

## The Design of Everyday Hate: A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

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### Abstract

Throughout history artists, poets, and writers have been interested in the nature of hate. Scientists from a variety of disciplines have also attempted to unravel its mysteries. Yet in spite of abundant theorizing and research, most modern scholars still complain that little is known about this complex emotion. In this study, a new approach has been taken. Following Heider's (1958) observation that scientists can often learn a great deal by exploring people's "common-sense" or "naïve psychologies," students at the University of Texas and participants from a number of Internet sites were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the nature of emotion. Using grounded theory and employing mixed-method analyses (qualitative and quantitative), four questions were explored: (1) What do people mean by hate? (2) Whom do they hate? (3) Why do people hate the people they do? (4) How do people attempt to deal with such feelings? From participants' answers, a theory concerning everyday hate was generated.

*Keywords: hate; grounded theory; qualitative analysis; quantitative analysis.*

In his Dictionary of Psychology, Reber (1985) defined hatred as:

A deep, enduring, intense emotion expressing animosity, anger, and hostility toward a person, group, or object. Hatred is usually assumed to be characterized by (a) the desire to harm or cause pain to the object of the emotion and (b) feelings of pleasure from the object's misfortunes. (p. 330)

Not all theorists would agree with this definition, of course. Emotions researchers have devoted a great deal of time and energy arguing about whether hate is an attitude, a cognitive mechanism, or an emotion (see Sternberg, 2005); whether it is a distinct emotion or tightly linked to a variety of other emotions (such as pride, rage, or anger); whether it is fueled by pride (or humiliation) or fear (or anger); and whether it sparks a desire to flee or to humiliate, hurt, and annihilate the object of one's hatred (see Allport, 1950; Arnold, 1960; Averill, 1991; Beck & Pretzer, 2004; Brewer, 1999; Davitz, 1969; Fehr & Russell, 1984; Gross, 1999; Izard, 1977; Keltner & Mandler, 1975; Kernberg, 1990, 1992; Levin & Rabrenovic, 2004; Mesquita & Frijda, 1992; Pedahzur & Yishi, 1999; Plutchik, 1980; Roseman, 1984;

Sternberg, 2005). Thus, it would be appropriate to accept the Reber definition as a working definition.

Throughout history, artists, writers, playwrights, and historians have been fascinated by the hatred people feel toward one another. In Euripides' *Medea*, Medea (driven mad by her hatred of Jason, who has betrayed her), slays their beloved children in an orgy of revenge. In the 5th century B.C.E., the Persians and Greeks waged a long and bitter war, marked by tribal enmities. From the 11th to 13th centuries, Christians waged a Holy war, determined to wrest Christian lands from the hated "infidels." In the 20th century, the Nazis slaughtered six million Jews in the Holocaust. In the past decade, the world has witnessed a plethora of the horrific: suicide bombers, mass murder, genocide, crimes against humanity, and global terrorism.

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have attempted to delineate the nature of hatred.

- *Psychoanalysts*. Traditionally, clinical theorists spoke of Thanatos (the will to destruction), Oedipal and Electra complexes, insecurity, defense mechanisms, and the fear of death as precursors to hate and rage (see Blum, 1997; Kernberg, 1992; Klein, 1975; McKellar, 1950; Moss, 2003; Strasser, 1999; Vitz & Mango, 1997).
- *Social psychologists*. In the wake of World War II, social psychologists (e.g., Allport, 1954) became interested in the authoritarian personality. Others focused on the interaction between cultural values (such as cultural stereotypes and prejudice), personality (narcissism and guilt), group dynamics, and the situation in which people found themselves (e.g., poverty), in an attempt to understand Neo-Nazi groups, anti-Semites, and people who hate those of different races and ethnic groups, religions, and sexual orientations (Altemeyer, 1981; Baumeister & Butz, 2004; Baumeister & Campbell, 1999; Beck & Pretzer, 2004; Brewer, 1999; Levin & Rabrenovic, 2004; Moss, 2003; Pedahzur & Yishi, 1999; Post, 1999; Sternberg, 2003; Staub, 2004). In recent years, Personal Relationship researchers have also attempted to unravel the mysteries of hatred (Duck, 1982; Fitness, 2000; Fitness & Fletcher, 1993; Rempel & Burris, 2005).
- *Sociologists*. Sociologists have long been interested in the impact of demographic variables—such as gender, age, and socio-economic status—on xenophobia, racism, hate crimes, and anti-immigrant enmities (Ehrlich & Pincus, 1999; Fein, 1993).
- *Social Workers*. Social workers have directly confronted the simmering hatreds that bedevil humans. They have explored such topics as child battering (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980), spousal abuse (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980), gang warfare, homophobia, and the like.

- *School psychologists.* School psychologists have often been interested in such topics as child abuse, class bullies, gang warfare, and so forth (Varma, 1993).
- *Political scientists.* Political scientists, like social psychologists, have been interested in gaining an understanding of political and ethnic hatreds, the Holocaust, genocide, and ethnic cleansing (Newman & Erber, 2002).

In spite of all this interest, scholars still complain that little is known about the antecedents, properties, or consequences of hatred (Sternberg, 2005). Today, most investigative articles end with a plea for more research.

In this paper, a different approach has been taken. In his classic text, Heider (1958) pointed out that one can gain a profound understanding of human behavior by exploring “naïve psychologies.” Additionally, Lincoln & Guba (1985) and Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1998) have attempted to provide a method for theorizing about less explored human behavior by using grounded theory. They argue that scholars should not start with a theory, but should develop one based on emergent categories (i.e., after categorizing participants’ responses into meaningful categories). In this paper we decided to take this approach (c.f., Davitz, 1969; McKeller, 1950).

In this study four questions have been explored: (1) What do people mean by hate? (2) Whom do they hate? (3) Why do people hate the people they do? (4) How do people attempt to deal with feelings of hatred? Considering the current debate on the phenomenon of hatred, it was considered reasonable to approach the study of hate from a grounded theory perspective when answering these questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). Both men and women from the University of Texas and from an Internet sample completed an online questionnaire inquiring about the people and groups they have hated. Answers for the open-ended questions were coded by categorizing concurrent themes of hate in an attempt to develop a general theory of the antecedents and consequences of hatred. Forced-choice answers were also examined in order to better understand participants’ hatred. From this approach, a theory concerning interpersonal hate emerged from the data. Hate seems to be directed at people who participants know and even love and rarely at people they do not know or are unacquainted with. Hate is precipitated by extreme dislike in a person’s personality or from betrayal (e.g., a loved one’s infidelity or broken promise). The most effective technique for ending one’s hatred (in terms of relationship satisfaction) seems to be a form of communication, either with the target of hate, with a third-party (like a friend) or with a higher power (as in prayer). Finally, in terms of how hate is defined, experienced on a daily basis, and the specific targets of one’s hate, seems to be moderated by age, gender, and the sample. This theory sheds new light on how hate can be further studied and examined.

## Method

### *Participants*

Both men and women from the University of Texas (UT sample) ( $n = 426$ ) and from an online community ( $n = 165$ ) participated (Total  $N = 591$ ). In studies conducted online, duplications are always of concern, and the following were removed: fifteen participants from the original sample, 5 self-reported repeats, and 10 repeats identified through IP address duplication.

*Sample Differences:* Participants from the UT sample were younger ( $M = 19.2$ ,  $SD = 2.6$ ) than the online community ( $M = 24.9$ ,  $SD = 8.0$ ,  $t(589) = -13.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ). More women participated in both the UT sample (261 women, 165 men, 2 unidentified) and the community sample (104 women, 55 men, 4 unidentified) ( $\chi^2(1, N = 585) = .84$ ,  $p = .359$ ). The UT sample was slightly more racially diverse, but both samples were comprised largely of European-American individuals (UT sample = 50%; online community = 59%). Both samples included participants from a variety of different religions; however, the UT sample was primarily Christian (71%), while the online community consisted largely of both Christian (50%) and those who do not affiliate with any religious organization (37%). The UT sample had more U.S.-born citizens (87%) than the online community (79%) ( $\chi^2(1, N = 594) = 5.72$ ,  $p = .017$ ). In addition, most participants in the UT sample were U.S. residents (99%) compared to 85% of participants in the online community ( $\chi^2(1, N = 591) = 46.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Considering the different demographics of both samples, statistical testing of variables of interest was conducted separately for each sample.

### *Questionnaire*

Participants were assured that all answers would be anonymous; University of Texas ID numbers (which were used to assign credit) were kept separate from participants' responses.

*General experience of hate.* After completion of the demographic questions, participants were asked how often on a daily basis they experienced a variety of emotions (e.g., pride, love, hatred, anger, sadness, joy, guilt, etc.). Participants could answer 1 (not at all), 2 (occasionally), 3 (some), 4 (usually), or 5 (frequently). To get a general idea of the incidence and developmental trajectory of hate, participants were asked: "How many people throughout your entire life have you hated?" and "Age you first remembered hating someone"; both could be answered by typing a number into a textbox next to both questions.

*General components of hate.* Participants were asked a number of questions designed to answer the four questions posed earlier. In order to determine "what is meant by hate,"

participants were asked: “What does it mean to hate someone?” Participants were told to “please free to use a past experience in which you felt hatred for someone.” Participants then proceeded to another section, “Hating Someone or a Group of People.” In order to determine “whom do you hate,” participants were asked: “How many people do you currently hate? (A rough estimation is acceptable),” and then “of these people you currently hate, please indicate how many people from each relation.” Participants were then presented with a list of people that they might hate, which included: family members, friends, acquaintances, coworkers, and groups of people [like sports groups or clubs]). This list was generated from a pre-test group of 10 students, who listed a variety of people they had hated. We included all relations that these pre-test participants mentioned (e.g., mom, ex-boyfriend, and friend) as well as additional relations that seemed relevant (e.g., dad, siblings, and cousins). Next to each relation (e.g., “friend”) was a text box that participants could fill in with a number to indicate how many individuals of that relation they currently hated. Participants were then asked: “Amongst these people, who do you believe you end up hating most of the time?” Participants were only allowed to pick one of the previous targets (e.g., father, cousin, or others). They were also allowed to select the “other” option, which allowed them to write in their own answer. Participants were then asked to check if they hated any “groups of people”; because the aim of the study was not to tap taboo hatreds such as those aimed at Nazi’s or certain racial groups or sexes, it was specifically mentioned as “groups of people, but not limited to telemarketers, pick-pockets, crazy drivers, or people of any political party.” In order to determine “why people hate,” participants were asked: “Why do you hate this person or these people? Specifically, did they do anything to you to make you hate them or did you discover something about them that caused you to hate them?” Respondents were invited to give open-ended answers, which could fall into more than one category.

Finally, in order to determine “how people attempt to deal with hate,” participants were asked an open-ended question: “What seems to be the most effective way for you to end your hatred for someone?” They were then asked to rate how often they used their chosen method (possible answers ranged from 1 = Never to 5 = Always). Finally, they were asked how effective that method had proved to be. Specifically: “On average, how well do your relationships with the people you’ve hated turn out?” (Possible answers ranged from 1 = Very badly to 5 = Very well.) Participants were asked additional questions, but for the purpose of this paper, they will not be discussed further.

### *Procedure*

The UT sample was recruited by advertising in the University’s psychology website and course requirement pages. The online community was recruited by advertising the

survey URL on psychology websites like [www.socialpsychology.org](http://www.socialpsychology.org) and [www.psy.utexas.edu](http://www.psy.utexas.edu). The web-questionnaire was written in Perl (a scripting language) and placed on a free hosting site ([netfirms.com](http://netfirms.com)), which was routinely tested to ensure that scores and data files were being properly recorded. These websites are not currently advertising the study, which is located (in perpetuity) at <http://survey.psy.utexas.edu/aumer/hate>. Non-psychology websites, such as [yahoo.com](http://yahoo.com) (a search engine that also advertises online psychology tests) and [youthink.com](http://youthink.com) (a website dedicated to discussion, networking, and survey-taking with a worldwide community) also advertised the hate study link. All participants read a consent form before filling out the questionnaire and provided consent by clicking on the “I agree” button on the bottom of the page. Total time to participate in this survey was dependent on how much a participant wrote about his/her experiences with hate; however, 2 RAs taking the survey beforehand averaged 45 minutes.

## Results

In attempting to derive a theory of the nature of hate, procedures recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) were followed. To determine the best-fit category for open-ended responses (specifically “What is meant by hate,” “Why do you hate this person or group of people,” and “What seems to be the most effective way for you to end your hatred for someone”), the first author and two University of Texas research assistants met and assigned the participants’ statements into categories. First, 20 responses from random participants were analyzed. Analysis involved reading the stories of participants’ experiences with hate and circling phrases or comments that indicated a particular theme (e.g., “I hate her because of her personality”). From this initial assessment, a key of the most common themes found in the transcripts and self-reports was written down (e.g., if more than one participant mentioned hating someone because of their “personality,” it was noted that “personality” was a common theme for “reasons for hating someone”). Subsequent transcripts were then analyzed with these key themes in mind. The first author analyzed each transcript and coded them, and then met with both RAs who had already read the same transcripts and coded them accordingly. Results were compared and scrutinized when there was disagreement (inter-rater reliability was 95%). If there was a disagreement (which occurred, but infrequently), the three raters discussed the classifications. If that failed, they consulted the participant’s original story detailing his or her own experiences with hate; this procedure always resolved any disagreements. This grounded-theory approach was only utilized for open-ended responses. Outlined below are the themes that were derived from the data.

*General Experience with Hate*

*How often do people experience hate on a daily basis?* On average, participants did not report experiencing much hate on a daily basis, with the largest group of participants reporting “not at all” (UT sample = 47%; online community = 40%). The UT sample experienced hate less frequently on a daily basis than those in the online community ( $\chi^2(4, N = 588) = 29.35, p < .001$ ). Specifically, there were more participants in the online community who answered “frequently” (4%) or “usually” (11%) than the UT sample (“frequently” = 0%; “usually” = 3.5%). Considering that both groups differed in age and gender, a (2[sample] x 2[gender] x 8 [age]) ANOVA was conducted to see how these variables might affect experience of hate. Analyses revealed a statistically significant main effect for gender ( $F(1,561) = 17.39, p < .001, \eta^2 = .03$ ) and gender x age interaction ( $F(5,561) = 2.73, p = .006, \eta^2 = .03$ ). Specifically, the analysis implied that as men got older, they were more likely to report experiencing hate (peaking at ages 33-37 and then slowly attenuating by ages 53-57).

Table 1

*Average experience of hate on a daily basis given age and gender (N = 582)*

Age	Gender	Mean	Std. Error
18-22	Female	1.85	0.07
	Male	1.91	0.09
23-27	Female	2.08	0.20
	Male	2.46	0.34
28-32	Female	1.67	0.30
	Male	2.75	0.55
33-37	Female	1.50	0.37
	Male	4.00	0.64
38-42	Female	1.43	0.34
	Male	2.67	0.52
43-47	Female	1.67	0.52
	Male	--	--
48-52	Female	1.67	0.52
	Male	3.00	0.91
53-57	Female	--	--
	Male	2.00	0.91

*Note.* Dashes indicate that there was no response in this combined (age x gender) category.

*How many people are hated throughout one’s entire life?* On average, participants reported hating 5 participants throughout their entire life (SD = 11.1). Additional analyses revealed that the online community (M = 7.64, SD = 17.08) reported hating more participants throughout their entire life, than the UT sample, (M = 3.95, SD = 7.55) ( $t(235) = -2.01, p = .05$ ). Due to a positively skewed distribution for both samples, a log (base 10)

transformation was conducted on participant's answers before conducting a t-test to normalize the distribution of participants' answers (Osborne, 2002). Similar analyses (as previously outlined) for experiencing hate on a daily basis were conducted. Main effect for age was statistically significant ( $F(1,562) = 4.13, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$ ), as well as an interaction between gender and age ( $F(6,562) = 3.23, p = .004, \eta^2 = .03$ ) and sample and age ( $F(2,562) = 2.82, p = .04, \eta^2 = .02$ ). Specifically, women in the online community reported hating more people in their lives in the age groups of 23-27 and 38-42, while men in the online community reported hating more people in their lives in the age groups of 33-37 and 48-52.

Table 2

*Average number of people hated throughout one's life (N = 584)*

Age	Gender	Sample	Mean	Std. Error
18-22	Female	UT	2.41	0.91
		Online	5.73	1.94
	Male	UT	3.37	1.12
		Online	10.64	2.62
23-27	Female	UT	2.67	5.66
		Online	16.47	3.18
	Male	UT	2.50	9.80
		Online	0.50	4.38
28-32	Female	UT	5.33	8.00
		Online	4.37	4.90
	Male	UT	5.00	13.86
		Online	7.50	9.80
33-37	Female	UT	5.50	9.80
		Online	5.67	5.66
	Male	UT	2.00	13.86
		Online	20.00	13.86
38-42	Female	UT	--	--
		Online	18.67	5.66
	Male	UT	--	--
		Online	1.00	8.00
43-47	Female	UT	--	--
		Online	2.33	8.00
	Male	UT	--	--
		Online	--	--
48-52	Female	UT	--	--
		Online	2.00	8.00
	Male	UT	--	--
		Online	50.00	13.86
53-57	Female	UT	--	--
		Online	--	--
	Male	UT	10.00	13.86
		Online	--	--

*Note.* Dashes indicate that there was no response in this (age x gender) category. Statistical analyses were conducted with the normalized data, but means and standard errors are reported using the non-transformed data.



*Age of First Incident with Hate:* Participants reported a wide range of ages for the first time they experienced hate towards someone (6 months to 40 yrs of age). On average, participants reported their first experience of hate at the age of 12 (SD = 5.06). This would place the average age of first experience with hate sometime in middle school. There was no significant difference in reported age of first experience with hate between the UT sample and the online community ( $t(413) = -1.27, p = .20$ ).

#### *General Components of Hate*

*What do people mean by hate?* Participants were asked: “What does it mean to hate someone?” They were instructed to “please free to use a past experience in which you felt hatred for someone.” Interestingly, when attempting to define “hate,” most participants referred to other similar attitudes or emotions, such as “extreme dislike,” “extreme disgust,” and “extreme anger.” For example, one 18-year-old man described his concept of hate as the following: “I guess it means to dislike them a lot. To the point to where you wish they were not here. Not necessarily dead, but not around you.” A 19-year-old woman had this to say: I would think that to hate someone is to literally dislike everything about them. I do think that sometimes it is because of a past experience, they did something wrong to you. Sometimes hate involves people not really knowing each other. . .but just not liking anything about a person with very strong desire to be away from them at all times.

The majority of participants (31%) confirmed that hate is linked to “extreme dislike,” “extreme anger,” and “extreme disgust” directed towards a target of hate. For many, hating someone meant that they had to perceive “bad qualities” (7%) in the target, that the target must have “hurt or betrayed you,” (9%), and that they must “wish [the target] would die or suffer” (23%). Table 3 indicates the percent of participants who mentioned various aspects as prototypic of hate. Additional analyses revealed that the UT sample was more likely to mention “disgust” as a description of hating someone than the online community (23% versus 6%, respectively) ( $\chi^2(1, N = 275) = 9.16, p = .002$ ). Additional analyses were conducted to see if gender or age was significant in predicting likelihood of noting disgust when describing hate. Chi-square analyses revealed that neither age (coded in equal categories) ( $\chi^2(6, N = 275) = 3.52, p = ns$ ) nor gender ( $\chi^2(6, N = 275) = 1.26, p = ns$ ) predicted the likelihood of describing hate in terms of disgust.

Table 3

Percentage of participants endorsing various definitions of hate (N=275)

What is hate?	%	UT n=182	Online n=93
<i>Extreme dislike</i>	31%	35%	25%
<i>Ill will/Wish target would die or suffer</i>	23%	19%	29%
<i>Extreme disgust</i>	17%	23%*	6%*
<i>Extreme anger</i>	15%	17%	11%
<i>Disagree with target or target's beliefs</i>	11%	13%	7%
<i>Reaction from being hurt or betrayed</i>	9%	7%	13%
<i>Have apathy for target</i>	8%	7%	11%
<i>See bad qualities in target</i>	7%	8%	6%
<i>To never forgive/end a relationship</i>	3%	3%	2%
<i>Obsession</i>	1%	1%	2%
<i>Jealousy</i>	2%	2%	1%
<i>Extreme fear</i>	2%	2%	3%

Note. Totals add to more than 100% as participants may mention more than one characteristic.

\*  $p = .002$  Chi-square statistic

Actually, the Reber (1985) definition of hate appears to correspond quite well with people's commonsense understandings of hate. How do people's naïve definitions of hate correspond to theorists' more developed definitions? Although it is not the case that scholars and laypersons need to agree on how various concepts should be defined (after all, it is not erroneous for physicists to suggest there may be nine, 12, or 15 "dimensions" in the universe, even though the person in the street sees things very differently), it may be of some benefit (as Heider, 1958, has argued) to compare scholars' and laypersons' definitions of various phenomena.

Table 3 demonstrates that most people think of hate as an emotion. This is consistent with the arguments of theorists such as Fehr & Russell (1984) who claim hate is a prototypic emotion; Kernberg (1990, 1992), who claims it is a chronic and stable emotion; and Sternberg (2005), who argues that "hate is among the most powerful of human emotions" (p. 1). Hate is, he continues, a complex emotion consisting of anger-fear, repulsion and disgust, and devaluation-diminution. Respondents' definitions are also in accord with Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, (1960), Altemeyer (1981),

Averill (1978), and Shand (1920), who contend that hate is comprised of many components, including cultural, cognitive, emotional, physical, and/or environmental components.

Many theorists, of course, contend that hatred is not a true emotion. Ekman (1992), for example, argues that hate is an “attitude,” too complex and sustained to properly qualify as an emotion. Others who take this (or related) positions include Allport (1954), Ben-Ze’ev (2000), Berkowitz (2004), Izard (1977), and Moss (2003). Still others take a cognitive or group dynamic perspective in attempting to understand the nature of hatred; these include Beck and Pretzer (2004), Brewer (1999), Levin & Rabrenovic (2004), and Pedahzur & Yishi (1999).

Theorists also disagree on whether people wish to avoid those they hate (because they fear these powerful others) or wish to humiliate, torment, and annihilate their targets of hatred. In crafting a definition of hate, participants assumed that hatred would generate both conflicting reactions. Some associated hate with apathy (8%); in this vision they would agree with Wiesel (1999). Others wished the target to suffer and die (23%); in this they would agree with Rempel & Burris (2005), who contend that hate is a motive based on devaluing the other and is associated with the goal of diminishing or destroying the other’s well being (see also Buss, 2005).

Who do people hate? Participants were given a list of people that they might hate and were also allowed to fill in other members that were not included in the list. In addition, they were allowed to mark any groups of people they hated. Participants were then asked: “Amongst these people, who do you believe you end up hating most of the time?” Participants’ replies are shown in Table 4. Additional analyses revealed significant sample-dependent group differences in who was hated most. The online community (4%) was more likely to name an “ex-husband” as someone hated most of the time compared to the UT sample (0.2%) ( $\chi^2(1, N = 591) = 11.99, p = .001$ ). The online community was also more likely to name a “coworker” as someone hated most of the time compared to the UT sample (6% versus 1%, respectively) ( $\chi^2(1, N = 591) = 11.77, p = .002$ ). The online community was less likely to name a “friend” as someone hated most of the time compared to the UT sample (10% versus 20%, respectively) ( $\chi^2(1, N = 591) = 9.40, p = .002$ ). Additional chi-square analyses revealed a main effect for gender when naming a friend as someone hated most of the time ( $\chi^2(9, N = 585) = 4.43, p = .04$ ). Of the people who named a friend as someone they hated most of the time, there were far more women (72%) than men (20%). Since only women ( $n = 7$ ) named an ex-husband as someone they hated most of the time we did not analyze gender as a predictor. A significant main effect for age was found ( $\chi^2(6, N = 365) = 60.44, p < .001$ ) in that the majority of women (85%) who named an ex-husband as someone they hated most of the time were between the ages of 28-52 and was especially high for women at the age range of 28-32 (29%). A significant main effect was found for age in

predicting the likelihood of naming a coworker as someone hated most of the time ( $\chi^2(6, N = 591) = 119.25, p < .001$ ). Most of the participants (82%) who named a coworker as someone they hated most of the time were at the age range of 18-42 and was especially high for those at the age ranges of 18-22 (27%) and 38-42 (27%).

Table 4

Percentage of participants hating certain categories of people most of the time (N=433)

Who is the target of hate most of the time?	%	Breakdown	UT n=315	Online n=118
<i>Friends</i>	24%		28%*	14%*
<i>Acquaintances</i>	22%		23%	21%
<i>Family Members</i>	12%		11%	15%
<i>Father</i>		37%		
<i>Mother</i>		22%		
<i>In-Laws</i>		9%		
<i>Brother</i>		9%		
<i>Sister</i>		7%		
<i>Aunt</i>		5%		
<i>Step-other</i>		3%		
<i>Uncle</i>		2%		
<i>Cousin</i>		2%		
<i>Grandma</i>		2%		
<i>Grandpa</i>		2%		
<i>Exes</i>	12%		11%	15%
<i>Ex-boyfriend</i>		65%		
<i>Ex-girlfriend</i>		21%		
<i>Ex-husband</i>		13%	.2%**	4%**
<i>Ex-wife</i>		1%		
<i>Hate all equally</i>	8%		8%	8%
<i>Other</i>	7%		7%	7%
<i>Someone else's friend/significant other</i>		63%		
<i>Employer/Coach/Professor</i>		19%		
<i>Classmates</i>		13%		
<i>Neighbors</i>		5%		
<i>Ex-Friends</i>		—		
<i>Groups of people</i>	5%		5%	5%
<i>Coworkers</i>	5%		2%*	9%*
<i>Strangers</i>	4%		4%	3%
<i>Significant others (only boyfriends)</i>	1%		1%	3%

Note. Dash signifies that this person or group was not selected by any participant as most hated.  
 \*\*  $p < .001$ . Chi-square statistic. \* $p = .002$

Personal relationship scholars have inquired into the violent passions of dating couples, marital partners, and divorcing couples (Duck, 1982; Duck & Gilmour, 1981; Fitness & Fletcher, 1993). They have investigated stalking (Baumeister & Wotman, 1992) and domestic violence (Kearney, 2001), and pointed out that that when a murder is committed the first step taken by the police is to investigate the spouse's motive, means, and opportunity (U.S. Department of Justice, 1996). With the passage of time, dating and married couples' feelings of passionate and companionate love are known to decline, while the guilt, anger, resentment, and sadness they feel when contemplating their mates and marriages increases (Hatfield, Pillemer, O'Brien, Sprecher, & Yee, submitted; Traupman & Hatfield, 1981). Participants' responses may reflect some support for this reasoning based on the percentage of participants in both samples reporting hate for boyfriends, and in the online community for hating ex-husbands. The fact that the online community consisted of older individuals may explain why ex-husbands were more likely to be named than in the UT sample. This same argument may also explain the online community's reported hatred for their coworkers, since the undergraduates in the UT sample may be less likely to have a career or full-time job. (For an excellent review of office enmities, see Fitness, 2000.)

*Who do people tend to hate?* People generally express the most ill-will toward those closest to them on a day-to-day basis. It is acquaintances (24%), friends (23%), family members (12%), and ex-boyfriends and girlfriends (12%) who spark the most enmity. Within the family, it is the "nearest and dearest" that arouse the most hatred: fathers (45%), mothers (23%), in-laws (13%) and siblings (3%) (again, see Table 4).

In defining "hate," one participant observed that people must truly know others if they are to hate them. This seems apt. Support for this contention comes from the fact that when men and women were asked to write a personal story about hate, most wrote stories that described their feelings toward friends, acquaintances, and family (22%, 22%, and 12%, respectively), while only 4% of participants wrote about a stranger. The remaining 40% still wrote about people they knew, worked with, or loved, suggesting that hatred may be something felt more towards those that are close and intimate than those that are unknown, unfamiliar, or foreign. Similar results—but for anger—were secured by Averill (1982). He found that it was loved ones who were most likely to enrage. Loved ones sparked 29% of angry episodes, while someone well-known and liked accounted for 24%, and acquaintances, 25%. Only rarely did someone who was well-known and disliked (8%) or a stranger (13%) generate angry feelings.

Interestingly, although few respondents admitted to hating their own significant others (1%), a full 4% hated a friend's boyfriend or girlfriend.

*What of more politically and socially motivated hatreds?* Social psychologists have devoted a great deal of thought to unraveling the mysteries of the "psycho-logic" that allows good

people to commit staggering wrongs, to engage in orgies of torture and killing (Bandura, 1990; Newman & Erber, 2002; Reich, 1990). They have attempted to delve into the minds of Nazis, White Supremacists, anti-Semites, anti-Islamists, Holy Islamic warriors, and male and female chauvinists—essentially, people who hate those who differ in culture, gender, race, creed, color, political orientation, sexual orientation, and so forth. Such hatreds are indeed worth studying, given their horrific consequences.

Yet when participants are asked about their everyday hatreds, it was found that political concerns are less salient in most people's minds than are their personal enmities. Table 4 demonstrates that people's everyday hate is aimed primarily at those loved, cared for, and known.

*Why do people hate?* Most religions condemn hatred and wrath—especially amongst family, friends, and “the chosen.” Many religions have proffered some variant of the Golden rule (“do unto others...”). Why then do people hate other people and groups? What provokes them to violate religious proscriptions and social norms? In order to find out, after indicating a target of hatred, participants were asked: “Why do you hate this person or these people? Specifically, did they do anything to you to make you hate them or did you discover something about them that caused you to hate them?” Respondents were invited to give open-ended answers, which could fall into more than one category. Additional analyses revealed no group differences between the UT sample and the online community sample regarding why they hated someone.

As is evident from Table 5, most participants (28%) reported that it was the target's unappealing personality that sparked their hatred. Consider this report by a 20-year-old woman: “I hated her personality. The stories she told, the things she did (or didn't do). Her work ethic was to get others in trouble because they didn't do it her way.” And this comment from a 19-year-old woman: “I hated this person because of her personality. I guess our personalities just didn't work well with each other. I considered her to be snobbish, arrogant, and too confident of herself.” Participants also mentioned aspects of the target's behavior that they believed testified to his or her disagreeable personality or character. For example, this 33-year-old woman observed: “he's the type of person who is allowed the full reign [range] of his emotions while I had to be the ‘adult’ and maintain my composure. . . also he was very hurtful in what he said both to me and to my child. There was just something about him.”

Table 5

Percentage of participants in each target category by reason for hating target (N = 231)

Reasons for Hating target	Target of Hate									Total
	Family member n=31	Significant other n=9	Friend n=56	Exes n=23	Acquaintance n=32	Coworker n=11	Stranger n=14	Group n=26	Other n=29	
Loneliness	<b>26%</b>	22%	<b>40%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>46%</b>	21%	<b>26%</b>	<b>47%</b>	28%
Unattractive	<b>26%</b>	<b>67%</b>	20%	<b>30%</b>	6%	9%	—	12%	3%	14%
Abuse/Physical Attack	16%	11%	5%	9%	19%	18%	<b>23%</b>	15%	10%	11%
Humiliation/Hurt Feelings	16%	—	11%	9%	16%	18%	—	19%	—	9%
Respect/Offended someone else	6%	—	5%	—	3%	—	14%	8%	10%	5%
Disrespect	6%	—	—	4%	9%	9%	7%	—	7%	4%
Disagreement	—	—	2%	—	6%	—	7%	8%	7%	3%
Jealousy	—	—	9%	4%	3%	—	14%	—	10%	4%
Inequity	—	—	2%	9%	—	—	7%	—	3%	2%
Provoke	—	—	—	—	—	—	7%	12%	3%	2%
Discrimination/Stole	4%	—	4%	—	3%	—	—	—	—	2%
Sexual Abuse	—	—	2%	5%	3%	—	—	—	—	1%

Note. Dashes indicate that this response was never chosen. Largest percentages are in bold.

Researchers have investigated the antecedents of anger directed against family, friends, and colleagues. They have discovered that people who behave in socially unacceptable ways—who are ugly and ill-kept, who are phony and manipulative, who are of low character, who are shiftless, boring, or even dare to disagree with us—arouse our wrath (see Carlson & Hatfield, 1992).

The theoretical debate that has ignited scholars' interest is this: "how do hatred and anger differ?" Davitz (1969) discovered that the two emotions have a great deal in common; in both, participants agreed with these statements: "my pulse quickens" and "I feel that I'll burst or explode; as if there is too much inside to be held in." But, says Davitz, hate includes a unique perceptual aspect. Participants observed: "I have a sense of being trapped, closed up, boxed, fenced in, tied down, inhibited," and an attitude of "the world seems no good, hostile, and unfair" (pp. 35, 64-65).

Many researchers have observed that hatred is sparked by humiliation, ill-treatment, and devaluation (e.g., Roseman, 1984). Fitness & Fletcher (1993), for example, argued that hate was "most often elicited by the perception that the subject had been badly treated, unsupported, or humiliated by the partner." Conversely, anger was elicited when the subject felt "unfairly" treated (p. 945). In the workplace, intense hate was most often provoked by humiliation (in the form of teasing and bullying), while anger was elicited by the perception of unfair or unjust treatment (Fitness, 2000). Averill (1983) concurs; anger, he claims, is a moral statement—an accusation of unfairness and injustice.

Not all theorists would agree. Both McKellar (1950) and Davitz (1969) argue that it is hatred—not anger—that is provoked by injustice and inequity. Davitz (1969), for example, argued that hate is most often elicited by "unfair circumstances."

Theorists have also argued about the link between power, hatred, and anger. Most have argued that we come to hate people only if we have no avenue for retaliation; people will merely get angry if they possess the power to retaliate for injustices. Davitz (1969), on the other hand, takes a contrarian view. He argues that hatreds are sparked by injustice, and can be reconciled by revenge or restitution.

In a practical sense, society often views the two emotions differently: in law, for example, those who commit hate-crimes get longer sentences (*Wisconsin v. Mitchell*, 1993) than those who commit crimes of passion (for a review see Averill, 1978).

Table 5 demonstrates that participants' hatreds did seem to be sparked, at least in part, by insult, humiliation, and betrayal. In describing why they hate, participants complained that the other gossiped or hurt their feelings (9%), disrespected them (4%), betrayed them (14%), or abused/physically attacked them (11%). Only a few mentioned reciprocating hate because they perceived inequity (2%) or that the target hated them first (2%).

In this study participants did not describe experiences with anger, and thus it is unclear how precursors of anger may differ from hate. Luckily, others have collected such information. Averill (1983) asked men and women involved in angry interchanges what sparked the trouble. He discovered that anger was an accusation. The angry were eager to cast blame; their targets were naturally less willing to accept it. (It was not that the "innocent" targets did not understand the accusations. They generally did understand why the other was angry. It was only that they denied any wrongdoing [i.e., "I had a right to do what I did," or "it couldn't be helped"]). Bandura (1983) argued that four types of stimuli excite anger: verbal insults or threats, physical assaults, thwarting, and denying a person reward. In this study, the first two of these were mentioned as sparking hate; the second two were not (or at least not directly).

Table 5 also shows that regardless of the closeness of one's relationships, the most common reason people give for hating is "defects of personality" (percentages range from 21% to 47%). Two other reasons appear to be important: when one is asked why one hates a lover or ex-lover, the cause is generally "betrayal" (67% and 30% respectively). As this 22-year old woman stated when discussing her mate's infidelity (coded as betrayal): "I hated him because he had cheated on me when I was so totally in love with him. I felt like he took my innocence from me." Family members (26%) and friends (40%) are hated for their betrayals, too. For example, in her story, one 21-year-old woman recalled:

I was talking to an ex-boyfriend who I had recently gotten involved with again. I was sputtering off things about her [my mother] that I speculated. I said, "I bet she cheated on my dad." He said that he knew of only one incident, I was like "What! How do you know?" He said: "Because it was with me."



Incidentally, the target of this woman's hate was not her boyfriend, but her mother.

The key component in all issues of betrayal appeared to be the breaking of promises: a conflict between what was agreed upon or expected (e.g., trust, faithfulness, or loyalty) and what actually transpired. As one 33-year-old woman said: "There was betrayal involved and she turned out to be someone who had misrepresented herself as a friend and as loyal."

How did people attempt to end their hate for those they loved, liked or were acquainted with? Reactions to this question are examined below.

*Methods of ending hate.* Participants were asked an open-ended question: "What seems to be the most effective way for you to end your hatred for someone?" Next, they were asked: "How often do you use this method?" (Possible answers ranged from 1 = Never to 5 = Always.) Finally, they were asked how effective that method had proven to be. Specifically: "On average, how well do your relationships with the people you've hated turn out?" (Possible answers ranged from 1 = Very badly to 5 = Very well.) In the original coding, it was found that participants were able to describe 16 different methods they used to attenuate hatred. For the sake of brevity, Table 6 only reports those methods that were mentioned by at least five participants. Table 6 indicates (1) the percentage of respondents mentioning a given technique for attenuating hate, (2) the frequency with which they employed that technique, and (3) their success in preserving a relationship as a consequence of using that technique. There were no group differences between the UT sample and the online sample with respect to these three aspects of ending hate.

Table 6

*Methods of ending hate, their frequency of use and effectiveness (N = 212)*

	%	Mean Frequency of use	SD	Mean Relationship turn out	SD	Rusbult's Categories
<b>Method used to end hate</b>						
<i>Suppress hate</i>	<b>21%</b>	2.93	.94	2.74	.74	L
<i>Compassion/empathy for target</i>	17%	3.12	1.10	2.92	.87	L
<i>Communicate with/Confront target</i>	13%	3.36	.86	3.21	.74	V
<i>Think positively about target</i>	9%	3.21	.85	2.47	.60	L
<i>Avoid them</i>	8%	3.00	.61	2.88	.72	N
<i>No method/Impromptu</i>	7%	2.00	.92	2.33	.91	N
<i>Logic: "Hate is waste of time"</i>	6%	<b>3.83</b>	.40	3.09	.83	L
<i>Distract myself</i>	4%	3.56	.82	2.89	.92	N
<i>Remove myself from situation/target</i>	4%	3.33	.88	2.25	.58	E
<i>Letting time go by</i>	4%	3.75	.94	2.67	.81	L
<i>Prayer</i>	3%	3.71	.95	<b>3.43</b>	1.13	L
<i>Talk with someone else</i>	3%	3.50	.98	3.17	.75	V

*Note.* Rusbult's categories for coping with social conflicts: L=Loyalty, V=Voice, N=Neglect, and E=Exit.

Rusbult (1987) argued that people in relationships can try to cope with social conflict in four ways: by utilizing strategies of exit, voice, loyalty, or neglect.

- *Voice.* Couples communicate. (They ask partners what is wrong, discuss their own concerns, or try to change themselves and their partners.) Voice is an attempt to salvage a relationship that is in danger of being damaged or destroyed.
- *Loyalty.* People pray, try to think positively, calm themselves, hope things will improve, and "give things time." Loyalty is a conservative reaction, designed to maintain the status quo.
- *Neglect.* People refuse to discuss problems, ignore their partners or treat them badly, and allow things to fall apart. Neglect occurs when people don't know what to do or aren't motivated to do much of anything.

- *Exit*. People decide to just be friends, divorce, or agree to disagree. People exit when they believe what they've got is not worth saving.

Voice and loyalty are classified as “constructive” responses, exit and neglect as negative ones. Although Rusbult’s paradigm (1987) was not initially considered when examining participants’ methods of ending hatred, later coding revealed good model fit to the concepts of voice, loyalty, neglect, and exit. On the far right of Table 6, Rusbult’s typologies are indicated next to respondents’ replies, indicating the possible correspondence between Rusbult’s categories and the coded participants’ responses. A quick glance makes it clear that participants not only prefer to use loyalty and voice in dealing with taboo emotions, but that these techniques appear to be the most effective in maintaining relationships. The most frequently reported methods of ending hate, for example, were two loyalty techniques: suppression and compassion. In terms of utilization, the most frequently used method by participants was logic (another loyalty technique). Here are some examples of how logic was coded: “Normally I try and look at my hate and realize it’s pretty illogical and it gains me nothing. And how this hate probably makes me a worse person than the person I hate.” This 20-year-old man attempted to think of his hate as a wasteful symptom of bad reasoning. Others emphasized the “wasteful” aspect of hate and also endorsed a change in perspective, like this 18-year-old woman: “Change your mindset by thinking of the people you love. You shouldn’t waste time hating someone who had hurt you but rather use that time to love the people you care about and the people that love you.” One 19-year-old woman recited this mantra: “The best way is to first calm down and analyze the situation from a logical standpoint...hatred is not going to help you any. Instead, it wastes energy.” In addition, participants used prayer in the hopes of invoking some sort of change in their feelings. For example, one 47 year old female answered that she ended her hate by: “Prayer. Talking to Our Heavenly Father and believing he will change my feelings.”

Following in Loyalty’s wake (in terms of the percentage of respondents who mentioned it) was one Voice item: communication. As Rusbult would predict, these were also the most effective techniques for keeping a relationship together. According to respondents, the most effective method of repairing a relationship with someone hated was a Loyalty strategy—prayer—followed by Voice items: confronting/communicating with the person and talking with someone. What these top three most effective methods (in terms of the future of the relationship) seem to have in common is that they involve sharing one’s experiences with another being—be it a higher power, the hated target, or a third-party. Post-hoc analyses revealed that having no method was the least effective in terms of relationship outcome (but no worse than letting time go by or distracting myself). These participants who failed to employ any method (Neglect) generally felt the situation was

hopeless. For example, this 32-year-old woman who had no method of ending her hate remarked: “Nothing has stopped my feelings because those people are still the same people and they still do the same stuff that makes me hate them. They would have to change and since I can’t change them nothing gets better.” The situation was simply overwhelming. Not surprisingly, this strategy did not work very well in improving relationships.

When the average effectiveness of Loyalty, Voice, Neglect, and Exit are compared, the most effective techniques in terms of relationship outcome were Voice ( $M = 3.19$ ) and Loyalty ( $M = 2.89$ ); least effective were Neglect ( $M = 2.70$ ) and Exit ( $M = 2.25$ ).

In considering the utility of these methods, it is important to note that they are not for everyone. After all, 21% ( $N = 586$ ) of the sample considered themselves to be agnostic/atheist, so prayer may not work for them. Then too, if a person is repeatedly humiliated, betrayed, or verbally and physically abused, it may not be the wisest strategy to attempt to improve the relationship; a quick Exit and the severance of ties with an oppressor or victimizer may be the best route.

### Discussion and Summary

This study was intended to construct a general framework of everyday hate that could be understood in terms of the very constituents of laypeople’s experiences with hate: specifically, their theories of hate, targets of hate, why they hated, and how they attempted to handle their tumultuous feelings. An exploratory analysis was conducted and has shed some light on this prototypical emotion. It is theorized from this approach that participants tend to hate people they know or love (as opposed to strangers or those with whom they are unacquainted). In addition, they tend to hate these people for two main reasons: the target’s personality or because of a perceived betrayal (e.g., a loved one’s infidelity or a broken promise). Finally, the most effective manner of ending one’s hatred (in terms of relationship satisfaction) tends to be a form of loyalty and/or communication, either with the target of hate, with a third-party (like a friend), or with a higher power (as in prayer). In addition, this study supplies strong support for contextualizing the investigation of hatred and considering how age, gender, and life experience may affect how this emotion is conceived, remembered, and targeted against.

#### *General Experience with Hate*

In this study, 70% ( $N = 591$ ) of participants reported some experience with hating someone. Group differences were observed between the UT sample and the online community. Specifically, the online community felt hate more often on a daily basis and hated more people throughout their life than the UT sample. These differences were

explained by both age and gender: the online community sample was older and probably starting or already invested in a career, family, or romantic relationship, while the UT sample was composed of undergraduate students, who on average are probably not immediately concerned with marriage, family responsibilities or career issues. In addition, gender differences suggest that as men enter their middle ages, the experience of hatred may come more readily and, as they age, they tend to remember hating more people throughout their lives. Although there were not enough older women in this sample to make definitive conclusions about women's experience with hatred, women did report hating more people throughout their lives, peaking in both their twenties and late thirties/early forties. Future studies should consider age, gender and differences in current life experiences (like starting a family or getting a divorce) when making conclusions about hate or the experience of hatred. Limiting one's sample to undergraduates may display a very different representation of how hate affects or shapes one's life than if an older population or one with different life experiences were sampled.

Interestingly, both samples did not differ in how old they were when they first experienced hatred. Most participants reported being near the age of 12 (which would correspond to being in middle school) when they first started feeling hate for someone. This younger population should also be considered for additional analyses concerning hate, since one's experience with hate may change as one gets older or as one becomes more indoctrinated with the idea that—as many participants pointed out—hate is socially unacceptable or the word itself should not be used. Given the current results, it seems necessary to consider how language use may affect emotional experience with hatred, especially when one considers that 30% of participants reported never experiencing hatred towards another individual (c.f., Pennebaker, 1995; Wierzbicka, 1999). What may explain this finding is that participants—as many noted—may have felt uncomfortable with the word “hate” or “hatred” in general and although some participants may have felt some type of hatred, would have preferred using terms like “extremely disliked” the person in order to work their way around certain social conventions that condemn feeling hatred. These data suggest that future studies concerning hate should consider how the cultural, religious, and social context affects how participants write or describe their feelings and conceptions of hate.

#### *General Components of Hate*

What is meant by hate? Ben-Ze'ev (2000) observed that “in light of the more negative moral value of hate, people readily admit that they are angry, but are less inclined to admit that they hate someone” (p. 401). Many participants felt hatred was morally repugnant. For example, this 22-year-old woman observed: “While growing up, my mom taught me that ‘hate’ is a very strong word. By the age of six or so, ‘hate’ had dropped out of my vocabulary.

I could never justify using such a strong word when there was always some other word or phrase to express how I really felt.” Participants’ naïve definitions of hate corresponded reasonably well with Reber’s (1985) definition. They considered hate to be an emotion, often related to anger, disgust, and dislike. They wished the hated person would disappear, or wished he or she would suffer or die.

Again, a group difference between the UT sample and the online community demonstrated that participants in the UT sample were more likely to say that disgust constituted feeling hate. Neither age nor gender was statistically significant at predicting this difference. This is despite the fact that previous studies have suggested that older participants may be less likely to detect disgust (e.g., Sullivan, Ruffman, & Hutton, 2007) and less likely to feel disgust (e.g., Birditt & Fingerman, 2003 [as a negative emotion in general]) than younger participants. However, the data from this current study suggests that the experience of hatred and defining hatred may also be contingent on general life experience differences. Specifically, the online community did not consist of undergraduate students and thus the undergraduate experience may influence their feelings, perceptions, and understanding of disgust that those outside of this community may not have access to. Again, this study demonstrates that the use of undergraduates in the understanding of hatred may be limiting in terms of how this population actually defines hatred.

*Who is hated?* Participants often felt momentary (or perhaps even longer-term) hatred and resentment for those they knew, loved, and cared for. When asked about hatred, people rarely spontaneously talked about their hatred for groups of people. It is of course possible that in the right setting, when people’s deepest prejudices are provoked, this group hatred might emerge—consider the findings in Sherif’s (1958) “Robber Cave” experiment, for example.

Group differences between the UT sample and online community also demonstrated that life experience, age, and gender may be strong determining factors in who is hated. The online community was more likely to name an ex-husband and a coworker as someone hated most of the time, while the UT sample was more likely to name friends. Specifically, women (rather than men) were more likely to name friends and older women were more likely to name ex-husbands as someone they hated most of the time, while older participants were more likely to name coworkers. Future topics concerning hatred should consider these group differences, but also determine more specifically how these group differences operate. As participants age, they enter into different social arrangements and participate in different social experiences (e.g., marriage and careers). Instead of looking just at group differences, scholars investigating hatred should examine how hatred manifests in these specific environments and if the hatred experienced is different across these contexts. Some scholars

(e.g., Fitness & Fletcher, 1993; Fitness, 2000) have already developed such procedures and this data bolsters the approach of contextualizing further theory concerning hatred.

*Why do people hate?* As previously noted, most religions condemn hatred. Nonetheless, most participants reported that they did indeed hate others. Generally, it was the target's unappealing personality that provoked hatred. Hatred was also sparked, at least in part, by insult, humiliation and betrayal. This was true for all sorts of relationships—from the closest to the most casual.

*Why is hatred so common?* Many scholars agree that emotions are functional (Barrett & Campos, 1987; Keltner & Gross, 1999; Keltner & Shiota, 2003). When it comes to hate, many contend that it has a motivational or driving force (Blum, 1997; Akhtar, 1995). After all, one cannot change a person's personality or undo a betrayal. However, one can separate from or avoid the target, or (as in more violent eras) kill an oppressor. Hate may be the impetus one needs to facilitate avoidance of the target and may serve as a form of protection. Relief may be felt when someone no longer has to deal with or see the person they hate.

*Ending hatred.* Given the data, if people wish to keep their relationships intact, it appears that the most effective techniques for ending hate are prayer and communication (with the target or someone else). There are many reasons why this might be so. Perhaps in such talks, people gain new insights into the situation (Pennebaker, 2003). It is also possible that talking with a higher power or others helps dampen one's angry, sad, and resentful feelings, making it possible to work things out with the other. Consider Kabat-Zinn, Wheeler, Light, & Cropley's (1998) Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Program, or Segal, Williams, & Teasdale's (2002) Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy. Such mindfulness-based interventions have been shown to facilitate self-compassion (Shapiro, Astin, Bishop, & Cordova, 2005), alleviate physical ailments (Kabat-Zinn, Wheeler, Light, & Cropley, 1998), and boost immune response (Davidson et al., 2003), all of which may help people attenuate their hate and focus on constructive ways to handle the situation.

#### *Limitations of the study*

As in any self-report study, people may not possess insight into their own emotional states and cognitive mechanisms (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). For example, "what is hate?" is a very difficult question for most people to answer. After profound contemplation, philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists have come up with very different answers. Nonetheless, as Heider (1958) argued, it is helpful to know how laypersons view things. Qualitative analyses, combined with other methods—be they self-reports, physiological tests, or fMRI scans—should provide information on how hate is experienced, expressed, and handled.

Another potential weakness of this study is that part of it was conducted on the Internet and thus only computer literate people are included in the online sample. It is possible that those who do not possess Internet access may experience hate in other ways. However, much research on hate, specifically group-hate (Levin, 2002; Levin & McDevitt, 1993), has shown that people are quite comfortable talking about their feelings of hate on the Internet. Internet usage is growing (U. S. Department of Commerce, 2004) and samples gathered from the Internet appear to be more representative than college student samples (Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava, & John, 2004).

### *Conclusions*

The aim of this study was to craft a general theory of hate given the sample and data provided—and thus the goal was modest and not an attempt to explain hate universally. Like many emotions, hate may be influenced by people's cultural and social scripts as well as their biological and evolutionary heritage. This current study was intended to supply an empirical understanding of hate that should help future investigators form more specific theories and hypotheses, providing a better understanding on how hatred works in everyday contexts.

Given the data, it is clear that the age, gender, and life experiences of the sample are important components of how hate is experienced and explained. Future studies should consider designing studies and experiments that take these limitations into account in order to provide a more valid and omnibus explanation and design of the everyday experience of hate. The theory derived from this data should also serve to inform future researchers. For example, emotions researchers may want to confine a study of hate to situations where the target is someone known, and (also) loved and liked. Personality psychologists may want to consider how certain personality characteristics may be “incompatible” with or spur hatred in an individual, while social psychologists may want to consider what aspects of betrayal facilitate hate (e.g., does the betrayal need to be socially condemned or only privately agreed upon?). Clinical and health psychologists may want to consider how clients' or participants' attempts to end their hatred—although frequently used—may not be the best choice in terms of how the relationship may turn out. These are just some of the ideas of how this deductive theory may provide additional support for future research concerning the emotion of hate.

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