligence

The ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). EI includes four specific abilities: perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions.

Down-Regulating: Reducing a response to a stimulus. A skill in emotional intelligence is the ability to reduce our reactions to stimuli. For example a son is angry at his father when he meets his father's new wife, but the son makes himself stay calm as he meets the new wife.

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5. Emotion Experience and Well-Being

CHRIS ALLEN

This is an edited and adapted chapter from Ford, B. & Mauss, I. B. (2019), for full attribution information see the end of the chapter.

Emotion Experience and Well-Being

Emotions don't just feel good or bad, they also contribute crucially to people's well-being and health. In general, experiencing positive emotions is good for us, whereas experiencing negative emotions is bad for us. However, recent research on emotions and well-being suggests this simple conclusion is incomplete and sometimes even wrong. Taking a closer look at this research, the present module provides a more complex relationship between emotion and well-being. At least three aspects of the emotional experience appear to affect how a given emotion is linked with well-being: the intensity of the emotion experienced, the fluctuation of the emotion experienced, and the context in which the emotion is experienced. While it is generally good to experience more positive emotion and less negative emotion, this is not always the guide to the good life.

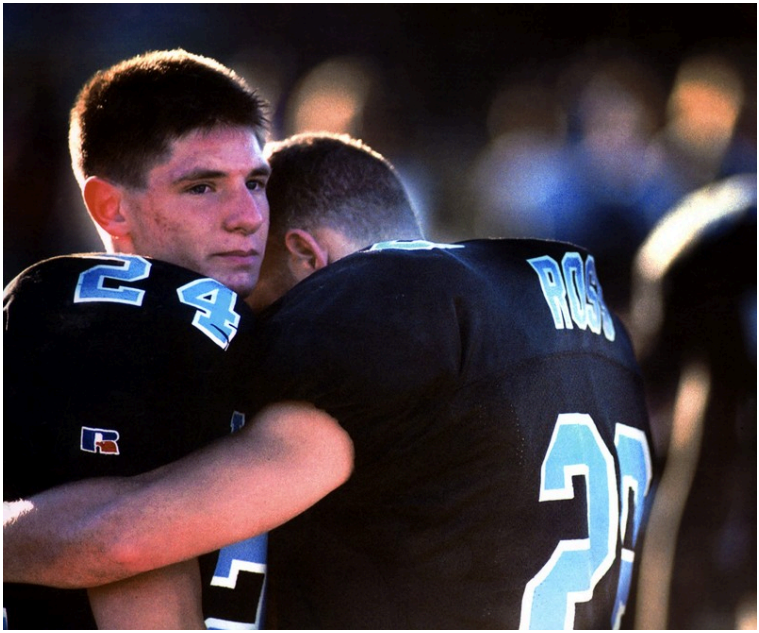
Learning Objectives

- Describe the general pattern of associations between emotion experience and well-being.
- Identify at least three aspects of emotion experience beyond

positivity and negativity of the emotion that affect the link between emotion experience and well-being.

How we feel adds much of the flavor to life's highest—and lowest—moments. Can you think of an important moment in your life that didn't involve strong feelings? In fact, it might be hard to recall *any* times when you had no feeling at all. Given how saturated human life is with feelings, and given how profoundly feelings affect us, it is not surprising that much theorizing and research has been devoted to uncovering how we can optimize our feelings, or, "emotion experiences," as they are referred to in psychological research.

Feelings contribute to well-being



Although we tend to think we should always strive for "positive" or

"feel-good" emotions, in some situations a negative emotion might be best. For example feeling disappointment when experiencing a failure might help motivate you for future success. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]

So, which emotions are the "best" ones to feel? Take a moment to think about how you might answer this question. At first glance, the answer might seem obvious. Of course, we should experience as much positive emotion and as little negative emotion as possible! Why? Because it is pleasant to experience positive emotions and it is unpleasant to experience negative emotions (Russell & Barrett, 1999). The conclusion that positive feelings are good and negative feelings are bad might seem so obvious as not to even warrant the question, much less bona fide psychological research. In fact, the very labels of "positive" and "negative" imply the answer to this question. However, for the purposes of this module, it may be helpful to think of "positive" and "negative" as descriptive terms used to discuss two different types of experiences, rather than a true value judgment. Thus, whether positive or negative emotions are good or bad for us is an empirical question.

As it turns out, this empirical question has been on the minds of theorists and researchers for many years. Such psychologists as Alice Isen, Charles Carver, Michael Scheier, and, more recently, Barbara Fredrickson, Dacher Keltner, Sonja Lyubomirsky, and others began asking whether the effects of feelings could go beyond the obvious momentary pleasure or displeasure. In other words, can emotions do more for us than simply make us feel good or bad? This is not necessarily a new question; variants of it have appeared in the texts of thinkers such as Charles Darwin (1872) and Aristotle (1999). However, modern psychological research has provided empirical evidence that feelings are not just inconsequential byproducts. Rather, each emotion experience, however fleeting, has effects on cognition, behavior, and the people around us. For example, feeling happy is not only pleasant, but is also useful to feel when in social situations because it helps us be friendly and collaborative, thus

promoting our positive relationships. Over time, the argument goes, these effects add up to have tangible effects on people's well-being (good mental and physical health).

A variety of research has been inspired by the notion that our emotions are involved in, and maybe even causally contribute to, our well-being. This research has shown that people who experience more frequent positive emotions and less frequent negative emotions have higher well-being (e.g., Fredrickson, 1998; Lyubomirksy, King, & Diener, 2005), including increased life satisfaction (Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 1991), increased physical health (Tugade, Fredrickson, & Barrett, 2004; Veenhoven, 2008), greater resilience to stress (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), better social connection with others (Fredrickson, 1998), and even longer lives (Veenhoven, 2008). Notably, the effect of positive emotion on longevity is about as powerful as the effect of smoking! Perhaps most importantly, some research directly supports that emotional experiences *cause* these various outcomes rather than being just a consequence of them (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, & Finkel, 2008; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005).

Not only do the emotions we feel vary by the context, but also the emotions we should feel depend on the circumstances, too. [Image: puppywind, https://goo.gl/BQKhKK, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, https://goo.gl/h9gK3o]

At this point, you might be tempted to conclude that you should always strive to experience as much positive emotion and as little negative emotion as possible. However, recent research suggests that this conclusion may be premature. This is because this conclusion neglects three central aspects of the emotion experience. First, it neglects the intensity of the emotion: Positive and negative emotions might not have the same effect on well-being at all intensities. Second, it neglects how emotions fluctuate over time: Stable emotion experiences might have quite different effects from experiences that change a lot. Third, it neglects the context in which the emotion is experienced: The context in which we experience an emotion might profoundly affect whether the

emotion is good or bad for us. So, to address the question "Which emotions should we feel?" we must answer, "It depends!" We next consider each of the three aspects of feelings, and how they influence the link between feelings and well-being.

The intensity of the emotion matters

Experiencing more *frequent* positive emotions is generally beneficial. But does this mean that we should strive to feel as *intense* positive emotion as possible? Recent research suggests that this unqualified conclusion might be wrong.

In fact, experiencing very high levels of positive emotion may be harmful (Gruber, 2011; Oishi, Diener, & Lucas, 2007). For instance, experiencing *very* high levels of positive emotion makes individuals more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as binge eating and drug use (Cyders & Smith, 2008; Martin et al., 2002). Furthermore, intense positive emotion is associated with the experience of mania (Gruber et al., 2009; Johnson, 2005). It appears that the experience of positive emotions follows an inverted U-shaped curve in relation to well-being: more positive emotion is linked with increased well-being, but only up to a point, after which even more positive emotion is linked with decreased well-being (Grant & Schwartz, 2011). These empirical findings underscore the sentiment put forth long ago by the philosopher Aristotle: Moderation is key to leading a good life (1999).

Too much positive emotion may pose a problem for well-being. Might too little negative emotion similarly be cause for concern? Although there is limited empirical research on this subject, initial research suggests supports this idea. For example, people who aim *not* to feel negative emotion are at risk for worse well-being and adaptive functioning, including lower life satisfaction, lower social support, worse college grades, and feelings of worse physical health (Tamir & Ford, 2012a). Similarly, feeling too little embarrassment

in response to a social faux pas may damage someone's social connections if they aren't motivated by their embarrassment to make amends (Keltner & Buswell, 1997). Low levels of negative emotion also seem to be involved in some forms of psychopathology. For instance, blunted sadness in response to a sad situation is a characteristic of major depressive disorder (Rottenberg, Gross, & Gotlib, 2005) and feeling too little fear is a hallmark of psychopathy (Marsh et al., 2008; Patrick, 1994).

In sum, this first section suggests that the conclusion "Of course we should experience as much positive emotions and as little negative emotions as possible" is sometimes wrong. As it turns out, there can be too much of a good thing and too little of a bad thing.

The fluctuation of the emotion matters

Throughout our lives, our emotions vary such that we experience great highs and great lows. However, if you average those emotions over time, we tend to end up somewhere in the middle. [Image: Moazzam Brohi, https://goo.gl/acZniv, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/BRvSA7]

Emotions naturally vary—or fluctuate—over time (Davidson, 1998). We probably all know someone whose emotions seem to fly everywhere—one minute they're ecstatic, the next they're upset. We

might also know a person who is pretty even-keeled, moderately happy, with only modest fluctuations across time. When looking only at *average* emotion experience, say across a month, both of these people might appear identical: moderately happy. However, underlying these identical averages are two very different patterns of fluctuation across time. Might these emotion fluctuations across time—beyond average intensity—have implications for well-being?

Overall, the available research suggests that how much emotions fluctuate does indeed matter. In general, greater fluctuations are associated with worse well-being. For example, higher fluctuation of positive emotions—measured either within a single day or across two weeks—was linked with lower well-being and greater depression (Gruber, Kogan, Quoidbach, & Mauss, 2013). Fluctuation in negative emotions, in turn, has been linked with increased depressive symptoms (Peeters, Berkhof, Delespaul, Rottenberg, & Nicolson, 2003), borderline personality disorder (Trull et al., 2008), and neuroticism (Eid & Diener, 1999). These associations tend to hold even when controlling for average levels of positive or negative emotion, which means that beyond the overall intensity of positive or negative emotion, the fluctuation of one's emotions across time is associated with well-being. While it is not entirely clear why fluctuations are linked to worse well-being, one explanation is that strong fluctuations are indicative of emotional instability (Kuppens, Oravecz, & Tuerlinckx, 2010).

Of course, this should not be taken to mean that we should rigidly feel the exact same way every minute of every day, regardless of context. After all, psychological flexibility—or the ability to adapt to changing situational demands and experience emotions accordingly—has generally demonstrated beneficial links with well-being (Bonanno, Papa, Lalande, Westphal, & Coifman, 2004; Kashdan, & Rottenberg, 2010). The question remains, however: what exact amount of emotional fluctuation constitutes unhealthy instability and what amount of emotional fluctuation constitutes healthy flexibility.

Again, then, we must qualify the conclusion that it is always better

to experience more positive emotions and less negative emotions. The degree to which emotions fluctuate across time plays an important role. Overall, relative stability (but not rigidity) in emotion experience appears to be optimal for well-being.

The context of the emotion experience matters

This module has already discussed two features of emotion experiences that affect how they relate to well-being: the intensity of the emotion and the fluctuation of the emotion over time. However, neither of these features takes into account the context in which the emotion is experienced. At least three different contexts may critically affect the links between emotion and well-being: (1) the external environment in which the emotion is being experienced, (2) the other emotional responses (e.g., physiology, facial behavior) that are currently activated, and (3) the other emotions that are currently being experienced.

The external environment

Feeling an emotion that matches the person's context (e.g., experiencing happiness at a birthday party) is typically the most functional or beneficial emotion to feel. [Image: OakleyOriginals, https://goo.gl/IxfIsq, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/BRvSA7]

Emotions don't occur within a vacuum. Instead, they are usually elicited by and experienced within specific situations that come in many shapes and sizes —from birthday parties to funerals, job interviews to mundane movie nights. The situation in which an emotion is experienced has strong implications for whether a given emotion is the "best" emotion to feel. Take happiness, for example. Feeling happiness at a birthday party may be a great idea. However,

having the exact same experience of happiness at a funeral would likely not bode well for your well-being.

When considering how the environment influences the link between emotion and well-being, it is important to understand that each emotion has its own function. For example, although fear is a negative emotion, fear helps us notice and avoid threats to our safety (öhman & Mineka, 2001), and may thus the "best" emotion to feel in dangerous situations. Happiness can help people cooperate with others, and may thus be the best emotion to feel when we need to collaborate (e.g., Van Kleef, van Dijk, Steinel, & van Beest, 2008). Anger can energize people to compete or fight with others, and may thus be advantageous to experience it in confrontations (e.g., Tamir & Ford, 2012b; Van Kleef et al., 2008). It might be disadvantageous to experience happiness (a positive emotion) when we need to fight with someone; in this situation, it might be better to experience anger (a negative emotion). This suggests that emotions' implications for well-being are not determined only by whether they are positive or negative but also by whether they are well-matched to their context.

In support of this general idea, people who experience emotions that fit the context at hand are more likely to recover from depression and trauma (Bonanno et al., 2004; Rottenberg, Kasch, Gross, & Gotlib, 2002). Research has also found that participants who want to feel emotions that match the context at hand (e.g., anger when confronting someone)—even if that emotion was negative—are more likely to experience greater well-being (Tamir & Ford, 2012a). Conversely, people who pursue emotions without regard to context—even if those emotions are positive, like happiness—are more likely to experience lower subjective well-being, more depression, greater loneliness, and even worse grades (Ford & Tamir, 2012; Mauss et al., 2012; Mauss, Tamir, Anderson, & Savino; 2011; Tamir & Ford, 2012a).

In sum, this research demonstrates that regardless of whether an emotion is positive or negative, the context in which it is

experienced critically influences whether the emotion helps or hinders well-being.

Other emotional responses

If we experience the emotion of amusement (from seeing something funny), we often have the physiological response to laugh. This is an example of emotion coherence, where we express a particular behavior associated with a particular emotion. [Image: Ed Schipul, https://goo.gl/7NUYmR, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://goo.gl/rxiUsF]

The subjective experience of an emotion—what an emotion *feels* like—is only one aspect of an emotion. Other aspects include behaviors, facial expressions, and physiological activation (Levenson, 1992). For example, if you feel excited about having made a new friend, you might want to be near that person, you might

smile, and your heart might be beating faster as you do so. Often, these different responses travel together, meaning that when we feel an emotion we *typically* have corresponding behaviors and physiological responses (e.g., Ekman, 1972; Levenson, 1992). The degree to which responses travel together has sometimes been referred to as emotion coherence (Mauss, Levenson, McCarter, Wilhelm, & Gross, 2005). However, these different responses do not co-occur in all instances and for all people (Bradley & Lang, 2000; Mauss et al., 2005; for review, see Fridlund, Ekman, & Oster, 1987). For example, some people may choose not to express an emotion they are feeling internally (English & John, 2013), which would result in lower coherence.

Does coherence—above and beyond emotion experience per se—matter for people's well-being? To examine this question, one study measured participants' emotion coherence by showing them a funny film clip of stand-up comedy while recording their experience of positive emotion as well as their behavioral displays of positive emotion (Mauss, Shallcross, et al., 2011). As predicted, participants differed quite a bit in their coherence. Some showed almost perfect coherence between their behavior and experience, whereas others' behavior and experience corresponded not much at all. Interestingly, the more that participants' behavior and experience cohered in the laboratory session, the lower levels of depressive symptoms and the higher levels of well-being they experienced 6 months later. This effect was found when statistically controlling for overall intensity of positive emotions experienced. In other words, experiencing high levels of positive emotion aided well-being *only if it was accompanied by corresponding positive facial expressions.*

But *why* would coherence of different emotional responses predict well-being? One of the key functions of an emotion is social communication (Keltner & Haidt, 1999), and arguably, successful social communication depends on whether an individual's emotions are being *accurately* communicated to others. When someone's emotional behavior doesn't match their experience it may disrupt communication because it could make the individual appear

confusing or inauthentic to others. In support of this theory, the above study found that lower coherence was associated with worse well-being because people with lower coherence felt less socially connected to others (Mauss, Shallcross, et al., 2011). These findings are also consistent with a large body of research examining the extent to which people mask the outward display of an emotional experience, or *suppression*. This research has demonstrated that people who habitually use suppression not only experience worse well being (Gross & John, 2003), but they also seem to be particularly worse off with regard to their social relationships (Srivastava, Tamir, McGonigal, John, & Gross, 2009).

These findings underscore the importance of examining whether an individual's experience is traveling together with his or her emotional responses, above and beyond overall levels of subjective experience. Thus, to understand how emotion experiences predict well-being, it is important not only to consider the experience of an emotion, but also the other emotional responses currently activated.

Other emotions

Up until now, we have treated emotional experiences as though people can only experience one emotion at a time. However, it should be kept in mind that positive and negative emotions are not simply the opposite of one another. Instead, they tend to be independent of one another, which means that a person can feel positive and negative emotions at the same time (Larsen, McGraw, Mellers, & Cacioppo, 2004). For example, how does it feel to win a prize when you expected a greater prize? Given "what might have been," situations like this can elicit both happiness and sadness. Or, take "schadenfreude" (a German term for deriving pleasure from someone else's misfortune), or "aviman" (an Indian term for prideful, loving anger), or nostaligia (an English term for affectionate sadness

about something from the past): these terms capture the notion that people can feel both positively and negatively within the same emotional experience. And as it turns out, the other emotions that someone feels (e.g., sadness) during the experience of an emotion (e.g., happiness) influence whether that emotion experience has a positive or negative effect on well-being.

What experiences can you recall where you felt mixed emotions? Happiness and disappointment? Hope and fear? Admiration and envy? [Image: Ron Cogswell, https://goo.gl/JKuzmU, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/BRvSA7]

Importantly, the extent to which someone experiences different emotions at the same time—or *mixed emotions*—may be beneficial for their well-being. Early support for this theory was provided by a study of bereaved spouses. In the study, participants were asked to talk about their recently deceased spouse, which undoubtedly elicited strong negative emotions. However, some participants

expressed positive emotions in addition to the negative ones, and it was those participants who recovered more quickly from their loss (Bonanno & Keltner, 1997). A recent study provides additional support for the benefits of mixed emotions, finding that adults who experienced more mixed emotions over a span of 10 years were physically healthier than adults whose experience of mixed emotions did not increase over time (Hershfield, Scheibe, Sims & Carstensen, 2013). Indeed, individuals who can experience positive emotions even in the face of negative emotions are more likely to cope successfully with stressful situations (Larsen, Hemenover, Norris, & Cacioppo, 2003).

Why would mixed emotions be beneficial for well-being? Stressful situations often elicit negative emotions, and recall that negative emotions have some benefits, as we outlined above. However, so do positive emotions, and thus having the ability to "take the good with the bad" might be another key component of well-being. Again, experiencing more positive emotion and less negative emotion may not always be optimal. Sometimes, a combination of both may be best.

Conclusion

Are emotions just fleeting experiences with no consequence beyond our momentary comfort or discomfort? A variety of research answers a firm "no"—emotions are integral predictors of our well-being. This module examined how, exactly, emotion experience might be linked to well-being. The obvious answer to this question is: *of course*, experiencing as much positive emotions and as little negative emotions as possible is good for us. But although this is true in general, recent research suggests that this obvious answer is incomplete and sometimes even wrong. As philosopher Robert Solomon said, "Living well is not just maximizing the good feelings

and minimizing the bad. (…) A happy life is not necessarily filled with happy moments" (2007, p. 86).

Discussion Questions

1. Much research confirms the relative benefits of positive emotions and relative costs of negative emotions. Could positive emotions be detrimental, or could negative emotions be beneficial? Why or why not?
2. We described some contexts that influence the effects of emotional experiences on well-being. What other contexts might influence the links between emotions and well-being? Age? Gender? Culture? How so?
3. How could you design an experiment that tests…(A) When and why it is beneficial to feel a negative emotion such as sadness? (B) How is the coherence of emotion behavior and emotion experience linked to well-being? (C) How likely a person is to feel mixed (as compared to simple) emotions?

Vocabulary

Emotion
An experiential, physiological, and behavioral response to a personally meaningful stimulus.

Emotion coherence
The degree to which emotional responses (subjective experience, behavior, physiology, etc.) converge with one another.

Emotion fluctuation
The degree to which emotions vary or change in intensity over

time.

Well-being

The experience of mental and physical health and the absence of disorder.

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6. Yoga, Buddhism, Relationships and Personality

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Yoga and Buddhism are vast subjects, spanning many thousands of years, and they are amazing philosophies. But, are they philosophy or religion? They both certainly have significant religious overtones, and are considered to be religions by many people. Actually, however, they are styles of life that developed in order to help people be more in tune with their religion and with God. Yoga, which means unity, was a practice that developed within the Hindu religion to help Hindus achieve unity with God. So it developed as a practice in one's daily life that led to religious fulfillment. The **Buddha** was a Yogi, and did not consider himself to be different than other people. His followers, however, have so fervently held to his teachings that the practice of Buddhism is often viewed as a religion, and over time it became mixed with religious stories and myths, as people tried to fit Buddhism into their traditional culture.

Placing Yoga in Context: An Ancient Plan for Self Development

The Concept of Self from a Yogic Perspective

Spirit, Nature, and Consciousness

In the metaphysics of Yoga our true self, the transcendental self, is a temporary manifestation of Spirit in essence. The great mistake in our lives is to confuse our body and mind with who we really are, to believe that this body and this mind are our self. The practice of Yoga, however, teaches us to still our minds, to eliminate all thought

and sensation, so that we might be in union with our transcendental self and the universal spirit. Once we have accomplished this task, by subjugating our natural tendency to think and restraining our mind itself, we will know who and what we really are (*Yoga Sutras* I:2,3 [Bailey, 1927]). This is not an easy task, but it has a great reward. As Sri Yukteswar told Yogananda:

> The soul expanded into Spirit remains alone in the region of lightless light, darkless dark, thoughtless thought, intoxicated with its ecstasy of joy in God's dream of cosmic creation (Yogananda, 1946; pgs. 489-490).

William James, America's foremost psychologist, is best known for his theory on the stream of consciousness. According to James, it is the continuity of consciousness that defines our self. This is in direct contradiction to Eastern philosophies, which consider the conscious mind to be derived from the natural world, and therefore only an illusion. Eastern philosophies consider the transcendental self to be real, but obscured from us by the distraction of the so-called conscious mind.

Discussion Question: Do you believe in a transcendental self (whether you call it self, spirit, soul…whatever)? What does this make you feel about your physical body? As for all of nature can you really believe it is just an illusion?

Karma

Karma is a difficult concept to grasp. We generally think of karma as the consequences of things we have done wrong, but karma does not apply simply to our misbehavior, it applies to all of our actions. An easy to understand discussion of karma has been written by Goldstein and Kornfield (2001). The law of karma can be understood on two levels. First, karma refers to cause and effect. Whenever we perform an action, we experience some consequence at a later time. The second level of karma may be more important, as it refers to our state of mind at the time when we performed the action in question. *Our intentions, or the motives behind an action, determine the nature of the consequences we experience.* The importance of this

point is that we control the nature of our karma. This, of course, has important implications for personality development. Once we understand the karmic law, it is only natural that we should begin to plant the seeds of healthy karma. In other words, we should be inclined to act only in ways that are healthy and socially beneficial, so that the consequences we then experience will lead to greater well-being for ourselves.

The second level of karma, that it is our intentions and motivation that affect the outcome of our lives, seems quite similar to cognitive theories in psychology. Cognitive psychology focuses on the nature of our thought, and problems often arise when we are trapped in a series of automatic thoughts that create problems for us. In other words, when we view the world negatively, we react in negative and maladaptive ways. Similarly, our past karma influences the karma we create for the future. **If we think and act in negative ways, we create negative karma, but it is also true that if we think and act in positive ways we create positive karma.** Cognitive therapy resembles much of what is written in the East about recognizing the *cause-and-effect pattern* that our karma traps us within. Successful cognitive therapy is something like enlightenment: when we realize the truth of what we are doing we have a chance to break that pattern and move in a healthy direction.

Discussion Question: Karma refers to the cosmic law of cause and effect, the idea that our past actions will someday affect our current and future lives. Do you believe this, and can you provide any examples of this happening to you?

Historical Description of Buddhism

Siddhattha Gotama

Siddhattha Gotama is recognized as the Buddha, but this is technically incorrect. Anyone can be a Buddha, there were many before Gotama Buddha, many after, and more to come. Indeed,

Siddhattha Gotama had lived many lives before he was born into that earthly identity (if, of course, you believe in such things), and this had an important impact on his life. According to legend, Dipankara Buddha foretold that Siddhattha Gotama would be born as a prince in the kingdom of the Shakyas (so he is also referred to as Prince Shakyamuni and as Shakyamuni Buddha), and that in that lifetime he would become a Buddha. Sometime around the fifth or sixth century B.C., Prince Shakyamuni was born. Not wanting his son to leave the kingdom, the king indulged his son with every sensual pleasure known to man. The king also protected his son from knowing the unpleasant realities of life (disease, death, etc.). However, the prince's destiny was set. Prince Shakyamuni decided he wanted to see the kingdom. In order to prevent the prince from seeing the reality of life, the king ordered that everything in the city should be cleaned and decorated and everyone should be on their best behavior. However, four heavenly beings appeared to Prince Shakyamuni: the first as someone suffering the ravages of old age, the second as someone stricken with disease, the third as a corpse, and the fourth as a wandering monk. These visitors made a profound impression on the young prince, who left his wife, child, and home to seek enlightenment.

Living in India, the path to spiritual enlightenment that he followed was to become a yogi. He studied meditation, he became an accomplished ascetic (it is said he lived for a time on one grain of rice a day), but he failed to achieve anything satisfying. So finally he had a nice lunch and sat down under a Bodhi tree, vowing to remain seated until he achieved enlightenment. Finally, he was "awakened," which is the meaning of the word Buddha. In his first sermon, Gotama Buddha revealed the **Four Noble Truths** and the **Middle Way,** among other teachings. **The middle way is a path of moderation, between the extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification.** The middle way also refers to a proposal by the Dalai Lama for a compromise with China, allowing Tibet to have independent culture and religion but remain a part of China. China has not accepted the middle way proposal.

Those who have followed the teachings of Buddha have come to be known as Buddhists. For more on the life of the Buddha, an excellent chapter has been written by Goldstein and Kornfield (2001). The sayings of the Buddha have also been collected, and are readily available (e.g., see Byrom, 1993). In his own words, we can see the relationship between Buddhism and psychology, and how these teachings were meant to guide people toward a healthy and happy life. In the teaching entitled "Choices," the Buddha says:

> We are what we think.
> All that we are arises with our thoughts.
> With our thoughts we make the world.
> Speak or act with a pure mind
> And happiness will follow you
> As your shadow, unshakable. (pgs. 1-2)
> *Bodhidharma*

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Unlike the historical figures Gotama Buddha, the **Dalai Lama** is alive today. Although his home is Tibet, where he was born in 1935, he lives in exile in India. He is believed to be the 14th Dalai Lama, a *reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lamas*, the first of whom is believed to have been the reincarnation of a boy who lived during the time of Gotama Buddha. That boy was an incarnation of Chenrezig (also known as Avalokiteshvara), the Bodhisattva of Compassion (a Bodhisattva is like a Buddha – see below), and the Dalai Lamas have served for over 650 years as the religious leader of the Tibetan people. Due to political circumstances in Tibet today, it is unclear what may happen to Tibetan culture. The Dalai Lama himself does not know whether he will be the last of the Dalai Lamas, but he hopes that choice will someday be made by a free and democratic Tibetan society (Dalai Lama, 2002).

Characteristics of Existence

Impermanence

The Buddha said that "everything arises and passes

away…existence is illusion" (in Byrom, 1993). The idea of **impermanence** or that nothing is permanent is a central belief in Buddhism. People are born, grow up, grow old, and die. Buildings wear down, cars break down, and enormous trees wither away. Even mountains are eventually worn down by erosion. However, children are born, new cars and buildings are built, new plants grow, and life goes on. The implications for Buddhism are quite interesting. If everything, and everyone, changes, then even someone who is enlightened will change! One cannot *be* a Buddha, for they will change. We must always continue to grow. Likewise, Buddhism itself will change, so most of their doctrines are not seen as static. They anticipate change over time.

For psychology, this has both good and not so good implications. For people who are depressed or anxious, they might take heart in impermanence, since things should eventually get better. Indeed, studies on the effects of psychotherapy often show that some people get better over time without treatment. However, if things seem to be going great, if you are happy and having lots of fun, those things will change too. But knowing this, we can prepare ourselves for it. An important aspect of coping with life's challenges is a sense of being in control. Although there are a wide variety of variables that contribute to individual resilience, maintaining a positive state of mind can help, and knowledge can help to maintain that positive state of mind (Bonnano, 2004, 2005; Folkman and Moskowitz, 2000; Ray, 2004).

Buddhism also brings to question whether personality really exists. It is clear people have individual differences. But depending on the school of Buddhism, some would suggest that all that we are is a temporary collection of attributes, made up of the body, the feelings, the perceptions, the reactions, and the consciousness of the mind (which, coming from the brain, is really part of the body). In this sense Buddhism has a more open attitude toward personality, seeing it as impermanent and it will change from lifetime to lifetime.

If we practice mindfulness and meditation, we can begin to see the impermanence of our lives. **Mindfulness** is a technique extracted from Buddhism where one tries to notice present thoughts, feeling and sensations without judgement. As we let go of our attachments to our self-image, our life will flow by like the pictures of a movie, each one a separate image, which only appears to flow smoothly when viewed at high speed. As we observe these fleeting images, we see how our sensations, thoughts, feelings, every aspect of our lives, change so quickly. We might then embrace the change that is truly our life. This process of letting go can be very difficult, but also very liberating (Goldstein and Kornfield, 2001).

> *"Do not seek perfection in a changing world.*
> *Instead, perfect your love." – Kornfield, 1994*

Suffering

As we learned with the first of the Four Noble Truths, suffering is an integral part of the human experience. It is easy for us to think of suffering in terms of big pictures: war, famine, natural disasters, and the like. But how often do we think of suffering as an inherent part of our daily lives? Life is difficult, it is a struggle, especially the way most of us live it. A struggle can only lead to suffering. The ultimate outcome of life's struggle, should we lose the battle, is death. If we could defeat death we would end up alone, and that loneliness might be even worse than the original suffering itself (Suzuki, 1962). Still, we do not even need to look at suffering in terms of a lifetime battle against aging and death, we can see suffering in every moment of the day. Goldstein and Kornfield offer a marvelous description of the daily challenge to be satisfied (2001). It goes something like this. Suppose we woke up on a day when we had no obligations at all. It might be tempting to stay in bed all day, but eventually we become uncomfortable because we have to go to the bathroom. Finally we go, and then crawl back into bed to get warm. But then we get hungry, so finally we get up to get something to eat. Then we get bored, so maybe we watch TV. Then we get uncomfortable, and have to change positions. Even each pleasurable moment is brief, and

fails to bring lasting satisfaction. So on, and so forth. We just keep suffering!

The **source of this suffering is attachment**. Gotama Buddha taught that suffering is the result of craving or desire. This was a problem of "attachment" to things in life such as money or love or anything that we get too attached to. Learning detachment or non-attachment to things is an important practice in Buddhism, and decreases suffering. We are attached to pleasurable things because we crave them. We are also attached to things that are not pleasant, because they occupy our mind and we cannot be free. The Buddha says, "Free yourself from pleasure and pain. For in craving pleasure or in nursing pain, there is only sorrow" (in Byrom, 1993). It may seem strange that we would be attached to our pain, but the word is used differently here than in most of Western psychology. Traditionally, psychologists think of attachment in a positive way, such as the attachment a child feels toward his or her parents. And yet, some cognitive psychologists do talk about individuals whose automatic thoughts lead them into consistently negative states of mind by disqualifying positive events, catastrophizing events, taking everything too personally, etc. (Pretzer and Beck, 2005). In Buddhism, attachment is neither positive nor negative, it is simply anything that reflects our illusion that the natural world is real. Only when we let go of our attachments to this world can we be one with the universal spirit, and only then can we end our suffering. There is also something hopeful in suffering. Bodhidharma taught that every suffering is a Buddha-seed, because suffering leads us to seek wisdom (in Red Pine, 1987). In this analogy, he describes the body and mind as a field. Suffering is the seed, wisdom the sprout, and Buddhahood the grain.

Discussion Question: Gotama Buddha taught that suffering is the result of craving or desire. Many of us have heard the saying that money is the root of all evil. Is our society excessively focused on buying more and bigger things? Do you ever find yourself obsessed with some material purchase? What problems, if any, have you

experienced because people were more concerned with getting things than caring about the people around them?

Selflessness

In keeping with its origins in Yoga, Buddhism teaches that there is no immortal, unchanging soul. All that we are is a temporary collection of attributes, made up of the body, the feelings, the perceptions, the reactions, and the consciousness of the mind (which, coming from the brain, is really part of the body). It is because we confuse our true self (the transcendental self) with this temporary collection of illusory things that we crave satisfaction, and ultimately suffer as a result. Now it may seem illogical to reject everything we are familiar with, including our own physical body, as an illusion, but Buddhists would suggest that there is a danger in choosing intellectual logic over faith. According to D.T. Suzuki (1962), "Faith lives and the intellect kills." Try the following exercise. Consider your body. Is it real? How much food have you eaten in your life, and where is it now? How many times have you gone to the bathroom, and where did all of that come from? It certainly isn't the same as when you ate it! Your body has been replaced many, many times. It is being replaced right now. It isn't real, it is only temporary, ever changing. The same is true with your mind. Even when William James discussed the stream of consciousness, he described a constantly changing awareness, one in which you cannot have the same thought twice. It just isn't possible. James (1892) realized that we cannot establish a *substantial* identity continuing from day to day, but concluded that our sense of continuity must reveal a *functional* identity. Arriving at a very different conclusion, Buddhists consider this to be maya, our inability to see things as they truly are (Suzuki, 1960).

These three characteristics of existence (impermanence, suffering, and selflessness) can be somewhat unsettling. It is not very appealing to believe that we don't really exist, that we will suffer as long as we believe we do exist, and all of it will just eventually pass away anyway. So, how does one continue in this practice? It is important to keep as our goal a true understanding of

the way things are, and the practice of meditation and other aspects of Yoga and Buddhism will help to deepen our realization of these basic truths (Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001). The practice remains challenging, however, because as we deepen our understanding the characteristic most often occupying the center of our greatest realization is that of suffering (Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001; Suzuki, 1962). We must then put aside our intellectualizing, we must slay it and throw it to the dogs, experiencing what Buddhists call the "Great Death" (Suzuki, 1962). Only then will we know the greatest wisdom and compassion. This is the beginning of our transcendence. It is not a separation from others, but a realization that we are all one. In other words, we are all in this together.

Interbeing – A Connection Between All People and All Things

Many people are familiar with the golden rule: do unto others as you would have others do unto you! This Christian saying also has great implications when considered from a Buddhist perspective. Based on the same philosophical/cosmological perspective as Yoga, Buddhists believe that there is one universal spirit. Therefore, we are really all the same, indeed the entire universe of living creatures and even inanimate objects in the physical world come from and return to the same, single source of creation. Thus, we could alter the golden rule to something like: as you do unto others you are doing unto yourself! This concept is not simply about being nice to other people for your own good, however. Much more importantly, it is about appreciating the relationships between all things. For example, when you drink a refreshing glass of milk, maybe after eating a few chocolate chip cookies, can you taste the grass and feel the falling rain? After all, the cow could not have grown up to give milk if it hadn't eaten grass, and the grass would not have grown if there hadn't been any rain. When you enjoy that milk do you remember to thank the farmer who milked the cow, or the grocer who sold the milk to you? And what about the worms that helped to create and aerate the soil in which the grass grew? Appreciating the concept of interbeing helps us to understand the importance of everyone and everything.

> The value of this concept of interbeing is that it can be much more than simply a curious academic topic. The Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh writes very eloquently about interbeing and its potential for promoting healthy relationships, both between people and between societies (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995):
>
> "Looking deeply" means observing something or someone with so much concentration that the distinction between observer and observed disappears. The result is insight into the true nature of the object. When we look into the heart of a flower, we see clouds, sunshine, minerals, time, the earth, and everything else in the cosmos in it. Without clouds, there could be no rain, and there would be no flower. Without time, the flower could not bloom. In fact, the flower is made entirely of non-flower elements; it has no independent, individual existence. It "inter-is" with everything else in the universe. ... When we see the nature of interbeing, barriers between ourselves and others are dissolved, and peace, love, and understanding are possible. Whenever there is understanding, compassion is born. (pg. 10)

Having understood this concept, how might it apply to personality? One of the best known cross-cultural topics in psychology today is the distinction between collectivistic vs. individualistic cultures (Triandis & Suh, 2002; Triandis et al., 1988). It is generally accepted that Western cultures focus on the individual, whereas Eastern cultures focus on society as a collective group. One can easily imagine how people whose religious and cultural philosophy focus on a single, universal spirit (the basis of interbeing) would focus more on their family and societal groups than on the individual. Both individualistic and collectivistic cultures seem to have advantages. People living in **individualistic cultures report higher levels of subjective well-being and self-esteem**, whereas people in **collectivistic cultures have tend to have lower levels of stress and**

correspondingly lower levels of cardiovascular disease (Triandis & Suh, 2002; Triandis et al., 1988). In collectivistic cultures people tend to view the environment as relatively fixed, and themselves as more flexible, more ready to fit in (Triandis & Suh, 2002). The collectivistic perspective supports the value of social cooperation and social interest (something Alfred Adler would likely appreciate). Still, even within cultures there are individual differences. There are idiocentric persons (those who favor individuality) living in collectivistic cultures, and allocentric persons (those who favor ingroups) living in individualistic cultures. The best relationship between personality and culture may be the "culture fit" model, which suggests that it is best to live in the culture that matches your personal inclinations.

Discussion Question: The concept of interbeing suggests that all things are ultimately connected. Have you ever taken the time to think about all the things that had to happen, and all the people who were involved, in producing anything you hold in your hand? What about all the things that had to happen, and all the people who were involved, in your creation? And if we are all connected in some way, if we are all interbeing, what have you done to value those relationships?

Connections Across Cultures: The Non-Violent Struggles of Mahatma Gandhi,

Thich Nhat Hanh, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the 14th Dalai Lama

The four men listed above are famous in a variety of ways, but they are probably best known for their commitment to nonviolence as a way to achieve political and social justice. Most importantly, they vowed non-violence while those around them were committed to terrible violence in order to deny justice to others. The two who are not alive today were both assassinated, and the other two were forced to live in exile. Gandhi was a Hindu who practiced Yoga, Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama are Buddhists, and M. L. King, Jr. was a Christian, and it was their spiritual beliefs that

so profoundly determined those aspects of their personalities that demanded peace.

Gandhi (1869-1948) is considered the father of modern India. He was born when the British ruled India, and spent much of his life fighting for the independence of his homeland. Twice he was imprisoned by the government, even though he insisted that all protests should be nonviolent. Indeed, he had established a movement of nonviolence known as **Satyagraha**. Ultimately this movement was successful, and India achieved its independence. Gandhi, however, was assassinated less than a year later. As he died, he spoke the name of God: Rama (Easwaran, 1972; Wilkinson, 2005).

Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-present) was born in Vietnam, and saw his country dominated first by the French and then by communists. During those difficult times he helped to develop what he and his friends called "**engaged Buddhism**." Rather than sitting in the temple meditating, they went out into the villages and tried to help the poor people of Vietnam. When confronted by soldiers they did their best to remain mindful, and to feel compassion for the soldiers who threatened them. After all, it was clear to Thich Nhat Hanh that many of those young soldiers were frightened themselves, and so their behavior was very hard to predict. Thus, the calm and peace that accompany mindfulness was often essential for protecting everyone in those terrifying encounters. After being exiled from Vietnam in 1966, he established a community called Plum Village in France, where he still resides today (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1966, 2003).

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) was a major figure in America's civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. The King children learned at an early age about the realities of racism in America. Coming from an educated and socially active family, both his father and grandfather were ministers, he vowed at an early age to work against racial injustice. According to his sister, he said he would turn the world upside down (Farris, 2003). However, he always insisted on doing so in a nonviolent fashion. For this commitment to nonviolence, in 1964 he became the youngest person to ever receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Despite the peace prize and the passage of

both the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act in 1965, discrimination continued in America. So did the nonviolent protests led by Dr. King. Then, in 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated (Burns, 2004; Hansen, 2003; Patrick, 1990).

The Dalai Lama (1935-present) lives in exile in India, though he also spends a great deal of time in America. When China invaded Tibet in 1950, he appealed to the United Nations, other countries, and even tried to reach an agreement with the Chinese leadership. Eventually, however, he was forced to leave Tibet in 1959. Today, nearly 50 years later, he continues to seek a peaceful resolution resulting in freedom for Tibet. He also works to deliberately cultivate feelings of compassion for the Chinese, believing that someday those who have harmed the people of Tibet will have to face the consequences of their actions (Dalai Lama, 2002). The Dalai Lama received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

These men have more in common than simply their shared belief in nonviolence. In addition to M. L. King, Jr. and the Dalai Lama receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, as Nobel Laureates are entitled to do, Dr. King nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the same award. Dr. King had received a letter from Thich Nhat Hanh asking for help in protesting the Vietnam war, which by the 1960s involved the United States. Dr. King was impressed by the Buddhist monk, and once appeared with him at a press conference in Chicago (Burns, 2004). Dr. King was also familiar with and impressed by the teachings of Gandhi. In 1959 he traveled to India to learn firsthand about Gandhi's Satyagraha, the basis for Gandhi's nonviolent independence movement (King, 2000). In 1966, Dr. King delivered the Gandhi Memorial Lecture at Howard University (Hansen, 2003). Since both the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh are alive today, they have met one another and the Dalai Lama has written several forewords for books by Thich Nhat Hanh. If these men from different countries and different cultures can share so much through the simple (though not easy) practice of nonviolence, perhaps there is something special here for everyone to learn more about.

Meditation

Meditation Techniques

Meditation is the means by which we control our mind and guide it in a more virtuous direction (Dalai Lama, 2001). Modern brain imaging techniques have even begun to identify the brain regions involved in these processes (Barinaga, 2003). There are many different meditation techniques in Yoga and Buddhism, and no one technique is necessarily better than another. What is most important is to pick one type of meditation and stick with it. Meditation takes practice. Most of us find it very difficult to relax and clear our mind. Even when we do, it is difficult to stay relaxed and keep our mind clear. We are distracted by constant thoughts, getting uncomfortable, we have itches and sneezes and whatever… But over time we can get better at relaxing. It helps to have a well-described procedure, and it can be very helpful to meditate in a group (especially if they offer classes or lessons on how to meditate). If you try meditation, don't get discouraged the first few times. Keep it up. As with all paths toward self-improvement, it takes time to progress in your ability to meditate.

Some of the writings of Master Dogen (1200-1253), the monk who founded Japanese Soto Zen, have survived during the 800 years since he lived (in Cook, 2002). Master Dogen recommends a very traditional form of seated meditation. Basically, sit straight up on a comfortable cushion with your legs crossed. Place your right hand in your lap, palm up, and your left hand on your right hand in the same manner, so that your thumbs touch slightly. Keep the eyes slightly open, the mouth closed, and breathe softly. Next comes the hard part: "Think about the unthinkable. How do you think about the unthinkable? Non-thinking."

Non-thinking may sound strange, but it is a fascinating experience for those who achieve it. It can actually make a 3- or 6-hour mediation seem to go by more quickly than a shorter meditation in which you never quite clear your mind. If it sounds a little too strange, don't worry, it isn't the goal of every form of meditation. Some forms of meditation focus on a mantra, or in

Christian mediation a short prayer. Trying to focus on God through the celestial eye (in the middle of the forehead) is also a common technique. The Dalai Lama describes several different approaches in one of his books (Dalai Lama, 2001), and Thich Nhat Hanh discusses being reasonable in one's approach to longer meditations (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991). Once again, there is not a right or wrong method of meditation. Whatever technique you try, whether from a book, a guru, a teacher, or a group, it is whatever works for you on your path to personal development.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a form of meditation that occurs throughout every moment of the day. Indeed, it is very important to live fully in every moment, and to look deeply into each experience (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991, 1995). By being mindful, we can enter into awareness of our body and our emotions. Thich Nhat Hanh relates a story in which the Buddha was asked when he and his monks practiced. The Buddha replied that they practiced when they sat, when they walked, and when they ate. When the person questioning the Buddha replied that everyone sits, walks, and eats, the Buddha replied that he and his monks *knew* they were sitting, *knew* they were walking, and *knew* they were eating (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995). Mindfulness can also be applied to acts as simple as breathing. According to Thich Nhat Hanh, conscious breathing is the most basic Buddhist technique for touching peace (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991, 1995). He suggests silently reciting the following lines while breathing mindfully:

> Breathing in, I calm my body.
> Breathing out, I smile.
> Dwelling in the present moment,
> I know this is a wonderful moment!

The concept of mindfulness, viewed in its traditional way, is also being used today in psychotherapy. Two recent books address the use of mindfulness either in combination with cognitive behavioral therapy to treat depression (McQuaid and Carmona, 2004) or as its

own approach to the treatment of anxiety (Brantley, 2003). McQuaid and Carmona (2004) discuss how combining cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness together can provide a much stronger approach to treatment than either technique alone. Since the approaches have much in common, they amplify the effectiveness of each, and given their differences, they offer a complete path to moving beyond simple recovery toward more positive self development. Dr. Brantley (2003) moves more completely into the practice of mindfulness, emphasizing that it must become a way of life. It is not simply a clever therapeutic technique or gimmick.

Discussion Question: Mindfulness refers to maintaining a meditative state throughout the day. A similar approach is essential to cognitive/behavioral therapy. Are you aware of what you do during the day, or are you overwhelmed with being too busy? Could you see the practice of mindfulness as a helpful way to deal with your hectic life, and perhaps reduce stress at the same time?

Compassion and Loving-Kindness

"Just as compassion is the wish that all sentient beings be free of suffering, loving-kindness is the wish that all may enjoy happiness" (Dalai Lama, 2001). With these simple words about Buddhism, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has captured the history of psychology briefly presented in the introductory chapter: that psychology focused for many years on helping to identify and treat mental illness (hopefully freeing people from suffering), whereas now there is a strong movement toward positive psychology (hoping to improve well-being for all). This recognition of compassion as the strong feeling or wish that others be freed from suffering comes from mindfulness. As one becomes truly aware of the suffering involved in human life, and if one is able to feel genuine empathy for others, then compassion naturally arises (Chappell, 2003; Dalai Lama, 2001; Goldstein & Kornfield, 2001; Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995). Compassion has described as the ideal emotional state (Bankart et al., 2003; Cook, 2002; Dockett & North-Schulte, 2003; Ragsdale, 2003), and Carl Rogers considered genuine empathy to be essential for client-centered therapy to be successful. Aside from Rogers,

however, have other psychologists begun to examine the value of compassion and loving-kindness? The answer is an unequivocal "Yes" (Bankart et al., 2003; Batson et al., 2005; Cassell, 2005; Dockett & North-Schulte, 2003; Keyes & Lopez, 2005; Khong, 2003; Ragsdale, 2003; Schulman, 2005; Young-Eisendrath, 2003)!

> "*Life is so hard, how can we be anything but kind?*"
> – *Kornfield, 1994*

Obstacles to Personal Growth: The Three Poisons of Buddhism

Buddhists believe in **three poisons**, the great obstacles to personal development. They are greed, anger, and delusion. These poisons, or realms as they are often called, have no nature of their own, they are created by us and they depend on us. Greed flows from attachment, anger flows from our emotions, and delusion flows from maya. By following the practices of Buddhism, we can free ourselves from these poisons as did the Buddha. According to Bodhidharma, the Buddha made three vows. He vowed to put an end to all evil, by practicing moral prohibitions to counter the poison of greed. He vowed to cultivate virtue by practicing meditation to counter the poison of anger. And he vowed to liberate all beings by practicing wisdom to counter the poison of delusion (in Red Pine, 1987). Likewise, we can devote ourselves to the three pure practices of morality, meditation, and wisdom.

It is interesting to note how well this philosophy fits with the growing field of positive psychology (e.g., see Compton, 2005; Peterson, 2006). Indeed, whole books have been written on the study of virtue in psychology (Fowers, 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Note, however, that these books are quite recent. Although the seeds of positive psychology, studies on virtue and similar topics have been around since the earliest days of psychology in the

Western world, we seem to be just starting to "discover" concepts that have been well established in Eastern philosophy/psychology for thousands of years. As we recognize more similarities between traditional Eastern perspectives and current Western perspectives, it may help to guide these developing areas of psychological research in the Western world.

A Final Note

Personality Theory in Real Life: Are You Really You?

We ended the first chapter in this book by asking an interesting question: Who are you? In this chapter, we have addressed the possibility that everything you know about yourself is an illusion, and that even knowing is an illusion. How can this be? The answer may be found, or perhaps not found, in the mystery that is God. The Christian Bible teaches that God's ways are not Man's ways. Paramahansa Yogananda provides a marvelous image of the mystery of the Godhead being so far beyond our comprehension that it defies description (Yogananda, 1946); and Dante's awesome description of the appearance of the divine essence in *Paradiso* is difficult to envision, even as one reads Dante's words (in Milano, 1947). Perhaps some things are beyond our comprehension.

How then, should we proceed to live our life? Based on the concept of Karma, our past actions will influence our future experiences. Consider things you have done in your life. Have you regretted some of them? Did they seem out of character for you? Try to determine if unfortunate events followed those actions you regret. On the positive side, are there things you have done that make you proud or happy? Have those things involved other people, or were they done for other people? Try to determine whether those good things you have done resulted in favorable consequences for you and for others.

Now, here comes the tricky part. When you have done good things, do they feel more like you than the bad things did? If the answer is yes, it may be that you have begun to touch something special within yourself. You are responsible for both the good things

and the bad things you have done in this life. But perhaps the good things feel better, feel more like you, because they begin to connect you with your transcendental self, that spark of the divine within you, which may be called spirit or soul. Thinking this way is a deep and powerful challenge, which requires you to have some faith in yourself. Meditate on this, and see what happens!

Review of Key Points

- Although Yoga and Buddhism have significant religious overtones, they are actually lifestyle guidelines that promote psychological well-being.
- In Yoga there is a dichotomy between spirit and nature, with spirit being pure consciousness. Our belief that we are actually our physical selves (our natural self) is an illusion.
- Karma refers to the cosmic law of cause and effect. Our past actions, both good and bad, affect our future.
- Everything in the natural world is composed of three gunas: rajas (craving and action), tamas (ignorance and dullness), and sattva (light and joy).
- Buddhism is based on the 2,500 year-old teachings of Siddhattha Gotama, who is also known as Gotama Buddha. Bodhidharma brought Zen Buddhism to China some 1,500 years ago, and the Dalai Lama is a very famous Tibetan Buddhist leader alive today.
- The Buddha taught that there are four noble truths: suffering is a reality in human life, suffering comes from craving, the craving that leads to suffering can be destroyed, the path to destroy craving is the Middle Way (aka, the Eightfold Path).
- Buddhists believe in three basic characteristics of existence: nothing is permanent, suffering is an integral part of human life, and we have no immortal, unchanging soul.
- The Buddhist concept of interbeing emphasizes the

connection between all living things, and even inanimate objects, because there is only one single source of all creation.

- Meditation, the common element in all forms of Yoga and Buddhism, is a means for controlling our mind and moving it in a more virtuous direction. Soto Zen emphasizes sitting meditation alone, whereas Rinzai Zen adds to seated meditation the practice of meditating on a koan, an unsolvable riddle.
- Mindfulness is the practice of maintaining a meditative state throughout our daily routine.
- The ideal emotional state for Buddhists is compassion. Both compassion and loving-kindness flow naturally from mindfulness, since mindful individuals recognize the reality of our existence.
- Buddhists believe in three poisons, or obstacles to personal growth: greed, anger, and delusion.
- Zen Buddhism has been taught in the United States for over 100 years. It has found its way into popular literature and has had a clear influence on psychology.

Vocabulary:

Karma: refers to cause and effect. Whenever we perform an action, we experience some consequence at a later time. The second level of karma may be more important, as it refers to our state of mind at the time when we performed the action in question. *Our intentions, or the motives behind an action, determine the nature of the consequences we experience.*

Buddha: Buddha's name was Siddhattha Gotama, who is also known as Gotama Buddha. He created teachings and a path of awareness and enlightenment. Buddhism is the philosophy of following the teaching of Buddha.

Dalai Lama: The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of Tibet, a

country on the Northern side of the Himalaya mountains. The Chinese government requires the Dalai Lama to be in exile because China has colonized Tibet yet Tibet wants to be a free and independent country and practice their religion and customs independent of Chinese rule. The Dalai Lama is an incarnation of previous Dalai Lama's and is an important figure in Tibetan Buddhism and as a world spiritual leader.

Impermanence: Buddha said that "everything arises and passes away…existence is illusion". The idea of impermanence or that nothing is permanent is a central belief in Buddhism. Impermanence also influences the study of personality issues, as in a sense there is not really a personality within a person, since everything will fade and change. All that we are is a temporary collection of attributes, made up of the body, the feelings, the perceptions, the reactions, and the consciousness of the mind (which, coming from the brain, is really part of the body).

Interbeing: the idea in Buddhism that all things are related, which when one is aware of this it creates additional compassion toward all things.

Mindfulness is a technique extracted from Buddhism where one tries to notice present thoughts, feeling and sensations without judgement. It can take many forms including focusing on one thing and being present, or non-thinking and empty mind, or yoga poses or walks in the forest.

Attachment and Detachment: Gotama Buddha taught that suffering is the result of craving or desire. This was a problem of "attachment" to things in life such as money or love. Learning detachment or non-attachment to things is an important practice in Buddhism, and decreases suffering.

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For a historical review of the Buddha, please watch this excellent documentary,

https://youtu.be/EDgd8LT9AL4

7. Happiness: The Empirical Science of Happiness and the Philosophy of Tibetan Buddhism

Introduction

This chapter examines empirical science of happiness, and discusses the traditions and philosophy of Tibetan Buddhism. In recent years as happiness science has flourished, it has become apparent that some of the philosophies of Tibetan Buddhism match well with discoveries from empirical science. This chapter examines scientific findings on happiness and how these parallel ideas from Tibetan Buddhism.

Terminologies

Professionals and scientists use the term **Subjective well-being (SWB)** as the scientific term for happiness and life satisfaction—thinking and feeling that your life is going well, not badly. Scientists rely primarily on self-report surveys to assess the happiness of individuals, but they have validated these scales with other types of measures. People's levels of subjective well-being are influenced by both internal factors, such as personality and outlook, and external factors, such as the society in which they live. Some of the major determinants of subjective well-being are a person's inborn temperament, the quality of their social relationships, the societies they live in, and their ability to meet their basic needs. To some degree people adapt to conditions so that over time our

circumstances may not influence our happiness as much as one might predict they would. Importantly, researchers have also studied the outcomes of subjective well-being and have found that "happy" people are more likely to be healthier and live longer, to have better social relationships, and to be more productive at work. In other words, people high in subjective well-being seem to be healthier and function more effectively compared to people who are chronically stressed, depressed, or angry. Thus, happiness does not just feel good, but it is good for people and for those around them.

Tibetan Buddhism is a form of philosophy and type of Buddhism practiced by the people of Tibet, and elsewhere in the world. Tibetan Buddhism is based in the teachings of the Buddha as introduced to the country of Tibet between the 7th and 9th centuries. Guatama Buddha, also called **Buddha** was a Yogi and teacher living in ancient India, and did not consider himself to be superior to other people. He felt everyone could learn what he had learned. His followers, however, have so fervently held to his teachings that the practice of Buddhism is often viewed as a religion, and over time it became mixed with religious stories and myths, as people tried to fit Buddhism into their traditional culture. Buddhism, including Tibetan Buddhism, includes ceremonies, practices, and teachings designed to reduce life suffering, increase compassion, and help people find well-being even amidst difficult challenges. Buddhism has a particular focus on happiness that comes from the decisions we make about how to live our life, and the types of thoughts we think and how we regulate our emotions.

For a review of the life of the Buddha and a basic understanding of the teachings of the Buddha, students can watch the movie below created by the American television service, the Public Broadcasting Service, pbs.org (2015)

https://youtu.be/EDgd8LT9AL4

The Science of Well-Being

If you had only one gift to give your child, what would it be? Happiness? [Image: mynameisharsha, https://goo.gl/216PFr, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://goo.gl/eLCn2O]

When people describe what they most want out of life, happiness is almost always on the list, and very frequently it is at the top of the list. When people describe what they want in life for their children, they frequently mention health and wealth, occasionally they mention fame or success—but they almost always mention happiness. People will claim that whether their kids are wealthy and

work in some prestigious occupation or not, "I just want my kids to be happy." Happiness appears to be one of the most important goals for people, if not the most important. But what is it, and how do people get it?

In this module we describe "**happiness**" or subjective well-being (SWB) as a process—it results from certain internal and external causes, and in turn it influences the way people behave, as well as their physiological states. Thus, high SWB is not just a pleasant outcome but having subjective well-being is an important factor in our future success. Because scientists have developed valid ways of measuring "happiness," they have come in the past decades to know much about its causes and consequences.

Types of Happiness

Philosophers debated the nature of happiness for thousands of years, but scientists have recently discovered that happiness means different things. Three major types of happiness are **high life satisfaction**, **frequent positive feelings**, and **infrequent negative feelings** (Diener, 1984). **"Subjective well-being" is the label given by scientists to the various forms of happiness taken together.** Although there are additional forms of SWB, the three in the table below have been studied extensively. The table also shows that the causes of the different types of happiness can be somewhat different.

Three Types of Happiness	Examples	Causes
Life Satisfaction	• I think my life is great • I am satisfied with my job	• A good income • Achieving one's goals • High self-esteem
Positive Feelings	• Enjoying life • Loving others	• Supportive friends • Interesting work • Extroverted personality
Low Negative Feelings	• Few chronic worries • Rarely sad or angry	• Low neuroticism • One's goals are in harmony • A positive outlook

Table 1: Three Types of Subjective Well-Being

You can see in the table that there are different causes of happiness, and that these causes are not identical for the various types of SWB. Therefore, there is no single key, no magic wand—high SWB is achieved by combining several different important elements (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). Thus, people who promise to know *the* key to happiness are oversimplifying.

Some people experience all three elements of happiness—they are very satisfied, enjoy life, and have only a few worries or other unpleasant emotions. Other unfortunate people are missing all three. Most of us also know individuals who have one type of happiness but not another. For example, imagine an elderly person who is completely satisfied with her life—she has done most everything she ever wanted—but is not currently enjoying life that much because of the infirmities of age. There are others who show a different pattern, for example, who really enjoy life but also experience a lot of stress, anger, and worry. And there are those who are having fun, but who are dissatisfied and believe they are wasting their lives. Because there are several components to happiness, each with somewhat different causes, there is no magic single cure-all that creates all forms of SWB. This means that to be happy, individuals must acquire each of the different elements that cause it.

Causes of Subjective Well-Being

There are external influences on people's happiness—the circumstances in which they live. It is possible for some to be happy living in poverty with ill health, or with a child who has a serious disease, but this is difficult. In contrast, it is easier to be happy if one has supportive family and friends, ample resources to meet one's needs, and good health. But even here there are exceptions—people who are depressed and unhappy while living in excellent circumstances. Thus, people can be happy or unhappy because of

their personalities and the way they think about the world or because of the external circumstances in which they live. People vary in their propensity to happiness—in their personalities and outlook—and this means that knowing their living conditions is not enough to predict happiness.

In the table below are shown internal and external circumstances that influence happiness. There are individual differences in what makes people happy, but the causes in the table are important for most people (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Lyubomirsky, 2013; Myers, 1992).

Internal Causes (Top-down influences)	Description
Inborn temperament	Studies of monozygotic (identical) twins raised apart indicate that our genes influence our happiness. Even when raised apart, identical twins tend to be similar in their levels of subjective well-being.
Personality and temperament	Personality is partly inborn and partly learned, and it influences our happiness. For example: Extroverts tend to have more positive feelings. Neurotics tend to have more negative feelings.
Outlook	People can develop habits of noticing the good things in life and interpreting ambiguous events in positive ways. Other people develop negative mental habits, leading to more unhappiness. One's culture also can influence whether we take an optimistic or pessimistic view of life.
Resilience	Happy individuals tend to bounce back more quickly after losses and negative events.
External Causes (Bottom-up influences)	**Description**
Sufficient material resources	People have enough money to meet their basic needs and fulfill their major goals.
Sufficient social resources	People differ in their need for social contact, but everyone needs some supportive and trusted others: family, a friend, or a partner, or sometimes all three. We need other people to lead a fulfilled life.
Desirable society	Our own efforts and circumstances influence our happiness, but so does the society in which we live. A society of hunger, war, conflict, and corruption is much less happy then one with material resources, high levels of trust and cooperation, and people who want to help each other.

Table 2: Internal and External Causes of Subjective Well-Being

Societal Influences on Happiness

When people consider their own happiness, they tend to think of their relationships, successes and failures, and other personal factors. But a very important influence on how happy people are is the society in which they live. It is easy to forget how important societies and neighborhoods are to people's happiness or

unhappiness. In Figure 1, I present life satisfaction around the world. You can see that some nations, those with the darkest shading on the map, are high in life satisfaction. Others, the lightest shaded areas, are very low. The grey areas in the map are places we could not collect happiness data—they were just too dangerous or inaccessible.

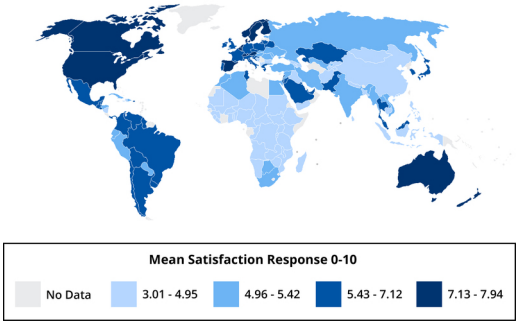


Figure 1

Can you guess what might make some societies happier than others? Much of North America and Europe have relatively high life satisfaction, and much of Africa is low in life satisfaction. For life satisfaction living in an economically developed nation is helpful because when people must struggle to obtain food, shelter, and other basic necessities, they tend to be dissatisfied with lives. However, other factors, such as trusting and being able to count on others, are also crucial to the happiness within nations. Indeed, for enjoying life our relationships with others seem more important than living in a wealthy society. One factor that predicts unhappiness is conflict—individuals in nations with high internal conflict or conflict with neighboring nations tend to experience low SWB.

Money and Happiness

Will money make you happy? A certain level of income is needed

to meet our needs, and very poor people are frequently dissatisfied with life (Diener & Seligman, 2004). However, having more and more money has diminishing returns—higher and higher incomes make less and less difference to happiness. Wealthy nations tend to have higher average life satisfaction than poor nations, but the United States has not experienced a rise in life satisfaction over the past decades, even as income has doubled. The goal is to find a level of income that you can live with and earn. Don't let your aspirations continue to rise so that you always feel poor, no matter how much money you have. Research shows that materialistic people often tend to be less happy, and putting your emphasis on relationships and other areas of life besides just money is a wise strategy. Money can help life satisfaction, but when too many other valuable things are sacrificed to earn a lot of money—such as relationships or taking a less enjoyable job—the pursuit of money can harm happiness.

There are stories of wealthy people who are unhappy and of janitors who are very happy. For instance, a number of extremely wealthy people in South Korea have committed suicide recently, apparently brought down by stress and other negative feelings. On the other hand, there is the hospital janitor who loved her life because she felt that her work in keeping the hospital clean was so important for the patients and nurses. Some millionaires are dissatisfied because they want to be billionaires. Conversely, some people with ordinary incomes are quite happy because they have learned to live within their means and enjoy the less expensive things in life.

It is important to always keep in mind that high materialism seems to lower life satisfaction—valuing money over other things such as relationships can make us dissatisfied. When people think money is more important than everything else, they seem to have a harder time being happy. And unless they make a great deal of money, they are not on average as happy as others. Perhaps in seeking money they sacrifice other important things too much, such as relationships, spirituality, or following their interests. Or it may be

that materialists just can never get enough money to fulfill their dreams—they always want more.

To sum up what makes for a happy life, let's take the example of Pema. Pema is age 16 and lives in a high mountain village in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Pema lives in a nomadic family which means she and her family move their tent and animals according to the seasons, so the animals can feed on the grasslands. Pema's family is poor relative to many families. They don't have much money and they barter with visitors or monks for barley flour when they can, otherwise they eat milk, cheese, yogurt, and meat primarily from their animals. Pema works hard helping with the animals, and enjoys life, despite the hardships. Pema is reasonably satisfied with life. Pema sometimes goes to the cities and can see some families are wealthy. Pema goes to a small local school and enjoys school, but Pema sees that some children in the cities are learning more quickly than she is at age 16. Sometimes they have very little food such as in the middle of winter when there is not enough food for the Yaks whom give the butter and milk and cheese. This is the hardest time for Pema and her family. Pema enjoys her family and friends, her religion of Buddhism, and her connection with nature and the mountains. Her families low income does lower her life satisfaction to some degree especially when they run out of food, but she finds she is able to be happy. Pema has a positive temperament and her enjoyment of social relationships help to some degree to overcome her feelings about the hardships of her life. Pema is aware her family is poor, but most nomad families are poor. Her family has 10 Yaks which is more than her aunt and uncle who only have 3 Yaks, so she feels lucky and her family helps her aunt and uncle whenever they need help.

Girl from Tibet Autonomous Region Holding Sheep

Tibetan Buddhism, The Middle Way, and Conative Balance

In his first sermon delivered at deer park in Benares in the 11th century, Gotama Buddha revealed the **Four Noble Truths** and the **Middle Way,** among other teachings. The middle way is a path of moderation, between the extremes of sensual indulgence and

self-mortification. The middle way also refers to a proposal by the Dalai Lama for a compromise with China, allowing Tibet to have independent culture and religion but remain a part of China. China has not accepted the middle way proposal, this the Dalai Lama's offer of compromise is an example of the emphasis of balance in Buddhism. Some pressured the Dalai Lama to insist on total independence for Tibet, while others pressured him to become part of the "one China" policy. The middle way is some of both.

The middle way is often applied to a viewpoint of life that concerning material experiences such as money. Tibetan Buddhists are not forbidden from making money or gaining materialistic items, such as a new iPhone. However, Tibetan Buddhist thought asks the question of "what makes a person truly happy"? Is it materialistic things? Is it money? In his book The Art of Happiness (2020), The Dalai Lama, whom is the exiled leader of Tibet and the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism says in Buddhism there is frequent reference to the four factors of fulfillment, or happiness: adequate wealth, worldly satisfaction, spirituality, and enlightenment. Together they embrace the totality of an individual's quest for happiness. This Buddhist viewpoint is similar to science research on the domains of happiness.

Martin Seligman, one of the founders of positive psychology, has researched happiness domains and has formed a popular assessment instrument called the Perma Profiler, to assess measures of happiness including what Seligman calls flourishing. To **flourish** is to find fulfillment in our lives, accomplishing meaningful and worthwhile tasks, and connecting with others at a deeper level—in essence, living the "good life" (Seligman, 2011) as Seligman described the PERMA model of flourishing. This model defines psychological wellbeing in terms of 5 domains:

- Positive emotions – P
- Engagement – E
- Relationships – R
- Meaning – M

- Accomplishment – A

Using this model as a framework, the emphasis in life is on increasing our positive emotions, engaging with the world and our work (or hobbies), develop deep and **meaningful relationships**, find meaning and purpose in our lives, and **achieve our goals** through cultivating and applying our strengths and talents. To flourish is to find fulfillment in our lives, accomplishing meaningful and worthwhile tasks, and connecting with others at a deeper level—in essence, living the "good life" (Seligman, 2011).

Buddhism has a similar view in the emphasis on domains or factors of fulfillment. However Buddhists put extra emphasis on community living and compassion. In addition to the four factors of fulfillment, The Dalai Lama (2020) states "happiness is found through love, affection, closeness and compassion" and "If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion." The Dalai Lama believes not only do humans have the capability of being happy, but also the Dalai Lama believes that each human naturally has a gentle quality within them that can help self and others be happy. Encouraging this gentle quality fosters positive relationships, loving community, and compassionate acts, which Tibetan Buddhists believe has the best chance of making people happy. Buddhism however does not deny the need for material pleasures. It is more an act of balancing various domains of pleasure and behavior and community life. This emphasis on compassion in relationships and community life is found in more recent studies in the scientific happiness research and literature, but perhaps with less emphasis than in Tibetan Buddhism. Sonja Lyubomirsky, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside, has studied happiness for more than 20 years. Her meta summary of happiness research in her 2013 book suggests that acts of kindness and compassion to others are considerably important to our happiness and to our health. Acts of kindness boost positive emotions, thoughts and behavior, in turn improving well-being for the person offering the kindness.

Lyubomirsky (2013) adds that there isn't really a one size fits all approach for acts of kindness. How often a person does acts of kindness, and shows acts of compassion, really depends on the person and context, but overall kindness and compassion are a key factor in happiness according to Lyubomirsky.

The focus on compassion towards others in community a core pillar of happiness in Tibetan Buddhism. Why does Buddhism emphasize this particular aspect of behaviors that connect to happiness?

Interbeing – A Connection Between All People and All Things

Many people are familiar with the golden rule: do unto others as you would have others do unto you! This Christian saying also has great implications when considered from a Buddhist perspective. Based on the same philosophical/cosmological perspective as Yoga, Buddhists believe that there is one universal spirit. Therefore, we are really all the same, indeed the entire universe of living creatures and even inanimate objects in the physical world come from and return to the same, single source of creation. Thus, we could alter the golden rule to something like: as you do unto others you are doing unto yourself! This concept is not simply about being nice to other people for your own good, however. Much more importantly, it is about appreciating the relationships between all things. For example, when you drink a refreshing glass of milk, maybe after eating a few chocolate chip cookies, can you taste the grass and feel the falling rain? After all, the cow could not have grown up to give milk if it hadn't eaten grass, and the grass would not have grown if there hadn't been any rain. When you enjoy that milk do you remember to thank the farmer who milked the cow, or the grocer who sold the milk to you? And what about the worms that helped to create and aerate the soil in which the grass grew? Appreciating the concept of interbeing helps us to understand the importance of everyone and everything.

> The value of this concept of interbeing is that it can be much more than simply a curious academic topic. The Vietnamese

Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh writes very eloquently about interbeing and its potential for promoting healthy relationships, both between people and between societies (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995):

> "Looking deeply" means observing something or someone with so much concentration that the distinction between observer and observed disappears. The result is insight into the true nature of the object. When we look into the heart of a flower, we see clouds, sunshine, minerals, time, the earth, and everything else in the cosmos in it. Without clouds, there could be no rain, and there would be no flower. Without time, the flower could not bloom. In fact, the flower is made entirely of non-flower elements; it has no independent, individual existence. It "inter-is" with everything else in the universe. ... When we see the nature of interbeing, barriers between ourselves and others are dissolved, and peace, love, and understanding are possible. Whenever there is understanding, compassion is born. (pg. 10)

The Country of Bhutan: A Case Study of Buddhism and Conative Balance

An interesting case study of Tibetan Buddhism and the concept of conative balance is the country of Bhutan. Bhutan practices a derivative of the Tibetan Buddhism practiced in Tibet, and has many Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, shrines, monks, and nuns. Bhutan focuses as it's top priority on happiness and balance and follows the principle of **conative balance** which means desiring wisely. One of the most famous ideas in recent years from the country of Bhutan was the concept of **Gross National Happiness** (also known by the acronym: **GNH**). GNH is a philosophy that guides the government of

Bhutan. It includes an index which is used to measure the collective happiness and well-being of a population. Gross National Happiness is instituted as the goal of the government of Bhutan in the Constitution of Bhutan, enacted on 18 July 2008. The term "Gross National Happiness" was coined in 1979 during an interview by a British journalist for the Financial Times at Bombay airport when the then king of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, said "Gross National Happiness is more important. Several movies and books have been focused on Bhutan, as it is a country trying to focus on some of the principles of the Buddhist belief of the sanctity of life, the preservation of nature, and living in harmony with the land — rather than focusing on materialistic gain. Bhutan is aiming for conative balance as a country and for individuals. For most of the 20th century Bhutan did not have cars and phones and other technology, in order to preserve their traditions. Their belief is that through actions of conative balance that are imbued in their aspects of their culture, social customs, and dress code, they are more likely to find happiness than following what much of the world has done through modernization. A trailer of the movie Bhutan: Height of Happiness describes these attempts by Bhutan to stay in touch with these principles of happiness.

A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/humanrelations/?p=82

There is scientific evidence that may lend support to the vision of Bhutan's leaders and elders to maintain a balance concerning materialistic desire and keep some of their cultural traditions around moderation of desire. Scientists have looked at the traditions of Buddhism and describe the emphasis of Buddhist concerns about desire, as conative balance (Wallace, 1993). Conative balance entails intentions and volitions that are conducive to one's own and others' well-being. Conative imbalances, on the other hand, constitute ways in which people's desires and intentions lead them away from psychological flourishing and into psychological distress (Rinpoche, 2003; Wallace, 1993, pp. 31–43). As discussed in the section above on money and happiness, people who focus on excessive wealth are likely to be less happy or no more happy than those with less money. Bhutan leaders have their challenges ahead,

as the youth of Bhutan are requesting access to cable television, a broader fashion choice, and alcohol and drugs.

An essential concept in Buddhism of living a quality life is following the 4 noble truths. The first of the noble truths is "Life is Suffering" but scholars suggest a more accurate translation of this noble truth is that "life brings unsatisfactoriness". Robert Wright, in his book, Why Buddhism is True: The Science and Philosophy of Meditation and Enlightenment explains that as we achieve something or gain something, as simple as a food we desire such as a donut, the pleasure of that thing generally fades. Tibetan Buddhism has for many centuries pointed out that in our grasping for permanence of pleasure, we find a certain level of unsatisfactoriness. The Buddhist concept of Samsara can be described as the wheel of life and existence that keeps rotating around and around and involves suffering and pain over and over again. The Buddha taught that if it most helpful for Buddhists to be able to see the world as it really is and this will help break the suffering of the cycle of Samsara. On a practical level, this includes noticing that the grasping for material pleasures brings a certain unsatisfactoriness to it, and that there are deeper principles such as compassion, relationships, and love, that bring more sustainable happiness. Robert Wright summarizes this idea by saying: "ultimately, happiness comes down to choosing between the discomfort of becoming aware of your mental afflictions and the discomfort of being ruled by them."

Students of psychology have studied human evolution and the nature of drives. Drive states differ from other affective or emotional states in terms of the biological functions they accomplish -that are essential to keep us alive. Whereas all affective states possess valence (i.e., they are positive or negative) and serve to motivate approach or avoidance behaviors (Zajonc, 1998), drive states are unique in that they generate behaviors that result in specific benefits for the body. For example, hunger directs individuals to eat foods that increase blood sugar levels in the body, while thirst causes individuals to drink fluids that increase water

levels in the body. Buddhism was aware of the all sorts of drives in humans and the necessity of these drives to keep us alive. This is at its essence, why Buddhism suggested we would make poor decisions regarding our own happiness. As Robert Wright (2017) states: "What kinds of perceptions and thoughts and feelings guide us through life each day?" the answer, at the most basic level, isn't "The kinds of thoughts and feelings and perceptions that give us an accurate picture of reality." No, at the most basic level the answer is "The kinds of thoughts and feelings and perceptions that helped our ancestors get genes into the next generation." Whether those thoughts and feelings and perceptions give us a true view of reality is, strictly speaking, beside the point. As a result, they sometimes don't. Our brains are designed to, among other things, delude us." Buddhism is designed to help us see the delusions that are inherently part of our survival system, and facilitate where possible decision-making that will bring well-being. Money and materialism is a key example of this, as humans are deluded that chasing additional wealth, after having an adequate income level, will increase their happiness. Robert Wright (2017) summarizes Buddhist thought this way: "If you want the shortest version of my answer to the question of why Buddhism is true, it's this: Because we are animals created by natural selection. Natural selection built into our brains the tendencies that early Buddhist thinkers did a pretty amazing job of sizing up, given the meager scientific resources at their disposal. Now, in light of the modern understanding of natural selection and the modern understanding of the human brain that natural selection produced, we can provide a new kind of defense of this sizing up." Wright (2017) goes on to say: "If you put these three principles of design together, you get a pretty plausible explanation of the human predicament as diagnosed by the Buddha. Yes, as he said, pleasure is fleeting, and, yes, this leaves us recurrently dissatisfied. And the reason is that pleasure is designed by natural selection to evaporate so that the ensuing dissatisfaction will get us to pursue more pleasure. Natural selection doesn't "want" us to be happy, after all; it just "wants" us to be productive, in its narrow

sense of productive. And the way to make us productive is to make the anticipation of pleasure very strong but the pleasure itself not very long-lasting."

Adaptation to Circumstances

The process of adaptation is important in understanding happiness. When good and bad events occur, people often react strongly at first, but then their reactions adapt over time and they return to their former levels of happiness. For instance, many people are euphoric when they first marry, but over time they grow accustomed to the marriage and are no longer ecstatic. The marriage becomes commonplace and they return to their former level of happiness. Few of us think this will happen to us, but the truth is that it usually does. Some people will be a bit happier even years after marriage, but nobody carries that initial "high" through the years. People also adapt over time to bad events. However, people take a long time to adapt to certain negative events such as unemployment. People become unhappy when they lose their work, but over time they recover to some extent. But even after a number of years, unemployed individuals sometimes have lower life satisfaction, indicating that they have not completely habituated to the experience. However, there are strong individual differences in adaptation, too. Some people are resilient and bounce back quickly after a bad event, and others are fragile and do not ever fully adapt to the bad event. Do you adapt quickly to bad events and bounce back, or do you continue to dwell on a bad event and let it keep you down?An example of adaptation to circumstances is shown in Figure 3, which shows the daily moods of "Harry," a college student who had Hodgkin's lymphoma (a form of cancer). As can be seen, over the 6-week period when I studied Harry's moods, they went up and down. A few times his moods dropped into the negative zone below the horizontal blue line. Most of the time Harry's moods were in the positive zone above the line. But about halfway

through the study Harry was told that his cancer was in remission—effectively cured—and his moods on that day spiked way up. But notice that he quickly adapted—the effects of the good news wore off, and Harry adapted back toward where he was before. So even the very best news one can imagine—recovering from cancer—was not enough to give Harry a permanent "high." Notice too, however, that Harry's moods averaged a bit higher after cancer remission. Thus, the typical pattern is a strong response to the event, and then a dampening of this joy over time. However, even in the long run, the person might be a bit happier or unhappier than before.

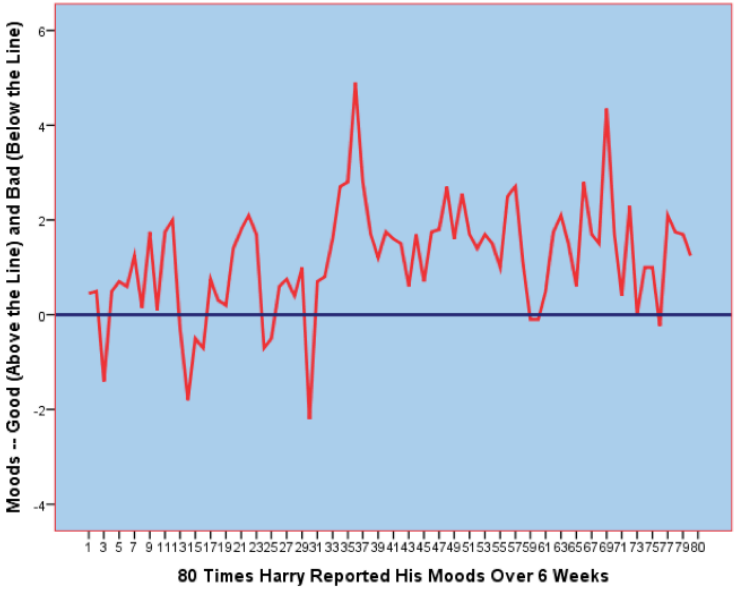
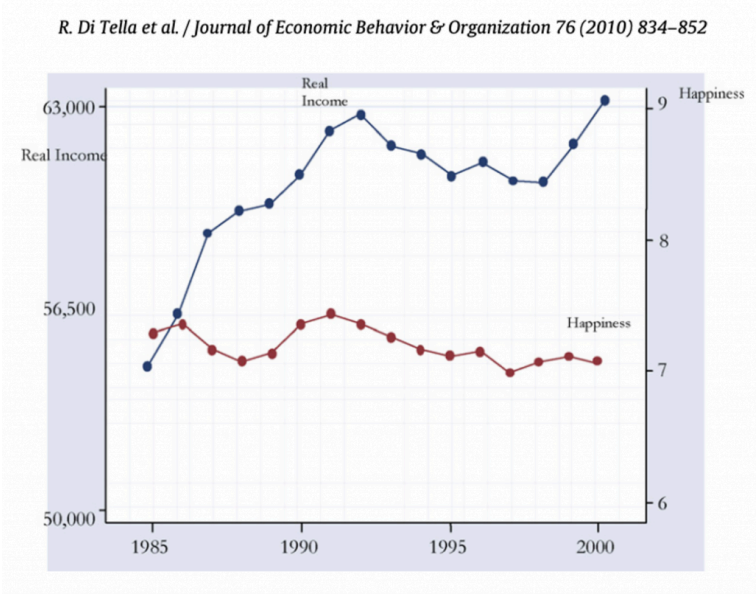


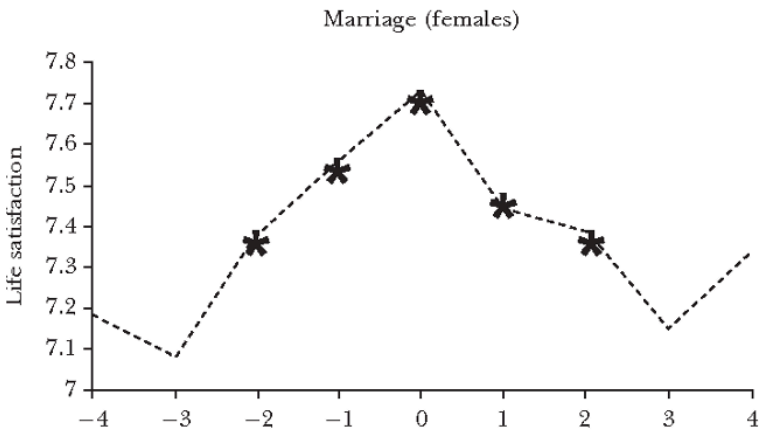
Figure 3. Harry's Daily Moods

Psychologists have a term for how we adapt to circumstances related to pleasure and pain: the **"hedonic treadmill," or "hedonic adaptation**," a concept that looks at humans as each having a set point or constant level at which they maintain their happiness, regardless of what happens in their lives. We think that getting married will make us permanently happy, or that getting a

promotion or making more money will make us more happy. As long as our basic needs are satisfied, we don't seem to be happier for very long due to these events -because we adapt to the spike in happiness and get back to our normal or "set point" of happiness. Here are a few studies to consider:

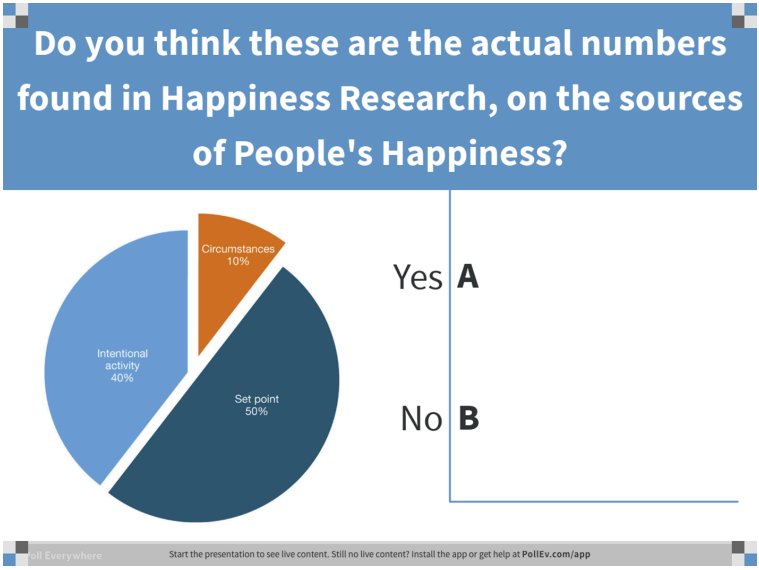


The above graph followed workers over a 20 year period. the blue line shows gradual increases in income. The red line shows happiness ratings. Happiness was more complex than a simple increase in income.



After Marriage People Return to a Baseline or Set Point of Happiness after 3 or 4 Years (Lucas et al. (2003).

There are many studies focused on the "set point" of happiness theory and how humans mispredict that large experiences such as making more money, marriage, health diagnoses, will permanently alter our happiness. Sonya Lyubomirsky summarized the happiness research in her book: *The myths of happiness: What should make you happy, but doesn't, what shouldn't make you happy, but does* (2013), reviewed many happiness studies and found that it is not likely 50% of our lives relate to a set point of happiness, while 10% relates to circumstances and 40% to the choices we make about happiness. I often give the above poll to students during lectures on happiness.



Poll asking Students Whether They Agree or Disagree this Pie Chart represents actual Happiness Research.

The pie chart is accurate and comes from Sonya Lyubomrisky's exhaustive review of research on happiness (2013). Students usually react to this information with shock and disagreement. They generally believe that our circumstances are much more important. This leads to a useful discussion together on how people adapt to negative and positive events more than we think they will. Someone winning the lottery may have about the same level of happiness a few years later after the event – they have adapted. Someone getting a medical diagnosis may initially be in shock, but then within months or years their happiness levels have adapted back to baseline. Generally students begin to understand that the human mind is an amazing thing in its capacity to adapt to positive and negative events, and that we are adapting back to a baseline or set point level of happiness. Essentially negative events aren't as

bad as we think they will be, and positive events don't last as long as we think they will, and we'll generally return to our set point level of happiness.

Buddhism presents a wide array of meditations designed to remedy specific forms of craving and other obsessive or unrealistic desires and to promote wholesome and realistic aspirations (Shantideva, 1981). Contentment is cultivated by reflecting on the transitory, unsatisfying nature of hedonic pleasures and by identifying and developing the inner causes of genuine well-being. One of the most well-known aspects of Buddhism is meditation. Meditation can take many forms, including being used for insight purposes (called Vipassana meditation), helping a person to think clearly, or meditation can be used to calm the mind and body (called Shamata meditation).

Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations. Mindfulness meditation is a form of meditation that can occur throughout every moment of the day. Indeed, it is very important to live fully in every moment, and to look deeply into each experience (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991, 1995). By being mindful, we can enter into awareness of our body and our emotions. Thich Nhat Hanh, a well-known Buddhist monk and teacher and author, relates a story in which the Buddha was asked when he and his monks practiced. The Buddha replied that they practiced when they sat, when they walked, and when they ate. When the person questioning the Buddha replied that everyone sits, walks, and eats, the Buddha replied that he and his monks *knew* they were sitting, *knew* they were walking, and *knew* they were eating (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1995). Mindfulness can also be applied to acts as simple as breathing. According to Thich Nhat Hanh, conscious breathing is the most basic Buddhist technique for touching peace (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991, 1995). He suggests silently reciting the following lines while breathing mindfully:

Breathing in, I calm my body.
Breathing out, I smile.
Dwelling in the present moment,
I know this is a wonderful moment!

The Psychological Immune System (we are stronger than we think we are)

Daniel Gilbert (2000), a long-time happiness researcher, identified the idea of **miswanting** – suggesting humans predict incorrectly in many situations what will make them happy. This includes how we predict what will make us happy in our future and how much we will like or dislike something. Wright (2017) suggests miswanting is strongly rooted in our minds desire to keep us alive, so throughout evolution the human mind has learned to favor things such material possessions, status, and aggression, which in some situations would help us stay alive. However our mind can trick us to overusing these tendencies and the goal identified in both Buddhism and scientific research is to gain awareness of the mind's tendency to miswant and mispredict.

Related to the idea of miswanting or mispredicting, Gilbert (1998) coined the term "immune neglect" to discuss our lack of awareness of something called our psychological immune system. The **psychological immune system** is a mental mechanism where our brain become helpful in creating solutions to our problems when we are under pressure. Based partly on how the brain processes cognitive dissonance and can use bias to help a person feel better, the psychological immune system will only come in to effect when it really has to. Gilbert suggests we essentially "**synthesize happiness**" when we don't get what we wanted, or we don't get what we thought we wanted. If we do get what we wanted, we feel something Gilbert calls natural happiness. But often in life we

don't get what we wanted or planned. Here the brain has the ability to synthesize happiness, which is the brain's ability to resolve dissonance and make the new road we are on and the new choices we have in life as valuable as the old road and old choices that were taken away from us. An example of the psychological immune system can be seen in the following student video. Selam was set on getting into medical school and was doing quite well in her pre-med courses and working as a medical scribe, but she would learn that based on her early grades it would be quite challenging to get into medical school. Within a few months, Selam's psychological immune system kicks in and she begins to focus on the negative parts of a career in medicine, and how some opportunities in organizational psychology might be a better fit. Gilbert (2007) suggests synthesized happiness is every bit as good as natural happiness, and that is the magic of it all – that the mind really does highlight and help us understand the benefits of the new path we are on.

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text. You can view it online here: https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/humanrelations/?p=82

The SELF and Wanting to Be Happy?

At the center of the ideas of miswanting and mispredicting how we will react to positive or negative circumstances, is the idea of whether humans have a brain that runs things accurately for their own happiness, and whether in the center of that brain is a "self". You can think of this as whether the internet has a self? Who runs the internet? It is a lot of knowledge, but is their a center of the internet? This chapter won't be able to answer the question of whether humans have a central self, but it is worth thinking about in terms of happiness. Recent psychological scientists question whether their is a central human self. As mentioned above in the book by Robert Wright (2017) on why Buddhism is true, Wright compares scientific advances with Buddhist thought. His argument is that science has yet to discover any particular "center" of the human mind where the self would be located. This is similar to the idea Buddhism has put forward for centuries. One view of the human mind currently popular among evolutionary psychologist is called the **modularity of the mind** (Fodor, 1983). Evolutionary psychologists propose that the mind is made up of genetically influenced and domain-specific mental algorithms or computational **modules**, designed to solve specific evolutionary problems of the past. An alternative view is the domain-general processing view, in which mental activity is distributed across the brain and cannot be decomposed, even abstractly, into independent units (Uttal, 2003). What is interesting across the models of the

mind that scientists are using, is thus far nobody has identified the *center* of the mind. Wright (2017) suggests: "In other words, if you were to build into the brain a component in charge of public relations, it would look something like the conscious self." Wright and other scientists are suggesting that as there is no center of the mind, no inherent "self", the most convincing module for the center of our mind may be the part of our mind that advocates for us as humans and makes us believe we are in charge. That makes us believe what we are doing is correct, or right, and make decisions in sensible ways. This view of the mind having a module that convinces us we have a central self, has a lot to do with bias, anger, and hatred. If we are so sure we are a "self" and that self is absolutely correct about our thoughts and feelings and reactions, we will act with more absolutism and potentially hurt others and act aggressively with a sense of "self"-righteousness. The reason for this is we are sure that our "self" or the center of who we are, is giving us accurate non-biased information. The same is true of cravings and needs–our self tells us we "must" eat a donut or drink a beer or we won't feel well.

Buddhism has questioned this idea of the self. In the following video, listen to Lama Lakshey Zangpo Rinpoche, a respected Tibetan Buddhist teacher, talk briefly about the Tibetan Buddhist idea of the self.

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Buddha gave some famous discourses on the difficulty of finding the "self". Buddha's interest in teaching this concept was to help his followers have more detachment from the viewpoint that they had a permanent "self. Buddha goes through give parts or aggregates of human experience suggesting he couldn't find the self located in any of them. Buddha said that if we had a self it would be either from: form (or material image, impression); sensations (or feelings, received from form); perceptions or mental activity; or consciousness. But he could not locate any of these areas that was the "self". Buddha taught the monks that clinging or grasping for things we want in life is mediated by the view that we have a self, and that this self needs or must have things. But if there is no self, which was the Buddha's opinion, it casts doubt on how essential we need what we think we need. Having no self is a complex issue particularly for non-Buddhist students to understand. The Buddha

was less interested that people believe his exact philosophy, and as the Dalai Lama said in The Art of Happiness: "Don't try to use what you learn from Buddhism to be a better Buddhist; use it to be a better whatever-you-already-are." Modern Buddhist teachers are interested in helping people have fluidity and less attachment to their absolutism based in their view of having an absolute inflexible self. This vision from Buddhist teachers fits well with the modularity of mind viewpoint arising in evolutionary psychology.

Perhaps the take home idea of this discussion of whether we have a self or not is this: A fundamental insight of Buddhism is the recognition of the fluctuating, impermanent nature of all phenomena that arise in dependence on preceding causes and contributing conditions. Mistakenly grasping objective things and events as true sources happiness produces a wide range of psychological problems, at the root of which is an overemphasis on oneself, as an immutable, unitary, independent ego (Ricard, 2006). When you our Self is unchangeable in all things, it sets us up a belief system that.

The Comparing Mind

The following video illustrates one of the central concepts related to happiness – comparison. As discussed above with the example of 16-year old Pema, she is happy with her life even though she knows others have some things easier. The following video illustrates this concept, as a woman named Norzom whom grew up living a very challenging nomadic life in the high mountains of Tibet, discusses her view on happiness.

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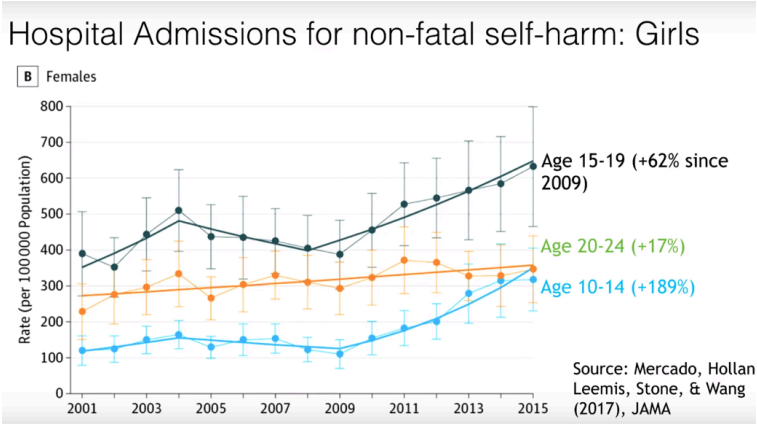
With the invention of social media, social comparison has become a critically important topic. One of the more alarming studies related to social media effects was published in the Journal of American Medical Association in 2017. The authors suggest the increase for non-fatal self-harm among age groups for girls increases significantly, showing spikes that correlate to increased phone usage and app usage such as Facebook. Particularly for girls that were ages 10-14 at the time of final measurement in 2015, the increase in self-harm was extreme, suggesting the younger a person is the more vulnerable they will be to social comparison, and that gender plays an important role in social comparison.



This graph shows a 189% increase in hospital admissions for self-harm for 10-14 year old girls between 2001 and 2015.

Our feelings of contentment are strongly influenced by our tendency to compare. Social scientists call this social comparison and have found that regardless of whether we compare ourselves with people better off than ourselves (upward social comparison) or we compare ourselves with people worse off than ourselves (downward social comparison), when in social comparison mode we are generally less likely to be happy. While some comparison with others is normal and may at times be necessary for self-improvement, our minds can be obsessed with social comparison which increases our anxiety and decreases happiness measures such as life satisfaction. People also respond differently to social comparison, related in part to their with certain people being highly sensitive to social comparison. People lower on happiness measures tend to have more difficulty with social comparison (Lyubomirsky, Tucker, 2001). Cognitive therapies and psychoeducational are often aimed at helping people resolve social comparison. One of the blossoming therapies of the last decade, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), focuses on helping a person accept where they are at in life as a primary therapeutic

goal (Hayes, 2005).People compare themselves with others who make more money or less money, and never quite seem satisfied. Much of this is a state of mind issue. A very interesting studies on social comparison completed during the 1992 Olympics, on medal winners at the Olympics. The study found gold and bronze medal winners were more likely to be smiling and to be happier than silver medal winners. Silver winners had a different comparison point or reference point than bronze medal winners.

Olympic medal winners in Swimming. The Gold and Bronze Winners Smiling More than the Silver Medal Winners (Medvac, ET AL 1995)

Tibetan Buddhism has long focused on avoiding comparisons of self to others as a key to well-being. Buddhism believes there will always be others with more or less, and that our state of mind that can contemplate this fact that there is always more or less, and that a person may be anywhere in this cycle of having or not having, is the key to maintaining our happiness. Buddhism teaching is often helping students of Buddhism to train their mind in the relativity of what people own, or what abilities and achievements others have, but to not let this be the focus of one's happiness. The Dalai Lama (2020) says it this way:

"If we utilize our favorable circumstances, such as our good health or wealth, in positive ways, in helping others, they can be contributory factors in achieving a happier life. And of course we enjoy these things—our material facilities, success, and so on. But without the right mental attitude, without attention to the mental factor, these things have very little impact on our long-term feelings of happiness. For example, if you harbor hateful thoughts or intense anger somewhere deep down within yourself, then it ruins your health; thus it destroys one of the factors. Also, if you are mentally unhappy or frustrated, then physical comfort is not of much help. On the other hand, if you can maintain a calm, peaceful state of mind, then you can be a very happy person even if you have poor health. Or, even if you have wonderful possessions, when you are in an intense moment of anger or hatred, you feel like throwing them, breaking them. At that moment your possessions mean nothing.

Outcomes of High Subjective Well-Being

Is the state of happiness truly a good thing? Is happiness simply a feel-good state that leaves us unmotivated and ignorant of the world's problems? Should people strive to be happy, or are they better off to be grumpy but "realistic"? Some have argued that happiness is actually a bad thing, leaving us superficial and uncaring.

Most of the evidence so far suggests that happy people are healthier, more sociable, more productive, and better citizens (Diener & Tay, 2012; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Research shows that the happiest individuals are usually very sociable. The table below summarizes some of the major findings.

Positive Outcomes	Description of Some of the Benefits
Health and Longevity	Happy and optimistic people have stronger immune systems and fewer cardiovascular diseases. Happy people are more likely to perform healthy behaviors, such as wearing seat belts and adhere to medical regimens. They also seem on average to live longer.
Social Relationships	Happy people are more popular, and their relationships are more stable and rewarding. For example, they get divorced less and are fired from work less. They support others more, and receive more support from others in return.
Productivity	Organizations in which people are positive and satisfied seem to be more successful. Work units with greater subjective well-being are more productive, and companies with happy workers tend to earn more money and develop higher stock prices.
Citizenship	Happy people are more likely to donate their time and money to charitable causes and to help others at work.

Table 3: Benefits of Happiness

Although it is beneficial generally to be happy, this does not mean that people should be constantly euphoric. In fact, it is appropriate and helpful sometimes to be sad or to worry. At times a bit of worry mixed with positive feelings makes people more creative. Most successful people in the workplace seem to be those who are mostly positive but sometimes a bit negative. Thus, people need not be a superstar in happiness to be a superstar in life. What is not helpful is to be chronically unhappy. The important question is whether people are satisfied with how happy they are. If you feel mostly positive and satisfied, and yet occasionally worry and feel stressed, this is probably fine as long as you feel comfortable with this level of happiness. If you are a person who is chronically unhappy much of the time, changes are needed, and perhaps professional intervention would help as well.

The Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhist teachers view happiness as a journey, not a destination. Rather than an emphasis on large events to make us happy, the focus is on a way of living. The Dalai Lama (2020) says: “So let us reflect on what is truly of value in life, what gives meaning to our lives, and set our priorities on the basis

of that. The purpose of our life needs to be positive. We weren't born with the purpose of causing trouble, harming others. For our life to be of value, I think we must develop basic good human qualities-warmth, kindness, compassion. Then our life becomes meaningful and more peaceful-happier." This quote sends the message that certain qualities of kindness, compassion, are more important than being a happiness superstar. And that these happiness habits create positive community and are good for all of us.

Don't Forget Genetics and Set Point

Sometimes when people read about the outcomes of happiness, and that being happy can cause a person to have better life outcomes, they become frustrated or use this information as a weapon against themself, saying something like: "if I were only more happy, I'd be happier". This may be motivating to some persons but is often experienced as a self-criticism. Sonya Lyubomirsky's (2013) work on the set point of happiness, including delving deeply in to the research on identical twins raised separately and together, is important to emphasize, because the role of biology and early experiences needs to be considered as a human happiness diversity issue. Not everyone, perhaps not most of us, will be a bouncy happy person, and that has something clear to do with nature. On the other hand, 40% of our life is under our control to make decisions to improve our happiness. The video of Rafael below is a good example of set point. Rafael discusses challenges with a medical diagnosis as a young adult. Yet he states that he has always had an optimistic approach and that this helped him move through the challenges of the medical diagnosis.

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Measuring Happiness

Dan Gilbert (2007) suggests it is very hard to predict our future happiness, because whatever we think will make us happier in the future is very possibly untrue because we are likely to base our feeling on what is going on in the present. This is related to the previous discussion of miswanting and mispredicting. Specifically – we use our "pre-feelings" or feelings now about an experience to predict how we will feel about it in the future. Marriage is a good example. How we feel about someone in the present, may or may not last. Another example is that humans often predict based on their youthful energy that they will have this same energy in the

second half of life. But as we age we get more tired, and at times wish we'd made choices that would make our life easier and require less energy, such as saving money for the future so we had to work less as we age. All this said, much of happiness research does require self-report measures, especially of our current happiness and SWB levels, and these self-report measures have found relatively good levels of of validity — meaning they do actually measure something about how happy a person currently is.

SWB researchers have relied primarily on self-report scales to assess happiness—how people rate their own happiness levels on self-report surveys. People respond to numbered scales to indicate their levels of satisfaction, positive feelings, and lack of negative feelings. You can see where you stand on these scales by going to http://internal.psychology.illinois.edu/~ediener/scales.html or by filling out the Flourishing Scale below. These measures will give you an idea of what popular scales of happiness are like.

Below are eight statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1–7 scale, indicate your agreement with each item by picking the appropriate response for each statement.

7 – Strongly agree
6 – Agree
5 – Slightly agree
4 – Neither agree nor disagree
3 – Slightly disagree
2 – Disagree
1 – Strongly disagree

__I lead a purposeful and meaningful life

__My social relationships are supportive and rewarding

__I am engaged and interested in my daily activities

__I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others

__I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me

__I am a good person and live a good life

__I am optimistic about my future

__People respect me

Scoring:
Add the responses, varying from 1 to 7, for all eight items. The possible range of scores is from 8 (lowest possible) to 56 (highest PWB possible). A high score represents a person with many psychological resources and strengths.

The Flourishing Scale

The self-report scales have proved to be relatively valid (Diener, Inglehart, & Tay, 2012), although people can lie, or fool themselves, or be influenced by their current moods or situational factors. Because the scales are imperfect, well-being scientists also sometimes use biological measures of happiness (e.g., the strength of a person's immune system, or measuring various brain areas that are associated with greater happiness). Scientists also use reports by family, coworkers, and friends—these people reporting how happy they believe the target person is. Other measures are used as

well to help overcome some of the shortcomings of the self-report scales, but most of the field is based on people telling us how happy they are using numbered scales.

There are scales to measure life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 2008), positive and negative feelings, and whether a person is psychologically flourishing (Diener et al., 2009). Flourishing has to do with whether a person feels meaning in life, has close relationships, and feels a sense of mastery over important life activities. You can take the well-being scales created in the Diener laboratory, and let others take them too, because they are free and open for use.

Some Ways to Be Happier

Most people are fairly happy, but many of them also wish they could be a bit more satisfied and enjoy life more. Prescriptions about how to achieve more happiness are often oversimplified because happiness has different components and prescriptions need to be aimed at where each individual needs improvement—one size does not fit all. A person might be strong in one area and deficient in other areas. People with prolonged serious unhappiness might need help from a professional. Thus, recommendations for how to achieve happiness are often appropriate for one person but not for others. With this in mind, I list in Table 4 below some general recommendations for you to be happier (see also Lyubomirsky, 2013):

Self-Questions for Becoming Happier
Are there controllable things in your life that could be changed to make your life more meaningful and happy? What are the avenues to change and why haven't you taken them?
Do you generally see the bright side of things - the part of the glass that is half full, or do you always see the dark side of things? Can you change this outlook on life by working to break the empty-glass view of life? Can you develop more positive mental habits, such as being grateful to others for all of the things they do for you?
Are there people around you who make you feel good about yourself and who make your life more enjoyable? How can you reduce the number of "downers" who might surround you?
In your relationships, seek to make others happy and help others, not just receive support from others. The happiest and healthiest people are often those who help others and the world. Beyond actually helping others, express gratefulness to them and be a person who gives lots of compliments.
Find work that you will love and be good at, while being realistic about your chances of finding certain jobs. Don't over-weigh the importance of money or status in selecting an occupation. Find a job that interests you and plays to your strengths. If you find a job you love, this can be a big boost to happiness.

Table 4: Self-Examination

The Dalai Lama's Suggestions for Happiness

As we've seen in this chapter, Tibetan Buddhism teachings as typified by the teachings of the Dalai Lama and others, parallels research from scientific exploration. Everything in the Table 4 could also be shared in teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. As stated above, Tibetan Buddhism has extra weight it places on compassion and kindness to self and within community living. Tibetan Buddhism also suggests that we become actively engaged in training the mind- or learning about the psychology of happiness. The Dalai Lama (2020) puts it this way:

I say 'training the mind,' in this context I'm not referring to 'mind' merely as one's cognitive ability or intellect. Rather, I'm using the term in the sense of the Tibetan word Sem, which has a much broader meaning, closer to 'psyche' or 'spirit', it includes intellect and feeling, heart and mind.

Congratulations to students who have completed this chapter, as it is a step toward beginning to understand your own psyche and your own habits of happiness.

Outsides Resources

Web: Sonja Lyubomirsky's website on happiness
http://sonjalyubomirsky.com/
Web: Ed Diener's website
http://internal.psychology.illinois.edu/~ediener/

Web: University of Pennsylvania Positive Psychology Center website
http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/

Web: World Database on Happiness
http://www1.eur.nl/fsw/happiness/

Discussion Questions

1. Which do you think is more important, the "top-down" personality influences on happiness or the "bottom-up" situational circumstances that influence it? In other words, discuss whether internal sources such as personality and outlook or external factors such situations, circumstances, and events are more important to happiness. Can you make an argument that both are very important?
2. Do you know people who are happy in one way but not in others? People who are high in life satisfaction, for example, but low in enjoying life or high in negative feelings? What should they do to increase their happiness across all three types of subjective well-being?
3. Certain sources of happiness have been emphasized in this

book, but there are others. Can you think of other important sources of happiness and unhappiness? Do you think religion, for example, is a positive source of happiness for most people? What about age or ethnicity? What about health and physical handicaps? If you were a researcher, what question might you tackle on the influences on happiness?

4. Are you satisfied with your level of happiness? If not, are there things you might do to change it? Would you function better if you were happier?
5. How much happiness is helpful to make a society thrive? Do people need some worry and sadness in life to help us avoid bad things? When is satisfaction a good thing, and when is some dissatisfaction a good thing?
6. How do you think money can help happiness? Interfere with happiness? What level of income will you need to be satisfied?

Vocabulary

Adaptation

The fact that after people first react to good or bad events, sometimes in a strong way, their feelings and reactions tend to dampen down over time and they return toward their original level of subjective well-being.

"Bottom-up" or external causes of happiness

Situational factors outside the person that influence his or her subjective well-being, such as good and bad events and circumstances such as health and wealth.

Conative balance: desiring wisely, including desires that benefit self and other beings.

Happiness

The popular word for subjective well-being. Scientists sometimes avoid using this term because it can refer to

different things, such as feeling good, being satisfied, or even the causes of high subjective well-being.

Hedonic Adaptation: a concept that looks at humans as each having a set point or constant level at which they maintain their happiness, regardless of what happens in their lives. Also, a general term for how people adapt to positive and negative experiences.

Interbeing: Buddhists believe that there is one universal spirit. Therefore, we are really all the same, indeed the entire universe of living creatures and even inanimate objects in the physical world come from and return to the same, single source of creation.

Middle Way: The middle way is a path of moderation, between the extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification.

Mindfulness: is a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.

Miswanting or Mispredicting: humans predict incorrectly in many situations what will make them happy, or that humans want the incorrect things.

Negative feelings

Undesirable and unpleasant feelings that people tend to avoid if they can. Moods and emotions such as depression, anger, and worry are examples.

Positive feelings

Desirable and pleasant feelings. Moods and emotions such as enjoyment and love are examples.

Psychological immune system is a mental mechanism where our brain help us find helpful solutions to our problems when we are under pressure. One way it can do this is to synthesize happiness, making us feel that if we don't get what we want, we can still be equally happy with our new life.

Subjective well-being

The name that scientists give to happiness—thinking and

feeling that our lives are going very well.

Tibetan Buddhism: a form of philosophy and type of Buddhism practiced by the people of Tibet, and elsewhere in the world. Tibetan Buddhism is based in the teachings of the Buddha as introduced to the country of Tibet between the 7th and 9th centuries.

"Top-down" or internal causes of happiness

The person's outlook and habitual response tendencies that influence their happiness—for example, their temperament or optimistic outlook on life.

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8. Nature and Nurture

CHRIS ALLEN

This is an edited and adapted chapter originally written by Eric Turkheimer PhD for the NOBA series in psychology. For full attribution please see the end of this chapter.

People have a deep intuition about what has been called the "nature–nurture question." Some aspects of our behavior feel as though they originate in our genetic makeup, while others feel like the result of our upbringing or our own hard work. The scientific field of behavior genetics attempts to study these differences empirically, either by examining similarities among family members with different degrees of genetic relatedness, or, more recently, by studying differences in the DNA of people with different behavioral traits. The scientific methods that have been developed are ingenious, but often inconclusive. Many of the difficulties encountered in the empirical science of behavior genetics turn out to be conceptual, and our intuitions about nature and nurture get more complicated the harder we think about them. In the end, it is an oversimplification to ask how "genetic" some particular behavior is. Genes and environments always combine to produce behavior, and the real science is in the discovery of how they combine for a given behavior.

Learning Objectives

- Understand what the nature–nurture debate is and why the problem fascinates us.
- Understand why nature–nurture questions are difficult to study empirically.
- Know the major research designs that can be used to study nature–nurture questions.
- Appreciate the complexities of nature–nurture and why

questions that seem simple turn out not to have simple answers.

Introduction

There are three related problems at the intersection of philosophy and science that are fundamental to our understanding of our relationship to the natural world: the mind–body problem, the free will problem, and the nature–nurture problem. These great questions have a lot in common. Everyone, even those without much knowledge of science or philosophy, has opinions about the answers to these questions that come simply from observing the world we live in. Our feelings about our relationship with the physical and biological world often seem incomplete. We are in control of our actions in some ways, but at the mercy of our bodies in others; it feels obvious that our consciousness is some kind of creation of our physical brains, at the same time we sense that our awareness must go beyond just the physical. This incomplete knowledge of our relationship with nature leaves us fascinated and a little obsessed, like a cat that climbs into a paper bag and then out again, over and over, mystified every time by a relationship between inner and outer that it can see but can't quite understand.

It may seem obvious that we are born with certain characteristics while others are acquired, and yet of the three great questions about humans' relationship with the natural world, only nature–nurture gets referred to as a "debate." In the history of psychology, no other question has caused so much controversy and offense: We are so concerned with nature–nurture because our very sense of moral character seems to depend on it. While we may admire the athletic skills of a great basketball player, we think of his height as simply a gift, a payoff in the "genetic lottery." For the same reason, no one blames a short person for his height or someone's congenital disability on poor decisions: To state the obvious, it's "not their

fault." But we do praise the concert violinist (and perhaps her parents and teachers as well) for her dedication, just as we condemn cheaters, slackers, and bullies for their bad behavior.

The problem is, most human characteristics aren't usually as clear-cut as height or instrument-mastery, affirming our nature–nurture expectations strongly one way or the other. In fact, even the great violinist might have some inborn qualities—perfect pitch, or long, nimble fingers—that support and reward her hard work. And the basketball player might have eaten a diet while growing up that promoted his genetic tendency for being tall. When we think about our own qualities, they seem under our control in some respects, yet beyond our control in others. And often the traits that don't seem to have an obvious cause are the ones that concern us the most and are far more personally significant. What about how much we drink or worry? What about our honesty, or religiosity, or sexual orientation? They all come from that uncertain zone, neither fixed by nature nor totally under our own control.

Researchers have learned a great deal about the nature-nurture dynamic by working with animals. But of course many of the techniques used to study animals cannot be applied to people. Separating these two influences in human subjects is a greater research challenge. [Image: Sebastián Dario, https://goo.gl/OPiIWd, CC BY-NC 2.0, https://goo.gl/FIlc2e]

One major problem with answering nature-nurture questions about people is, how do you set up an experiment? In nonhuman animals, there are relatively straightforward experiments for tackling nature–nurture questions. Say, for example, you are interested in aggressiveness in dogs. You want to test for the more important determinant of aggression: being born to aggressive dogs or being raised by them. You could mate two aggressive dogs—angry Chihuahuas—together, and mate two nonaggressive dogs—happy

beagles—together, then switch half the puppies from each litter between the different sets of parents to raise. You would then have puppies born to aggressive parents (the Chihuahuas) but being raised by nonaggressive parents (the Beagles), and vice versa, in litters that mirror each other in puppy distribution. The big questions are: Would the Chihuahua parents raise aggressive beagle puppies? Would the beagle parents raise *non*aggressive Chihuahua puppies? Would the puppies' *nature* win out, regardless of who raised them? Or… would the result be a combination of nature *and* nurture? Much of the most significant nature–nurture research has been done in this way (Scott & Fuller, 1998), and animal breeders have been doing it successfully for thousands of years. In fact, it is fairly easy to breed animals for behavioral traits.

With people, however, we can't assign babies to parents at random, or select parents with certain behavioral characteristics to mate, merely in the interest of science (though history does include horrific examples of such practices, in misguided attempts at **"eugenics,"** the shaping of human characteristics through intentional breeding). In typical human families, children's biological parents raise them, so it is very difficult to know whether children act like their parents due to genetic (nature) or environmental (nurture) reasons. Nevertheless, despite our restrictions on setting up human-based experiments, we do see real-world examples of nature-nurture at work in the human sphere—though they only provide partial answers to our many questions.

The science of how genes and environments work together to influence behavior is called **behavioral genetics**. The easiest opportunity we have to observe this is the **adoption study**. When children are put up for adoption, the parents who give birth to them are no longer the parents who raise them. This setup isn't quite the same as the experiments with dogs (children aren't assigned to random adoptive parents in order to suit the particular interests of a scientist) but adoption still tells us some interesting things, or at least confirms some basic expectations. For instance, if the biological child of tall parents were adopted into a family of short

people, do you suppose the child's growth would be affected? What about the biological child of a Spanish-speaking family adopted at birth into an English-speaking family? What language would you expect the child to speak? And what might these outcomes tell you about the difference between height and language in terms of nature-nurture?

Studies focused on twins have led to important insights about the biological origins of many personality characteristics.

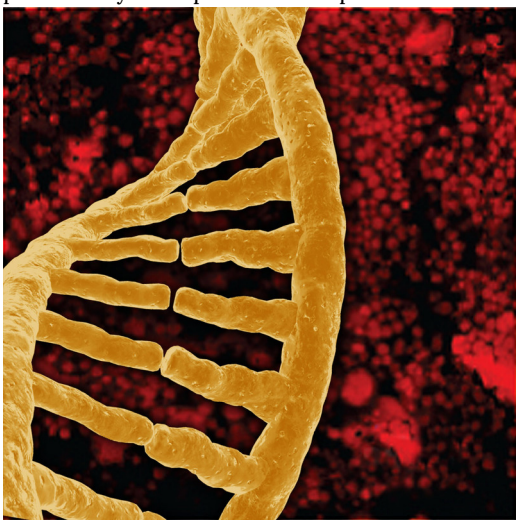
Another option for observing nature-nurture in humans involves **twin studies**. There are two types of twins: monozygotic

(MZ) and dizygotic (DZ). Monozygotic twins, also called "identical" twins, result from a single zygote (fertilized egg) and have the same DNA. They are essentially clones. Dizygotic twins, also known as "fraternal" twins, develop from two zygotes and share 50% of their DNA. Fraternal twins are ordinary siblings who happen to have been born at the same time. To analyze nature–nurture using twins, we compare the similarity of MZ and DZ pairs. Sticking with the features of height and spoken language, let's take a look at how nature and nurture apply: Identical twins, unsurprisingly, are almost perfectly similar for height. The heights of fraternal twins, however, are like any other sibling pairs: more similar to each other than to people from other families, but hardly identical. This contrast between twin types gives us a clue about the role genetics plays in determining height. Now consider spoken language. If one identical twin speaks Spanish at home, the co-twin with whom she is raised almost certainly does too. But the same would be true for a pair of fraternal twins raised together. In terms of spoken language, fraternal twins are just as similar as identical twins, so it appears that the genetic match of identical twins doesn't make much difference.

Twin and adoption studies are two instances of a much broader class of methods for observing nature-nurture called quantitative genetics, the scientific discipline in which similarities among individuals are analyzed based on how biologically related they are. We can do these studies with siblings and half-siblings, cousins, twins who have been separated at birth and raised separately (Bouchard, Lykken, McGue, & Segal, 1990; such twins are very rare and play a smaller role than is commonly believed in the science of nature–nurture), or with entire extended families (see Plomin, DeFries, Knopik, & Neiderhiser, 2012, for a complete introduction to research methods relevant to nature–nurture).

For better or for worse, contentions about nature–nurture have intensified because quantitative genetics produces a number called a **heritability coefficient**, varying from 0 to 1, that is meant to provide a single measure of genetics' influence of a trait. In a general

way, a heritability coefficient measures how strongly differences among individuals are related to differences among their genes. But beware: Heritability coefficients, although simple to compute, are deceptively difficult to interpret. Nevertheless, numbers that provide simple answers to complicated questions tend to have a strong influence on the human imagination, and a great deal of time has been spent discussing whether the heritability of intelligence or personality or depression is equal to one number or another.



Quantitative genetics uses statistical methods to study the effects that both heredity and environment have on test subjects. These methods have provided us with the heritability coefficient which measures how strongly differences among individuals for a trait are related to differences among their genes. [Image: EMSL, https://goo.gl/IRfn9g, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, https://goo.gl/fbv27n]

One reason nature–nurture continues to fascinate us so much is that we live in an era of great scientific discovery in genetics, comparable to the times of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, with regard to astronomy and physics. Every day, it seems, new discoveries are made, new possibilities proposed. When Francis Galton first started thinking about nature–nurture in the late-19th

century he was very influenced by his cousin, Charles Darwin, but genetics *per se* was unknown. Mendel's famous work with peas, conducted at about the same time, went undiscovered for 20 years; quantitative genetics was developed in the 1920s; DNA was discovered by Watson and Crick in the 1950s; the human genome was completely sequenced at the turn of the 21st century; and we are now on the verge of being able to obtain the specific DNA sequence of anyone at a relatively low cost. No one knows what this new genetic knowledge will mean for the study of nature–nurture, but as we will see in the next section, answers to nature–nurture questions have turned out to be far more difficult and mysterious than anyone imagined.

What Have We Learned About Nature–Nurture?

It would be satisfying to be able to say that nature–nurture studies have given us conclusive and complete evidence about where traits come from, with some traits clearly resulting from genetics and others almost entirely from environmental factors, such as childrearing practices and personal will; but that is not the case. Instead, *everything* has turned out to have some footing in genetics. The more genetically-related people are, the more similar they are—for *everything*: height, weight, intelligence, personality, mental illness, etc. Sure, it seems like common sense that some traits have a genetic bias. For example, adopted children resemble their biological parents even if they have never met them, and identical twins are more similar to each other than are fraternal twins. And while certain psychological traits, such as personality or mental illness (e.g., schizophrenia), seem reasonably influenced by genetics, it turns out that the same is true for political attitudes, how much

television people watch (Plomin, Corley, DeFries, & Fulker, 1990), and whether or not they get divorced (McGue & Lykken, 1992).

Research over the last half century has revealed how central genetics are to behavior. The more genetically related people are the more similar they are not just physically but also in terms of personality and behavior. [Image: Paul Altobelli, https://goo.gl/SWLwm2, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/9uSnqN]

It may seem surprising, but genetic influence on behavior is a relatively recent discovery. In the middle of the 20th century, psychology was dominated by the doctrine of behaviorism, which held that behavior could only be explained in terms of environmental factors. Psychiatry concentrated on psychoanalysis, which probed for roots of behavior in individuals' early life-histories. The truth is, neither behaviorism nor psychoanalysis is incompatible

with genetic influences on behavior, and neither Freud nor Skinner was naive about the importance of organic processes in behavior. Nevertheless, in their day it was widely thought that children's personalities were shaped entirely by imitating their parents' behavior, and that schizophrenia was caused by certain kinds of "pathological mothering." Whatever the outcome of our broader discussion of nature–nurture, the basic fact that the best predictors of an adopted child's personality or mental health are found in the biological parents he or she has never met, rather than in the adoptive parents who raised him or her, presents a significant challenge to purely environmental explanations of personality or psychopathology. The message is clear: You can't leave genes out of the equation. But keep in mind, no behavioral traits are completely inherited, so you can't leave the environment out altogether, either.

Trying to untangle the various ways nature-nurture influences human behavior can be messy, and often common-sense notions can get in the way of good science. One very significant contribution of behavioral genetics that has changed psychology for good can be very helpful to keep in mind: When your subjects are biologically-related, no matter how clearly a situation may seem to point to environmental influence, it is never safe to interpret a behavior as wholly the result of nurture without further evidence. For example, when presented with data showing that children whose mothers read to them often are likely to have better reading scores in third grade, it is tempting to conclude that reading to your kids out loud is important to success in school; this may well be true, but the study as described is inconclusive, because there are genetic *as well as* environmental pathways between the parenting practices of mothers and the abilities of their children. This is a case where "correlation does not imply causation," as they say. To establish that reading aloud causes success, a scientist can either study the problem in adoptive families (in which the genetic pathway is absent) or by finding a way to randomly assign children to oral reading conditions.

The outcomes of nature–nurture studies have fallen short of our

expectations (of establishing clear-cut bases for traits) in many ways. The most disappointing outcome has been the inability to organize traits from *more*– to *less*-genetic. As noted earlier, everything has turned out to be at least *somewhat* heritable (passed down), yet nothing has turned out to be *absolutely* heritable, and there hasn't been much consistency as to which traits are *more* heritable and which are *less* heritable once other considerations (such as how accurately the trait can be measured) are taken into account (Turkheimer, 2000). The problem is conceptual: The heritability coefficient, and, in fact, the whole quantitative structure that underlies it, does not match up with our nature–nurture intuitions. We want to know how "important" the roles of genes and environment are to the development of a trait, but in focusing on "important" maybe we're emphasizing the wrong thing. First of all, genes and environment are both crucial to *every* trait; without genes the environment would have nothing to work on, and too, genes cannot develop in a vacuum. Even more important, because nature–nurture questions look at the differences among people, the cause of a given trait depends not only on the trait itself, but also on the differences in that trait between members of the group being studied.

The classic example of the heritability coefficient defying intuition is the trait of having two arms. No one would argue against the development of arms being a biological, genetic process. But fraternal twins are just as similar for "two-armedness" as identical twins, resulting in a heritability coefficient of zero for the trait of having two arms. Normally, according to the heritability model, this result (coefficient of zero) would suggest all nurture, no nature, but we know that's not the case. The reason this result is not a tip-off that arm development is less genetic than we imagine is because people *do not vary* in the genes related to arm development—which essentially upends the heritability formula. In fact, in this instance, the opposite is likely true: the extent that people differ in arm number is likely the result of accidents and, therefore, environmental. For reasons like these, we always have to be very

careful when asking nature–nurture questions, especially when we try to express the answer in terms of a single number. The heritability of a trait is not simply a property of that trait, but a property of the trait in a particular context of relevant genes and environmental factors.

Another issue with the heritability coefficient is that it divides traits' determinants into two portions—genes and environment—which are then calculated together for the total variability. This is a little like asking how much of the experience of a symphony comes from the horns and how much from the strings; the ways instruments or genes integrate is more complex than that. It turns out to be the case that, for many traits, genetic differences affect behavior under some environmental circumstances but not others—a phenomenon called **gene-environment interaction**, or G x E. In one well-known example, Caspi et al. (2002) showed that among maltreated children, those who carried a particular allele of the MAOA gene showed a predisposition to violence and antisocial behavior, while those with other alleles did not. Whereas, in children who had not been maltreated, the gene had no effect. Making matters even more complicated are very recent studies of what is known as epigenetics, a process in which the DNA itself is modified by environmental events, and those genetic changes transmitted to children.

The answer to the nature –nurture question has not turned out to be as straightforward as we would like. The many questions we can ask about the relationships among genes, environments, and human traits may have many different answers, and the answer to one tells us little about the answers to the others. [Image: Sundaram Ramaswamy, https://goo.gl/Bv8lp6, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/9uSnqN]**Epigenetics** is the study of changes in organisms caused by modification of gene expression rather than alteration of the genetic code itself. Epigenetics has the potential to provide answers to these important questions and refers to the transmission of **phenotype** in terms of gene expression in the absence of changes in DNA sequence—hence the name epi- (Greek: επί- over, above) genetics (Waddington, 1942; Wolffe & Matzke, 1999). The **genotype–phenotype distinction** is drawn in genetics. "**Genotype**" is an organism's full hereditary information. … The

genes contribute to a trait, and the **phenotype** is the observable expression of the genes (and therefore the **genotype** that affects the trait). Genotype studies have provided insights into epigenetic regulation of developmental pathways in response to a range of external environmental factors (Dolinoy, Weidman, & Jirtle, 2007). These environmental factors during early childhood and adolescence can cause changes in expression of genes conferring risk of mental health and chronic physical conditions. Thus, the examination of genetic–epigenetic–environment interactions from a developmental perspective may determine the nature of gene misregulation in psychological disorders. **Identical twins** develop from a single fertilized egg, they **have the same** genome. However recent studies **have** shown that many environmentally induced differences are reflected in the epigenome for identical twins. The ***epigenome*** refers to the genomic pattern and information made up of chemical compounds and proteins that can attach to DNA and direct such actions as turning genes on or off, controlling the production of proteins in particular cells and changing the expression of a gene. These changes in the epigenome may be passed down through heritance, or may be changed by environmental experiences.The video above explains basics of epigenetics, and shares the story of two "clones" or persons that were born identical, but had very different life circumstances. One person was stressed and ate poorly, the other had an easier life and ate healthy ways. If you and your clone person were examined at age 50, you would look quite different. The one who had eaten poorly would probably look more tired. If scientists looked at your DNA however, your DNA would be still the same, or your genomes would be the same. However you would have different epigenomes – meaning that some markers on your genes would look differently. If you think of DNA and genes as a paragraph, then epigenomes could be the punctuation of the paragraph. As you know, punctuation changes the meaning and expression of a paragraph. The epigenome is the "marching orders" for what the gene is supposed to do, and can be affected by environmental experiences.

What we do, what we eat, what we smoke, who we hang out with, all of these affect our epigenomes or the expression of our genes.One of the most educational findings (and historically tragic events) on the impact of adverse environmental conditions (phenotype experiences) and physical health (genotype experiences) comes from studies of the children of women who were pregnant during two civilian famines of World War II: the Siege of Leningrad (1941–44) (Bateson, 2001) and the Dutch Hunger Winter (1944–1945) (Stanner et al., 1997). In the Netherlands famine, women who were previously well nourished were subjected to low caloric intake and associated environmental stressors. Women who endured the famine in the late stages of pregnancy gave birth to smaller babies (Lumey & Stein, 1997) and these children had an increased risk of insulin resistance later in life (Painter, Roseboom, & Bleker, 2005). In addition, offspring who were starved prenatally later experienced impaired glucose tolerance in adulthood, even when food was more abundant (Stanner et al., 1997). Famine exposure at various stages of gestation was associated with a wide range of risks such as increased obesity, higher rates of coronary heart disease, and lower birth weight (Lumey & Stein, 1997). Interestingly, when examined 60 years later, people exposed to famine prenatally showed reduced DNA methylation compared with their unexposed same-sex siblings (Heijmans et al., 2008).

Parental investment and programming of stress responses in the offspring

The most comprehensive study to date of variations in parental investment and epigenetic inheritance in mammals is that of the maternally transmitted responses to stress in rats. In rat pups, maternal nurturing (licking and grooming) during the first week of life is associated with long-term programming of individual differences in stress responsiveness, emotionality, cognitive performance, and reproductive behavior (Caldji et al., 1998; Francis, Diorio, Liu, & Meaney, 1999; Liu et al., 1997; Myers, Brunelli, Shair, Squire, & Hofer, 1989; Stern, 1997). In adulthood, the offspring of mothers that exhibit increased levels of pup licking and grooming over the first

week of life show increased expression of the glucocorticoid receptor in the hippocampus (a brain structure associated with stress responsivity as well as learning and memory) and a lower hormonal response to stress compared with adult animals reared by low licking and grooming mothers (Francis et al., 1999; Liu et al., 1997). Moreover, rat pups that received low levels of maternal licking and grooming during the first week of life showed decreased histone acetylation and increased DNA methylation of a neuron-specific promoter of the glucocorticoid receptor gene (Weaver et al., 2004). The expression of this gene is then reduced, the number of glucocorticoid receptors in the brain is decreased, and the animals show a higher hormonal response to stress throughout their life. The effects of maternal care on stress hormone responses and behaviour in the offspring can be eliminated in adulthood by pharmacological treatment (HDAC inhibitor trichostatin A, TSA) or dietary amino acid supplementation (methyl donor L-methionine), treatments that influence histone acetylation, DNA methylation, and expression of the glucocorticoid receptor gene (Weaver et al., 2004; Weaver et al., 2005). This series of experiments shows that histone acetylation and DNA methylation of the glucocorticoid receptor gene promoter is a necessary link in the process leading to the long-term physiological and behavioral sequelae of poor maternal care. This points to a possible molecular target for treatments that may reverse or ameliorate the traces of childhood maltreatment.

Several studies have attempted to determine to what extent the findings from model animals are transferable to humans. Examination of post-mortem brain tissue from healthy human subjects found that the human equivalent of the glucocorticoid receptor gene promoter (NR3C1 exon 1F promoter) is also unique to the individual (Turner, Pelascini, Macedo, & Muller, 2008). A similar study examining newborns showed that methylation of the glucocorticoid receptor gene promoter maybe an early epigenetic marker of maternal mood and risk of increased hormonal responses

to stress in infants 3 months of age (Oberlander et al., 2008). Although further studies are required to examine the functional consequence of this DNA methylation, these findings are consistent with our studies in the neonate and adult offspring of low licking and grooming mothers that show increased DNA methylation of the promoter of the glucocorticoid receptor gene, decreased glucocorticoid receptor gene expression, and increased hormonal responses to stress (Weaver et al., 2004). Examination of brain tissue from suicide victims found that the human glucocorticoid receptor gene promoter is also more methylated in the brains of individuals who had experienced maltreatment during childhood (McGowan et al., 2009). These finding suggests that DNA methylation mediates the effects of early environment in both rodents and humans and points to the possibility of new therapeutic approaches stemming from translational epigenetic research. Indeed, similar processes at comparable epigenetic labile regions could explain why the adult offspring of high and low licking/grooming mothers exhibit widespread differences in hippocampal gene expression and cognitive function (Weaver, Meaney, & Szyf, 2006).

However, this type of research is limited by the inaccessibility of human brain samples. The translational potential of this finding would be greatly enhanced if the relevant epigenetic modification can be measured in an accessible tissue. Examination of blood samples from adult patients with bipolar disorder, who also retrospectively reported on their experiences of childhood abuse and neglect, found that the degree of DNA methylation of the human glucocorticoid receptor gene promoter was strongly positively related to the reported experience of childhood maltreatment decades earlier. For a relationship between a molecular measure and reported historical exposure, the effects size is extraordinarily large. This opens a range of new possibilities: given the large effect size and consistency of this association, measurement of the GR promoter methylation may effectively become a blood test measuring the physiological traces left on the genome by early experiences. Although this blood test cannot

replace current methods of diagnosis, this unique and addition information adds to our knowledge of how disease may arise and be manifested throughout life. Near-future research will examine whether this measure adds value over and above simple reporting of early adversities when it comes to predicting important outcomes, such as response to treatment or suicide.

Epigenetic strategy to understanding gene-environment interactions

Although there is some evidence that a dysfunctional upbringing can increase one's likelihood for schizophrenia (an epigenetically inherited disease), some people who have both the predisposition and the stressful environment never develop the mental illness. [Image: Steve White, CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]
While the cellular and molecular mechanisms that influence on physical and mental health have long been a central focus of neuroscience, only in recent years has attention turned to the epigenetic mechanisms behind the dynamic changes in gene expression responsible for normal cognitive function and increased risk for mental illness. The links between early environment and epigenetic modifications suggest a mechanism underlying gene-environment interactions. Early environmental adversity alone is not a sufficient cause of mental illness, because many individuals with a history of severe childhood maltreatment or trauma remain healthy. It is increasingly becoming evident that inherited differences in the segments of specific genes may moderate the effects of adversity and determine who is sensitive and who is resilient through a gene-environment interplay. Genes such as the glucocorticoid receptor appear to moderate the effects of childhood adversity on mental illness. Remarkably, epigenetic DNA modifications have been identified that may underlie the long-lasting effects of environment on biological functions. This new epigenetic research is pointing to a new strategy to understanding gene-environment interactions.

Some common questions about nature–nurture are, how susceptible is a trait to change, how malleable is it, and do we "have a choice" about it? These questions are much more complex than they may seem at first glance. For example, phenylketonuria is an inborn error of metabolism caused by a single gene; it prevents the body from metabolizing phenylalanine. Untreated, it causes mental retardation and death. But it can be treated effectively by a

straightforward environmental intervention: avoiding foods containing phenylalanine. Height seems like a trait firmly rooted in our nature and unchangeable, but the average height of many populations in Asia and Europe has increased significantly in the past 100 years, due to changes in diet and the alleviation of poverty. Even the most modern genetics has not provided definitive answers to nature–nurture questions. When it was first becoming possible to measure the DNA sequences of individual people, it was widely thought that we would quickly progress to finding the specific genes that account for behavioral characteristics, but that hasn't happened. There are a few rare genes that have been found to have significant (almost always negative) effects, such as the single gene that causes Huntington's disease, or the Apolipoprotein gene that causes early onset dementia in a small percentage of Alzheimer's cases. Aside from these rare genes of great effect, however, the genetic impact on behavior is broken up over many genes, each with very small effects. For most behavioral traits, the effects are so small and distributed across so many genes that we have not been able to catalog them in a meaningful way. In fact, the same is true of environmental effects. We know that extreme environmental hardship causes catastrophic effects for many behavioral outcomes, but fortunately extreme environmental hardship is very rare. Within the normal range of environmental events, those responsible for differences (e.g., why some children in a suburban third-grade classroom perform better than others) are much more difficult to grasp.

The difficulties with finding clear-cut solutions to nature–nurture problems bring us back to the other great questions about our relationship with the natural world: the mind-body problem and free will. Investigations into what we mean when we say we are aware of something reveal that consciousness is not simply the product of a particular area of the brain, nor does choice turn out to be an orderly activity that we can apply to some behaviors but not others. So it is with nature and nurture: What at first may seem to be a straightforward matter, able to be indexed

with a single number, becomes more and more complicated the closer we look. The many questions we can ask about the intersection among genes, environments, and human traits—how sensitive are traits to environmental change, and how common are those influential environments; are parents or culture more relevant; how sensitive are traits to differences in genes, and how much do the relevant genes vary in a particular population; does the trait involve a single gene or a great many genes; is the trait more easily described in genetic or more-complex behavioral terms?—may have different answers, and the answer to one tells us little about the answers to the others.

It is tempting to predict that the more we understand the wide-ranging effects of genetic differences on all human characteristics—especially behavioral ones—our cultural, ethical, legal, and personal ways of thinking about ourselves will have to undergo profound changes in response. Perhaps criminal proceedings will consider genetic background. Parents, presented with the genetic sequence of their children, will be faced with difficult decisions about reproduction. These hopes or fears are often exaggerated. In some ways, our thinking may need to change—for example, when we consider the meaning behind the fundamental American principle that all men are created equal. Human beings differ, and like all evolved organisms they differ genetically. The Declaration of Independence predates Darwin and Mendel, but it is hard to imagine that Jefferson—whose genius encompassed botany as well as moral philosophy—would have been alarmed to learn about the genetic diversity of organisms. One of the most important things modern genetics has taught us is that almost all human behavior is too complex to be nailed down, even from the most complete genetic information, unless we're looking at identical twins. The science of nature and nurture has demonstrated that genetic differences among people are vital to human moral equality, freedom, and self-determination, not opposed to them. As Mordecai Kaplan said about the role of the past in Jewish theology, genetics gets a vote, not a veto, in the

determination of human behavior. We should indulge our fascination with nature–nurture while resisting the temptation to oversimplify it.

Vocabulary

Adoption study

A behavior genetic research method that involves comparison of adopted children to their adoptive and biological parents.

Behavioral genetics

The empirical science of how genes and environments combine to generate behavior

Epigenetics is the study of changes in organisms caused by modification of gene expression rather than alteration of the genetic code itself. Epigenetics looks at all events that occur in the absence of changes in DNA sequence. Epigenetics is looking at changes of the gene expression, rather than changes in the DNA code itself.

Epigenome: epigenome refers to the genetic patterns and information made up of chemical compounds and proteins that can attach to DNA, and direct such actions as turning genes on or off, controlling the production of proteins in particular cells and changing the expression of a gene. These changes in the epigenome may be passed down through heritance, or may be changed by environmental experiences.

Heritability coefficient

An easily misinterpreted statistical construct that purports to measure the role of genetics in the explanation of differences among individuals.

Genotype: is an organism's full hereditary information. … The genes

that contribute to a trait". Genotype is an organism's full hereditary information.

Phenotype: is an organism's actual observed properties, such as morphology, development, or behavior.

Twin studies

A behavior genetic research method that involves comparison of the similarity of identical (monozygotic; MZ) and fraternal (dizygotic; DZ) twins.

Quiz

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: https://pdx.pressbooks.pub/humanrelations/?p=44#h5p-5

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9. Self-Regulation and Conscientiousness

This is an edited and adapted chapter by Baumeister, R. F. (2019). Full attribution information can be found at the end of the chapter.

Self-regulation means changing oneself based on standards, that is, ideas of how one should or should not be. It is a centrally important capacity that contributes to socially desirable behavior, including moral behavior. Effective self-regulation requires knowledge of standards for proper behavior, careful monitoring of one's actions and feelings, and the ability to make desired changes.
Learning Objectives

- Understand what self-regulation means and how it works.
- Understand the requirements and benefits of effective self-regulation.
- Understand differences in state (ego depletion) and trait (conscientiousness).

Introduction

Self-regulation is the capacity to alter one's responses. It is broadly related to the term "self-control". The term "regulate" means to change something—but not just any change, rather change to bring it into agreement with some idea, such as a rule, a goal, a plan, or a moral principle. To illustrate, when the government regulates how houses are built, that means the government inspects the buildings to check that everything is done "up to code" or according to the rules about good building. In a similar fashion, when you regulate

yourself, you watch and change yourself to bring your responses into line with some ideas about how they should be.

When you find that quiet spot in the library and keep yourself focused on your study tasks for a few hours you're demonstrating self-regulation. Certainly you're controlling your thinking, but you may also be controlling your impulses to do other things. [Image: Clemson University Library, https://goo.gl/RtZrqu, CC BY-NC 2.0, https://goo.gl/VnKlK8]

People regulate four broad categories of responses. They control their thinking, such as in trying to concentrate or to shut some annoying earworm tune out of their mind. They control their emotions, as in trying to cheer themselves up or to calm down when angry (or to stay angry, if that's helpful). They control their impulses, as in trying not to eat fattening food, trying to hold one's

tongue, or trying to quit smoking. Last, they try to control their task performances, such as in pushing themselves to keep working when tired and discouraged, or deciding whether to speed up (to get more done) or slow down (to make sure to get it right).

Early Work on Delay of Gratification

Delayed gratification, or deferred **gratification**, describes the process that the subject undergoes when the subject resists the temptation of an immediate reward in preference for a later reward. Research on self-regulation was greatly stimulated by early experiments conducted by Walter Mischel and his colleagues (e.g., Mischel, 1974) on the capacity to delay gratification, which means being able to refuse current temptations and pleasures to work toward future benefits. In a typical study with what later came to be called the "marshmallow test," a 4-year-old child would be seated in a room, and a favorite treat such as a cookie or marshmallow was placed on the table. The experimenter would tell the child, "I have to leave for a few minutes and then I'll be back. You can have this treat any time, but if you can wait until I come back, you can have two of them." Two treats are better than one, but to get the double treat, the child had to wait. Self-regulation was required to resist that urge to gobble down the marshmallow on the table so as to reap the larger reward.

Many situations in life demand similar delays for best results. Going to college to get an education often means living in poverty and debt rather than getting a job to earn money right away. But in the long run, the college degree increases your lifetime income by hundreds of thousands of dollars. Very few nonhuman animals can bring themselves to resist immediate temptations so as to pursue future rewards, but this trait is an important key to success in human life.

Benefits of Self-Control

If you have never seen a 4-year-old try to resist eating a marshmallow, you may not realize how difficult (and funny) a task like this is. See the "Outside Resources" of this module for a great video demonstration. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]

People who are good at self-regulation do better than others in life. Follow-up studies with Mischel's samples found that the children who resisted temptation and delayed gratification effectively grew into adults who were better than others in school and work, more popular with other people, and who were rated as nicer, better people by teachers and others (Mischel, Shoda, & Peake, 1988; Shoda, Mischel, & Peake, 1990). College students with high

self-control get better grades, have better close relationships, manage their emotions better, have fewer problems with drugs and alcohol, are less prone to eating disorders, are better adjusted, have higher self-esteem, and get along better with other people, as compared to people with low self-control (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). They are happier and have less stress and conflict (Hofmann, Vohs, Fisher, Luhmann, & Baumeister, 2013). Longitudinal studies have found that children with good self-control go through life with fewer problems, are more successful, are less likely to be arrested or have a child out of wedlock, and enjoy other benefits (Moffitt et al., 2011). Criminologists have concluded that low self-control is a—if not the—key trait for understanding the criminal personality (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Pratt & Cullen, 2000).

Some researchers have searched for evidence that too much self-control can be bad (Tangney et al., 2004)—but without success. There is such a thing as being highly inhibited or clinically "over-controlled," which can impair initiative and reduce happiness, but that does not appear to be an excess of self-regulation. Rather, it may stem from having been punished excessively as a child and, therefore, adopting a fearful, inhibited approach to life. In general, self-control resembles intelligence in that the more one has, the better off one is, and the benefits are found through a broad range of life activities.

Four Ingredients of Effective Self-Regulation

For self-regulation to be effective, four parts or ingredients are involved. The first is **standards**, which are ideas about how things should (or should not) be. The second is **monitoring**, which means keeping track of the target behavior that is to be regulated. The third is the **capacity to change,** and the fourth is **motivation.**

Standards are an indispensable foundation for self-regulation. We already saw that self-regulation means change in relation to some idea; without such guiding ideas, change would largely be random and lacking direction. Standards include goals, laws, moral principles, personal rules, other people's expectations, and social norms. Dieters, for example, typically have a goal in terms of how much weight they wish to lose. They help their self-regulation further by developing standards for how much or how little to eat and what kinds of foods they will eat.

With some self-regulation goals (like increasing your distance in preparation for a 10K race), it is easier to monitor your actual progress. With other goals, however, if there isn't a helpful standard to compare oneself to it may be harder to know if you are progressing. [Image: CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]

The second ingredient is monitoring. It is hard to regulate something without being aware of it. For example, dieters count their calories. That is, they keep track of how much they eat and how fattening it is. In fact, some evidence suggests that dieters stop keeping track of how much they eat when they break their diet or go on an eating binge, and the failure of monitoring contributes to eating more (Polivy, 1976). Alcohol has been found to impair all sorts of self-regulation, partly because intoxicated persons fail to keep track of their behavior and compare it to their standards.

The combination of standards and monitoring was featured in an influential theory about self-regulation by Carver and Scheier (1981, 1982, 1998). Those researchers started their careers studying self-awareness, which is a key human trait. The study of self-awareness recognized early on that people do not simply notice themselves the way they might notice a tree or car. Rather, self-awareness always seemed to involve comparing oneself to a standard. For example, when a man looks in a mirror, he does not just think, "Oh, there I am," but more likely thinks, "Is my hair a mess? Do my clothes look good?" Carver and Scheier proposed that the reason for this comparison to standards is that it enables people to regulate themselves, such as by changing things that do not measure up to their standards. In the mirror example, the man might comb his hair to bring it into line with his standards for personal appearance. Good students keep track of their grades, credits, and progress toward their degree and other goals. Athletes keep track of their times, scores, and achievements, as a way to monitor improvement.

The process of monitoring oneself can be compared to how a thermostat operates. The thermostat checks the temperature in the room, compares it to a standard (the setting for desired temperature), and if those do not match, it turns on the heat or air conditioner to change the temperature. It checks again and again, and when the room temperature matches the desired setting, the thermostat turns off the climate control. In the same way, people compare themselves to their personal standards, make changes as

needed, and stop working on change once they have met their goals. People feel good not just when they reach their goals but even when they deem they are making good progress (Carver & Scheier, 1990). They feel bad when they are not making sufficient progress.

That brings up the third ingredient, which is the capacity to change oneself. In effective self-regulation, people operate on themselves to bring about these changes. The popular term for this is "willpower," which suggests some kind of energy is expended in the process. Psychologists hesitate to adopt terms associated with folk wisdom, because there are many potential implications. Here, the term is used to refer specifically to some energy that is involved in the capacity to change oneself.

The fourth ingredient is motivation – specifically, motivation to achieve the goal or meet the standard, which in practice amounts to *motivation to regulate the self*. Even if the standards are clear, monitoring is fully effective, and the person's resources are abundant, he or she may still fail to self-regulate due to not caring about reaching the goal. Thus, the proper way to understand the role of motivation in self regulation is as one of four ingredients

Consistent with the popular notion of willpower, people do seem to expend some energy during self-regulation. Many studies have found that after people exert self-regulation to change some response, they perform worse on the next unrelated task if it too requires self-regulation (Hagger, Wood, Stiff, & Chatzisarantis, 2010). That pattern suggests that some energy such as willpower was used up during the first task, leaving less available for the second task. The term for this state of reduced energy available for self-regulation is **ego depletion** (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice, 1998). As people go about their daily lives, they have to resist many desires and impulses and must control themselves in other ways, and so over the course of a typical day many people gradually become ego depleted. The result is that they become increasingly likely to give in to impulses and desires that they would have resisted successfully earlier in the day (Hofmann, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2012). During the state of ego depletion, people become

less helpful and more aggressive, prone to overeat, misbehave sexually, express more prejudice, and in other ways do things that they may later regret.

People can get worn down from exercising self-control. And when they do they're more likely to make the kinds of decisions that are not in their own best interests. [Image: Tim Caynes, https://goo.gl/vaoc3q, CC BY-NC 2.0, https://goo.gl/VnKlK8]

Thus, a person's capacity for self-regulation is not constant, but rather it fluctuates. To be sure, some people are generally better than others at controlling themselves (Tangney et al., 2004). But even someone with excellent self-control may occasionally find that control breaks down under ego depletion. In general, self-regulation can be improved by getting enough sleep and healthy food, and by minimizing other demands on one's willpower.

There is some evidence that regular exercise of self-control can build up one's willpower, like strengthening a muscle (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011; Oaten & Cheng, 2006). Even in early adulthood, one's self-control can be strengthened. Furthermore, research has shown that disadvantaged, minority children who take part in preschool programs such as Head Start (often based on the Perry program) end up doing better in life even as adults. This was thought for a while to be due to increases in intelligence quotient (IQ), but changes in IQ from such programs are at best temporary. Instead, recent work indicates that improvement in self-control and related traits may be what produce the benefits (Heckman, Pinto, & Savelyev, in press). It's not doing math problems or learning to spell at age 3 that increases subsequent adult success—but rather the benefit comes from having some early practice at planning, getting organized, and following rules.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is a stable dimension of personality, which means that some people are typically higher on it than others. Being a personality trait does not mean that it is unchangeable. Most people do show some changes over time, particularly becoming higher on conscientiousness as they grow older. Some psychologists look specifically at the trait of self-control, which is understood (and measured) in personality psychology in a very specific, narrowly focused, well-defined sense. Conscientiousness, in contrast, is one of five super-traits that supposedly account for all the other traits, in various combinations. The trait self-control is one big part of conscientiousness, but there are other parts.

Two aspects of conscientiousness that have been well documented are being orderly and being industrious (Roberts, Lejuez, Krueger, Richards, & Hill, 2012). Orderliness includes being clean and neat, making and following plans, and being punctual

(which is helpful with following plans!). Low conscientious means the opposite: being disorganized, messy, late, or erratic. Being industrious not only means working hard but also persevering in the face of failures and difficulties, as well as aspiring to excellence. Most of these reflect good self-control.

Conscientious people are careful, disciplined, responsible, and thorough, and they tend to plan and think things through before acting. People who are low in conscientiousness tend to be more impulsive and spontaneous, even reckless. They are easygoing and may often be late or sloppy, partly because they are not strongly focused on future goals for success and not highly concerned to obey all rules and stay on schedule. Psychologists prefer not to make a value judgment about whether it is better to be high or low in any personality trait. But when it comes specifically to self-control, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that high self-control is better, both for the person and for society at large.

One of the most important characteristics of people high in conscientiousness is orderliness. If someone could take a look at

your desk or your room right now, how conscientious would they judge you to be? [Image: William Iven, CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]

Some aspects of conscientiousness have less apparent connection to self-control, however. People high in conscientiousness tend to be *decisive*. They are often formal, in the sense of following social norms and rules, such as dressing properly, waiting one's turn, or holding doors for others. They tend to respect traditions and traditional values.

Conscientious people behave differently from people who score low on that trait. People scoring low on conscientiousness are more likely than others to report driving without wearing seatbelts, daydreaming, swearing, telling dirty jokes, and picking up hitchhikers (Hirsh, DeYoung, & Peterson, 2009). In terms of more substantial life outcomes, people low on conscientiousness are more likely than others to get divorced, presumably because they make bad choices and misbehave during the marriage such as by saying hurtful things, getting into arguments and fights, and behaving irresponsibly (Roberts, Jackson, Fayard, Edmonds, & Meints, 2009). People low on conscientiousness are more likely than others to lose their jobs, to become homeless, to do time in prison, to have money problems, and to have drug problems.

Conscientious people make better spouses. They are less likely than others to get divorced, partly because they avoid many behaviors that undermine intimacy, such as abusing their partners, drinking excessively, or having extramarital affairs (Roberts et al., 2009).

Encompassing self-control, conscientiousness is the personality trait with the strongest effect on life or death: People high on that trait live longer than others (Deary, Weiss, & Batty, 2010). Why? Among other things, they avoid many behavior patterns associated with early death, including alcohol abuse, obesity and other eating problems, drug abuse, smoking, failure to exercise, risky sex, suicide, violence, and unsafe driving (Bogg & Roberts, in press).

They also visit physicians more regularly and take their prescribed medicines more reliably than people low in conscientiousness. Their good habits help avoid many life-threatening diseases.

Differentiation:

Differentiation as an active process "in which partners define themselves to each other." Another way to think of differentiation in interpersonal terms, is the ability to be oneself while also maintaining an ongoing relationship. To be a "self" yet maintain a relationship requires important self-regulation skills. David Schnarch (Schnarch, 2009) has operationalized differentiation in terms of 4 balancing and self-regulation skills. Schnarch identifies these important points of balance as key learning for maintaining differentiation while in a relationship.

Differentiation is a form of self-regulation in relationships.

What are the Crucible 4 Points of Balance for Differentiation? (taken from: https://crucible4points.com/crucible-four-points-balance) by David Schnarch.

1st Point of Balance: Solid Flexible Self

Many people lack a solid sense of themselves. They have no real identity of their own. To the degree you lack a solid sense of self you depend on a reflected sense of self. You depend on getting a positive reflected sense of self from other people. Many people say they want intimacy, but what they're looking for is:

When you have **solid flexible self:**

- You have an internalized set of core values by which you run your life.
- You have a sense of your own self worth that perseveres through hard time.
- You can maintain your own viewpoints and sense of direction when others pressure you to conform.
- You draw your sense of personal stability, values, and direction from within yourself, which comes from frequently confronting yourself (from the best in yourself) that you could be wrong.
- You don't always have to be right, and you don't crash when you're wrong.

Solid Flexible Self is not a rigid self. Being able to adapt and change when prudent is just as import as staying the course.

2nd Point of Balance: Quiet Mind & Calm Heart

Soothe your own mind and heart

The second basis of emotionally healthy living involves handling your own emotional inner world.
Quiet Mind & Calm Heart means controlling your anxiety so it doesn't run away with you, and includes:

- Handling your feelings and emotions
- Soothing your emotional bruises
- Monitoring your body

Many people have difficulty soothing their own emotions and/or

calming their anxiety. Developing **Quiet Mind & Calm Heart** not only makes your own life better, it lets other people live better too.

3rd Point of Balance: Grounded Responding

Getting emotionally grounded

Grounded responding involves reacting in a balanced way, not too much, not too little. **Over-reacting** to tense or anxiety-filled situations is a common problem. Unbalanced, untimely, or disproportionate responses are one of the most common ways people ruin their lives. Sometimes avoidance or **"Under-reacting"** masquerades as Grounded Responding but it's not. It is commonly excused as procrastination. You're not making grounded responses if you fail to react or take action when necessary.

Grounded Responding involves making modulated responses to people, events, and situations. There's an old saying that completely contradicts common emphasis on expressing feelings and frustrations. It says, "*Marriage is improved by the two or three things not said each day.*" Grounded responding is also quite important in parenting. If your kids need you as a parent to be more relaxed, that is important. If they need you to be more strict and more actively set boundaries, that is also grounded responding.

4th Point of Balance: Meaningful Endurance

Tolerating discomfort for growth

Of all things that determine success in life, perhaps the most important is Meaningful Endurance, the 4th Point of Balance.

Very little gets accomplished in life without Meaningful Endurance. Endurance increases your chances of success in marriage, parenting, families, and careers.

Meaningful Endurance is the basis of mastery. You cannot master a new skill, refine your abilities, develop your talent, learn new things, or expand your personality without Meaningful Endurance. Meaningful Endurance is not blind perseverance, stubbornness, or refusal to face facts. It is not stupid pain-for-no-purpose. It is not simply high pain tolerance, or accepting a lousy relationship.

Meaningful Endurance is about tolerating pain for growth. If there's no growth, it's not *meaningful*.

Video 1: Jennifer discussing 4 points of balance in an effort to stay differentiated and live with her family.

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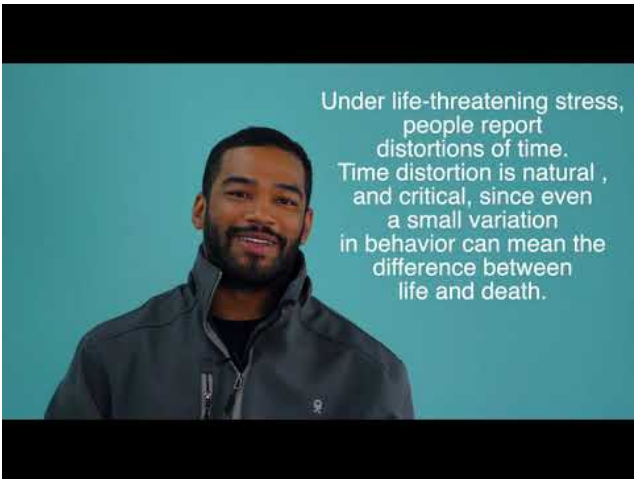
Video 2: Billy on Self-Regulation in extreme situations, and setting small goals.



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Video 3: Baba Shiv: How to Make Better Decisions and Self-Regulation

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Vocabulary

Conscientiousness

A personality trait consisting of self-control, orderliness, industriousness, and traditionalism.**Ego-Depletion:** a state of depleted willpower that can come from hunger, stress, making too many decisions and other sources.

Delayed gratification, or deferred **gratification**, describes the process that the subject undergoes when the subject resists the temptation of an immediate reward in preference for a later reward.
Self-regulation

The process of altering one's responses, including thoughts, feelings, impulses, actions, and task performance.

Four ingredients of self-regulation: (the order is not important) 1) Standards are an indispensable foundation for self-regulation. **Standards** include goals, laws, moral principles, personal rules, other people's expectations, and social norms. **Monitoring** includes tracking whether we are moving closer to our standards and what we need to track in order to move closer to those standards. **Capacity to change oneself is** is used similar to willpower and refers specifically to the capacity or energy that is involved in the capacity to change oneself. Research suggests we do not have unlimited capacity for change. **Motivation** refers to the motivation to achieve the goal or meet the standard, which in practice amounts to the overall *motivation to regulate the self*.

Four Points of Balance for Differentiation. **Solid Flexible Self:** not a Reflected Self, you can say yes, no, and be generous yet have boundaries. **Quiet Mind & Comforted Heart:** ability to quiet your mind and comfort your heart while in conflict or difficulty. . **Grounded Responding:** ability to modulated responses to people, events, and situations. **Meaningful Endurance**
Ability to hang in there and bounce back under difficult situations.

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10. Self and Identity

Self and Identity

For human beings, the self is what happens when "I" encounters "Me." The central psychological question of selfhood, then, is this: How does a person apprehend and understand who he or she is? Over the past 100 years, psychologists have approached the study of self (and the related concept of identity) in many different ways, but three central metaphors for the self repeatedly emerge. First, the self may be seen as a social actor, who enacts roles and displays traits by performing behaviors in the presence of others. Second, the self is a motivated agent, who acts upon inner desires and formulates goals, values, and plans to guide behavior in the future. Third, the self eventually becomes an autobiographical author, too, who takes stock of life — past, present, and future — to create a story about who I am, how I came to be, and where my life may be going. This module briefly reviews central ideas and research findings on the self as an actor, an agent, and an author, with an emphasis on how these features of selfhood develop over the human life course.

Learning Objectives

- Explain the basic idea of reflexivity in human selfhood—how the "I" encounters and makes sense of itself (the "Me").
- Describe fundamental distinctions between three different perspectives on the self: the self as actor, agent, and author.
- Describe how a sense of self as a social actor emerges around the age of 2 years and how it develops going forward.

- Describe the development of the self's sense of motivated agency from the emergence of the child's theory of mind to the articulation of life goals and values in adolescence and beyond.
- Define the term narrative identity, and explain what psychological and cultural functions narrative identity serves.

Introduction

In the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, the ancient Greeks inscribed the words: "Know thy*self*." For at least 2,500 years, and probably longer, human beings have pondered the meaning of the ancient aphorism. Over the past century, psychological scientists have joined the effort. They have formulated many theories and tested countless hypotheses that speak to the central question of human selfhood: *How does a person know who he or she is?*

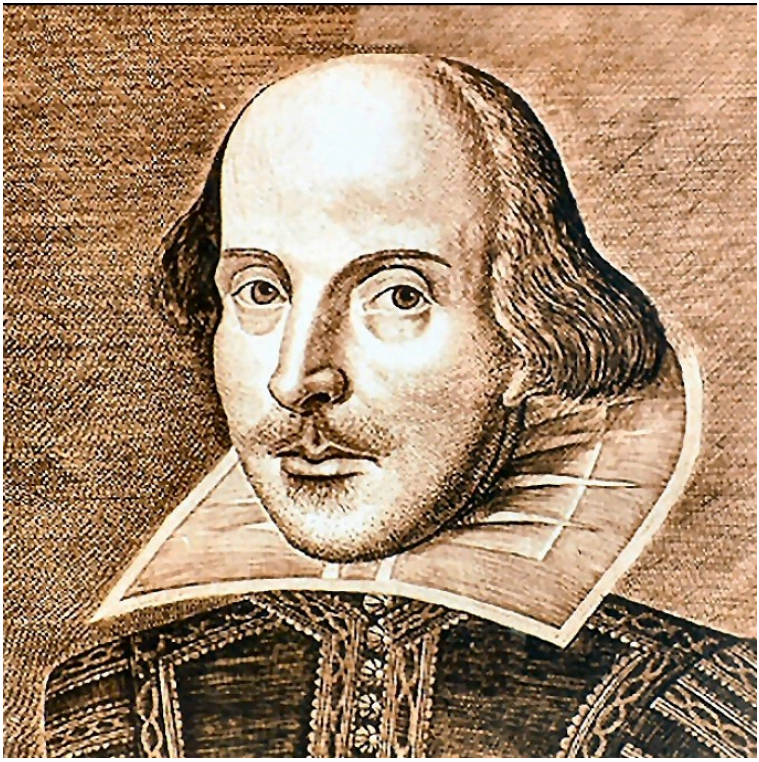
We work on ourselves as we would any other interesting project. And when we do we generally focus on three psychological categories – The Social Actor, The Motivated Agent, and The Autobiographical Author. [Image: MakuKulden, https://goo.gl/sMUsnJ, CC BY-NC 2.0, https://goo.gl/VnKlK8]

The ancient Greeks seemed to realize that the self is inherently **reflexive**—it reflects back on itself. In the disarmingly simple idea made famous by the great psychologist William James (1892/1963), the self is what happens when "I" reflects back upon "Me." The self is both the I and the Me—it is the knower, and it is what the knower knows when the knower reflects upon itself. When you look back at yourself, what do you see? When you look inside, what do you find? Moreover, when you try to *change* your self in some way, what is it that you are trying to change? The philosopher Charles Taylor (1989) describes the self as a reflexive *project*. In modern life, Taylor agues, we often try to manage, discipline, refine, improve, or develop the self. We *work on* our selves, as we might work on any other interesting project. But what exactly is it that we work on?

Imagine for a moment that you have decided to improve your*self*. You might, say, go on a diet to improve your appearance. Or you might decide to be nicer to your mother, in order to improve that important social role. Or maybe the problem is at work—you need to find a better job or go back to school to prepare for a different career. Perhaps you just need to work harder. Or get organized. Or recommit yourself to religion. Or maybe the key is to begin thinking about your whole life story in a completely different way, in a way that you hope will bring you more happiness, fulfillment, peace, or excitement.

Although there are many different ways you might reflect upon and try to improve the self, it turns out that many, if not most, of them fall roughly into three broad psychological categories (McAdams & Cox, 2010). The I may encounter the Me as (a) a social actor, (b) a motivated agent, or (c) an autobiographical author.

The Social Actor



In some ways people are just like actors on stage. We play roles and follow scripts every day. [Image: Brian, https://goo.gl/z0VI3t, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://goo.gl/i4GXf5]

Shakespeare tapped into a deep truth about human nature when he famously wrote, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." He was wrong about the "merely," however, for there is nothing more important for human adaptation than the manner in which we perform our roles as actors in the everyday theatre of social life. What Shakespeare may have sensed but could not have fully understood is that human beings evolved to live in social groups. Beginning with Darwin (1872/1965) and running

through contemporary conceptions of human evolution, scientists have portrayed human nature as profoundly *social* (Wilson, 2012). For a few million years, *Homo sapiens* and their evolutionary forerunners have survived and flourished by virtue of their ability to live and work together in complex social groups, cooperating with each other to solve problems and overcome threats and competing with each other in the face of limited resources. As social animals, human beings strive to *get along* and *get ahead* in the presence of each other (Hogan, 1982). Evolution has prepared us to care deeply about social acceptance and social status, for those unfortunate individuals who do not get along well in social groups or who fail to attain a requisite status among their peers have typically been severely compromised when it comes to survival and reproduction. It makes consummate evolutionary sense, therefore, that the human "I" should apprehend the "Me" first and foremost as a *social actor*.

For human beings, the sense of the self as a social actor begins to emerge around the age of 18 months. Numerous studies have shown that by the time they reach their second birthday most toddlers recognize themselves in mirrors and other reflecting devices (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979; Rochat, 2003). What they see is an embodied actor who moves through space and time. Many children begin to use words such as "me" and "mine" in the second year of life, suggesting that the I now has linguistic labels that can be applied reflexively to itself: I call myself "me." Around the same time, children also begin to express social emotions such as embarrassment, shame, guilt, and pride (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). These emotions tell the social actor how well he or she is performing in the group. When I do things that win the approval of others, I feel proud of myself. When I fail in the presence of others, I may feel embarrassment or shame. When I violate a social rule, I may experience guilt, which may motivate me to make amends.

Many of the classic psychological theories of human selfhood point to the second year of life as a key developmental period. For example, Freud (1923/1961) and his followers in the psychoanalytic

tradition traced the emergence of an autonomous ego back to the second year. Freud used the term **"ego"** (in German *das Ich*, which also translates into "the I") to refer to an executive self in the personality. Erikson (1963) argued that experiences of trust and interpersonal attachment in the first year of life help to consolidate the autonomy of the ego in the second. Coming from a more sociological perspective, Mead (1934) suggested that the I comes to know the Me through reflection, which may begin quite literally with mirrors but later involves the reflected appraisals of others. I come to know who I am as a social actor, Mead argued, by noting how *other people* in my social world react to my performances. In the development of the self as a social actor, other people function like mirrors—they reflect who I am back to me.

Research has shown that when young children begin to make attributions about themselves, they start simple (Harter, 2006). At age 4, Jessica knows that she has dark hair, knows that she lives in a white house, and describes herself to others in terms of simple behavioral *traits*. She may say that she is "nice," or "helpful," or that she is "a good girl most of the time." By the time, she hits fifth grade (age 10), Jessica sees herself in more complex ways, attributing traits to the self such as "honest," "moody," "outgoing," "shy," "hard-working," "smart," "good at math but not gym class," or "nice except when I am around my annoying brother." By late childhood and early adolescence, the personality traits that people attribute to themselves, as well as those attributed to them by others, tend to correlate with each other in ways that conform to a well-established taxonomy of five broad trait domains, repeatedly derived in studies of adult personality and often called the Big Five: (1) extraversion, (2) neuroticism, (3) agreeableness, (4) conscientiousness, and (5) openness to experience (Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2008). By late childhood, moreover, self-conceptions will likely also include important social *roles*: "I am a good student," "I am the oldest daughter," or "I am a good friend to Sarah."

Traits and roles, and variations on these notions, are the main currency of the **self as social actor** (McAdams & Cox, 2010). Trait

terms capture perceived consistencies in social performance. They convey what I reflexively perceive to be my overall acting style, based in part on how I think others see me as an actor in many different social situations. Roles capture the quality, as I perceive it, of important structured relationships in my life. Taken together, traits and roles make up the main features of my **social reputation**, as I apprehend it in my own mind (Hogan, 1982).

If you have ever tried hard to change yourself, you may have taken aim at your social reputation, targeting your central traits or your social roles. Maybe you woke up one day and decided that you must become a more optimistic and emotionally upbeat person. Taking into consideration the reflected appraisals of others, you realized that even your friends seem to avoid you because you bring them down. In addition, it feels bad to feel so bad all the time: Wouldn't it be better to feel good, to have more energy and hope? In the language of traits, you have decided to "work on" your "neuroticism." Or maybe instead, your problem is the trait of "conscientiousness": You are undisciplined and don't work hard enough, so you resolve to make changes in that area. Self-improvement efforts such as these—aimed at changing one's traits to become a more effective social actor—are sometimes successful, but they are very hard—kind of like dieting. Research suggests that broad traits tend to be stubborn, resistant to change, even with the aid of psychotherapy. However, people often have more success working directly on their social roles. To become a more effective social actor, you may want to take aim at the important roles you play in life. What can I do to become a better son or daughter? How can I find new and meaningful roles to perform at work, or in my family, or among my friends, or in my church and community? By doing concrete things that enrich your performances in important social roles, you may begin to see yourself in a new light, and others will notice the change, too. Social actors hold the potential to transform their performances across the human life course. Each time you walk out on stage, you have a chance to start anew.

The Motivated Agent

When we observe others we only see how they act but are never able to access the entirety of their internal experience. [Iamge: CC0 Public Domain, https://goo.gl/m25gce]

Whether we are talking literally about the theatrical stage or more figuratively, as I do in this module, about the everyday social environment for human behavior, observers can never fully know what is in the actor's head, no matter how closely they watch. We can see actors act, but we cannot know for sure what they *want* or what they *value*, unless they tell us straightaway. As a social actor, a person may come across as friendly and compassionate, or cynical and mean-spirited, but in neither case can we infer their

motivations from their traits or their roles. What does the friendly person want? What is the cynical father trying to achieve? Many broad psychological theories of the self prioritize the motivational qualities of human behavior—the inner needs, wants, desires, goals, values, plans, programs, fears, and aversions that seem to give behavior its direction and purpose (Bandura, 1989; Deci & Ryan, 1991; Markus & Nurius, 1986). These kinds of theories explicitly conceive of the self as a *motivated agent.*

To be an agent is to act with direction and purpose, to move forward into the future in pursuit of self-chosen and valued goals. In a sense, human beings are agents even as infants, for babies can surely act in goal-directed ways. By age 1 year, moreover, infants show a strong preference for observing and imitating the goal-directed, intentional behavior of others, rather than random behaviors (Woodward, 2009). Still, it is one thing to act in goal-directed ways; it is quite another for the I to know itself (the Me) as an intentional and purposeful force who moves forward in life in pursuit of self-chosen goals, values, and other desired end states. In order to do so, the person must first realize that people indeed have desires and goals in their minds and that these inner desires and goals *motivate* (initiate, energize, put into motion) their behavior. According to a strong line of research in developmental psychology, attaining this kind of understanding means acquiring a theory of mind (Wellman, 1993), which occurs for most children by the age of 4. Once a child understands that other people's behavior is often motivated by inner desires and goals, it is a small step to apprehend the self in similar terms.

Building on theory of mind and other cognitive and social developments, children begin to construct the self as a motivated agent in the elementary school years, layered over their still-developing sense of themselves as social actors. Theory and research on what developmental psychologists call the **age 5-to-7 shift** converge to suggest that children become more planful, intentional, and systematic in their pursuit of valued goals during this time (Sameroff & Haith, 1996). Schooling reinforces the shift in

that teachers and curricula place increasing demands on students to work hard, adhere to schedules, focus on goals, and achieve success in particular, well-defined task domains. Their relative success in achieving their most cherished goals, furthermore, goes a long way in determining children's self-esteem (Robins, Tracy, & Trzesniewski, 2008). Motivated agents feel good about themselves to the extent they believe that they are making good progress in achieving their goals and advancing their most important values.

Goals and values become even more important for the self in adolescence, as teenagers begin to confront what Erikson (1963) famously termed the developmental challenge of **identity**. For adolescents and young adults, establishing a psychologically efficacious identity involves exploring different options with respect to life goals, values, vocations, and intimate relationships and eventually committing to a motivational and ideological agenda for adult life—an integrated and realistic sense of what I want and value in life and how I plan to achieve it (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Committing oneself to an integrated suite of life goals and values is perhaps the greatest achievement for the self as motivated agent. Establishing an adult identity has implications, as well, for how a person moves through life as a social actor, entailing new role commitments and, perhaps, a changing understanding of one's basic dispositional traits. According to Erikson, however, identity achievement is always provisional, for adults continue to work on their identities as they move into midlife and beyond, often relinquishing old goals in favor of new ones, investing themselves in new projects and making new plans, exploring new relationships, and shifting their priorities in response to changing life circumstances (Freund & Riediger, 2006; Josselson, 1996).

There is a sense whereby *any* time you try to change yourself, you are assuming the role of a motivated agent. After all, to strive to change something is inherently what an agent does. However, what particular feature of selfhood you try to change may correspond to your self as actor, agent, or author, or some combination. When you try to change your traits or roles, you take aim at the social actor. By

contrast, when you try to change your values or life goals, you are focusing on yourself as a motivated agent. Adolescence and young adulthood are periods in the human life course when many of us focus attention on our values and life goals. Perhaps you grew up as a traditional Catholic, but now in college you believe that the values inculcated in your childhood no longer function so well for you. You no longer believe in the central tenets of the Catholic Church, say, and are now working to replace your old values with new ones. Or maybe you still want to be Catholic, but you feel that your new take on faith requires a different kind of personal ideology. In the realm of the motivated agent, moreover, changing values can influence life goals. If your new value system prioritizes alleviating the suffering of others, you may decide to pursue a degree in social work, or to become a public interest lawyer, or to live a simpler life that prioritizes people over material wealth. A great deal of the identity work we do in adolescence and young adulthood is about values and goals, as we strive to articulate a personal vision or dream for what we hope to accomplish in the future.

The Autobiographical Author

Even as **the "I"**continues to develop a sense of t**he "Me"** as both a social actor and a motivated agent, a third standpoint for selfhood gradually emerges in the adolescent and early-adult years. The third perspective is a response to Erikson's (1963) challenge of identity. According to Erikson, developing an identity involves more than the exploration of and commitment to life goals and values (the self as motivated agent), and more than committing to new roles and re-evaluating old traits (the self as social actor). It also involves achieving a sense of *temporal continuity* in life—a reflexive understanding of *how I have come to be the person I am becoming*, or put differently, how my past self has developed into my present self, and how my present self will, in turn, develop into an envisioned

future self. In his analysis of identity formation in the life of the 15th-century Protestant reformer Martin Luther, Erikson (1958) describes the culmination of a young adult's search for identity in this way:

"To be adult means among other things to see one's own life in continuous perspective, both in retrospect and prospect. By accepting some definition of who he is, usually on the basis of a function in an economy, a place in the sequence of generations, and a status in the structure of society, the adult is able *to selectively reconstruct his past in such a way that, step for step, it seems to have planned him, or better, he seems to have planned it*. In this sense, psychologically we do choose our parents, our family history, and the history of our kings, heroes, and gods. By making them our own, we maneuver ourselves into the inner position of proprietors, of creators."

— (Erikson, 1958, pp. 111–112; emphasis added).

In this rich passage, Erikson intimates that the development of a mature identity in young adulthood involves the I's ability to construct a retrospective and prospective *story* about the Me (McAdams, 1985). In their efforts to find a meaningful identity for life, young men and women begin "to selectively reconstruct" their past, as Erikson wrote, and imagine their future to create an integrative life story, or what psychologists today often call a narrative identity. A **narrative identity** is an internalized and evolving story of the self that reconstructs the past and anticipates the future in such a way as to provide a person's life with some degree of unity, meaning, and purpose over time (McAdams, 2008; McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007). The self typically becomes an *autobiographical author* in the early-adult years, a way of being that is layered over the motivated agent, which is layered over the social actor. In order to provide life with the sense of temporal continuity and deep meaning that Erikson believed identity should confer, we must author a personalized life story that integrates our understanding of who we once were, who we are today, and who we may become in the future. The story helps to explain, for the author and for the author's world, why the social actor does what

it does and why the motivated agent wants what it wants, and how the person as a whole has developed over time, from the past's reconstructed beginning to the future's imagined ending.

By the time they are 5 or 6 years of age, children can tell well-formed stories about personal events in their lives (Fivush, 2011). By the end of childhood, they usually have a good sense of what a typical biography contains and how it is sequenced, from birth to death (Thomsen & Bernsten, 2008). But it is not until adolescence, research shows, that human beings express advanced storytelling skills and what psychologists call **autobiographical reasoning** (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McLean & Fournier, 2008). In autobiographical reasoning, a narrator is able to derive substantive conclusions about the self from analyzing his or her own personal experiences. Adolescents may develop the ability to string together events into causal chains and inductively derive general themes about life from a sequence of chapters and scenes (Habermas & de Silveira, 2008). For example, a 16-year-old may be able to explain to herself and to others how childhood experiences in her family have shaped her vocation in life. Her parents were divorced when she was 5 years old, the teenager recalls, and this caused a great deal of stress in her family. Her mother often seemed anxious and depressed, but she (the now-teenager when she was a little girl—the story's protagonist) often tried to cheer her mother up, and her efforts seemed to work. In more recent years, the teenager notes that her friends often come to her with their boyfriend problems. She seems to be very adept at giving advice about love and relationships, which stems, the teenager now believes, from her early experiences with her mother. Carrying this causal narrative forward, the teenager now thinks that she would like to be a marriage counselor when she grows up.

Young people often "try on" many variations of identities to see which best fits their private sense of themselves. [Image: Sangudo, https://goo.gl/Ay3UMR, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, https://goo.gl/Toc0ZF]

Unlike children, then, adolescents can tell a full and convincing story about an entire human life, or at least a prominent line of causation within a full life, explaining continuity and change in the story's protagonist over time. Once the cognitive skills are in place, young people seek interpersonal opportunities to share and refine their developing sense of themselves as storytellers (the I) who tell stories about themselves (the Me). Adolescents and young adults author a narrative sense of the self by telling stories about their experiences to other people, monitoring the feedback they receive from the tellings, editing their stories in light of the feedback, gaining new experiences and telling stories about those, and on and

on, as selves create stories that, in turn, create new selves (McLean et al., 2007). Gradually, in fits and starts, through conversation and introspection, the I develops a convincing and coherent narrative about the Me.

Contemporary research on the self as autobiographical author emphasizes the strong effect of *culture* on narrative identity (Hammack, 2008). Culture provides a menu of favored plot lines, themes, and character types for the construction of self-defining life stories. Autobiographical authors sample selectively from the cultural menu, appropriating ideas that seem to resonate well with their own life experiences. As such, life stories reflect the culture, wherein they are situated as much as they reflect the authorial efforts of the autobiographical I.

As one example of the tight link between culture and narrative identity, McAdams (2013) and others (e.g., Kleinfeld, 2012) have highlighted the prominence of **redemptive narratives** in American culture. Epitomized in such iconic cultural ideals as the American dream, Horatio Alger stories, and narratives of Christian atonement, redemptive stories track the move from suffering to an enhanced status or state, while scripting the development of a chosen protagonist who journeys forth into a dangerous and unredeemed world (McAdams, 2013). Hollywood movies often celebrate redemptive quests. Americans are exposed to similar narrative messages in self-help books, 12-step programs, Sunday sermons, and in the rhetoric of political campaigns. Over the past two decades, the world's most influential spokesperson for the power of redemption in human lives may be Oprah Winfrey, who tells her own story of overcoming childhood adversity while encouraging others, through her media outlets and philanthropy, to tell similar kinds of stories for their own lives (McAdams, 2013). Research has demonstrated that American adults who enjoy high levels of mental health and civic engagement tend to construct their lives as narratives of redemption, tracking the move from sin to salvation, rags to riches, oppression to liberation, or sickness/abuse to health/recovery (McAdams, Diamond, de St. Aubin, & Mansfield,

1997; McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, & Bowman, 2001; Walker & Frimer, 2007). In American society, these kinds of stories are often seen to be inspirational.

At the same time, McAdams (2011, 2013) has pointed to shortcomings and limitations in the redemptive stories that many Americans tell, which mirror cultural biases and stereotypes in American culture and heritage. McAdams has argued that redemptive stories support happiness and societal engagement for some Americans, but the same stories can encourage moral righteousness and a naïve expectation that suffering will always be redeemed. For better and sometimes for worse, Americans seem to love stories of personal redemption and often aim to assimilate their autobiographical memories and aspirations to a redemptive form. Nonetheless, these same stories may not work so well in cultures that espouse different values and narrative ideals (Hammack, 2008). It is important to remember that every culture offers its own storehouse of favored narrative forms. It is also essential to know that no single narrative form captures all that is good (or bad) about a culture. In American society, the redemptive narrative is but one of many different kinds of stories that people commonly employ to make sense of their lives.

What is your story? What kind of a narrative are you working on? As you look to the past and imagine the future, what threads of continuity, change, and meaning do you discern? For many people, the most dramatic and fulfilling efforts to change the self happen when the I works hard, as an autobiographical author, to construct and, ultimately, to tell a new story about the Me. Storytelling may be the most powerful form of self-transformation that human beings have ever invented. Changing one's life story is at the heart of many forms of psychotherapy and counseling, as well as religious conversions, vocational epiphanies, and other dramatic transformations of the self that people often celebrate as turning points in their lives (Adler, 2012). Storytelling is often at the heart of the little changes, too, minor edits in the self that we make as we

move through daily life, as we live and experience life, and as we later tell it to ourselves and to others.

Conclusion

For human beings, selves begin as social actors, but they eventually become motivated agents and autobiographical authors, too. The I first sees itself as an embodied actor in social space; with development, however, it comes to appreciate itself also as a forward-looking source of self-determined goals and values, and later yet, as a storyteller of personal experience, oriented to the reconstructed past and the imagined future. To "know thyself" in mature adulthood, then, is to do three things: (a) to apprehend and to perform with social approval my self-ascribed traits and roles, (b) to pursue with vigor and (ideally) success my most valued goals and plans, and (c) to construct a story about life that conveys, with vividness and cultural resonance, how I became the person I am becoming, integrating my past as I remember it, my present as I am experiencing it, and my future as I hope it to be.

Outside Resources

Web: The website for the Foley Center for the Study of Lives, at Northwestern University. The site contains research materials, interview protocols, and coding manuals for conducting studies of narrative identity.

http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/foley/

Discussion Questions

1. Back in the 1950s, Erik Erikson argued that many adolescents and young adults experience a tumultuous identity crisis. Do you think this is true today? What might an identity crisis look and feel like? And, how might it be resolved?
2. Many people believe that they have a true self buried inside of them. From this perspective, the development of self is about discovering a psychological truth deep inside. Do you believe this to be true? How does thinking about the self as an actor, agent, and author bear on this question?
3. Psychological research shows that when people are placed in front of mirrors they often behave in a more moral and conscientious manner, even though they sometimes experience this procedure as unpleasant. From the standpoint of the self as a social actor, how might we explain this phenomenon?
4. By the time they reach adulthood, does everybody have a narrative identity? Do some people simply never develop a story for their life?
5. What happens when the three perspectives on self—the self as actor, agent, and author—conflict with each other? Is it necessary for people's self-ascribed traits and roles to line up well with their goals and their stories?
6. William James wrote that the self includes all things that the person considers to be "mine." If we take James literally, a person's self might extend to include his or her material possessions, pets, and friends and family. Does this make sense?
7. To what extent can we control the self? Are some features of selfhood easier to control than others?
8. What cultural differences may be observed in the construction of the self? How might gender, ethnicity, and class impact the development of the self as actor, as agent, and as author?

Vocabulary

Autobiographical reasoning

The ability, typically developed in adolescence, to derive substantive conclusions about the self from analyzing one's own personal experiences.

Ego

Sigmund Freud's conception of an executive self in the personality. Akin to this module's notion of "the I," Freud imagined the ego as observing outside reality, engaging in rational though, and coping with the competing demands of inner desires and moral standards.

Identity

Sometimes used synonymously with the term "self," identity means many different things in psychological science and in other fields (e.g., sociology). In this module, I adopt Erik Erikson's conception of identity as a developmental task for late adolescence and young adulthood. Forming an identity in adolescence and young adulthood involves exploring alternative roles, values, goals, and relationships and eventually committing to a realistic agenda for life that productively situates a person in the adult world of work and love. In addition, identity formation entails commitments to new social roles and reevaluation of old traits, and importantly, it brings with it a sense of temporal continuity in life, achieved though the construction of an integrative life story.

Narrative identity

An internalized and evolving story of the self designed to provide life with some measure of temporal unity and purpose. Beginning in late adolescence, people craft self-defining stories that reconstruct the past and imagine the future to explain how the person came to be the person that he or she is

becoming.

Redemptive narratives

Life stories that affirm the transformation from suffering to an enhanced status or state. In American culture, redemptive life stories are highly prized as models for the good self, as in classic narratives of atonement, upward mobility, liberation, and recovery.

Reflexivity

The idea that the self reflects back upon itself; that the I (the knower, the subject) encounters the Me (the known, the object). Reflexivity is a fundamental property of human selfhood.

Self as autobiographical author

The sense of the self as a storyteller who reconstructs the past and imagines the future in order to articulate an integrative narrative that provides life with some measure of temporal continuity and purpose.

Self as social actor

The sense of the self as an embodied actor whose social performances may be construed in terms of more or less consistent self-ascribed traits and social roles.

Self-esteem

The extent to which a person feels that he or she is worthy and good. The success or failure that the motivated agent experiences in pursuit of valued goals is a strong determinant of self-esteem.

Social reputation

The traits and social roles that others attribute to an actor. Actors also have their own conceptions of what they imagine their respective social reputations indeed are in the eyes of others.

The "I"

The self as knower, the sense of the self as a subject who encounters (knows, works on) itself (the Me).

The "Me"

The self as known, the sense of the self as the object or target of the I's knowledge and work.

Theory of mind

Emerging around the age of 4, the child's understanding that other people have minds in which are located desires and beliefs, and that desires and beliefs, thereby, motivate behavior.

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11. Conformity and Obedience

Conformity and Obedience

We often change our attitudes and behaviors to match the attitudes and behaviors of the people around us. One reason for this conformity is a concern about what other people think of us. This process was demonstrated in a classic study in which college students deliberately gave wrong answers to a simple visual judgment task rather than go against the group. Another reason we conform to the norm is because other people often have information we do not, and relying on norms can be a reasonable strategy when we are uncertain about how we are supposed to act. Unfortunately, we frequently misperceive how the typical person acts, which can contribute to problems such as the excessive binge drinking often seen in college students. Obeying orders from an authority figure can sometimes lead to disturbing behavior. This danger was illustrated in a famous study in which participants were instructed to administer painful electric shocks to another person in what they believed to be a learning experiment. Despite vehement protests from the person receiving the shocks, most participants continued the procedure when instructed to do so by the experimenter. The findings raise questions about the power of blind obedience in deplorable situations such as atrocities and genocide. They also raise concerns about the ethical treatment of participants in psychology experiments.

Learning Objectives

- Become aware of how widespread conformity is in our lives and some of the ways each of us changes our attitudes and

behavior to match the norm.
- Understand the two primary reasons why people often conform to perceived norms.
- Appreciate how obedience to authority has been examined in laboratory studies and some of the implications of the findings from these investigations.
- Consider some of the remaining issues and sources of controversy surrounding Milgram's obedience studies.

Introduction

When he was a teenager, my son often enjoyed looking at photographs of me and my wife taken when we were in high school. He laughed at the hairstyles, the clothing, and the kind of glasses people wore "back then." And when he was through with his ridiculing, we would point out that no one is immune to fashions and fads and that someday his children will probably be equally amused by his high school photographs and the trends he found so normal at the time.

Everyday observation confirms that we often adopt the actions and attitudes of the people around us. Trends in clothing, music, foods, and entertainment are obvious. But our views on political issues, religious questions, and lifestyles also reflect to some degree the attitudes of the people we interact with. Similarly, decisions about behaviors such as smoking and drinking are influenced by whether the people we spend time with engage in these activities. Psychologists refer to this widespread tendency to act and think like the people around us as **conformity.**

Fashion trends serve as good, and sometimes embarrassing, examples of our own susceptibility to conformity. [Image: bianca francesca, https://goo.gl/0roq35, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, https://goo.gl/Toc0ZF]

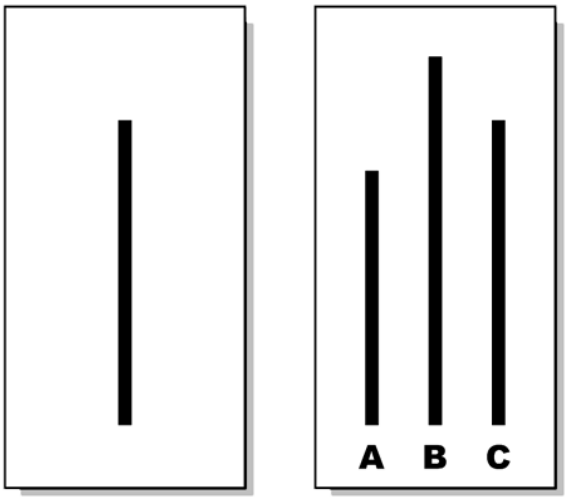
Conformity

What causes all this conformity? To start, humans may possess an inherent tendency to imitate the actions of others. Although we usually are not aware of it, we often mimic the gestures, body posture, language, talking speed, and many other behaviors of the people we interact with. Researchers find that this mimicking increases the connection between people and allows our interactions to flow more smoothly (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999).

Beyond this automatic tendency to imitate others, psychologists have identified two primary reasons for conformity. The first of these is normative influence. When normative influence is operating, people go along with the crowd because they are concerned about what others think of them. We don't want to look

out of step or become the target of criticism just because we like different kinds of music or dress differently than everyone else. Fitting in also brings rewards such as camaraderie and compliments.

How powerful is normative influence? Consider a classic study conducted many years ago by Solomon Asch (1956). The participants were male college students who were asked to engage in a seemingly simple task. An experimenter standing several feet away held up a card that depicted one line on the left side and three lines on the right side. The participant's job was to say aloud which of the three lines on the right was the same length as the line on the left. Sixteen cards were presented one at a time, and the correct answer on each was so obvious as to make the task a little boring. Except for one thing. The participant was not alone. In fact, there were six other people in the room who also gave their answers to the line-judgment task aloud. Moreover, although they pretended to be fellow participants, these other individuals were, in fact, confederates working with the experimenter. The real participant was seated so that he always gave his answer after hearing what five other "participants" said. Everything went smoothly until the third trial, when inexplicably the first "participant" gave an obviously incorrect answer. The mistake might have been amusing, except the second participant gave the same answer. As did the third, the fourth, and the fifth participant. Suddenly the real participant was in a difficult situation. His eyes told him one thing, but five out of five people apparently saw something else.



Examples of the cards used in the Asch experiment. How powerful is the normative influence? Would you be tempted to give a clearly incorrect answer, like many participants in the Asch experiment did, to better match the thoughts of a group of peers? [Image: Fred the Oyster, https://goo.gl/Gi5mtu, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://goo.gl/zVGXn8]

It's one thing to wear your hair a certain way or like certain foods because everyone around you does. But, would participants intentionally give a wrong answer just to conform with the other participants? The confederates uniformly gave incorrect answers on 12 of the 16 trials, and 76 percent of the participants went along with the norm at least once and also gave the wrong answer. In total, they conformed with the group on one-third of the 12 test trials. Although we might be impressed that the majority of the time participants answered honestly, most psychologists find it remarkable that so many college students caved in to the pressure of the group rather than do the job they had volunteered to do. In almost all cases, the participants knew they were giving an incorrect

answer, but their concern for what these other people might be thinking about them overpowered their desire to do the right thing.

Variations of Asch's procedures have been conducted numerous times (Bond, 2005; Bond & Smith, 1996). We now know that the findings are easily replicated, that there is an increase in conformity with more confederates (up to about five), that teenagers are more prone to conforming than are adults, and that people conform significantly less often when they believe the confederates will not hear their responses (Berndt, 1979; Bond, 2005; Crutchfield, 1955; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). This last finding is consistent with the notion that participants change their answers because they are concerned about what others think of them. Finally, although we see the effect in virtually every culture that has been studied, more conformity is found in collectivist countries such as Japan and China than in individualistic countries such as the United States (Bond & Smith, 1996). Compared with individualistic cultures, people who live in collectivist cultures place a higher value on the goals of the group than on individual preferences. They also are more motivated to maintain harmony in their interpersonal relations.

The other reason we sometimes go along with the crowd is that people are often a source of information. Psychologists refer to this process as **informational influence**. Most of us, most of the time, are motivated to do the right thing. If society deems that we put litter in a proper container, speak softly in libraries, and tip our waiter, then that's what most of us will do. But sometimes it's not clear what society expects of us. In these situations, we often rely on *descriptive norms* (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990). That is, we act the way most people—or most people like us—act. This is not an unreasonable strategy. Other people often have information that we do not, especially when we find ourselves in new situations. If you have ever been part of a conversation that went something like this,

> "Do you think we should?"
> "Sure. Everyone else is doing it.",

you have experienced the power of informational influence.

Efforts to influence people to engage in healthier or more sustainable behaviors have benefitted from the informational influence. For example, hotels have been able to significantly increase the numbers of people who re-use bath towels (reducing water and energy use) by informing them on signs in their rooms that re-using towels is a typical behavior of other hotel guests. [Image: Infrogmation of New Orleans, https://goo.gl/5P5F0v, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/BRvSA7]

However, it's not always easy to obtain good descriptive norm information, which means we sometimes rely on a flawed notion of the norm when deciding how we should behave. A good example of how misperceived norms can lead to problems is found in research on binge drinking among college students. Excessive drinking is a

serious problem on many campuses (Mita, 2009). There are many reasons why students binge drink, but one of the most important is their perception of the descriptive norm. How much students drink is highly correlated with how much they believe the average student drinks (Neighbors, Lee, Lewis, Fossos, & Larimer, 2007). Unfortunately, students aren't very good at making this assessment. They notice the boisterous heavy drinker at the party but fail to consider all the students not attending the party. As a result, students typically overestimate the descriptive norm for college student drinking (Borsari & Carey, 2003; Perkins, Haines, & Rice, 2005). Most students believe they consume significantly less alcohol than the norm, a miscalculation that creates a dangerous push toward more and more excessive alcohol consumption. On the positive side, providing students with accurate information about drinking norms has been found to reduce overindulgent drinking (Burger, LaSalvia, Hendricks, Mehdipour, & Neudeck, 2011; Neighbors, Lee, Lewis, Fossos, & Walter, 2009).

Researchers have demonstrated the power of descriptive norms in a number of areas. Homeowners reduced the amount of energy they used when they learned that they were consuming more energy than their neighbors (Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2007). Undergraduates selected the healthy food option when led to believe that other students had made this choice (Burger et al., 2010). Hotel guests were more likely to reuse their towels when a hanger in the bathroom told them that this is what most guests did (Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008). And more people began using the stairs instead of the elevator when informed that the vast majority of people took the stairs to go up one or two floors (Burger & Shelton, 2011).

Obedience

Although we may be influenced by the people around us more than

we recognize, whether we conform to the norm is up to us. But sometimes decisions about how to act are not so easy. Sometimes we are directed by a more powerful person to do things we may not want to do. Researchers who study **obedience** are interested in how people react when given an order or command from someone in a position of authority. In many situations, obedience is a good thing. We are taught at an early age to obey parents, teachers, and police officers. It's also important to follow instructions from judges, firefighters, and lifeguards. And a military would fail to function if soldiers stopped obeying orders from superiors. But, there is also a dark side to obedience. In the name of "following orders" or "just doing my job," people can violate ethical principles and break laws. More disturbingly, obedience often is at the heart of some of the worst of human behavior—massacres, atrocities, and even genocide.

Photographs of victims of Cambodian dictator Pol Pot. From

1975-79 the Khmer Rouge army obediently carried out orders to execute tens of thousands of civilians. [Image: ...your local connection, https://goo.gl/ut9fvk, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, https://goo.gl/Toc0ZF]

It was this unsettling side of obedience that led to some of the most famous and most controversial research in the history of psychology. Milgram (1963, 1965, 1974) wanted to know why so many otherwise decent German citizens went along with the brutality of the Nazi leaders during the Holocaust. "These inhumane policies may have originated in the mind of a single person," Milgram (1963, p. 371) wrote, "but they could only be carried out on a massive scale if a very large number of persons obeyed orders."

To understand this obedience, Milgram conducted a series of laboratory investigations. In all but one variation of the basic procedure, participants were men recruited from the community surrounding Yale University, where the research was carried out. These citizens signed up for what they believed to be an experiment on learning and memory. In particular, they were told the research concerned the effects of punishment on learning. Three people were involved in each session. One was the participant. Another was the experimenter. The third was a confederate who pretended to be another participant.

The experimenter explained that the study consisted of a memory test and that one of the men would be the teacher and the other the learner. Through a rigged drawing, the real participant was always assigned the teacher's role and the confederate was always the learner. The teacher watched as the learner was strapped into a chair and had electrodes attached to his wrist. The teacher then moved to the room next door where he was seated in front of a large metal box the experimenter identified as a "shock generator." The front of the box displayed gauges and lights and, most noteworthy, a series of 30 levers across the bottom. Each lever was labeled with a voltage figure, starting with 15 volts and moving up in 15-volt increments to 450 volts. Labels also indicated the strength of the

shocks, starting with “Slight Shock” and moving up to “Danger: Severe Shock” toward the end. The last two levers were simply labeled “XXX” in red.

Through a microphone, the teacher administered a memory test to the learner in the next room. The learner responded to the multiple-choice items by pressing one of four buttons that were barely within reach of his strapped-down hand. If the teacher saw the correct answer light up on his side of the wall, he simply moved on to the next item. But if the learner got the item wrong, the teacher pressed one of the shock levers and, thereby, delivered the learner’s punishment. The teacher was instructed to start with the 15-volt lever and move up to the next highest shock for each successive wrong answer.

In reality, the learner received no shocks. But he did make a lot of mistakes on the test, which forced the teacher to administer what he believed to be increasingly strong shocks. The purpose of the study was to see how far the teacher would go before refusing to continue. The teacher’s first hint that something was amiss came after pressing the 75-volt lever and hearing through the wall the learner say “Ugh!” The learner’s reactions became stronger and louder with each lever press. At 150 volts, the learner yelled out, “Experimenter! That’s all. Get me out of here. I told you I had heart trouble. My heart’s starting to bother me now. Get me out of here, please. My heart’s starting to bother me. I refuse to go on. Let me out.”

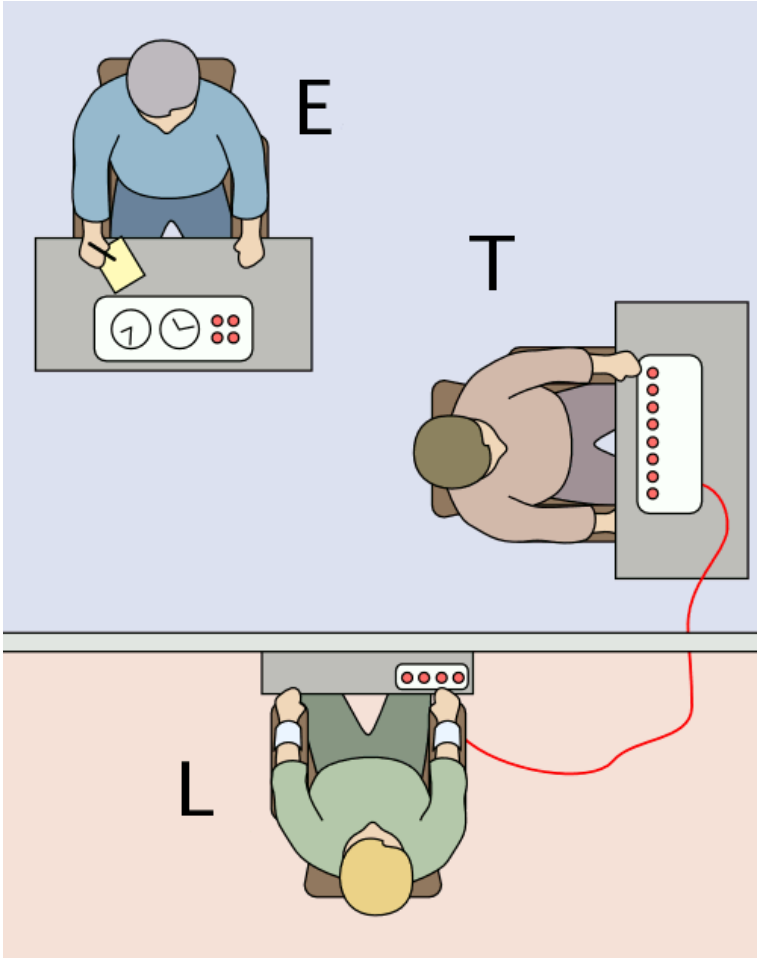


Diagram of the Milgram Experiment in which the "teacher" (T) was asked to deliver a (supposedly) painful electric shock to the "learner"(L). Would this experiment be approved by a review board today? [Image: Fred the Oyster, https://goo.gl/ZIbQz1, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://goo.gl/X3i0tq]

The experimenter's role was to encourage the participant to continue. If at any time the teacher asked to end the session, the experimenter responded with phrases such as, "The experiment requires that you continue," and "You have no other choice, you

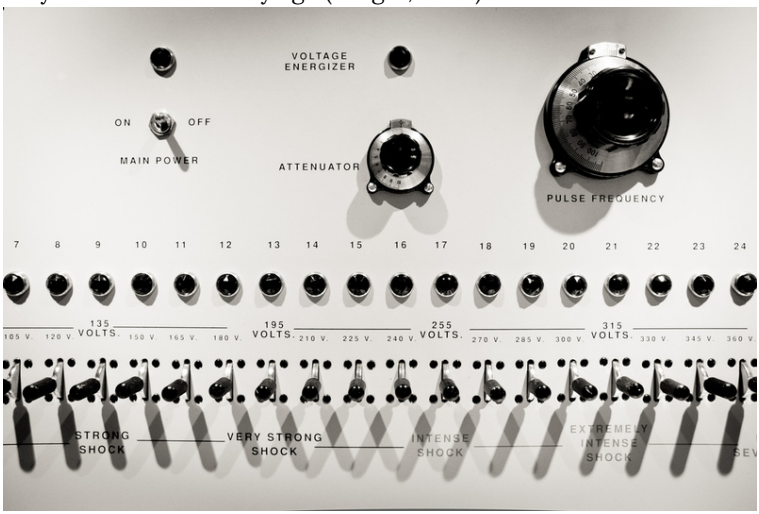
must go on." The experimenter ended the session only after the teacher stated four successive times that he did not want to continue. All the while, the learner's protests became more intense with each shock. After 300 volts, the learner refused to answer any more questions, which led the experimenter to say that no answer should be considered a wrong answer. After 330 volts, despite vehement protests from the learner following previous shocks, the teacher heard only silence, suggesting that the learner was now physically unable to respond. If the teacher reached 450 volts—the end of the generator—the experimenter told him to continue pressing the 450 volt lever for each wrong answer. It was only after the teacher pressed the 450-volt lever three times that the experimenter announced that the study was over.

If you had been a participant in this research, what would you have done? Virtually everyone says he or she would have stopped early in the process. And most people predict that very few if any participants would keep pressing all the way to 450 volts. Yet in the basic procedure described here, 65 percent of the participants continued to administer shocks to the very end of the session. These were not brutal, sadistic men. They were ordinary citizens who nonetheless followed the experimenter's instructions to administer what they believed to be excruciating if not dangerous electric shocks to an innocent person. The disturbing implication from the findings is that, under the right circumstances, each of us may be capable of acting in some very uncharacteristic and perhaps some very unsettling ways.

Milgram conducted many variations of this basic procedure to explore some of the factors that affect obedience. He found that obedience rates decreased when the learner was in the same room as the experimenter and declined even further when the teacher had to physically touch the learner to administer the punishment. Participants also were less willing to continue the procedure after seeing other teachers refuse to press the shock levers, and they were significantly less obedient when the instructions to continue came from a person they believed to be another participant rather

than from the experimenter. Finally, Milgram found that women participants followed the experimenter's instructions at exactly the same rate the men had.

Milgram's obedience research has been the subject of much controversy and discussion. Psychologists continue to debate the extent to which Milgram's studies tell us something about atrocities in general and about the behavior of German citizens during the Holocaust in particular (Miller, 2004). Certainly, there are important features of that time and place that cannot be recreated in a laboratory, such as a pervasive climate of prejudice and dehumanization. Another issue concerns the relevance of the findings. Some people have argued that today we are more aware of the dangers of blind obedience than we were when the research was conducted back in the 1960s. However, findings from partial and modified replications of Milgram's procedures conducted in recent years suggest that people respond to the situation today much like they did a half a century ago (Burger, 2009).



If you had been "a teacher" in the Milgram experiment, would you have behaved differently than the majority who delivered what they thought were massive 450-volt shocks? [Image: Sharon Drummond, https://goo.gl/uQZGtZ, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0,

https://goo.gl/Toc0ZF]

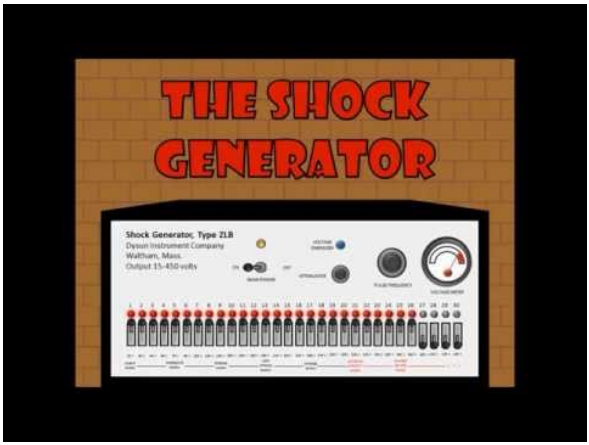
Another point of controversy concerns the ethical treatment of research participants. Researchers have an obligation to look out for the welfare of their participants. Yet, there is little doubt that many of Milgram's participants experienced intense levels of stress as they went through the procedure. In his defense, Milgram was not unconcerned about the effects of the experience on his participants. And in follow-up questionnaires, the vast majority of his participants said they were pleased they had been part of the research and thought similar experiments should be conducted in the future. Nonetheless, in part because of Milgram's studies, guidelines and procedures were developed to protect research participants from these kinds of experiences. Although Milgram's intriguing findings left us with many unanswered questions, conducting a full replication of his experiment remains out of bounds by today's standards.

Social psychologists are fond of saying that we are all influenced by the people around us more than we recognize. Of course, each person is unique, and ultimately each of us makes choices about how we will and will not act. But decades of research on conformity and obedience make it clear that we live in a social world and that—for better or worse—much of what we do is a reflection of the people we encounter.

Videos: (note if the videos are not appearing on your device, please copy the URL and attempt to search for the video)

Student Video: Christine N. Winston and Hemali Maher's 'The Milgram Experiment' gives an excellent 3-minute overview of one of the most famous experiments in the history of psychology. It was one of the winning entries in the 2015 Noba Student Video

Award.



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Video: An example of information influence in a field setting

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Video: Scenes from a recent partial replication of Milgram's obedience studies

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Video: Scenes from a recent replication of Asch's conformity experiment

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Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you see normative influence operating among you and your peers? How difficult would it be to go against the norm? What would it take for you to not do something just because all your friends were doing it?
2. What are some examples of how informational influence helps us do the right thing? How can we use descriptive norm information to change problem behaviors?
3. Is conformity more likely or less likely to occur when interacting with other people through social media as

compared to face-to-face encounters?

4. When is obedience to authority a good thing and when is it bad? What can be done to prevent people from obeying commands to engage in truly deplorable behavior such as atrocities and massacres?
5. In what ways do Milgram's experimental procedures fall outside the guidelines for research with human participants? Are there ways to conduct relevant research on obedience to authority without violating these guidelines?

Vocabulary

Conformity
Changing one's attitude or behavior to match a perceived social norm.

Descriptive norm
The perception of what most people do in a given situation.

Informational influence
Conformity that results from a concern to act in a socially approved manner as determined by how others act.

Normative influence
Conformity that results from a concern for what other people think of us.

Obedience
Responding to an order or command from a person in a position of authority.

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12. Prejudice, Discrimination, and Stereotyping

Prejudice, Discrimination, and Stereotyping

People are often biased against others outside of their own social group, showing prejudice (emotional bias), stereotypes (cognitive bias), and discrimination (behavioral bias). In the past, people used to be more explicit with their biases, but during the 20th century, when it became less socially acceptable to exhibit bias, such things like prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination became more subtle (automatic, ambiguous, and ambivalent). In the 21st century, however, with social group categories even more complex, biases may be transforming once again.

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination.
- Distinguish old-fashioned, blatant biases from contemporary, subtle biases.
- Understand old-fashioned biases such as social dominance orientation and right-wing. authoritarianism.
- Understand subtle, unexamined biases that are automatic, ambiguous, and ambivalent.
- Understand 21st century biases that may break down as identities get more complicated.

Introduction

You are an individual, full of beliefs, identities, and more that help make you unique. You don't want to be labeled just by your gender or race or religion. But as complex as we perceive ourselves to be, we often define others merely by their most distinct social group. [Image: caseorganic, https://goo.gl/PuLI4E, CC BY-NC 2.0, https://goo.gl/VnKlK8]

Even in one's own family, everyone wants to be seen for who they are, not as "just another typical X." But still, people put other people into groups, using that label to inform their evaluation of the person as a whole—a process that can result in serious consequences. This module focuses on biases against social groups, which social

psychologists sort into emotional **prejudices**, **mental stereotypes, and behavioral discrimination**. These three aspects of bias are related, but they each can occur separately from the others (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010; Fiske, 1998). For example, sometimes people have a negative, emotional reaction to a social group (prejudice) without knowing even the most superficial reasons to dislike them (stereotypes).

This module shows that today's biases are not yesterday's biases in many ways, but at the same time, they are troublingly similar. First, we'll discuss old-fashioned biases that might have belonged to our grandparents and great-grandparents—or even the people nowadays who have yet to leave those wrongful times. Next, we will discuss late 20th century biases that affected our parents and still linger today. Finally, we will talk about today's 21st century biases that challenge fairness and respect for all.

Old-fashioned Biases: Almost Gone

You would be hard pressed to find someone today who openly admits they don't believe in equality. Regardless of one's demographics, most people believe everyone is entitled to the same, natural rights. However, as much as we now collectively believe this, not too far back in our history, this ideal of equality was an unpracticed sentiment. Of all the countries in the world, only a few have equality in their constitution, and those who do, originally defined it for a select group of people.

At the time, old-fashioned biases were simple: people openly put down those not from their own group. For example, just 80 years ago, American college students unabashedly thought Turkish people were "cruel, very religious, and treacherous" (Katz & Braly, 1933). So where did they get those ideas, assuming that most of them had never met anyone from Turkey? Old-fashioned stereotypes were

overt, unapologetic, and expected to be shared by others—what we now call "blatant biases."

Blatant biases are conscious beliefs, feelings, and behavior that people are perfectly willing to admit, which mostly express hostility toward other groups (outgroups) while unduly favoring one's own group (in-group). For example, organizations that preach contempt for other races (and praise for their own) is an example of a blatant bias. And scarily, these blatant biases tend to run in packs: People who openly hate one outgroup also hate many others. To illustrate this pattern, we turn to two personality scales next.

Social Dominance Orientation

People with a social dominance orientation are more likely to be attracted to certain types of careers, such as law enforcement, that maintain group hierarchies. [Image: Thomas Hawk, https://goo.gl/qWQ7jE, CC BY-NC 2.0, https://goo.gl/VnKlK8]

Social dominance orientation (SDO) describes a belief that group hierarchies are inevitable in all societies and are even a good idea to maintain order and stability (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Those who score high on SDO believe that some groups are inherently better than others, and because of this, there is no such thing as group "equality." At the same time, though, SDO is not just about being personally dominant and controlling of others; SDO describes a preferred arrangement of groups with some on top (preferably one's own group) and some on the bottom. For example, someone high in SDO would likely be upset if someone from an outgroup moved into his or her neighborhood. It's not that the person high in SDO wants to "control" what this outgroup member does; it's that moving into this "nice neighborhood" disrupts the social hierarchy the person high in SDO believes in (i.e. living in a nice neighborhood denotes one's place in the social hierarchy—a place reserved for one's in-group members).

Although research has shown that people higher in SDO are more likely to be politically conservative, there are other traits that more strongly predict one's SDO. For example, researchers have found that those who score higher on SDO are usually lower than average on tolerance, empathy, altruism, and community orientation. In general, those high in SDO have a strong belief in work ethic—that hard work always pays off and leisure is a waste of time. People higher on SDO tend to choose and thrive in occupations that maintain existing group hierarchies (police, prosecutors, business), compared to those lower in SDO, who tend to pick more equalizing occupations (social work, public defense, psychology).

The point is that SDO—a preference for inequality as normal and natural—also predicts endorsing the superiority of certain groups: men, native-born residents, heterosexuals, and believers in the

dominant religion. This means seeing women, minorities, homosexuals, and non-believers as inferior. Understandably, the first list of groups tend to score higher on SDO, while the second group tends to score lower. For example, the SDO gender difference (men higher, women lower) appears all over the world.

At its heart, SDO rests on a fundamental belief that the world is tough and competitive with only a limited number of resources. Thus, those high in SDO see groups as battling each other for these resources, with winners at the top of the social hierarchy and losers at the bottom (see Table 1).

	Social Dominance Orientation	Right-Wing Authoritarianism
Core Belief	Groups compete for economic resources	Groups compete over values
Intergroup Belief	Group hierarchies are inevitable, good	Groups must follow authority
Ingroup Belief	Ingroup must be tough, competitive	Ingroup must unite, protect
Outgroup Belief	"They" are trying to beat "us"	"They" have bad values

Table 1. Old-Fashioned Biases

Right-wing Authoritarianism

Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) focuses on value conflicts, whereas SDO focuses on the economic ones. That is, RWA endorses respect for obedience and authority in the service of group conformity (Altemeyer, 1988). Returning to an example from earlier, the homeowner who's high in SDO may dislike the outgroup member moving into his or her neighborhood because it "threatens" one's economic resources (e.g. lowering the value of one's house; fewer openings in the school; etc.). Those high in RWA may equally dislike the outgroup member moving into the neighborhood but for different reasons. Here, it's because this outgroup member brings in values or beliefs that the person high in RWA disagrees with, thus "threatening" the collective values of his or her group. RWA respects group unity over individual preferences, wanting to maintain group values in the face of differing opinions. Despite its name, though,

RWA is not necessarily limited to people on the right (conservatives). Like SDO, there does appear to be an association between this personality scale (i.e. the preference for order, clarity, and conventional values) and conservative beliefs. However, regardless of political ideology, RWA focuses on groups' competing frameworks of values. Extreme scores on RWA predict biases against outgroups while demanding in-group loyalty and conformity Notably, the combination of high RWA and high SDO predicts joining hate groups that openly endorse aggression against minority groups, immigrants, homosexuals, and believers in non-dominant religions (Altemeyer, 2004).

The term Right-Wing Authoritarianism is a bit misleading. The phrase "right-wing" in right-wing authoritarianism does not necessarily refer to someone's politics, but to psychological preferences and personality. It means that the person tends to follow the established conventions and authorities in society. In theory, the authorities could have either right-wing or left-wing political views. It is just as possible that people on the "left wing" can be authoritarian. Left wing groups can also have authoritarianism and obedience in their policies.

20th Century Biases: Subtle but Significant

Fortunately, old-fashioned biases have diminished over the 20th century and into the 21st century. Openly expressing prejudice is like blowing second-hand cigarette smoke in someone's face: It's just not done any more in most circles, and if it is, people are readily criticized for their behavior. Still, these biases exist in people; they're just less in view than before. These **subtle biases** are unexamined and sometimes unconscious but real in their consequences. They are automatic, ambiguous, and ambivalent, but

nonetheless biased, unfair, and disrespectful to the belief in equality.

Automatic Biases

Most people like themselves well enough, and most people identify themselves as members of certain groups but not others. Logic suggests, then, that because we like ourselves, we therefore like the groups we associate with more, whether those groups are our hometown, school, religion, gender, or ethnicity. Liking yourself and your groups is human nature. The larger issue, however, is that own-group preference often results in liking other groups less. And whether you recognize this "favoritism" as wrong, this trade-off is relatively **automatic**, that is, unintended, immediate, and irresistible.

Social psychologist try to measure automatic bias through tests examining quick processing times, such as the Implicit Associations Test. It is thought that if someone is given a task that requires quick processing, they won't be able to think much about their choice, and this will uncover their "implicit" bias. However it is challenging to measure automatic or implicit bias. Does someone respond quickly in an association test because they are biased against someone, or because they are less familiar with that particular type of person, therefore their mind takes more time to process information about that person? Social psychologists are currently debating the best way to measure automatic bias. Automatic bias tests are sometimes given to employees as part of diversity training or college student assignments. However, because the science is not not yet at a level of high validity (does the test measure what it says it measures) and high reliability (does it measure that across time and circumstances) , the information given to the employee or student may be best understood as part of an ongoing experimental data base rather than a final measurement of that particular person's bias. An

example is: a student comes to Canada as an international student from a small region in China. They grew up in a region with people of mostly similar ethnic and racial backgrounds. When they are attending college in Canada, the teacher assigns them to try an automatic bias test measuring bias against Asians. The test says they respond more slowly to Asian people and this might suggest bias against Asian people. The student wonders if this means they are against Asian people? They don't feel biased against Asians? The questions social psychologists are studying include whether the test may be measuring other variables such as the lack of familiarity with other groups of Asian people, so the student responds more slowly during the task, or is the bias test measuring actual bias against a certain group which is why the student is responding slower.

Ambiguous Biases

Whether we are aware of it or not (and usually we're not), we sort the world into "us" and "them" categories. We are more likely to

treat with bias or discrimination anyone we feel is outside our own group. [Image: Keira McPhee, https://goo.gl/gkaKBe, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/BRvSA7]

Social identity theory (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971) describes this tendency to favor one's own in-group over another's outgroup. And as a result, outgroup disliking stems from this in-group liking (Brewer & Brown, 1998). For example, if two classes of children want to play on the same soccer field, the classes will come to dislike each other not because of any real, objectionable traits about the other group. The dislike originates from each class's *favoritism toward itself* and the fact that only one group can play on the soccer field at a time. With this preferential perspective for one's own group, people are not punishing the other one so much as neglecting it in favor of their own. However, to justify this preferential treatment, people will often *exaggerate the differences between their in-group and the outgroup*. In turn, people see the outgroup as more similar in personality than they are. This results in the perception that "they" really differ from us, and "they" are all alike. Because the attributes of group categories can be either good or bad, we tend to favor the groups with people like us and incidentally disfavor the others. In-group favoritism is an ambiguous form of bias because it disfavors the outgroup by exclusion. For example, if a politician has to decide between funding one program or another, s/he may be more likely to give resources to the group that more closely represents his in-group. And this life-changing decision stems from the simple, natural human tendency to be more comfortable with people like yourself.

Bias Can Be Complicated – Ambivalent Biases

Not all stereotypes of outgroups are all bad. For example, ethnic

Asians living in the United States are commonly referred to as the "model minority" because of their perceived success in areas such as education, income, and social stability. Another example includes people who feel benevolent toward traditional women but hostile toward nontraditional women. Or even ageist people who feel respect toward older adults but, at the same time, worry about the burden they place on public welfare programs. A simple way to understand these mixed feelings, across a variety of groups, results from the **Stereotype Content Mode**l (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007).

When people learn about a new group, they first want to know if its intentions of the people in this group are for good or ill. Like the guard at night: "Who goes there, friend or foe?" If the other group has good, cooperative intentions, we view them as warm and trustworthy and often consider them part of "our side." However, if the other group is cold and competitive or full of exploiters, we often view them as a threat and treat them accordingly. After learning the group's intentions, though, we also want to know whether they are competent enough to act on them (if they are incompetent, or unable, their intentions matter less). These two simple dimensions—**warmth and competence**—together map how groups relate to each other in society.

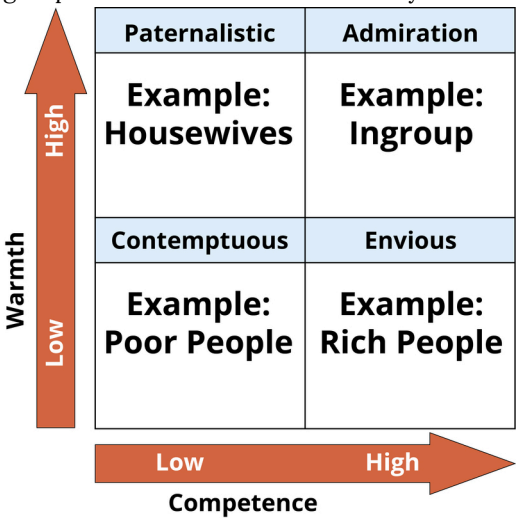

Figure 1: Stereotype Content Model – 4 kinds of stereotypes that form from perceptions of competence and warmth

There are common stereotypes of people from all sorts of categories and occupations that lead them to be classified along these two dimensions. For example, a stereotypical "housewife" would be seen as high in warmth but lower in competence. This is not to suggest that actual housewives are not competent, of course, but that they are not widely admired for their competence in the same way as scientific pioneers, trendsetters, or captains of industry. At another end of the spectrum are homeless people and drug addicts, stereotyped as not having good intentions (perhaps exploitative for not trying to play by the rules), and likewise being incompetent (unable) to do anything useful. These groups reportedly make society more disgusted than any other groups do.

Some group stereotypes are mixed, high on one dimension and low on the other. Groups stereotyped as competent but not warm, for example, include rich people and outsiders good at business. These groups that are seen as "competent but cold" make people feel some envy, admitting that these others may have some talent but resenting them for not being "people like us." The "model minority" stereotype mentioned earlier includes people with this excessive competence but deficient sociability.

The other mixed combination is high warmth but low competence. Groups who fit this combination include older people and disabled people. Others report pitying them, but only so long as they stay in their place. In an effort to combat this negative stereotype, disability- and elderly-rights activists try to eliminate that pity, hopefully gaining respect in the process.

Altogether, these four kinds of stereotypes and their associated emotional prejudices (pride, disgust, envy, pity) occur all over the world for each of society's own groups. These maps of the group terrain predict specific types of discrimination for specific kinds of groups, underlining how bias is not exactly equal opportunity.

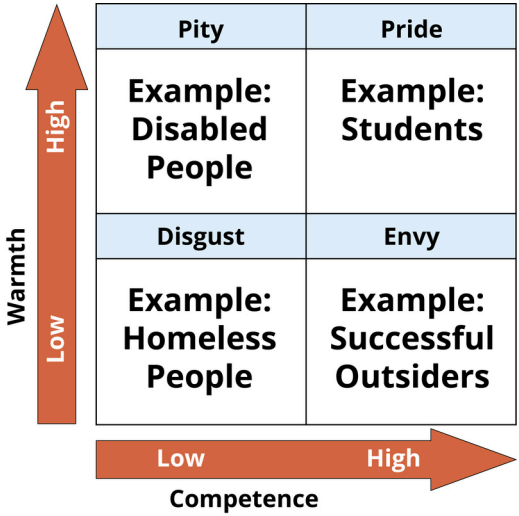

Figure 2: Combinations of perceived warmth and confidence and the associated behaviors/emotional prejudices.

Conclusion: 21st Century Prejudices

As the world becomes more interconnected—more collaborations between countries, more intermarrying between different groups—more and more people are encountering greater diversity of others in everyday life. Just ask yourself if you've ever been asked, "What *are* you?" Such a question would be preposterous if you were only surrounded by members of your own group. Categories, then, are becoming more and more uncertain, unclear, volatile, and complex (Bodenhausen & Peery, 2009). People's identities are multifaceted, intersecting across gender, race, class, age, region, and more. Identities are not so simple, but maybe as the 21st century unfurls, we will recognize each other by the content of our character instead of the cover on our outside.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you know more people from different kinds of social groups than your parents did?
2. How often do you hear people criticizing groups without knowing anything about them?
3. Take the IAT. Could you feel that some associations are easier than others?
4. What groups illustrate ambivalent biases, seemingly competent but cold, or warm but incompetent?
5. Do you or someone you know believe that group hierarchies are inevitable? Desirable?
6. How can people learn to get along with people who seem different from them?

Vocabulary

Automatic bias

Automatic biases are unintended, immediate, and irresistible.

Blatant biases

Blatant biases are conscious beliefs, feelings, and behavior that people are perfectly willing to admit, are mostly hostile, and openly favor their own group.

Discrimination

Discrimination is behavior that advantages or disadvantages people merely based on their group membership.

Implicit Association Test

Implicit Association Test (IAT) measures relatively automatic biases that favor own group relative to other groups.

Prejudice

Prejudice is an evaluation or emotion toward people merely based on their group membership.

Social dominance orientation

Social dominance orientation (SDO) describes a belief that group hierarchies are inevitable in all societies and even good, to maintain order and stability.

Social identity theory

Social identity theory notes that people categorize each other into groups, favoring their own group.

Stereotype Content Model

Stereotype Content Model shows that social groups are viewed according to their perceived warmth and competence.

Stereotypes

Stereotype is a belief that characterizes people based merely on their group membership.

Subtle biases

Subtle biases are automatic, ambiguous, and ambivalent, but real in their consequences.

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13. Cooperation

Cooperation

Humans are social animals. This means we work together in groups to achieve goals that benefit everyone. From building skyscrapers to delivering packages to remote island nations, modern life requires that people cooperate with one another. However, people are also motivated by self-interest, which often stands as an obstacle to effective cooperation. This module explores the concept of cooperation and the processes that both help and hinder it.

Learning Objectives

- Define "cooperation"
- Distinguish between different social value orientations
- List 2 influences on cooperation
- Explain 2 methods psychologists use to research cooperation

Introduction

As far back as the early 1800s, people imagined constructing a tunnel under the sea to connect France and England. But, digging under the English Channel—a body of water spanning more than 20 miles (32 km)—would be an enormous and difficult undertaking. It would require a massive amount of resources as well as coordinating the efforts of people from two separate nations,

speaking two different languages. Not until 1988 did the idea of the Channel Tunnel (or "Chunnel" as it is known) change from dream to reality, as construction began. It took ten different construction companies– financed by three separate banks– six years to complete the project. Even today, decades later, the Chunnel is an amazing feat of engineering and collaboration. Seen through the lens of psychological science, it stands as an inspiring example of what is possible when people work together. Humans *need* to cooperate with others to survive and to thrive. Cooperation, or the coordination of multiple individuals toward a goal that benefits the entire group, is a fundamental feature of human social life.

The Channel Tunnel – an example of real-world cooperation between people. [Image: Sam Churchill, http://goo.gl/ildZrk, CC BY 2.0, http://goo.gl/v4Y0Zv]

Whether on the playground with friends, at home with family, or at work with colleagues, cooperation is a natural instinct (Keltner, Kogan, Piff, & Saturn, 2014). Children as young as 14 months cooperate with others on joint tasks (Warneken, Chen, & Tomasello 2006; Warneken & Tomasello, 2007). Humans' closest evolutionary relatives, chimpanzees and bonobos, maintain long-term cooperative relationships as well, sharing resources and caring for

each other's young (de Waal & Lanting, 1997; Langergraber, Mitani, & Vigilant, 2007). Ancient animal remains found near early human settlements suggest that our ancestors hunted in cooperative groups (Mithen, 1996). Cooperation, it seems, is embedded in our evolutionary heritage.

Yet, cooperation can also be difficult to achieve; there are often breakdowns in people's ability to work effectively in teams, or in their willingness to collaborate with others. Even with issues that can only be solved through large-scale cooperation, such as climate change and world hunger, people can have difficulties joining forces with others to take collective action. Psychologists have identified numerous individual and situational factors that influence the effectiveness of cooperation across many areas of life. From the trust that people place in others to the lines they draw between "us" and "them," many different processes shape cooperation. This module will explore these individual, situational, and cultural influences on cooperation.

The Prisoner's Dilemma

Imagine that you are a participant in a social experiment. As you sit down, you are told that you will be playing a game with another person in a separate room. The other participant is also part of the experiment but the two of you will never meet. In the experiment, there is the possibility that you will be awarded some money. Both you and your unknown partner are required to make a choice: either choose to "cooperate," maximizing your combined reward, or "defect," (not cooperate) and thereby maximize your individual reward. The choice you make, along with that of the other participant, will result in one of three unique outcomes to this task, illustrated below in Figure 1. If you and your partner *both cooperate* (1), you will each receive $5. If you and your partner *both defect* (2), you will each receive $2. However, if *one partner defects*

and the other partner cooperates (3), the defector will receive $8, while the cooperator will receive nothing. Remember, you and your partner cannot discuss your strategy. Which would you choose? Striking out on your own promises big rewards but you could also lose everything. Cooperating, on the other hand, offers the best benefit for the most people but requires a high level of trust.

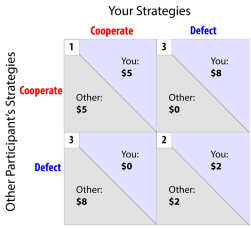

Figure 1. The various possible outcomes of a prisoner's dilemma scenario

This scenario, in which two people independently choose between cooperation and defection, is known as the **prisoner's dilemma**. It gets its name from the situation in which two prisoners who have committed a crime are given the opportunity to either (A) both confess their crime (and get a moderate sentence), (B) rat out their accomplice (and get a lesser sentence), or (C) both remain silent (and avoid punishment altogether). Psychologists use various forms of the prisoner's dilemma scenario to study self-interest and cooperation. Whether framed as a monetary game or a prison game, the prisoner's dilemma illuminates a conflict at the core of many decisions to cooperate: it pits the motivation to maximize *personal reward* against the motivation to maximize *gains for the group* (you and your partner combined).

For someone trying to maximize his or her own personal reward, the most "rational" choice is to defect (not cooperate), because defecting always results in a larger personal reward, regardless of the partner's choice. However, when the two participants view their partnership as a joint effort (such as a friendly relationship), cooperating is the best strategy of all, since it provides the largest combined sum of money ($10—which they share), as opposed to

partial cooperation ($8), or mutual defection ($4). In other words, although defecting represents the "best" choice from an individual perspective, it is also the worst choice to make for the group as a whole.

This divide between personal and collective interests is a key obstacle that prevents people from cooperating. Think back to our earlier definition of cooperation: cooperation is when multiple partners work together toward a common goal that will benefit everyone. As is frequent in these types of scenarios, even though cooperation may benefit the whole group, individuals are often able to earn even larger, personal rewards by defecting—as demonstrated in the prisoner's dilemma example above.

Do you like music? You can see a small, real-world example of the prisoner's dilemma phenomenon at live music concerts. At venues with seating, many audience members will choose to stand, hoping to get a better view of the musicians onstage. As a result, the people sitting directly behind those now-standing people are also forced to stand to see the action onstage. This creates a chain reaction in which the entire audience now has to stand, just to see over the heads of the crowd in front of them. While choosing to stand may improve one's own concert experience, it creates a literal barrier for the rest of the audience, hurting the overall experience of the group.

Simple models of rational self-interest predict 100% defection in cooperative tasks. That is, if people were only interested in benefiting themselves, we would always expect to see selfish behavior. Instead, there is a surprising tendency to cooperate in the prisoner's dilemma and similar tasks (Batson & Moran, 1999; Oosterbeek, Sloof, Van De Kuilen, 2004). Given the clear benefits to defect, why then do some people choose to cooperate, whereas others choose to defect?

Individual Differences in Cooperation

Social Value Orientation

One key factor related to individual differences in cooperation is the extent to which people value not only their own outcomes, but also the outcomes of others. **Social value orientation** (SVO) describes people's preferences when dividing important resources between themselves and others (Messick & McClintock, 1968). A person might, for example, generally be competitive with others, or cooperative, or self-sacrificing. People with different social values differ in the importance they place on their own positive outcomes relative to the outcomes of others. For example, you might give your friend gas money because she drives you to school, even though that means you will have less spending money for the weekend. In this example, you are demonstrating a cooperative orientation.

People generally fall into one of three categories of SVO: cooperative, individualistic, or competitive. While most people want to bring about positive outcomes for all (cooperative orientation), certain types of people are less concerned about the outcomes of others (individualistic), or even seek to undermine others in order to get ahead (competitive orientation).

Are you curious about your own orientation? One technique psychologists use to sort people into one of these categories is to have them play a series of decomposed games—short laboratory exercises that involve making a choice from various distributions of resources between oneself and an "other." Consider the example shown in Figure 2, which offers three different ways to distribute a valuable resource (such as money). People with *competitive* SVOs, who try to maximize their relative advantage over others, are most likely to pick option A. People with *cooperative* SVOs, who try to maximize joint gain for both themselves and others, are more likely to split the resource evenly, picking option B. People

with *individualistic* SVOs, who always maximize gains to the self, regardless of how it affects others, will most likely pick option C.

SVO decomposed game	A	B	C
You get	**500**	**500**	**550**
Other gets	**100**	**500**	**300**

Figure 2. Example of an SVO decomposed game used to determine how competitive or cooperative a person is.

Researchers have found that a person's SVO predicts how cooperative he or she is in both laboratory experiments and the outside world. For example, in one laboratory experiment, groups of participants were asked to play a **commons dilemma game**. In this game, participants each took turns drawing from a central collection of points to be exchanged for real money at the end of the experiment. These points represented a common-pool resource for the group, like valuable goods or services in society (such as farm land, ground water, and air quality) that are freely accessible to everyone but prone to overuse and degradation. Participants were told that, while the common-pool resource would gradually replenish after the end of every turn, taking too much of the resource too quickly would eventually deplete it. The researchers found that participants with cooperative SVOs withdrew fewer resources from the common-pool than those with competitive and individualistic SVOs, indicating a greater willingness to cooperate with others and act in a way that is sustainable for the group (Kramer, McClintock, & Messick, 1986; Roch & Samuelson, 1997).

Research has also shown that people with cooperative SVOs are more likely to commute to work using public transportation—an act of cooperation that can help reduce carbon emissions—rather than drive themselves, compared to people with competitive and individualistic SVOs (Van Vugt, Meertens, & Van Lange, 1995; Van Vugt, Van Lange, & Meertens, 1996). People with cooperative SVOs also more frequently engage in behavior intended to help others, such as volunteering and giving money to charity (McClintock & Allison, 1989; Van Lange, Bekkers, Schuyt, Van Vugt, 2007). Taken

together, these findings show that people with cooperative SVOs act with greater consideration for the overall well-being of others and the group as a whole, using resources in moderation and taking more effortful measures (like using public transportation to protect the environment) to benefit the group.

Empathic Ability

Feelings of empathy lead to greater levels of cooperation. Research shows that even young children cooperate more when experiencing feelings of empathy. [Image: US Army, https://goo.gl/psWXOe, CC BY 2.0, https://goo.gl/BRvSA7]

Empathy is the ability to feel and understand another's emotional experience. When we empathize with someone else, we take on that person's perspective, imagining the world from his or her point of view and vicariously experiencing his or her emotions (Davis, 1994; Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010). Research has shown that when people empathize with their partner, they act with greater cooperation and overall **altruism**—the desire to help the partner, even at a potential cost to the self. People that can experience and understand the emotions of others are better able to work with others in groups, earning higher job performance ratings on average from their supervisors, even after adjusting for different types of work and other aspects of personality (Côté & Miners, 2006).

When empathizing with a person in distress, the natural desire to help is often expressed as a desire to cooperate. In one study, just before playing an economic game with a partner in another room, participants were given a note revealing that their partner had just gone through a rough breakup and needed some cheering up. While half of the subjects were urged by the experimenters to "remain objective and detached," the other half were told to "try and imagine how the other person feels." Though both groups received the same information about their partner, those who were encouraged to engage in empathy—by actively experiencing their partner's emotions—acted with greater cooperation in the economic game (Batson & Moran, 1999). The researchers also found that people who empathized with their partners were more likely to act cooperatively, even after being told that their partner had already made a choice to *not* cooperate (Batson & Ahmad, 2001)! Evidence of the link between empathy and cooperation has even been found in studies of preschool children (Marcus, Telleen, & Roke, 1979). From a very early age, emotional understanding can foster cooperation.

Although empathizing with a partner can lead to more cooperation between two people, it can also undercut cooperation within larger groups. In groups, empathizing with a single person

can lead people to abandon broader cooperation in favor of helping only the target individual. In one study, participants were asked to play a cooperative game with three partners. In the game, participants were asked to (A) donate resources to a central pool, (B) donate resources to a specific group member, or (C) keep the resources for themselves. According to the rules, all donations to the central pool would be increased by 50% then distributed evenly, resulting in a net gain to the entire group. Objectively, this might seem to be the best option. However, when participants were encouraged to imagine the feelings of one of their partners said to be in distress, they were more likely to donate their tickets to that partner and not engage in cooperation with the group—rather than remaining detached and objective (Batson et al., 1995). Though empathy can create strong cooperative bonds between individuals, it can sometimes lead to actions that, despite being well-intentioned, end up undermining the group's best interests.

Situational Influences of Cooperation

Communication and Commitment

Open communication between people is one of the best ways to promote cooperation (Dawes, McTavish, & Shaklee, 1977; Dawes, 1988). This is because communication provides an opportunity to size up the trustworthiness of others. It also affords us a chance to prove our own trustworthiness, by verbally committing to cooperate with others. Since cooperation requires people to enter a **state of vulnerability** and trust with partners, we are very sensitive to the social cues and interactions of potential partners before deciding to cooperate with them.

In one line of research, groups of participants were allowed to

chat for five minutes before playing a multi-round "public goods" game. During the chats, the players were allowed to discuss game strategies and make verbal commitments about their in-game actions. While some groups were able to reach a consensus on a strategy (e.g., "always cooperate"), other groups failed to reach a consensus within their allotted five minutes or even picked strategies that ensured *non*cooperation (e.g., "every person for themselves"). The researchers found that when group members made explicit commitments to each other to cooperate, they ended up honoring those commitments and acting with greater cooperation. Interestingly, the effect of face-to-face verbal commitments persisted even when the cooperation game itself was completely anonymous (Kerr and Kaufman-Gilliland, 1994; Kerr, Garst, Lewandowski, & Harris, 1997). This suggests that those who explicitly commit to cooperate are driven not by the fear of external punishment by group members, but by their own personal desire to honor such commitments. In other words, once people make a specific promise to cooperate, they are driven by "that still, small voice"—the voice of their own inner conscience—to fulfill that commitment (Kerr et al., 1997).

Trust

Trust is essential for cooperation, people are much more motivated to cooperate if they know others in the group will support one another. [Image: Wesley Fryer, https://goo.gl/LKNLWp, CC BY-SA 2.0, https://goo.gl/rxiUsF]

When it comes to cooperation, trust is key (Pruitt & Kimmel, 1977; Parks, Henager, & Scamahorn, 1996; Chaudhuri, Sopher, & Strand, 2002). Working with others toward a common goal requires a level of faith that our partners will repay our hard work and generosity, and not take advantage of us for their own selfish gains. Social trust, or the belief that another person's actions will be beneficial to one's own interests (Kramer, 1999), enables people

to work together as a single unit, pooling their resources to accomplish more than they could individually. Trusting others, however, depends on their actions and reputation.

One common example of the difficulties in trusting others that you might recognize from being a student occurs when you are assigned a group project. Many students dislike group projects because they worry about "social loafing"—the way that one person expends less effort but still benefits from the efforts of the group. Imagine, for example, that you and five other students are assigned to work together on a difficult class project. At first, you and your group members split the work up evenly. As the project continues, however, you notice that one member of your team isn't doing his "fair share." He fails to show up to meetings, his work is sloppy, and he seems generally uninterested in contributing to the project. After a while, you might begin to suspect that this student is trying to get by with minimal effort, perhaps assuming others will pick up the slack. Your group now faces a difficult choice: either join the slacker and abandon all work on the project, causing it to collapse, or keep cooperating and allow for the possibility that the uncooperative student may receive a decent grade for others' work.

If this scenario sounds familiar to you, you're not alone. Economists call this situation the **free rider problem**—when individuals benefit from the cooperation of others without contributing anything in return (Grossman & Hart, 1980). Although these sorts of actions may benefit the free rider in the short-term, free riding can have a negative impact on a person's social reputation over time. In the above example, for instance, the "free riding" student may develop a reputation as lazy or untrustworthy, leading others to be less willing to work with him in the future.

Indeed, research has shown that a poor reputation for cooperation can serve as a warning sign for others *not* to cooperate with the person in disrepute. For example, in one experiment involving a group economic game, participants seen as being uncooperative were punished harshly by their fellow participants. According to the rules of the game, individuals took turns being

either a “donor” or a “receiver” over the course of multiple rounds. If donors chose to give up a small sum of actual money, receivers would receive a slightly larger sum, resulting in an overall net gain. However, unbeknownst to the group, one participant was secretly instructed *never* to donate. After just a few rounds of play, this individual was effectively shunned by the rest of the group, receiving almost zero donations from the other members (Milinski, Semmann, Bakker, & Krambeck, 2001). When someone is seen being consistently uncooperative, other people have no incentive to trust him/her, resulting in a collapse of cooperation.

On the other hand, people are more likely to cooperate with others who have a good reputation for cooperation and are therefore deemed trustworthy. In one study, people played a group economic game similar to the one described above: over multiple rounds, they took turns choosing whether to donate to other group members. Over the course of the game, donations were more frequently given to individuals who had been generous in earlier rounds of the game (Wedekind & Milinski, 2000). In other words, individuals seen cooperating with others were afforded a reputational advantage, earning them more partners willing to cooperate and a larger overall monetary reward.

Group Identification

Sometimes the groups with which we identify can be formed based on preferences. Are you a dog person or a cat person? Just knowing that someone else shares your preference can affect the cooperation between you. [Image: Doris Meta F, https://goo.gl/k8Zi6N, CC BY-NC 2.0, https://goo.gl/tgFydH]

Another factor that can impact cooperation is a person's s**ocial identity**, or the extent to which he or she identifies as a member of a particular social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979/1986). People can identify with groups of all shapes and sizes: a group might be relatively small, such as a local high school class, or very large, such as a national citizenship or a political party. While these groups are often bound together by shared goals and values, they can also form according to seemingly arbitrary qualities, such as musical

taste, hometown, or even completely randomized assignment, such as a coin toss (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971; Bigler, Brown, & Markell, 2001; Locksley, Ortiz, & Hepburn, 1980). When members of a group place a high value on their group membership, their identity (the way they view themselves) can be shaped in part by the goals and values of that group.

When people strongly identify with a group, their own well-being becomes bound to the welfare of that group, increasing their willingness to make personal sacrifices for its benefit. We see this with sports fans. When fans heavily identify with a favorite team, they become elated when the team wins and sad when the team loses. Die-hard fans often make personal sacrifices to support their team, such as braving terrible weather, paying high prices for tickets, and standing and chanting during games.

Research shows that when people's group identity is emphasized (for example, when laboratory participants are referred to as "group members" rather than "individuals"), they are less likely to act selfishly in a commons dilemma game. In such experiments, so-called "group members" withdraw fewer resources, with the outcome of promoting the sustainability of the group (Brewer & Kramer, 1986). In one study, students who strongly identified with their university were less likely to leave a cooperative group of fellow students when given an attractive option to exit (Van Vugt & Hart, 2004). In addition, the strength of a person's identification with a group or organization is a key driver behind participation in large-scale cooperative efforts, such as collective action in political and workers' groups (Klandersman, 2002), and engaging in organizational citizenship behaviors (Cropanzano & Byrne, 2000).

Emphasizing group identity is not without its costs: although it can increase cooperation *within* groups, it can also undermine cooperation *between* groups. Researchers have found that groups interacting with other groups are more competitive and less cooperative than individuals interacting with other individuals, a phenomenon known as interindividual-intergroup discontinuity (Schopler & Insko, 1999; Wildschut, Pinter, Vevea,

Insko, & Schopler, 2003). For example, groups interacting with other groups displayed greater self-interest and reduced cooperation in a prisoner's dilemma game than did individuals completing the same tasks with other individuals (Insko et al., 1987). Such problems with trust and cooperation are largely due to people's general reluctance to cooperate with members of an outgroup, or those outside the boundaries of one's own social group (Allport, 1954; Van Vugt, Biel, Snyder, & Tyler, 2000). Outgroups do not have to be explicit rivals for this effect to take place. Indeed, in one study, simply telling groups of participants that other groups preferred a different style of painting led them to behave less cooperatively than pairs of individuals completing the same task (Insko, Kirchner, Pinter, Efaw, & Wildschut, 2005). Though a strong group identity can bind individuals within the group together, it can also drive divisions between different groups, reducing overall trust and cooperation on a larger scope.

Under the right circumstances, however, even rival groups can be turned into cooperative partners in the presence of superordinate goals. In a classic demonstration of this phenomenon, Muzafer Sherif and colleagues observed the cooperative and competing behaviors of two groups of twelve-year-old boys at a summer camp in Robber's Cave State Park, in Oklahoma (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). The twenty-two boys in the study were all carefully interviewed to determine that none of them knew each other beforehand. Importantly, Sherif and colleagues kept both groups unaware of each other's existence, arranging for them to arrive at separate times and occupy different areas of the camp. Within each group, the participants quickly bonded and established their own group identity—"The Eagles" and "The Rattlers"—identifying leaders and creating flags decorated with their own group's name and symbols.

For the next phase of the experiment, the researchers revealed the existence of each group to the other, leading to reactions of anger, territorialism, and verbal abuse between the two. This behavior was further compounded by a series of competitive group

activities, such as baseball and tug-of-war, leading the two groups to engage in even more spiteful behavior: The Eagles set fire to The Rattlers' flag, and The Rattlers retaliated by ransacking The Eagles' cabin, overturning beds and stealing their belongings. Eventually, the two groups refused to eat together in the same dining hall, and they had to be physically separated to avoid further conflict.

However, in the final phase of the experiment, Sherif and colleagues introduced a dilemma to both groups that could only be solved through mutual cooperation. The researchers told both groups that there was a *shortage of drinking water* in the camp, supposedly due to "vandals" damaging the water supply. As both groups gathered around the water supply, attempting to find a solution, members from each group offered suggestions and worked together to fix the problem. Since the lack of drinking water affected both groups equally, both were highly motivated to try and resolve the issue. Finally, after 45 minutes, the two groups managed to clear a stuck pipe, allowing fresh water to flow. The researchers concluded that when conflicting groups share a superordinate goal, they are capable of shifting their attitudes and bridging group differences to become cooperative partners. The insights from this study have important implications for group-level cooperation. Since many problems facing the world today, such as climate change and nuclear proliferation, affect individuals of all nations, and are best dealt with through the coordinated efforts of different groups and countries, emphasizing the shared nature of these dilemmas may enable otherwise competing groups to engage in cooperative and collective action.

Culture

There are cultural differences in how and how much people cooperate. Some societies require more cooperation to ensure survival. [Image: Cindy Cornett Seigle, http://goo.gl/u0kE9Z, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, http://goo.gl/iF4hmM]

Culture can have a powerful effect on people's beliefs about and ways they interact with others. Might culture also affect a person's tendency toward cooperation? To answer this question, Joseph Henrich and his colleagues surveyed people from 15 small-scale societies around the world, located in places such as Zimbabwe, Bolivia, and Indonesia. These groups varied widely in the ways they traditionally interacted with their environments: some practiced small-scale agriculture, others foraged for food, and still others were nomadic herders of animals (Henrich et al., 2001).

To measure their tendency toward cooperation, individuals of each society were asked to play the ultimatum game, a task similar in nature to the prisoner's dilemma. The game has two players: Player A (the "allocator") is given a sum of money (equal to two days' wages) and allowed to donate any amount of it to Player B (the "responder"). Player B can then either accept or reject Player A's offer. If Player B accepts the offer, both players keep their agreed-upon amounts. However, if Player B rejects the offer, then neither player receives anything. In this scenario, the responder can use his/her authority to punish unfair offers, even though it requires giving up his or her own reward. In turn, Player A must be careful to propose an acceptable offer to Player B, while still trying to maximize his/her own outcome in the game.

According to a model of rational economics, a self-interested Player B should always choose to accept any offer, no matter how small or unfair. As a result, Player A should always try to offer the minimum possible amount to Player B, in order to maximize his/her own reward. Instead, the researchers found that people in these 15 societies donated on average 39% of the sum to their partner (Henrich et al., 2001). This number is almost identical to the amount that people of Western cultures donate when playing the ultimatum game (Oosterbeek et al., 2004). These findings suggest that allocators in the game, instead of offering the least possible amount, try to maintain a sense of fairness and "shared rewards" in the game, in part so that their offers will not be rejected by the responder.

Henrich and colleagues (2001) also observed significant variation between cultures in terms of their level of cooperation. Specifically, the researchers found that the extent to which individuals in a culture needed to collaborate with each other to gather resources to survive predicted how likely they were to be cooperative. For example, among the people of the Lamelara in Indonesia, who survive by hunting whales in groups of a dozen or more individuals, donations in the ultimatum game were extremely high—approximately 58% of the total sum. In contrast, the

Machiguenga people of Peru, who are generally economically independent at the family level, donated much less on average—about 26% of the total sum. The interdependence of people for survival, therefore, seems to be a key component of why people decide to cooperate with others.

Though the various survival strategies of small-scale societies might seem quite remote from your own experiences, take a moment to think about how your life is dependent on collaboration with others. Very few of us in industrialized societies live in houses we build ourselves, wear clothes we make ourselves, or eat food we grow ourselves. Instead, we depend on others to provide specialized resources and products, such as food, clothing, and shelter that are essential to our survival. Studies show that Americans give about 40% of their sum in the ultimatum game—less than the Lamelara give, but on par with most of the small-scale societies sampled by Henrich and colleagues (Oosterbeek et al., 2004). While living in an industrialized society might not require us to hunt in groups like the Lamelara do, we still depend on others to supply the resources we need to survive.

Conclusion

Cooperation is an important part of our everyday lives. Practically every feature of modern social life, from the taxes we pay to the street signs we follow, involves multiple parties working together toward shared goals. There are many factors that help determine whether people will successfully cooperate, from their culture of origin and the trust they place in their partners, to the degree to which they empathize with others. Although cooperation can sometimes be difficult to achieve, certain diplomatic practices, such as emphasizing shared goals and engaging in open communication, can promote teamwork and even break down rivalries. Though choosing not to cooperate can sometimes achieve a larger reward

for an individual in the short term, cooperation is often necessary to ensure that the group as a whole––including all members of that group—achieves the optimal outcome.

Outside Resources

Experiment: Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation: The Robbers Cave Experiment – An online version of Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, and Sherif's (1954/1961) study, which includes photos.

http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Sherif/

Video: A clip from a reality TV show, "Golden Balls", that pits players against each other in a high-stakes Prisoners' Dilemma situation.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=p3Uos2fzIJ0%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Video: Describes recent research showing how chimpanzees naturally cooperate with each other to accomplish tasks.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=fME0_RsEXiI%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Video: The Empathic Civilization – A 10 minute, 39 second animated talk that explores the topics of empathy.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=xjarMIXA2q8%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Video: Tragedy of the Commons, Part 1 – What happens when

many people seek to share the same, limited resource?

https://youtube.com/watch?v=KZDjPnzoge0%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Video: Tragedy of the Commons, Part 2 – This video (which is 1 minute, 27 seconds) discusses how cooperation can be a solution to the commons dilemma.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=IVwk6VIxBXg%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Video: Understanding the Prisoners' Dilemma.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=t9Lo2fgxWHw%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Video: Why Some People are More Altruistic Than Others – A 12 minute, 21 second TED talk about altruism. A psychologist, Abigail Marsh, discusses the research about altruism.

https://youtube.com/watch?v=m4KbUSRfnR4%3Fcolor%3Dred%26modestbranding%3D1%26showinfo%3D0%26origin%3Dhttps%3A

Web: Take an online test to determine your Social Values Orientation (SVO).

http://vlab.ethz.ch/svo/index-normal.html

Web: What is Social Identity? – A brief explanation of social identity, which includes specific examples.

http://people.howstuffworks.com/what-is-social-identity.htm

Discussion Questions

1. Which groups do you identify with? Consider sports teams, home towns, and universities. How does your identification with these groups make you feel about other members of these groups? What about members of competing groups?
2. Thinking of all the accomplishments of humanity throughout history which do you believe required the greatest amounts of cooperation? Why?
3. In your experience working on group projects—such as group projects for a class—what have you noticed regarding the themes presented in this module (eg. Competition, free riding, cooperation, trust)? How could you use the material you have just learned to make group projects more effective?

Vocabulary

Altruism

A desire to improve the welfare of another person, at a potential cost to the self and without any expectation of reward.

Commons dilemma game

A game in which members of a group must balance their desire for personal gain against the deterioration and possible collapse of a resource.

Cooperation

The coordination of multiple partners toward a common goal that will benefit everyone involved.

Empathy

The ability to vicariously experience the emotions of another person.

Free rider problem

A situation in which one or more individuals benefit from a common-pool resource without paying their share of the cost.

Outgroup

A social category or group with which an individual does not identify.

Prisoner's dilemma

A classic paradox in which two individuals must independently choose between defection (maximizing reward to the self) and cooperation (maximizing reward to the group).

Social value orientation (SVO)

An assessment of how an individual prefers to allocate resources between him- or herself and another person.

State of vulnerability

When a person places him or herself in a position in which he or she might be exploited or harmed. This is often done out of trust that others will not exploit the vulnerability.

Ultimatum game

An economic game in which a proposer (Player A) can offer a subset of resources to a responder (Player B), who can then either accept or reject the given proposal.

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14.