Chapter 2

TOWARD A PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT OF ENMITY

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ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses a phenomenon pertinent to interpersonal hate: enmity. We first review the existing literature relevant to enemies, including a discussion of the relative neglect of this topic and the paucity of research on “the dark side of relationships.” The remainder of the chapter addresses definitional, theoretical, and methodological issues in studying enmity. In particular, we provide a novel construct definition of interpersonal enmity in which an enemy is a person someone dislikes; believes is malevolent or threatening; and wishes some degree of social, psychological, or physical harm upon. The benefits of this approach over other conceptualizations are discussed, as are multiple unresolved issues in conceptualizing enmity. The remainder of the chapter discusses future directions for research on enemy relationships including different classes or types of enemies, the integration of enemies with the self, the influence of enmity on person perception, and the role of individual differences in the development of enemy relations. Finally, we argue for the need to move beyond questionnaire and interview

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methodologies and discuss the benefits which can be obtained by more rigorous hypothesis testing and experimental design in this research area.

**INTRODUCTION**

As an intensely social species, humans engage in a large and diverse set of interpersonal relationships. At a basic level these relationships are the foundation on which human cooperation, the sharing of resources and information, is built. In fact, our species is so social that this cooperation is utterly necessary for human survival and achievement; that is, humans are *obligately interdependent* (Caporael, 2007). We depend upon one another for survival throughout the lifespan, and ostracism from the group likely meant death throughout much of human evolutionary history. Because of this, human development is characterized by many emergent capacities which serve to maintain positive social relationships (see, e.g., Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). Interestingly, these capacities are expressed so early in the lifespan (e.g., by age 1 in some cases; Tomasello, 2007) that they are likely to have a quite substantial genetic component.

In conjunction with our ability to selectively determine with whom relationships form and persist, the basic capacity to cooperate leads most relationships to be positive, providing net benefits to both parties. Evidence exists to support this contention. Consider, for example, that though the impact of marriage on subjective well-being varies with marriage quality, the married are on the whole significantly happier than the unmarried (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). The socially isolated, on the other hand, are both psychologically and physically less healthy than those who are more successful in maintaining relationships (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008).

Against this backdrop, the common phenomenon of interpersonal conflict is somewhat of a puzzle. Obviously, interpersonal relationships characterized by intense dislike, distrust, and malevolence -- in short, by hate -- are not particularly uncommon. Individuals in such relationships are often called enemies. How and why is it that some people come to be enemies? Are certain types of people more likely to form enemies than others? Are there qualitatively different types or kinds of enmity? Is enmity largely inherent to human nature or are its origins more cultural and institutional? Is enmity pertinent to social problems like aggression and institutional dysfunction? In this chapter, we argue that social psychological science has failed to provide the answers to such critical questions and that the theorizing surrounding such issues is so nascent that investigators have not yet developed an adequate conceptual framework from which to begin formal
investigations. Therefore, the focus of the chapter will be offering a novel construct definition of enmity and providing the basic rationale that underlies this conceptual framework. First, however, we address the existence of enmity as a meaningful social phenomenon and review the existing scholarly literature.

**Enmity: A Familiar Phenomenon**

The word “enemy” is a familiar one in human discourse. It is common to maxims such as “Know thy enemy” and “Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.” When we hear quotations such as Oscar Wilde’s “A man cannot be too careful in his choice of enemies,” John F. Kennedy’s “Forgive your enemies, but never forget their names,” or Aesop’s “We often give our enemies the means of our own destruction,” we easily understand what they mean. As these quotes so clearly indicate, one’s enemy is an individual with the capacity to threaten his or her wellbeing. Thus, one should monitor such a person closely.

Some indication that the phenomenon of enmity is common to human experience can be drawn from the field of literature. Enemies are common to classic and contemporary literature, and their conflicts compose much of the most enthralling drama one can experience. One of the authors of this chapter (C. J.) has long found the relationship between Roger Chillingworth and Arthur Dimmesdale in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* to be particularly memorable. Chillingworth returns from years abroad to find his wife Hester has had a child and will not reveal the father’s identity. Upon confirming his suspicions that minister Arthur Dimmesdale is the father, Chillingworth exploits his position as a doctor to augment Arthur’s physical and psychological torment (Arthur himself, ashamed, already engaging in intense literal and figurative self-flagellation). The manner in which Chillingworth secretly, methodically, and effectively punishes Arthur for the cuckolding is, so to speak, chilling. If the frequency with which they occur in narrative is any indication, romantic competition and revenge for transgressions, romantic or otherwise, are among the most common bases of enmity. Another is the power struggle. The one between Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham has captivated audiences in its various forms for centuries. Enemies are, rather obviously, still prominent in contemporary narrative. How many young people cannot name Harry Potter’s greatest enemy? (Though, of course, as Potter readers know, He Must Not Be Named). Enmity has been a prevalent theme in narrative throughout time, as is apparent in the mythologies that comprise much of humanity’s earliest narrative. A consideration of mythology also highlights the cultural universality of enmity.
For example, Ares and Hephaestus of Greek mythology, were made enemies by conflict over the beautiful Aphrodite. In Egyptian mythology, Ra, the sun god, struggled eternally with the monstrous Apep for control of the skies. The Japanese sibling deities Amaterasu and Susanoo had starkly opposing dispositions that continually put them at odds. These are but a few of the relevant examples, and even the most cursory search will easily reveal more. Although successful human cooperation and amity may be the norm, it seems to have made for a less enthralling story than enmity.

Though examples from narrative can be suggestive, the phenomenon must exist outside of fiction to be of interest to psychological science. Numerous historical examples are available, but we will limit ourselves to one of the most notorious. U.S. President Richard Nixon’s famed “enemies list” enumerated various individuals and groups seen as obstructing the President’s agenda, including politicians and their benefactors, journalists, academics, and celebrities. Compiled by White House Special Counsel Chuck Colson and aides, the existence of the list was revealed at the Watergate hearings by former White House counsel John Dean. Nixon’s enemies were to be targeted for government harassment through such mechanisms as IRS audits, denial of grants, and prosecution. For example, in reference to a newspaper article critical of Nixon’s close friend, banker Charles Rebozo, Dean said, “I got instructions that one of the authors of the article should have some problems” (Siddon, 1973). The possibility that influential individuals might acquire enemies more easily than others seems likely.

**PAST RESEARCH ON ENMITY**

In the previous section, we provided evidence that enmity is a meaningful social phenomenon which is common and familiar across time and culture. Of course this evidence was largely indirect and anecdotal, an unfortunate imposition of the current state of the literature. It is simply unknown to psychological science, to the best of our knowledge, how prevalent enmity is because it has never been assessed in large, representative samples. In fact, the sort of interpersonal phenomenon we are referring to as enmity has received little scientific attention in any form. This pronounced shortcoming in the literature has been noted by the few papers which do address the topic (e.g. Adams, 2005; Wiseman & Duck, 1995) and can generally be seen as part of a larger gap in scientific understanding of “the dark side” of interpersonal relationships (see
In particular, Felmlee and Sprecher noted that, “…the process of becoming enemies may be as worthy of study as that of friendship initiation; yet there is no equivalent relationship field of social animosity” (p. 371).

This is not to say that the word “enemy” or its variants do not appear in the literature of social psychology or related fields with reference to interpersonal interactions. These concepts are present, but are rarely defined or treated as specific psychological constructs or as the focus of inquiry. Rather, “enemy” is most frequently used as a casual reference to any disliked person. A number of classic social psychological papers are illustrative. For example, Blumberg (1969) wrote, “subjects indicated that they would be happiest not only when their friends liked them, but also when their enemies disliked them” (p. 121). The actual wording of questions posed to participants, however, referred only to how participants would feel about various matched and mismatched levels of liking and never mentioned enemies (or friends). One might expect articles titled “My Enemy’s Enemy Is My Friend” (Aronson & Cope, 1968) and “An Observer’s Reaction to the Suffering of His Enemy” (Bramel, Taub, & Blum, 1968) to treat the concept more formally. On the contrary, in neither case is it explicitly explained what is meant by the term. In the latter, “enemy” and its variants do not even appear in the main text of the article. We do not mean to criticize these authors or these studies, but merely to illustrate the extent to which the concept of enmity has not had its own distinct identity as a social psychological construct. Interestingly, in both of these studies the “enemy” in question is an experimenter who has been rude to participants. It is not established that participants consider this person an enemy, and it is unclear whether participants plausibly might. Instead, dislike and enmity are equated. While people surely dislike their enemies, we propose that a meaningful construct of enmity should go beyond mere dislike. Unfortunately contemporary usage of the term in psychological discourse continues in this same vague fashion, with a few exceptions noted below.

Contemporary research and theory on enemy relationships can be traced back to Wiseman and Duck (1995), who were the first to formally define the construct (using the terms “enmity” and “enemyship”). This initial analysis was based on two earlier qualitative studies conducted by Wiseman using an in-depth interview methodology. The first (N = 80) concerned friendship, and the second (N = 60) concerned enmity. The study pertaining to enmity was constructed such that the questions asked of participants paralleled the previous study of friendship as much as possible. This enabled some comparisons between the two relationship types. Though Wiseman and Duck describe a few parallels between the two sets of data, they conclude that this approach “revealed major differences in the generic
aspects of friendship and enmityship. The two kinds of relationships are not two ends of the same continuum, nor are they mirror images of each other—at least in the minds of persons who have experienced these relationships” (p. 46). One difference, for example, is that enemies were described largely in terms of their actions whereas friends were described largely in terms of their enduring characteristics. Because of this dissociation, we have adopted the term “enmity” in the current review in order to avoid implications of equivalence or parallel with the construct of friendship.

The notion of enmity has received some attention in the child and adolescent development literature. Most notably, the journal New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development devoted an issue (no. 102, winter 2003) to the topic of antipathy in the relationships of young people. Several of the articles within discuss enemies, though they do so inconsistently with respect to how enmity is conceptualized, and rigorous theorizing of an enmity construct is lacking, as noted in an analysis of the body of work composing the special issue (Hartup, 2003). As in the social psychological literature, disliking, mutual disliking, and enmity are not sufficiently distinguished. Be this as it may, many of the empirical findings documented in this literature are intriguing. For example, Card and Hodges (2003) found that while children’s attachment styles with their parents were not simple predictors of the propensity to form mutual antipathies, mutual antipathies did tend to form amongst children whose parental attachment styles were incompatible, suggesting that such phenomena must be addressed from a dyadic, relational framework to be fully understood. Parker and Gamm (2003) found that children who were aggressive or lacked social skills were less liked by peers, but this “did not necessarily lead to the accumulation of many mutual enemies” (p. 69). Instead, their data suggested that the tendency towards jealousy was a particularly potent predictor of enmity. Whether such findings generalize to adults or to enmity conceptualized in ways other than mutual disliking is unclear.

Some research has also addressed enmity in a cross-cultural context. Adams (2005), for instance, has argued (and provided preliminary supporting data) that it is more common to have enemies in West African than in American cultures. Moreover, people’s views of enmity differ across cultures, such that Americans tend to perceive enmity as rare and pathological. West Africans, however, would consider that view naïve and believe that enemies (including secret enemies), are exceedingly common. These different experiences and conceptions likely vary due to the cultural underpinnings of relationship and self. That is, North American and European self-construals are typically isolated and atomistic, whereas in other cultures, including West African ones, the self is conceived more as a node in an interconnected network of selves (see, e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991, on this
distinction between “independent” and “interdependent” self-construal). Adams’ work suggests that fundamentally different types of enmity, or at the very least different prevailing beliefs about it, exist in different cultures. The construct of enmity described by Wiseman and Duck and the construct analyzed in this chapter, then, pertain more certainly to the enmity experienced and perceived in Western cultures.

Finally, it is necessary to distinguish between enmity at the interpersonal and intergroup levels. The term “enemy” and its variants can apply to either, but they are very different. Interpersonal enmity is based on personal motives and specific experience with a particular individual. Intergroup enmity is based on the motives of the individual-as-group-member and is directed at another solely due to that person’s group membership (e.g. in an opposing army). While the former, our focus, is little researched, significantly more attention has been given to the latter phenomenon. Particularly, the notion of “enemy images” in international relations theory is well-known (e.g. Alexander, Brewer, & Hermann, 1999; Silverstein, 1989). It is common to hold stereotyped views of other nations that tend to reflect beliefs about certain attributes and relations. An “enemy” state is one that is powerful and antagonistic. While intergroup enmity is important in its own right, evidence exists to support the contention that it reflects an entirely different phenomenon than the interpersonal one at hand. For example, Holt (1989) explored college students’ definitions and images of enemies with respect both to particular individuals and to nations. Interpersonal enemies were those who intended to harm participants or who had betrayed them, and responses indicated that interpersonal enmity had little to do with difference of opinion or ideology. Enemy nations, however, were identified and justified largely on the grounds of oppositional values or policy. Thus, it seems that the ample literature on intergroup conflict should be only tentatively generalized to the less understood domain of interpersonal conflict.

Wiseman and Duck (1995)

At present, the work of Wiseman and Duck (1995) reflects the most substantial theoretical and empirical contribution toward a construct of enmity, and therefore deserves detailed attention. In terms of theory, these authors noted a number of features of enmity observed in the interviews as particularly striking. One was the frequently “unannounced,” quality of enmity in which the interpersonal conflict was not entirely open. Another was an increased consciousness and exploitation of power dynamics in these social relationships. It
appears that competition for limited resources, including social resources, that provide one with the capacity for influence is often part of the genesis of enmity, and the utilization of acquired power often plays a role in exacerbating it. Wiseman and Duck also described a number of axes along which enemy relationships vary. They identified the dislike/hate axis as primary. The intensity of negative affect towards an enemy is likely of great importance. The other two major axes were the active/passive and personal/professional axes. The former concerns whether a person’s enemy is actively engaged in antagonistic actions directed at that person or whether the enemy only possesses a latent capacity to do so. The latter axis concerns the social domain in which the relationship is rooted. Variance along these axes is likely to be important in understanding enmity, particularly in predicting how one will manage the challenge of enmity. At present, however, exactly what consequences follow from such variance remains a very open question. Other axes designated as “less important,” though it is not apparent on what grounds, were the close/distant contact and aware/unaware axes. The former concerns the extent to which contact with the enemy is inevitable, and the latter concerns one’s certainty about the presence or degree of malicious intent held by the enemy. Finally, time frame, or temporal distance, is likely of some consequence.

Although the extensive interviews conducted by Wiseman provide a rich source of information, very little quantitative analysis of this data has been communicated. Nevertheless, some of the empirical findings can be described in broad strokes. First, only a “small percentage of respondents claimed they had no enemies” (p. 48). Enemies tended to emerge from the realms of personal social activity and professional life—they found no indication of enmity within families (but see Adams, 2005). They noted that individuals virtually never cited their own behavior in the development of enmity, almost certainly reflecting a self-serving attributional bias. That is, participants saw enmity as originating from specific and unanticipated acts by the other party—betrayals, disappointments, embarrassments, attacks, and the like. Based on the interview content, it appears likely that many enemies are competitors or rivals. Many enemies were also once considered friends. Contexts promoting conflict over limited resources, jealousy, and power struggle were seen as facilitative of enmity. Once acquired, enemies engendered feelings of frustration and disgust, though the primary response enemies elicited may have been avoidance. Many sought social support in dealing with enemies, and relatively few reported intent to attack or retaliate against enemies.
DEFINING ENMITY: A WAY FORWARD

So far, we have avoided defining enmity because the matter requires considerable attention. As the previous literature review demonstrates, the term can take on a number of distinct meanings. Often, psychologists do not specify exactly is meant by the term. Defining enmity, however, is of critical importance for it is only with a clear and unambiguous definition that predictions and theory can be adequately communicated and corresponding operationalizations can be developed. As noted above, such efforts have been rare.

First, let us examine how enmity has been previously defined. Wiseman and Duck (1995) were the first to extensively discuss a construct of enmity as a relationship. They refrain, however, from concisely defining the term. Adams (2005), citing Wiseman and Duck, defines it thusly: “a personal relationship of hatred and malice in which one person desires another person’s downfall or attempts to sabotage another person’s progress” (p. 948). This fairly captures the gist of the construct as articulated by Wiseman and Duck, and it is surely evocative of the phenomenon in question. However, as a formal definition (to be fair, it was likely not intended as such), it is problematic. In order to be clearly specified, the terms used to define enmity should themselves be clearly specified psychological constructs with conventional, consensually accepted meanings. To define enmity with terms such as “hatred” and “progress” is to beg the question of what these terms themselves mean. Hate, as this volume makes clear, is not a simple construct with a conventional usage. Is hate best conceptualized as the extreme negative end of a liking continuum? Or, is hate somehow qualitatively distinct from dislike? For instance, some might conceptualize hate as an emotional construct, complete with distinctive physiological manifestation. Some identify hate as special in the sense that hated things are those bad objects to be approached and destroyed, rather than avoided. One can say she hates beets or hates, say, her boss and mean very different things. If enmity is to be defined by hate, the intended meaning of hate must be articulated. “Downfall” is similarly unspecified but seems to exclude as an enemy anyone who desires less than the total ruination of another—a boundary condition that seems inappropriate given the data of Wiseman and Duck (1995). “Sabotage” has a strong connotation suggesting covertness, implying that one who is overtly adversarial does not qualify. In sum, though the definition above is evocative, it is not an adequate formal construct definition because it is too unclear and, taken literally, inadequately inclusive. Thus, it would pose problems of operationalization. These same problems are common to standard dictionary definitions of enemy and its variants.
Enmity has also rarely been operationalized. Some research has identified enemies by reciprocal dislike, that is, each party endorses a negative attitude toward the other on a scale item or items (e.g. Card & Hodges, 2003). Though this is a perfectly straightforward and useful method, it is obviously a more direct and face valid operationalization of mutual antipathy rather than enmity per se. This is clearly a related construct, but the two are not, in our view, synonymous (see Abecassis, 2003 for one conceptualization relating the two constructs). Other research which has had to operationalize enmity typically involves simply asking participants about their enemies. Clearly, this is problematic because it leaves much to the vicissitudes of interpretation by participants and likely taps various phenomena that could (and should) be distinguished at a construct level.

**Enmity: A Tripartite Definition**

We offer here a definition of enmity that shares much of the spirit of other definitions of enmity as a relationship, but is phrased in terms of clear psychological constructs more suitable for future operationalization. An individual’s enemy is a person whom the individual: a) dislikes b) perceives as malevolent, and c) desires to be harmed. The first component is attitudinal, referring to a summary evaluation associated in memory with that person (see Fazio, 1995). Thus, thinking about or encountering the enemy will activate negative evaluative processes (see Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994 on the substrates of negativity and its independence from positivity). This activation of basic negativity then serves as a building block for more complex and differentiated feelings and emotions like anger or disgust (Russell, 2003). The second component is more specific and cognitive in nature. By malevolent we mean that the individual perceives the enemy as unjustifiably threatening or harmful in prior behavior, character, or intent. Finally, an enemy is someone for whom one hopes some kind of psychological, social, or physical harm, meant in the broadest sense possible. To be clear, one need not necessarily intend or desire to personally harm one’s enemy. It is instead sufficient that one wishes some form of suffering, retribution, or psychological discomfort upon this individual. Thus, one may or may not actively harm one’s enemy. The critical difference between an enemy and a merely disliked individual is that one prefers bad things to happen to an enemy because of the enemy’s malevolence, something that is not the case for all disliked individuals. One hopes the enemy does not achieve his or her goals, one would be less likely to intervene to prevent harm from befalling an enemy, and
one would likely react less unfavorably to observing the pain of an enemy (cf. Bramel, Taub, & Blum, 1968).

We view each of these three components as a necessary but not sufficient condition of enmity. That is, in the absence of any of these components, the case would seem to lack essential characteristics of the enemy relationship. Thus, any one component alone would not suffice to constitute enmity. Although each must be present for an enemy relationship to form, we do not conceptualize enmity as a dichotomous (present vs. absent) construct. Instead, it is continuous and each component can differ in intensity with the degree of enmity varying as a function of these combined intensities. Weak enmity might reflect all three components but not intensely: for example, one might hope an annoying coworker viewed as egotistical and overly competitive be passed over for promotion. On the other hand, strong enmity might be formed towards a despised individual who has seriously and wantonly hurt a loved one and is viewed as deserving the harshest of punishments. This conceptualization has the advantage of being easily quantifiable (i.e. each component can be straightforwardly measured and combined with the others), though how this might be done *optimally* is a question best left aside pending further theoretical and empirical advances.

**On the Tripartite Nature of Enmity**

Although the three components of enmity are each distinct constructs which contribute separately to the meaning of enmity, various psychological processes exist that will cause the components to influence one another. For example, because of the motivation for cognitive consistency that many have argued are basic to human psychology (Heider, 1958; Festinger, 1957), a general trend towards the coherence of affect, cognition, and behavior is to be expected. More specifically, a host of specific processes relate each component to the others. We will provide some illustrative examples.

First, simply disliking another individual is likely to foster negative beliefs about and hope for harm to befall this person. Some recent work provides especially compelling evidence in this regard. Miele, Todd, and Richeson (2009) used a subliminal evaluative conditioning procedure to associate positive or negative affect with unfamiliar groups. After this, participants reported the extent to which they believed each group possessed certain qualities. Interestingly, individuals spontaneously generated beliefs about the groups consistent with the feelings that had been subliminally attached to them: the group associated with negative affect was rated as less warm than the group associated with positive
affect. Negative evaluations can also produce unfavorable cognitions due to their biasing effects on subsequent information processing. For instance, information about a disliked person is likely to be elaborated in a biased fashion, such that even a set of evaluatively varied but objectively neutral information about a disliked individual will foster more negative beliefs and a more extremely negative attitude (Lord, Ross, & Lepper, 1979). Information that pertains unfavorably to the disliked individual will be accepted unquestioningly while information that pertains favorably will be scrutinized harshly. In addition, disliking a person, or even expecting to do so (Kelley, 1950), will produce biased hypothesis testing about that individual’s character, motives, and the like. Looking for negatives will allow individuals to more easily identify this information, and the motivation to view the person negatively will produce a lower threshold for evidence that confirms this hypothesis (and correspondingly raise the threshold of evidence for disconfirming hypotheses; Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1987). Research has also demonstrated that simple dislike can actually cause an individual not only to wish harm upon another but also to become more likely to act upon that desire (see the General Aggression Model; Anderson & Bushman, 2002). In particular, negative affect in the form of pain, frustration, and anger are especially likely to elicit such aggressive tendencies.

One’s negative beliefs concerning the threat and malevolence of another are likely to produce increased dislike and the desire to see that individual come to harm. Both general evaluations (Smith, Bruner, & White, 1956) and emotional experiences (Russell, 2003; Scherer, Schorr, & Johnstone, 2001) are shaped by cognitive appraisals of objects and situations. Further, the more frequently one elaborates on such beliefs, which can form the basis of a negative attitude, the more one’s attitude is likely to be rehearsed, thus coming to mind more readily on future occasions (Powell & Fazio, 1984). Rumination, the tendency to repeatedly and prolongedly think about negative experiences and feelings, has been linked to aggressive tendencies (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Anestis, Anestis, Selby, & Joiner, 2009). Thus, much research suggests that when thinking about how an individual is threatening or malevolent, both dislike of that individual and behavioral tendencies toward aggression against that individual (a relatively strong manifestation of the desire for harm to befall a person) will increase.

Finally, although somewhat less intuitively obvious, one’s desire for harm to befall another (or actually harming another) can also produce corresponding dislike and negative beliefs. This is because such thoughts (or actions) are likely to produce a sense of discomfort that threatens people’s tendency to view themselves as good and moral beings. Therefore, self-justification processes
serving to restore one’s positive self-conception are likely to follow. One manner of doing so would be to increase the extent to which the person is viewed as disliked and deserving of harm (i.e., derogation). Tavris and Aronson (2007) extensively describe such self-justification processes and have shown that people are especially likely to derogate another after having performed a hurtful action towards this individual. Though to our knowledge it has not been demonstrated that merely wishing harm upon another provokes such self-justificatory tendencies, to the extent these desires threaten one’s self-image, there is every reason to expect that it does. In sum, a host of processes lead dislike, perceptions of malevolence, and the desire for harm to feed into one another to produce an integrated, self-perpetuating enemy relation. This feedback and crosstalk between the three components are likely what make enmity such a strong and persistent relationship that can be immune to various reconciliation efforts (Wiseman & Duck, 1995).

Therefore, the appearance or augmentation of any one component of enmity is likely to foster the appearance or augmentation of the others. We do not mean to say, however, that the mere presence of any one component will inexorably facilitate the formation of tripartite enmity. This would not necessarily be the case because causal links between the components that we have described are contingent upon the frequency with which the individual is encountered or thought about. Further, the likelihood that one component will influence the others obviously depends on the strength or intensity of that component. It is clearly possible for one to dislike a person without perceiving that person as malevolent, to wish someone harm without disliking that person (likely for some utilitarian reason), and so on. We predict, however, that full-blown enmity often follows when any particular component emerges to a strong degree and the individual cannot henceforth be easily avoided.

**OTHER ISSUES IN THE DEFINITION OF ENMITY**

**Mutuality and Directionality**

Two related conceptual aspects of enmity relating to some of the above definitional issues are the ideas of mutuality and directionality. In some relationships, individuals may harbor roughly equivalent antipathies in form and degree, and often these are the examples that are evoked upon mention of enemies. The enmity is mutual. Some dictionary definitions even go so far as to
define enmity as such. However, the existing literature points to clear asymmetries in the enmity individuals describe (Wiseman & Duck, 1995) and the existence of “secret” enemies (Adams, 2005) is particularly inconsistent with this definition. Thus, although the proportion of enemies that are mutual remains unknown, we see no reason to limit the construct to these cases. Consider our first literary example. Roger Chillingworth of *The Scarlet Letter* hides his identity and knowledge from Arthur Dimmesdale, which allows him to punish Dimmesdale all the more effectively. Arthur, on the other hand, bears no ill-will whatsoever towards Chillingworth, at least while the ruse persists. By our definition, Chillingworth’s enemy was Dimmesdale, but not vice versa. The enmity was not mutual, and yet the example, at least in our view, clearly reflects an example of an enemy relationship.

The prior example raises the issue of directionality. Note that the earlier definition we described refers to one person hating and desiring another’s downfall and is flexible with respect to the issue of directionality. One might say that two people are enemies if one or the other feels a certain way. This raises a potential terminological and communicative problem. If one says “Chris’ enemy,” it may refer, to be concise, either to someone who Chris hates or to someone who hates Chris. One solution would be to introduce terminology that distinguishes the two. For example, the Latin prefixes *ad* and *ab*, meaning toward or away from a point of reference respectively could be utilized. Thus, Chris’ (the point of reference) ad-enemy hates Chris. Chris’ ab-enemy is one whom Chris hates. Another solution to this communicative problem is to specify directionality in the definition as we have done. Chris’ enemy, using our definition, is one who Chris dislikes, perceives as malevolent and wishes harm upon. To say “Chris’ enemy” does not necessarily imply anything about this other person’s feelings etc. about Chris, though if one were to say Chris and another are enemies, the implication would be that the feelings are mutual.

The disadvantage of this approach is that it is at odds with individuals’ tendency to focus disproportionately on the other when describing their enemies. Individuals, asked about their enemies, tend to focus on the hatred and ill will directed at themselves. However, there is a strong pragmatic reason for defining enemy as from a point of reference. When measuring enmity using our conceptualization, one must ask individuals about dislike, beliefs, and intent to harm. One can answer these questions about themselves or about others. The degree of knowledge and certainty participants can have is much greater in the former case, which is how measurement would occur focusing on enmity directed from the participant. Although individuals are frequently biased and are particularly unaware of their own biases (Pronin, Gilovich, & Ross, 2004), these...
biases tend to be self-serving. If an individual reports disliking another, perceiving that person as malevolent, and desiring that they are harmed, we can be quite certain it is true. When a participant must report whether such things are true of another, measurement of enmity is likely to be much less reliable.

**Intimacy, Familiarity and Longevity**

Another definitional issue is that of intimacy or familiarity. In conceiving enmity within the domain of personal relationships, we are specifying that a minimum degree of intimacy or familiarity is met. The conflict generates from dynamics particular to the two individuals and their interactions rather than group memberships and the actions of the individuals’ affiliates. Others may be involved, but the sentiments are specific to the two parties. One might go further and define enmity as a phenomenon within close groups (e.g. Adams & Dzokoto, 2007). Depending on how stringently an in-group context is defined, this would seem to exclude many relationships from the domain of enmity. For example, one of the authors has a friend who owns a business. He has what we would consider an enemy. This enemy is a business rival who provides roughly the same service and competes for customers. In this friend’s case, at the most meaningful level of self-identification, the enemy is in an outgroup (the other company). Though it is not irrelevant to their relationship that their groups are opposed, it is obvious in this case that the enmity is at least partially rooted specifically in interpersonal interactions and perceptions. Not all members of that group are his enemies and it was the unique actions of this particular outgroup member that created the dislike, perceptions of malevolence, and desire for harm. Because of this, we view this case as one that should fall within the theoretical domain of interpersonal enmity.

There is, however, an empirical question at hand. Is enmity within a close ingroup similar to enmity between individuals in different groups? Or are these two forms sufficiently dissimilar that they ought to be differentiated at a construct level? It is likely too soon to say, but we do not see any reason at present to limit the construct to intragroup relationships.

Defining enmity as a relationship means that we typically have had direct interaction with our enemies and have a relatively high degree of familiarity with them. As with other relationships, this suggests a certain degree of longevity. Thus, the two individuals in question will likely have prolonged contact and the defining characteristics of enmity will persist over time. However, some special cases that vary from this prototype must be considered. Some individuals, in particular those who are public figures and/or are particularly influential, might
have enemies who they know of but may never have had any actual direct contact. Nixon and his enemies come to mind. The problem of the public figure is interesting because another person might paradoxically know the public figure very well and not at all, simultaneously. More generally, one can be influenced in a negative way by another who is almost completely unknown but still come to consider that individual as an enemy. Another special case involves relationships that are highly context-dependent. A football player, for example, might identify another opposing player as particularly noxious and a ripe target for harm, yet this sentiment might dissolve at game’s end. At this early stage, we again view more inclusive definitions as prudent, though it may prove superior to restrict the construct to particular types or degrees of intimacy and longevity as more is learned.

**FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

**Typology**

As has been alluded to repeatedly, it is possible that the construct of enmity can be further differentiated. Differences in enemy relationships obviously exist, and it may be the case that some differences are consistently produced by sufficiently distinct circumstances and/or consistently lead to sufficiently distinct outcomes that it would prove theoretically useful to specify subtypes of enmity in addition to identifying more isolated continua of variability of enmity. Determining whether such unique kinds of enmity exist is an important problem for future research. The personal/professional axis identified by Wiseman and Duck is a particularly interesting potential source of differentiation because of its more qualitative distinction (compared to the other axes they identified as important). The dominant emotions that an enemy evokes might also be integral to differentiating the construct of enmity. Different emotions are known to arise from different antecedents, to differ experientially, and to promote different behaviors. An enemy that primarily evokes fear is likely to be very different than one that particularly evokes anger, disgust, or jealousy. All of this, obviously, remains speculative.
The Self

Clearly, relationships are extremely important aspects of people’s lives. One primary manner in which individuals self-identify is through their important relationships with others (relational identities—Brewer & Gardner, 1996), such as one’s identity as spouse, parent, sibling, boss, partner, etc. In close relationships, a merging of self and other can occur. This is not a mere turn of phrase; at the level of mental representation, close others can become so closely associated with the self that the two are represented in memory in an overlapping fashion such that activation of one activates the other (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991). Conceivably, relationships with one’s enemies might come to possess a similar significance. This is especially likely when the enemy relationship is so intense that two individuals are engaged in active and significant attempts to cause harm to one another over a prolonged period. When this is the case, one may begin to define oneself as a person whose purpose in life is, to a substantial extent, to successfully oppose the enemy. To the extent that this occurs, the destruction of an enemy or resolution of enmity may come to pose problems of self-identification. The newly impoverished self-concept may involve the person struggling to determine who he or she is and what his or her goals should be (cf. Nord, 1997). Although such intense enmity is probably relatively rare, such relationships do appear in literature. Though in reality one’s enemy is unlikely to be an animal, to say the least, Captain Ahab’s single-minded, self-consuming quest to destroy Moby Dick, the whale who bit off his leg, comes to mind.

Person Perception and Enmity

People surely perceive and process information about their enemies in a different manner than they do other people. In particular, individuals are likely to exhibit two separate tendencies that will interact to produce a unique form of person perception. As described above, the first of these tendencies will be a negative bias in the processing of information -- people will process information about their enemies in an extremely biased manner, altering the type of attributions made about their behaviors and the perceived consequences of their actions. This will tend to result in perceiving the enemy as having more negative characteristics, having more suspect motivations, and as generally being just worse than would be seen by a more neutral observer. Especially when enemies are strongly disliked, people will be motivated to perceive them in the worst possible way, and this bias may cause them to quite literally see their enemies
more negatively than other people (see Balcetis & Dunning, 2006 for a discussion of higher-order motivational influence on lower-order perception).

At the same time, however, a powerful accuracy motive is also likely to be present. Because of the threat that enemies pose, one has a vested interest in being able to accurately judge an enemy’s capacities and predict an enemy’s actions. Especially for enemies with whom one has a high degree of contact, the malevolent enemy must be scrutinized and anticipated. This will likely motivate individuals to commit a great deal of their information processing resources to the enemy whenever this individual is present in addition to ruminating about the person in absentia. Such increased attention combined with bias likely makes individuals particularly adept at identifying their enemies’ shortcomings and weaknesses, though they may be prone to exaggerating them. Interestingly, committing such a large amount of cognitive attention to this single individual is likely to produce a deficit in the processing of other information in the environment when an enemy is present or on the mind. By serving as a cognitive load, the presence of an enemy is likely to produce a variety of information processing outcomes related to reduced mental capacity (e.g., Biernat, Kobrynowicz, & Weber, 2003; Reeder, 1997; Spears, Haslam, & Jansen, 1999; Van Knippenberg, Dijksterhuis, & Vermeulen, 1999). This interplay between strong bias, increased elaboration, and accuracy constraints imposed by the need to predict the enemy creates an intriguing dynamic of person perception.

**Individual Differences**

Various individual differences surely play a role in enmity. Some attention has been paid to gender, leading to the conclusion that same-sex versus cross-sex enmities differ systematically (see Wiseman & Duck, 1995 and the previously mentioned special issue of *New Directions for Adolescent and Child Development*). Gender differences in the propensities for physical and social aggression are also pertinent to nature of the harm component of enmity (see Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Archer & Coyne, 2005). Demographic variables such as political affiliation and religiosity may relate to enmity. A host of personality variables may also relate with enmity in various ways. The basic fundamental factors of personality, such as the Big-5 or HEXACO, seem an appropriate place to start testing for relationships. Also, narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism -- the so-called dark triad of personality -- are especially likely to affect one’s propensity to make enemies and the methods selected to deal with them.
Methodology

As mentioned, the most notable research on enmity has involved interview methodologies. This largely qualitative approach is quite suitable for initial inquiry into the phenomenon. Given the paucity of research on this topic, it is likely that further research in this vein will continue to be useful. Additionally, however, it is of utmost importance that researchers begin to investigate enmity in other ways that allow for more precise quantification of variables. In particular, experimental methodologies in which an independent variable is manipulated are crucial to establishing causal relationships pertinent to enmity. Scenario methodologies would seem to lend themselves rather readily to such early investigations. In particular, it would be relatively simple to manipulate variables relating to the setting of a relationship, the behavior of the enemy, etc., and examine how participants expect they would feel and behave, the degree to which the components of enmity would be met, and the like. Of course scenario methodologies are problematic because they rely heavily on introspection, but findings from scenario studies could be bolstered with other more intensive methods including the interview and behavioral studies. Ultimately, it will be necessary to create enemies in the laboratory, perhaps using paradigms like those in classic research involving rude, insulting experimenters (e.g. Aronson & Cope, 1968; Bramel, Taub, & Blum, 1968). Of course due to both practical and ethical constraints, it will probably only prove feasible to create weak enemies in the laboratory, and these would lack the characteristic of being particularly meaningful social relationships. The potential payoff in knowledge from experimental methodologies involving the creation of enmity in the laboratory, however, is enormous because of the degree of control it affords.

Enmity has also, to date, only been studied in small, convenient samples. Much could be learned from the use of large, representative samples that could reveal the contours of the phenomenon in a more definitive manner than has yet occurred. Another sampling issue concerns the possibility of studying both parties in enemy relationships simultaneously. While this poses a substantial logistical challenge, the dyadic nature of the phenomenon demands it. Both field and laboratory contexts could potentially be utilized towards this aim.
CONCLUSION

Enmity is a recognizable phenomenon in the social world, one that most everyone has observed if not experienced. Somehow, however, it has gone mostly unstudied by the field to which it perhaps most directly pertains, social psychology. At present, a clearly articulated construct of enmity has yet to be developed. Towards this end, we have offered a novel construct definition. Enmity is a social relationship in which one dislikes one’s enemy, perceives one’s enemy as malevolent, and desires some sort of physical, psychological, or social harm to befall this person. This tripartite definition is easily operationalized and makes a number of novel predictions regarding the antecedents and consequences of enmity. The existing literature points to various ways in which enmity might be further differentiated or specified as a construct. The extent to which this area remains open is daunting. Nevertheless, many points of departure are quite clear, both respect to theory and method. Advancing along these lines will not only prove informative for understanding this manifestation of human relationship but should also provide a great deal of insight into a variety of practical social problems, such as interpersonal aggression and hate.

REFERENCES


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