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# **PSY1102**

## **Introduction to Applied Psychology**

### **Class 23**

### **Social psychology (continued)**

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# Agenda for today

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## 1. Social relations

- a. Prejudice
- b. Aggression
- c. Attraction

In the last class, we'll cover:

- d. Altruism
- e. Conflict and peacemaking

# 1. Social relations

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- Having discussed a lot of material that was “dry”, the closing class addresses issues that, for better or worse, can get our blood stirring.

# 1a. Prejudice

## What is prejudice?

- Prejudice is an unjustifiable (and usually negative) attitude towards a group and its members. Prejudice generally involves stereotyped beliefs, negative feelings, and a predisposition to discriminatory action.
- Prejudice is a mixture of beliefs (here, stereotypes), emotions, and a predisposition to action.
  - A stereotype is a generalised (sometimes accurate but often over-generalised) belief about a group of people.
- Prejudice is a negative attitude; discrimination is an unjustifiable negative behaviour towards a group and its members.

# 1a. How prejudiced are people?

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- Prejudice exists in many forms:
  - Racial (e.g., black vs. white)
  - Ethnic (e.g., Hutu vs. Tutsi)
  - Religious (e.g., Catholic vs. Protestant in Northern Ireland, Shia vs. Sunni Muslims, Muslim vs. Hindu, Christian vs. Jew, and on and on)
  - Gender (male vs. female)
  - Sexual orientation (e.g., straight vs. gay)
  - Age (e.g., older vs. younger)
  - Economic or class (e.g., working class vs. nobility, rich vs. poor)
  - Cultural (e.g., francophone vs. anglophone in Canada, English vs. German in Europe)

# 1a. Social roots of prejudice

What are the social and emotional roots of prejudice?

- Prejudice can arise from inequalities, social divisions, and scapegoating, among other causes.
- Social inequalities include disparities in money, power, and prestige (“haves” vs. “have nots”).
  - The “haves” like the status quo, whereas the “have nots” want a rebalancing.
  - Gordon Allport was an influential voice in this aspect of social psychology, examining (among other things) how prejudice leads to discrimination in an ongoing cycle, including the blame-the-victim situation.

## 1a. Social roots of prejudice

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- In addition to social inequalities, the us and them division, which defines an in-group and an out-group, can contribute to prejudice.
  - Consider, for example, the dynamics of gangs.
  - In-group bias occurs even when groups are composed randomly.
- Although there are definite advantages to belonging to a group, tensions can arise between groups and between individuals from different groups when the aims and “territory” of the group outweigh those of the aggregate.
  - The strongest rivalries are between groups closest to each other.
  - The Catholic-Protestant split in Northern Ireland is particularly ironic, because the differences between the Roman Catholic liturgy (religious ceremony) and the High Anglican (Church of England) liturgy are minuscule.

## 1a. Emotional roots of prejudice

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- As demonstrated by Landau et al. (2004), restimulating terror in people (in this case, associated with the events of September 11, 2001) can increase support for “us” rather than “them”.
- Scapegoat theory is the theory that prejudice offers an outlet for anger by providing someone to blame. In this case, the relevant emotion is anger, not fear.
- Economic frustration can also be a contributing factor to economic or class-based prejudice.
  - For example, how would you feel if you lived in the US and, because of the economic downturn and the sub-prime mortgage scandal, you had lost your job, lost your home, and your family had been split up as you tried to make ends meet, while at the same time the bankers who contributed to the economic downturn were taking home \$10 million bonuses each year?



# 1a. Cognitive roots of prejudice

What are the cognitive roots of prejudice?

- We've considered social and emotional roots of prejudice. Cognitive roots seem curious because they should be more rational.
- We'll consider three topics:
  - Categorisation;
  - Vivid cases; and
  - The just-world phenomenon.

# 1a. Cognitive roots of prejudice: Categorisation

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- Categorisation is a way of simplifying the world. However, a category can also be a way of dividing people from each other.
- For example, “my group” is very diverse. By contrast, all the people in the other group are the same – they’re all out to hurt me, or to cheat me, or they all smell funny, or they all beat their children, etc.
- Moreover, people are subject to the other-race effect, which is the tendency to recall faces of one own race more accurately than faces of other races.
  - This is also called the cross-race effect and the own-race bias.
  - Note that this topic disregards the consensus that the term “race” has no biological meaning in its common use.

## 1a. Cognitive roots of prejudice: Other topics

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- The textbook describes the issue of vivid cases (page 697).
- The just-world phenomenon is the tendency for people to believe the world is just and that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get.
- If we believe that “bad people” get punished and “good people” get rewarded, then it is an illogical but small cognitive leap to assume that someone who is getting punished must be “bad”.
- An important issue here is hindsight bias. In recent years, we have heard public figures describe victims of sexual assault as “asking for it” because of their attire, and in recent years we heard the death of Florida teenager Trayvon Martin explained because he was wearing a hoodie. (See bottom of p. 697 in the textbook.)

## 1b. Aggression

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- Aggression is defined as any physical or verbal behaviour intended to hurt or destroy.
- As such, aggression is a destructive, not constructive, force in our social relations.
- We'll consider two factors that contribute to aggression:
  - The biology of aggression
  - Psychological and socio-cultural factors in aggression

## 1b. The biology of aggression

What biological factors make us more prone to hurt one another?

- Although aggression varies widely from culture to culture, it is clear that biological factors influence aggressive behaviour.
- We'll consider three types of influence:
  - Genetic influences
  - Neural influences
  - Biochemical influences

## 1b. The biology of aggression: genetic influences

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- Other than the Y chromosome present in all males, the textbook presents no solid evidence for genetic determinants of aggression in humans.
  - It has been suggested that men with an extra Y chromosome (XYY males or “supermales”) are more aggressive than XY males, but the evidence in the general population is not clear.
- Twin studies suggest correlated self-reporting of aggressiveness in identical twins.
- In other species – perhaps most noticeably in dogs – it seems clear that selective breeding can influence aggressiveness. However, it is not clear that environmental factors have been excluded entirely.

## 1b. The biology of aggression: neural influences

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- There is no one area of the brain that is the “source” of aggression.
- Neural structures involved in aggression include the limbic system, which is involved in emotions and emotional behaviour), and the frontal lobes, which tend to regulate or moderate impulsive behaviour.

## 1b. Biology of aggression: biochemical influences

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- Removal of testosterone from the system reduces aggression. This is especially effective if males are castrated before puberty. Administration of testosterone increases aggression. A natural reduction in testosterone with age is associated with reduced aggression.
- The other chemical that affects aggression is alcohol. A tendency towards increased aggression occurs even if one is not aware of having consumed alcohol.
- People incorrectly told they have consumed alcohol may show increased aggression, suggesting that learning may play a role.



## 1b. Psychological and socio-cultural factors

What psychological factors may trigger aggressive behaviour?

- Aversive events
- Social and cultural influences
- Observing models of aggression
- Acquiring social scripts
- Video games as teachers or releasers of violence

## 1b. Aversive events and aggression

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- The frustration-aggression principle posits that frustration (the blocking of an attempt to reach some goal) creates anger, which can generate aggression.
- Because the “fight-or-flight” reaction is fuelled by dumping adrenalin into our system, an event that causes this reaction can contribute to aggression, either by being aggressive itself or by having a suitable stimulus (e.g., a gun) around when the event occurs.
- There is also evidence that increased temperature is correlated with more aggressive acts.

## 1b. Social and cultural influences and aggression

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- In operant learning, the consequence of a behaviour may be a reward. If one behaves aggressively and is rewarded (e.g., with food, money, sex, etc.), then one can learn that aggression can bring rewards; this can increase the likelihood of future aggression.
  - Of course, aggression is different from assertiveness.
- Another contributing social factor is social exclusion, as typified by shunning, rejection, or bullying.
  - The lyrics of Gordon Lightfoot's song "For Lovin' Me" are a good example of viewing someone as a disposable commodity, especially the lines "I've had a hundred just like you / I'll have a thousand 'fore I'm through" ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpkATS6mjbc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpkATS6mjbc)).

## 1b. Social and cultural influences (continued)

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- Cultural influences can affect the likelihood of aggression. (See textbook, page 701.)
- The absence of a father-figure is associated with higher rates of imprisonment among US youths.
- An aggression-replacement programme can re-train groups and individuals to reduce aggression. Among other aspects, training focuses on using positive-focused language rather than phrasing that focuses on negative consequences.

## 1b. Observing models of aggression

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- We don't only learn from our parents, of course.
- There is evidence that we learn sexual roles from friends and other sources that we see as role models. In some cases, these sources can glorify or trivialise rape, where the victim can be portrayed as inviting or enjoying the experience (the rape myth). Mainstream examples:
  - *Gone With the Wind*
  - *Young Frankenstein*
- Pornography is also associated with various forms of abuse, but this appears to be attributable to sexual violence rather than to the erotic aspects of pornography.

## 1b. Aggression and acquiring social scripts

- One of the challenges of unravelling the causes of aggression is the complexity of aggression, including varieties of aggression and the circumstances under which aggression occurs.
- A social script is, in effect, a script that guides the behaviour of an individual, informing what is “normal”. For example:
  - If the individual was raised in a home where the husband hit the wife, this may guide future behaviour;
  - If pornography is the principal source of sex education, then the roles of the actors are “normal”; and so on.

John Lennon apologised for writing the song “Run For Your Life”, which contains lyrics such as “I’d rather see you dead, little girl / Than to be with another man.”

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv\\_Y1kbZbJA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv_Y1kbZbJA)

## 1b. Video games and aggression

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- Although most people who watch violent films do not commit similar acts of violence, it is legitimate to ask under what circumstances and to what extent engaging in simulated acts of consequence-free violence can contribute to violent behaviour.
- As we will see when we discuss attraction, the two-factor theory of emotion argues that the first factor (arousal) primes us to identify a target for releasing our emotion, whether the emotion is positive or negative.
- To the extent that video games can cause arousal, and perhaps offer a social script, they may have a role in fostering aggression.
- The catharsis hypothesis, arguing that we are less aggressive if we “blow off steam”, is not supported by evidence here.

## 1b. Aggression: a biopsychosocial phenomenon

- Figure 16.12 in the textbook (p. 705) identifies biological influences, psychological influences, and socio-cultural influences on aggression.

### Biological influences

- Genetic influences
- Biochemical influences, such as testosterone and alcohol
- Neural influences, such as severe head injury

### Psychological influences

- Dominating behaviour
- Believing you've drunk alcohol
- Frustration
- Aggressive role models
- Rewards for aggressive behaviour

### Socio-cultural influences

- Deindividuation
- Challenging environmental factors
- Parental models, etc.

Aggressive  
behaviour



## 1c. Attraction

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- The psychology of attraction
- Romantic love

## 1c. The psychology of attraction: proximity

Why do we befriend or fall in love with some people but not others? Answers: Proximity, physical attractiveness, and similarity.

- Proximity is defined as geographic (not emotional) nearness.
- Reasons you have a relationship with your friends are that:
  - you have met them (that is, you know who they are) and
  - you see them regularly.
- Although these may seem obvious, the converse is perhaps less obvious: one of the reasons that you are not friendly with Jim Bob Smith of Alberta is that you've never met him.
- Thus, the people near us are ones we are likely to befriend, to socialise with, and to marry: availability and convenience.
- What does proximity mean in the age of the Internet?

## 1c. Psychology of attraction: proximity (cont'd.)

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- The mere exposure effect is the phenomenon that repeated exposure to novel stimuli increases liking of them.
- Repeated exposure is more likely with proximity.

## 1c. Attraction: physical attractiveness

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- Physical attractiveness is another factor that influences who we are attracted to.
  - Physical attractiveness influences the gaze pattern of babies and is also relevant, albeit through friends, to some people who are blind.
- Physical attractiveness is also correlated with higher income, job success, and several other factors.
- The textbook provides (pp. 706-709) several examples of the role of physical attractiveness in attraction.
- For those obsessed with, or concerned about, their own physical attractiveness, remember Shakespeare's words: "Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind."

## **1c. The psychology of attraction: similarity**

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- The textbook provides (pp. 709-710) some examples of the role of similarity in attraction.

## 1c. Romantic love

How does romantic love typically change as time passes?

- The textbook considers two components of romantic love:
  - Passionate love, an aroused state of intense positive absorption in another, usually present at the beginning of a love relationship; and
  - Companionate love, the deep affectionate attachment we feel for those with whom our lives are intertwined.

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KC0DEggDg7g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KC0DEggDg7g);
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgNbS6\\_MCMg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MgNbS6_MCMg).

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=2c-1eOzpS6o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2c-1eOzpS6o).;
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylj1eWaFE9Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylj1eWaFE9Q).

## 1c. Romantic love: passionate love

- The two-factor theory of emotion argues that physical arousal and cognitive appraisal are both involved in an emotional response.
- Physical arousal is induced by an emotive stimulus. Once this state of arousal exists, the response is directed to the most opportune (and available) stimulus.
  - The arousal (via adrenalin) primes the individual, and the cognitive stimulus directs the arousal.
  - You should become familiar with the study of Dutton and Aron that took place on the Capilano Bridge in British Columbia.



## 1c. Romantic love: companionate love

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- The initial giddy sensation of romantic love typically diminishes with time, and is replaced by companionate love.
  - Because romantic love has a relatively short life, some non-Western societies see love as a feeble justification for marriage, and instead have instituted “arranged” marriages, which have lower divorce rates (for diverse reasons) than Western marriages.
- Factors important to a lasting relationship include:
  - Equity, a condition in which people receive from a relationship in proportion to what they give to it;
  - Self-disclosure, the revealing of intimate aspects of oneself to others (here, think back also to free association in psychoanalysis); and other factors mentioned in passing in the textbook, including:
  - Faithfulness; and
  - A happy sexual relationship.



## 1c. Romantic love: companionate love

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- Gordon Lightfoot is not only associated with the callousness of “For Lovin’ Me”. His “Song for a Winter’s Night” is from the opposite end of the spectrum:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_yQc-wGeYvk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_yQc-wGeYvk)

- For those preferring a female voice, the song was also covered by Sarah McLachlan:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=f660fEGaaJw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f660fEGaaJw)

# Summary: Class 23

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1. Social relations
  - a. Prejudice
  - b. Aggression
  - c. Attraction