PREJUDICE: A PROBLEM IN PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CAUSATION

by

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We honor Kurt Lewin in these lectures because he, perhaps more successfully than any other psychologist, has identified basic processes in human conduct that have practical consequences for our collective life in schools, industries, neighborhoods, and nation. Among the many topics to which he directed his genius is the problem of group prejudice and conflict. While he attacked the issue on many fronts, he contributed especially to our understanding of authoritarian and democratic social climates, of ethnic and national differences, and of the effects of prejudice upon its victims (Lewin 1948).

In recent years interest in this area of research has spread like a flood both in social psychology and in adjacent social sciences. Publications are cascading from the presses. The outpouring within the past decade surely exceeds the output in all previous human history.

Thousands of facts and scores of interpretations already lie before us. A unified theory is lacking. Why it is lacking and what we can do about the matter constitute the subject of this lecture.

Is Research on Prejudice Basic?

My approach to the problem differs from that of some of my colleagues. A few of them, distressed by the complexity and present disorganization of the field, are saying that the topic of prejudice is a scientific will-o-the-wisp. They say it rests on nothing but a value judgment of liberal intellectuals. They say it is a sloppily descriptive concept; and that we would do better to give our attention to more basic research in terms of perception, cognitive reorganization, reinforcement or the habit hierarchy. After all, prejudice, if it is not a mere value judgment, is a compound, and we would do better to explore ingredients than to consider the compound as an entity in itself.

While we should heed these criticisms, I for one do not find them particularly convincing. The fact that liberal intellectuals deplore prejudice does not in the slightest degree affect its veridicality as a mode of mental functioning. Psychopathologists regard paranoia or neurosis as undesirable; but paranoia and neurosis as syndromes nevertheless exist. School teachers regard certain mental sets as objectionable; the mental sets are there. Whatever our values may be prejudice is a fact of mental organization and a mode of mental functioning. It is our business to understand it.
Any definition of this attitudinal syndrome must contain two propositions: one, that the individual is affectively oriented toward an object of regard; and the other, that this object of regard is over-generalized. Most definitions observe these two conditions very well. Thus the New Oxford Dictionary calls prejudice "a feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward any person or thing, prior to or not based on actual experience." There are, of course, favorable prejudices—tendencies to accept objects or persons because of their membership in a class that is categorically approved. But for simplicity's sake we shall confine ourselves to negative prejudice and not at this time raise the question whether affiliative prejudices in all respects follow the same basic principles (Cf. Allport 1950b). We shall also confine ourselves to prejudice against people, though one can surely be prejudiced against colleges, cities, or cookery. There is no reason to suppose that prejudice against non-human objects differs in its essentials from prejudice against human beings. Developmentally, xenophobia is probably much like nosophobia.

But we shall limit ourselves to the negative attitudes toward human beings that are held because of their membership (or supposed membership) in a certain group. The pre-judgment runs its course without due regard for individual differences. Misjudgment is also involved because no group as a whole has attributes that each member unvaryingly shares (Vickery and Opler, 1948). Thomistic psychology sums the matter up crisply. Prejudice against human beings is a form of "rash judgment," which, simply said, is a matter of "thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant."

Some of our hostile acts and repudiations are entirely realistic. This Negro, we may know from experience is untrustworthy; that Britisher bores us. In such cases we think ill of others with sufficient warrant. But as soon as our ill-thinking becomes wholly or in part derivative—as soon as it borrows from the fallacious generalization that all Negroes are untrustworthy, or all Britishers bores—then prejudice is at work.

Three basic and universal psychological functions underlie the syndrome. Each in its way helps to account for the formation of fallacious over-generalizations and for their impress upon specific judgments.

The first is the familiar process of concept formation, which so easily goes to excessive lengths. Grouping, constellating, rubricizing leap far ahead of experience. They do so partly because of the impetus of culturally transmitted language. Aided by labels we generalize concerning matters where our experience is limited—concerning chiropractors, vitamins, Esquimaux. Every individual within the class is endowed with the handful of attributes by which the class as a whole is known. We have come to call the over-generalized attribute, or constellation of attributes, by which the class is known a stereotype. Exceptions, as Walter Lippmann pointed out, are often pooh-poohed, forgotten, or otherwise not admitted to the
category. It was prejudice when the Oxford student remarked that he despised all Americans, but had never met one that he didn't like.

The second basic function concerns the generalization of feeling and emotion—sometimes referred to as *displacement*, *spread*, *irradiation*, or *diffusion*. A person who fears that he may lose his job is, first and foremost, an anxious person. We must expect this diffused organismic condition to affect his behavior generally. An individual severely frustrated at home but unable to master the situation becomes an angry and aggressive person whose impulses understandably enough may be discharged upon irrelevant targets. This diffusion of the affective life, as Tolman says, is all the greater “if the goal is perceptually blotted out by a type of negative barrier.” If, for example, an individual does not understand his own problem, that is, does not know what pathways are appropriate to his goals, he may transfer his anxiety to “similars, symbols, or associates.” Discussing this matter in the Lewin Memorial Lecture of last year Tolman describes, for example, the manner in which sex repression may evade barriers of social disapproval by becoming charged with other libidinous energy, including aggression, and finally lead the individual to a socially permitted form of hostility toward out-groups (Tolman, 1949). While, as Zawadski (1948) and Lindzey (1950) have shown, displacement cannot serve as an omnibus explanation of prejudice, still we shall not be able to understand our subject at all unless we concede that a person's distress may spread like a grease spot to “similars, symbols, or associates.”

The third function is one that brings together the stereotype and the distress in a particular situation. It is the trick human beings have of rectifying their thought to conform to their feelings. This *rationalization*, though common enough, is an unrealistic and protective mental operation. It is true that mature and healthy minds often strive to rectify feelings to conform to the state of the objective evidence. But the very fact that some people do one thing and some another is further proof that the syndrome of prejudice is a special mode of mental functioning requiring direct study.

Any psychologist who admits these basic mechanisms of *categorization*, *displacement*, *rationalization* to good standing ought to admit the product of their joint operation. Prejudice is something, and *does* something. It is not the invention of liberals. Its importance in society merely adds urgency to what is in any case a basic psychological problem.

As I have said, there is no single adequate theory of prejudice. The scapegoat theory, while partially valid, does not cover all the known facts. Explanations in terms of economic determinism, childhood insecurity, institutionalized aggression, or perceptual distortion, are all suggestive and demonstrably valid in part, but each by itself is incomplete. We are confronted here—as in many problems of interest to social psychology—with the phenomenon of multiple causation. In dealing with such problems it seems that the social psychologist must allow for six valid levels of causal
analysis. He need not himself employ all six, but he must constantly be aware of their importance.

**Figure 1**

**SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CAUSATION**

Etiological Approaches to Prejudice

At the right of Figure 1 we see that investigations may center upon the nature of the stimulus object itself. This is a backward region of research. Yet it has to do with the most basic of all issues in the field of prejudice, namely, the nature of group differences.

If we were strictly logical we would suspend further work upon prejudice until the objective nature of the relevant stimulus patterns were known. Thus if it should turn out to be true that all Negroes are dull, shiftless, aggressive, it would be folly to speak of prejudice when we reject Negro X for having these qualities. While we know that generalizations of this order of certainty are unlikely to be correct, it is important to learn just how false they are. After all, a stereotype and a negative attitude would be partially admissible if they had a high probability of according with facts. Until we know more about national, racial, ethnic character we shall not be able to distinguish between prejudice and what Zawadski calls “well deserved reputation.” What percentage of Jews, as compared with gentiles, is aggressive, tax evading, or ostentatious? Does anyone

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know? If it is high, then current judgments are semi-realistic though they cannot safely be applied to a given individual; if low, then we shall have to invoke projection and agree with Ackerman and Jahoda (1950) that the Jew is little more than a “living inkblot.” It goes without saying that if accusations against minority groups should turn out to be justified to an appreciable degree the problem would still remain whether the traits in question were the cause or the consequence of public prejudice. It would not be surprising if some members of minority groups developed certain defensive characteristics simply because people in the dominant group persistently refuse to treat them as individuals according to their personal merits.

The stimulus-approach will likewise teach us more than we know about the factor of visibility (Ichheiser, 1947). Unless members of a minority group can in some way be identified they cannot be victimized. What then are the psychological implications of skin-color, of ethnic names, customs, language, and—conceivably—odor? While some work has been done in this direction, there is much to learn.

A few years ago under the impact of Gestalt theory the concept of illusion was virtually lost to psychology. This is regrettable, for unless we know the objectively verifiable properties of the stimulus, how can we ever tell how much subjective rectification is taking place? And so with prejudice, until we know to what extent our generalized antipathy is based on provocative fact, we shall not be able to determine the extent of the irrationality that remains.

The Phenomenological Approach

But if the Gestalt revolution unduly minimized the stimulus it brought compensatory gains. The phenomenological level of analysis that it popularized invites us to determine how the individual is perceiving the stimulus object, and therefore, from what immediateregnancy (from what “causal integration”) his behavior proceeds.

Once during a session of summer school a lady in my class came to me and in an alarmed tone of voice said, “I think there is a student with some Negro blood in this class”—and pointed out a dark brunette to me. To my non-committal “Really?” she persisted, “But you wouldn’t want a nigger in the class, would you?” Next day she returned and firmly informed me, “I know she’s colored because I dropped a paper on the floor and said to her, ‘Pick that up.’ She did so, and that proves she’s just a darky servant trying to get above her station.” The lady’s whole background had oversensitized her to a certain mode of seeing and behaving. In the forefront of her life she carried important hypotheses that selected her perceptions and sifted her actions.

In South Africa on a Public Service Examination candidates were instructed to “underline the percentage that you think Jews constitute of the whole population of South Africa: 1 per cent, 5... 10... 15... 20...
When tabulated the modal estimate turned out to be 20 per cent. The true answer is just a little over 1 per cent (Malherbe, 1946). Here again we see how prejudice accentuates features within the phenomenal world.

In this connection the Chinese doctrine of immortality contains a revealing belief. The spirits of one's ancestors are presumed to grow smaller with each generation. Thus as one's memory and interest fail one's representation of outer reality shrinks.

A final example I borrow from the Deutsch-Collins (1949) research on integrated versus segregated bi-racial housing projects. The residential situations of two groups of white people cause them to perceive Negroes in different ways. Table 1 shows the replies of white people to the question: "Are they (the Negro people in the project) pretty much the same as the white people who live here or are they different?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Integrated Housing Units</th>
<th>Segregated Housing Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Data from Deutsch-Collins: Intergroup Relations in Interracial Housing, Table 18.)

We note how residential contact affects the perception of sameness and difference.

The same research contains even more subtle evidence that perceptions of people's qualities change through alterations in degree and kind of contact. When they mentioned the chief faults they thought Negro people had, whites living in segregated units tended to name aggressive traits: trouble-making, rowdy, dangerous. Those living in the closer association of integrated units mentioned predominantly an entirely different type of trait, namely, feelings of inferiority or over-sensitiveness to prejudice. The shift here is from a fear-sustained perception to one sustained by a friendly, "mental hygiene," point of view. In this instance we note the transformation from what Newcomb (1947) calls "autistic hostility" to social reality.

Heider (1944) in his stimulating work on social perception has pointed out how our interpretations of causality are ordinarily anthropomorphic in character. We ascribe change wherever possible to human agencies. For example, in deteriorated residential districts we are far more likely to see the Negro who lives there as disfiguring the district, than to perceive the district as disfiguring the Negro.

Memory, like perception, is selectively conditioned. Seeleman's study shows how people's power to recognize individual Negro faces varies in-
versely with their anti-Negro prejudice (V. Seeleman, 1940). In order to maintain our perceptual hypotheses (i.e., our stereotypes) intact we are forced to forget in a selective manner all the dignified, well-behaved Negroes, all the generous Jews, all the liberal-minded Catholics we have met. We think of them simply as Americans. Only when the expected pushing in a Negro, penny-pinching in a Jew, or narrow-mindedness of a Catholic, are encountered do we revive our favored hypotheses in our minds and proceed through our perceptions to confirm them. What has been called "motivated assimilation" in the process of rumor distortion is of this same order (Allport and Postman, 1947). Stories heard and told are tailored to pre-existing hypotheses. Rumors seem more often to conform to regnant hypotheses than to stimulus events.

I have illustrated the phenomenological approach to prejudice before I have defined it. Brought to prominence in recent years by Brunswik, Košika, Krech and Crutchfield, Bruner and Postman, MacLeod, Heider and others, phenomenology deals with the individual's definition of the situation he finds himself in, i.e., with his subjective reality. While this reality is in part a function of the stimulus-situation it is in varying degrees also a function of personal hypotheses within which are focused the needs and traits of the individual, the situational context of the moment, as well as cultural and historical influences (Bruner, 1950; Postman, 1950).

There is merit in this approach. Like a lens it directs the rays from remoter regions of causation upon the present need for adjustment. As Figure 1 suggests, it represents the convergence of many etiological factors, and defines the immediate regnancy that leads to specific acts of behavior. I have attempted in the diagram to represent in a crude manner the law that every act results from the final common path of convergent tendencies, from a "causal integration." The phenomenal field is a distillation of background forces, and thus marks the final distribution of energy systems just prior to innervation.* Many of Lewin's topological diagrams depict these terminal vectorial arrangements within the phenomenal field that eventuate in overt behavior.

Let me add just one final example of the merits of this approach. Much investigation in social psychology is conducted through interviewing. Now it goes without saying that replies to questions will be determined by the way the respondent perceives the question asked. Merton has pointed out that to ask an individual, "Would you mind living next door to a

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* A serious issue arises when we ask whether the phenomenal field is, by definition, only the field of conscious meanings. If so, then we are compelled to say that the value of the phenomenological approach, though by no means destroyed, is limited. Any final common path, or "causal integration," may run its course, wholly or in part, with marginal consciousness, or even subliminally. My own view is that it is wise to consider the phenomenological approach as dealing with conscious meanings exclusively. To do so reveals an important level of causal analysis. At the same time it makes entirely clear the fact that phenomenology alone cannot solve all the etiological problems involved.
"Negro?" may not tap his deeper attitudes toward Negroes at all. The question might mean to him, "Do you want to risk lower status in the eyes of your friends and relatives?" Or, "Do you want to be cut off from your present neighbors?" Or, "Do you want to take an unnecessary chance that your daughter will fall in love with a Negro boy?" The precaution that we all take nowadays to pre-test our questionnaires proceeds, whether we know it or not, from our recognition of the importance of phenomenological causation.

Valuable as this approach is it obviously cannot serve as a complete conceptualization of prejudice. It deals only with the individual's definition of the presenting situation, and does not tell what determines this definition. In etiological terms it represents only \textit{proximate} (i.e., immediate) causation. The pivotal concepts in phenomenology such as "hypothesis," "cognitive map" (Tolman), and "life space" (Lewin) all imply that every factor required to formulate an event is operating in the field at the moment. Yet the origin of these factors, their peculiar recurrence, and their \textit{functional significance} in the life of the individual can only be explained by pushing our causal analysis further.

\textit{Personality Dynamics and Structure: the Functional Significance of Prejudice}

The greater part of the recent outpouring of research and theory has had to do with personality dynamics and structure.

Implicit in this approach, I should like first to point out, is a widespread acceptance of the concept of attitude. What we do with our measuring instruments, whether they be direct questionnaires (e.g., Adorno \textit{et al.}, 1950; Allport and Kramer; 1946; Deri \textit{et al.}, 1948), polls (Cf. Kramer, 1949), or clever projective and trap devices (e.g., Razran, 1950; Gough, 1950) is to discover the range and intensity of prejudiced attitudes. The evidence for the high internal reliability of prejudice scales is conclusive (Cf. Hartley, 1946), likewise for their repeat reliability (Cf. Dodd, 1935). In view of these facts it is surprising to note the various attempts that have been made in recent years to dislodge the concept of attitude. We may agree with Doob that attitudes should be tied to a sound learning theory (Doob, 1947) and with Smith (1947-48) that attitudes should not be considered apart from their functional value in the context of the individual's life as a whole. But these, and other recent critics, to my mind have succeeded not in eliminating the concept, but in helpfully refining and establishing it.

Perhaps the chief progress that has been made in the psychology of attitudes during the past decade lies in the growing recognition that attitudes serve a purpose in the life-economy of the individual. The California farmer who is prejudiced against Japanese-Americans has a definable attitude, but this attitude is not isolated in his life. Rather it may be for him a means of excusing his failures, maintaining his self-esteem, and enhancing
his competitive position. While many studies of prejudice do run their course at the level of polling or measurement with only first-order breakdowns or simple accompanying correlations, those that have penetrated deeper disclose the stabilizing function that prejudice may play in personality. Investigations such as those of Escalona (1946), Ackerman and Jahoda (1950), Simmel (1946), Bettelheim and Janowitz (1950), Adorno et al. (1950) show beyond doubt that prejudiced attitudes may serve as a psychological crutch for persons crippled in their encounters with life.

In such instances the dynamisms involved are those we have mentioned—categorization, displacement, rationalization; they include likewise projection, reaction formation, and other sly tricks of ego-defense. Summarizing the work in this area Theodore Newcomb concludes that "the personality factors most closely related to attitudes of prejudice are those which have to do with threat orientation" (1950, p. 588). From this point of view prejudice would seem to be largely a device for handling basic insecurity. Campbell's discovery that job dissatisfaction is associated with anti-Semitism is one of many lines of evidence supporting this proposition (Campbell, 1947). So too Bixler's case where a domestic quarrel disrupted a truck driver's erstwhile friendly relations with a Negro companion (1948). Much other evidence could be cited supporting this hypothesis.

Yet manifestly some people handle both outer and inner threats with complete equanimity. Although faced with a lowering standard of living, with downward mobility, for example, they do not necessarily react as did many of the Chicago veterans with acute prejudice. What we need to know is the type of character-structure that resorts to prejudice when threats are felt.

It is at this point that some of the most brilliant advances have recently been made. I refer first to an unpublished study by Nancy Carter Morse (1947). This investigator set herself the task of testing many hypotheses concerning anti-Semitism: that it varies with outer insecurity, with felt insecurity, with outer frustration, with self-frustration, with past experience, with "belief in essence" (e.g., "Jewishness"), and with different patterns of loyalty. She found that while several of these factors correlated with anti-Semitism they did so only in a contingent manner. Unless high "national involvement" were also present these etiological variables were not operative. Conversely, "national involvement" correlated with hostility against the Jews when everything else was held constant. The higher the degree of "patriotism" the higher the anti-Semitism. To my mind the significance of this study lies in its demonstration that prejudice is not merely a response to threat. It is also an element in a positive pattern of security. The bigot is first and foremost an institutionalist. He cannot tolerate uncertainty of membership. He fashions an island of safety and clings to it. The fact that the intercorrelation of prejudiced attitudes is known to be high (Cf. Hartley, 1946) offers support for this interpretation. A person who is against one minority is in most cases against all other minorities. In
short, his mode of life is exclusionist. He cannot welcome strangers or out-
groups of any kind to his island.

For additional light on this syndrome we are in debt to the California
investigators (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, Sanford, 1950), and
to others whose results provide support (Cf. Allport, 1950a). Without
attempting a final portrayal of the type of character-structure in question,
I list some of the findings concerning the “authoritarian personality.” The
type is also depicted by Fromm (1947) who contrasts it with the “produc-
tive personality” and by Maslow (1943) who contrasts it with the “self-
actualizing” personality (1949).

The authoritarian person has a general trait of extropunitiveness.
Blame is seldom directed toward himself. He sees outer events, per-
sions, circumstances as accountable for his failures.

His personal relations are characteristically regarded in terms of
power and status rather than in terms of love and friendship.

While there are protestations of love and accord for one’s parents,
deeper study shows that parent-child affection and trust were in fact
lacking. Discipline and authority marked the relationship. Latent
rebellion, firmly held in check, is therefore detectable.

Conventionalism and excessive institutionalism mark these lives.
Lacking a sense of inner security they seek safety in well defined
in-groups—in church, sorority, or nation (Cf. Morse, 1947).

Categorical thinking is prominent, especially a two-valued logic.
What is not clearly good is ipso facto evil; a woman is “pure” or else
“bad.”

Insight into one’s own nature is lacking, although one is usually
well satisfied with oneself.

A rigidity marks the style of life. Perseverative mental sets are
found even in areas that have nothing apparently to do with preju-
dice (Cf. Rokeach, 1948).

A need for certainty characterizes the thinking. Seldom does
the person say, “I don’t know.” Roper finds that DK responses
among anti-Semites are less than among tolerant people (1946).

Such characters live in fear of punishment and retaliation. They
are broadly suspicious. They agree with the proposition, “The world
is a hazardous place where men are basically evil and dangerous”
(Allport and Kramer, 1946).

Much of the world seems “ego alien” to them. They clutch at
certainties. Even their Rorschach responses seem compulsively me-
ticulous (Reichard, 1948). To maintain a precarious integration they
structure their island of safety rigidly lest confusion overwhelm them.

Often the individual aligns himself with authoritarian movements
in order to codify and justify his own bigotry.

The agitator, the “prophet of deceit,” may be looked upon as an
individual in whom this syndrome is excessively marked and who possesses
motivation and skill enough to become a leader in exclusionist and persecu-
tory movements (Lowenthal and Guterman, 1949). Paranoid characteristics may be present in such individuals (Morlan, 1948).

It is important to note that this syndrome, originally established in adults, has been found to reach down into the middle years of childhood by Frenkel-Brunswik (1948) and Rokeach (1948); and even into the age of seven by Kutner (1950). But we do not yet know for certain—though these studies strongly imply it—that early childhood training is responsible. Indications are that harsh and capricious discipline, affectional deprivation, feelings of rejection, may underlie the character-structure thus formed. We dare not, however, rule out the possibility of a constitutional bent toward rigidity, though concerning this important matter we know absolutely nothing.

Adults—first encountering upsetting conditions in later years—may likewise adopt the safety-island method of adjustment, and develop bigotry where apparently none existed before. There is important work to be done in establishing the conditions for latent bigotry that will develop only if and when suitable situational factors arise.

Most research on the dynamics and structure of personality in relation to prejudice utilizes extreme and contrasting groups. The subjects are chosen from those “high” and “low” in prejudice. Median subjects are usually discarded. This heuristic device leads to an over-emphasis upon types. We study confirmed bigots on the one hand, and emerge with the concept of an “authoritarian” personality; or we focus on markedly tolerant people, and emerge with the “productive,” “mature,” or “self-actualizing” personality. This procedure, while defensible, leads subtly to the depiction of “ideal types.” We sharpen our findings, so that the whole complex subject falls a little too readily into a neat “scheme of comprehensibility.” This procedure tempts us to forget the many mixtures that occur in ordinary run-of-the-mill personalities.

While we are examining somewhat critically the methods employed in establishing the rigidity-prejudice correlation we should mark the almost universal absence of a desirable control. It is not sufficient, for example, to determine that people high in prejudice are generally deficient in ability to change their mental set; but we must likewise prove that groups deficient in their ability to change their mental set are high in prejudice. Until we do so our parameters are not clearly established.

In framing our theories of dynamisms and character structure we should make room for the apparently serious conflict between biological and psychogenic motives that may enter into ethnic attitudes. In relations between whites and Negroes, for example, there is a considerable and growing amount of friendliness wherever cultivated and psychogenic interests are involved. Negro artists are in theaters, drawing rooms, sports arenas. Negro folk-music is accepted as American folk-music. At concerts, church and in community activities we increasingly participate in a friendly
fashion. In short, wherever there are mature areas of interest association is readily handled. But where biological gratifications are in question the authoritarian mode of adjustment seems more likely to assert itself. Two fiercely possessive needs—property and sex—appear to be the final bastions of conservatism. In a life where mature adjustments in these regions are not worked out, and where anxiety dwells, there seems to be a higher probability of rigid, exclusive, suspicious character-formation. And in one and the same personality we find sentiments that are egalitarian up to a point, but that seem to turn turtle when miscegenation or occupational equality are mentioned. This suggested relation between “gut functions” and prejudice deserves further study.

Conformity. Now we dare not assume that prejudiced attitudes are always psychological crutches employed by immature or crippled individuals. Many studies suggest that they may be peripheral to the personality, skin-deep as it were. On the basis of interviews with veterans, Bettelheim and Janowitz classify attitudes toward Jews and Negroes as in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPES OF ATTITUDE EXPRESSED</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS (N = 150)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toward Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensely anti- (spontaneous)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outspokenly anti- (when questioned)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotyped</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerant</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Data from B. Bettelheim and M. Janowitz: *Dynamics of Prejudice*, 1950, pp. 16 and 26.)

One has the impression that the “stereotyped” cases (roughly one-quarter of each group), and perhaps some of the “outspoken” cases may be little more than cultural parrots, repeating idle chatter they have heard. These individuals do not live by their prejudice; its functional significance for them is low or else lacking. But, as I have observed, latent prejudice now expressed merely in stereotypes, may blaze with functional significance when conditions are ripe.

Again it is not that two distinct types are involved, but rather as Figure 2 suggests, a continuum of cases. At any given time a prejudiced individual presumably may be located at some point between a maximum degree of ego-relevant functional significance, and a maximum degree of sheer (not ego-involved) conformity.

It does not affect the continuum to argue that conformity itself has functional significance for the individual. We may grant that no person would adopt the folkways unless it served his purpose to do so. Yet there
is a wide difference between, let us say, normal habits of cleanliness acquired from parents and culture, and compulsive hand-washing. A similar difference obtains between bigotry that is simply stereotyped and bigotry that is saturated with need and necessity.

**Socialization**

The topic of conformity leads to the problem of learning. As shown in Figure 1, the problem is properly located at the junction of the individual approach and the situational, for it is always through a concrete learning situation that the influence of a culture or subculture reach the person.

I shall say little about the acquisition of prejudice, not because facts and theories are lacking, but because the topic is inexhaustible. Let me mention only two or three well-established findings.

(1) It takes considerable time for the young child to make the in-group and out-group distinctions prescribed by his culture. For example, to the simple question, "What are you?" only 10 per cent of four-year olds reply in terms of racial, ethnic, or religious membership; whereas 75 per cent of nine-year olds do so (Hartley, Rosenbaum and Schwartz, 1948).

(2) Before the child can distinguish between various groups he often acquires power-words of violent opprobrium such as nigger, kike, wop, whose affective significance he senses. Through these symbols he thus learns to reject a group even before he knows to what group they apply. Aggression may thus be pre-channeled upon groups before the child has any experience with them (Cf. Trager and Radke, 1947).

(3) In general, the role of first-hand knowledge of, or experience with, minority groups seems to be a negligible factor in the formation of prejudice in childhood. From the point of view of mental health it is regrettable that attitudes are not the generalized product of first-hand experience, but in the realm of ethnic attitudes, as in the case of most moral attitudes, they are taken over ready-made. Subsequent experience is ordinarily interpreted in a selective fashion so that it serves to confirm the second-hand hypotheses acquired from parents and associates (Cf. Horowitz, 1936).
Now these particular findings bear primarily upon the conformity aspects of prejudice. While they are vastly important we should not forget that the groundwork for an authoritarian character-structure may also be laid through learning. Thus a rejected child, unable to identify securely with his parents, may be forced into a survival-pattern that will lead in his later years to a rigid, out-group-hating mode of life.

Therefore, research on the acquisition of prejudice should deal equally with two basic problems which may well involve different kinds of learning: (1) the acquiring of content, i.e., of beliefs and categories; and (2) the acquiring of functional predispositions towards, or a need for, prejudice in the economy of the personal life (Cf. Allport, 1950b).

The Situational Approach

The situational approach to the study of prejudice is the least easily defined. Broadly speaking it seeks illumination from studying the confluence of outer forces that act upon the individual. Causation is seen as residing to a greater or lesser degree behind and beyond the individual. Now many psychologists, Lewin among them, might insist that it is the phenomenal field alone that matters. The person acts not on the basis of surrounding forces but on the basis of the subjective, causal integration he has fashioned. Reasonable as this argument sounds the fact remains that we cannot know the phenomenal field directly. We infer it partly from the resultant act and partly from the outer situation.

Any field is a state of energy tension existing between two or more poles. Sometimes it is viewed as existing in space-time, sometimes as a dimension of thought. Often the two modes of existence are confused. What we think of as a phenomenological field sometimes turns out to be a space-time field. Even Lewin's classic investigations of the autocratic and democratic group atmosphere rest upon outer situational criteria and not directly upon the boy's perceptual structuring thereof. Valuable as is the concept of phenomenal field we are forced to admit that in practice we often confuse what is phenomenal with what is situational. Take the common expression that we have adopted from Lewin: we speak of someone "going out of the field." Unless we were in fact viewing the field situationally we could not speak of an individual leaving it. For not even a Houdini could "go out of" his own phenomenal field.

An educator from South Africa told me the following incident. The pupils in a rural school were not making satisfactory progress in learning English. The supervisor of English instruction in the district visited the school and asked the native teacher to put on a demonstration period to show how he taught. Thereupon the native did so, but only after speaking first to the children in the vernacular, "Come now, children, put away your things and let us spend an hour wrestling with the enemy's language." This is the situation in which the learning proceeded, or failed to proceed. We
may imagine what structuring took place in the pupils' phenomenal field, but actually we can only know for certain the outer situation.

When one studies the relationship between unemployment and prejudice one is using the situational approach. So too when one investigates the effects of different types of contacts—residential, occupational, social and wartime contacts in combat situations. A large number of important researches have dealt with this particular situational problem (e.g., Stouffer et al., 1949; MacKenzie, 1948; Allport and Kramer, 1946; Deutsch and Collins, 1949; Deutscher and Chein, 1948). The generalization that emerges is to the effect that only in situations where different groups meet on equal footing, enjoying equal status, does prejudice diminish; the effect is greatly enhanced if the groups holding such equal status engage in joint participation in a common task.

Many if not most studies of the classroom employ the situational approach. Educators are nowadays insisting that a democratic atmosphere must mark relationships in the classroom if desirable intercultural attitudes are to be fostered (e.g., Kilpatrick and van Til, 1947). Lewin has repeatedly made the point that the creator of group atmosphere is primarily the leader (or teacher) who inevitably serves as the "gatekeeper of the channel of communication" (1947).

A good example of the importance of the situation in the expression of prejudice is contained in the researches of Robinson and Rhode (1946) who found that Jewish-appearing interviewers, especially if introducing themselves with Jewish names, obtained far less open expression of anti-Semitism than did interviewers who seemed to the respondents to be non-Jewish. People of lower socio-economic levels were more restrained in their expression of prejudice to Jewish-appearing interviewers than were those of higher levels.

What I am here calling situational studies are, as these few examples show, diverse in type. Some situations are as enduring as family structure, others as transitory as a race riot. Some are as embracing as the impact of press and radio upon us, others as specialized as the fleeting anti-minority incidents in offices or tramways so cleverly studied by Citron, Chein and Harding (1950).

Broadly speaking, in the concept of situation we are approaching a level of theory congenial to sociological investigators. Coutu (1949) has recently advised us to abandon the concept of attitude altogether and to speak exclusively of a tendency-in-a-situation. Prejudice would thus be defined as the range of situations in which an individual makes a negative or hostile response.

I feel that there is a desirable reciprocity between the individual theories of causation and the situational. They have a fortunate way of handling each other's exceptions. Thus if not all members of an agitator's audience fall for his line; or if not all dwellers in an area marked by Negro in-migration resent their arrival, we seek the explanation for the exceptions
in terms of individual differences (in personality dynamics or structure). Conversely if a given individual, noted for his tolerance, suddenly behaves out of character, explanation can be sought in terms of the situation. Take the case of the white woman living in an inter-racial project who was not merely content but actually enthusiastic about her experience there. Yet in spite of this warm and friendly attitude she decided to move away. The contradiction, it developed, was due to the fact that she had a twelve-year old daughter whom she expected "would just naturally fall in love with one of the fine young Negro lads in the project." The mother had no objection to the prospect herself, but she knew that the resulting situation would be fraught with trouble for her daughter. The mother's decision was contrary to her own attitudes; it was determined by a situational and cultural structure quite alien to her own nature (Deutsch, 1949).

We may state the point at issue a little more exactly. Few personalities are completely integrated and conflictless. Even the most consistent among us play many roles in the several groups of which we are members. But there are none the less the less bona fide psychophysical dispositions and habits within our own organisms to correspond to these roles. Sometimes one and sometimes another disposition or habit is evoked—according to the situation (Cf. Myrdal, 1944).

This insistence upon the biophysical nature of conflict and of role behavior does not in the slightest degree weaken the situational approach to the study of prejudice. Quite the contrary, it grows more and more apparent that it is the varying situational contexts that set off varying action-tendencies. Unless we admit the situation in our total analysis we shall never be able to deal adequately with the problem of consistency and inconsistency in individual behavior. Nor shall we discover those conditions (for example, equal-status contact) that are known to arouse tolerant, and to weaken intolerant, modes of response.

**Culture and Subculture**

We come now to another level of causal theory favored by many. Prejudice, we are told, is lockstitched with the folkways of a group, with its caste system, with its institutionalized outlets for aggression.

One of the strongest arguments in favor of the socio-cultural approach is this: in every society on earth the children are thought to belong to the social and religious groups of their parents. By virtue of his kinship the child is expected, among other things, to take on the prejudices of his parents, and also to become the victim of whatever prejudice is directed against them. Thus prejudice is learned with all the authoritative support of the kinship system; it is germinal in the child's identifications, sometimes essential to his very survival.

This fact helps to explain why prejudice is not easily changed by non-family agencies—by school, church, or state. While the official creed of America is unexceptionally tolerant, prejudice flourishes. The explanation
must lie in the fact that family influence outweighs official agencies in its impact upon youth. A little girl, who no doubt was receiving democratic training at school and church, burst into tears when the Negro family in her neighborhood moved away. "Now," she sobbed, "there is no one that we are better than."

We need this socio-cultural emphasis upon the demand of individual and family for status. Psychologists, at least until the recent past, have talked more about hunger and sex, than about self-esteem. Sociologists and anthropologists, by and large, are more properly aware of the basic importance of caste, power structure, and sanctions.

Another merit of the socio-cultural approach lies in its insistence that there are "standard meanings" which in a rough way each member of a social group adopts. It is only in recent years, thanks to the assistance of sociologists and anthropologists, that psychologists have begun to employ culturally established frames of reference as a starting point for an analysis of the social consciousness and behavior of the individual. It is by and large a wholesome thing to do.*

From the socio-cultural approach come many important findings, among them the following.

Only in a highly differentiated society where multiple secondary groups exist is there such a thing as group prejudice. An homogeneous society, such as the Navaho, may sanction hostility toward individual outcasts (witches) but not toward groups within the society (Cf. Kluckhohn, 1944).

Even a differentiated society does not generate acute intergroup hostility unless there is possible upward mobility within the social structure.

The more numerous the members in an upwardly mobile minority group, the greater the prejudice against them.

In times of rapid social changes, and in times of calamity and war, prejudice mounts.

* Wholesome though it is, there is a certain trap in this approach. To illustrate, I refer to an excellent recent textbook. Within the space of a few pages the author speaks of "shared meaning," "shared codes," "shared interests," "shared norms," "shared values," and "shared frame of reference." The trap lies in the Hegelian style of terminology. Just where is the norm or code that we "share"? Do we in fact "share" it, or have we in our minds only a personal and approximate version of the code? And is not the code itself merely an abstraction from many different (though comparable) codes that separate individuals have? The psychologist should not forget that every person is a unique unit, and his mental furnishing is his own—not "shared."

It seems appropriate enough for sociologists and anthropologists to speak of "shared values" and "shared codes," for by the nature of their profession their view of social conduct is normally "superoorganic." But the psychologist has the inescapable duty to keep firmly in sight the unique and personal formations of meaning and evaluation in which all social norms are selectively rendered. While such formations may in many cases be comparable individual by individual, they are never actually shared.
Whenever a culture permits exploitative gains at the expense of a minority group, prejudice is great. In our own society status-gains result from social anti-Semitism (McWilliams, 1948), economic gains from exploitation of the Negro (Cox, 1948), sexual gains from intimidation of the Negro male (Myrdal, 1944), and political gains from manipulated anti-Semitism (Lowenthal and Guterman, 1949). Currently we see the enormous political benefits that accrue to demagogues who fan the flames of anti-Communist feeling.

To a truly extraordinary degree the prejudices of the dominant society infect all sub-groups within that society. Thus even in such a diverse culture area as America it is found that the order of preference for various ethnic groups is nearly universal (Cf. Newcomb, 1950, p. 581). So prevalent is this standard of judgment that members of certain minorities even become infected with the prevailing scorn and dislike for themselves.

All legends that sustain and justify prejudice are part of the cultural heritage. To take but one important consequence of this fact: every nation or clan has in its history the account of a “golden age.” Modern Greeks can judge their worth in terms of Greece’s glorious antiquity. Italians have their Renaissance. The Catholic Church once held all of Christendom. Boston was once the hub of the universe. Thanks to this golden age legend—to its historical halo—nearly everyone on earth can with a bit of contriving look down on nearly everyone else.

**The Historical Approach**

This example leads us finally to our need for historical perspective. Without it all theories of prejudice seem foreshortened. One historian, in criticizing approaches made exclusively in terms of personality structure, writes, “Such studies are enlightening only within narrow limits. For personality is itself conditioned by social forces; in the last analysis, the search for understanding must reach into the broad social context within which personality is shaped” (Handlin, 1949).

Take anti-Semitism—the most ancient known form of prejudice that is still extant. Without the historical approach this phenomenon is almost unintelligible. For one thing, only history allows us to see how throughout the ages Jews have been forced to occupy a position at the “fringe of stable values”—as money-lenders, entertainers, entrepreneurs, in addition to (or because of) their deviance in religious belief. The historical view helps us likewise to understand why people at the fringe of stable values are regarded as threatening agents by conservatives in every era. Also why at certain periods of time conditions have been ripe for persecution, pogroms, genocide. Using the historical method, Massing (1949) has shown how the Nazi manipulations of anti-Semitism were a culmination
of events in German social and political life during the decades preceding Hitler's rise to power.

How could one comprehend the peculiar pattern of prejudice against the Negro in this country without an historical knowledge of slavery, emancipation, and carpet-bagging? Historical patterns, even historical "accidents," form an essential groundwork for research in prejudice. It may well be, as my colleague Jerome Bruner has remarked, that it is the historical process that establishes the Jew rather than the redhead as the object of prejudice. If perchance events had been such that the villainy of Frederick Barbarossa had been perpetuated over the centuries by other redheads, we might today have to cope with anti-rufutism.

It is not necessary to multiply instances. We have reason to regret the almost complete separation of psychology and history in our programs of teaching and research. While happy rapprochements are being effected between psychology and other social sciences, the gap between psychology and history is still wide.

One type of historical theory, economic determinism, should not be overlooked. Economic considerations enter not only in the broad sweep of history, but focus our attention upon the exploitative elements in all cultures. Economic conditions likewise create situational fields to which the individual is forced to respond, sometimes in a prejudiced manner. And finally within personality structure itself, as I have pointed out, property-demands, like sex, may determine the functional significance of prejudice in a given life. It would be as great an error to overlook economic considerations as to make them solely responsible for all group bias as Cox (1944) has done.

Conclusion

I have been using the topic of prejudice in order to adumbrate the problem of explanation and causation in social psychology.* Conceivably the time may come when all social science will employ a single set of descriptive dimensions and state its causal propositions at one and the same level of abstraction. Some pioneer efforts in this direction are being made by Parsons and Shils (in press) and by others. But for the time being I believe the best we can do is to regard any social issue as accessible to several different but equally valid levels of analysis—analysis in terms of the stimulus object, the phenomenal field, the dynamics and structure of the individual life; the surrounding situation; the underlying cultural norms and laws of social structure and action; and the total relevant

* Positivists will object to the frank and naive use of "causation" throughout this paper. I make no apology. Methodologists who banish causation from the front door, often admit it surreptitiously at the back. Or else they spin their logic too fine for the present needs of social science. To my mind social science at its present stage of development will be concerned with causation, or else it will be concerned with nothing of consequence.
historical context. Not only prejudice, but religious behavior, economic behavior, domestic behavior—almost any type of human conduct that is not exclusively reflex or biological, can and should be viewed through this series of lenses. Causation may be proximate, or causation may be ultimate. Forces may be precipitating or underlying, in the foreground or in the background. A social scientist is free to select his own level of approach, but he should be respectfully aware of the whole etiological sweep.