

# Prejudice and discrimination have existed

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Throughout human history, prejudice and discrimination have existed.

Prejudice refers to the irrational and inflexible attitudes that members of a particular group hold about members of another group (Sibley and Duckitt 248). Prejudices are either harmful or positive. Both forms of prejudice are usually preconceived by the people who hold them and are extremely difficult to alter (Stephan, Cookie and Stephan 33). The negative form of prejudices leads to discrimination- unjust behaviors that holders of negative prejudice direct against the victims of their prejudices (Sibley and Duckitt 251).

According to both psychology and sociology, the emotionality that is inherent in prejudice arises from subconscious attitudes which cause an individual to project feelings of inadequacy onto a target group as a way of warding off such feelings (Sibley and Duckitt 252). This view fundamentally relates prejudice to low self-esteem. People with low self-esteem boost their feelings of self-worth by hating certain groups.

Social science studies have identified several social factors that contribute to prejudice. The first social factor that contributes to prejudice is socialization. Once particular prejudices are held, they are usually passed on amongst the members of a generation and from one generation to the next through socialization (Pettigrew, Thomas and Tropp 922). The second social factor that contributes to the existence of prejudice is conforming behaviors.

Usually, holding particular prejudices earn the support of significant others (Stangor 22). Therefore, individuals may hold certain prejudices to follow the opinions of their significant others. The third factor that contributes

significantly to prejudice is ethnocentrism. It refers to the tendency of some individuals to rely on their cultural norms and values in evaluating the culture of other people (Oskamp 27). Such ethnocentric tendencies entail stereotypical thinking which serves to advance prejudice.

In her novel *Frankenstein*, Shelly uses the prejudices that Frankenstein and the other characters hold against the creature to reflect how prejudices function in the society and the impacts they have on the victims. The rejection of Frankenstein's creature by Frankenstein and other members of the society is a manifestation of how prejudice against objects or individuals who reflect norms other than that which is accepted in the society is instilled through the fear of difference.

In psychology, the term refers to the state of representing abnormality (Wright and Lubensky 291). Such an abnormality is viewed as a threat to the social fabric by the members of the society who reflect the accepted norm (Wright and Lubensky 291). Whenever such threats arise, the ideological power structure that prevails at the time usually institute a response. There are two possible responses to such abnormalities. First, the ideological power structure of the time can outrightly reject the threat and destroy it (Navarrete et al. 933). Second, the ideological power structures can render it safe and take it up into the mainstream until the threatening aspects of its existence are diluted so that it replicates the society (Wright and Lubensky 293). Whichever the method used, the society's first response is usually to distance the abnormality through language.

That is, the first step towards the assimilation or destruction of anything that threatens normality in the society is usually to label it using disparaging terms and pejorative descriptions (Wright and Baray 225). Frankenstein's creature by being unlike from the other members of the society is an exhibition of the other in that society. When Frankenstein and others reject this creature, they present the fear of difference which serves to indoctrinate prejudice against anything that does not conform to the prevailing norms. The society's attempt to distance itself from the creature through language is evidenced in the text by the following quote. Abhorred monster! fiend that thou art! The tortures of hell are too mild a vengeance for thy crimes.

Wretched devil! You reproach me with your creation, come on, then, that I may extinguish the spark which I so negligently bestowed (Shelley 113)." In this quote, Frankenstein is distancing himself from the creature by labeling him with pejorative descriptions. From this quote, Frankenstein is exhibiting the society's fear of difference. Since the creature is different, it serves as a threat to normality and must thus be belittled.

Whereas the rejection of the creature by its creator and the people it comes into contact with is primarily assumed on the fear and prejudice caused by its hideous appearance which is completely different from the norm, it is also fueled by the atypical mode of its creation. In nearly all societies, ugliness is usually belittled and described using cruel descriptions.

The case of this creature is worsened by the mode of its creation which turns it from a mere monster to a devil in the eyes of its creator and the people it comes into contact with. In many societies around the world, fear and

suspicion surround alternative methods of reproduction (Wright and Baray 228). This fear and prejudice span the complete range of the world's religious beliefs. In contemporary society, the fear and suspicion that surround alternative methods of reproduction can be observed on the debate around cloning.

Even though there is not yet any cloned creature that can be prejudiced, cloning arouses considerable fear and suspicion which have caused prejudice against the technique. Since this happens in all societies, it is not surprising for the Frankenstein creature to face prejudice and rejection because of the strange method of its creation which is linked to an unnatural process, especially considering in the time period that this novel was written in, people were even less accepting than nowadays.

In the creation of the Frankenstein creature, only science was involved. The process of its production, therefore, lacks any aspects of the occult or the supernatural. Science has for long and still continues to be viewed with fear and suspicion by many people who cannot understand the mechanisms by which it operates. The majority of people who view science with fear and suspicion usually think of it as competing for nature. They fear is that somehow, science may outdo nature and come up with stronger and greater things. Such creations of science are threatening since they will not only be different from the norm but will also be superior.

In the novel, the uniqueness of the process of the creature's production is shown by the following quote. But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles

and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing (Shelley 142) In this quote, the creature is wondering why he is not like the others. Unlike the normal human beings, he had no father, mother, or any relations. This made him different, therefore he is presented as a threat to the social fabric and prompting its creators and the individuals it interacted with to reject it. The uniqueness of the creature is further exhibited in the novel by the following quote.

I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices in the ice, among which I had walked with caution; his stature, also, as he approached, seemed to exceed that of man (Shelley 112). In this quote, Frankenstein is expressing the supernatural nature of the creature. His description of the creature serves to reveal the differences between the creature and what is accepted in the society as normal. Whereas Frankenstein had walked amongst the crevices in the ice with great caution, the creature is bounding over them.

As the creature approaches him, he realizes that its stature exceeds that of a man. From this description, Frankenstein reveals to readers the abnormalities in the creature which serve to instill fear and prejudice. These differences are the results of science which just as feared by many has created a greater being capable of outdoing humans. The fear and prejudice that results from Frankenstein's view of the creature are exhibited in the following quote from the novel. I perceived, as the shape came nearer (sight tremendous and abhorred!) that it was the wretch whom I had created. I

trembled with rage and horror, resolving to wait his approach and then close with him in mortal combat (Shelley 112)“ In this quote, Frankenstein is driven by his fear of the abnormalities of this creature, and he has resolved to fight it to death.

When members of the society distance the other- an individual or a thing that manifests attributes other than the accepted norm- through language, they usually aim to create a sense of inferiority in that individual (Hall, Matz and Wood 126). It is this sense of inferiority that will facilitate the assimilation or annihilation of the unique individual. In the novel, Frankenstein and every person that the creature interacts with succeeding in creating a sense of inferiority in the creature.

Even though the creature is both intellectually and physically superior to most of these people, he concludes that he is inferior upon comparing himself with them. The sense of inferiority that the prejudice against the creature creates in himself is evidenced in the novel by the following quote. I had never yet seen a being resembling me, or who claimed any intercourse with me, what was I (Shelley 143)? In this quote, the creature thinks of himself as inferior because he does not resemble any being. This quote reflects the negative impacts of prejudice on the victims. Prejudice usually cultures in the victims a sense of inferiority which may make them want to destroy themselves.

Prejudice is a negative attribute that hurts all human societies. In all societies, things are usually judged beforehand, and in most cases, wrong opinions are usually formed based on less important attributes as opposed to

the characteristics that matter. In her novel Frankenstein, Shelly opens up the issues of prejudice through the creature. Through the rejection of the creator, Shelly shows that prejudice is caused by fear of difference and causes a sense of inferiority in the victims.

Frankenstein and everyone that the creature interacts with reject it based on the differences between its looks and creation process and those of the normal humans. Consequently, the creature develops a sense of inferiority despite being intellectually and physically superior to most of the people it interacted with. Basically this novel is teaching us readers a lesson that our self-esteem clearly can depend on how people view us, and the individual might be the brightest, but if there are people constantly putting the individual down, the person will feel inferior and not success on its tasks.