



Prejudice

Definition:

“Prejudice is a preconceived negative judgment of a group and its individual members”.

Prejudice is an attitude and therefore has an affective component, a behavior tendency, and a cognitive component. The root word of prejudice is "pre-judge." It is “a set of attitudes which causes, supports, or justifies discrimination. Prejudice refers to a tendency to "over categorize." Prejudiced people respond to others in a more or less fixed way (Farley, 2000:18).

Prejudice is an unjustified or incorrect attitude (usually negative) towards an individual based solely on the individual’s membership of a social group.

For example, a person may hold prejudiced views towards a certain race or gender etc. (e.g. sexist). A family may preach its children some prejudiced belief about some other family in order to make up the minds of their children against them due to some classicism or racism factors.

A prejudiced person might dislike those different from themselves, behave in a discriminatory manner, and believe they are ignorant and dangerous. While specific definitions of prejudice given by social scientists often differ, most agree that it involves prejudgments (usually negative) about members of a group.

Prejudice is a baseless and usually negative attitude toward members of a group. Common features of prejudice include: Negative feelings, stereotyped beliefs, and a tendency to discriminate against members of the group.

Discrimination

Definition:

“Is the behavior or actions, usually negative, towards an individual or group of people, especially on the basis of sex/race/social class, etc.”

Example of Discrimination: World War II - In Germany and German-controlled lands, Jewish people had to wear yellow stars to identify themselves as Jews. Later, the Jews were placed in concentration camps by the Nazis.



Lecture 11 Handouts

Difference between Prejudice and Discrimination:

Prejudice is a negative attitude or belief toward a person or group based on characteristics such as race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. It is an internalized mindset that may manifest as feelings (e.g., dislike, fear) or beliefs (e.g., stereotypes). For example a person might hold a prejudice against a particular racial group, believing they are less capable or trustworthy without any direct experience or evidence.

Discrimination refers to actions or behaviors that treat people unfairly based on their membership in a particular group. It is an external expression of prejudice, involving behaviors that lead to unequal treatment. For example of discrimination would be an employer refusing to hire someone solely based on their race, regardless of whether the employer openly acknowledges their prejudiced beliefs.

So, Prejudice is about thoughts and feelings; discrimination is about actions and behaviors. Prejudice can lead to discrimination, but one can exist without the other. For instance, someone may have prejudiced beliefs without acting on them, or they may discriminate against a group without personally harboring strong prejudices.

Types of Prejudice

Prejudice can be based upon a number of factors including sex, race, age, sexual orientations, nationality, socioeconomic status and religion. Some of the most well-known types of prejudice include:

- Racism
- Sexism
- Classicism
- Homophobia
- Nationalism
- Religious prejudice
- Ageism

Origin of Prejudice

Throughout the past century, research on prejudice has closely reflected ideological trends, telling as much about the personal biases of the scientific community as about prejudice itself.

Psychological research on prejudice first emerged in the 1920's and was based upon American and European race theories that attempted to prove White superiority. Several influential theorists came to regard prejudice as pathological, and they searched for personality syndromes associated with racism, anti-Semitism, and other forms of prejudice. Theodor Adorno (1950), who had fled Nazi Germany and concluded that, the key to prejudice lay in what he called an "authoritarian personality. "Adorno believed people with authoritarian personalities were the most likely to be prejudiced against groups of lower status. In the 1970s, research began to show that much of prejudice is based not on negative feelings towards other groups but favoritism towards one's own groups. In 1979, Thomas Pettigrew described the ultimate attribution error and its role in prejudice. The ultimate attribution error occurs when in-group members.

Direct Intergroup Conflict

Definition:

"Intergroup prejudice includes the negative emotions and irrational beliefs one group has concerning other groups (again, by repeating "group" a special effect is achieved), and as thus is linked to ignorance and hatred."

Intergroup conflict can take many forms, ranging from a disagreement with the neighbors to a full-out war between countries.

Though consequences vary, the cause of intergroup conflict usually stems from a few basic principles. Example, The class fellow's family having a latest Toyota, big home, the newest technology gadgets, may bring up a prejudice in the other fellows who are deprived of them. Direct Inter-Group conflict, or hostilities between different groups, is a pervasive feature common to all levels of social organization (e.g., sports teams, colleagues, ethnic groups, nations, religions, gangs).

Many psychologists are of the view that Direct Inter-group Conflict is:

"A circumstance in which groups take antagonistic actions toward one another to control some outcome important to each."

"An overt expression of tensions between the goals or concerns of one party and those of another."

Domains that contribute to Direct Intergroup Conflict

Roy J Eidelson and Judy I Eidelson, identified parallels between individuals and the collective world views of groups on the basis of five key belief domains, such as:

- **Superiority**

At an individual level, this belief revolves around a person's enduring conviction that he or she is better than other people in important ways. At the group level, superiority includes shared convictions of moral superiority, entitlement, being the chosen and having a special destiny. It is being chosen, the belief that one's own group has a superior cultural. Heritage (e.g., history, values, language, tradition) is common among groups who base their identity on their ethnicity.

- **Injustice**

At the individual level, this belief revolves around perceived mistreatment by others, and/or the world at large. At the group level, this translates to a worldview that the in-group has significant and legitimate grievances against an out-group. This belief is seen as contributing greatly to the force for war over the past two centuries, as the majority of wars in that time period have centered on issues of justice rather than security or power (Welch, 1993).

- **Vulnerability**

At the individual level, vulnerability refers to a person's belief that he or she is perpetually in harm's way. At the group level, this belief is manifested in the form of fears about the future. This vulnerability can manifest itself in a group as catastrophic thinking – when the envisioned worst case scenario is seen as being inevitable.

- **Distrust**

At the individual level, this belief focuses on the presumed intent of others to cause harm and/or exhibit hostility. The notion of trust is often seen by psychologists as the first challenge of psychosocial development. At the group level, this worldview focuses specifically on the perspective that out groups is dishonest, untrustworthy and has negative intentions toward the in group. In more extreme manifestations, this belief is similar to collective paranoia, which is defined as the collectively held beliefs.

- **Helplessness**

At the individual level, helplessness focuses on the belief that even carefully planned and executed actions will fail to produce the desired outcome. When taken at the group level, it translates into a collective mindset of powerlessness and dependency. The group shares a pessimistic approach which focuses on their own weaknesses, and attributes setbacks to their own limitations.

Us vs. Them

Us” (in-group) vs. “them” (out-group)

“People belonging to a particular race, religion, culture, region, country, town etc. divide themselves among groups Us (their own group of people) and Them (the other group of people).”

In-group: “Us”—a group of people who share a sense of belonging, a feeling of common identity.

In-group Bias: The tendency to favor one’s own group.

Out-group: “Them”—a group that people perceive as distinctly different from or apart from their in-group.

People mistakenly believe that if they share ideas, wealth and resources, there will be less left for them. People having Us v/s Them attitude have great difficulty expressing pleasure or feeling happy for the good fortunes or achievements of other people, even members of their own family or close friends. They are not prepared to take the second best spot. There can only be one position, the top position which they must occupy. Their constant comparing with others is to ensure they remain continuously at the top position.

Social Learning

Social learning is:

“A perspective that states that people learn within a social context and is facilitated through concepts such as modeling and observational learning.”

Social learning is a perspective that states that social behavior (any type of behavior that we display socially) is learned primarily by observing and imitating the actions of others. People, especially children, learn from the environment and seek acceptance from society by learning through influential models. The social behavior is also influenced by being rewarded and/or punished for the actions they perform.

Example of Social Learning

One of the most famous experiments performed by Bandura is the famous bobo doll experiment. Children observed as adults modeled either violent or passive behavior towards the doll, and this observation was found to influence the manner in which the children subsequently interacted with the dolls. Children who observed violent behavior behaved violently toward the doll and vice versa.

Social Sources of Prejudice

- **Unequal Status**

This refers to the hierarchical arrangement of groups in society, where some groups hold more power, resources, and privilege than others. This inequality can lead to prejudice as dominant groups may justify their status through stereotypes, while subordinate groups may internalize negative perceptions, reinforcing societal divisions.

- **The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy**

This concept describes a situation where an individual's or group's expectations about another person or group lead to behaviors that cause those expectations to come true. For example, if a teacher believes that a certain student is not capable, they may provide less support, leading to poor performance that confirms the teacher's initial belief, thereby perpetuating stereotypes and prejudice.

- **Stereotype Threat**

Stereotype threat occurs when individuals are at risk of confirming negative stereotypes about their social group. This fear can hinder performance and contribute to the perpetuation of the stereotype. For instance, a woman in a male-dominated field may perform poorly on a test if she fears reinforcing the stereotype that women are less capable in that area.

- **Social Identity**

This concept refers to an individual's sense of who they are based on their group memberships, such as ethnicity, religion, or nationality. Social identity can influence how individuals perceive themselves and others, leading to in-group favoritism and out-group prejudice. People often derive self-esteem from their group affiliations, which can heighten biases against perceived outsiders.

- **In-group Bias**

In-group bias refers to the tendency to favor one's own group over others. This bias can manifest in preferential treatment, positive stereotypes, and stronger emotional connections within the group, while leading to negative attitudes and discrimination against out-group members. This phenomenon can reinforce social divisions and prejudice.

- **Conformity**

Conformity is the act of aligning one's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors with those of a group. This pressure to conform can lead individuals to adopt prejudiced views held by their social circle, even if those views contradict their personal beliefs. Social norms and group dynamics can strongly influence attitudes toward different groups.

Role of Social Learning

Role of Social learning comprises extensively of understanding of aggression (Bandura, 1973) and psychological disorders, particularly in the context of behavior modification (Bandura,

1969). It is also the theoretical foundation for the technique of behavior modeling which is widely used in training programs. In recent years, Bandura has focused his work on the concept of self-efficacy in a variety of contexts.

Social learning is more prevalent among children, as Children model what they see and hear their parents and caregivers and other close adults say and do. Children soak in the assumptions and prejudices around them and take them in by way of vicarious learning (in which they model the behaviors and attitudes they see) without thinking about what they are learning with any critical awareness.

Children who observe their parents (or aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, clergy, friends, etc.) making racist, prejudiced remarks or acting in prejudiced and discriminatory ways learn to be racist, prejudiced and discriminatory in those same ways. Such children may find themselves discriminating against others "just because".

Example,

The most common (and pervasive) examples of social learning situations are television commercials. Commercials suggest that drinking a certain beverage or using a particular hair shampoo will make us popular and win the admiration of attractive people. Depending upon the component processes involved (such as attention or motivation), we may model the behavior shown in the commercial and buy the product being advertised.

Stereotype

“A belief about the personal attributes of a group of people. Stereotypes are sometimes over generalized, inaccurate, and resistant to new information”.

Common stereotypes are: British people are stuffy. American people are outgoing. Professors are absent-minded. Stereotypes can be accurate or inaccurate. A "stereotype" is basically a generalization about a person or group of persons.

Stereotypes are developed when we are unable or unwilling to obtain all of the information we would need to make “fair judgments” about people or situations. In the absence of the "total picture," stereotypes in many cases allow us to “filling the blanks. “Our society often innocently creates and perpetuates stereotypes, but these stereotypes often lead to unfair discrimination and persecution when the stereotype is unfavorable.

By stereotyping, we assume that a person or group has certain characteristics. Quite often, we have stereotypes about persons who are members of groups with which we have not had firsthand contact.

Stereotypes also evolve out of fear of persons from minority groups. For example, many people have the view of a person with mental illness as someone who is violence-prone. This conflicts

with statistical data, which indicate that persons with mental illness tend to be no more prone to violence than the general population.

Difference between Stereotype and Prejudice

Stereotype and prejudice are related concepts, but they refer to different aspects of biased thinking and attitudes.

A stereotype is a generalized belief or assumption about a particular group of people. It involves oversimplified and often inaccurate perceptions that do not account for individual differences. Stereotypes can be positive, negative, or neutral but are often based on oversimplifications and can lead to misconceptions. For example: Believing that all teenagers are rebellious or that all elderly people are frail are examples of stereotypes.

Prejudice refers to a negative attitude or feeling toward a person or group based on their perceived characteristics, such as race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. It involves evaluative judgments about individuals based on group membership. Prejudice is typically negative and encompasses emotions such as dislike, fear, or hostility. It is often rooted in stereotypes. For example: Having an unfounded dislike for someone because they belong to a specific racial or ethnic group reflects prejudice.

In conclusion, stereotypes are cognitive beliefs or generalizations about groups, while prejudice is an emotional response or attitude toward individuals based on their group membership. Stereotypes can lead to prejudice, as negative stereotypes often underlie prejudiced attitudes. Stereotypes can exist without prejudice (e.g., a neutral stereotype), but prejudice typically involves negative judgments and feelings.

Understanding the distinction between the two concepts is important for addressing issues of bias and discrimination in society.