

Chapter 2

Understanding Prejudice and Its Causes

"No one has ever been born a Negro hater, a Jew hater, or any other kind of hater. Nature refuses to be involved in such suicidal practices."

Harry Bridges (1900–1990)

No credible studies have concluded that prejudice is part of human nature, an innate outcome of being human. In fact, Hauser (2006) cited a study reporting that during their first hours of life, babies will cry if they hear other babies crying. One developmental psychologist explained this phenomenon as a "rudimentary form of empathy" (p. 193). The evidence supports the claim that prejudice, as Bridges suggests, must be learned. It is also important to remember that prejudice is an attitude, not an action. Whether you are looking at definitions in a dictionary or reading scholarly writing, you will inevitably encounter puzzling uses of the term *prejudice*. Some people describe prejudice as a hatred of others, but hatred is bigotry. Based on their study of world cultures, anthropologists have argued that people everywhere in the world have prejudices, yet they do not claim that hatred—or bigotry—is widespread.

Confusion, not clarification, is caused by a definition suggesting that prejudice is synonymous with bigotry. Such a definition may cause many of us to deny that we are prejudiced: A bigot hates, and we are certain we don't hate anyone. In addition, we deny the pervasiveness of prejudice because we don't observe widespread hatred in the world; thus confusing prejudice with bigotry creates misunderstanding about the nature and extent of prejudice.

Conceptions and Misconceptions of Prejudice

What are examples of misconceptions about prejudice?

We confuse prejudice with bias, stereotypes, and bigotry. As defined in Chapter 1, bias is a mildly positive or negative feeling about someone or something; and to stereotype is to associate positive or negative traits with a group of people. **Prejudice** is a stronger feeling, but it is always negative, and it always refers to a group of people. Prejudice predisposes us to behave negatively toward certain people because of a group to which they belong. And when prejudice reaches the intensity of hatred, it becomes bigotry.

Some dictionaries define *prejudice* as the process of forming opinions without looking at relevant facts, yet people with prejudices may examine relevant facts and simply interpret them to confirm their prejudices. Other definitions describe prejudice as being irrational, implying that those we acknowledge as rational could not possibly be prejudiced. The problem here is that rational people also hold prejudices; we know this from reading what they wrote. Aristotle claimed that a woman was an inferior man. Abraham Lincoln believed black

people were intellectually inferior to white people. Carroll (2001) quoted Martin Luther warning German Christians, “do not doubt that next to the devil you have no enemy more cruel, more venomous and virulent, than a true Jew” (p. 368). However, their prejudices did not deter any of these men from achieving significant improvements in human rights.

It is easy to view ancient racist or sexist attitudes as patently absurd and to denounce them, yet often we do not acknowledge current widespread prejudices that future generations may find just as incongruous. In fifty or one hundred years, what will people think about today’s programs for the poor in the United States? Or how people with disabilities were so often isolated or ignored? Or how gay men and lesbians were condemned by so many people?

How widespread is prejudice?

Although this book focuses on attitudes in the United States, prejudices are not limited to one country or one race. People living in nations around the world possess negative attitudes toward others within their own borders or close to them. Prejudices have been ignored, promoted, or tolerated, but rarely challenged. When prejudice has been challenged, the case often has become a cause célèbre, as when Emile Zola published “*J’accuse*,” an essay denouncing anti-Semitism in France’s prosecution of Alfred Dreyfus for treason (Bredin, 2008). Persistence of prejudice was illustrated by Jean-Paul Sartre’s 1945 description of French anti-Semitic attitudes as Jews returned to France following World War II, even though French people were aware of the existence of Nazi concentration camps and of the genocide against the Jews.

There are, in every age, new errors to be rectified, and new prejudices to be opposed.

Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)

Today, nations around the world are being forced to confront historic prejudices because of economic globalization and population migrations that have created major demographic changes.

Some responses to immigration have revealed the persistence of historic prejudices. In the opening paragraph of their book on prejudice and discrimination, Simpson and Yinger (1985) describe this phenomenon:

Western European nations discovered that “guest workers,” whom they have employed by the millions, are something more than cogs in an economic machine.

And, for example,

England, with a steady migration of people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Africa, and the West Indies, found herself faced with problems of a color bar and passed an unprecedented law limiting immigration. Pressures against persons of Indian descent in the new nations of East Africa not only reshaped intergroup relations in those lands but influenced Britain’s restrictive immigration policy. (p. 3)

As long as people lived in relative isolation from others, prejudice against those who were far away was not necessarily harmful. In a global economy requiring functional and respectful relationships among nations, prejudice can be a destructive force both in the world and in individual societies, especially diverse societies (Gioseffi, 1993). Language is an important source for understanding a culture because analyzing language reveals a culture’s assumptions, beliefs, values, and priorities, as well as examples of prejudice. Some countries are now addressing their historic prejudices by changing or eliminating media images and language that have promoted negative attitudes, especially toward racial or ethnic groups.

How are prejudices reflected in American media?

To understand how prejudices are transmitted in our culture, we need only observe some of the prevalent images of racial or cultural groups in society. As Giroux (1998) said,

My concern with such representations . . . lies not in deciding whether they are “good” or “bad” but in analyzing them in relation to the pedagogical work they are doing. That is, what knowledge, values, and pleasures do such representations invite or exclude? (p. 27)

Look for magazine advertisements that depict Native Americans, Asian Americans, or Hispanic Americans. Why is it that most advertisements seem to use African American models to reflect diversity? If people of color are included in advertisements, why are they often featured in ways that reflect historic stereotypes? Native Americans are almost never portrayed as contemporary people but as nineteenth-century warriors; Asian Americans are often shown working at computers or in math-related professions; Mexican Americans are presented as gardeners or servants. Problems of omission and stereotyping affect other groups as well: People with disabilities are invisible, blue-collar workers are usually stereotyped, if they appear at all, and women appear frequently in advertisements as sex objects to sell products. Still, we typically don't recognize these advertisements as stereotypes because these images are so familiar that they seem not to be stereotypes at all, but rather to portray reality. This is one reason so many white Americans do not understand why Native Americans are offended by the use of Indian mascots for sports teams. (See Figure 2.1.)

Media portrayals of Muslim Americans represent the most recent example of pervasive stereotyping.

Although anti-Muslim attitudes in the United States have a long history, Ansari (2004) insists that ever since the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis, the media has focused on activities of militant Muslims. Since then, media portrayals have often presented Muslims as "irrational, undemocratic (and) opposed to equality, freedom, and peace" (Khan, 2004, p. 100). According to McCloud (2006), the stereotype of Muslims as evil terrorists existed prior to 9/11, but such representations in the media have increased, and these portrayals have most likely contributed to the results reported in a 2004 opinion poll, where 25% of Americans said they had negative attitudes about Muslims and 50% supported the federal government restricting the civil liberties of Muslim Americans (Barrett, 2007). McCloud (2004) concluded that American media "have declared Islam and Muslims as violent, irrational, and anti-modern" (p. 79).

Although the media bears some responsibility for reinforcing a variety of stereotypes, there are other sources that foster negative attitudes. One reason many Americans may not even recognize portrayals of certain groups as stereotypical is that the prejudices are embedded in our language.

FIGURE 2.1

Source: John Branch, San Antonio Express-News.



What examples of prejudice exist in our language?

One pattern observed in the English language has been called the **black/white syndrome**. Scholars report that this language pattern emerged in English long before the British knew that people described as black were living in Africa (Moore, 2006). Although the pattern likely originated in biblical language referring to Satan, evil, and hell as black or dark, it has been argued that a consistently negative pattern for references to black affected British perceptions of Africans and that negative connotations for blackness were readily applied to all dark-skinned people they encountered. A negative pattern for *black* has persisted in the English language, as can be seen in familiar phrases: black deed, black day, black hearted, black mass, black magic, the Black Death, black thoughts, black looks, and blacklist. Such words and phrases illustrate the point made by linguist Skuttnab-Kangas (2000), “Dominant groups keep a monopoly of defining others, and it is their labels we see in dictionaries” (p. 154).

Skuttnab-Kangas also argues that labeling others includes “the power to define oneself” by not having to accept the definitions others have for your group. It should not be surprising that references to “white” in the English language follow a consistently positive pattern: telling little white lies, having a white wedding, cheering white knights (in shining armor), indicating approval by saying “that’s really white of you,” and even engaging in white-collar crime (perceived as less harmful than other crimes). Some authors have exploited the pervasive black/white pattern by deliberately using white as a negative term, invoking images of sterility, death, or evil to shock readers with unexpected associations. Robert Frost employed this reversal in some of his poems, and it was no accident that Herman Melville chose to make Moby Dick, the symbol of evil in Ahab’s obsession, a white whale.

Sometimes prejudice is not obvious, as in the expression, “Where there’s a will there’s a way.” At first glance, this expression seems nothing more than an attempt to encourage children and youth to try hard, but it has another meaning: If all that it takes to be successful is to have the will to succeed, then those people who are not successful are at fault for their failure because they just didn’t

“try” hard enough. This belief leads to blaming the victim, providing an ethical escape for middle-class people. After all, if they were successful because they worked hard, then someone who is poor must not have worked hard enough, perhaps because they are lazy or incompetent.

Such stereotypes for “the poor” reinforce the conclusion that poor people are responsible for their poverty and thus the rest of us are under no obligation to help them. Other stereotypes may be revealed in expressions. When people negotiate with the seller on the price of a product they might say, “I Jewed him down,” alluding to an old stereotype. Parents and teachers have been overheard telling children to stop behaving “like a bunch of wild Indians.” Teenagers who say, “That’s so gay” do not intend it as a compliment. Boys are still ridiculed by comments such as “he throws like a girl” or “he’s a sissy.” Children are no longer limited to the term *sissy*. Today, even elementary children can be heard calling one another a *faggot*. They may not be certain what the word means, but they know it is a negative term (Wessler, 2001).

You can tell the ideals of a nation by its advertisements.

Norman Douglas (1868–1952)

And then there are jokes based on racial, ethnic, gender, or other prejudices. When we complain that these jokes aren’t funny, we are likely to be told we don’t have a sense of humor: “It was a joke!” Just a joke. Although people are more careful today about telling racist jokes, sexist jokes are frequently told at work and in school. Perhaps the numerous examples of sexist words and phrases in our language make it easier to express sexist attitudes publicly.

How does gender prejudice in our language promote sexist attitudes?

Unlike many other languages, English does not have a neutral pronoun that includes both men and women, so the word *he* is used to refer to someone of indeterminate gender. *Man* has traditionally been used in words or phrases where the referent could be female (even though there are

neutral nouns such as *human* and *people*). Some people continue to insist that *man* is generic when used in words such as *businessman*, *chairman*, *congressman*, *fireman*, *layman*, *mailman*, *policeman*, *salesman*, *spokesman*, and *statesman*, but studies do not support the claim. Arliss (1991) described studies using subjects ranging from elementary children to adults; all concluded that generic language invoked mental images of males.

In a study reported by Miller and Swift (2000) involving 500 junior high students, one group of students received instructions to draw pictures of "early man" engaged in various activities and to give each person drawn a name (so researchers could be certain that a man or woman was the subject of the drawing). The majority of students of both sexes tended to draw only males for every activity identified except the one representing infant care, and even for that activity, 49% of boys drew a male image. A second group of students was instructed to draw pictures of "early people" engaged in the same activities and to give each human figure drawn a name; once again, the majority of the humans drawn by both sexes were male. It is possible that the phrase *early people* sounded strange and that many students translated it as "cave men" and drew male pictures. The third group of students was asked to draw pictures of "early men and early women," once again giving names to human figures. Only in this group did the figures drawn by students include a significant number of female images, but even with these instructions, some students of both sexes drew only male figures.

I am, in plainer words, a bundle of prejudices—made up of likings and dislikings.

Charles Lamb (1775–1834)

What sexist terms for men could be considered derisive?

Although a plethora of derisive terms exist for women, derisive language directed at men often sends a mixed message. It may be intended as an insult to call a man a *prick* or a *bastard*, but it can also be interpreted as the speaker being envious of the man's power or position. Men may feel that

they have to be tough, ruthless, and relentless if they are going to be successful in a "dog eat dog world"; such language could be regarded as a compliment to a man's prowess, his masculinity.

In American English, unambiguously derisive terms for men often accuse a man of being feminine. No little boy wants to be called a *sissy*; no man wants to be called a *wimp* or a *pussy*. Although a man may not like being called a name that implies he acts like a woman, according to Baker (1981), it is even more insulting to be called a name suggesting that a woman controls him, that he's *pussy whipped*. Men often use such language in a joking manner, but the message is serious.

That it is an insult for a man to be compared to a woman was illustrated by an incident at a summer festival. The dunking booth was not open yet, but a man and his son were getting it ready. Three young men came up to the booth and volunteered to be dunked. The man thanked them but said he had all the volunteers he needed. Animated by the alcohol they had consumed, the three of them badgered the man for several minutes before they gave up. As they walked away, the man at the booth said, "Good-bye, girls!" One of the young men turned around quickly and shouted, "What the fuck did you call me?" The vehemence of the young man's response was both surprising and disturbing as he came storming back. Even though the father had his son next to him, the young man was prepared to use violence to defend his manhood against such a degrading insult.

A mother and daughter were standing nearby in a line for face painting. Having observed this confrontation, the mother shouted sarcastically to the young man, "Oh, what a terrible thing to be called!" He looked over at the face-painting line, and other mothers standing with their daughters shouted similar comments. As the young man looked at them, his face betrayed his confusion. His body had swelled up with anger, but now it seemed to deflate. His shoulders drooped and his expression became almost sheepish. As he approached the man at the dunking booth, he was still angry, but not to the point of engaging in violence. After a brief conversation, a security officer arrived and escorted the young man away. Considering the hostility aroused by such a flippant remark, one has to wonder about the attitudes males are being taught concerning women. Is it possible for a man to hate

the idea of being called a female and not subconsciously hate women as well?

Aren't some prejudices positive?

Some people misuse the term *prejudice* by saying they are prejudiced *for* something, but a prejudice is always a negative attitude. A milder attitude of liking or disliking anything or anyone is a bias; however, the concept of prejudice involves learning to fear and mistrust other groups of people, and to strengthen negative attitudes we have been taught about them. Once we learn to be prejudiced against a certain group, we tend to behave in negative ways toward others who appear to be members of that group. Negative behavior is discrimination: We no longer merely hold a negative attitude—we have acted on that attitude. To prevent such negative consequences of prejudice, it is necessary to unlearn whatever prejudices we have been taught, but that is more difficult than it sounds because there are powerful factors motivating people to persist in maintaining their prejudices.

The Perpetuation of Prejudice

People want to be successful and will try to promote their own self-interests. When members of one group believe that individuals from another group are becoming more successful than they are, they may become angry at those individuals—even hostile toward the entire group—and rationalize that an advantage other than talent or skill is responsible for that individual's or group's success. Resentment from economic competition for good jobs with high salaries and status fosters prejudice. Because humans are intelligent enough to identify these various causes of prejudice, it seems logical to assume that people should be able to recognize that they have prejudices and attempt to eliminate them.

How are prejudices perpetuated?

A major factor in the perpetuation of prejudice is the tendency to rationalize prejudices and the negative behaviors prejudices promote. As Gioseffi (1993) has noted, this not only affects individuals

but also is an international phenomenon: "Just as individuals will rationalize their hostile behaviors . . . so nations do also" (p. xvii). Vega (1978) described rationalizations as taking three forms: denial, victim-blaming, and avoidance. To unlearn our prejudices and develop effective ways of confronting prejudices expressed by others, we need to recognize these rationalizations so we can make an appropriate response when they are expressed.

Denial rationalizations. In making **denial rationalizations**, we refuse to recognize that there are problems in our society resulting from prejudices and discrimination. Such claims are astonishing in their ignorance, yet they continue to be made. In response to assertions of racism, the most common denial rationalization is the reverse discrimination argument claiming that women and minorities receive the best jobs because of affirmative action programs. Is there any truth to this claim?

According to population demographics, women now comprise almost half of the workforce; another 10% consists of men of color, which means that white men constitute about 40% of the workforce (Daft, 2003). A job paying an annual salary of \$50,000 or more is a criterion to identify which jobs involve some degree of authority, status, and decision-making power. How many of these jobs are in the hands of white men? It would be consistent with their proportion of the workforce if white men held slightly less than half of these jobs, yet according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2001), white men hold over three fourths of these positions, about twice as many as the percentage of white men in the workforce. Claims that white men are unfairly discriminated against as a result of affirmative action policies thus appear to be inaccurate (see Table 2.1).

The most common denial rationalization related to sexism is the "natural" argument, which denies gender discrimination, claiming that it is natural for women to do some things better than men, and for men to do some things better than women. This denial rationalization is offered as an explanation for why men and women have historically held certain types of jobs. The argument does not explain the difference between the skills of a tailor (predominantly men) compared to a seamstress (predominantly women) to justify the differences in their compensations. Nor does it explain why construction workers (mostly men)

TABLE 2.1 Annual Incomes of Full-Time Workers in the United States

Race/Gender	Median Weekly Earnings	
	2004	2011
White males	\$732 (100%)	\$856 (100%)
Black males	\$569 (77.7%)	\$653 (76.3%)
Hispanic males	\$480 (65.6%)	\$571 (66.7%)
White females	\$584 (79.8%)	\$703 (82.1%)
Black females	\$505 (69.9%)	\$595 (69.5%)
Hispanic females	\$419 (57.2%)	\$518 (60.5%)

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012.

should be compensated at a greater rate than college-educated social workers (mostly women). Historically, women have been paid less than men for doing the same work, and occupations dominated by women still receive lower wages than occupations dominated by men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001). This is the reality, but denial rationalizations have little to do with reality.

The most subtle denial rationalization is personal denial illustrated by the man who says, "How can I be sexist? I love women! I married a woman. I have daughters." This seems a reasonable statement: A man denying he has gender prejudices does not appear to deny the existence of widespread prejudice against women—but the statement actually does imply a more sweeping denial. Psychologically, most people feel they are normal, average people. If a person denies being prejudiced, he or she is actually denying that most other normal, average people are prejudiced as well. The real meaning of such a statement is that the speaker does not believe prejudice and discrimination are serious problems in society. If the person making this denial rationalization argues this point, he or she might resort to victim-blaming responses because the two are closely related.

Prejudice blinds, ignorance retards, indifference deafens, hate amputates. In this way do some people disable their souls.

Mary Robinson (1944–)

Victim-blaming rationalizations. People employing **victim-blaming rationalizations** reject the notion that prejudice and discrimination are problems in society, even though they admit that problems exist. The problems they identify, however, are typically deficiencies or flaws in members of minority groups (Ryan, 1976). Victim blamers focus on the group being harmed by societal prejudices and insist that society doesn't need to change: The group needs to change. Victim blamers urge individuals to stop being so sensitive or so pushy, to work harder, and to quit complaining. Group members are told they are responsible for whatever problems they must overcome. Ironically, some victim blamers do not hold themselves responsible for their own failures, but instead blame the environment or other factors. In a study of college students who took an intelligence test, participants tended to explain the poor performance of others as an indication of inferior intellectual ability, but if *they* performed poorly, they were more likely to view the results as a consequence of the level of difficulty of the test (Aronson, 2008).

Victim blaming often occurs among people who want to believe in a just world. In one study, subjects observed two people working equally hard at a task. By a random decision, researchers gave one of the workers a significant reward when the task was completed; the other worker received nothing. When asked to rate how hard the two people had worked, the subjects tended to describe the person who received nothing as not working as hard as the person receiving the reward.

Aronson (2008) concluded his analysis of this study by suggesting that “we find it frightening to think about living in a world where people, through no fault of their own, can be deprived of what they deserve or need” (p. 323).

People who engage in victim-blaming rationalizations often go beyond blame to propose solutions. By defining the problem as a deficiency existing in the victimized group, every solution proposed by a victim blamer involves what victims need to do because they are the problem. The rest of us need do nothing. Rape is increasing on college campuses? That’s a woman’s problem, so what women need to do is to wear less provocative clothing, avoid going out late at night, and learn to defend themselves by taking martial arts classes or carrying pepper spray. What to do about the rapist isn’t addressed. Because victim blamers offer solutions, it is easy to confuse victim blaming with some avoidance rationalizations.

Avoidance rationalizations. Unlike people who employ denial and victim blaming rationalizations, those who promote **avoidance rationalizations** recognize the problems in society as stemming from prejudice and discrimination. This is a significant departure from the previous rationalizations. Even though a person making avoidance rationalizations admits there are problems, he or she will not address them and will rationalize a reason to avoid them. Ways to avoid confronting issues include offering a solution that addresses only part of a problem or suggesting a false solution that does not address the problem at all.

If college administrators decide to confront prejudice by requiring students to take an ethnic studies course, that requirement will address a small part of the problems caused by racial prejudice and discrimination. Learning more about ethnic groups is a good idea, but if colleges are serious about actively opposing racism and improving race relations, administration and faculty must recruit diverse students, hire diverse faculty, and promote cultural diversity through workshops and seminars both on campus and in the community.

A false solution that does not address the problems of sexism at all is the proposal that “sexism would just disappear if we didn’t pay so much attention to it.” Problems created by sexism did not suddenly appear and they won’t disappear unless

people engage in actions to confront, challenge, and change sexist attitudes, policies, and laws. The only way any society can solve problems and improve conditions is to analyze a problem, create appropriate solutions, implement the solutions that seem most likely to be effective, and, after time passes, assess the impact of these solutions.

Another form of avoidance rationalization involves making an argument that distracts attention from the issue or question being discussed. Imagine a group of people discussing efforts that could be made to increase social justice in our society. Suddenly someone says, “You’re being too idealistic. We are never going to solve this problem because we’re never going to have a utopia.” The speaker was not arguing for the creation of a utopia, a perfect society, but for ways to improve society. By making the reasonable statement that utopias are not possible, the speaker has shifted the focus of the conversation to a different topic that avoids the issue. It is not realistic to believe that it is possible to create a perfect society, but it is possible—in fact, essential—to believe that any society can be improved.

In a discussion about the need for child-care centers at work sites, someone might say, “I support the idea, but it takes time; it’s not going to happen overnight.” A reasonable response, except what has been achieved if the discussion ends with that comment? To implement any solution successfully, it is necessary to clarify what is entailed: What needs to be done? Who will do what? Which actions should be taken next month? What can we expect in the next six months? Who will determine whether the solution is working, and how will progress be assessed? Saying a solution takes time may be true, but it is still necessary to discuss what must be done to implement it. To avoid that discussion is to sidestep dealing with the problem. Problems are not solved by talk or the passage of time but by taking some kind of action.

Conservatives are often accused of engaging in denial and victim-blaming rationalizations. Their solutions tend to concentrate on perceived flaws in victims of prejudice rather than addressing the prejudice and discrimination that create many of these difficult circumstances. On the other hand, liberals are more likely to be criticized for engaging in avoidance rationalizations in which they acknowledge and express sympathy for the problems faced by

oppressed groups, but never do anything to address the causes of these problems. As long as significant numbers of individuals continue to employ such rationalizations, Americans are not likely to perceive or confront causes or consequences of the persistent inequities stemming from prejudices based on race, gender, and other human differences.

Causes and Consequences of Prejudice

Considerable research has been conducted addressing the question of how individuals become prejudiced. Some studies suggest that elitist attitudes foster prejudice. **Elitism** is the belief that the most able people succeed in society and form a natural aristocracy, whereas the least able enjoy the least success because they are flawed in some way or lack the necessary qualities to be successful. This condescending attitude promotes the belief that those in the lower levels of society deserve to be where they are and that successful people have earned their place in society. Unsuccessful people are often held responsible for their failure. Elitist attitudes are a major factor in studies based on social dominance theory (Howard, 2006; Stephan, 1999).

The eugenics movement beginning in the late 1800s argued that an individual's genetic inheritance determined his or her fate and that environment played little or no role in human development (Selden, 2006). Based on this argument, proponents of the eugenics movement in the United States were promoting elitist attitudes. Selden quotes American biologist George W. Hunter, author of several biology textbooks widely used in schools between 1914 and 1941, who expressed this elitist attitude clearly:

Those of low grade intelligence would do little better under the most favorable conditions possible, while those of superior intelligence will make good no matter what handicaps they are given. (p. 75)

Other studies suggest a link between prejudice and attitudes about power. Some people express a **zero-sum** attitude, a highly competitive orientation toward power based on the assumption that the personal gains of one individual mean a loss

for someone else; therefore, to share power is regarded as having less power. According to Levin and Levin (1982), an individual with a zero-sum orientation toward power tends to be a person with strong prejudices. Thurow (2001) has described the adverse consequences for society when a zero-sum orientation is prevalent. Studies also suggest that people with authoritarian personalities tend to be more prejudiced, although other studies refute the idea (Farley, 2005). Some have even proposed that prejudice is innate, but there are no scientific studies to support that claim.

Everyone is a prisoner of his own experiences.
 No one can eliminate prejudices—just recognize them.

Edward R. Murrow (1908–1965)

To be as pervasive and persistent as it has been, prejudice must serve some purpose and offer some benefit to individuals or to society.

What are the major causes promoting the development of prejudice?

Having reviewed research concerning causes of prejudice, Levin and Levin (1982) identified four primary causes, and within these causes, functions of prejudice that sustain it. The four causes include (1) personal frustration, (2) uncertainty about a person based on lack of knowledge or experience with the group to which they belong, (3) threat to one's self-esteem, and (4) competition among individuals in our society to achieve their goals in relation to status, wealth, and power.

How does frustration cause prejudice?

The frustration-aggression hypothesis maintains that as frustration builds, it leads to aggressive action. Frustration causes tension to increase until a person chooses to act on the frustration to alleviate the tension. Jones (1997) and others have called this the "scapegoat phenomenon." The word **scapegoat** derives from an ancient Hebrew custom described in Leviticus 16: 20–22, where each year the Hebrew people reflected on their

sins during days of atonement. At the end of that time, a spiritual leader would stand before them with a goat, lay his hands on the goat's head, and recite a list of the people's sins, transferring the sins of the people to the goat—which was then set free. In modern America, the term generally refers to blaming a person or group for problems they did not cause.

When we take aggressive action—from verbal abuse to physical violence—we inevitably cause harm to others. Because most individuals define themselves as “good” according to some criteria, they will usually find a way to rationalize their actions as being good or at least justified. When southerners lynched black people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they justified their actions by insisting that all blacks were lazy, lustful, or liars. Using the Kafkaesque reasoning that all blacks were guilty and therefore it didn’t matter what crime a black person was accused of committing, they executed victims with no regard for whether that specific black person was guilty of a crime.

Ironically, data from some studies have shown that aggressive action may not alleviate frustration, but instead may exacerbate it. In one study, two groups of subjects were asked to allow medical technicians to take physical measurements of their bodies. After taking the measurements, the technicians made derogatory comments intended to make the subjects angry. One group was taken to the technician’s “supervisor” if they wanted to complain; the other group was not. The researchers thought that members of the group being allowed to “vent” their anger would feel less hostile toward the technician afterward, yet those who were given the opportunity to complain reported stronger feelings of hostility than the subjects who were not allowed to complain (Aronson, 2008). The findings suggest that identifying a scapegoat on which to vent one’s frustration does not solve a person’s problems, and it may make matters worse.

The implication that finding a scapegoat does not solve problems is illustrated in domestic abuse cases. When a man takes out his frustrations by abusing his partner, he has to justify his actions. It is common for men arrested for domestic abuse to explain their behavior by saying, “She made me do it,” or “She kept nagging and wouldn’t shut up.” This not only depicts the man as a victim (the suffering husband), but also reinforces the stereotype

of nagging wives, providing the husband with an excuse for assaulting the woman he once claimed to love. As violence escalates with each domestic abuse complaint from the same home, it is obvious that blaming one’s spouse or partner doesn’t solve the problem; it may possibly cause the abuser to become more violent toward those interfering with his actions.

Because of the high rates of injury and death to police officers responding to domestic abuse cases, many American cities, counties, and states require officers to file abuse charges directly, even over the objections of the one abused. Courts often mandate counseling for abusers to address and understand how gender prejudices and stereotypes created negative attitudes leading to abuse, and to teach abusive men effective, nonviolent strategies for managing anger. The role of gender stereotypes in contributing to domestic abuse illustrates another major cause of prejudice—uncertainty.

What do stereotypes have to do with uncertainty and how do they cause prejudice?

Most of us only have knowledge of the groups to which we belong; often we do not know much about other groups. In the United States, schools have historically implemented curricula reflecting perspectives, contributions, and experiences of the dominant (white) group, and many of our neighborhoods still tend to be segregated by race or social class. The result is that people from different racial and ethnic groups have few opportunities to learn about one another. Because of our lack of accurate information, we may believe in stereotypes as a way to convince ourselves that we know about certain groups. (See Figure 2.2.) Our stereotypes can be reinforced by images or information contained in such media as advertisements, textbooks, and films.

For an example of ignorance promoting prejudice, how many Americans know that Muslims have been in the United States from colonial times because many slaves brought to America from West Africa were Muslim? The evidence is in the names that “read like a Who’s Who of traditional Muslim names”—Bullaly (Bilali), Mahomet (Muhammad), Walley (Wali), and Sambo meant “second son” to Muslim Fulbe people (Abdo, 2006, p. 66).

**FIGURE 2.2**

This drawing has been used for research and in classrooms. One person is shown this picture and whispers a description of the entire scene to another person, who then whispers the description to another person until each person in the room has heard it. The last person is asked to describe the scene to everyone. Typically, the person describes a poorly dressed black man with a weapon preparing to attack a well-dressed white man, thus illustrating the power of racial stereotypes.

While Americans tend to stereotype all Arabs as Muslims, the majority of Arabs immigrating to the United States in the late nineteenth century were Christians. Another stereotype is that Muslims have only lived in urban areas. How many Americans know that in the 1920s a small group of Muslims settled in Ross, South Dakota, and built the first mosque in the United States, or that the oldest continuously functioning mosque is in Cedar Rapids, Iowa (Abdo, 2006)?

Even if they don't know this history, how many Americans know that Muslim Americans today own over 200,000 businesses and that there are over 2,000 mosques in the United States (Ansari, 2004)? How many Americans know that Muslim American adults are better educated than the average American (59% have college degrees compared to 27% of other Americans) and wealthier (a median annual income of \$60,000 compared to the

national median annual income of \$50,000) (Barrett, 2007)? Muslims have done what America expects of immigrants. But, unaware of this information, and surrounded by stereotypes and the media's focus on Islamic terrorists, how many Americans harbor negative views of both the Islamic faith and Muslims? According to a 2004 survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, nearly 50% of Americans perceived the Islamic faith as more likely to promote violence than other religions (a percentage that doubled compared to the results of a similar survey conducted two years earlier) and nearly 40% expressed a negative view of Muslims (Abdo, 2006).

People have long known that stereotypes skew an individual's perception of a group, but more recently scholars have reported that being aware of the stereotypes for your group can adversely affect members of a group. This is called a **stereotype threat**,

which Aronson (2008) defines as “the apprehension experienced by members of a minority group that they might behave in a manner that confirms an existing cultural stereotype” (p. 437). Such apprehensions can contribute to feelings of anxiety and poor performance.

Ariely (2008) described a study in which Asian American women were divided into two groups and administered the same math exam. Prior to receiving the exam, one group was asked numerous questions related to their gender, and the other group was asked numerous questions related to their race. The second group performed much better than the first group on the math test, suggesting that stereotypes about women being deficient in math and Asians excelling at math may have influenced their performance. Other studies have reported similar results, including one study of white male engineering students who had almost perfect math scores on the SAT tests. These white males were randomly divided into two groups, and prior to being given a challenging math test, one group was told that the test would measure their math abilities, whereas the other group was told that the purpose of the study was to understand why Asians appear to be superior to all others in their math ability. The second group had much lower scores on the math exam than the first group (Aronson, 2008).

When a person actually encounters individuals of a different race, ethnicity, or social class, selective perception of the behaviors of those individuals often reinforces his or her stereotypes. Stephan (1999) reported on one study where subjects were presented with equal amounts of positive and negative information about a group to which they belonged (in-group) and a group to which they did not belong (out-group). Subjects tended to recall more positive information about the in-group and more negative information about the out-group. According to Stephan, negative attitudes in our memory tend to increase over time.

Selective perception was illustrated in another study in which two groups of subjects viewed consecutive videotapes: The first videotape was of a fourth-grade girl playing with friends, and the second videotape was of the same girl taking an oral test in school in which she answered some difficult questions correctly but missed some easy questions. Although the second videotape was the same for both groups, the first videotape shown

to one group was the girl playing in a low-income neighborhood, and the first videotape shown to the other group was the girl playing in a high-income neighborhood. After watching both videotapes, subjects were asked to judge the girl’s academic abilities. Those who saw her playing in the low-income neighborhood rated her academic ability lower than those who saw her playing in the more affluent neighborhood. Whether the subjects focused more on the girl’s correct or incorrect answers appeared to have been influenced by the neighborhood in which they believed she lived and stereotypes associated with affluence and poverty (Aronson, 2008).

Researchers have also shown that becoming more knowledgeable about others helps people overcome stereotypical perceptions. In a psychiatric hospital with an all-white staff, patients acting violently were either taken to a “time-out room” or subjected to the harsher penalty of being put in a straitjacket and sedated. In the first month of a research study, both black and white patients were admitted. Although the black patients admitted were diagnosed as being less violent than the whites, they were four times more likely to be put in a straitjacket and sedated by the staff if they became violent. The discrepancy in the white staff’s use of restraints suggests that they believed in the stereotype that black people were more prone to violence. As they became better acquainted with the patients, the staff responded to violent incidents with more equal use of restraints for both black and white patients (Aronson, 2008). Stereotypes that portray a group as being prone to violence, lazy, or less intelligent can influence a person’s behavior; stereotypes can also play a part in a person’s self-esteem being threatened, which is another major cause of prejudice identified in research.

Sometimes (prejudice) is like a hair across your cheek. You can’t see it, you can’t find it with your fingers, but you keep brushing at it because the feel of it is irritating.

Marian Anderson (1897–1993)

How does threat to self-esteem cause prejudice?

In the United States, people are encouraged to develop self-esteem by comparing themselves with others. We do so by grades in school, music contests, debates in speech, and athletic competitions. But what happens when positive self-esteem is achieved by developing feelings of superiority to someone else? Or when we achieve our sense of superiority by projecting our feelings of inferiority onto another person or group? If we believe in the innate superiority of our group compared to other groups, then we believe we are better than anyone who is a member of the inferior group. If members of an inferior group become successful, their achievements threaten those whose self-esteem was based on feelings of group superiority and their condescending attitude unconsciously turns into prejudice.

People of color confront the issue of self-esteem based on race as a cause of prejudice when they encounter white people whose self-esteem is threatened by their achievements or success. The first African American to teach at Harvard University Law School commented,

You have to simultaneously function on a high level and try not to upset those whose racial equilibrium is thrown off when they recognize that you are not incompetent, not mediocre, and don't fit the long accepted notions about persons of color that serve as unrecognized but important components of their self-esteem. (Bell, 2002, pp. 66–67)

When we possess this kind of self-esteem, we are insecure and easily threatened. Coleman (2007) argued that people perceiving others as inferior “are more likely to identify and maintain negative stereotypes about members of stigmatized groups” (p. 222).

Studies suggest that part of the self-esteem for many men derives just from being male. In Michigan, over a thousand children wrote essays about what their lives would be like if they were the opposite gender. Although almost half the girls found many positive things to say about being male, 95% of the boys could find nothing positive to say about being female (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Similar attitudes appear among adults. In their research on self-esteem, Martinez and Dukes (1991) reported

that males displayed higher self-esteem than did females, and that white males had the highest self-esteem of all groups.

When male self-esteem derives from perceiving one's gender as superior, it is easily threatened by women's achievements. American men often rationalize female achievements by attributing women's success to reasons other than competence. Their rationalizations may be characterized by resentment or anger, which intensifies the prejudice that created the initial illusion of superiority. If a woman receives the promotion a man wanted, he might complain that she is “sleeping her way to the top.” Because self-esteem based on a belief in gender superiority is an illusion, it is ultimately inadequate because the individual has done nothing to earn it. Fearing that an “inferior” person might receive rewards the “superior” individual desires is related to the fourth primary cause of prejudice: competition for status, wealth, and power.

How does competition for status, wealth, and power cause prejudice?

There is evidence that competition fosters prejudicial attitudes. Jones (1997) described a study at a summer camp where Boy Scouts were given time to become acquainted and to develop friendships before being divided into two groups and housed in separate bunkhouses. The groups were divided so that approximately two thirds of each boy's friends were in the other bunkhouse. The two groups were encouraged to play a series of competitive games such as tug-of-war, football, and baseball. Boys who had liked each other began to intensely dislike each other and to engage in name-calling. Although there was solidarity within groups, friendships that had been established with boys from the other group no longer existed. After competitive games were concluded, researchers brought the boys together, but animosity remained until the boys were given tasks that required them to cooperate with each other. Working together to achieve a common goal reduced the hostility and resulted in the boys again making friendships with individuals from the other group. From this study we can argue how important it is, in schools and at work sites, to promote collaborative efforts among students or workers so that they not only complete necessary

tasks, but build better relationships between individuals from diverse groups. This may be one of the most effective ways to reduce both prejudice and the kinds of discriminatory practices that stem from prejudice such as racial profiling.

What is racial profiling?

Racial profiling occurs when authorities assume that members of certain racial or ethnic groups are more likely to engage in criminal activity—anything from selling drugs to acts of terrorism. For many years African Americans have complained about being disproportionately stopped by police for no reason, or for what police insisted was a “routine” traffic stop. Blacks referred to this as being guilty of the crime of “Driving While Black” (DWB). But DWB is no longer the only form of racial profiling. Muslims have reported being similarly singled out by airport authorities for FWM (“Flying While Muslim”). A poll of American Muslims reported that they were encountering increased racial profiling in airports, and they were also being subjected to “extra surveillance” by the federal government (Niebuhr, 2008). Federal and state funding of anti-terrorism training for local police has contributed to racial profiling of Muslims. Stalcup and Craze (2011) observed specific trainers reinforcing anti-Muslim stereotypes and presenting false statements about Islamic beliefs including the attribution of extremist beliefs to mainstream Muslims. Critics argue that racial profiling is not only discriminatory, but an ineffective approach to curbing terrorism; yet few Americans are likely to object to racial profiling of Muslims because of their negative attitudes toward Islam. According to a 2009 poll, almost half of Americans had an “unfavorable opinion of Islam,” and a 2010 Pew Research Center survey found 35% of Americans believing that Islam encouraged its followers to engage in violence, while 28% thought that American Muslims felt sympathetic toward Al Qaeda (Steinback, 2011).

In addition, the controversy over illegal immigration has led to racial profiling of Latinos by some law enforcement officials. This was exacerbated by Arizona’s passage of a harsh immigration law that allows police officers to detain an individual on a suspicion that the person is an undocumented worker. With the passage of SB 1070, Latinos in

Arizona can be forced to produce papers proving that they are U.S. citizens or legal immigrants, and without such papers they could be arrested and incarcerated. At a naturalization ceremony in the Rose Garden, President Obama warned that the Arizona law could potentially “undermine basic notions that we cherish as Americans, as well as the trust between police and our communities that is so crucial to keeping us safe” (Archibald, 2010, p. 1). Unfortunately, a majority of Americans appear to support the controversial law. In a 2010 poll of more than 1,000 Americans, 61% said they approved of the Arizona law. This approval spanned political parties with 49% of Democrats, 80% of Republicans, and 54% of Independents supporting the law (Tolev, 2010). Arizona’s law should increase the pressure on federal lawmakers to pass some kind of immigration reform, but a divided Congress seems unwilling to address this critical issue. Meanwhile, Latino organizations and advocacy groups are monitoring police activities in Arizona to make sure that the rights of American citizens and legal immigrants are not abused by those charged with enforcing this law.

What other forms of discrimination are a consequence of prejudice?

With regard to discriminatory actions, Allport (1979) identified five negative behaviors caused by prejudice: (1) *verbal abuse* against others that occurs among friends or results in name-calling directed at others from a particular group. Name-calling can escalate into (2) *physical assaults*. The victim doesn’t even have to be a member of the despised group to be assaulted; anyone could be a victim by being perceived as one of “them.” When a large group of ethnic Hmong from Southeast Asia settled in a Wisconsin community of 50,000 people, some local citizens did not accept them. A Japanese foreign exchange student who attended a college in that community was severely beaten by a white man in the mistaken belief that his victim was Hmong. Another common example of violence based on misperceptions is heterosexual men who have been physically assaulted because they were perceived to be gay.

If prejudice evolves into bigotry, one’s hatred can lead to (3) *extreme violence*, including the desire to commit murder. Such behavior is now called a

"hate crime." In 1982, two Detroit men lost their jobs at an automobile factory and believed it was related to the popularity of imported Japanese cars. When they encountered Vincent Chin, a Chinese American, they mistakenly thought he was Japanese. Motivated by hatred and rage, they brutally murdered him. If homicidal rage spreads, it might lead to the extreme form of violence called **genocide**—the systematic and deliberate extermination of a nationality or a racial or ethnic group (Feagin & Feagin, 2008). A person can play a passive role that still supports genocide. After World War II, most Germans (also Poles, Austrians, and others) claimed they didn't know that six million Jews were killed in concentration camps; persuasive evidence has been gathered to argue that they knew but were not concerned enough to do anything about it (Goldhagen, 2002).

In contrast to confrontational negative behavior stemming from prejudice and bigotry, a more passive negative response to prejudice is to avoid members of other groups. We do this by (4) *limiting our interactions* with people from racial or ethnic groups other than our own. Measuring attitudes about avoiding others was the focus of research by Bogardus; this study used a Social Distance Scale in which people encounter a list of racial, ethnic, and religious groups and are asked to rank them in order of preference (Schaefer, 2008). People consistently reveal a preference for those groups most like their own, and they have less regard for people from groups they perceive as least like themselves.

Another way to avoid certain groups is (5) to *engage in or condone discrimination* in such areas as education, employment, and housing. To illustrate this behavior, consider how people choose what sort of neighborhood they want to live in. In the 1960s, when courts ordered urban school districts to desegregate, many school administrators responded by busing students to different schools, a controversial solution that caused massive movement of white families from urban neighborhoods to racially segregated suburbs, the **white flight** phenomenon (see Figure 2.3). Despite the passage of the 1968 National Fair Housing Act, studies have documented the preference of most white Americans to live in racially segregated neighborhoods (Farley, 2005; Massey, 2001). As Massey noted, the Fair Housing Act "theoretically put an end to housing discrimination; however, residential segregation proved to be remarkably persistent" (p. 424).

Is prejudice the main cause of discrimination in society?

For years we believed that discrimination was caused by prejudice; therefore, the way to reduce discrimination was to reduce prejudice. Efforts were made in schools and in popular culture to address and reduce prejudice, and they produced positive results. For many years, research reported a significant decrease in prejudice; however, studies did not find a significant decrease in discrimination (Astor, 1997). Based on efforts by scholars seeking alternative explanations, Feagin and Feagin (1986) described three theories of discrimination: the interest theory, the internal colonialism theory, and the institutionalized discrimination theory, all of which identify historic and contemporary forces responsible for inequities being perpetuated without the involvement of prejudice.

How does the interest theory explain discrimination?

The **interest theory** describes discrimination resulting from people protecting their power and privilege. Instead of being motivated by prejudice, people discriminate against individuals from subordinate groups because of self-interest. For example, white men may object to affirmative action programs not because of their prejudice but from fear of policies that might reduce their opportunities to be hired, retained, or promoted. Homeowners might persuade neighbors not to sell their home to a family of color because they are worried about what will happen to property values. Discrimination is a function of protecting one's interests; this is similar to the internal colonialism theory.

How is self-interest involved in the internal colonialism theory?

The **internal colonialism theory** of discrimination is an analysis of how privilege was created in the United States when the dominant group—white male Europeans—exploited subordinate groups to assume control of America's resources: land from American Indians, unpaid labor by African slaves, and wages and property of wives.

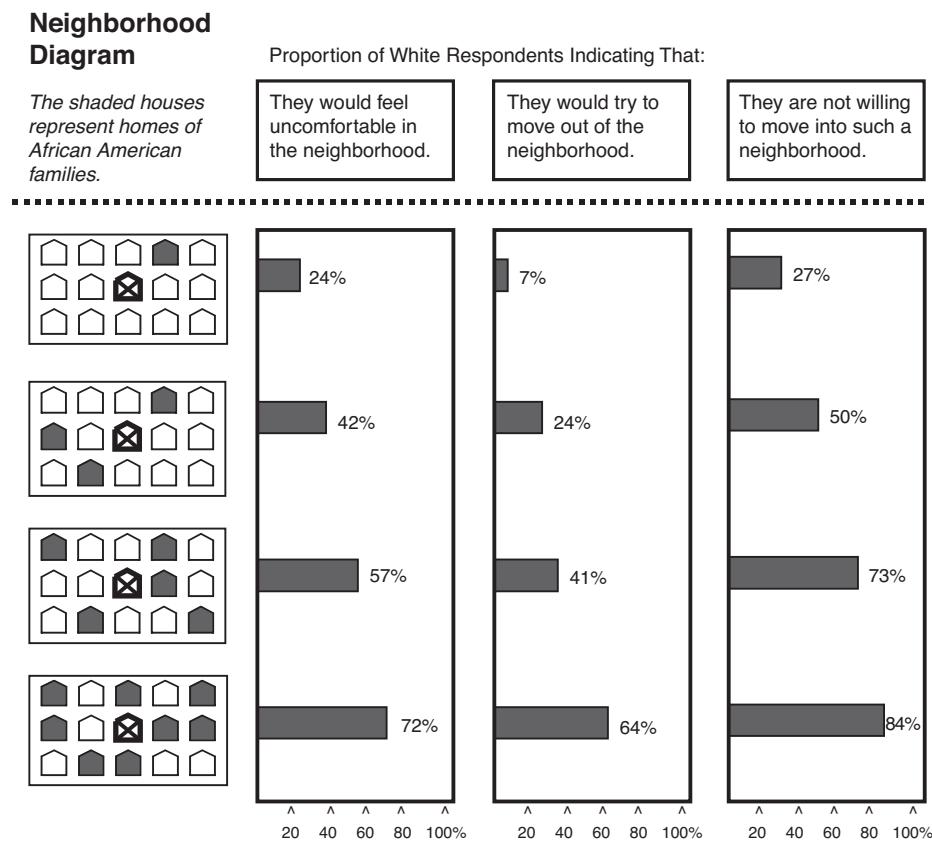


FIGURE 2.3 Neighborhood Preference of White Respondents

In a study cited by Farley (2005), subjects were shown diagrams of neighborhoods consisting of 15 homes with an X in the home in the center of the neighborhood indicating the subject's home. Each shaded home represented an African American family. White respondents were asked: How comfortable would they feel in each neighborhood? If they were uncomfortable, would they leave? Would they move to such a neighborhood? The percentage not willing to live in those neighborhoods were only a fifth or a third of homeowners were African Americans illustrates attitudes that produced white flight.

Furthermore, by gaining control over resources and exploiting them to their advantage, certain white male Europeans achieved positions that provided them access to technological developments and control of industrial developments in the United States, including military technology. Once they are in a position of power, people will do whatever they can to maintain their advantage and stay in power.

Although initially established by force, unequal distribution and control of economic and political resources eventually became institutionalized. The theory of internal colonialism asserts that continued domination of nonwhites and women by white men is maintained by the way that institutions function in the United States. Internal colonialism theory creates the foundation on which the theory of institutionalized discrimination was built.

How is discrimination explained by the institutionalized discrimination theory?

The **institutionalized discrimination theory** accepts the history of internal colonialism but focuses on contemporary discrimination. This theory describes institutional policies and practices that have different and negative effects on subordinate groups. It examines how privilege and advantage are embedded in an organization's norms, its regulations, informal rules, and roles—social positions with their attendant duties and rights. An analysis based on this theory seeks to understand mechanisms and methods that lead to discrimination in institutional policies and practices. Similar to the other two theories, institutionalized discrimination theory is not concerned with prejudice (what U.S. courts have called "evil intent") but is based on the assumption that much discrimination today is unintentional.

When a number of women in city government in an urban area were interviewed for a research project, one department head explained how a group of female department heads had solved a problem. At the end of a workday, the women tended to leave immediately because of family responsibilities such as picking up children and preparing meals. Male department heads tended to meet for a drink after work once or twice a week, and to play golf together on weekends while women department heads spent that time with their families. At meetings in which they had to make decisions about funding for programs, female department heads were frustrated by their inability to be as effective as their male counterparts in supporting each other.

The women understood why the men had an advantage. Because of their social activities, male department heads knew more about each other's departments, so they could make informed arguments in support of each other's programs. To create a similar advantage for themselves, the women started meeting together one evening every month (child care provided) to talk about their programs and needs and to prepare for debates on funding priorities. As a result of their efforts, a greater amount of funding was distributed to departments headed by women (Koppelman, 1994).

The institutionalized discrimination theory provides a realistic basis for understanding discrimination: The actions of the male department heads

were not based on a prejudice against women; rather, they were doing their job in accordance with historic practices that benefited their departments. The women understood that the solution was not to berate the men but rather to devise a strategy to offset advantages already established for male department heads. Even though informal institutional procedures favored the men, the women found a way to "play the game" more effectively. Discriminatory actions can still be a direct result of prejudice on the part of people making decisions, but it is more likely that causes for discrimination stem from reasons far more subtle and complex. Although prejudice may not be the main cause of discrimination, we should continue with research to understand what causes prejudice and do what we can to reduce it.

AFTERWORD

If prejudice were part of human nature, people would be justified in feeling despair because the implication would be that human beings eventually will destroy each other. But no evidence supports the idea that prejudice is innate. Instead, studies have consistently concluded that prejudice is learned. The fact that prejudice is learned offers hope because anything that can be learned can be unlearned. Education can confront negative attitudes both in the media and in our language to help students unlearn prejudices they have been taught, and also understand why it is in everyone's best interest not to act on prejudices.

[There is a] strangely irrational notion that there is something in the very flow of time that will inevitably cure all ills. Actually time is neutral. It can be used either destructively or constructively.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968)

In their study of brain research, Newberg and Waldman (2006) found that people could "interrupt" prejudicial beliefs and stereotypes and generate new ideas, and that these new ideas "can alter

the neural circuitry that governs how we behave and what we believe. Our beliefs . . . aren't necessarily static. They can change; we can change them" (p. 9).

Prejudice can be reduced by accurate information, by formal and informal learning, and by establishing equitable workplace policies and practices. Prejudices can also be unlearned by friends challenging one another's negative attitudes. Even though some people may not be able to give up their prejudices, they do not have to act on them. It is not inevitable that our prejudices control us. When we can identify our prejudices and understand how we learned them, we can choose to limit their influence on our behavior. We can control them instead of letting them control us.

When we make positive choices, we affirm the basis for having hope for the future. Positive choices that individuals have made throughout history have resulted in genuine human progress. If our society is to benefit from its diversity, it will be because enough Americans have chosen to regard diversity as an asset and to confront their prejudices. Those who make such positive choices today will shape the nature of the society in which our children and their children must live.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Avoidance rationalization A response to a social problem—such as injustice toward a minority group—that acknowledges the existence of a problem but avoids confronting the problem by offering partial or false solutions or by using arguments that do not address the situation as in "Yes, but you should have seen how bad it was last year."

Black/white syndrome A pattern in the English language consisting of negative meanings for phrases including the word *black* and positive meanings for phrases including the word *white*

Denial rationalization A response to a social problem—such as injustice toward a minority group—that does not acknowledge the existence of a problem but insists instead that no injustice has occurred as in "That's not discrimination, men have always been the boss; it's just the way things are meant to be."

Elitism The belief that the best people ascend to a place of superiority in society and represent a natural

aristocracy, whereas those who are not successful are viewed as lacking the necessary qualities to be successful within society

Genocide The deliberate and systematic extermination of a particular nationality, or racial, ethnic, or minority group

Institutionalized discrimination theory Institutional policies and practices that have differential and negative effects on subordinate groups in a society

Interest theory People engaging or acquiescing in discriminatory actions based on a desire to protect their power or privilege

Internal colonialism theory Explains contemporary discrimination as the maintenance of inequities resulting from historic exploitation of subordinate groups by the dominant group

Prejudice A negative attitude toward a group and anyone perceived to be a member of that group; a predisposition to negative behavior toward members of a group

Racial profiling People in authority taking actions against members of racial or ethnic groups based on assumptions that these groups are more likely to engage in criminal activity

Scapegoat An individual or a group of people blamed for another person's problems or difficulties; identifying a scapegoat is often employed to justify one's taking a negative action against that individual or group

Stereotype threat The apprehension experienced by members of a minority group that they might behave in a manner that confirms an existing cultural stereotype

Victim-blaming rationalization A response to a social problem—such as injustice toward a minority group—that identifies the problem as a deficiency in the minority group and not a societal problem, as in "If poor people want to escape poverty they just have to be willing to work harder."

White flight The migration of white families from an urban to a suburban location because of court rulings to desegregate urban schools

Zero sum An orientation toward power and resources based on assumptions of scarcity, as when struggling to achieve goals, one person gains at the expense of another. The belief that sharing power means a reduction of power

DISCUSSION EXERCISES

Clarification Exercise—Rationalizations: Victim-Blame, Denial, and Avoidance

Directions: This exercise provides everyday statements we might hear; each one is a specific kind of rationalization. Based on the text and on your group discussion, identify the statements below according to one of the three types of rationalizations. First, select which passages would most likely represent an avoidance of a problem. Then select those in which the speaker employs a denial rationalization—that the problem either does not exist or that the speaker is suggesting “That’s just the way things are.” Finally, locate victim-blame statements in which a specific person or group is being charged with its own downfall or problem.

Rationalizations for Our Prejudices

Directions: Decide whether the following statements represent a denial of the problem (D), a victim-blame that it is the speaker’s problem (D/VB), or an avoidance of the problem (A).

- _____ 1. Women and minorities are getting everything their way. They are taking away our jobs and pretty soon they are going to take over everything.
- _____ 2. What we have here, basically, is a failure to communicate. We must develop better programs in interpersonal communications to address this issue.
- _____ 3. This is the way these people want to live. You can’t change poor people; they can’t help the way they are.
- _____ 4. We must move with deliberation on these issues. Real change takes time. We have to educate people.
- _____ 5. All those women on welfare have it made. All they do is stay home and make babies while the rest of us have to work and pay taxes to support them.
- _____ 6. I can’t figure out what to call all these people. Why can’t we all just be human instead of black, Chicano, Latino, Native American, or Asian American?

- _____ 7. Indians are their own worst enemy. They should stop fighting among themselves and get together on whatever it is they really want.
- _____ 8. If blacks want to make it in our society, they are going to have to get rid of those dreadlocks and other weird hairstyles, the baggy clothes, funny handshakes, and they better start speaking better English.
- _____ 9. Yes, but in the old days, race and sex discrimination were much worse. And even today, women and minorities are much better off in this country than anywhere else in the world.
- _____ 10. Women are just too sensitive about sexism. They need to look at these things less emotionally and much more rationally.
- _____ 11. We need more programs in African American studies, Latino studies, Native American studies, and Asian American studies to learn about all the contributions these groups have made to our society.
- _____ 12. Feminists are pushing too hard for the changes that they demand. They are hurting themselves more than they are helping.
- _____ 13. I understand that some people face more difficulties than others, but this is a free country and I believe that anybody who is willing to work hard enough can be successful.

Follow-Up: Select any two from each of the three categories—D, VB, and A—and rewrite them to be the fourth kind of statement—those without rationalization. Explain why you chose to rewrite them as you did.

Exercise—The Liver Transplant Problem

Background: Today, the only medical procedure available to save the lives of persons suffering from diseases of the liver is an organ transplant. Unfortunately, there are not enough livers to take care of all cases now, and there will not be enough in the near future to save the lives of all those in need.

Your Role: The decision about which people can be saved must be made on criteria other than medical criteria. Your hospital has decided that the best way to select persons for a transplant is by setting up a volunteer citizens panel to make the decisions. You are on the panel and receive a Profile Sheet of applicants for transplants (see the table). Doctors have screened all patients, and all have equal prognosis for medical success.

Problem: There is a liver available for one person on the list. All those not served will die. The availability of other livers cannot be anticipated, although if other livers become available, additional persons on the list could receive transplants.

Directions: Your panel must make a unanimous decision regarding the person to be the liver recipient. A lottery violates institutional ethics and is not an acceptable strategy. As you deliberate, discuss your values and consider those of others related to the process being utilized and the criteria that you propose:

1. The criteria you develop for choosing the recipient.
2. Why you believe that the person you chose best fits your criteria.
3. How your panel arrives at a single selection of a recipient.

Please see the next page for more detailed notes about the recipients.

Liver Transplant Recipient Profile Sheet

Code	Age	Race	Sex	Marital Status	Religious Affiliation	Children	Occupation
A	24	Black	M	Married	Muslim	None	Postal worker
B	45	White	M	Married	Atheist	2	Executive
C	39	Asian American	F	Divorced	Buddhist	None	Medical Doctor
D	40	White	F	Married	Jew	3	Housewife
E	23	Black	M	Unmarried	Episcopal	None	PhD student
F	40	White	F	Unmarried	Pentecostal	9	Welfare Mother
G	28	Native American	M	Unmarried	Native	3	Seasonal Worker
H	30	Latina	F	Married	Catholic	7	Housewife
I	19	White	M	Unmarried	Baptist	None	Special Student

Notes about Recipients:

- Devotes time to volunteer work for black organizations
- Possible candidate for U.S. Senate
- College physician and feminist speaker
- Active in local synagogue and charitable activities
- Middle states chair of a gay rights task force
- Advocate and organizer of welfare mothers
- State chair, Indian Treaty Rights Organization
- Blind and physically disabled
- Cognitively disabled

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