

Social psychological principles of prejudice and attitudes



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Many people believe prejudice and discrimination mean the same thing. In fact there is a very important difference between them. Prejudice is an attitude, whereas discrimination refers to the behaviour or action. If someone dislikes a given minority, but does not allow this dislike to effect their behaviour then the person shows prejudice but not discrimination. According to Baron and Byrne (1991) prejudice is an attitude towards the member of some group based solely on their membership in that group. In contrast discrimination involves negative action directed at the member of the group. Allport (1954) argued that there are five different stages of discrimination.

Anti-location: Verbal attacks are directed against some other group.

Avoidance: the other group is systematically avoided.

Discrimination: the other group is deliberately treated less well than other groups in term of civil rights.

Physical attack: Membership of the other group are attacked and their property is destroyed.

Extermination: there are deliberate attempts to kill all members of the other group.

The word prejudice can be broken down in to pre (meaning before) and justice (meaning judgement). Therefore to be prejudice towards an individual or group shows a pre-judge of that individual or group. There are three elements to prejudice.

Cognitive element: This involves the beliefs held about the group. These beliefs will be in the form of stereotyping, common but over simple views of what particular groups of people are like.

The affective element: This involves the feelings experienced in response to the group. If we are prejudiced against a group we may experience anger, fear, hate or disgust when we encounter a member of that group.

The behavioural element: This consists of our actions toward the object of our prejudice. Behaving differently towards people based on their membership of a group is called discrimination. Our actions against members of a group against which we hold a prejudice can range from avoidance and verbal criticism to mass extermination.

Psychological approach to explain prejudice falls in to two broad areas. Social approach centres on the social factors that contribute to prejudice in general. Whereas individual differences approaches centres on what factors make some people more prone to prejudice.

Tajel and Turner (1979) proposed the social identity theory. This theory is one of a group of theory's that share the assumption that prejudice can be explained by our tendency to identify ourselves as part of a group and to classify other people as either within or outside that group. Tajfel and Turner carried out a number of laboratory experiment called the minimal group

Tajfel (1970) carried out an experiment to look at intergroup discrimination. To test his theory sixty four schoolboys aged between 14 and 15 year old were selected. The participants were initially informed that the experiment

was research investigating vision. The boys were shown clusters of dots on a screen and asked to estimate the number of dots on the picture. The participants were then divided into two groups group A and group B. Group A was classified as boys that had underestimated the amount of dots and group B was those boys who had overestimated the amount of dots. The boys were then given a number of tasks in which they would allocate points to each other. Each boy did not know who they were allocating points to but they did know which group the boy belonged to three conditions were used as part of this experiment condition one the choice was between two boys from group A the second condition was two boys from group B and the last condition used one boy from each group. What Tajfel identified as part of this research was that the boys overwhelmingly chose to allocate points to the boys who had been identified as in the same group as themselves. Despite the fact that there was no direct competition between the two groups the participants consistently displayed favouritism towards the boys from the same group.

Ellis and Fox (2001) also carried out research into prejudice and discrimination looking at the effect of self-identification sexual orientation on helping behaviour. This research involved 235 British men and women who were telephoned at home. The caller explained that they had dialled the wrong number and that they had no more change to make a further call and asked if the participant would relay a message to the caller's partner. In the experimental condition the caller's partner was identified as the same sex as the caller, and in the controlled condition they were identified as the opposite sex. The findings showed that overall both gay men and lesbians were

less likely to receive help than heterosexuals. Women were also more to receive help than men. The final conclusion to the research showed that people were less likely to offer help to a gay men who found themselves in difficulty. This showed prejudice and discrimination towards gay men.

When discussing prejudice or discrimination, stereotyping also needs to be examined Stewart et al. (1979) described stereotyping as a process not only used to simplify environmental and social stimuli, but one that also aids the construction of meaning to those stimuli based on attribution expectations.

Whereas Taguirs (1969) defined stereotyping as the tendency to place a person in a category according to some easily and quickly identifiable characteristic such as age, sex, ethnic membership, nationality or occupation, and then to attribute to them qualities believed to be typical of a member of that category. Stereotypes seem to provide a simple and economical; way of perceiving the world.

In the late 1800s male Chinese immigrants were brought to the U. S. to work on the railroads and as agricultural labours on the West Coast many specialized in laundry services. Some came willingly others were basically kidnapped and brought forcibly. After the transcontinental railroad was completed and it occurred to white Americans that the Chinese workers were still around and might compete with them for jobs, a wave of anti-Chinese sentiment swept the U. S. Chinese men were stereotyped as degenerate heroin addicts whose presence encouraged prostitution, gambling, and other immoral activities. Since most Chinese immigrants were brought here specifically as workers, the vast majority were male few at that time were able to bring their wives. A number of cities on the West Coast experienced <https://assignbuster.com/social-psychological-principles-of-prejudice-and-attitudes/>

riots in which whites attacked Asians and destroyed Chinese sections of town. The Seattle riot resulted in practically the entire Chinese population being rounded up and forcibly sent to San Francisco. Similar situations in other towns encouraged Chinese workers scattered throughout the West to relocate, leading to the growth of Chinatowns in a few larger cities on the West Coast.

According to Buchanan (2007) many researchers have argued that prejudice is part of human nature and that the only way by confronting our authentic nature can we gain real insight into the forces that drive group conflict and learn how we might better manage and defuse such urges.

Probably the first formal proposal of a set of social psychological principles for reducing prejudice was from Allport's (1954) Contact hypothesis.

Prejudice may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and the minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. When people are segregated they are more likely to experience autistic hostility, that is ignorance of other which in turn results in a failure to understand the reason for their actions. Lack of contact means there is no reality testing against which to check our own interpretation of others' behaviour, and in turn can enforce negative stereotyping.