

# 1 An Introduction to the Psychology of Prejudice

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## What Is Prejudice?

What makes something, say a particular attitude or belief, an expression of prejudice? What defines a particular attitude as racist or sexist? We are often asked these questions by our students, reporters, and sometimes (although perhaps not often enough) by policymakers. The question of “what is prejudice?” is a difficult and extremely important one to answer. According to Gordon Allport (1954, p. 9), and many of the subsequent textbooks in social psychology and related areas, prejudice can be defined as “an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he [sic] is a member of that group.”

Allport’s definition of prejudice-as-antipathy, or to use some other synonyms, prejudice-as-overt-dislike, hostility, or aversion, is consistent with many of the types of attitudes that members of the public may tend to naturally think of as being, for example, sexist, racist, homophobic, and so forth. Researchers working in the area of prejudice and intergroup relations owe Gordon Allport a huge intellectual debt for his founding work in the area. However, when it comes to a working definition of prejudice, Allport’s was incomplete.

Indeed, in the introduction to *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport*, Dovidio, Glick, and Rudman (2005) commented that the definition of prejudice-as-antipathy was “Allport’s most fundamental blindspot” (p. 10). We agree, and many of the chapters in this handbook illustrate the point. For example, Connor, Glick, and Fiske (2017) and Hammond and Overall (2017) emphasize that patronizing attitudes that position one group as weaker than the other and in need of protection (such as benevolent sexism) perform remarkably well in maintaining inequality. Similarly, Brewer’s (2017) chapter highlights that disparity can arise *not only* as a result from outgroup hate but rather because of ingroup love. Neither of these phenomena fit a definition of prejudice-as-antipathy. However, they may sometimes have a more powerful effect on diffusing resistance to inequality and hierarchy and legitimizing violence and oppression because of the

very fact that they seem caring or are focused on ingroup preservation, rather than overt anti-outgroup hostility.

Hence, in our view, asking whether a particular attitude or belief may be defined as prejudice is not necessarily the most important question. Instead, determining whether certain beliefs, attitudes, ideologies, stereotypes, and so forth function to help maintain hierarchy and exploitation may be more productive, at least if the goal is to challenge inequality. It is at this point that we can begin to investigate the factors that disrupt the creation and maintenance of prejudice and inequality. In this sense, we define prejudice as “those ideologies, attitudes, and beliefs that help maintain and legitimize group-based hierarchy and exploitation” (see also Eagly & Diekmann, 2005; Jackman, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Providing concrete answers to questions about the processes that produce and maintain prejudice and explicit, evidence-based, and effective recommendations for how such processes can be disrupted is no easy feat. As we often admit to our students (but sadly, less so to reporters and policymakers), if we had a ready “one size fits all” answer to the question of how the processes that cause – for lack of a better term – prejudice could be disrupted, then the problem of prejudice would probably already be solved.

### A Brief Historical Overview

The theoretical lens through which we view prejudice has changed substantially since Allport (1954) penned his seminal work, *The Nature of Prejudice*. To understand current scholarship on the social psychology of prejudice, an understanding of the historical context of our theories and models is needed. Duckitt (2010) argued that the social scientific study of prejudice has undergone eight distinct paradigm shifts since the scientific study of the topic began early last century. Duckitt’s (2010) model of these eight historical paradigms begins with a perspective of prejudice as a natural response to so-called “backward” peoples that prevailed up until around the 1920s and leads up to the current zeitgeist, which emerged sometime in the new millennium, where prejudice tends to be viewed as complex, affective, and motivationally driven. Duckitt’s (2010) summary of historical paradigms through which prejudice has been studied along with the prevailing definition of prejudice at the time are summarized in Table 1.1.

Duckitt’s (2010) analysis of the paradigm shifts in the study of prejudice highlights that such shifts do not necessarily follow a linear progression. That is, the emergence of historical paradigms does not necessarily follow a process in which dominant theories and methods of the time were formally refuted and replaced with more advanced (and more scientifically valid) ones. Certainly this is true to some extent, but as Duckitt (2010) noted, the history of the study of prejudice seems to have also shifted focus in reaction to changing historical circumstances. A good example of this is the development of the theory of authoritarian personality, which

Table 1.1 *Historical overview of the major paradigms in the social scientific study of prejudice (from Duckitt, 2010).*

Social and historical context and issues	Concept of prejudice and dominant theoretical approach	Dominant social policy orientation to prejudice and discrimination
Up to the 1920s: White domination and colonial rule of “backward peoples”	Prejudice as a natural response to the deficiencies of “backward” peoples: race theories	Domination, discrimination, and segregation are natural and justified social policies
The 1920s: The legitimacy of White domination challenged	Prejudice as irrational and unjustified: measuring and describing prejudice	Prejudice will fade as the social sciences clarify how wrong and unjustified it is
The 1930s and 1940s: The ubiquity and tenacity of White racism	Prejudice as an unconscious defense: psychoanalytic and frustration theories	Gradual acceptance as minorities and colonial peoples become assimilated
The 1950s: Nazi racial ideology and the holocaust	Prejudice rooted in antidemocratic ideology and authoritarian personalities	Democracy and liberal values will erode intolerance and prejudice
The 1960s: The problem of institutionalized racism in the American South	Sociocultural explanations: racism rooted in social norms of discriminatory social structures	Desegregation and antidiscriminatory laws will erode and eliminate racism and prejudice
The 1970s: The problem of informal racism and discrimination in the North	Prejudice as an expression of dominant group interests in maintaining intergroup inequality	Reducing intergroup inequality through affirmative action and minority empowerment
The 1980s and 1990s: The stubborn persistence of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination	Prejudice as an expression of universal cognitive processes: social categorization and identity	Multicultural policies to provide minorities with esteem and positive identities and to foster tolerance
Post-2000: Confronting a complex world of multiple-based and often irrationally intense intergroup hostilities	Prejudice as complex, affective, and motivationally driven?	Broader approaches with strategies flexibly adapted to varying patterns of prejudice and situational dynamics?

was proposed in the context of understanding Nazi racial ideology and the holocaust (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950).

As the chapters in this handbook show beyond contestation, prejudice remains one of the central social problems facing humanity. This is so today, and we expect prejudice and inequality to become more pressing in the future with increased population pressure, diminishing resources, increased globalization, and the growing likelihood of massive population displacement. The problem, or perhaps it

would be more apt to say the challenge, of prejudice is also intertwined with the enduring problems of reducing inequality around the globe and solving large-scale human cooperative dilemmas. Such dilemmas are likely to include, for example, how we respond to climate change, how we allocate scarce resources on a global scale, and how we react to massive population displacement, likely the result of climate change and war, in the decades to come. This, we think, is likely to be the sociohistorical context shaping the social scientific study of prejudice in the decades to come.

The sociohistorical context shaping the contemporary study of prejudice also interacts with unprecedented advances in our ability to collect novel forms of data and statistically model the processes involved in the generation and outcomes of prejudice. In our view, the extent to which methodological innovations have influenced past paradigm shifts in the study of prejudice are one aspect of Duckitt's (2010) historical analysis that warrants further elaboration.

In this regard, our current research context is unprecedented with regard to the development of reaction time and neuropsychological, physiological, and genetic measures. It is unprecedented with regard to the ability to collect so-called Big Data, the relative ease of conducting large-scale, cross-national surveys, and the availability of data culled from online activity or automated passive observation. The analysis of data from this latter source is also something of which our field will need to carefully consider the ethics. Our current research context is also unlike any other time in history because of the rapid and exciting development of accessible new methods of statistically analyzing these and many other types of data – and we should add in the open and transparent sharing of data and the growing focus on replication.

Quite simply, the effect of novel methods in data modeling and analysis on consequent theory development cannot be underestimated, neither can developments in our ability to easily and rapidly collect new forms of data and measure new types of processes. To echo Greenwald (2012), who was in turn paraphrasing Lewin (1951), “there is nothing so theoretical as a good method.” Greenwald was talking about science in general when he opined this, and it is an observation that the rapid pace of development in methods in the fields of prejudice and intergroup relations corroborate. In short, it is an exciting – and important – time in our history to be involved in the scientific study of prejudice, intergroup relations, and related fields of research.

### **An Overview of the Handbook**

This handbook aims to move us closer toward the goal of understanding the factors that produce prejudice both within individuals and wider groups, as well as the outcomes of prejudice. This handbook also aims to bring us a little closer to the end-goal: that of increasing our understanding of how to go about disrupting the

processes that generate or maintain prejudice, inequality, oppression, and their subsequent effects.

The chapters in this handbook represent the cutting edge of the scientific study of prejudice in a variety of domains, and from a variety of perspectives. Their aim as a whole is to provide comprehensive coverage of current theories of prejudice; many, if not all, of the chapters tend to converge on the consensus that prejudice is indeed, as Duckitt (2010) argued, complex, affective, and motivationally driven.

The handbook is organized into three broad parts. The chapters in Part I summarize general theoretical perspectives on prejudice at an overall level. The focus of Part I is thus on reviewing theories that provide the foundation for understanding the psychology of prejudice generally and are relevant for understanding prejudice toward multiple specific target groups and in diverse contexts. Part II contains chapters focusing on prejudice in specific domains, such as sexism and racism; related to this are theories about specific forms of prejudice and how prejudice operates in specific contexts. Finally, the chapters in Part III focus on the study of prejudice in applied domains – its outcomes and how to reduce it.

## Part I: General Theoretical Perspectives

In Chapter 2, Sng, Williams and Neuberg (2017) present a broad evolutionary perspective on prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. This general evolutionary perspective underpins much of the research on the social scientific study of prejudice, and many of the following chapters in the handbook make explicit assumptions grounded in evolutionary psychology. To paraphrase Dobzhansky's (1973) well-known quote, nothing in the scientific study of prejudice and intergroup relations makes sense except in light of evolution.

Sng et al. begin their chapter by presenting an overview of evolutionary theory and address possible, and sometimes all too common, misconceptions about the theory. The authors then present an overview of the concept of affordance management systems – psychological systems adapted to identify and react to social threats and opportunities – and explain how modern-day expressions of prejudice are a result of such evolved systems. Evolutionary psychology provides a rich theoretical framework for generating novel hypotheses in many domains of psychology. Sng et al. take full advantage of this to review and derive a number of nuanced hypotheses that expand our understanding of the psychological processes that generate prejudice, and the contexts in which specific forms of prejudice will be expressed. This chapter, and the following one on social identity theory provide two of the key overarching meta-theoretical perspectives that anchor the remainder of the handbook.

In Chapter 3, Reynolds, Subasic, Batalha, and Jones (2017) introduce social identity theory and self-categorization theory as theoretical perspectives that

explain not only the development and perpetuation of prejudice but also the development of social change and collective action to overcome societal inequality. In taking such an approach, they focus on social, rather than individual, predictors of prejudice. They develop a model in which they categorize theories explaining prejudice on two dimensions: (a) social stability to social change and (b) majority group focused to minority group focused. In particular, they make the case that any theory of prejudice that fails to take into account often rapid social change and challenge is flawed. They draw on multiple studies from within a social identity/self-categorization framework to challenge old conceptualizations of prejudice, instead looking at factors such as group status, legitimacy, norms, and leadership as core drivers of prejudice versus social change.

In Chapter 4, Wenzel, Waldzus, and Steffens (2017) continue in the tradition of social identity theory with their presentation of the ingroup projection model. Wenzel et al. present a comprehensive review of work on the model to date, and they emphasize the crucial goal of superordinate identity complexity in reducing prejudice and increasing tolerance. Wenzel et al. begin their chapter by discussing an Austrian fable, “When the Crows Were Still Colorful.” This fable tells the story of when crows came in myriad hues, with different colorful patterns on their wings. Then one day the crows were asked “what does the real or true crow look like?” and this of course began subgrouping, the creation of group boundaries, and ingroup bias and outgroup hostility. This fable is highly relevant to the ingroup projection model, and indeed to most of the chapters in this book. The handbook cover is a representation of the crows from this fable. We thank Yanshu Huang, who started her PhD in 2016 and is already herself a published researcher in the area of ambivalent sexism, for designing this cover image.

In Chapter 5, Brewer (2017) presents a comprehensive review of ingroup bias and outgroup hostility. Brewer argues that it is critical for research on prejudice and discrimination to differentiate between these two concepts, and further, that ingroup bias (or “love”) can account for a substantial portion of the prejudice and discrimination in society. Brewer emphasizes the important point that prejudice and discrimination can readily arise in the absence of outgroup hostility and that ingroup favoritism alone may be enough to produce systemic discrimination and resulting inequality. As in the preceding chapter by Wenzel et al. (2017), Brewer discusses novel ways in which prejudice and discrimination can be ameliorated by reducing group boundaries and creating more inclusive ingroups or a common identity. With regard to the fable of the crows, for instance, this would mean creating a broader definition of crows as being of all colors and patterns (and, of course, this would require considerable crow “buy-in” to work).

In Chapter 6, Maitner, Smith, and Mackie (2017) introduce and review previous research on intergroup emotions theory. This theory extends social identity theory by articulating the mechanisms through which individuals react to and express different types of emotion toward outgroup members. Maitner et al. focus their discussion on three intergroup emotions: fear, anger, and contempt/disgust. These

three emotional reactions tend to relate to intergroup conflict. The authors also provide an important discussion of how culture moderates emotional reactions, and they point to new directions for future research on the communication of emotions between groups. In our view, the intergroup communication of emotions provides a promising avenue for interventions aimed at conflict resolution.

In Chapter 7, Stephan and Stephan (2017) update and review their theory of intergroup threats. Intergroup threat theory is a multilevel theory that integrates a diverse array of research findings, including the evolutionary basis of threat perception (see Sng et al., 2017, Chapter 1), Social identity (see Reynolds et al., 2017, Chapter 3), and intergroup emotions (see Maitner et al., 2017, Chapter 6). Here, Stephan and Stephan distinguish between two broad types of threat, those that are realistic and those that are more symbolic in nature. They identify five distinct classes of threat antecedent: individual-based characteristics (such as personality and identity salience), attitudes and cognitions (such as stereotypes), intergroup contact (see also Tropp, Mazziotta, and Wright, 2017, Chapter 20), intergroup relations, and situational factors. The theory synthesizes work within these areas and outlines how the five classes of antecedent can generate realistic and symbolic threats, which in turn shape emotions, cognitions, and behavior.

In Chapter 8, Sidanius, Cotterill, Sheehy-Skeffington, Kteily, and Carvacho (2017) review social dominance theory. As the authors note, this chapter represents the first major review of the theory in a decade (the last being Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). Sidanius and colleagues review and discuss research on a number of new and emerging aspects of social dominance theory, including the stability and contingent effects of social dominance orientation, the causal relationship between empathy and social dominance orientation, and a new mechanism through which they propose ideology contributes to the maintenance of inequality. The chapter also contains a comprehensive response to some of the recent criticisms of the theory and notes a number of new promising directions for future research. In addition to all of this, Sidanius et al. provide an exhaustive bibliography of research applying social dominance theory in different domains since 2005. This bibliography should prove invaluable to both students and scholars new to the theory.

In Chapter 9, Duckitt and Sibley (2017) review and update 15 years of research on the dual process model of ideology and prejudice (following the original formulation of the model by Duckitt in 2001). Duckitt's model provides an overall framework identifying *dual processes* that generate individual differences in prejudice and related ideologies. The theory draws on social dominance theory and the identification of social dominance orientation as one of two core motivational goals predicting prejudice. According to the dual process model, the other core motivational goal predicting prejudice is based on a threat-driven motivation for social cohesion, as indexed by right-wing authoritarianism. In this chapter, Duckitt and Sibley expand the dual process model by differentiating between legitimizing myths, group stratifications, targets of prejudice, and support for different policies

and leadership styles that should be predicted by social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism.

In Chapter 10, Barlow, Sherlock, and Zietsch (2017) bring the first section of the handbook to a close with their discussion of the heritability of prejudice. They review literature that suggests that individual tendencies to be prejudiced (or not) are genetic. They describe the classic twin study design, which forms the basis of all the research reviewed, before highlighting multiple studies showing that intergroup attitudes, political conservatism, and social dominance orientation (among other things) are often in large part heritable. They end by engaging with the troubled history of genetics and prejudice (with faulty understandings of the former often contributing to the latter) and speculate on how we wed together evidence-based interventions designed to reduce prejudice with the knowledge that some people are going to be more (or less) oriented toward intergroup suspicion and antipathy to begin with. As discussed earlier in this chapter, we believe that the discipline will only continue to grow and improve by taking into account biological as well as psychological determinants of prejudice, as the two are inextricably linked.

## Part II: Prejudice in Specific Domains

In Chapter 11, Yogeeswaran, Devos, and Nash (2017) open the second part of the handbook with a review and summary of reaction time and neuropsychological measures of implicit prejudice. The development of such measures is arguably one of the most important advances in the scientific study of prejudice in recent decades. Yogeeswaran et al. provide a comprehensive review of the factors known to shape implicit biases and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of many of the most popular measures in the area. They review the Implicit Association Test, priming designs, the Go/No-Go Association Task, designs using functional magnetic resonance imaging, and electroencephalography. Yogeeswaran et al. also discuss how measures of implicit bias and neuropsychological processes inform our understanding of prejudice in applied domains, such as nonverbal behavior, job hiring, voting decisions, medical decision making, and economic choices. This chapter provides an extensive review of the methods available for assessing implicit prejudice and serves as an excellent starting point for researchers and students new to the field, as well as those wanting to keep abreast of key developments shaping the area.

In Chapter 12, Dovidio, Gaertner, and Pearson (2017) discuss contemporary forms of racism in the United States. Dovidio et al. first describe the development of subtle forms of racism, which came about in response to changing social norms in the post-civil rights era in the United States. The authors then introduce the concepts of symbolic racism, modern racism, ambivalent racism, and aversive racism. It is this latter theory for which Dovidio and colleagues

are well known, and they provide a detailed and comprehensive review and update of their theory. A key concept in aversive racism theory is that people can express pro-egalitarian sentiments but simultaneously hold nonconscious or implicit biases.

Dovidio et al. extend the general review of implicit measures provided in the preceding chapter by Yogeeswaran et al. (2017) to focus specifically on measures of implicit or nonconscious racial bias. They also dedicate a substantial part of the chapter to discussing potential interventions informed by research on aversive racism theory. These include designs aiming to reduce implicit bias, correct for unconscious bias, harness egalitarian motives, and redirect the forces of ingroup bias. Aversive racism theory and other theories of contemporary racism form a cornerstone of research on racism more generally, and it is for this reason that we locate the chapter in Part II. However, the informative reflections and discussion of interventions aimed at reducing or eliminating the effects of implicit racial biases mean that this chapter could also easily fit in the third part of the handbook on prejudice reduction in applied contexts.

In Chapter 13, Connor et al. (2017) present a review and update of 20 years of research on ambivalent sexism theory. Since its initial presentation by Glick and Fiske in 1996, ambivalent sexism theory has arguably become the most influential theory of sexism in the field. No handbook on the psychology of prejudice would be complete without a chapter on this topic. The theory describes how two forms of sexism – hostile and benevolent – operate together to provide a powerful and synergistic ideological system that maintains and legitimizes patriarchy. As we alluded to in our opening discussion of the nature of prejudice, a key insight of the theory is that beliefs and attitudes that idealize women and position them as wonderful and caring are a key building block in a larger set of ideologies that justify gender inequality and the oppression of women. Connor et al. review recent research on ambivalent sexism theory and focus specifically on discussing how the theory informs our understanding of physical and sexual violence toward women.

In Chapter 14, Hammond and Overall (2017) follow directly from Connor et al. (2017) and discuss how ambivalent sexism operates in heterosexual romantic relationships. We recommend those new to the area read these two chapters sequentially. The chapter by Hammond and Overall fills an important gap in the literature by bringing together research and perspectives from the study of intimate relationships and the dyadic modeling of relationship processes, with research on ambivalent sexism. Hammond and Overall document and review accumulating evidence that demonstrates that benevolent sexism provides benefits to women *within intimate relationships*. They also provide a comprehensive list and discussion of key points demonstrating why and how intimate relationships are central to understanding the emergence, function, and consequences of women's attitudes toward men, and vice versa. This chapter provides an important bridge between research on interpersonal and intergroup processes relating to sexism, which have, for the most part, developed independently of each other.

In Chapter 15, Ng and Gervais (2017) discuss the links between religion and prejudice. Ng and Gervais turn to evolutionary theorizing to review both adaptationist and by-product accounts of religion. They then present an integrated evolutionary analysis of the role of religion in prejudice. This analysis builds on the more general review of the evolutionary basis of prejudice presented in Chapter 2 by Sng et al. Ng and Gervais identify distinct types of threats to the religious ingroup: threats to belief structures, threats to behaviors and ritual, and threats to belonging. The chapter outlines how reactions to such threats may in turn generate prejudice stratified along religious lines. Writing in 2016, and considering global fears about interreligious terrorism, this is a particularly salient and important chapter. Ng and Gervais apply their model to outline the links between religion and prejudice in three domains: anti-Muslim prejudice, sexual prejudice, and anti-atheist prejudice. According to their model, religious-based prejudice in each of these domains represents specific reactions tailored to deal with adaptive challenges (i.e., types of threat).

In Chapter 16, Poteat and Birkett (2017) review research on sexual prejudice. They begin by describing the different ways in which sexual prejudice has been operationalized over the years, in terms of homophobia, sexual stigma, heterosexism, and the modern definition of sexual prejudice (negative attitudes toward individuals based on their sexual minority group membership). The chapter draws on a wide range of theories and presents a comprehensive review of the individual and intergroup/societal factors associated with sexual prejudice. These include gender ideology, social dominance orientation, right-wing authoritarianism, the salience of sexual identity, levels of intergroup contact, peer socialization, and norms. Poteat and Birkett also discuss the importance of considering sexual prejudice in combination with multiple stigmatized identities and call for future research in this area.

In Chapter 17, Diedrichs and Puhl (2017) discuss the prevalence of weight bias and discrimination, discuss theories about their psychological antecedents, and outline the corrosive effects of this type of prejudice on the people who experience it. Weight bias refers to prejudice and discrimination toward overweight and obese individuals, and as Diedrichs and Puhl argue, represents one of the last socially acceptable or normative expressions of prejudice. The chapter provides a detailed review of the sources of weight bias in children, adolescents, adults, and the media more generally.

Among the many important findings reviewed in the chapter, Diedrichs and Puhl discuss research indicating that those who experience weight bias and body shaming may be more likely to engage in disordered eating and unhealthy weight control and generally show a higher risk of becoming and remaining obese. In our view, weight bias represents an important and potentially growing form of prejudice in many societies, and one that we think deserves more attention from researchers in our field. The chapter by Diedrichs and Puhl provides an excellent overview of current research and thinking in this area, and it makes an urgent call for research developing interventions to reduce this form of prejudice.