

## PREJUDICE AND HOSTILITY: SOME PERSPECTIVES

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### Introduction

In the United States the largest segment of studies has predictively been the descriptive or documentation of racial prejudice for over four decades (Crosby, Bromley and Saxe, 1984). The differential treatment of individuals based on their group membership, especially race, can be measured by discriminatory behaviour and prejudiced attitudes. The pre-sumption of certain attributes in individuals solely on the basis of a particular group, called stereotyping, is another form of prejudice that is a useful measure for racism.

In Indonesia prejudice and discrimination are pervasive as well (see Helmi, 1991), however, there are claims that discrimination cannot last long in the country with equality as the way of life.

Because prejudice and discrimination exist in many places, scholars have been led to study the phenomena systematically. Generally speaking, there are two explanations of prejudice in social psychology: One is the individual approach, and the other implies intergroup analysis. This article will focus on the discussion of prejudice in as an intergroup phenomenon while the individual approach will be discussed as a complement to and comparison of the whole explanations.

### Theories of Prejudice

Prejudice can be classified as social representations of intergroup relations. Technically, prejudice could be applied to the cognitive content of interpersonal and inter-group perceptions as well as affective components such as like and dislike. The most important indicator of prejudice, as a cognitive component, is a negative evaluation. The other component of prejudice is a predisposition to react as a behavioural factor. To some extent, these components are not necessarily congruent, however, cognitive content is sometimes used concerning the affective component. The behavioural component is obviously controlled by internal and external factors such as norms, values, and social control, before it manifests.

The distinction between the personal tendency to be prejudiced and prejudice in society is important. The theory of Adorno et al. (1950) explains prejudice in terms of internal characteristics of individuals. They found that persons who are highly prejudiced are characterised by an authoritarian personality. This characteristic is developed by experiences of conflicts. Because authoritarian persons have lacked adaptive tools for coping with the ambivalence, they deal with problems by way of defensiveness such as projection of unpleasant imagination to others. These persons have a strong orientation toward authority and status. In addition, prejudiced people typically direct their prejudice toward most groups or people who are different from themselves rather than toward a specific group. Adorno et al. only specified that when the authoritarian discovers inferior persons or groups, this inferiority justifies him or her to be aggressive toward them.

The theory accounts for individual differences in the levels of prejudice. Some people are prejudiced and others are tolerant. The recognition of individual differences is a strength of the inner state theory of prejudice (Aboud, 1988).

The conception of the authoritarian personality has been widened by Rokeach (1960) by labelling dogmatism or closed-mindedness. He viewed dogmatism as a mode of thought or a cognitive style characterised by rigidity and intolerance of ambiguity. Moreover, he defined dogmatism as a cognitive organisation of beliefs about reality, which is relatively closed. It is organised around central beliefs about absolute authority that provides a framework for patterns of intolerance toward others.

Rokeach's theory has been recognised as the belief congruence theory. In terms of intergroup relations, Rokeach argues that people are attracted to others with similar beliefs in order to validate their own. He also proposes that similarities and differences of beliefs in many situations are more important for acceptance or rejection of others than for group memberships. Based on a study conducted by Rokeach and his colleagues, he concluded that prejudice was an outcome of perceived belief incongruence. The incongruence could be caused by closed-mindedness that can lead to misleading perceptions.

Belief congruence theory is basically individualistic since the theory assumes that intergroup relations depend upon individual belief systems. Thus, when it is applied for explaining intergroup phenomena, the theory seems to be interpersonal theory of intergroup relations (Milner, 1981). However, belief congruence has specified more specifically the target of prejudice, that is individuals who have different beliefs to the subjects. This is a strength of the belief congruence theory in which Adorno et al. do not mention the specific target for prejudice.

The societal or intergroup explanation of prejudice does not focus on individuals who are prejudiced, but on conditions and events that contribute to intensify prejudice. This approach could be a complement to previous theories rather than a contradiction. The facts show that in conflict-free conditions some individuals are more prejudiced than others. On the other hand, intergroup conflicts tend to influence attitudes of nonauthoritarians and authoritarians as well.

According to intergroup explanations, prejudice is basically an intergroup process (Babad, Birbaun and Benne, 1983). The pioneers of this approach are Sherif and Sherif (1969) who conclude that hostile attitudes are the creation of competitive relation between groups. However, Billig (1973) argues that intergroup competition is not a necessary condition for intergroup attitudes. He suggests that group-formation during a phase of experiments creates the social categorisation and ingroup identity. These developments initiate intergroup attitudes. The analysis of Billig has been a basis of a body of theory developed by some scholars (e.g., Billig and Tajfel, 1973; Perdue et al., 1990; Turner, 1975).

Billig and Tajfel (1973) found that the determinant of favouritism shown by subjects was the presence or absence of minimal intergroup categorisation. Ingroup-outgroup membership per se has been sufficient for intergroup competition. Conflict of interest or history of hostility was not necessary to create competition between groups.

How does competition between groups relate to discrimination and prejudice? The basic findings of studies show that subjects discriminated in their decision in favour of the ingroup and against outgroup members. They were competitive, not only discriminating by giving more money to their own group members but they also tried to give outgroup members less than was possible. Turner (1981) gives further clarifications that intergroup discrimination depends on subjects perceiving each other as representatives of their groups. Ingroup-outgroup division also makes subjects favour dissimilar ingroup members over similar outgroup members. Thus, social categorisation seems to be the effective cause of intergroup discrimination. People will discriminate because they tend to stereotype themselves as similar or different based on group memberships.

Summarising various findings on the minimal intergroup situations, Horwitz and Rabbie (1982) concluded that the tendency to favour the ingroup over the outgroup increases when the



following conditions occur. Firstly, there is an explicit similarity within the ingroup. Secondly, a spirit of competition between the groups is fostered. Thirdly, the outgroup is perceived to control the outcomes of ingroup power. Finally, there is a strong perception of the ingroup as a unity.

Tajfel and Turner have also developed social identity theory, which can be useful to analyse prejudice. Social identity is "that part of the individual's self concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance of that membership" (Tajfel, 1982, p. 255). According to social identity theory, membership of a social category will contribute to one's social identity. Turner (1982) argues that the desire to evaluate that category positively is needed for positive self esteem. However, positive social identity is difficult to evaluate if there is not another social (group) category as a comparison. In line with this idea, prejudices are held and maintained by individuals in the framework of their own social identities.

### The Synthesis

The earlier theory has hypothesized that prejudice serves an important function for authoritarian personality (Adorno et al., 1950). The empirical evidence of the theory, since then, has been limited. Studies of the role of personality in prejudice have changed to the relationship between prejudice and self esteem (see Crocker and Schwartz, 1985; Crocker et al., 1987; and Crocker and Luhtanen, 1990).

Crocker and her colleagues (Crocker and Schwartz, 1985; Crocker et al., 1987) found that low self esteem individuals are consistently more prejudiced than people who have high self-esteem. The findings support Allport's (1954) argument that low esteem individuals enhance their feeling about themselves by deprecating others. When another finding in Crocker's study shows that low self esteem persons tend to perceive all targets negatively, including ingroup as well as outgroup members, the role of personality in prejudice seems to be very important. These findings clarified the basic idea of Adorno et al.

There is no evidence of self-enhancing bias in the studies of Crocker and Schwartz (1985) and Crocker et al. (1987). However, a review by Taylor and Brown (1988) indicates that people who are high in personal self-esteem show self serving biases, distortion and self-enhancing. In contrast, individuals who are typically low in self-esteem tend to have no self-enhancing biases. These results lead to a speculation that prejudice and self-enhancement could be two separated concepts and not correlated to each other. To some extent, especially in terms of intergroup relation, self-enhancement is a strong predictor of ingroup favouritism or ethnocentrism. When group membership has positive implications for personal attributes, self enhancement predictably has a strong relationship with ingroup bias as well as when a group has more prestige.

So far, the findings have been based on studies of individual differences and minimal group situations. As mentioned, in the early studies of social categorisation, the minimal group situation was sufficient for intergroup discrimination (see Billig, 1985; Tajfel et al., 1971; Turner, 1975). This result can be interpreted as indicating that social categorisation is one basis for prejudice since it manifests in discrimination. But, later studies (see Brewer, 1979; Brewer and Kramer, 1985) show that "the enhancement of ingroup bias is more related to increase favouritism toward ingroup members than to increase hostility toward outgroup members" (Brewer, 1979, p.307). In other words, ingroup bias is a function of ingroup enhancement, but not necessarily outgroup derogation.

Social identity theory is not concerned with individual differences, however, the theory categories personal and social identities as aspects of self-concept. The failure of categorisation to understand prejudice may be caused by lack of a link between behaviour such as discrimination and

the self-concept. By including personal identity as an aspect of self-concept, prejudice could be explained by social identity theory more clearly.

### Prejudice and Hostility

Crocker and Luhtanen (1990) assume that a positive personal identity is characterised by high personal self-esteem. According to social identity theory, to get and maintain a high level of self-esteem, people try to develop and protect their self-concepts. In intergroup relations, people maintain their positive social identity when they compare with other social groups especially if their social identity is threatened. To favour the ingroup is a common way to maintain social identity. As a result, the salience between ingroup and outgroup exists in intergroup relations especially competition (Brewer, 1979). When groups become salience, in which the group boundaries are meaningful, outgroup derogation or prejudice could be more prevalent.

One determinant of an intergroup boundary is dissimilarity between groups. The more that attributes such as beliefs, attitudes and values differ, the more the group members perceive they are distinct from other groups. It seems that belief congruence theory (Barnard and Benn, 1988; Rokeach, 1960) is applied to clarify intergroup prejudice besides the analysis of personality and social identity theory. Furthermore, all three analyses may complement each other for explaining hostility.

The most remarkable distinction between social identity theory and the conflict of interest concept (Sherif and Sherif, 1969) when analysing prejudice and hostility is the order of occurrence of prejudice and hostility. In Sherif and Sherif's experiment prejudice exists following hostility, or they go together, while social identity theory emphasises that social categorisation per se is effective for creating discrimination. As mentioned above, a critique to the conflict of interest concept when analysing prejudice is its ignorance on group formation process. Thus, hostility seems to be more likely to follow prejudice rather than the reverse. In contrast, social categorisation is too weak to create prejudice.

On the other hand, the difference between belief congruence theory and social identity theory lies in the perspective of similarity and dissimilarity between groups. Social identity theory hypothesized that ingroup-outgroup similarity threatens ingroup uniqueness. If individuals perceive themselves as having similarity with each other in a group they may also perceive that they are losing superiority. In the presence of competition perceived similarity leads to hostility toward outgroup. However, in the absence of competition perceived similarity promotes a positive orientation to the outgroup. The latter proposition seems to be parallel to belief congruence theory, while the hypothesis of a negative effect of intergroup similarity opposes hypothesized negative effect of dissimilarity on intergroup behaviour of belief congruence theory.

Ingroup favouritism and perceived value dissimilarity may not be able to induce overt hostility directly. Harming other group members cognitively is inconsistent with one's self concept because individuals seek a positive social identity as proposed by social identity theory. To engage in hostility toward others someone or group members should find strong causes for harming that are acceptable by society. A reason that may be acceptable as the motive to hostility is a conflict of interest as suggested by Sherif and Sherif (1969).

A variable that may moderate ingroup-outgroup conflict and hostility proposed by Struch and Schwartz (1990) is perceived permeability of the ingroup-outgroup boundary. The assumption is that the sharper the separation one feels from others, the less one is likely to empathize with them. In addition, perceived ingroup-outgroup conflict creates the perception that the boundaries between groups are less permeable. Thus, individuals are less likely to stop harming members of other



groups because the greater the perceived conflict is and less permeable the boundaries perceived are, the less likely individuals are to empathize with those in the other group.

Struch and Schwartz (1990) postulate that the stronger the conflict, the more dehumanisation of the outgroup occurs, which is necessary to justify intergroup hostility. Based on belief congruence theory, Struch and Schwartz assume that an outgroup is perceived to be inhumane if there is a great dissimilarity between ingroup and outgroup in their hierarchies of basic values that reflect what people wish to do or to be. The dissimilarity of values also motivates group members to attribute to the outgroup relatively negative that is useful to deal with hostility. In other words, a perceived dissimilar value hierarchy may justify ignoring norms opposed to doing harm.

In considering hostility between groups, Brown (1986) is concerned with perceived inequity threatened to group members as a disadvantaged group. Inequity would be a stimulus of hostility if individuals perceive that the ratio of profit, which is desirable rewards minus undesirable outcomes, and investment to get reward they obtain are unbalanced with what other people reach for in the same manner. The state of injustice would be more complicated, in accordance with equity theory, because group members think they have to have more resources and profits than outgroup. Consequently, the equal distributions might not be perceived as equity and the unequal distribution will result in hostility.

### Concluding Remarks

This paper has quoted several theories to explain prejudice. In spite of an agreement that prejudice is basically an intergroup process, it does not mean that individual differences are ignored. There is an interaction between inner state and intergroup relations that leads persons to be prejudiced individually or as a member of groups.

Some disagreements among theories, of course, cannot be avoided. The conflict of interest concept, for instance, argues that hostility produces prejudice. In contrast, according to social identity theory, prejudice does not necessarily follow competition. These perspectives seem to oppose one another, but they could be combined. Prejudice that is following hostility or competition may become stronger than prejudice just because of social categorisation.

The difference between belief congruence and social identity theory when explaining prejudice in competitive situation has been tested by Struch and Schwartz (1989). Because the finding shows that ingroup-outgroup dissimilarity is a stronger prediction of hostility than the similarity, it could be concluded that dissimilarity will lead to prejudice and hostility in competitive conditions as well, not only in noncompetitive situations as predicted by the social identity theory.

By eliminating the differences among theories of prejudice, those theories can support one another in explaining prejudice and hostility by making these phenomena more understandable. The study of Crocker and Luhtanen (1990) has synthesized personality and group variables in the model; Struch and Schwartz (1989) combine belief congruence and social identity theory in their study; and Brown (1986) places social identity and equity theory together in his analysis of hostility. These efforts are more useful than a study using a specific concept. Future research could explore prejudice and hostility by using more complicated models that involve more theories.

Finally, social psychologists have recognised that improving positive intergroup relations is not an easy task. In addition, a contact between groups does not necessarily lead to reduce prejudice because each group has a different identity which, according to social categorisation, will induce ingroup favouritism. As mentioned, ethnocentrism may not lead to the derogation of outgroup unless dissimilarity of beliefs, attitudes and values, conflict of interest, and perceived injustice exist. However, ingroup favouritism is a basis for the occurrence of prejudice, especially when a

group becomes salient. Based on these perspectives, prejudice can be reduced by widening group boundaries by promoting the pursuit of common goals that represent the needs of many different groups. Thus, there is a general objective that can be shared over group interests and lead participants to have equal status. Having the same goals will obtain cooperative conditions which are necessary to eliminate prejudice. \*\*\*

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