

Workshop 2 – Motives to Help and Harm: Their Common Character and Conversion to Action

MONDAY, October 15 – 9am-12noon

TUESDAY, October 16 – 9am-12noon

Instructor

R. A. Wright

(001) 205.936.4743

rex.wright@unt.edu

Description

We will consider why people help and harm others and the manner in which reasons to help and harm translate into effortful goal pursuit, that is, action. Classically, prosocial (helping) behavior and anti-social (harming) behavior have been understood in different motivational terms, for example, with scholars emphasizing desire to adhere to norms when accounting for prosocial behavior and emphasizing desire to address injustice when accounting for anti-social behavior. The instructor will propose an alternative idea – that fundamental motives for helping and harming are fully overlapping. This is to say that *people may help others for precisely the same reasons that they harm them*. The instructor also will argue that the intensity of helping and harming activity is not determined by the strength of reasons to help or harm. Instead, intensity should be determined by what can, will, and must be done to accomplish helping and harming purposes.

Grades

Grades will be based on general participation and the score earned on a single-item essay exam administered at the end of the workshop. Students are encouraged to review assigned publications and arrive being prepared to discuss themes.

Background Reading

1. Anderson, C.A. (2002). Aggression. Article in E. Borgatta (Ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Revised Edition. New York: MacMillan.
2. Batson, C. D. (2011). *Altruism in humans*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Chapter 1)
3. Berkowitz, L. (1989). Frustration-aggression hypothesis: Examination and reformulation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *106*, 59-73.
4. Brehm, J. W., Wright, R. A., Solomon, S., Silka, L., & Greenberg, J. (1983). Perceived difficulty, energization, and the magnitude of goal valence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *19*, 21-48.
5. Brehm, J. W., & Self, E. (1989). The intensity of motivation. In M. R. Rozenweig and L. W. Porter (Eds.), *Annual Review of Psychology* (pp. 109-131). Palo Alto: Annual Reviews, Inc.
6. Bushman, B.J., & Anderson, C.A. (2001). Is it time to pull the plug on the hostile versus instrumental aggression dichotomy? *Psychological Review*, *108*, 273-279.
7. Hoffman, M. L. (1981). Is altruism a part of human nature? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *40*, 121-137.
8. Mook, D. G. (1991). Why can't altruism be selfish? *Psychological Inquiry*, *2*, 139-141.
9. Toi, M., & Batson, C. D. (1982). More evidence that empathy is a source of altruistic motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *43*, 281-292.
10. Wright, R. A. (2016). Motivation theory essentials: Understanding motives and their conversion into effortful goal pursuit. *Motivation and Emotion*, *40*, 16-21. DOI 10.1007/s11031-015-9536-4