simple prescription for physical activity is insufficient to initiate physical activity change. Some researchers have attempted to increase the amount of time that physicians spend counseling patients on physical activity and have also used techniques such as motivational interviewing. While there has been some success with these approaches in efficacy trials, there is limited evidence that physicians have the time necessary to even insert a 2- to 3-minute counseling session for each patient that presents with a low level of physical activity. Where the most promise appears to be in regard to clinic-based physical activity promotion is at the intersection of health information technology and community resources. With the growing prevalence of the electronic health record and the push to include exercise as a vital sign, clinics have moved to the forefront as a location to identify people who could benefit from more physical activity. Still other researchers have shown that when physicians refer patients to a proactive community physical activity organization like the YMCA, the results are typically quite good in terms of increased physical activity.

Faith-Based Interventions

The rationale for intervening in faith-based institutions is not very different than some of the other place-based or settings-based interventions mentioned above. A large proportion of the American population attends a weekly faith-based service, and these services provide a great opportunity to promote physical activity. Just as with worksites, there are a number of different levels of potential intervention in a faith-based organization—sermons, socials, and service opportunities. Guide to Health provides a strong example of an effective intervention that was evaluated across 14 churches in southwest Virginia. The intervention prompted congregates to create weekly step-count goals, and when step counts were met, the future goals changed by an additional 500 steps. If a congregant failed to meet a weekly goal, helpful self-regulation strategies were used to help that person meet personal goals. The intervention was successful in initiating physical activity among congregation members.

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See also Ecological Theory; Group Characteristics; Group Formation; Social Cognitive Theory; Team Building

Further Readings


Hedonic Theory

Hedonic theory, or theory of psychological hedonism, is the idea that human behavior is motivated by the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain (or, more accurately, displeasure). Its origins can be traced to the beginnings of Western philosophy. Although its prominence within psychology waned during the 20th century, updated versions of hedonic theory have emerged in behavioral economics and neurology. As researchers in exercise psychology have begun searching for postcognitivist explanations for variations in exercise behavior, hedonic theory has attracted attention as a perspective of considerable potential value.

History

Early expressions of hedonism can be found in Aristippus (435–366 BCE) and Epicurus (341–270 BCE), both of whom considered pleasure as the ultimate good. Aristippus emphasized physical pleasures, whereas the Epicureans promoted a holistic view of pleasure that included serenity, a
sense of belonging, and overall well-being. Holistic views of pleasure were also promoted by Plato (428–348 BCE), who believed in the balance of the rational, emotional, and appetitive parts of the soul, and Aristotle (384–322 BCE), who coined the term *eudaimonia* to signify the pleasure derived from a virtuous and fulfilling life.

Hedonism reemerged during the Renaissance, with thinkers struggling to align hedonistic ideas with the stern doctrine of the Church. Erasmus (1466–1536) and Thomas More (1478–1535) argued that the pursuit of pleasure is consistent with religion. René Descartes (1596–1650) accepted that passions, including pleasures, influence human behavior but maintained that the mind must control these passions in its pursuit of higher ideals.

In Britain, hedonism was at the core of debates on the appropriate goal of societies and political systems. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and David Hume (1711–1776) accepted that humans are motivated to pursue pleasure and avoid pain. Hume further claimed that reason, which previous thinkers from Plato to Descartes considered capable of keeping passions under control, is powerless. French philosophers La Mettrie (1709–1751) and Helvétius (1715–1771) also endorsed hedonism, arguing that pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain are and should be the primary human motives.

Hedonistic ideas gained wide exposure in utilitarianism, a movement pioneered by Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and continued by James Mill (1773–1836) and his son John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). Utilitarianism was an ethical philosophy, according to which the goal should be the maximization of utility. In Bentham's hedonic calculus, the utility (usefulness) of each action is computed as the algebraic sum of the pleasure to be obtained minus the pain to be caused. The fundamental axiom of utilitarianism was that “the greatest happiness of the greatest number . . . is the measure of right and wrong.” In the opening lines of his book *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Bentham famously wrote that “nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure; it is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do.”

The utilitarian pursuit of pleasure was criticized for encouraging unprincipled self-interest and a disregard for costs to others. Critics argued that this emphasis on pleasure abolished any distinction between humans and animals, characterizing hedonism a doctrine “worthy only of swine.” This attack prompted John Stuart Mill to revise Bentham’s earlier undifferentiated view of pleasure by distinguishing between lower and higher forms (e.g., education, art), the latter being of higher utility.

The ideas of the utilitarians greatly influenced the psychologists of the 19th and early 20th century. Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) emphasized the evolutionary advantage of hedonism, insisting that the only type of behavior that is conducive to life is the behavior that ensures a surplus of pleasure over pain. This evolutionary advantage was also highlighted by Alexander Bain (1818–1903), William James (1842–1910), and William McDougall (1871–1938). Their opinions diverged on the question of whether the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain are the only (the ultimate) human motives, with Bain supporting and James and McDougall rejecting this notion. The writings of Bentham also influenced Sigmund Freud’s (1856–1939) pleasure principle.

Fragments of hedonic theory can even be found during behaviorism and cognitivism, periods during which psychology largely ignored subjective states, such as pleasure, focusing instead on overt behavior and cognitive appraisals, respectively. According to Edward L. Thorndike's (1874–1949) law of effect, when a behavior is paired with pleasure, it becomes more likely to be repeated, whereas, if it is paired with displeasure, it becomes more likely to be avoided. Similarly, for Albert Bandura (1925–), pleasant and unpleasant emotional states can have an influence on behavior, albeit not directly but rather by influencing self-efficacy.

**Contemporary Iterations**

References to hedonic theory in contemporary psychology are rare because, in the prevailing view, behavior and decision making are driven by the rational cognitive analysis of information. Among the exceptions have been emotion theorist Silvan Tomkins (1911–1991) and his students, who have considered affects, including pleasure and displeasure, as the prime human motives. Revivals of psychological hedonism have come mainly from disciplines outside of psychology proper. In behavioral economics, Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman proposed that, because human rationality and cognitive ability are limited compared to
the complexity of the problems that humans face, decision making is aided by *heuristics*, including the *affect heuristic*, that is, people do what makes them feel better and avoid what makes them feel worse.

In neurology, Antonio Damasio, working with patients with focal brain lesions, showed that when areas involved in affective processing are damaged, one may be able to list the pros and cons of various behavioral options but has difficulty making decisions. According to Damasio, different behavioral options are associated with pleasant or unpleasant configurations of bodily state, called *somatic markers*, which influence the decision-making process.

**Application in Exercise Psychology**

Prompted by the limited variance in exercise behavior explained by cognitive variables, researchers have begun exploring the potential of hedonic theory. Data show that exercise enjoyment (which partly reflects pleasure from exercise), affective associations (pairing the idea of exercise with positive or negative descriptors), and ratings of pleasure–displeasure obtained during exercise are significant correlates and predictors of exercise behavior.

*Panteleimon Ekkekakis*

See also Affect; Affective Responses to Exercise; Enjoyment, as Mediator of Exercise Behavior Change; Pleasure

**Further Readings**


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**HETEROSEXISM, HOMONEGATIVISM, AND TRANSPREJUDICE**

Heterosexism, homonegativism, and transprejudice are prejudices aimed at lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) people. These beliefs and actions are common in sport and negatively impact all participants, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. This entry discusses common types of prejudices faced by LGBT sport participants, defines related terminology, and notes the effects of biased sport climates.

**Heterosexism** is a belief system in which it is assumed or expected that all people are heterosexual. In a heterosexist environment, heterosexuality is viewed as the natural or normal sexual orientation. This belief creates the assumption that people are inherently straight (heterosexual), and that those individuals who do not meet this expectation are deviant. As a result, nonheterosexuality is considered strange or abnormal. Heterosexism forms a climate where heterosexuality is privileged or rewarded with high social status and respect not readily granted to nonheterosexuals.

In sport, heterosexism is common. The prevailing silence about the existence of LGBT athletes or coaches renders them invisible. For example, heterosexual privilege is provided when locker rooms are divided by sex. This separation is based on the assumption that through creating all-male and all-female spaces, all sexual innuendos, harassment, or relationships among teammates will be prevented since everyone is expected to be heterosexual. That people in sport tend to only imagine and recognize male athletes as having girlfriends or wives and female athletes solely in relationships with males shows how extensive heterosexism is. Nonheterosexuals participating in heterosexist sport climates may feel excluded from or invisible to their teammates, coaches, or other sport personnel. Heterosexism provides the foundation for climates perceived as unwelcoming for LGBT sport participants.
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