1. In-group bias:

**Overview**

This concept refers to a pattern of favoring members of one's [in-group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ingroups_and_outgroups) (“us”) over out-group members (“them”). When defining what you are – your gender, race, religion, marital status, etc. – it implies a definition of what you are not, and a tendency to exclude the out-group. The mere experience of being placed into groups may promote in-group bias. Even something as simple as sharing a birthday with someone created enough of a bond to evoke heightened cooperation in a laboratory experiment (Miller & others, 1998).

**Classic study**

In a series of experiments, Tajfel & Billig explored how little it takes to provoke favoritism toward *us* and unfairness toward *them*. In one study, they had individual teenagers evaluate modern abstract paintings and then told them that they and some other teens had favored the art of Paul Klee over that of Wassily Kandinsky. Without ever meeting the other members of their Klee-favoring group, each teen divided some money among members of both groups. Defining groups even in this trivial way produced in-group favoritism. When given the opportunity to divide 15 points worth of money, subjects generally awarded 9 or 10 points to their own group and 5 or 6 groups to the other group.

1. Mere exposure effect:

**Overview**

Familiarity does not breed contempt; rather, it breeds fondness. Simply being exposed to all sorts of novel stimuli – nonsense syllables, Chinese calligraphy characters, musical selections, faces – boosts people’s ratings of them.

**Classic study**

Robert Zajonc of the University of Michigan gave participants a list of nonsense words such as *nansoma*, *saricik* and *afworbu*. When asked to rate how favorable they felt about words from a list, the participants preferred they words to which they had been previously been exposed. In fact, the more times they had seen the nonsense word(s), the more likely they were to say it meant something good.

1. Proximity principle:

**Overview**

Within the realm of [social psychology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_psychology), the proximity principle accounts for the tendency for individuals to form interpersonal relations with those who are close by.

There are two main reasons why people form groups with others nearby rather than people further away. First, human beings like things that are familiar to them. Second, the more people come into contact with one another, the more likely the interaction will cultivate a relationship. However, this tendency is accurate only when the increased contact does not unveil detestable traits in either person.

**Classic study**

Sociological research by Bossard as far back as 1932 found this effect with married couples. Bossard explored the locations of Philadelphia residents who applied for marriage licenses. He found a significant correlation between proximity and love. In other words, people were more likely to get married the closer they lived to each other.

1. Halo effect:

**Overview**

The halo effect refers to the habitual tendency of people to rate attractive individuals more favorably for their personality traits or characteristics than those who are less attractive. For example, people might assume that because Jennifer Aniston is attractive, she must be kind and intelligent.

**Classic study**

Numerous studies with adults have found that being physically attractive impacts one’s hiring potential, salary and chances of being elected to office.

For example, a recent study by Carl Senior and Michael J.R. Butler explored the influence of the halo effect in a mock job negotiation scenario. Interviewers were shown pictures of attractive or average looking male and female job applicants. Interviewers were found to allocate attractive looking interviewees more high status job packages than the average looking men.

1. Self-serving attributions/bias:

**Overview**

As we process information that relates to ourselves, a potent bias intrudes. We readily accept credit for our successes but excuse our failures and attribute failures to external factors such as bad luck or the problem’s inherent “impossibility.” Also, in many ways see ourselves as better than average. Such self-enhancing perceptions enable most people to enjoy the bright side of high self-esteem, while occasionally suffering the dark side.

**Classic study**

For example, a study of by Gove of athletes showed that they commonly credit themselves (and their teammates) for victories but attribute losses to other factors: bad breaks, bad referee calls, or the other team’s superior effort or dirty play.

1. Social-exchange theory:

### Overview

Social exchange theory suggests that we essentially (though often unconsciously) take the benefits and subtract the costs in order to determine how much a relationship or behavior is worth. Positive relationships/behaviors are those in which the benefits outweigh the costs, while negative relationships/behaviors occur when the costs are greater than the benefits.

For example, if one person helps a friend, this friend will experience an obligation to reciprocate at some time in the future, offering a form of assistance that is equal in magnitude. If this norm of reciprocity is fulfilled, a trusting and loyal relationship evolves.

Social exchange theory also highlights some subtle complications that compromise relationships. For example, if individuals help someone else, they expect a favor in return that is comparable to the cost, effort, or inconvenience of this act. If a favor is not reciprocated comparably, it can elicit resentment in relationships.

**Classic study**

According to studies by Jane Allyn Piliavin, before deciding whether to participate in a blood drive, participants make subtle – and possibly unconscious – decisions that weight the *costs* of donating (needle prick, time, resulting fatigue) against those of not donating (guilt, disapproval), as well as the *benefits* of donating (feeling good about helping someone, free refreshments) against those of not donating (saving the time, discomfort, anxiety).

1. Matching hypothesis/phenomenon:

**Overview**

This is the idea that people “get real” when choosing friends and a mate, by ultimately selecting people who are about as attractive and intelligent as they are – or who have “compensating qualities” in other areas. In making these decisions, we seek out those who are desirable but are mindful of the limits of our own desirability.

**Classic study**

This tendency is conducive to good relationships. A study by George White looked at dating couples from the UCLA. Those who were most similar in physical attractiveness were most likely, nine months later, to have fallen more deeply in love.

1. Self-fulfilling prophecy:

**Overview**

This is the idea that social beliefs can lead to their own fulfillment. These beliefs influence how we feel and act, and by so doing may help generate their own reality. In other words, when people act on a belief, they create a reality to match that belief. For example, if led to believe that their bank is about to crash, its customers will race to withdraw their money, which could cause the bank to *actually* crash.

**Classic study**

Sixty-four subjects took a popular or academic psychological test, and then interacted with a stranger. The subjects who took each test received bogus feedback implying that they were either extroverted or introverted. The results showed that subjects who received the extroversion feedback were more interactive with a stranger than those who received the introversion feedback, irrespective of whether they had taken the popular or academic test. This suggests that the feedback of the tests can influence human behavior and create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

1. Deindividuation:

**Overview**

Groups diffuse individual responsibility, which can lead to behaviors one is unlikely to do under other circumstances, such as throwing food in the cafeteria or group vandalism. These unrestrained behaviors are provoked by the power of the group, in part because people are more focused on the situation, rather than themselves. People in groups are more likely to abandon normal restraints, to lose their sense of individual identity, and to become responsive to group or crowd norms. This is because groups make individuals feel safe engaging in these behaviors because they feel less identifiable, or more “anonymous.”

**Classic study**

A research team led by Ed Diener observed over 1,000 children trick-or-treating on Halloween. As the children, either alone or in groups, approached specific homes, an experimenter greeted them warmly, invited them to “take *one* of the candies,” and then left the candy unattended. Hidden observers noted that children in groups were more than twice as likely to take extra candy as solo children.