

Inclusion and alienation in social psychology assignment

[Psychology](#)



The relationship ended badly and subsequently the boy and eight of his friends began a vicious campaign of lulling and social alienation toward her. She was subjected to verbal taunts and threats of violence both in and outside of school. The gang of bullies harassed Phoebe on a regular basis. They often followed her home, continuing to taunt and insult Phoebe, and even threw things at her. After six weeks of the unyielding harassment, Phoebe could take it no longer. She returned home from school and hung herself in a hallway (CNN Wiretaps, 2010).

Following Phoebe's death, state prosecutors issued indictments against nine of her classmates, charging them with crimes ranging from stalking to auditory rape. Any punishment these individuals might receive will likely offer little solace to Phoebe's family and friends. What does this terrible event say about the nature of social ties, the impact of alienation, and people's need to feel a sense of belonging? Research reported by Bandmaster et al. (1995), Pickett et al. (2004), and others indicate that a need for belongingness is a fundamental human emotion and an essential component to psychological health. Bandmaster's Research Bandmaster, Roy and Leary (1995) suggest that a positive and secure sense of loneliness maintains a powerful and significant effect on both emotional and cognitive functioning. Feeling connected to others and a sense of belonging to a social group helps a person's overall wellbeing, improves physical health, and can assist a person's ability to adjust to adverse circumstances (Bandmaster et al. , 1995; Sanderson, 2009).

A lack of belonging, a sense of alienation, meanwhile, is detrimental to well-being and can compromise physical health and make adjusting to hardship <https://assignbuster.com/inclusion-and-alienation-in-social-psychology-assignment/>

all the more difficult (Bandmaster et al. , 1 995; Sanderson, 2009; Buss, 1991; Lastly, 1972). Ironically enough, the process of alienating one member of a social group can act to enhance the belongingness of the other members of the group. Sheriffs Research Research reported by Musher Sheriff (1958) and Decamps and Brown (1983) notes that the presence of a subordinate goal frequently acts to augment bonds among peers and reduce intercrop conflict.

Here a ‘ subordinate goal’ is a common goal that all members of the group collectively work toward; and the cooperation needed to achieve this common goal acts to strengthen the attachment bonds among members Of the group (Sheriff 1958). In this sense, the group of bullies who harassed Phoebe Prince attained a greater sense of connection, cohesion, and belongingness with one another by way of their mutual and collective tormenting of Phoebe.

It appears that one of the reasons why Phoebe was singled out by the group of bullies was her past romantic involvement with a boy from the bullying group. It is also likely, however, that she was made a target of their bullying because she came from a foreign county and was from a different cultural background. Outsider Research Studies reported by Huffman (2001), Morocco (1999), Brand et al. (1974) and there note that students who are from cultural minorities are very often the focus of alienation from members of the cultural majority.

Being from Ireland identified Phoebe as a type of ‘ outsider’ and this factor likely contributed to the bullies’ decision to target her (and may even have

<https://assignbuster.com/inclusion-and-alienation-in-social-psychology-assignment/>

been a factor in the teachers' and school administrators' neglecting to intervene on the matter until it was too late). Another factor that likely contributed to the bullying of Phoebe Prince was a lack of empathy on the part of her tormentors. Identification As reviewed in the last module, deficits in empathy can very often be a salient factor in cruel, antisocial behaviors.

The bullies' inability to empathize with what Phoebe was going through was possibly compounded by way of identification. Identification is a social psychology construct that describes a person's tendency to become caught up in a mob mentality and lose any sense of individual accountability (Zanzibar, 1970). That is to say, a person who is normally nonviolent and non-aggressive can become violent and aggressive when caught up in the angry mentality of a group. Research reported by Richer et al. (1995) suggests that difficult ties with individuation can become more pronounced when the members of the group are closely bonded or interconnected to one another (i.e., when there is a significant feeling of intergroup belongingness). In this sense, the nine students who bullied Phoebe may have gotten caught up in a demutualization mob-mentality where their individual senses of responsibility, compassion, and empathy toward Phoebe were significantly obscured. The Impact of Bullying Bullying in school settings is a substantial problem.

A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that nearly 30% of a large sample of middle and high school students reported moderate to frequent involvement with bullying – either as a victim of bullying and/or as the perpetrator of bullying (Manses et al., 2001). The

traditional concept of bullying usually involves direct aggression where a larger student intimidates or assaults a smaller student. Rachel Simmons (2002) points out, however, that many cases of bullying involve indirect or non-violent aggression (such as name-calling and the spreading of vicious rumors).

Simmons suggests that indirect aggression is the primary way in which female students bully one another. Non-Violent Aggression Bullying that involves non-violent/indirect aggression can be especially insidious because teachers and other authority figures often neglect to intercede. The situation is much more straight-forward when a bully hits or physically assaults a victim – and here it is much more likely that a teacher will intervene and the bully will be reprimanded.

When the bullying is non-violent, however, teachers are more likely to overlook it (Simmons, 2002; Whitney ; Smith, 1993). There were incidents where Phoebe Prince was physically assaulted, yet, for the most part, the bullying was non-violent and centered on verbal taunts and threats and this likely contributed to the teachers' and school administrators' failure to intervene. Research on the issue of student peer relations also focuses on those students who are typically the target of bullying and social alienation.

In particular, studies have noted that there is frequently a difference between students who are neglected by their peers and those who are rejected by their peers (Asher ; Wheeler, 1985; Newcomer et al. , 1993).

Neglected or Rejected Students Neglected students are those who do not fit in with specific groups or cliques and who just seem to be overlooked and

excluded by their peers. Rejected students, meanwhile, are those who are actively alienated and ostracized by their peers due to various factors ranging from ethnic/cultural differences to a general failure to conform to established norms.

A change in settings (such as transferring to a new school) is usually beneficial for those students who are neglected, but usually does not have an effect on those who are rejected (Asher ; Wheeler, 1985). Although it appears that Phoebe Prince was ‘ rejected’ by the bullies rather than ‘ neglected,’ it is likely that her transferring to a new school would have gone a long way toward improving her situation (and may have prevented her suicide).