

BOOK REVIEW

The Nature of Hate

by R. J. Sternberg and K. Sternberg
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Hate is one of the most powerful, destructive, and enigmatic emotional phenomena. The negative impact of hate on human lives, on interpersonal, intergroup, and societal levels has been widely documented (Sternberg, 2005; Opatow & McClelland, 2007; Staub, 2005, 2011). Do we, however, really and truly know what hate is? Do we understand what drives it and how it evolves? And why does it have such powerful impact on almost every aspect of our personal, social, and political lives? Despite extensive acknowledgment of its potentially destructive impact, there are few contemporary definitions of hate. (For a review, see Royzman, McCauley, & Rosin, 2005). One of the main reasons for the shortage in research and definitions of hate is the fact that hate is commonly viewed as an illegitimate social emotion by lay people and scholars alike (Yanay, 2002).

It seems that the authors of *The Nature of Hate*, Robert and Karin Sternberg, have taken it upon themselves to approach this gap in the literature as a challenge and not as a threat. Given the scientific background of Robert Sternberg, who has previously studied the nature of another mysterious and powerful emo-

tion—love—this should not come as too much of a surprise. This book is a novel detailed attempt by Robert and Karin Sternberg to address several fundamental queries surrounding the issue of hate. What is hate and why is it so common? Where does hate originate, and how can it be dealt with?

The book opens with a discussion of the various ways hate affects and influences human lives on a regular basis. Following this, the authors present an overview of various definitions and theories of hate. Next, they describe a two-part theory of hate. According to the Sternberg's theory, hate has three components: negation of intimacy, passion, and commitment. The second part of the theory discusses hate as originating from stories people create about the target. The final parts of the book discuss the application of the theory in various contexts, with further emphasis on hate's role in interpersonal relationships, in driving and underlying propaganda, and in instigating terrorism, massacres, and genocides. Finally, the authors discuss possible cures and solutions for hate.

Although hate plays a pivotal role in intergroup conflicts, the book does not deal with and examine conflicts but prominently discusses hate itself. The authors present a wide perspective of hate as a psychological phenomenon, and readers can make use of it for their own purposes. Additional merits of the book include the integration between a well structured, innovative theory and real world examples, and the interesting approach of hate as a dynamic set of stories.

At the same time, while reading through the book with much enjoyment and enthusiasm, some concerns did cross my mind. Most importantly, I got the impression that the authors' theory of hate is more appropriate for hate on an interpersonal level than on a group level. One main reason for that is that the theory had de-

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veloped as a continuation (and at times as a contradiction) to a parallel theory about love. My sense was that the authors were overcommitted to their original theory about the triangle of love, and by that missed some of the most important components of hate. One important question I would like to raise is whether we can really address a concept such as intergroup love? What follows is that the ingredients of the theory (e.g., negation of intimacy, passion, and commitment) seem to fit interpersonal hate much better than intergroup hate. On a related issue, when it comes to intractable, prolonged conflicts, hate is much more than an individual feeling (see Halperin, Sharvit, & Gross, 2011). In these situations hate takes on the form of a group-based, collective emotion, frequently entering the culture of the involved societies, experienced as a dominant emotional climate (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & de Rivera, 2007).

Even more importantly, I have a number of concerns regarding some of the core aspects of the hate theory presented in the book. By describing hate in a triangle format, the authors imply that hate is not necessarily a discrete emotion, but a unique combination of three (or more) emotions. I only partially agree with that approach. On the one hand, hate usually involves additional experiences of other emotions like disgust, fear, and anger (according to the authors), and I would suggest that there is also some sense of despair involved. But I believe that in almost every aspect of the emotional experience, hate involves some added value above and beyond the mere integration of other emotions. The biggest challenge of any theory about hate is to demonstrate how it is distinguishable and not overlapping with other emotions.

I would suggest reframing the theory a little, utilizing some recent empirical studies conducted mainly in the context of real world intractable conflicts (e.g., Halperin, 2008, 2011; Halperin et al., 2011). According to these studies, the unique aspect of hate is that it targets a concrete object or group and is driven by the judgment that the hated person or group is evil by nature and will never change its negative, immoral, or violent ways (see Halperin, 2008). In addition, the negative or offensive behavior of the hated group or its members is perceived to derive from a motivation to hurt the hater and his or her group and not from some other in-

strumental or practical motivations of gaining more resources. The almost natural implications of these appraisals are: (a) an in-depth belief that there is no real hope of improving the hated group's behavior and (b) a generalized hostility toward every behavior, action, or trait of the hated person or group. Now, with these necessary preconditions in mind, hate can take the form of a pluripotential emotion that can be translated to various action tendencies, depending on the specific context and accompanied emotions. Here my view joins that of the authors, by accepting the fact that each angle of their model would lead to a different behavioral response to hate.

To conclude, this interesting book constitutes a contribution to the field of peace psychology. Anyone who believes that emotions indeed play an important role in intergroup conflict ought to acquire a better understanding regarding the nature, functions, and influence of hate. *The Nature of Hate* provides a starting point for such a journey.

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