

# 20 - Prejudice

## Prejudice

© SPMM Course 5. Intergroup behaviour Prejudice Prejudice is essentially an attitude. It has

1. Cognitive component - stereotypes
2. Affective component - hostility
3. Behavioural component - which according to Allport can be a. anti-locution b. avoidance c. discrimination d. physical attack or e. extermination in terms of increasing severity.

Prejudice can be positive or neutral as well as negative though the term is mostly used to describe negative prejudice. Theories of prejudice □ Adorno's authoritarian personality theory: Authoritarians are prejudiced in a generalised manner; difficult upbringing and disciplinarian rules in childhood may lead to a projection of difficulties on minorities. But this theory does not explain the sudden surges of prejudice that occur in history. It has no experimental proof either. An allied theory says that ideological dogmatism in rigid, authoritarian people can explain prejudice. □ Scapegoating theory: It is related to the frustration-aggression model of Dollard. In situations of extreme frustration when the source of such frustration is too powerful, we may tend to displace aggression towards a soft target - the scapegoat. The choice of scapegoat depends on the prevailing social mood. Hence, the society provides the content of one's prejudice though one's personality may predispose to such prejudice according to Adorno. □ Relative deprivation theory: This supplements scapegoating theory. The discrepancy between actual attainments and expectations of a society is called relative deprivation. Any acute changes can cause a sudden substantial relative deprivation, leading to unrest and scapegoating follows. Note that the relative deprivation is subjective to individuals in a group, and the competition may be within individuals (egoistic) or between groups (fraternalistic). □ Realistic conflict theory: This asserts that the mere suggestion of competition is enough to trigger prejudices. Famous Robber's Cove experiments by Sherif supported this theory. The mere perception of another group's existence can spark discrimination. At a summer camp at Robber's Cove, two groups were created from unrelated individuals. Even when

© SPMM Course these groups were allowed to interact freely, they developed strong in-group preferences and anti out-group ideas. When a competition was introduced, the groups exhibited a high degree of aggression and hatred against each other. Sherif concluded that mere competition is sufficient to create conflicts, and no real lack of resources or acute deprivation is necessary. □ Social identity theory: An individual's positive self-image depends on both personal and social identities. So each individual strives to improve his group's success to foster his own image. This leads to prejudice against other groups. How to reduce prejudice? □ Blue eyes and brown eyes experiment (Elliott): Prejudice exhibited by a person could be lesser when he/she himself

experienced such prejudice in the past. In a class room, blueeyed children were initially treated badly by instructing brown eyed pupils that blue eye stood for inferiority and weakness. When the roles were reversed later, and opposite information was now provided, supporting the supremacy of blue-eyed children, the amount of aggression shown was lesser. This suggested that when one experiences prejudice first hand, his own discriminatory behaviour reduces later. □ Contact hypothesis (Allport): When contact occurs between opposite group members under equal status and in pursuit of common goals, this can reduce prejudice. Personal friendship is not needed though. Due to lack of knowledge about what happens in the other group a degree of autistic hostility exists. This reinforces negative stereotypes as mirror image phenomenon i.e. 'we are right, so they are wrong', etc. Also, one group starts believing that the members of the opposite groups all are alike - illusion of out-group homogeneity.

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