Overview: “prejudice and discrimination are not innate human characteristics” (Marger, 2012:62); all social science perspectives agree that prejudice and discrimination are learned; sociologists focus on situational factors and power structure; psychologists tend to view prejudice rooted in certain personality types

Classic Psychological Theories

Pathological/irrational attitude (e.g., prejudice) causes discriminatory behavior

A. Mental/individual focus: must change what is in people’s heads to combat racism
B. Two classic approaches:

1. Frustration-Aggression Theory: (John Dollard 1939) has 2 premises
   a. Frustration causes aggression: interference with goal striving causes aggression
   b. Scapegoating: if source of frustration is too strong, a weaker substitute target is selected
      1. Example: Germans frustrated by WWI defeat and reparations; Jews weaker than allies
      2. Subordinate groups are convenient/safe targets of displaced aggression (M 2012:63)
      3. Short-lived (irrational) relief: “unless actual source is attacked, feeling of frustration will quickly recur or even intensify” (M 2012:63); Allport (1979:332) states “Nature never created a less adaptive mechanism than displacement”

2. Totalitarian or Authoritarian Personality: (Theodore Adorno et. al., 1950) from Freudian (psychoanalytic) perspective, this personality type is more prejudiced
   a. Dogmatism: rigid views, no gray areas; anti-intellectual and anti-scientific
   b. Conformism: conform to traditional values; fear things that are different; resist social change
   c. Authority: unquestioning obedience; bullying arrogance toward inferiors; subject children to strong disciplinary action; attracted to movements requiring submission to authoritarian leader
   d. Childhood source of personality (Freudian): repression by harsh, strict, and cold father
      Note: theory is seen as “flawed” today because it reduces authoritarianism to personality trait, whereas prejudice can be consensual, e.g. Nazism appealed to broad spectrum of German society

3. Other personality theories: focus on prejudicial way of thinking for some; cognitive processes thought to be different; Hartley (1946) reports prejudice toward fictional groups in a survey

C. Critique of psychological theories: Schermerhorn (1970): situations in which people think/act not given sufficient attention regarding their effect on thought and action; “prejudice is a product of situations, historical situations, economic situations, political situations; it is not a little demon that emerges in people simply because they are depraved” (1970:6); not only personality causes racism
   1. Overly focused on negative feelings: paternalism, pity, even affection may accompany domination, in which the central motivator is desire for control rather than antipathy (Jackman 2005)
   2. Critique from standpoint of “normative theories:” discrimination is a product of situational norms by which we feel compelled to abide; we understand that such actions are expected of us, and in most cases we conform even if we have desire to disobey; norms are group standards that define how people are expected to act in particular social situations; there are positive sanctions (rewards) for conforming and negative sanctions for deviating from norms of discrimination (66)
      a. unconscious transmission: negative attitudes toward a group are learned in the same way as learning to eat with a knife and fork; this socialization is subtle and largely unconscious; prejudice and discrimination need not be taught directly and intentionally (Marger, 2012: 66)
      b. most learning through observation and imitation: not direct teaching methods; children and adults take cues from their peers and other important reference groups as well as mass media; through this process, ethnic-racial attitudes start to crystallize by age 4, and by age 6 are clear even to children who have had no contact with other racial/ethnic groups (Van Ansdale and Feagin, 2001); racism may be no
more indicative of defective personality than taste in food

**c. Impact of changing reference groups (Pearlin 1954):** southern white women “most strongly affiliated with their pre-college membership groups” (M:68) were most prejudiced; those who had weakened these ties & had increased ID with college groups were least prejudiced; study of college women shows adoption of racial attitudes of reference group (liberal college view).

**d. Robert Merton’s 4 ideal types demonstrate “situational norms”:**
1. All-weather liberals (unprejudiced nondiscriminators): attitudes and behavior are consistent.
2. Active bigots (prejudiced discriminators): also consistent.
3. Timid bigots (prejudiced nondiscriminators) shows the effect of situational contexts on behavior (e.g., La Pierre study; Lewis Killian (1953) study of white working-class southerners (‘hillbillies’) as travelers to Chicago who praised segregation and complained blacks were “taking over Chicago,” but peacefully adopted northern norms of treatment unheard of in South before 1960s;
4. Fair-weather liberals (unprejudiced discriminators): also succumb to situational norms because they do not desire to undermine their social status or break law (NY Times, in 1987, reports an apparently non-prejudiced pharmacy owner in Tifton, Georgia who dismissed a black student—placed in the pharmacy for training—because of fear of antagonism from white patrons (Marger 2012:70).

**e. Statistical discrimination (Van den Berghe 1997) is situational:** “where information is in short supply and costly, people will rely on stereotypes” (M:71); is based on rational self-interest rather than prejudiced personality only insofar as “guidelines” can be changed by facts; whites stereotype blacks as “criminal inclined” despite age and class being more predictive than race; whites having little interaction with blacks discriminate because race more obvious than class; banks act similarly, charging higher interest rates or making fewer loans to blacks, only in part, because of incomplete information in assessing risk; like racial profiling by police

**Social Structural Theories**

**Overview:** structural theories focus on the use of power to further group interests rather than on “individual personalities” or on the “constraints and demands of different social situations” (Marger 2012:72)—insofar as situations are shaped by the structure of power and wealth; structural theories assume that social dominance (behavior of groups) shapes legitimating ideology (surfacing in attitudes) rather than attitudes causing behavior

**A. Gain is key:** conflict theories focus on perceived gains (often economic) from discrimination (M:72); An example is profit/wealth and other gains from slave systems, which are justified by racial ideology

**B. Perceived threats (to dominance or privilege) result in blatant discrimination and even violence:** Texas fisherman in 1981 felt threatened when 100 Vietnamese shrimpers began competing with them in Galveston Bay, so whites enlisted Ku Klux Klan to engage in physical attacks & arson (Hein 1995)

**Power Imbalance/Conflict Theory:** group use of power to sustain privilege (discriminatory behavior) causes ideological legitimation (or prejudicial attitudes); opposite of psychological theory; 3 premises below:

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**A. Conflict:** inevitable group conflict (not individual) over scarcity (wealth, etc.) leads 1 group(s) to dominate

**B. Power sustains privilege:** dominant group (controlling resources) uses its power to maintain privileges; Examples are property owners and governing elites (often white) whose position is protected by police, courts, prisons, and military; split labor market theory (Bonacich 1972, 1976) is another example, which focuses on threat of cheap labor (e.g., immigrants or blacks), often used as strikebreakers by employers; higher priced labor (often white) uses racial discrimination to combat fear of threat to wages/employment

1. Makabe (1981) finds support for split labor market theory: in British Columbia, Canada, before WWII, white workers engage in hostile rejection of Japanese workers, who were paid lower wages by employers when entering workforce at bottom (resulting in white demands to halt to immigration); in Brazil, Japanese entered with skills/financial resources superior to native employees (often former slaves), so there was little competition or conflict because not seeking the same occupational positions

2. Feelings of superiority not sufficient to create prejudice/discrimination (Lawrence Bobo 1999): also must be perceived threat from subordinate group to dominant group privileges example is white southern political strategy of manipulating white fears of blacks:
   a. Alabama gubernatorial election in 1958 (Frady 1968): after losing to “a candidate more avowedly
racist than himself,” George Wallace said he would never allow this to happen again.

b. **Willie Horton used by Republican ads in 1988 presidential campaign:** Horton was a convicted murderer who, during furlough from a prison, raped a woman; imagery of black male used to frighten white voters while characterizing the Democratic candidate (Dukakis) as “soft on crime”

c. **Post-WWII upward mobility of Jews and Catholics:** did not antagonize dominant group because “nonzero-sum-mobility” (prosperity advanced everyone) did not threaten privileges

C. **Ideology:** dominant group legitimates privileges with ideology (system of ideas) of superiority; this is more effective than application of superior force or power, which is a scarce resource that is quickly expended; Marxist version examines how dominant class (e.g., capitalists) use ideology to divide subordinate classes (e.g. workers) as a ‘divide and conquer’ strategy (e.g. create split between black and white workers)

Example of Social Structural Theories: Colonial/Neo-Colonial Model

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500 Years of Colonialism create Global Racial Stratification - clarifies race relations today

A. **Scope:** At one time or another Europe ruled 85% of global land surface (See Fig. 1)
   1. One tiny island (England) controls 26% of global land surface and population
   2. Whites rule over people of color
B. Examples: French West Africa, Belgian Congo, British Guiana
C. **Theme 1 of Model:** global stratification system created by force (at gunpoint):
   1. Europe first to head toward industrialization and superior military technology

**Theme 2:** Global Racial Stratification System Institutionalized in World Economy/Culture

A. **North/South legacy:** income differential partial by-product of colonialism:
   1. Per capital GNP (1978): Africa $500, Asia $280 vs. $9600 U.S./Canada
   2. Economic dependency: trade, investment, aid, jobs controlled by former colonizers

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**Theme 3:** Racial ideology legitimates Colonialism

A. Argues power/privileges produced by merit (superiority): once “white man’s burden”
B. Argues privilege bestowed by nature rather than social oppression—stifles rebellion
C. De Gobineau, Galton, Chamberlain advance racial theories at height of colonialism
   1. No accident this happens in last half of 19th century when colonial rule expands rapidly

**Theme 4:** Stratification within countries by-product of global colonial system

A. **Slavery:** Africans incorporated in bottom strata of U.S. through colonial slave trade
B. **Indian's forcible removal:** colonizer’s weapons force Indians onto worthless land (reservations) (See Fig. 2)
C. Treaty of Guadeloupe-Hidalgo (1848): Mexico loses 1/3 land; Spanish language not respected (See Fig. 3)

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