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PREJUDICE

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PREJUDICE and stereotypes are often grouped together as ways that we misrelate to our fellow humans, based on their group identities. Stereotypes often generate prejudices; if I regard group *X* as stupid, venal, or dishonest, I am likely to have an antipathy toward group *X* that constitutes prejudice. Prejudices generally involve stereotypes also; if I have antipathy toward group *Y*, I am likely to attribute certain negative characteristics to them in a stereotypical way. Similarly, both stereotypes and prejudice pose educational challenges. Both involve irrationality in beliefs about human groups, and both involve violating appropriate regard and respect for our fellow human beings. Avoiding these moral and epistemological pitfalls is an important task of education.

Yet prejudice and stereotypes are distinct phenomena and require distinct treatment. People can stereotype without necessarily being prejudiced. They may hold various stereotypic associations with various groups without either having any negative affect toward the group or assessing the group negatively. This is partly because stereotypes can be positive, attributing a generally favorable trait to the group—blacks being good athletes, Asians being good students, and so on. The stereotype is still objectionable, as all stereotypes are, but does not necessarily involve prejudice. But even negative stereotypes do not necessarily rise to the level of actual prejudice, which is a more robust negative attitude toward the group. So someone might think that Asians are devious and untrustworthy, yet not form an actual prejudice against Asians based on that attribution. In this entry, I will be focusing on prejudice, and will discuss stereotypes only incidentally.

The linguistic origin of *prejudice* lies in *prejudgment*, or making a judgment prior to having adequate evidentiary basis for it. But the contemporary notion of prejudice involves an affective component as well as a judgmental one. If I judge group *X* to have such and such characteristics, though I have little basis for doing

so, yet if I have no feeling for or against group *X*, I would not be spoken of as prejudiced against group *X*. At the same time, a pure antipathy toward group *X* without any accompanying evaluations or judgments ("I'm not saying there is anything wrong with Mexicans—I just hate them") would not generally be spoken of as prejudice either, though this is not a very common phenomenon.

Prejudices can be favorable toward a group, not only antipathetic to them. However, of greater concern from a moral and educational perspective is the much more common phenomenon of prejudice as "prejudice against," and I will from this point on use *prejudice* only with this meaning.

Of the two components of prejudice, negative affect and (unwarranted) negative evaluation/judgment, neither has causal or definitional primacy. Judging or stereotyping group *X* as lazy, dishonest, and foolish can lead to antipathy toward its members; but an antipathy can be primary and can give rise to negative judgments that appear to rationalize the antipathy.

Almost anything can be a target of prejudice or stereotyping—individual persons, types of music, cities—but the study of prejudice has generally focused on human groups, or persons as members of such groups, no doubt because these are very common forms of prejudice and present moral challenges as harmful or disrespectful to persons. (If I am prejudiced against baseball, there seems no harm in this.) So human groups and human persons will be our subject. Yet the way that human persons are the target of prejudice allows for other related and derivative targets. Someone who dislikes blacks may also, derivatively, dislike what she regards as black characteristics, or characteristics she associates with blacks, in other persons or things (Piper 1990). For example, she may dislike hip-hop styles, when exhibited by whites or other nonblacks. That is, prejudice against blacks can involve prejudice against "blackness," which the subject can see in nonblacks. Prejudice does not require that the connection between black persons and the characteristic or object in question be in any way a valid one, only that the subject make that connection in her own mind; if someone dislikes a kind of music because she associates it with blacks, when in fact the music is Greek in origin, this dislike is still, for that person, part of prejudice against blacks.

Not all hostility toward human groups is prejudice, for some of it is justified. Prejudice must be unjustified; that is part of why it is morally wrong. Hostility toward Nazis is justified and, more generally, hostility to groups defined by a commitment to bad beliefs or actions is justified. Of course, it is not always easy, or possible, to determine what is bad in the sense required here. But most groups are not united around a bad project in this way; and ethnic, racial, religious, and national groups—those with which prejudice research has been primarily concerned—are not, so that antipathy toward them is always unjustified and is prejudice. And antipathy toward whole groups based on the bad behavior or characteristics of only some of its members is a paradigm of prejudice.

Since prejudice is, by definition, wrong or bad, people seldom avow prejudices as such, though they might avow an attitude they recognize others to view as prejudice. So there are two different ways prejudice can fail to be acknowledged.

One is that persons can hold antipathies toward a group, but regard those antipathies as warranted; they wrongly believe that the group in question possesses traits that warrant the group antipathy—Mexicans as lazy, Muslims as terrorists, Jews as greedy and cheap, and so on. So such persons acknowledge the antipathy but not that this constitutes prejudice.

A second very common way that prejudices can be unacknowledged is that a person might harbor antipathy toward a group and have negative evaluations of the group, yet be unaware of doing so. There is an important historical dimension to this form of nonconscious prejudice that can be illustrated in the case of racial prejudice. For centuries in the United States, holding antipathetic or disparaging views of black people was expected and normal among the white majority; this was true as well toward other nonwhite groups, and (in the early part of the twentieth century) toward many (white) immigrant groups also. Such negative assessments of whole ethnic groups were not thought to be wrong or misplaced. Over time, and largely because of the challenges to these prejudices spearheaded by blacks and, later, other racial and ethnic minorities, the idea that it was wrong to hold such views became normative, especially in public venues but in many personal ones as well. This development resulted in an incentive for people to be prejudice-free and to be thought to be prejudice-free.

This incentive did not result in the disappearance of racial and ethnic prejudices, although the striking diminishing of certain avowed prejudices (e.g., in opposition to racial integration) on opinion surveys from, say, the 1930s until today surely reflects some reduction in actual prejudice. But another effect of the incentive was the mere reduction in overt expressions of prejudice, both because many people learned to express their prejudices in a way that would not garner social disapproval and because many people masked their possession of those prejudices from themselves. As a result, it is much more difficult to discern when someone has racial prejudices than in earlier periods. And unconscious prejudice raises distinct moral issues. If someone does not know she is prejudiced do we not think of her as less responsible for her prejudice than if she is aware of that prejudice and accepts it? (Of course, she could be aware of it and be in the process of attempting to rid herself of them also.)

1. DELIMITING “PREJUDICE”

Sometimes the term “prejudice” is used to encompass any and all negative affect toward human groups. This can be misleading, in two different ways. First, some negative feelings toward a group are so intense and extreme that the word *prejudice* seems too pallid to capture them. To say that Southern whites who lynched African Americans were “prejudiced” against them seems too weak for attitudes that would prompt such conduct, just as it would be to say that Hitler was “prejudiced” against

Jews. Although prejudices can themselves be of different strengths or intensities—someone can be more prejudiced against gays than Latinos, for example, and person A can be more prejudiced (against a given group) than person B—there seems to be some maximal threshold, not necessarily specifiable in any definitive way, beyond which the sentiment or attitude in question becomes something worse than prejudice. Similarly, some negative affect seems to be too weak or minimal to count as prejudice—for example, a mild discomfort in the presence of a member of the outgroup. It is not that such discomfort should be regarded as an acceptable feeling, only that the term “prejudice” implies something stronger.

A different potential confusion about the scope of *prejudice* relates to its standard definition, which I have accepted, as involving a negative affect and evaluation toward the group in question. Not every objectionable and unwarranted attitude toward human groups satisfies that definition. During Jim Crow segregation, many whites who employed blacks as servants felt genuine affection and care toward their employees; they did not have a “negative affect” such as antipathy, hostility, or dislike toward them. And yet they generally made the racist assumption that blacks’ proper role in life was to serve white people, and that this was true of these valued servants as well. Obviously, this is an entirely morally objectionable view of blacks. So, objectionable attitudes toward a group do not always involve negative feelings toward the group. One can demean or patronize a group without such negative feeling. However, the ideology that blacks’ proper place is to serve and be deferential to whites does tend to generate hostility and hatred toward those particular blacks who defy or fail adequately to conform, in whites’ minds, to this expectation.

That objectionable racial attitudes do not necessarily involve antipathy or other negative affect illustrates a larger point about prejudice that applies beyond the domain of race. Objectionable sexist attitudes toward women can exemplify this point as well, as when women are seen as delicate flowers requiring male protection, objects of display for successful or powerful men, being ill-suited to “male domains” of work, and so on.

It would be morally arbitrary to confine a concern with objectionable and unwarranted individual attitudes toward groups to those involving negative affect toward the group. That subcategory is not necessarily more objectionable in any general sense than the disrespect involved in regarding group X as suited only to serve a “superior” group. And in fact, most psychologists studying prejudice often tacitly include the broader category of objectionable attitudes toward groups in their theories and research, even when their official definition of *prejudice* restricts it to negative affect. I will, therefore, take both the broader and the narrower category as my concern here, attempting to be clear about which is being discussed, while recognizing that the word *prejudice* as ordinarily used does not reliably track that broader view.

This lack of clarity about the appropriate scope of prejudice research arises in an acute and productive way in contemporary theories of racism or racial prejudice. As mentioned earlier, social psychologists and political psychologists recognize that expression of overt racial prejudice is no longer socially acceptable in most venues, but that actual prejudice has not declined to the same degree as its

overt expression. New theories about the character of objectionable racial attitudes attempt to come to grips with the subtler or less blatant forms of these attitudes. For example, an important finding from opinion research is that some white people express opposition to the idea that the government should do anything to improve the situation of black people, but they do not express anything like the same hostility to black people themselves, either individually or as a group. There is a lively scholarly debate about whether the former view should be interpreted as a new form of racial prejudice, a perhaps unconscious displacement of a now-stigmatized prejudice into an acceptable political stance. (The names “modern racism” and “symbolic racism” have been used to label such a view.) Others draw a sharper distinction between traditional racial antipathy and political ideology.

Without weighing in on this complex dispute, there certainly seems a distinction worth making between an antipathy toward a group itself and its actual members, and an opposition toward the legitimate interests that that group presents in the political arena. The former may seem more objectionable than the latter; but this does not mean that the latter is acceptable. Suppose someone is opposed to the government’s (at any level) doing anything to rectify the legacy of racial injustice from which blacks in the United States and elsewhere currently suffer. There may be different reasons that someone might hold such a view, ranging from straight prejudice against blacks to a pure libertarian ideology that thinks the government should be no more than a “minimal state.” (Those reasons are explored in the literature just mentioned.) Nevertheless, the view itself is morally problematic, in that it involves blindness to or a failure to be moved by injustice. The exploration of prejudice should be concerned also with blindness to injustice (toward particular groups), and why some people have this blindness, as well as with other similar types of morally objectionable attitudes. It needs to be clear that it is not only racial animus that renders a resulting political stance or attitude morally problematic. That persons can hold principled political stands from which it follows that there should be no state action to address injustice does not shield such persons from moral criticism, although the criticism will have a different character than the charge of personal prejudice, depending, in part, on its source.

2. THE DIVERSITY OF PREJUDICES

Is prejudice a single phenomenon or many distinct phenomena? We have seen that prejudices encompass a range of distinct objectionable psychic phenomena—antipathy, disrespect, denial of humanity, opposition to justice. In her book *The Anatomy of Prejudices*, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl decries a tendency in psychology research about prejudice to think of prejudice as a unitary psychic phenomenon, as suggested by the title (and content) of Gordon Allport’s classic (1954) work, *The Nature of Prejudice*. Young-Bruehl suggests a different sort of plurality than yet

discussed, within the general category of “prejudice” and in contrast to Allport’s view. Allport held that people who were prejudiced against a given group (when that group was a fairly widespread target of prejudice) tended to be prejudiced against all “out-groups.” (An “out-group” is a group of which a given person is not a member.) Young-Bruehl argues, by contrast, that prejudices against different groups have differing psychological characteristics or structures, even when all of them share the same prejudice-defining psychic state, such as antipathy. So, she suggests, antipathy toward Jews and (in its recent forms in the U.S.) Asians and Asian Americans generally involves envy of their purported special capacity for success and (in the case of Jews) a view of them as pollutants who, in extreme forms of this antipathy, should be eliminated from the society in question. By contrast, she suggests, antipathy toward blacks involves projecting onto blacks sexual desires that the subject cannot acknowledge, then finding their resultant purported sexual nature fearful and threatening, and, in consequence, the group as uncivilized. Sexism she sees as exemplifying a third psychic configuration based on a fear of difference, and of that difference inside oneself (i.e., men fearing the feminine in themselves).

Young-Bruehl’s specific psychoanalytically based analyses do not always seem convincing as full accounts of prejudice against the groups she discusses. Although she is correct to say that, in the United States at least, there is a tradition of sexualizing both black men and black women as part of anti-black prejudice, other dimensions of anti-black prejudice do not fit that prototype. The idea that blacks are meant to serve whites does not necessarily (though it can) have such a sexual component. And the stigmatizing of blacks evidenced in whites’ refusal to live in neighborhoods with more than a “tipping point” of blacks has much more to do with associating blacks with crime, lowering of property values, and poor educational attainment and commitment than with sexuality. Nevertheless, Young-Bruehl’s larger point about the different psychological characteristics of prejudice against different groups is a salutary one and responds to the evident fact that some persons are prejudiced against only some groups but not others. They can have hostilities based on sexual orientation but not race, or vice versa, or gender but not nationality, and so on. In addition, they can have prejudices within those categories against some groups but not others (blacks but not Asians, etc.). This fact is not, however, inconsistent with a part of Allport’s point—that some persons are prejudiced against all, or many, out-groups, within or across many categories.

Another related source of plurality within prejudice is in the group identities of subjects of prejudice against a particular group. For example, anti-gay prejudice among blacks might take a different form—that is, have a different psychic structure—than anti-gay prejudice among whites. For blacks, it might often be bound up with a threatened masculinity related to the historical difficulty during the era of slavery that black males had in finding work that could support their families. Anti-Jewish prejudice might have a different character among marginal white farmers who have never met a Jew but scapegoat Jews as the

cause of their problems; among upper-class Protestants who view Jews with disdain as aggressive upstarts without good breeding; among blacks who know Jews as shop owners in their communities; and among Islamist Muslims. Just as the plurality among the targets of prejudice dovetails with the plurality of psychic structures of prejudice, so does a plurality in the group identities of the subjects of prejudice.

Particularly noteworthy in subject-plurality is reactive prejudice—that is, prejudice against members of groups that are victimizing one's own group. The category of reactive prejudice does not include antipathy toward the actual persons who are victimizing one or one's group; such antipathy is warranted and so does not count as prejudice. Perhaps such warranted hostility can be extended, if in lesser form, to members of the victimizer's group who support the victimizing, even if they do not take part in it. But (reactive) prejudice is involved when one is hostile to any or all members of the group in question simply because of their shared membership with the victimizers. Hostility of blacks toward all whites, or almost all whites (except those known not to be racist), or gays toward straights, are examples of reactive prejudice. Some argue that such prejudice is excusable and not really wrong. I think it would be preferable to see it as wrong but of lesser fault than nonreactive prejudice (that is, standard-issue prejudice, in any of the many forms mentioned above). It is always wrong to be hostile to another human being without warrant; it offends a norm of human respect. But it is more forgivable to do so if one's group is being targeted for victimization or discrimination by members of another group as members of that group, and with at least the passive support of many other members of said group, so that one cannot easily tell if the particular member in question falls into the set of passive supporters.

Reactive prejudice is not merely any prejudice on the part of a subordinate or nondominant group; rather, it is only when directed against the victimizing group. When directed against, say, another subordinate group, this is an entirely different dynamic, with different moral implications, as when blacks are prejudiced against Jews or gays, or gays against blacks or Mexicans. Subordinate status is not, purely in itself, a mitigating factor in the blameworthiness of prejudice.

As the phenomenon of reactive prejudice suggests, to the different forms of diversity so far mentioned—in the subject group, in the target group, and in the psychic character of prejudice—must be added a consequent fourth form: moral diversity. Not all manifestations of prejudice are equally morally wrong, blameworthy, or otherwise problematic. *Ceteris paribus*, intense hostility to group *X* is worse than mild hostility; hatred is worse than dislike. Some groups are more vulnerable (within a given society) than others because of their small numbers, lack of economic or political power, frequency of being a target of prejudice, history of victimization, and the like. *Ceteris paribus*, prejudice against a more vulnerable group is morally worse than prejudice against a less vulnerable one. The more vulnerable group (or individual) is more likely to be harmed by the prejudice, both materially and psychologically, than is the nonvulnerable or less vulnerable group. For example, prejudice against Christians is, in the United States, less bad

than prejudice against Muslims; prejudice against whites, than prejudice against Mexican Americans.

3. TOTALISTIC AND SELECTIVE FORMS OF PREJUDICE

We have defined the targets of prejudice as groups, or individuals in relation to their group identity or membership. This formulation needs some refinement. Some prejudices do encompass an entire group; every member of the group is regarded with equal hostility or disdain, or their justice-related interests are opposed. Let us call this a “totalistic” form of prejudice. However, when groups are in close interaction with one another, prejudices often take a more selective character, in which differentiations are made within the group. For example, in the United States, young black males are generally much more stigmatized and objects of more intense prejudice than, say, older black women. One can understand this as the subject viewing the subgroup as more representative of the larger group (young black males being viewed as “more black,” or as representing what the subject sees as paradigmatically black, compared to other subgroups). A variation of this selective prejudice is when members of a group are accepted but only insofar as they do not do something to mark themselves as members of that group, even if the subject recognizes that they are members. So, blacks who do not call attention to their blackness by, for example, braiding their hair in dreadlocks, wearing African clothing, advocating for black interests, talking in African-American dialect, and the like, are accepted, while those who do engage in such behaviors are the target of prejudice. Here, the subject does not fail to recognize that the former group members actually are black. (However, “I don’t see you as black” is one way of expressing this sort of prejudice, offered as if it were a compliment, but we do not think the utterer of this comment actually fails to recognize the person in question as black, according to standard racial classification practices.) But the subject is more prejudiced against those who call attention to their blackness.

Something similar applies to a selective form of anti-gay prejudice, and it represents an advance, though only a very partial one, from the totalistic homophobia that targets every gay person equally. In the selective form, certain gay people are accepted—those whom the subject does not regard as calling attention to or showing pride in their gayness, for example, by acting or talking in ways seen by the subject as gay, advocating for gay rights, and so on. Older forms of acceptance of only those Jews seen as “not too Jewish” exemplify this selective prejudice.

Clearly, selective prejudice does involve objectionable attitudes toward the whole group itself, even if it takes a nontotalistic form, in which certain subgroups

are not the target of standard prejudicial attitudes of hostility, derision, disgust, and the like. For the subject is not able to accept members of the group who embrace that membership.

4. THEORIES OF THE CAUSES OF PREJUDICE

If prejudice is to be understood as objectionable attitudes (evaluations plus affect) toward human groups, one wants to know what gives rise to such attitudes. This question is important also for educational purposes, as we want to know how to employ education to prevent or reduce prejudice; knowing what causes prejudice will help us to do that. Philosophy cannot supply this information; only social science can. But we can differentiate different categories of explanation—individual/psychological, social, and historical.

Psychological theories locate the causes of prejudice in features of individual personality. Perhaps the best-known of such theories was propounded in the 1950 study, *The Authoritarian Personality*, which claimed that persons who are rigid, conventional, strongly submissive to authority, and aggressive toward inferiors are likely to be prejudiced (toward all out-groups, it was claimed). Prejudice is thus seen as a kind of individual pathology.

Social explanations locate the sources of individual prejudice in social structures and circumstances. Individuals internalize views dominant in their societies, or in the subcultures in which they live, of salient social groups. (What causes a certain society to hold the views of particular groups that they do hold requires further explanation, such as the historical perspective attempts, in part, to supply.) Prejudice thus becomes part of normal socialization, like learning conventional greetings, expectations of personal distance, and accepted social values. On this account, someone's holding prejudices tells us little about that person's individual psychology.

The social approach encompasses two different emphases. One is how an individual's overall level or type of prejudice is linked to the norms of her society or subculture. A second is how an individual's prejudices might differ in different social circumstances. A 1952 study of white West Virginian miners found that when working in the mine, the workers accepted blacks as equals and accepted integration, but in community life "above ground," inequality and segregation were the norm. These two emphases within social explanations of prejudice pull in different directions but are not strictly incompatible. Some prejudices could be relatively stable and situationally independent, by virtue of their deriving from norms entrenched in their larger social contexts, while others could be situationally variable.

The third category of explanation is historical. Some, perhaps most, current prejudices have long histories. Jew hatred arose out of early Christianity, and was

affected by the dispersal of Jews throughout Europe and Asia in the centuries around the birth of Christ, resulting in Jews being a religious minority in the lands in which they resided. These and other factors help to explain the forms and prevalence of Jew hatred (or what since the late nineteenth century is called “anti-Semitism”) in the modern world. In the West, prejudice against blacks can only be understood in the historical context of the African slave trade and slavery in the New World, colonialism in Africa, segregation in the United States, and apartheid in South Africa. That history bears heavily on the current situation of blacks and the character of prejudices against blacks. For example, it explains why prejudices against blacks contain such a heavy component of the idea that blacks are inferior to whites, which is less present in other ethnic prejudices and prejudices of other categories such as sexual orientation and immigrant status. On the other hand, gender prejudice—prejudice against women—also has a long history and that history also contains a strong element of the idea that women are inherently inferior to men in important human traits.

The three categories of explanation—individual, social, historical—pull in different directions and have different implications for attempts to mitigate prejudice. If prejudice’s causes are individual, attempts to address them through education and changes in child-rearing practices are appropriate. But if the causes are social in character, it will be necessary to change social arrangements and structures through policy and perhaps social movements. This difference is highlighted in one prominent theory of prejudice, called “social dominance” theory. On this view, societies in which some groups are more favorably positioned than others develop and adopt ideologies that rationalize that inequality—for example, by viewing some groups as inferior to others (either biologically or culturally). That ideology will then be pervasive within the society and will thus be adopted by individuals and groups, although to significantly different extents, in part dependent on whether the individual is a member of a dominant group or a subdominant one. Although social dominance theory does not explicitly draw this implication, it would seem to follow from it that if a society becomes more egalitarian in its social arrangements, and mitigates the inequities between social groups, its resultant ideology will change in a less hierarchy-rationalizing direction; such a more egalitarian society will, then, produce diminished prejudice within the society overall.

Of course, trying to make one’s society more equal through social policy or social movement can be regarded as a worthy goal independent of its impact on prejudice. And, indeed, the focus on prejudice has itself been criticized for focusing exclusively on individuals and their prejudices, and thereby diverting attention from attempts to make societies themselves less unequal.

Although the individual, social, and historical approaches to prejudice causation can be at odds with one another, they are not really incompatible; indeed, one would expect an overarching theory of prejudice to contain all three. The historical is necessary to understand why the social factors—institutional devaluing of blacks, widespread stereotypes of Jews and Muslims, and the like—are present

and how they operate. And the individual level can be combined with the social in two ways. One is to say that the same prejudice can have multiple causes. Some people are prejudiced against gays because they cannot acknowledge their own homosexual impulses, and suppressing those impulses results in antipathy toward gay people; but others simply absorb the less intense and emotionally volatile form of anti-gay prejudice pervasive in all but a small number of communities in the United States. A second way of combining them is to say that the individual and the social sources can coexist in a single person; to oversimplify a bit, perhaps everyone in a given community who is not gay shares a certain degree of anti-gay antipathy, but some individuals in that community are much more homophobic than others, and this difference is due to individual factors. In fact, social dominance theory itself is concerned both with general social prejudices generated by inequality-rationalizing ideologies and also with explaining individual differences in the degree and form of such prejudices.

5. IS PREJUDICE INERADICABLE?

How can education contribute to reducing prejudice? Before addressing this question we must make sure that prejudice can be reduced, that it is not an inevitable and ineradicable part of human nature. Several distinct theories claim or strongly suggest that it is. One claims that the drawing of a boundary between in-group and out-group, with an attendant favoritism toward in-groups, is universal. A second says that natural selection favored small groups with strong in-group protective impulses, and that human beings inherit that tendency. A third focuses on a claim that our brains are hardwired to view social reality in terms of simplified group categories, which inevitably distort the complex reality of our world and render stereotyping, hence prejudice, inevitable. This last claim belongs to a discussion of stereotyping that cannot be undertaken here. The evolutionary claim in the second stance would also take us too far afield. But the view somewhat shared between the first and second claim, about the inevitability of in-group and out-group boundaries, warrants a brief discussion.

Attachment to particular groups does seem a virtually universal feature of human nature, and necessarily brings with it a differentiating between in-group and out-group members. Nevertheless, the character of sentiments toward out-groups seems extremely variable and wide-ranging, encompassing amiable competitiveness, benign indifference, prejudicial and inaccurate stereotyping, hostility, and hatred. The mere distinguishing between in-group and out-group does not by itself dictate what sort of attitudes and sentiments will be generated by that distinction, and certainly does not require prejudice against out-group members. Perhaps it is more likely, everything else being equal, that prejudice will develop toward out-groups than in-groups; but this tells us nothing about the possibilities

of reducing or even eliminating prejudice, through education or other means. Moreover, making an in-group/out-group distinction is perfectly consistent with the existence of attitudes that are indifferent to or transcend that distinction, such as a sense of obligation to or solidarity with one's fellow citizen, fellow human being, fellow sufferer, and so on.

Furthermore, the boundary between in-group and out-group can be drawn in a large number of ways, and some are much more likely than others to generate prejudice. In a racially and ethnically mixed group of students in the same class, neighborhood, or club, in-groups can form along lines that transcend race and ethnicity, and can either supplant, or exist alongside, in-groups defined by ethnicity itself. The former types of in-group (in a racially mixed neighborhood, for example) are not likely to generate common forms of ethnic and racial prejudice, although they may generate other deleterious forms of rivalry and prejudice.

The distinction between in-group and out-group is sometimes conflated with the notion of ethnocentrism. And the latter is sometimes thought to be universal (and is sometimes, then, contrasted with racism, which exists only where a notion of race has developed, a notion that is not historically or culturally universal). But ethnocentrism is only one very particular form of in-group/out-group distinction, one that is based on a sense of *ethnos*, or ancestral-cultural identity, and involves the idea that one's *ethnos* is better than other *ethne*. But not everyone is part of such an *ethnos*, especially in a world of extensive ethnic mixing such as our own. And not everyone who is part of such an *ethnos* invests much in that distinction or identity. So ethnocentrism is not universal.

6. EDUCATIONAL RESPONSES TO PREJUDICE: THE CONTACT HYPOTHESIS

We can divide educational approaches to the reduction of prejudice into curricular and noncurricular forms. Let me begin with the latter.

Students' contact in school with members of out-groups clearly merits attention for its potential to reduce prejudice against those groups (and perhaps out-groups more generally). Indeed, many people think of prejudice as depending centrally on ignorance of the other, so that contact with those others will automatically reduce prejudice as well. Psychologists have long recognized the falsity of this assumption. The psychology of prejudice and its generally attendant stereotyping are much too complex for contact with others to result automatically in the reduction of prejudice against and stereotypes of the group in question. For one thing, prejudices and stereotypes are not mere conscious hypothetical generalizations about groups that are readily open to confirmatory or disconfirmatory evidence. They are psychic structures and cognitive schemas that exist at least

partly at levels of consciousness not directly susceptible to straightforward cognitive engagement. Often there is an emotional investment in prejudices and stereotypes not directly susceptible to cognitive treatment through disconfirmation. Moreover, there is not a tight fit between the individual and group level; persons can be prejudiced against group *X* while nevertheless thinking well of and liking particular members of group *X*. And on the other side, persons can change their conscious view of group *X*, while nevertheless continuing to react to particular encountered members of group *X* in prejudicial ways.

For these and other reasons, social psychologists in the late 1940s and 1950s concerned with improving intergroup relations and countering prejudice developed the “contact hypothesis”—a theory about the conditions that must obtain for contact between members of two different groups between which (in either or both directions) there is some extant prejudice to result in a reduction of that prejudice. The issue addressed by the contact hypothesis became particularly salient after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1954) and the attempts at school desegregation that followed in its wake. Although it did not originate with him, the contact hypothesis was elaborated by and is most closely associated with Gordon Allport’s *Nature of Prejudice* (1954). It has remained an important research paradigm in social psychology, often linked with the tortuous fate of desegregation attempts over the years, in response to the changing legal standing of such attempts. (In 2007, the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Parents Involved* case shrank almost to nothing the ability of school districts to facilitate racial desegregation through the explicit use of race in assigning students to schools.)

The four conditions most generally accepted as facilitating the translation of contact into prejudice reduction are cooperation, equal status, individualized contact, and authoritative support. I will discuss the first three of these. First, cooperation. Students from different groups must engage in activities that require them to cooperate with one another for an aim shared by all. Further research has also found that unless the group is successful in attaining that shared aim, the desired prejudice reduction is much less likely to occur; indeed, failure often leads to members of one group blaming the other for the mixed group failure and so may even intensify prejudice, at least temporarily. A plausible explanation for the positive effect of cooperation is that it creates a superordinate identity, transcending the ethnic (or other in-group) identity. The superordinate identity is able to compete with the ethnic identity and give the students who adopt that identity a sense of “we-ness” defined by the cooperating group and its success that counters the prejudicial ethnic in-group/out-group dynamic.

A second condition is equal status among the group participants. If the cooperating group contains students from groups of differing social status (wealthy/nonwealthy, white/black, native speaker/immigrant, and the like), who also have differential abilities to achieve the group goal that align with the differences in social status, the cooperative activity is likely to simply reinforce the stereotype that the lower status group is less competent. To reduce prejudice, the members of the cooperating group must see one another as equals and equal contributors.

Two dimensions of social status must be equalized in order to achieve this result. One is equal social status on dimensions extrinsic to the task at hand. In a hierarchical society, by definition this condition will not be met by choosing random members of the differing groups; since some racial desegregation in schools brings largely middle-class whites and largely working-class or poor blacks and Latinos together, the equal status condition is challenging to meet. However, it can be partially realized by careful selection of the students in the cooperating group—for example, having white and black students, or native and immigrant students, of a similar class background put into the same cooperative groups, even if these are not representative of those groups in the school.

The second dimension is equal status within the cooperative in-class group itself. That is to say, students from each of the ethnic/racial groups must be perceived by members of the other group(s), as well as by themselves, to be equally competent at and contributory to achieving the group goal. One way this condition can be achieved is through the so-called jigsaw method, in which each student is given a distinct task that differs from all the others and is able to become an “expert” in this task, and all the tasks are essential to achieving the overall group aim (Stephan 1999, p. 63). The members of the group will then be dependent on each other and will perceive each other as competent and contributory no matter what their ethnic group. This condition can trump the need for extra-school equal status which, as we saw, can be difficult to achieve (Stephan 1999, p. 42).

The third condition for contact to have a positive impact on prejudice is that the students get to know one another across group lines, that the contact not be too fleeting or superficial, and that the group identity which is the subject of the prejudice not be made too salient. (This is called “personalization” or “individualization.”) That form of contact allows students to break through their prejudice and stereotypes at least in relation to the particular other students, to gain information about these students that allows them to see the limitations of their previous images of the group, and thus to increase the likelihood of reducing the prejudice at least to some extent.

7. EDUCATIONAL RESPONSES TO PREJUDICE: CURRICULAR APPROACHES

On the curricular side, there are two obvious candidates for academic material with some claim to reducing prejudice. One is information about particular groups that are the likely target of the prejudices of the students in the school. This might differ from school to school, depending on the demography of the area; some communities will have significant numbers of Mexicans, Hmong, Filipinos, and so on, and others not. But some groups should be taught about, independent of their numbers

in the local population, just because of their national or international historical importance or their general vulnerability to prejudice—blacks, gays, Muslims, Mexicans, and women, for example.

The assumption here is that if students who are prejudiced or stereotyping of group *X* learn more and thus gain accurate information about group *X*, this will reduce their prejudice and stereotyping. This effect can take place in two ways. One is a correction of misinformation about the group—recognizing that blacks are not just or mainly drug dealers, criminals, or unemployed; that gays are not, disproportionately, child molesters; that women are as capable as men; and so on. The second is an encouragement of empathy for the group through seeing the world from its perspective, in light of its particular history, struggles, cultures, and so on. This is not a matter of information so much as of learning to take the point of the view of members of out-groups.

No doubt the study of groups will often have this desired effect. But we should not overstate its likelihood, as prejudice and stereotypes are only partly accessible to rational methods. Moreover, not everything one learns about a given group will be flattering to the group, and some further knowledge of a group may have the unfortunate effect of seeming to confirm the stereotypes the students bring to the class. If, for example, students learn that the unemployment rate among young black males is three times that of whites of the same age, for some this might play into a stereotype of black males as lazy and unreliable as workers, even though the inference from the former to the latter is not valid. Despite this point, the temptation to present material about a stigmatized group that is entirely favorable to it or to shun material that might “play into” a stereotype or prejudice should be resisted. As important as the goal of reducing prejudice is, methods for doing so that do not violate truth or accuracy must be employed.

A second domain of curricular learning is prejudice and stereotypes themselves; the processes by which people acquire them; their damage to their targets and their distorting effects on their possessors; the historical sources of various stereotypes and prejudices; and the universalistic values of respect, truth, and humanitarianism that they violate. This domain of learning should include the differences in types of prejudice discussed earlier—in psychic structures dependent on differences in the subjects and targets of prejudice, in social factors and histories, and so on. Presumably such knowledge will make students more reflective, better able to identify their own prejudices and stereotyping, and by recognizing the ways that these can survive disconfirming evidence and other rational processes, render the students more sophisticated about how to combat their own stereotypes and prejudices—for example, by becoming better at recognizing when they are falling back into these prejudices and stereotypes after attempting to reject them.

There are age-appropriate ways of presenting both these domains—information about groups, and about prejudice itself—from elementary school on, keeping in mind that prejudices are responsive to the course of cognitive, emotional, and moral development. In high school, the standard disciplines might seem to provide greater

scope for the study of particular groups—in social studies, history, and literature classes—than for the study of prejudice and stereotypes, which seems to belong to psychology or philosophy, or subjects not generally taught in high school. At the same time, units on prejudice can be included in any number of subjects, and some curricular initiatives, such as that of the professional development organization Facing History and Ourselves, have found creative and effective ways of weaving prejudice reduction and the study of prejudice and stereotypes into high school and junior high school history, social studies, and literature curricula.

One might include a third general domain of academic study in addition to groups and prejudice. If one accepts, even to some degree, the outlook of the “social dominance” theorists, students learning about social inequality, how it has arisen, what sustains it, and how one goes about reducing it through political action will help them to understand an important source of prejudice and how to counter it. Ultimately, making the society more just, and thus political action toward that goal, may have the most longstanding effect on reducing the sources of prejudice.

8. THE CHARACTER OF PREJUDICE REDUCTION AS AN EDUCATIONAL GOAL

How should we conceive of the goal of educational initiatives regarding prejudice? To put it another way, what exactly is “prejudice reduction” as an educational goal? Let us consider two different prominent views of prejudice and their implications for this question. The first is the related theories of “stereotyping with compunction” of Patricia Devine and of “implicit prejudice” of Mahzarin Banaji. These views posit that certain associations between groups and positive or negative traits are widely shared in a given society. The trait, or the general negativity or positivity implied by it, is automatically triggered in most people’s minds when the group in question (e.g., blacks, women, gays, immigrants) is “primed”—that is, when it is brought into a subject’s explicit consciousness. However, most persons are unaware that they have these associations. (Banaji sees the associations as more definitively unconscious than does Devine.)

Studies have linked these associations, which Banaji (1994) calls “implicit prejudice,” to discriminatory behavior. For example, one study showed that implicit prejudice against blacks correlated with prescribing (in a laboratory context) less adequate medical treatment for blacks compared to whites, when both were having a heart attack. (Since numerous data show that blacks actually receive inferior health care to whites, this laboratory study is likely to bear on the real world conduct of medical professionals.) So this implicit prejudice is consequential, even though it may exist at a level below that of explicit awareness.

Devine (1989) thinks that the group associations, which she refers to as a "stereotype," are relatively impervious to conscious intervention, and do not change much in the society at large over time. But she does think that people's conscious beliefs about the traits possessed by groups, and beliefs about how one should act toward members of the groups in question, are, or can be, relatively independent of the stereotype; and she believes that such beliefs control how we actually act toward the group in question. So if the doctors in the study just mentioned became aware of their previously unconscious negative associations with blacks, they can try to ensure that their beliefs about when patients warrant treatment are responsive not to their knowledge of the patient's racial identity but solely to his condition.

In line with much opinion research on whites' racial views (as we noted earlier), Devine argues that in the United States, whites' personal beliefs about blacks have become much more positive over time, in contrast to the relatively unchanging negative stereotype of blacks. An obvious educational implication of this view is that while attempting to rid students of the stereotypic associations themselves (acquired through socialization) is a fruitless endeavor, we should try to help students to adopt nonracist and egalitarian beliefs, and to recognize the challenge of maintaining such beliefs in light of their persistent stereotypic associations. Since beliefs are capable of trumping associations in determining our conduct, according to Devine, it is much more important to affect beliefs than associations.

Banaji (1994) refers to the associations themselves (between a group and negative characteristics) as "implicit prejudice." This use of the word *prejudice* seem misleading to me, and likely to distort the educational challenge involved in prejudice reduction. A prejudice is a more robust attitude than a mere association, consequential as that association may be for behavior; it requires some significant degree of cognitive investment, as implied in the "evaluative" aspect of prejudice, though perhaps less than that required for actual belief in the association. To say that someone is prejudiced against blacks implies that he genuinely views blacks in a negative light, not merely that he makes involuntary associations in his mind between blacks and negative traits (such as laziness or criminality). Banaji's qualification of these associations as "implicit" is, of course, meant to be a way of marking this distinction from more conscious and acknowledged prejudices; but the retention of *prejudice* just confuses the matter.

On the other hand, Devine's (1989) somewhat educationally optimistic focus only on conscious belief seems to understate the challenge of prejudice reduction. The adoption of egalitarian beliefs, or positive beliefs about a particular group, is only part of the challenge of affecting actual prejudices, as we have seen. Some students who consciously adopt nonprejudicial beliefs may still carry around prejudices and stereotypes (and not merely automatic associations with little cognitive investment).

Thus, the challenge of prejudice reduction through education is a fairly complex and daunting one. Explicit instruction as well as appropriately structured contact

with out-groups can definitely help, though it is by no means guaranteed to succeed. A more minimal goal, but still a very significant one, is to enforce rules that promote civil and respectful conduct toward out-groups. For example, because homophobia is rampant among high school students, simply ensuring that a publicly identified gay student is treated respectfully and is not harassed and vilified would be an important accomplishment, even if it were not accomplished through a direct assault on anti-gay prejudices. However, it is also important to recognize the important falsehood that Allport (1954) noted in his book, in a context in which Southern whites were resisting legally mandated desegregation, in the statement that laws cannot affect personal attitudes, only conduct. Allport saw that laws do indeed affect attitudes over time. Once people begin to behave in a certain way, and become accustomed to doing so, eventually they tend to adopt attitudes that are consonant with that behavior. (Of course, this result is not inevitable or universal.)

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