CHAPTER 3

TOOLS OF DOMINANCE

Prejudice and Discrimination

We have now seen that in most multiethnic societies, ethnic groups are arranged in a hierarchy in which the dominant group receives a disproportionate share of the society's rewards because of its greater political, economic, and cultural power. It is not enough, however, to simply proclaim that the dominant group is more powerful, though this is, of course, the crux of the matter. We must also look at the techniques by which dominance and subordination are maintained and stabilized in systems of ethnic stratification.

To enforce its power and sustain its privileges, the dominant ethnic group employs certain tools:

- Widely held beliefs and values regarding the character and capacities of particular groups, which take the form of **prejudices**; that is, negative ideas regarding subordinate ethnic groups and ideas expressing the superiority of the dominant group. These beliefs often come together in a cohesive ideology of racism or another deterministic notion; but at other times, they are applied to groups in a somewhat disparate, unsystematic fashion.
- Actions against minority ethnic groups, including avoidance, denial, threat, or physical attack. These actions are termed **discrimination**. Different forms of discrimination may be applied, depending on how threatening the minority group is perceived to be.

In this chapter, we look at some theories and research findings regarding prejudice and discrimination in multiethnic societies. This area of ethnic relations has been the focus of much research, yielding a large amount of empirical data. In looking at prejudice and discrimination, we will necessarily investigate some of the social psychology of ethnic relations; that is, ethnic relations at the individual, or interpersonal, level. Up to this point we have been concerned primarily with ethnic

relations at the group, or structural, level; and our approach to prejudice and discrimination will continue to emphasize the group dynamics and consequences of these social phenomena. But here, more than in other aspects of ethnic studies, we must pay closer attention to individual attitudes and motives, recognizing that, as the sociologist C. Wright Mills put it, "Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both" (1956:3).

PREJUDICE

Most simply, prejudice involves a judgment, "based on a fixed mental image of some group or class of people and applied to all individuals of that class without being tested against reality" (Mason, 1970:52). It is, in other words, a generalized belief, usually unfavorable and rigid, applied to all members of a particular group. Although often defined as a prejudgment or preconcept founded on inadequate evidence (Klineberg, 1968), prejudice is, as Berry and Tischler have pointed out, "more emotion, feeling, and bias than it is judgment" (1978:235).

Ethnic prejudices are characterized by several specific features.

- They are *categorical*, or generalized, thoughts. Individuals are judged on the basis of their group membership, not their personal attributes. A prejudicial attitude may be directed at a particular person, but it is the person's group and its alleged traits that evoke this attitude rather than his or her individual actions and qualities. Once the person's group is known, his or her behavioral traits are inferred. Thus, prejudice violates "the norms of rationality" (Pettigrew, 1980:821).
- They are *inflexible*. As the social psychologist Gordon Allport explains, "Prejudgments become prejudices only if they are not reversible when exposed to new knowledge" (1958:9). A prejudice is not simply an error in thought, but is an error not subject to correction. Individuals develop emotional attachments to certain beliefs and will not discard them in the light of contrary evidence. People may proclaim that "some of their best friends" are members of a particular ethnic group that they generally view adversely. The implication is that such persons do not exhibit the negative qualities ordinarily attributed to members of their ethnic group. But instead of refuting the belief, which logic would dictate, they serve only as "exceptions that prove the rule." Such contrary evidence is recognized but excluded from the generalization; it thus has no correcting effect (Allport, 1958).
- They are usually *negative* in content. That is, the specific traits ascribed to targeted groups are considered inferior and socially undesirable. Of course, prejudices may be positive as well as negative. Ethnic group members maintain an overly favorable image of their own group, just as they maintain overly unfavorable images of certain out-groups. Indeed, all ethnic groups express ethnocentric notions regarding their unique character. Moreover, what is often interpreted as prejudice against out-groups may in fact be more a matter of in-group bias; that is, favoritism toward members of one's own group (Brewer, 1979; Jones, 1996). In studying ethnic relations, however, sociologists and psychologists have been concerned almost exclusively with negative prejudices.

- They are based on erroneous or inadequate group images called *stereotypes*. Because they compose the chief content of ethnic prejudices, let us look more closely at these generalized group images.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes were first suggested in 1922 by political commentator Walter Lippmann, who described them as "pictures in our heads" that we do not acquire through personal experience. In the case of ethnic stereotypes, distinctive behavioral traits of an ethnic group are selected by out-group members who exaggerate them to construct what Shibutani and Kwan call "a shorthand depiction" of the group (1965:86).

Rarely will people claim to dislike someone of another ethnic group merely because he or she is a member of that group. Instead, the adverse view will be couched in "rational" terms. One dislikes Jews because they are "shrewd," blacks because they are "lazy," or Italians because they are "loud and uncouth." These mental images of groups thus serve as supports for the negative beliefs that constitute prejudice. Once we learn the stereotypes attached to particular groups, we tend to subsequently perceive individual members according to those generalized images. To stereotype someone, then, "is to attribute to that person some characteristics which are seen to be shared by all or most of his or her fellow group members" (Brown, 1995:82).

Rational Stereotypes Clearly, however, generalizing about groups or objects is a most common pattern of thought. Indeed, it is the very mental technique that facilitates social interaction, particularly in modern, complex societies where we cannot possibly know all the personal characteristics of those whom we encounter daily. Thus, on the basis of some identifying marks such as ethnicity, sex, age, or occupation, we generalize and make judgments about people. In a sense, generalizing on the basis of group membership is a kind of predictive mechanism we use in various social situations.

Consider an example familiar to college students. On the first day of class, students meet Professor X. Professor X is known only as part of the group called professors, about which there are certain general ideas. Professors ordinarily lecture, give examinations, grade students, and so on. Armed with this understanding of the category *professors*, students naturally expect Professor X to behave accordingly. The chances are very great that Professor X will conform to their expectations. In the same way, of course, Professor X may meet his or her students for the first time knowing nothing more about them but that they are students. With this bit of knowledge, however, Professor X can "predict" the actions of the students, using the same technique of categorizing they have used. In this situation, people are expected to perform the roles of professor and student according to the social "script" attached to each.

In most cases our expectations or predictions about how people will act in different social situations prove correct. As a result, we can interact with people about whom we know nothing more than their social identifications, that is, their group

memberships. Individuals occasionally fail to perform in the manner expected, and our predictions are then proved incorrect. But these are not the usual cases. For the most part, we understand correctly what is expected of people in various social roles—professor, student, doctor, father, Catholic, and so on—and what our behavior toward them should be. This is the nature of rational thought and behavior. How, then, do ethnic stereotypes differ from these common forms of generalized or predictive thought?

ETHNIC STEREOTYPES Ethnic stereotypes differ from rational generalizations in that they are oversimplistic and overexaggerated beliefs about a group, generally acquired secondhand and resistant to change (Harding, 1968; Pettigrew, 1980). Thus, ethnic stereotypes are sustained despite numerous individual cases that clearly refute their validity.

The characteristics attributed to various ethnic groups are established in popular beliefs and become "part of our shared understanding of who 'we' and 'they' are" (Wright and Taylor, 2003:434). That is, they are socially shared representations of groups and they structure and perpetuate intergroup relations. Because stereotypes are *group* depictions, individuals to whom the stereotype is applied are seen not as individuals per se but as representatives of the group of which they are a part.

The content of ethnic stereotypes may change periodically and sometimes radically, depending on different economic, political, and social circumstances. Whatever their content, however, they are conveyed in subtle but effective ways through various socialization agencies, including the family, the school, and the mass media. Thus stereotypes cannot be seen as irrational pictures of ethnic groups held by a numerically insignificant part of the general population. Rather, they are part of the society's heritage, and as Ehrlich (1973) explains, no person can grow up in a society without having learned them.

SELECTIVE PERCEPTION Stereotypes are reinforced through selective perception. This means that people take note of those cases that confirm their stereotypical pictures and overlook or ignore those that refute them. Those who believe blacks to be lazy or Jews to be deceitful will take special notice of those blacks or Jews who do in fact exhibit such traits but will fail to notice the many more blacks and Jews who do not. Moreover, these stereotypical traits will be inferred, even if they are not evident, so that the observers of an ethnic group will interpret the actions of group members based on their preconceived image.

In addition, stereotypes fail to show how members of the dominant group may share the same negative traits imputed to minority groups; or how the dominant group, through the self-fulfilling prophecy, may contribute to the very creation of these unfavorable traits (Simpson and Yinger, 1985).

UNIFORMITY AND PERSISTENCE OF STEREOTYPES The pioneer study of ethnic stereotyping in the United States was conducted in 1933 by Katz and Braly, who questioned 100 Princeton undergraduates on the prevailing stereotypes of various ethnic groups. Their findings indicated a very high degree of uniformity, in some cases as high as 75 percent. Jews, for example, were consistently described as "shrewd," "mercenary," and "ambitious"; blacks as "superstitious," "happy-go-lucky," and

"lazy"; and Germans as "scientifically minded," "industrious," and "stolid." Katz and Braly noted that the students had had little or no contact with members of most of the groups they described, an indication that they had acquired the stereotypes by absorbing the dominant culture.

Gilbert replicated this study in 1951 and found a prevalence of many of the same stereotypes. However, he also detected a marked change in attitude. Many students now expressed reluctance to categorize people whom they did not know. A third generation of Princeton students was questioned in 1967, and the researchers in that case also encountered irritation and resentment among those asked to generalize about ethnic groups. Further, they found that the actual content of the stereotypes had now changed considerably, with some groups such as blacks and Jews being assigned more favorable traits than had been the case in 1933 (Karlins et al., 1969). But the uniformity of the application of stereotypes had not changed. In other words, some traditional stereotypes had declined in frequency, but they had been replaced by others, some more favorable than previously. The researchers concluded that although the students in 1967 appeared to be more tolerant and less receptive to stereotyping, the application of ethnic stereotypes was still evident.

In a more recent study, Devine and Elliot (1995) suggested that the three Princeton studies all suffered from several methodological shortcomings. First, they did not distinguish between stereotypes and personal beliefs. Knowing an ethnic stereotype does not necessarily mean that one *believes* that these traits actually characterize members of the group. Also, the Princeton studies made no assessment of the respondents' level of prejudice, nor did they employ stereotypical terms that are more prevalent today than they were in 1933, when the study was first conducted. Devine and Elliot sought to correct these shortcomings, although they measured changes only in the stereotypes of blacks, not the full range of groups dealt with in the Princeton studies. They found that there is today a clear and consistent negative stereotype of blacks, but that personal beliefs about blacks are equally consistently positive. They concluded that the earlier Princeton studies were actually measuring personal beliefs, not stereotypes, which may or may not be congruent. Although the stereotype is well understood by all, only highly prejudiced people actually endorse it.

An important question posed by Devine and Elliot's study is why stereotypes persist if they don't represent what a great many people believe about a group. Perhaps most important is their durability as part of the society's cultural fabric. Social norms regarding overt expressions of prejudice have changed considerably, yet ethnic stereotypes persist in more subtle and covert, yet effectual, ways.

STEREOTYPE CREATION AND CHANGE A noteworthy international study was conducted by Buchanan and Cantril (1953) in the early 1950s that demonstrated how ethnic stereotypes can rise and fall, depending on social and political circumstances. Respondents from eight countries were asked to describe people of other countries by choosing from a list of descriptive adjectives. (This was similar to the technique used by Katz and Braly and others.) The general findings of this study were that people in all eight countries displayed a tendency to use stereotypes in describing other national groups, that their own compatriots were always described in flattering terms, and that the choice of either complimentary or derogatory adjectives depended largely on the current state of relations between the nations.

Based on their evidence, Buchanan and Cantril concluded that stereotypes, rather than preceding people's reaction to a certain group, ordinarily do not exist until objective events demand their creation. Thus they stressed that stereotypes should be thought of not as causative but as symptomatic. As they put it, "Perhaps their important function is the wartime one of providing a rationale within which men are able to kill, deceive, and perform other acts not sanctioned by the usual moral code" (1953:57).

A clear illustration of the creation of stereotypes as a means of rationalizing events is the dramatic change after World War II in the stereotypes of Japanese and Germans held by Americans. During the war, negative images of these two groups—as evil, hostile, and cruel—prevailed; but by the 1960s the groups were seen as clean, efficient, and industrious. The image of Russians was also altered, but in the opposite direction. As World War II allies, the Russians were portrayed in generally positive terms, but this image changed in the late 1940s with the onset of the Cold War and the emergence of the Soviet Union as the United States' chief ideological foe.

THE COMPETITIVE USE OF STEREOTYPES In the same way that wartime stereotypes are used to rationalize hostility toward enemy nations, stereotypes are used by dominant groups in multiethnic societies to sustain their competitive advantage over challenging or threatening ethnic groups. The negative images of blacks long held by whites in the United States or South Africa have their counterparts in Northern Ireland, where Protestants, the dominant ethnic group, have traditionally held adverse images of Catholics. In these cases, the persistence of negative group images can be explained as a rationale on the part of the dominant group for keeping the minority ethnic group or groups in a subordinate position. As long as groups are perceived as undeserving, their social disadvantages can be justified (Devine and Sherman, 1992).

The competitive use of stereotypes may explain their very content. Simpson and Yinger note, for example, that those groups that have successfully competed with the dominant group cannot be labeled lazy or unintelligent, "so they are pictured as too ambitious, and with a crafty kind of self-interested intelligence" (1985:155). This can be seen clearly in the case of Jews in the United States and other societies where they have exhibited an exceptional ability to achieve economic success. Allport (1958) compares the admirable traits of Abraham Lincoln with the disliked traits of Jews and finds them quite the same. Both are generally described as thrifty, hardworking, eager for knowledge, ambitious, devoted to the rights of the average man, and eminently successful in climbing the ladder of opportunity. The key difference, explains Allport, is that the terms used to describe the Jews are often disparaging. Thus, thrifty becomes "tight-fisted," hardworking becomes "overambitious," ambitious becomes "pushy," and concerned about human rights becomes "radical" (1958:184). Much the same semantic reversals of positive traits have been used in describing Chinese and East Indians in various Asian and African societies where they constitute economically successful minority groups (Hunt and Walker, 1974; Kristof, 1998).

A related notion is "ambivalent stereotypes" (Fiske et al., 1999). The idea is that one can envy and respect high-status groups for their competence, but dislike them nonetheless. Asian Americans, as we will see in Chapter 9, are admired as a "model minority" for their economic and intellectual accomplishments; at the same

time they are often the victims of subtle discrimination. By the same token, one can disrespect low-status groups for their incompetence, but still like them.

THE MASS MEDIA AND STEREOTYPES With their pervasiveness and enormous impact in modern societies, the mass media—television and motion pictures, in particular—are key conveyors of ethnic stereotypes. For example, until recently blacks in American films traditionally played subservient characters and rarely were given starring roles except in all-black productions (Brown, 1981; Sterngold, 1998a). Other racial and ethnic minorities have fared little better. American Indians have been portrayed customarily as savages and Hispanics as untrustworthy villains (Coward, 1999; Engelhardt, 1975; Moore and Pachon, 1985). The early years of American television, the 1950s and 1960s, were marked by an almost total exclusion of minorities from the screen except for stereotyped roles. The absence of blacks was due mainly to the fear held by networks and program sponsors of offending white viewers, especially in the South (Sterngold, 1998a; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977).

In the last four decades, the presence of ethnic minorities in sitcoms, news presentations, and other programming has increased enormously, reflecting proportionately their population segments (Dougherty, 2003; Greenberg and Brand, 1998; Wilson and Gutiérrez, 1995). Nonetheless, the mass media continue to sustain ethnic stereotypes. Media researcher Robert Entman has demonstrated how television news upholds the common stereotype of African Americans, for example, as "poor." The linkage of "black" and "poor" is so strong in the presentation of televised news, explains Entman, that "the white public's perceptions of poverty appear difficult to disentangle from their thinking about African Americans" (1997:33). Moreover, as political scientist Martin Gilens explains, the undeserving character of welfare recipients, in the minds of many white Americans, has come to be associated specifically with African Americans. Historically well-worn stereotypes of blacks—as lazy and irresponsible—were first projected by the mass media in the mid-1960s when many welfare programs were created or expanded. These negative images continue to influence the view of white Americans of the typical beneficiary of welfare (Gilens, 1999). The stereotypical linkage of crime and violence with African Americans is similarly bolstered by television news, especially at the local level.

The mass media, however, may also convey exaggerated positive images. De Roche and de Roche (1991) studied episodes of five police series popular in the 1980s, comparing characterizations of black and white officers. They found that black men in these dramas had been "counterstereotyped." That is, not only were these men not described with negative ghetto stereotypes, but they were portrayed in overly favorable terms in comparison with white officers. "In the collection of characters on which we focused, black men are modeled for us as more bourgeois than their white counterparts, more self-directed and affectively well-managed, and more tasteful. . . . They clearly confirm the traditional ideal of a stable, financially responsible husband/father, and this in an era when female-headed, single-parent families are becoming increasingly common in all social sectors" (de Roche and de Roche, 1991:86).[1]

[1] The researchers found, however, that blacks in these police dramas tended to remain support characters, not as qualified as whites to head up their organizations.

Although most observers agree that the electronic media are important transmitters of ethnic stereotypes and attitudes, both positive and negative, studies have indicated that their effect may be only to reinforce ideas already acquired before exposure. Vidmar and Rokeach's study (1974) of viewers of a popular television sitcom of the 1970s, *All in the Family*, demonstrates this point. This program set a precedent in its candid use of ethnic humor and its general treatment of ethnic-related issues. The chief protagonist, Archie Bunker, is a humorous bigot who voices well-established ethnic slurs and stereotypes and expresses blatant racist ideas. The producers of the program argued that openly dealing with bigotry and making the major character a laughable figure would serve to reduce societal prejudice. Poking fun at bigotry, it was felt, would force viewers to recognize their own prejudices and thus reduce them. Others, however, argued that the program encouraged prejudice by introducing people, particularly children, to ideas they might not otherwise be exposed to.

Vidmar and Rokeach hypothesized that a process of selective perception would cause viewers to react differently to Archie Bunker's bigotry, depending on their prior attitudes. Viewers who were not prejudiced to begin with, they felt, would see Bunker as a bigot and would understand the show's satirical messages, whereas prejudiced viewers would see Bunker as honest and candid. Two groups of respondents—one made up of American adolescents, the other of Canadian adults—were asked their reactions to the program; they were also given a set of attitudinal questions designed to measure their level of prejudice. The study's findings confirmed the selective-perception hypothesis: Reactions to the program varied in relation to prior attitudes. Those less prejudiced recognized Archie Bunker as bigoted, rigid, and domineering; those more highly prejudiced recognized him as down-to-earth, frank, and hardworking.

Vidmar and Rokeach also hypothesized that those high in prejudice would not watch the program as frequently as those less prejudiced. This hypothesis was based on the well-researched notion that people expose themselves to social stimuli that are compatible with their established views and attitudes. For example, campaign speeches by political candidates are listened to or watched mainly by those who are already committed to those candidates. In much the same way, it was thought that because the show was a satire on bigotry, the more frequent viewers would be those low in prejudice. However, Vidmar and Rokeach suggested that if many viewers did not see the program as satire, it would be just as reasonable to predict the opposite; that is, the more frequent viewers would be the most highly prejudiced. Their data supported the latter view: The program seemed more appealing to those more highly prejudiced.

This and other studies (see, for example, Sarlin and Tate, 1976) suggest that television may only bolster ethnic stereotypes and attitudes already conveyed in other socialization settings. Though the electronic media are unarguably pervasive, their effectiveness in conveying the same messages to all viewers is by no means certain. Moreover, the extent and nature of television's effect on how children of different racial and ethnic groups interact with each other, as well as how it affects their attitudes toward and knowledge of different groups, are still subject to much debate (Graves, 1999).

Social Distance

Prejudice involves not simply mental perceptions of ethnic groups (the cognitive dimension of prejudice) but also emotions and a preparedness to act in a certain way toward members of those groups (the affective and conative dimensions). If people believe blacks to be lazy and shiftless, for example, they will also probably feel resentment over welfare payments to blacks, who it is felt obviously do not deserve such assistance. Similar payments to poor whites, however, may go unnoticed or may be seen as merited.

The affective and conative dimensions of prejudice are reflections of **social distance**. Park (1924) first defined social distance as a degree of intimacy people are prepared to establish in their relations with others. Feelings of social distance are, according to Williams, "feelings of unwillingness among members of a group to accept or approve a given degree of intimacy in interaction with a member of an out-group" (1964:29). It is, in a sense, an indication of how acceptable or objectionable are various ethnic groups.

THE BOGARDUS SCALE In 1925 the sociologist Emory Bogardus constructed a technique to measure social distance between specific American ethnic groups. This social distance scale has continued to be used by sociologists as a general measure of ethnic prejudice. Respondents are asked to indicate whether they would accept a member of an ethnic out-group in varying social contexts, extending from very close encounters to very remote ones. Bogardus asked his respondents to indicate their willingness to interact with members of particular groups in the following situations:

- Close kin by marriage
- Fellow club members
- Neighbors
- Workers in my occupation
- Citizens of my country
- Visitors to my country
- Persons to be excluded from my country

Each situation represents a lower degree of social intimacy, and assigning an increasing numerical value to each allows a score to be computed for each ethnic group. American social distance scales compiled by Bogardus and others over several generations reveal the relative consistency of the group ranking from year to year. WASPs (white Anglo-Saxon Protestants) are at the top of the scale, followed by other northwestern European groups and, in descending order, southern and eastern Europeans, Jews, and various racial-ethnic groups (Bogardus, 1925a, 1925b, 1959; Owen et al., 1981).

Studies of social distance in non-American societies indicate the similar construction of a hierarchy (Bogardus, 1968; Lever, 1968; Pettigrew, 1960), but the basis of social distance may vary from one society to another. Whereas ethnic differences, particularly those with a physical basis, are the most significant criteria of social distance for Americans, in other societies religion, class, or political ideology may be more important factors in separating people (Banton, 1967).

MEASURING SOCIAL DISTANCE AND PREJUDICIAL ATTITUDES Feelings of social distance and ethnic prejudicial attitudes in general are difficult to accurately determine, for in real situations individuals do not always think or act as their verbal expressions seem to indicate. Attitudes are elusive and not always subject to clear-cut measurement, no matter how sophisticated the technique. What people tell pollsters, for example, may reflect only what they think are socially acceptable responses, not necessarily their real beliefs and feelings. That is, the pressure to conform to community and other group standards may force individuals to express attitudes that are not genuine. Moreover, the way in which poll questions are worded on racial and ethnic issues may strongly influence the results (Langer, 1989).

A pioneer study by Richard LaPiere (1934) demonstrated the unreliability of people's statements regarding ethnic prejudice. Between 1930 and 1932, LaPiere traveled throughout the United States with a Chinese couple and was refused hotel and dining service only one time. Shortly after his travels, he sent a questionnaire to hotels and restaurants asking whether they would accept Chinese as guests. To his surprise, LaPiere received mainly negative replies from those who responded. A similar finding was obtained in the early 1950s using a black couple as the test case (Kutner et al., 1952).

In sum, prejudice is multidimensional, and the negative attitudes people maintain toward various ethnic groups vary not only in intensity, but also in consistency. As we will see, changing situational contexts may force people to change their attitudes accordingly.

DISCRIMINATION

Whereas prejudice is the attitudinal element in enforcing ethnic stratification, discrimination is the active, or behavioral, element. Discrimination, most basically, is behavior aimed at denying members of particular ethnic groups equal access to societal rewards. Thus it goes well beyond merely thinking unfavorably about members of certain groups. Dominant groups carry out actions or enact and enforce legal or customary measures that in some way ensure that minority group members are treated differently and adversely. Recall the most basic aspect of minority status: differential and unequal treatment. Such treatment can involve a wide range of actions and measures in various realms of social life.

Although there are links between the two, prejudice and discrimination must be dealt with as distinct phenomena. There is ordinarily a tendency for prejudicial attitudes to accompany discriminatory behavior; but as we will see, one may occur without the other. Moreover, although the two may be causally related in some instances, in others there need be no cause-effect relationship. In any case, prejudice and discrimination are most frequently mutually reinforcing (Simpson and Yinger, 1985).

It is important to stress that, like prejudice, discrimination is applied on the basis of group membership, not individual attributes. Antonovsky explains that discrimination is a situation in which "individuals are denied desired and expected rewards or opportunities for reasons related not to their capacities, merits, or behavior, but solely because of membership in an identifiable out-group" (1960:81). Or, as Pettigrew defines it, discrimination is "an institutional process of exclusion against an out-group, racial or cultural, based simply on who they are rather than on their knowledge or abilities" (1980:821).

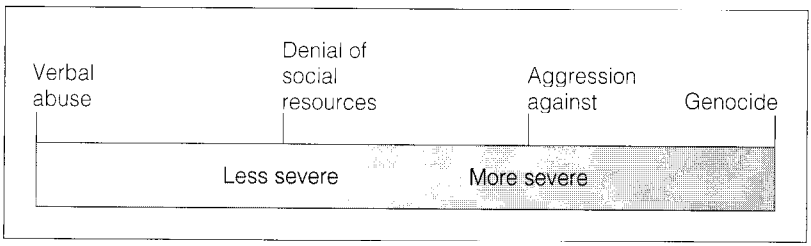

FIGURE 3.1 | SPECTRUM OF DISCRIMINATION

THE RANGE OF DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOR

The discriminatory actions that create disadvantages for minority group members vary widely both in form and degree. These variations may be seen on a scale, or continuum (Figure 3.1). The use of derogatory labels in referring to members of ethnic groups ("kike," "wop," "nigger") or phrases with pejorative ethnic references ("to Jew down," "to gyp," "Indian giver") is a relatively minor form of ethnic discrimination; in many cases the language may not even be understood by the user as disparaging. Nonetheless, such terms and phrases contribute to the perpetuation of ethnic stereotypes and render psychological damage of some nature to those who are their subjects.

More serious forms of discrimination with much greater injury to minorities involve the denial of access to various life chances such as jobs, housing, health care, education, justice, and political participation. Minority ethnic groups are placed in disadvantageous positions with regard to these societal rewards and end up receiving less than they would, absent ethnic barriers.

The most severe forms of discrimination involve acts of aggression against ethnic minorities, ranging from isolated incidents of violence to the attempt to exterminate an entire group, genocide. Examples of the full range abound in the modern world. In the United States, attacks on ethnic minorities have a long tradition, occurring as both selective actions undertaken by individuals or communities (such as lynchings, beatings, and bombings) and calculated public policies (such as American Indian removal in the nineteenth century and Japanese American internment in the 1940s). But the United States holds no monopoly on ethnic aggression. Comparable actions typify the history, current and past, of most multiethnic societies. Indeed, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed extremes of ethnic violence and destruction on a massive scale in a variety of world areas including, among many others, the annihilation of native peoples in Australia, South Africa, and North America; the slaughter of perhaps a million Armenians by Turks[2]; the systematic

[2] The Armenian genocide in 1915 is a strongly contested historical event. Turkey denies having carried out the deliberate killings, maintaining that Armenian deaths—far smaller in number than a million—were the result of the war that raged in the Ottoman Empire (of which modern Turkey and Armenia were then a part) at that time.

murder by the Nazis of 6 million Jews;[3] and more recently, the massacre of entire populations in Rwanda and Bosnia.

Types and Levels of Discrimination

Discrimination is not always overt, nor does it always entail intentional actions of denial or aggression. Furthermore, there is a vast difference between isolated actions of individuals and the rational policies of institutions in creating and sustaining patterns of discrimination. The behavior of one café owner in refusing to serve members of a particular ethnic group is hardly the equivalent of a state policy requiring separate eating facilities for members of that group. The different social contexts in which discrimination may occur and the often concealed and unintentional forms it may take require a more precise outline of discrimination.

To simplify matters, we can classify three general types of discrimination: micro, macro, and structural.

Micro Discrimination Actions taken by individuals or groups of limited size to injure or deny members of minority ethnic groups are perhaps the most easily understood form of discrimination. The employment manager who refuses to hire Asians, the judge who metes out unusually harsh sentences to blacks, and the homeowners' group that agrees not to sell houses in the neighborhood to Jews are examples of discriminators at this level. In these cases, actions are taken by one or a few with the intent to harm or restrict in some way members of a minority group. Notice that the actors are not part of a large-scale organization or institution but operate within a relatively bounded context.

In cases of **micro**, or **individual, discrimination** the actions taken against minority group members are intentional. Moreover, they appear to be the implementation of prejudicial attitudes. At first glance we might assume that in the above cases the employment manager thinks unfavorably of Asians, the judge of blacks, and the homeowners of Jews. This may in fact be the motivating force behind the discrimination in all these cases, but we cannot be certain until we understand more fully the context in which these actions occur. The employment manager, for example, may have no ill feeling toward Asians but may feel compelled to carry out what he perceives to be the unwritten yet generally understood company policy of not hiring Asians. The judge may feel that sentencing blacks more harshly will gain her votes among her predominantly white constituency in the next election. And the members of the homeowners' group may simply be responding to what they feel are neighborhood pressures to conform. Thus prejudice need not be at the root of even such blatant instances of intentional discrimination. In any of these instances, of course, whether or not the actors' beliefs and attitudes are consistent with their actual behavior does not negate the detrimental effect on those who are

[3] The literature on the Nazi holocaust is enormous, but two of the more comprehensive works are Dawidowicz (1986) and Hilberg (2003). On theories and policies of genocide, see Kuper (1981) and Fein (1993).

the victims of the discriminatory actions: The Asian is still not hired; the black still serves a longer sentence; and the Jew is still denied a home.

MACRO DISCRIMINATION The preceding cases pertain to the actions of individuals and small groups usually acting in violation of the society's norms. Discrimination, however, may be legal or customary, in which case it is not socially unexpected or disapproved but is legitimized. **Macro, or institutional, discrimination** is not limited to specific cases of negative actions taken against members of particular groups but is firmly incorporated in the society's normative system. Social conventions exist in which members of particular groups are legally or customarily denied equal access to various life chances. Discrimination at this level is fundamental to the way a society's institutions work.

In the United States before the 1960s, a well-institutionalized system of discrimination served to effectively block the access of blacks to the same economic, political, and social opportunities afforded whites. In the South, an elaborate system of custom and law legitimized segregated and unequal schools, housing, transportation, and public facilities; kept blacks in low-paying and less desirable jobs; and essentially prevented them from participating in the political process either as voters or as officials. Most of this system was formally established and maintained by specific discriminatory laws, but much of it was also based on the development of customary practices.

South Africa is another case in which a formal and entrenched system of racial segregation and discrimination traditionally served to ensure the power, wealth, and prestige of one group—whites—at the expense of another—nonwhites. As we will see in Chapter 13, this system, called apartheid, has been officially renounced, but many of its essential features are still supported by customs that validate and enforce discriminatory policies and practices.

STRUCTURAL DISCRIMINATION The institutional discrimination that was such a fundamental part of apartheid South Africa or the antebellum U.S. South is today uncommon. In most contemporary multiethnic societies, discrimination is more subtle, less obvious, and more indirect in application. It takes the form of **structural discrimination** which, unlike micro and macro forms, is unintended. It cannot be attributed to the prejudicial beliefs or conforming pressures of individuals, or to the deliberate establishment of a set of rules seeking to withhold privileges or injure members of particular ethnic groups. Rather, it exists as a product of the normal functioning of the society's institutions. Because of past discrimination of an overt, intentional nature, or because of the spillover effect of direct discrimination in one institutional area into another, certain groups find themselves perpetually at a disadvantage in the society's opportunity and reward structures.

The structural form of discrimination is difficult to observe because it does not use ethnicity as the subordinating mechanism; instead it uses other devices that are only indirectly related to ethnicity. This can be illustrated with a few examples.

In recent decades most new jobs in the United States have been created not in central cities, where they had been concentrated in the past, but in outlying and suburban areas, where shopping centers and factories are built on large expanses of land, where transportation lines, particularly highways, are more accessible,

and where taxes are lower. The outlying location of these jobs, however, handicaps African Americans who might qualify for them but who reside mainly in central cities. Qualified African Americans are therefore less likely to secure these jobs, but for reasons that do not necessarily involve direct discriminatory practices by employers. Businesses choose to locate in the suburbs not because they wish to avoid hiring African Americans but simply because it is in their economic interests to do so. When combined with the more overt discriminatory practices in housing that create the concentration of African Americans in central cities, the outlying location of commerce and industry has the effect of discriminating against African Americans. In other words, the more overt discrimination in one institutional area—housing—has created an indirect discriminatory effect in another—employment.

This indirect form of discrimination can also be seen in the area of education. Because ethnic minority students commonly attend poorer quality inner-city schools, they are automatically placed at a disadvantage in qualifying for well-paying and promising jobs. Similarly, entrance into top-ranked colleges and universities will be more difficult for them because they will not be adequately prepared to meet the rigid academic requirements. In both cases, there is no necessary intention to discriminate. Decisions by employment managers or college admissions officers may be quite rational, made not on the basis of applicants' ethnicity but on objective employment and academic standards. What is overlooked is that the lower qualifications of minority students are the result of attendance at inner-city public schools that have inadequately prepared them for better jobs and colleges.

Such unintentional, yet effective, ethnic discrimination is repeated in a variety of areas. Bankers, for example, who hesitate to lend to minority entrepreneurs because they fear they are poor credit risks may simply be engaging in practical business tactics. Or the grocery chain that charges higher prices in its inner-city stores than in its suburban stores will explain that such practices are necessary to offset the higher operating costs in its central-city stores, due to higher rents or insurance rates. Similar patterns emerge in medical services, administration of justice, and other key areas of social life.

Perhaps most significant is that structural discriminatory practices are not only unintentional, but largely unconscious. As Baron notes, "The individual only has to conform to the operating norms of the organization and the institution will do the discriminating for him" (1969:143). Discrimination, in other words, does not depend in these cases on the actions of specific individuals or even organizations. Instead, it is simply a function of the standard operating procedures of societal institutions.

Because it is unintentional and largely unwitting, structural discrimination remains difficult to detect; and even when it does become apparent, it is not easy to determine who is ultimately responsible. Its obscurity, therefore, makes it difficult to eradicate. Paradoxically, it is ordinarily carried out by individuals and groups who do not consider themselves to be discriminators. Thus many who have purged their own behavior of discriminatory actions may come to feel that it is minority ethnic groups themselves who are mostly responsible for their subordinate status. The burden of responsibility for social problems, then, is placed on the individual or the group, not on patterns of discrimination that may be built into the institutional structure. This is commonly referred to as "blaming the victim" (Ryan, 1975).

The authoritarian personality theory was developed after World War II by a group of social scientists determined to trace the psychological foundations of such destructive and regressive movements as Nazism. It subsequently became one of the most widely tested and debated ideas in the social sciences (see Kirscht and Dillehay, 1967). In their studies, T. W. Adorno and his associates (1950) found evidence to support the notion that prejudice and political extremism are more generally characteristic of a definite personality type. Such people, they maintained, are highly conformist, disciplinarian, cynical, intolerant, and preoccupied with power. They are particularly authority oriented and are thus attracted to sociopolitical movements that require submission to a powerful leader. Such personality traits extend well beyond people's political beliefs and are reflected in all aspects of their social life. In the family, for instance, authoritarians will subject their children to strong disciplinary action; in their religious beliefs, they will emphasize submission and obedience. In sum, such people strongly support conservative values and resist social change. They are thus more likely to display prejudicial thought and to discriminate when given the opportunity.

Other scholars, although not necessarily subscribing to the notion of an authoritarian personality, suggest that prejudice is a general way of thinking for some people. Hartley (1946), for example, found that when purely fictitious groups were presented in a social distance test, people who were prejudiced toward other groups tended to express prejudice toward the fictitious groups as well. Allport also maintains that "the cognitive processes of prejudiced people are in general different from the cognitive processes of tolerant people" (1958:170).

In any case, theories suggesting that certain personality types are generally prone to prejudice and discrimination suffer several critical shortcomings. Like the frustration-aggression theory, they fail to tell us how ethnic prejudice and discrimination arise in the first place. The authoritarian personality theory has fallen out of use and is regarded as flawed because it reduces authoritarianism to a personality trait. We see the prejudiced person in action, but not the social conditions that create ethnic, rather than other forms of hostility (Duckitt, 1989).

Moreover, the emphasis of this genre of studies has been on patently and intensely prejudiced people, such as members of the Ku Klux Klan or other white supremacist groups. Most prejudice and discrimination, however, is more subtle and less intense and is characteristic of people who cannot be categorized as extremists. Indeed, in some societies prejudice can be consensual, evident among an entire cross section of individuals with different personality traits (Brown, 1995). For example, studies have shown that the Nazi movement had appeal across a wide social spectrum of German society (Gerth, 1940; Peukert, 1987). Undoubtedly, prejudice and discrimination play a vital part in the thought and actions of many people; but it is necessary to carefully delineate the varying degrees and forms of ethnic antipathy displayed by different individuals.

INDIVIDUALS VS. SITUATIONS The chief criticism of psychological theories in general is that the situations within which people think and act are not given sufficient attention as variables that fundamentally affect the nature of their thought and action. Schermerhorn cautions us to consider that "if research has confirmed anything in this area, it is that 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).

However, psychological theories such as frustration-aggression and the authoritarian personality have been popular not only because they are more easily understood than sociological theories emphasizing structural conditions, but precisely because they focus the blame for ethnic antagonisms on disturbed individuals—those who are pathological or overtly irrational in behavior and thought. This focus deflects attention from society's normally functioning institutions, which may compel people to think and act negatively toward members of particular ethnic groups. Indeed, as will be seen shortly, prejudice and discrimination are in most cases *conforming* thoughts and actions, not those of a few maladjusted persons. As long as ethnic antipathy is thought to be characteristic only of the sick few rather than a proper response to the expectations of the community or society as a whole, it can be seen as eradicable simply by treating those few, not by painfully reexamining established societal institutions.

Whatever their effect on prejudice and discrimination, psychological components must be seen in conjunction with political and economic structures out of which intergroup relations develop and are sustained. William Julius Wilson asserts that psychological explanations of prejudice and discrimination "prove to have little predictive value when social factors are taken into account" (1973:39). These social factors are the basis of normative theories, to which we now turn.

Normative Theories

Why do we often compliment a friend on his or her new hairdo or clothes when in fact we think they are quite unattractive? Similarly, why do we many times feel obliged to contribute to a class discussion or a business meeting when we really have nothing meaningful to say? Sociologists explain such apparently inconsistent thought and action as 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 to those expectations even when we have a real desire to ignore or disobey them. Norms are group standards that define how people are expected to act in particular social situations. There are positive sanctions for conforming to and negative sanctions for deviating from them. Because there are norms pertaining to all social situations in which we find ourselves, these social "rules" enable us to predict others' behavior, and in doing so they facilitate interaction. In a real sense, they provide the society with order.

Prejudice and discrimination can be explained within the framework of social norms. Rather than the thoughts and actions of a deviant few, they are conforming responses to social situations in which people find themselves. When negative thoughts about particular ethnic groups and discriminatory behavior toward them are expected, individuals will feel compelled to think and act accordingly. Thus it is to individuals' social environment—the groups they belong to, the cultural and political values and customs operative in their society and community, and the processes of socialization—that prejudice and discrimination can be traced. Obviously, such explanations are considerably different from psychological theories, which focus not on the group contexts of individual thought and action but on the individuals themselves.

In this view, bigots emerge out of the social experiences to which they are exposed. Frank Westie has succinctly explained the essence of normative theory: "Individuals are prejudiced because they are raised in societies which have prejudice as a facet of the normative system of their culture. Prejudice is built into the culture in the form of normative precepts—that is, notions of 'ought to be'—which define the ways in which members of the group ought to behave in relation to the members of selected outgroups" (1964:583–84). Normative theories thus concentrate primarily on the transmission of ethnic prejudices through the socialization process and on the social situations that compel discriminatory behavior (Dean and Rosen, 1955; Williams, 1964).

SOCIALIZATION Prejudice and discrimination can be seen as part of a society's social code, which is passed down from generation to generation. Fear of, dislike for, and antipathy toward one group or another are learned in much the same way that people learn to eat with a knife and fork rather than with their bare hands or to respect others' privacy in personal matters. These standards of behavior are the product of learning processes of which we ordinarily have little cognizance. Socialization is subtle and works in a largely unconscious manner. Prejudice and discrimination, therefore, need not be taught directly and intentionally. If those are the norms and values of the society or community within which the individual interacts, the chances are very great that they will be adopted with little overt instruction. As Van Ansdale and Feagin explain, "Well before they can speak clearly, children are exposed to racial and ethnic ideas through their immersion in and observation of the large social world" (2001:189).

Parents are sometimes puzzled by certain expressions and attitudes of their children because they are sure they did not impart these. In their puzzlement, they discount the informal and often undetected ways in which the society's culture is transmitted by the various agents of socialization outside the family. Most learning is accomplished not through direct teaching methods but through observation and imitation. Children—and adults—take cues from their peers and other important reference groups as well as the mass media. Social psychologists have shown that among American children four years of age, ethnic values and attitudes are already beginning to crystallize (Aboud, 1988; Goodman, 1964; Porter, 1971; Ramsey, 1987). By this age, children have been exposed to the society's ethnic hierarchy, particularly the white-over-black element. By age six, children—even those who have had little or no contact with members of other racial and ethnic groups—have a solid conception of racial-ethnic distinctions (Van Ansdale and Feagin, 2001).

Prejudice and discrimination, then, are no more indicators of a defective personality than are one's taste in food or fashion. They are simply products of socialization. If prejudice and discrimination are pervasive in the society or community, the more logical question may not be, "Why do some people display prejudice and discrimination?" but rather, "Why do some people *fail* to display prejudice and discrimination?"

Consider South Africa under apartheid or the pre-1960s American South. Using the normative approach, white prejudice and discrimination against blacks in those settings can be explained not as the product of deviant individuals but as the natural outgrowth of a whole system of racist norms, learned early and thoroughly, that

guided people's actions and attitudes. In that system, blacks were not to be thought of or treated in the same way as whites. For whites to avoid almost any contact with blacks beyond the most purely functional (supervising them in a work situation, for example) was correct, expected, and positively sanctioned by societal norms. For whites to deviate from such behavior would have been unusual and responded to with negative sanctions. John Stone (1973), in a study of British immigrants to South Africa in the 1970s, discovered that they frequently changed their attitude toward the segregationist policy of apartheid. Before leaving Britain, the majority was either opposed to or had no opinion about it; after living in South Africa for a time, however, an even larger majority stated that it favored the policy. Stone concluded that the change reflected not the manifestation of latent racist personalities but the need of immigrants to adapt to the ways of their new society: "We are not witnessing the mass attraction of bigoted racialists to a segregationalist's dream, rather we are observing how ordinary people, confronted by a particular social structure, will tend to conform to the attitudes, values, and norms implicit in it" (1973:253).

REFERENCE GROUPS Even where societal norms dictate fairness toward different groups, prejudice and discrimination may typify the behavior of some people who have been exposed to reference groups that strongly prescribe such behavior. Reference groups are those that provide individuals with standards by which they shape their own patterns of action and from which they adopt important beliefs and values. In a sense, they serve as models of thought and action. We ordinarily think of the family as a reference group, but there are many others to which we may look for behavioral guidance, even some of which we are not members. In the latter case, we may aspire to membership and thus take on the ways and attitudes of the group. This is most apparent in the early stages of socialization when children begin to identify with particular occupational groups—firefighters, doctors, nurses, and the like—or with sports and entertainment groups they admire. As might be expected, studies have shown that individuals tend to adopt beliefs and values congruent with those of the groups with which they identify.

Applying the concept of the reference group to prejudice and discrimination, such thoughts and actions are normal responses of individuals when called for by their reference groups. No one is immune to the pressures to conform—applied by family, friendship cliques, or other significant groups. The fear of group rejection is constantly present and serves as an effective disciplinary mechanism. Again, this process is subtle, and the individual may not see such conformity as a response to external coercion.

If the person's reference groups change, attitudes and actions can be expected to change accordingly. College students, for example, often face a challenge to their well-formed values when they encounter new ideas from their instructors and classmates. These new ideas often involve social issues like ethnic prejudice. Pearlin's (1954) study at a southern women's college in the 1950s demonstrated the effect of a change in reference groups on students' racial attitudes. Pearlin started with the assumption that white students would find in the college environment sentiments more favorable to blacks than they had found in their precollege experiences. But merely being exposed to new and positive ideas about blacks, he believed,

would not in itself reduce prejudicial attitudes. Rather, modification of attitudes was thought to depend more on changes in social relationships. Thus attitudinal changes, Pearlin surmised, were likely to come about only if the students began to identify with new groups holding those favorable attitudes toward blacks. Pearlin's hypotheses were confirmed: Those most prejudiced toward blacks remained most strongly affiliated with their precollege membership groups, and those least prejudiced experienced a weakening of such ties and an increasing identification with their new college groups. In short, Pearlin's findings showed that people tend to adopt the attitudes of those groups with which they most strongly identify.

MERTON'S PARADIGM Given the social, rather than the personality, origins of ethnic prejudice and discrimination, changing social situations can produce fluctuations in individual thought and behavior. Ethnic prejudice and discrimination are thus not constant and unchanging but variable, depending on a number of situational factors: the person's definition of the situation, the compulsion to conform to societal and reference group norms, and the rewards—economic, prestige, political—to be gained by acting and believing in such a manner. That attitudes and actions toward members of particular ethnic groups may fluctuate within different social contexts is demonstrated by Robert Merton (1949) in his well-known paradigm (Figure 3.2).

By combining the prejudicial attitudes or lack of such attitudes with the propensity either to engage in discriminatory actions or to refrain from them, Merton suggested four ideal types. First, he denoted unprejudiced nondiscriminators, whom he called "all-weather liberals." These are people who accept the idea of social equality and refrain from discriminating against ethnic minorities. Their behavior and attitudes are thus consistent. A second type, also consistent in behavior and attitude, is prejudiced discriminators, whom Merton labeled "active bigots." Such

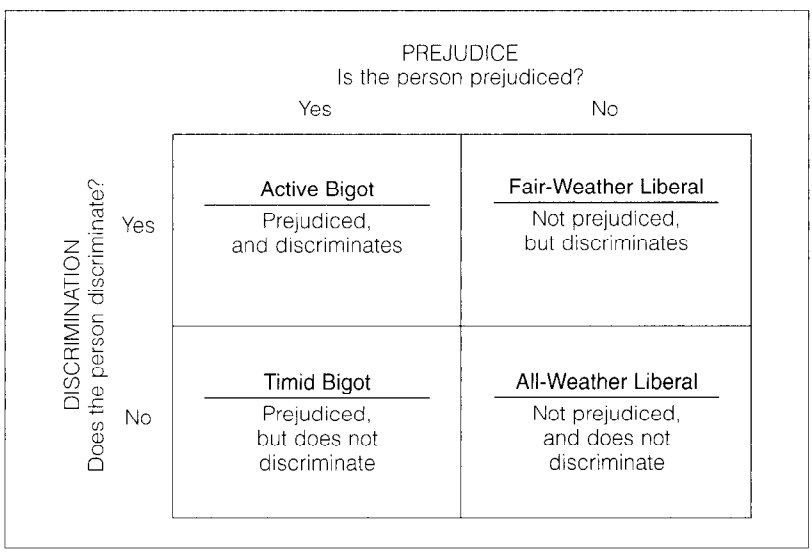

FIGURE 3.2 | MERTON'S PARADIGM

people do not hesitate to turn their prejudicial beliefs into discriminatory behavior when the opportunity arises. Members of organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan or neo-Nazi parties in the United States or skinhead groups in Europe exemplify such people. Both of these types, consistent as they are in belief and behavior, might indicate by themselves support for the psychological perspective; that is, there are prejudiced people or tolerant people, who may be expected to act accordingly.

Merton's third and fourth types, however, demonstrate the situational context and the effect it may have on people's behavior. In these cases, behavior and attitude are not consistent. Prejudiced nondiscriminators, or "timid bigots," as Merton called them, maintain negative beliefs about ethnic minorities but are precluded from acting out those beliefs by situational norms. If a situation requires fair treatment toward ethnic groups who are viewed negatively by such people, fair treatment will mark their behavior. For example, whites traveling from the American South to northern states before the 1960s would find that the laws and customs of the North required them to interact with blacks in a manner unheard of in their home states. Lewis Killian described how white working-class southerners who had migrated to Chicago responded to blacks in their new environment: "The 'hillbillies' constantly praised the southern pattern of racial segregation and deplored the fact that Negroes were 'taking over Chicago.' In most of their behavior, however, they made a peaceful, if reluctant, accommodation to northern urban patterns" (1953:68). The hotel and restaurant keepers encountered by LaPiere in his previously cited study would also fall into this category.

Unprejudiced discriminators, whom Merton called "fair-weather liberals," also adjust their behavior to meet the demands of particular circumstances. When discrimination is normative in the group or community, such people abide by those patterns of behavior even though they may harbor no prejudicial feelings toward members of the targeted group. To do otherwise would jeopardize their social standing and might even constitute violations of the law. Such a situation was faced in the pre-1960s American South by many whites who did not share the racial animosity of their neighbors. In a 1987 case, the owner of a pharmacy in Tifton, Georgia, dismissed a black student pharmacist who had been placed in the store as part of her training at the University of Georgia's College of Pharmacy. She was dismissed, the owner explained, because he feared negative customer reaction (*New York Times*, 1987).

It must be remembered that each of Merton's four cases is an ideal type and thus does not reflect perfectly any individual's behavior and attitudes. More realistically, people can be expected to display higher or lower degrees of each. We should also remember that prejudice and discrimination directed at one ethnic group do not necessarily imply the same attitudes and behavior toward others. Those who are antiblack are not necessarily anti-Catholic, and so on. One may be a fair-weather liberal in one instance and a timid bigot in another.

Situational explanations of prejudice and discrimination like Merton's demonstrate that there is no necessary causal relationship between the two. The conventional wisdom has generally assumed that prejudice leads to or causes discrimination. Abundant sociological evidence, however, has shown not only that this sequence need not occur but also that the very opposite is more common (Pettigrew, 1979; Raab and Lipset, 1971). "What we call prejudices," writes the

anthropologist Marvin Harris, "are merely the rationalizations which we acquire in order to prove to ourselves that the human beings whom we harm are not worthy of better treatment" (1964:68). Prejudice, then, is used to rationalize discriminatory behavior *after* the fact.

This is an important observation, for it seriously challenges the idea that eliminating discrimination requires a change in attitude, that is, the elimination of prejudice. This was the generally shared opinion of both scholars and policy makers in the United States before the 1960s. Reeducating people was therefore the most frequently proposed remedy for alleviating ethnic hostility. It was thought that if people's faulty ideas about race and ethnicity could be corrected, they would, as a result, be induced to change their behavior. In the past few decades, however, it has become obvious that prejudicial attitudes may have little or no bearing on whether people discriminate against particular groups. Instead, people appear to be motivated to change their behavior toward ethnic groups by laws and other social mechanisms that seriously alter their social situation vis-à-vis those groups. After such situational changes occur, individuals seem to adjust their ideas to fit these new modes of behavior (Ehrlich, 1973; Pettigrew, 1980). Hence, changes in ethnic relations are impelled not by efforts to change attitudes but by changing the structure of those relations.

STATISTICAL DISCRIMINATION Van den Berghe (1997) has suggested a model of discrimination akin to Merton's that links such behavior to stereotyping. He posits that stereotypes are most often used in a rational way, enabling people to make quick decisions about others in interactive situations where they have minimum information. (Recall this point in our discussion of stereotypes.) *Statistical* discrimination, in which people are treated negatively on the basis of beliefs about the category of which they are members, is distinct from *categorical* discrimination, in which people are treated negatively simply on the basis of being part of a socially assigned category. The former is rational in that it is responsive to counterevidence, whereas the latter form of discrimination is not. Van den Berghe contends that statistical discrimination is more common than categorical discrimination because it is based on self-interest, whereas the latter is nonrational. Hence, stereotypes are not necessarily to be seen as evidence of prejudice but are simply "guidelines in making statistical discriminations in situations of imperfect information" (1997:5). Where information is in short supply and costly, people will rely on stereotypes.

For example, because blacks appear to commit a disproportionate percentage of violent crimes, whether due to a racist criminal justice system or to class bias, whites stereotype blacks as "criminally inclined" and thus may discriminate against blacks with whom they interact. In reality, the relationship of crime to such factors as social class and age is stronger than the relationship of crime to race. But most whites, living as they do apart from blacks, are not as attuned to class differences among blacks. It is, then, less costly to discriminate on the basis of race—which is more readily apparent—than class. Banks may make decisions about loans using much the same calculus based on racial criteria, as a result granting fewer loans to blacks or charging them higher interest rates. Again, the decision is a rational one: "Money-lenders are in the business of evaluating risk as cheaply as possible and of adjusting interest rates in direct proportion to assessed risk. . . . [F]rom the perspective

of the bank ignoring race would be a costly mistake, unless the bank can develop a more valid and equally cheap discriminator" (van den Berghe, 1997:12). Racial profiling, wherein police select someone for investigation or stronger action on the basis of race or ethnicity, may be seen in the same way.

Like Merton, van den Berghe demonstrates how discrimination is not necessarily motivated by prejudice. "Modern industrial societies," he notes, "are hot-beds of stereotypy, not because they are populated by bigots, but because people have little else to structure their relationships" (1997:13). Where race and ethnicity create barriers to communication and where members of different groups live in segregated areas, the chances of changing the criteria of statistical discrimination are reduced.

Power-Conflict Theories

Though the normative theories of prejudice and discrimination appear to go well beyond the earlier psychological theories, they stop short of explaining how or why they arise in the first place. They basically explain the mechanics of prejudice and discrimination, that is, how these social phenomena are transmitted and sustained. To begin to understand their origins we must turn to power-conflict theories.

Most simply, these theories view prejudice and discrimination as emerging from historical instances of intergroup conflict (Bernard, 1951; Newman, 1973). In this view, discrimination serves as a means of injuring or neutralizing out-groups that the dominant group perceives as threatening to its position of power and privilege. Negative beliefs and stereotypes, in turn, become basic components of the dominant group's ideology, which justifies differential treatment of minority ethnic groups. When prejudice and discrimination are combined, they function to protect and enhance dominant group interests. And once established, prejudice and discrimination are used as power resources that can be tapped as new conflict situations demand.

Prejudice and discrimination, in this view, are products of group interests and are used to protect and enhance those interests. To understand negative ethnic beliefs and behavior requires a focus not on individual personalities or even on the constraints and demands of different social situations, but on the economic, political, and social competition among groups in a multiethnic society.

Economic Gain Chief among power-conflict theories are those emphasizing the economic benefits that derive from prejudice and discrimination. Simply put, prejudice and discrimination, in this view, yield profits for those who engage in them. Different groups may be targeted because they present—or are perceived as presenting—a threat to the economic position of the dominant group.

Colonial and slave systems, buttressed by elaborate racist ideologies, are obvious cases in which economic benefits accrued to a dominant group from the exploitation, both physical and mental, of minority groups. We need not look at such historically distant examples, however, to understand the relation between ethnic antagonism and economic gain. In his study of black-white relations in the American South of the 1930s, John Dollard showed that in every sphere of social life—work, health, justice, education—the white middle class realized substantial

gains from the subordination of blacks. In exploiting blacks, explained Dollard, southern whites were simply "acting as they have to act in the position within the social labor structure which they hold, that is, competing as hard as they can for maximum returns" (1937:115). Later studies (Glenn, 1963, 1966; Thurow, 1969) concluded that prejudice and discrimination against blacks in the United States continued to benefit at least some segments of the white population.

Resistance in the form of blatant discriminatory efforts can be expected whenever economic advantages appear to be challenged by lower-ranking or more recently arrived ethnic groups. In 1981, for example, white fishermen in the shrimping grounds in Galveston Bay, Texas, encountered competition from immigrant Vietnamese fishermen. About 100 Vietnamese shrimpers had come to the area during the previous two years, challenging the economic dominance of the whites. Although the situation was eventually resolved, for several months white fishermen, with support from the Ku Klux Klan, engaged in acts of intimidation against the Vietnamese, including physical attacks and arson (Hein, 1995).

MARXIAN THEORY Some economic-based theories are more specific in suggesting who the beneficiaries of prejudice and discrimination are. Class theorists, in the tradition of Karl Marx, have conventionally held that in capitalist societies, ethnic antagonism serves the interests of the capitalist class—those who own and control the means of economic production—by keeping the working class fragmented and thus easier to control. The basic idea of Marxian theory is "divide and rule." One ethnic element of the working class is pitted against another, and as long as this internal discord can be maintained, the chances that the working class will unite in opposition to the interests of the capitalists are reduced. Capitalists are able to foster ethnic division and ethnic consciousness among the workers, thereby curtailing the development of worker solidarity and class consciousness.

In the United States, for example, the historic conflict between black and white workers has been construed by Marxists as having deflected attention from the common anticapitalist interests of both groups (Allen, 1970; Cox, 1948; Reich, 1978; Szymanski, 1976). Anti-immigrant movements in the past as well as in recent times can be seen in the same way. Ethnic prejudice, therefore, is viewed as a means of sustaining a system of economic exploitation, the benefits of which accrue to the capitalist class. Though capitalists may not consciously conspire to create and maintain racist institutions, they nonetheless reap the benefits of racist practices and therefore do not seek to completely dismantle them.

THE SPLIT LABOR MARKET THEORY Whereas conventional Marxist thought holds that the profits of ethnic hostilities redound primarily to the owners of capital, others maintain that it is workers of the dominant ethnic group who are the chief beneficiaries of prejudice and discrimination. If ethnic minorities are kept out of desired occupations, the favored workers, rather than the capitalists, are viewed as gaining the most from discriminatory institutions. This is the crux of sociologist Edna Bonacich's split labor market theory (1972, 1976).

According to Bonacich, there are three key groups in a capitalist market: businesspeople (employers), higher-paid labor, and cheap labor. One group of workers controls certain jobs exclusively and gets paid at one scale, and the other group is

confined to jobs paid at a lower rate. Given the imperatives of a capitalist system, employers seek to hire workers at the lowest possible wage and therefore turn to the lower-paid sector when possible as a means of maximizing profits. Recent immigrants or ethnic groups migrating from rural areas in search of industrial jobs ordinarily make up this source of cheap labor. These groups can be used by employers as strikebreakers and as an abundant labor supply to keep wages artificially low. Because these groups represent a collective threat to their jobs and wages, workers of the dominant ethnic group become the force behind hostile and exclusionary movements aimed at curtailing the source of cheap labor. Wage differentials, in this view, do not arise through the efforts of capitalists to prevent working-class unity by favoring one group over another, but through the efforts of higher-paid laborers to prevent lower-paid workers—mainly of low-status ethnic groups—from undercutting their wages and jobs. This goal is achieved through various forms of prejudice and discrimination.

The split labor market theory is supported by historical evidence in American society. Successive waves of European immigrants during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries traditionally served as a source of cheap labor and became the targets of nativist movements, usually backed strongly by labor unions. Following the cessation of European immigration, northward-migrating blacks from the rural South assumed a similar role, touching off periodic racial violence in many cities. Depending on how threatening they were perceived by native workers, various groups at different times were the objects of worker-inspired hostility. For example, efforts in the nineteenth century to restrict the Chinese to particular occupations and to limit their immigration was spurred largely by white workers fearing a deluge of cheaper labor. Lyman notes that after 1850, "It was the leadership of the labor movement that provided the most outrageous rhetoric, vicious accusations, and pejorative demagoguery for the American Sinophobic movement" (1974:70).

In a study of Japanese immigrants in Brazil and Canada, Makabe (1981) found support for the split labor market theory. Japanese immigrants entering Canada, specifically British Columbia, in the pre–World War II years experienced an extremely harsh reception from native Canadians. Makabe explains that among white workers the rejection of the Japanese was unusually cruel. This is accounted for by the fact that the Japanese entered the Canadian economy at the bottom, enabling employers to pay them lower wages and thereby undercutting the more highly paid native workers. Striving for upward mobility, the Japanese found themselves in direct competition with those immediately above them in economic position—white workers. The result was discrimination against the Japanese in the workforce and pressure to halt all Japanese immigration. In Brazil, however, the Japanese experienced a significantly different situation. Rather than entering the labor force in competition with higher-paid workers, they found themselves with skills and financial resources superior to those of most native workers, who themselves were mostly severely disadvantaged former slaves. Little competition and, hence, little conflict arose between them because they did not seek similar occupational positions.

GROUP POSITION Herbert Blumer (1958) posited that prejudice is always a protective device used by the dominant group in a multiethnic society in ensuring its majority position. When that group position is challenged, prejudice is aroused and

hostilities are directed at the group perceived to be threatening. As Lawrence Bobo (1999) explains, feelings of superiority among dominant group members toward subordinate group members are not sufficient to produce prejudice and discrimination. What is required in addition is the perception that dominant group privileges and resources are threatened by the subordinate group. In this view, negative stereotypes and discriminatory actions are used by elements of the dominant ethnic group, sometimes directly and other times indirectly, to secure not only their economic power, but their political power and social prestige as well.

Political leaders have long recognized the value of exploiting ethnic divisions for attaining and enhancing their power. For example, until blacks became an electoral factor of some significance in the 1970s, racist politicians in the American South effectively manipulated white fears of blacks to their own ends. After losing the Alabama gubernatorial election in 1958 to a candidate even more avowedly racist than himself, George Wallace declared that he would not be "out-nigguhed again" (Frady, 1968). In the 1988 presidential campaign, George H. W. Bush used the case of Willie Horton, a convicted murderer who raped a woman while on furlough from a Massachusetts prison, to portray his Democratic opponent, Michael Dukakis, as soft on crime. As a black man, Horton's image was intended to elicit white fears of black crime. Similarly, in recent years, rightist politicians in France, Germany, and other western European countries have stirred anti-immigrant feelings, particularly against Muslims from North Africa and the Middle East, in appealing to voters.

In addition to economic and political benefits, status privileges may derive from ethnic antagonism. People may enjoy more prestige simply from being a member of the dominant ethnic group, regardless of their social class. In the American South, working- and lower-class whites could take comfort in knowing that they were part of the dominant ethnic group even though economically they were in much the same position as blacks. As Dollard described it, white subordination of blacks consisted of "the fact that a member of the white caste has an automatic right to demand forms of behavior from Negroes which serve to increase his own self esteem" (1937:174). Van den Berghe described the same well-understood racial etiquette that prevailed in South Africa before the end of apartheid: "Non-Europeans are expected to show subservience and self-deprecation, and to extend to the whites the titles of 'Sir,' 'Madam,' or 'baas.' The Europeans, as a rule, refuse to extend the use of titles and other forms of elementary courtesy to nonwhites, and call the latter by first names (real or fictitious), or by the terms 'boy' and 'girl'" (1967:142).

Wilson (1973) also notes that when the system of ethnic stratification is challenged—that is, when minority groups no longer accept their group position—strong prejudices founded on a racist ideology emerge. Through this ideology, members of the dominant group can, as Wilson explains, "claim that they are in a superior position because they are naturally superior, that subordinate members do not possess qualities enabling them to compete on equal terms" (1973:43). The dominant ideology, incorporating key negative stereotypes of minority ethnic groups, thus reinforces the sense of group position, aids in maintaining patterns of subordination, and serves as a philosophical justification for exploitation.

The resistance of many whites to school busing, residential desegregation, affirmative action, and immigration during the past four decades can be interpreted as the response of those who perceive a threat to their group position. Applying this

model, these are negative reactions by members of the dominant group who see their economic, political, and status privileges—their group position—threatened by blacks and other minorities seeking upward social mobility.

FUNCTIONS FOR MINORITIES Paradoxically, prejudice and discrimination may serve certain functions for minority groups themselves. Sociologists have recognized that conflict between groups has a unifying effect on the members of each. External threats tend to strengthen group ties and create a sense of solidarity that might not otherwise exist (Coser, 1956). The ability of Jews to survive in various societies in which they were persecuted, for example, has often been attributed to the continued anti-Semitic hostility itself. As constant targets of antagonism, Jews have strengthened their resolve to maintain a group identity and cohesiveness.

Continued prejudice and discrimination directed at a minority group may also contribute to a sense of psychological security for its members. Even though their place is at the bottom, they may take consolation in the certainty and predictability of their social relationships with the dominant group (Levin and Levin, 1982). Moreover, the minority individual's self-esteem may be protected by attributing personal failures to abstract notions like "the system" or "racism" rather than to individual shortcomings.

Prejudice may also serve as a release of frustration for minorities, just as it may for those of the dominant group. Indeed, prejudice should not be seen as characteristic only of dominant groups. Although sociologists have been reluctant to deal with it, prejudice is commonly displayed by minority groups as well, not only toward the dominant group—which seems entirely logical—but also toward other minority groups. Recall the strong antipathy toward each other expressed by American minority ethnic groups, mentioned earlier.[4] If prejudice is normative in the society, minority group members socialized to those norms will be affected in much the same way as members of the dominant group.

The benefits to minority ethnic groups that derive from prejudice and discrimination, however, should not be overdrawn. Clearly, the primary beneficiaries of ethnic antagonism are members of the dominant group.[5]

THEORIES OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION: AN ASSESSMENT

As we have now seen, the explanation for prejudice and discrimination in multiethnic societies is complex and by no means agreed on by theorists and researchers. It may very well be that a full investigation of these phenomena requires a

[4] Westie (1964) asserts that the prejudice of minority group members has been largely ignored by social scientists. He suggests that this may be a result of the sympathy social scientists usually display for social underdogs. Moreover, interethnic conflict is usually perpetrated by members of the dominant group, and the prejudices of minority group members are seen mainly as responses to these actions. Westie maintains that, however well intended this view may be, it has produced social science literature "which gives the impression that the minority person can 'do no wrong'" (1964: 605).

[5] There are also certain negative effects of prejudice and discrimination on the dominant group. See, for example, Bowser and Hunt (1981).

multidimensional approach using different aspects of psychological, normative, and power-conflict theories. All may have some validity, depending on which aspect or level of ethnic antagonism is focused on.

In this book, power-conflict theories of prejudice and discrimination are favored because the structural rather than the psychological or small-group dynamics of race and ethnic relations are emphasized. In Parts II and III, therefore, the analysis of prejudice and discrimination in the United States and in other multiethnic societies will view these ethnic attitudes and actions as tools of dominance, developed and used by one group over others in competition for the society's resources.

Although power-conflict theories are stressed, keep in mind that prejudice and discrimination are multifaceted, and therefore other theories cannot be disregarded. Power-conflict theories will not entirely explain, on the one hand, why some people will not discriminate even when it is profitable to do so or, on the other hand, why some will continue to discriminate when it is no longer beneficial. For such cases, psychological or normative theories may offer additional insight. As Simpson and Yinger point out, not all prejudice and discrimination can be explained by structural variables alone; individuals' responses to group influences are conditioned by their personality and vice versa. Therefore, "The task is to discover how much of the variance in prejudice and discrimination can be explained by attention to personality variables, how much by social structural variables, and how much by their interaction" (1985:29).

SUMMARY

Prejudice and discrimination are techniques of ethnic dominance. Prejudice is the attitudinal dimension of ethnic antagonism. Prejudices are categorical, inflexible, negative attitudes toward ethnic groups, based on simplistic and exaggerated group images called stereotypes. Discrimination is the behavioral dimension and involves actions designed to sustain ethnic inequality. Discrimination takes various forms, ranging from derogation to physical attack and even extermination. Discrimination occurs at different levels: micro (or individual), macro (or institutional), and structural. Micro discrimination is carried out by single persons or small groups, usually in a deliberate manner; macro discrimination is rendered broadly as a result of the norms and structures of organizations and institutions; structural discrimination occurs obliquely in an unwitting and unintentional manner and is the indirect result of discrimination in other, more blatant forms.

There are three major theoretical traditions in explaining the origins and patterns of prejudice and discrimination. Psychological theories focus on the ways in which group hostility satisfies certain personality needs; prejudice and discrimination, in this view, are traced to individual factors. Normative theories explain that ethnic antagonisms are conforming responses to social situations in which people find themselves. Power-conflict theories explain prejudice and discrimination as products of group interests and as tools used to protect and enhance those interests; focus is placed not on individual behavior or on group dynamics but on the political, economic, and social competition among a society's ethnic groups.

Suggested Readings

Allport, Gordon W. 1958. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday. Presents perhaps the most complete examination of the origins and forms of prejudice, stressing psychological factors. A classic work that has stood the test of time.

Duckitt, John. 1992. *The Social Psychology of Prejudice*. New York: Praeger. A thorough conceptual and theoretical analysis of the causes and intergroup dynamics of prejudice.

Knowles, Louis L., and Kenneth Prewitt (eds.). 1970. *Institutional Racism in America*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall. Describes historical and modern-day patterns of institutional discrimination in the United States.

Lester, Paul Martin, and Susan Dente Ross (eds.). 2003. *Images That Injure: Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger. A collection of articles that describe and analyze how media-generated ethnic and gender stereotypes are created and firmly implanted in American culture.

Levin, Jack, and William Levin. 1982. *The Functions of Discrimination and Prejudice*. 2nd ed. New York: Harper & Row. Examines prejudice and discrimination by focusing on the consequences of these thoughts and actions for both dominant and minority groups.

Schuman, Howard, Charlotte Steeh, Lawrence Bobo, and Maria Krysan. 1997. *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations*. Rev. ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Through a review of relevant survey data, traces the changing racial attitudes of Americans during the past five decades.

Simpson, George Eaton, and J. Milton Yinger. 1985. *Racial and Cultural Minorities: An Analysis of Prejudice and Discrimination*. 5th ed. New York: Plenum Press. Explains the psychological and sociological origins and effects of prejudice and discrimination, with a comprehensive review of significant studies regarding these phenomena.