

# Essay on the psychology of hate

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



Hate has been a subject of debate among social psychologists yet it remains a subject that has not been the focus of sufficient research. Individual components of hatred such as discrimination and prejudice have been associated with the buildup of aggression and there have been several studies dedicated to analyzing their effects on the society, hatred itself remains fairly under-researched. Mob behavior has been analyzed and identified as triggering abnormally aggressive behavior in individuals who would otherwise be relatively passive. This can be categorized as situational hatred. There is also the aggression that is triggered by differences in social standing and power struggles that creates hostility towards a particular group or section of society. This is deemed as interpersonal hatred.

The Social Influence approach towards prejudice and intergroup hostility suggests that being under the influence of a higher authority alters the behavior of an individual. There are several theories such as deindividuation , diffusion of responsibility and obedience to authority that support this approach. People have also been known to get influenced by powerful leaders who endorse such behavior or when they consider an act of violence to be just .

Pertaining to ingroups, Allport maintained that love towards your own group does not necessarily spur hatred towards other groups . However, current research on ingroups, prejudice and ethnocentrism reveals otherwise.

Laboratory testing as well as field research show that there is discrimination within ingroups as well. Hence, it becomes important that the origin hatred towards others and within one's own group is understood.

According to Sumner, it was the scarcity of resources that caused individuals to form groups in order to contend with others for resources and survival . Sherif took this view further by distinguishing an ingroup as being the result of positive interdependence while intergroup rivalry to negative interdependence . Allport noted that ingroups and outgroups are more easily defined as the concept of ' us' and them, i. e. people who are considered to be part of the groups and everyone else who is outside it.

The love for ingroups is considered to be universal and this is what drives the preference for ingroup behaviors. It is human nature to consider one's own group to be morally superior to all outgroups. The familiar is generally preferred over the unfamiliar. This behavior can be seen in various instances of discrimination and prejudice: a) rich-poor, b) man-woman, c) beauty-geek, and d) sexual orientation among others. Members of an ingroup prefer to maintain a distance from outgroups. However, whenever circumstances throw the two together, it spurs hatred. It is this mentality that, in its extremities, leads to the concept of ' ethnic cleansing' .

As mentioned earlier, ingroups mainly contend with outgroups over limited resources or for authority. When one groups anticipates or perceives a threat from the other, this triggers hatred. Common goals can also be a binding force among intergroups, making them closer knit. Struggling for power is also a major cause of hatred and has been known to be the reason behind several international conflicts. Take, for example, the Palestinian-Jew struggle in the Middle East crisis or the fight for power among Shia and Sunni Muslim factions in Iraq. The size and influence of one group when compared

to other and their involvement in the struggle for power also leads to hatred and prejudice.

However, any member displaying positive interdependence with outgroups is most likely to be subject to discrimination and even ingroup hatred. For example, in times when the apartheid was at its peak, a white person supporting or even treating a black person with kindness would have been subject to ridicule among his 'own people'. This attitude among ingroups makes it difficult for anyone to break the cycle of hatred and bridge the gap between the ingroup and outgroup.

When hatred is felt, it is not necessary that it will reveal itself in the form of actions. There are many closet racists even today, who, although do not make derogatory remarks about colored people in public, do discriminate against them privately. This can be particularly harmful when people with hatred are in a position of power. For example, a person who hates homosexuals is highly unlikely to favor any law that is aimed at protecting the rights of the said group. However, whether hatred is kept a secret or revealed, it does more harm and little or no good.

When a person feels hatred towards another person, it is generally due to a personal preference. The hatred could be directed towards a person's appearance, habits or tastes among others. While hatred, of any kind, it never advisable, hatred against a person is lesser a devil than hatred directed towards a group or community. This is because, when one hates a person, the impact of the hatred ends with that particular person. However, when a person hates a group or community of people, the effects last for

longer and have a much wider scope. For example, one may hate an African American because of his or her inclination towards violence and abusive language. The person would feel the same hatred against a Chinese person displaying similar behavior. However, the hate would not be directed towards all African American or Chinese people. Such prejudice or discrimination would be easier to control.

Hate is a part of human nature and it cannot be uprooted all together. However, tolerance can be promoted in order to curb the extent of spread of hatred. While it is one of the duties of a fair government to form laws and regulations that protect the rights of all citizens alike, the responsibility does not lie with the government alone. Controlling the spread of hatred depends greatly on those who hate as well those who are hated. In the words of Gandhi, an eye for an eye will make the whole world blind. Responding to acts of violence with similar or greater extend of violence only adds fuel to the fire of hate.

In conclusion, while it may be difficult to understand the psychology of hate in its entirety, there are certain approaches that have been noted to be as close to accuracy as possible. That being said, understanding hate is crucial in order to effectively tackle it, on a community as well as individual level. While government laws should be effective enough to protect those who seek help, it is going to take a change of mindsets to truly curb and control the spread of hatred of all kinds.

## **Bibliography**

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