

Are social identities
integrated into the
personal self-concept
or do they exist ...



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One's self-concept refers to one's idea of one's identity as distinct from others. This self-concept emerges from the understanding of oneself as a being separate from others; one's self-esteem emerges from one's interactions with others.

Occasionally, the terms " positive" or " negative self-concept" are used to describe self-esteem. (Harter, 1983). This paper examines whether the idea of social identities are integrated into one's self-concept or they exist independently. It shall focus on the particular issue of prejudice and discrimination and relates it to the self-concept of individuals. Pride and prejudice
Prejudice is an attitude. The word means " prejudgment.

" It generally refers to the application of a previously formed judgment to some person, object or situation. It can be favorable or unfavorable. Usually it comes from categorizing or stereotyping. Where does the idea of this being integrated into one's personal concept? Mainly, it arises in the development of attitudes which are influenced by different factors since it develops in the following sequence: Phase I - awareness of ethnic differences, beginning at about age two-and-a-half to three. Phase II - orientation toward specific ethnic-related and concepts, beginning at about age four
Phase III - true attitudes toward various ethnic groups, beginning at about age seven.

(Goodman 1964). Thus, this developmental sequence is probably due to the reaction of others to children's appearance-remarks about skin color, hair, and facial features alert one to the fact that people look different. Experience with differences promotes more awareness of the self-concept. For instance, prejudice and discrimination exist in many societies.

These two concepts are intimately related as prejudice manifests one's views and attitudes towards others while discrimination is the behavior or action we take as a result of our prejudice. In a society where social divisions are clearly marked, it is also a propagation ground for prejudice and discrimination. Separation easily leads to discrimination. Division can be based on gender, religion, profession, education, and politics.

Nevertheless, it is significant not to be confused between diversity and division. Diversity indicates a sense of dynamic interaction whereas division creates isolation, inequity, and in many cases, brutality. (Le) Much of social psychological theory and research over the past century has been concerned with inter-group biases for which prejudice and discrimination are negative manifestations of integral power. Over the years, little research has been carried out investigating the causes or consequences, despite the basic nature of such social behavior. Both prejudice (attitudes) and discrimination (behavior) have a significant role to play in impacting the value of life in a society (Frideres). This paper shall attempt to discuss prejudice and discrimination and their effects to society.

Specifically, this paper shall review the psychological literature to explore the origins and operation of such biases, its growth of tolerance and the strategies for change. As a replacement for bringing or holding people together, prejudice and discrimination drive them apart. Paradoxically, even prejudice and discrimination entail some kind of relationship. If there is no relationship people would be totally unaware of another person's or group's existence. When there is any relationship at all, even a negative one, there is some amalgamation.

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Kenneth Boulding referred to this as “ disintegrative power”-“ the integration that is achieved through hatred, fear, and the threat of a common enemy.” (1989, p. 62.) Prejudice is a cultural approach that rests on negative stereotypes about individuals or groups because of their cultural, religious, racial, or ethnic conditions. Discrimination is the dynamic denial of desired goals from a group of persons.

A category can be based on sex, ethnicity, nationality, religion, language, or class. More recently, disadvantaged groups now comprise those based on gender, age, and physical disabilities. (A Short Encyclopedia of the Bahai Faith). Prejudice and discrimination are intensely imbedded at both the individual’s self-concept and social identity levels. Attempts to eliminate prejudice and discrimination must deal with prevailing beliefs or ideologies, and social structure. As far as historical records show, no society or nation has been unaffected to prejudice and discrimination, either as victim or victimizer.

Current forms of prejudice and discrimination date back to when European colonizers penetrated and transformed formerly isolated societies and peoples. The more severe forms of discriminatory practices include genocide, slavery, legislated discrimination (such as Apartheid), discriminatory immigration laws, and disenfranchisement. Less extreme forms of prejudice and discrimination, but nonetheless persistent and oppressive, include social exclusion at the institutional level (such as in schools and hospitals), and the more subtle forms practiced by the media. Some groups appear to suffer from more persistent forms of discrimination, such as Jews (as in anti-Semitism) and the Roma (a. k. <https://assignbuster.com/are-social-identities-integrated-into-the-personal-self-concept-or-do-they-exist-independently/>)

a. Gypsies), regardless of time and place. (A Short Encyclopedia of the Bahal Faith). Prejudice and discrimination create enormous effects in the psychological, social, political, and economic domains.

Whether planned or not, the effects are compounded by the loss of self-worth, a sense of alienation from the wider society, political disempowerment, and economic inequalities. Klineberg (1968: 440) asserts that “prejudice and ethnic hostilities comprise a major threat to peace both within a nation and among nations.” As a result, the appearance of a new global moral order gradually provides a leverage point to oppose the effects of prejudice and discrimination. While many agree that the a variety of international instruments to protect people against prejudice and discrimination are still not universally followed or even implemented, it is clear that a new international consciousness is indeed rising and is, in fact, increasing(A Short Encyclopedia of the Bahal Faith). Interpersonal in originAccording to Barbara Watters of Mercyhurst College, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination (S, P, & D) are principally interpersonal in their origins, thus, reinforcing the fact that social identities are well integrated in one’s self-concept.

Indeed, the remedies would be ultimate and effective. However, most psychologists, sociologists, and other social scientists agree that S, P, & D are inter-group phenomenon. Andersen & Collins (1998, p. 3) emphasized that “in particular, these phenomena can be understood throughout the interlocking categories of race, class, and gender which influence individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privileges”. Moreover, according to Andersen & Collins (1998, p. 4), <https://assignbuster.com/are-social-identities-integrated-into-the-personal-self-concept-or-do-they-exist-independently/>

conceptualizing S, P, & D in this way forces people to “ interpret the division between powerful and powerless, or between oppressor and oppressed, as not being clear cut”.

It also forces human beings to look at and to question some of the most cherished beliefs learned from families and religions. (Watters, 2001) Contemporary societies differ from one another only in the degree to which certain groups are set apart from the social mainstream and consequently suffer inequality of opportunity and inequity of condition. The bad news is that sexism, racism, ageism, ethnic intolerance, religious bigotry, and all manner of other injustices persist in Western industrial societies regardless of calls for human rights all the way from the United Nations down to national, sub-national and even municipal governments, to say nothing of the hard work of well-meaning private individuals, associations and businesses.

Integration into an Individual's Self-Concept It appears that the most effective way of reducing prejudice and discrimination is by inter-group contact. However, this is only likely to be beneficial when the following conditions are met: two groups have fair status; two groups are working towards the same goals based on co-operation; intergroup contact is both regular and of a duration that allows healthy relationships to develop; and social and institutional support is provided.

If these conditions are not met, contact may actually trigger prejudice.

Research suggests that there is a need to work with policy makers to clearly define what is meant by the two concepts prejudice and discrimination and to make sure that scope reflect all dimensions of the concepts. While <https://assignbuster.com/are-social-identities-integrated-into-the-personal-self-concept-or-do-they-exist-independently/>

considerable concern and interest has focused on “ what causes prejudice and/or discrimination,” no systematic set of empirical research projects exists. Furthermore, prejudices are notable not in their existence, but in their ease with which they can be aroused, their diversity of expression, and the persistence with which they are held. While it is improbable that the universal psychological processes which underlie a fundamental propensity for prejudice can be changed, the degree to which they come to be expressed can be: at the level of social structure and inter-group relations, in the social influences to which individuals are exposed, and in individual vulnerability.

Knowledge on prejudice within our country, and within us, is vital in order to move toward a more humane world. Prejudice and discrimination are existing and critical issues in the country, and they recur again and again in this society due to its disturbed history of civil rights. These issues will always be current, and thus, they need to be taught and discussed openly.