

PSY 251-252

THE SUBJECT TOPICS OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING; BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDES, CONFORMITY AND OBEDIENCE, GROUP INFLUENCE, PREJUDICE, PERSUASION, AGGRESSION AND HELPING. THE STUDENT NOTES OF ONE OF THE TOPICS 'PREJUDICE' IS GIVEN BELOW.

PREJUDICE

Many people seem to use the term “prejudice” and “discrimination” interchangeable as synonyms. But most social psychologists feel that they are not the same.

Prejudice is a preconceived negative judgment of a group and its individual members. Prejudice refers to especial type of attitude –generally a negative one-towards to the members of some distinct social group. Prejudice is an attitude. An attitude is a combination of feelings (affect) inclinations of acting (behavior tendency) and beliefs (cognition). A prejudice person may dislike others who are different from himself and can behave in a discriminatory manner, believing that others are ignorant and dangerous. Discrimination refers to the negative actions directed towards those individuals.

When prejudice is defined as a special type of an attitude two important implications follow. First, attitudes often operate as cognitive frameworks for organization interpreting and recalling information [schemata] therefore when people are prejudiced against the members of some groups, they tend to notice and store the memory and later they remember certain kinds of information for

example the information consistent with their prejudice. Secondly, Prejudice as an attitude involves three major components. The affective component refers to the negative feelings or emotions prejudiced person experience when in the presence of members of a specific group or merely when they think about them for some reason. The cognitive component involves beliefs and expectations about members of these groups and finally behavioral component involves tendencies to act in a negative ways towards to a group or groups who are the objects of prejudice. When these tendencies or intentions become as overt actions then we call it discrimination.

The negative evaluations that mark prejudice is often supported by negative beliefs called stereotypes. To stereotype is to generalize, we generalize to simplify the world. Stereotype is a belief about a personal attributes of a group of people. Stereotypes sometimes are over generalized that they became inaccurate and resistant to new information. The problem with stereotypes arises when they are over generalized or they are plain wrong.

Prejudice is a negative attitude.

Discrimination is a negative behavior.

Stereotype is a belief.

Racism and sexism are institutional practices that discriminate even when there is no prejudicial intent

Sexism is an individual's prejudicial attitudes or discriminatory behavior towards to a people of a given sex.

Race is a classification used to categorize humans into large and distinct populations or groups by heritable characteristics, geographic ancestry and physical appearance. Race is a set of people from the same gene pool.

Ethnic group is a group of people whose members identify with each other through a common heritage, often consisting of a common language, a common culture and often a common religion.

Racism is an individual's prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior towards to a people of a given race .Racism is a prejudice based on socially significant physical distinctions.

Prejudice is one of the best examples for our dual attitude system .Subtle and overt. We can have different explicit (conscious) or implicit (automatic) attitudes towards the same target. Therefore we may retain from childhood a habitual automatic fear or dislike of people for whom we now express respect and admiration. Although explicit attitudes may change dramatically with education, implicit attitudes may linger changing only if we form new habits through practice.

Some studies conformed that prejudiced and stereotypic evaluations can occur outside people's awareness.

Why Prejudice occurs:

Prejudice seems to be present in all societies throughout recorded history. Why do so many people hold negative views about people that belongs to a specific social groups---specially to one's who are different from their own.? There are so many factors involving this...The following are the some of the most important ones.

Direct intergroup conflict: The things that most people value –good jobs, money, status, ----are short in supply .This basic fact serves as the foundation for one of the influential explanation of prejudice---realistic conflict theory .According to this view, prejudice stems from

competition between various social groups over valued commodities .Prejudice develops out of the struggle over jobs, adequate housing, good schools, and many desirable outcomes. The theory further suggests that as such competition continues, the members of the groups involved come to view each other in increasingly negative ways. They label one other as “enemies ”view their own group as totally as right ,and draw boundaries between themselves and their opponents ever more firmly .therefore the simple competition soon develops into full-scale prejudice.

“Us” versus” them”: Often, individuals divide the social world around them into two distinct categories-“us” and “them” They see the people as they belong to their own group (the in group) or they see the people as they belong to some other category (an out group).Sharply contrasting feelings and believes are usually attached to members of the in-group and members of the various out –group. People in the in-group see themselves in favorable terms and they dislike the people in the out –group.

Early experience: This suggests that such reactions are socially learned .Children acquire negative attitudes towards specific social groups because they may be exposed to such views by their parents, friends, teachers etc .Mass media also plays an important part in this aspect.

Cognitive sources: It involves the basic ways that we think about the other people .It is the key process of social cognition. Among the most important of those are stereotypes ,illusory correlation and the illusion of out-group homogeneity.

Stereotype-----relatively stable set of shared generalization about the supposed characteristics of the members of the group.

Illusory correlation----- apparent cognitive tendency to associate some characteristics with group identity that in fact do not exist.

Illusion of out group homogeneity: seeing the members of the out group as similar or homogenous.

