The self and attitudes

Chapter 3

Learning Objectives

Compare the way we manage ourselves in different social situations to how others perceive us

Explain how we arrive at an understanding of our own selves

Understand how different identities affect our behavior

Determine the factors that impact self-esteem

Analyze how prejudice and trying to conceal our identity impacts well-being

Identify the learning processes through which our attitudes are formed

Examine the link between attitudes and behavior and the factors that affect their relationship

Explain the two processes through which attitudes guide behavior

Examine the methods that help people resist skilled attempts to persuade us

Evaluate how people form and use stereotypes

Recall the factors leading to prejudice against specific groups

Explain how subtle forms of discrimination are the manifestations of prejudice

How do you interact with your friend on **Facebook**?

How do you talk to your friend when **you meet in person**?

*Generally, people tend to portray themselves in **social environments** a little more positively than they are in reality. Most people are concerned with how they are perceived by others, whether in social media interactions or face to face.*

Self-presentation

How we think or feel about ourselves

How others see or think about us

Whether all our aspects/attributes are equally available in any context- online, in social settings, in personal space

Do we know ourselves better than others

Self-presentation: Who Is More Accurate About Our Behavior: Self or Others?

All of us are faced with the task of presenting ourselves to a variety of audiences, and we may play different roles (be different selves) in different plays (in different contexts).

Each of us has access to our internal mental states (e.g., feelings, thoughts, aspirations, and intentions), which others do not- so we know us best, but is it true?

Maybe not- having access to **our intentions**, which observers do not have, **is one reason why we are sometimes inaccurate about ourselves**.

Recall the example: your friend is always late at meetings. You predict their behaviour as "latecomer", but your friend does not know about this behaviour, because they intend to be on time and put all efforts to be on time. So who knows your friend better- you or your friend themselves?

Now, your friend would likely admit to being occasionally late, but they would also say that they always try hard to be on time. They might even recall a few instances when that was true.- **This is behavioral self reporting. But is the prediction correct?**

Self-presentation: Who Is More Accurate About Our Behavior: Self or Others?

Often, a close other's ratings and multiple others' ratings of research participants' behavioral frequencies (e.g., attending class) were more strongly related to actual behavioral frequencies than the participant's own self-ratings. So, sometimes we can predict our own behavior better than others can, but not always.

Behavior	Self	Aggregated Informants	Single Informant
With other people	.14	.36**	.30**
On the phone	.37**	.40**	.32**
Talking one-on-one	−.06	.25*	.22*
Talking in a group	.25*	.20*	.25*
Talking to same sex	.34**	.25*	.13
Talking to opposite sex	.31**	.32**	.18
Laughing	.23*	.25*	.13
Singing	.34**	.29**	.34**
Crying	.18	.16	.19
Arguing	.28**	−.05	.09
Listening to music	.40**	.34**	.26*
Watching TV	.55**	.39**	.36**
On the computer	.29**	.31**	.20
At work	.25*	.35**	.22*
Attending class	.07	.33**	.26*
Socializing	.18	.30**	.27*
Indoors	.16	.16	.20
Outdoors	.11	.05	.10
Commuting	.27**	.16	.14
At a coffee shop/bar/restaurant	.27**	.15	.24*

Self-presentation: Tactics

Self-promotion: If we say we're really good at something, people will often believe us.
Self-verification perspective—the processes we use to lead others to agree with our own self-views—suggests that negotiation occurs in attempts to get others to agree with our self-claims

Maria writes a LinkedIn post summarizing her achievement:
"Excited to share that I recently developed a tool that streamlined task automation, resulting in a 25% productivity boost for my team! It was a great opportunity to apply my skills in Python and automation. Looking forward to future challenges in tech innovation!"

Self-deceptive: Discrepancy between our ideal and actual selves (e.g., how do you select your DP)

John is a sales manager whose team missed their quarterly targets. Instead of acknowledging that poor planning and unrealistic goals contributed to the shortfall, he convinces himself that external factors, e.g., an unusually tough competitor, were solely to blame. When presenting the results to his senior management, John emphasizes these external factors and downplays his team's internal shortcomings.

Self-presentation: Tactics

Present yourself to others as someone who particularly values or respects them. In general, when we want to make a good impression on others, it can be useful to employ **ingratiation tactics.**

Before an important presentation, Alex compliments the CEO by saying:
"I really admire the way you handled last quarter's strategic shift. It was inspiring and taught me a lot about leadership."

Self-deprecating—imply that we are not as good as the other person, by communicating admiration or by simply lowering an audience's expectations of our abilities.

Before presentation to a group of executives, Sara is nervous because the topic is complex, so she starts her talk with a bit of humor:
"Before we dive in, let me just say—if I lose you halfway through, it's probably because I got too excited about all the data. Feel free to interrupt me if I do!"

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Self-knowledge

How do we analyze ourselves

Do we take an observer's perspective on the self

Self-knowledge:

Introspection—privately thinking about the factors that made us who we are—is a useful way to learn about the self. **The more we introspect—particularly the more we examine the reasons why we act as we do—the greater the self-understanding we will achieve.** Thinking about reasons for our actions can misdirect our quest for self-knowledge when our behavior is really driven by our feelings and when we have difficulty in predicting the future.

Emily, a project manager, notices that a recent project didn't go as smoothly as planned. the team experienced several conflicts and miscommunications along the way. Instead of immediately moving on to the next project, Emily takes time to reflect. She asks herself questions like:

- *"Why did the team struggle to stay aligned?"*
- *"Did I provide clear enough instructions and support?"*
- *"How could I improve my leadership approach next time?"*

She journals her thoughts and realizes that she could have facilitated more frequent check-ins and clarified roles better at the outset. She also acknowledges that stress affected her communication style and resolves to manage it better in future projects.

Self-knowledge: The Self from the Observer's Standpoint

One way that we can attempt to learn about ourselves is by taking an "observer" perspective on own past- one way to gain self-insight is to try to see ourselves as others do, and consider the possibility that they are more right than we are!

Because actors and observers differ in their focus of attention, and observers are less likely to be swayed by knowing our intentions and so forth, they could potentially have greater
insight into when we will behave as we have done in the past.

David, a university student, is giving a speech at a student event. As he speaks, he notices a few people in the audience looking at their phones and others exchanging glances. He starts thinking: "Do they find my speech boring? Am I coming across as nervous?"

In this moment, David views himself not just as the speaker but from the perspective of the audience—imagining how they might be judging his performance. This self-knowledge leads him to adjust his delivery, adding more energy and humor to re-engage the audience.

Self-identity

we think of ourselves primarily as
individuals- personal identity

we think of ourselves as members
of specific social groups- social identity

what is salient and what is trifling

we define ourselves and behave differently
in different situations

Self-identity

When our personal identity is salient and we think of ourselves as unique individuals, this results in self-descriptions that emphasize how we differ from other individuals- **intra-group comparison**. However, such personal identity description depends on comparative contexts.

Example: You could describe yourself as particularly liberal if you were comparing yourself to your parents, but if you were indicating how you are different from other college students you might say that you are rather conservative.

Perceiving ourselves as members of a group means we emphasize what we share with other group members. We describe ourselves in terms of the attributes that differentiate our group from another comparison group- **inter-group comparison**.

Example: if you are female and your gender is salient, you might perceive the attributes that you believe you share with other women (e.g., warm and caring) and that you perceive as differentiating women from men as self-descriptive. Likewise, if you are male, when gender is salient, you might think of yourself (i.e., self-stereotype) in terms of attributes that are believed to characterize men and that differentiate them from women (e.g., independent, strong).
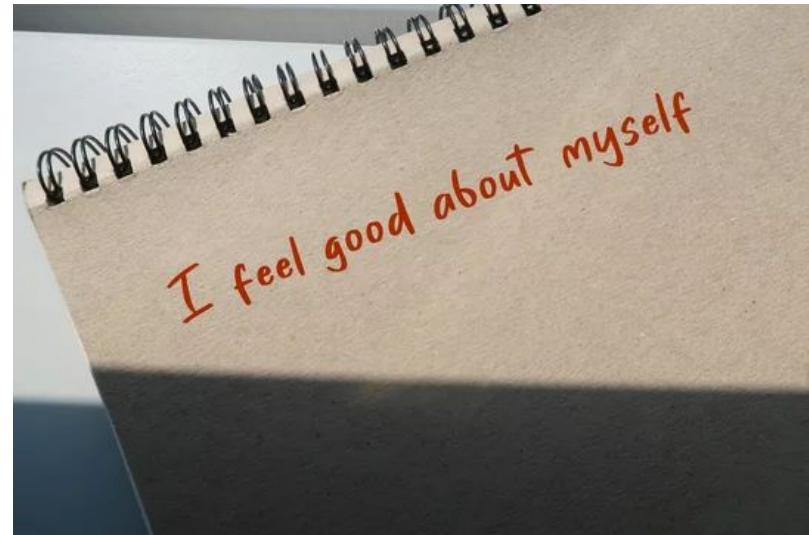
Self-esteem

What kind of attitude do you have toward yourself—is it positive or negative?

Do you think your attitude about yourself varies across time and settings?

Is your attitude about yourself stable?

Does it increase/change in response to life events?

I feel good about myself

Self-esteem: Measurements

The most common method of measuring personal self-esteem as an overall assessment of self-evaluation is with the 10-item Rosenberg (1965) scale. On this measure, people are asked to rate their own explicit attitude toward themselves.

However, self-esteem scores based on the Rosenberg scale could be biased by self-presentation concerns.

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.*
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.*
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.*
9. I certainly feel useless at times.*
10. At times I think I am no good at all.*

Self-esteem: Measurements

The Implicit Association Test (IAT), developed in 1995 by Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald, measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report. The IAT may be especially interesting if it shows that you have an implicit attitude (hidden biases about gender, race, age, disability, sexuality and 90 other topics) that you did not know about.

Implicit bias generally results in a preference for dominant group members and creates privilege for people in those groups.

Self-esteem: Factors determining self-esteem

People's self-esteem is often visibly responsive to life events. When we reflect on our achievements, self-esteem increases and focusing on our failures typically hurts self-esteem.

When people are reminded of the ways they fall short of their ideals, self-esteem decreases. When people with low self-esteem receive negative feedback, their self-esteem suffers further declines. Being ostracized, excluded, or ignored by other people can be psychologically painful and cause reductions in self-esteem.

People with high self-esteem are less vulnerable to threat following a failure experience.

Based on our experiences with our parents—may lay the foundation for implicit associations between the self and positive attributes, or the self and negative attributes.

When you are facing a big challenge, for people with high self-esteem, such self-talk represents a confirmation of their already positive self-views. But for people with low self-esteem, positive self-talk might simply serve to remind them that they might not measure up.

Self-esteem: Migration

Recent research has addressed this question with Asian and European American students who moved from California to Hawaii. In their home state of California, European Americans are the numeric majority and Asian Americans the minority, while this is reversed in Hawaii with Asian Americans the numeric majority and European Americans the minority.

European Americans' self-esteem levels were lower after their first year in Hawaii where their ethnic group was a minority, suggesting that **the change from majority to minority may have challenged their views about themselves.** In contrast, for Asian Americans, although their ethnic identity became less salient by the move from a minority to majority context, their self-esteem was unchanged.

However, what happens to the self-esteem of refugees? This may lead to a considerable trauma.

The Self as a Target of Prejudice

For some identities that we might possess, negative treatment is widely and routinely experienced. For some of these identities, people may be tempted to hide, or not reveal, "who they are" in order to avoid prejudicial treatment. Avoiding discrimination with successful concealment can come at quite a cost— negative health and well-being stemming from loneliness and not being able to connect with others like oneself.

Choosing not to reveal, or repeatedly having to decide to do so or not, can be a substantial burden in its own right. People with concealable stigmatized identities might exhibit lower self-esteem and greater psychological distress than those with stigmatized identities that are not readily concealed (gender, race).

A study: When a stigmatized identity was hidden, participants who did so felt greater authenticity concerns about themselves than those who were not induced to hide their identity. Observers of their interaction with another person saw the "hiding" others as disclosing less about themselves and had a less positive impression of the interaction than when the "true" identity had been revealed.

Attitude formation

One important means by which our attitudes are formed is through the process of social learning. Many of our views are acquired by interacting with others, or simply observing their behavior. Such learning occurs through several processes:

❏ Classical Conditioning: Learning Based on Association

❏ Instrumental Conditioning: Rewards for the "Right" Views

❏ Observational Learning: Learning by Exposure to Others

Attitude formation: Classical Conditioning: Learning Based on Association

A stimulus that is capable of evoking a response—the unconditioned stimulus—regularly precedes another neutral stimulus, the one that occurs first can become a signal for the second—the conditioned stimulus. Stimuli can affect consciously or unconsciously.

Suppose, you want to sell saree to ladies aged in the range, 25-45 years. What photo would you select on your Facebook handle?

Often producers/sellers use such stimulus to increase their product sales.

Attitude formation: Classical Conditioning: Learning Based on Association

Classical conditioning can affect attitudes via two pathways: the direct and indirect route.

The **direct route**—can be seen in this advertisement. That is, positive stimuli (e.g., images of different women) are repeatedly paired with the product, with the aim being to directly transfer the effect felt about the women to the brand.

However, by pairing a specific celebrity endorser who is already liked by the target audience with a brand, a memory link between the two can be established. With this **indirect route**, the idea is that by repeatedly presenting that specific celebrity with the product, then whenever that celebrity is thought of, the product too will come to mind.

Also, remember what will you feel about eating right after you see a cute baby or a mad person. This is an subconscious/subliminal condition forming your attitude about eating.

Attitude formation: Classical Conditioning: Learning Based on Association

Indirect Stimulus – The happy resort scene
Indirect Response – Positive emotions (happiness)
Neutral Stimulus – The beverage brand
Direct Stimulus– The beverage brand after repeated pairing with the happy scene
Direct Response– Positive feelings triggered by the beverage brand

Attitude formation: Instrumental Conditioning: Rewards for the "Right" Views

Individuals learn which views are seen as the "correct" attitudes to hold—because of the rewards received for voicing those attitudes by the people they identify with and want to be accepted by.

Attitudes are acquired is through the process of instrumental conditioning— differential rewards and punishments. Sometimes the conditioning process is rather subtle, with the reward being psychological acceptance—by rewarding children with smiles, approval, or hugs for stating the "right" views and punishing them by glaring angrily at them.

Most instrumental conditioning forming attitudes comes from family and past peer influence, in addition, new social networks also become influential in forming attitudes. We adapt to multiple social networks and form different attitudes to different networks.

Attitude formation: Instrumental Conditioning: Rewards for the "Right" Views

Suppose, you join an eco club as your friends opened it (**new social network**), before joining this club you were not exactly environmental. But now you participate in cleaning up your campus (**positive reinforcement**), you feel less guilty about contributing to pollution (**negative reinforcement**). You are **praised** for this initiative. However, one day you forget recycling, and you are criticized by your club member (**punishment**).

Attitude formation: Observational Learning: Learning by Exposure to Others

Observational learning occurs when individuals acquire attitudes or behaviors simply by observing others. People acquire attitudes toward many topics and objects by exposure to advertising— where we see "people like us" acting positively or negatively toward different kinds of objects or issues.

The mechanism of social comparison—our tendency to compare ourselves with others in order to determine whether our view of social reality is correct or not. That is, to the extent that our views agree with those of others, we tend to conclude that our ideas and attitudes are accurate; after all, if others hold the same views, these views must be right! Also, attitudes are being shaped by our own desire to be similar to people we like **(Example: my best friend is talking negative about an individual/group/ event/item/place, I usually adopt my friends views and I also dislike that individual/group/event/item/place.)**

People often adjust their attitudes so as to hold views closer to those of others who they value and identify with—their reference groups. For example- *the adoption of favorable attitudes toward wearing sunscreen depended on the extent to which the respondents identified with the group advocating this change.*

# Attitude formation: Observational Learning: Learning by Exposure to Others

You are not actually a dessert lover. But you ordered an ice-cream because you friend ordered one. Thus, you are modeling your friend's eating (**social modeling**).

Attitude formation

Who are more convincing-scientists or politicians to you regarding your perception of climate change and your responsible attitude and actions?

Republicans rank climate change at the bottom of their priorities for the president and Congress in 2024

*% of U.S. adults who describe each of the 20 issues asked about as a **top priority** for the president and Congress*

EACH DOT REPRESENTS ONE OF 20 ISSUES ASKED ABOUT
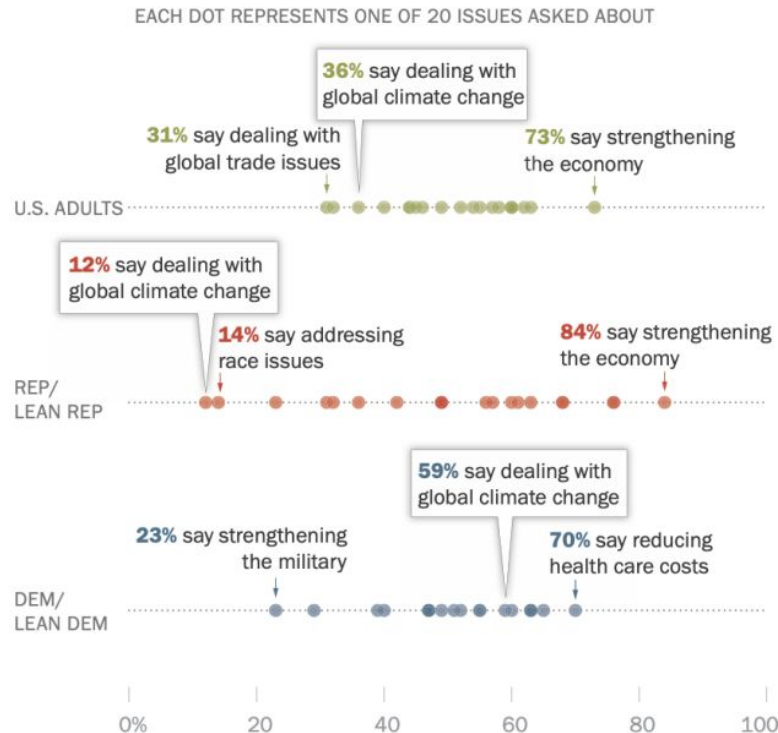
Note: Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 16-21, 2024.

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Attitude guiding behavior: TRA or TPB

In some situations we give careful, deliberate thought to our attitudes and their implications for our behavior. Insight into the nature of this process is provided by the **theory of reasoned action (TRA)**, which was later refined and termed the **theory of planned behavior (TPB)** (**Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980**)

The notion: decision to engage in a particular behavior is the result of a rational process.

Various behavioral options are considered, the consequences or outcomes of each are evaluated,
and a decision is reached to act or not to act.

That decision is then reflected in **behavioral intentions**, which are often good predictors of whether we will act on our attitudes in a given situation- **intention-behavior relationship.**


Theory of Planned Behavior
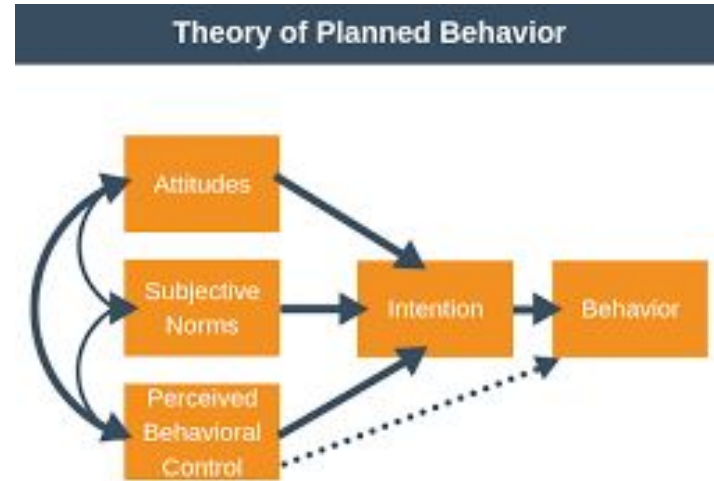
Attitude guiding behavior: TRA or TPB

How do you form an intention to change some aspect of your **behavior**?

Intentions are determined by two factors: **Attitudes** toward the behavior—people's positive or negative evaluations of performing the behavior (whether they think it will yield positive or negative consequences)

Subjective norms—people's perceptions of whether others will approve or disapprove of this behavior.

Perceived behavioral control—people's appraisals of their ability to perform the behavior—was subsequently added to the theory.

Theory of Planned Behavior

Attitudes → Intention → Behavior

Subjective Norms → Intention

Perceived Behavioral Control → Intention ⋯→ Behavior
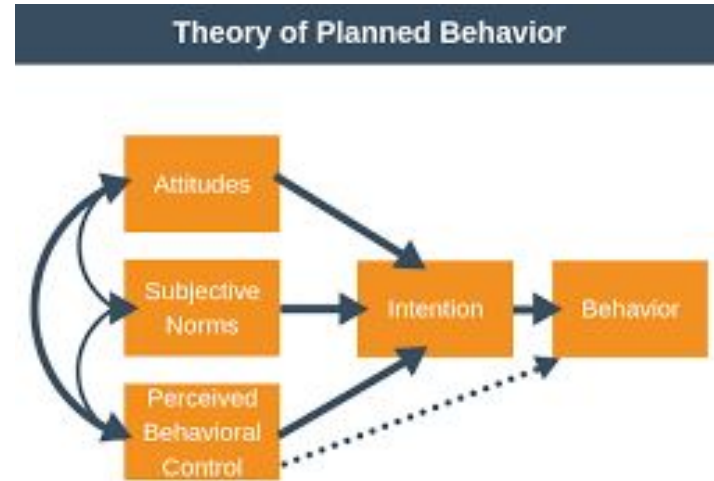
Attitude guiding behavior: TRA or TPB

Suppose an adolescent male is considering joining Facebook. Will he actually take action, and go through the process of joining up on the website?

Behavior: Signing up on Facebook

Intention: his intentions to carry out this action may be quite strong.

Attitude: Positive attitude towards Facebook (he feels that this will make him look sociable)

Subjective norms: He believes that people whose opinions he values will approve of this action.

Perceived behavioral control: Access to phone, less parental restrictions, knowledge about Facebook operations

Attitude guiding behavior: TRA or TPB

Suppose farmers are adopting conservation agriculture (CA)? Why?

Behavior: Farmers adopting CA

Intention: I am interested in CA for the betterment of future generation as CA practice is environment-friendly.

Attitude: I like CA as it is good for soil health and environment.

Subjective norms: Family members and relatives have positive opinions about CA.

Perceived behavioral control: I am able to continue CA next year if I want to and I have enough facilities (Farmer's perception of their ability about CA).

Reactance

People can be **persuaded to change their attitudes and behavior**—either because they think systematically about a compelling message, or because they are influenced by more peripheral cues.

You have probably experienced another individual who increasingly pressures you to change your attitude on some issue. In both of these instances, whether "public" persuaders or private ones, you are on the receiving end of threats to your freedom to decide for yourself. As a result, you may experience a growing level of annoyance and resentment.

The final outcome: **Not only do you resist their persuasion attempts, but you may actually lean over backward to adopt views opposite to those the would-be persuader wants you to adopt.** Such behavior is an example of what social psychologists call **reactance**—a negative reaction to efforts by others to reduce our freedom by getting us to believe or do what they want.

Why reactance- When individuals perceive such appeals as direct threats to their personal freedom (or their image of being an independent person), they are strongly motivated to resist.

Stereotype, prejudice and discrimination

Stereotypes are considered the cognitive component of attitudes toward a social group—specifically, **beliefs** about what a particular group is like. Traits thought to distinguish between one group and another can be either positive or negative; they can be accurate or inaccurate, and may be either agreed with or rejected by members of the stereotyped group. Stereotypes act as theories, guiding what we attend to, and exerting strong effects on how we process social information.

Example: Believing that all individuals from a particular racial group are naturally better at sports or worse at academic subjects.

Prejudice is considered the affective component, or the **feelings** we have about a particular group. Threats to self-esteem and resource scarcity/competition are the sources of prejudice.

Example: A person feels uncomfortable or distrustful around people of a certain race because they associate them with aggression on the field, even though there is no valid reason for that feeling.

Discrimination concerns the behavioral component, or **differential actions** taken toward members of specific social groups. It is actually prejudice in action.

Example: A qualified sportsperson from a minority racial group is denied on the national team because the employer prefers hiring people from a different racial background, even when there is no legitimate reason to do so.

Dear Past Self,

BE THE BEST VERSION OF YOU