The Social Psychology of Perceived Prejudice and Discrimination

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Abstract

Most research on prejudice has followed a unidirectional orientation of investigating why or when majority- or dominant-group members become prejudiced toward members of minority or subordinate groups, without considering the effects of prejudice and discrimination upon its victims.

By contrast, my research program over the past quarter-century deals with the “phenomenology” of prejudice and discrimination from the perspective of the victim and has sought to answer questions such as the following: What is it like to be discriminated against on the basis of an arbitrary characteristic such as ethnicity, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, etc.? What are the social-psychological and affective correlates and consequences to individuals who confront prejudice and discrimination by virtue of membership in a minority or subordinate group? This paper presents a sampling of my research on the “phenomenology” of prejudice and discrimination, along with several theoretical perspectives that I have used and developed to help understand this issue.

Canada prides itself, quite rightly, as being a tolerant society in which people from different racial, ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds can live together amicably in forming our national “mosaic.” Nevertheless, members of some groups often feel themselves to be discriminated against in personal, economic, social, and/or political spheres.

Feeling one is a victim of discrimination or prejudice is hardly rare. A national Gallup poll in the early 1990s showed one in four Canadians believed they had been discriminated against on some basis. The same question posed 10 years previously found one in five Canadians felt discriminated against. So, perceived discrimination is increasing, slowly but surely, and may continue to do so in future as individuals’ sense of entitlement increases and/or their willingness to tolerate inequity declines or disappears.

Moreover, a national survey of Canadians by Angus Reid in the early-1990s showed that Canadians are generally aware of discrimination against some groups in our country. Nearly half strongly agreed that discrimination against nonwhites was a problem in Canada. Younger Canadians, particularly those under 24 years old, were especially likely to agree that discrimination is a problem in Canada.

In the early-1970s, I began conducting research into the then neglected topic of prejudice and discrimination from the perspective of the “victim” or target. I wanted to explore what I called the “phenomenology” of prejudice. My colleagues and I asked questions such as: What is it like to be a victim of prejudice or discrimination? What are the affective and social-psychological consequences or correlates of perceiving prejudice and discrimination aimed at oneself and one’s group? To explore these issues, we have used methods ranging from controlled experiments in the psychological laboratory to correlational and survey studies assessing the correlates of perceived discrimination in the community and society outside the laboratory. With my collaborators, I have tried to show that the phenomenology of prejudice and discrimination is not only researchable, but also very informative about the groups and individuals who confront them. The picture that emerges from this research is complex, with some clearly negative features but also some positive – or at least, apparently non-negative – features, as well.

Not surprisingly, perceiving oneself to be a target of prejudice or discrimination has demonstrable, negative impact upon the individual, and I speculate theoretically about why and in what sense it is a negative experience. However, every cloud usually has at least a bit of a silver lining. The silver lining here is that perceived prejudice and discrimination, under some circumstances, may help buffer or protect aspects of the self-concept for members of certain minority or subordinate groups, in some instances. The multiple hedges in the latter statement are intentional. A final aspect of the story to be told in this paper is that per-
ceived prejudice and discrimination are also goals to protest, militancy, and agitation for social change by those on the receiving end of intolerance. In this paper, I use the terms "prejudice" and "discrimination" more or less interchangeably, though they have different referents and somewhat different meanings. Prejudice usually refers to negative attitudes toward disfavored groups and their members while discrimination is unfair behavior or unequal treatment accorded others on the basis of their group membership or possession of some arbitrary trait.

Colleagues such as Jennifer Crocker, Brenda Major, and Janet Swim in the United States, and Donald Taylor and his associates in Canada, have since followed my lead and begun active research programs in the late-1980s and 1990s, exploring the phenomenology of prejudice and the psychology of perceived discrimination from the perspective of the victim or target. My own research program, of course, has continued merrily along in its own course during this period. All of us researching the psychology of perceived prejudice and discrimination would dearly love to be put out of business by a global outbreak of tolerance, though I suspect we will not be. What all of our research, taken together, shows, I believe, is that perceived prejudice and discrimination are highly relevant for understanding the psychology of racial and ethnic minorities as well as other groups unfairly discriminated against on some arbitrary bases.

My goal in this paper is to present aspects of my research program on the psychology of perceived prejudice and discrimination, considering target groups representing dimensions such as race, religion, ethnicity, sex, and sexual orientation, supplemented by related research of others. Over the years, the different theoretical perspectives we have employed to help us understand what it is like to be a victim of prejudice or discrimination are highlighted.

THE ATTRIBUTION VIEWPOINT
One perspective my colleagues and I have found useful is an attribution viewpoint. Since the experience of discrimination is most often ambiguous, members of minority or subordinate groups often find themselves in an attributional dilemma or ambiguity as to whether a negative experience they have encountered is due to prejudice or discrimination on the part of those they are interacting with (i.e., an attribution of prejudice), or whether the setback reflects their own failings or other personal characteristics (i.e., a dispositional attribution to self). The types of attributions individuals make in such cases can affect their self-evaluations. The first evidence of this came from one of my experiments where university women competed in a laboratory setting against several unseen others, whom they were led to believe were either all male or all female, and the women failed either mildly or severely compared to them (Dion, 1975). Following the experimentally induced failure, the women serving as participants rated themselves on positive and negative aspects of the female stereotype as well as self-esteem traits, and also indicated to what extent they felt the others were biased or prejudiced toward them. Using this latter measure, participants were then categorized into high versus low perceived prejudice groups, with perceived prejudice taken as an additional independent variable in the analyses along with the experimentally manipulated variables of alleged sex of the opponents and severity of failure.

Two aspects of the results are worth highlighting. No effects whatever were found on negative stereotypic self-ratings. However, on positive stereotypic self-ratings, an interaction emerged between perceived prejudice and the alleged sex of the opponents. Women who thought their putative male opponents were highly prejudiced toward them evaluated themselves more favorably on positive traits underlying the female stereotype (e.g., warmth and nurturance), suggesting an enhanced identification with their gender membership group.

This finding was the first, to my knowledge, to suggest that attributing a negative experience to prejudice could "buffer" or protect some aspects of the self-concept, in this case a stereotypic or collective self-concept. This finding is also interesting because the prior literature on prejudice up to that point had emphasized the negative effects of perceived prejudice on self-esteem (Kardiner & Ovesey, 1951; Karon, 1975). This previous literature had, in effect, assumed a "looking-glass self," in which the self-concepts of minority and subordinate group members were assumed to reflect more or less faithfully the negative opinions of dominant, majority groups toward them in a given society. By contrast, the preceding study was suggesting just the reverse, namely, a setback attributed to perceived prejudice could help to sustain or buffer one's self-concept in certain cases. Another strong challenge to the "looking-glass self" notion is that on measures of global self-esteem in the latter 20th century, there are no differences between Blacks and Whites or between women and men, in the U. S. (Crocker & Major, 1989). In fact, Blacks show a small but consistent positive advantage in self-esteem over Whites, despite the fact that Black Americans are considerably more disadvantaged and subject to much greater discrimination than their White counterparts.

A "buffering" or mitigating effect for perceived
prejudice was also suggested by a three-way interaction on the global self-esteem index in the women's study. Not surprisingly, the greater the failure, the lower the women's subsequently reported self-esteem. However, perceived prejudice "buffered" loss of self-esteem due to severe failure. Women who experienced severe failure with male opponents and perceived it as reflecting prejudice on the males' part showed higher self-regard than those in the same circumstances who did not see their putative male opponents as biased or prejudiced. So, early on, there was some tantalizing evidence that perceived prejudice does not inevitably lower self-esteem in the victim or target. Instead, in some circumstances or for some people, it might sustain self-esteem by enabling a minority or subordinate group member to attribute a negative experience to prejudice by others rather than making a dispositional attribution to their own personal qualities as an individual.

The classic book *Black Like Me*, in which the White American author James Griffin (1961, p. 48) described his experiences posing as a Black man in the U.S. South of the 1950s, suggested a similar process among African-Americans. Recalling an instance of discrimination he had experienced, he noted: "The Negro's only salvation... lies in his belief, the old belief of his fore fathers, that these things are not directed against him personally, but against his race, his pigmentation. His mother or aunt or teacher long ago carefully prepared him, explaining that: 'They don't do it to you because you're Johnny - they don't even know you. They do it against your 'Negro-ness.'"

In the late-1980s, Jennifer Crocker and her colleagues also explored the attributional ambiguity hypothesis and the potential buffering effects of perceived prejudice upon self-esteem (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991). In one study, African-American college students received either positive or negative interpersonal feedback from a White evaluator for a self-description they had written. By using two rooms separated by a one-way mirror and a shade that was drawn or raised, the African-American participants were led to believe the White evaluator either could see them and was aware of their race or could not see them and hence was unaware of their race. African-American participants who thought they could be seen and had attributed the negative feedback to prejudice showed less pretest-post-test change in self-esteem than when the White evaluator allegedly could not see them. In other words, they discounted negative feedback from a White evaluator and apparently attributed the negative evaluation to perceived prejudice. They also discounted positive feedback when the White evaluator could allegedly see them and showed decreased self-esteem in that situation too. By contrast, they showed increased self-esteem in the positive feedback condition when presumably unseen by the White evaluator when no ulterior motives for a positive evaluation by a White person could be attributed to them.

While the buffering effect of perceived prejudice upon self-evaluation appears to be real, its strength varies across groups (Dion, Earn, & Yee, 1978). Nor does it appear in every group subject to prejudice and discrimination. A study of Jewish undergraduate men (Dion & Earn, 1975) that we shall discuss shortly yielded little or no evidence of a buffering effect on reported self-esteem in response to an experimental induction of perceived prejudice. Experimental studies of White women as targets of prejudice, by Dion (1975) and Crocker et al. (1991), respectively, suggest the buffering effect on self-esteem for women is only marginal and probably quite weak. By contrast, clearer evidence for the buffering effect of perceived prejudice upon self-esteem comes from African-American participants in the Crocker et al. (1991) study.

Assuming Crocker et al.'s results (1991) are replicable, the preceding pattern makes sense. In Canada and the U.S., members of visible minorities, such as African-Americans, are considerably more likely to be targets of prejudice and discrimination, and more readily perceive these being directed against them, than is the case for White women and Jewish people, respectively. As a consequence of this greater victimization now and in the past, visible minority members may have developed, perhaps through ethnic group socialization, the strategy of discounting negative feedback from White, majority group members and attributing it to prejudice as a means of coping and of sustaining their self-esteem. Their self-esteem simply does not depend on the opinions or attitudes of the White majority group.

I consider the impact of perceived prejudice and discrimination upon self-esteem to be a "weak effect," in the sense that it is not invariably observed and it occurs only for certain groups and under certain conditions. Major (2001) has independently come to the same conclusion and is working on determining under what conditions and for which people and for which groups of people that perceived prejudice will have a buffering effect upon self-esteem. Also, somewhat perversely, the buffering effect of perceived prejudice and perceived discrimination upon self-esteem may well be stronger and more evident with White Euro-American men who feel discriminated against by policies such as affirmative action than it is in the case of minority group members (Kobrynnowicz &
Branscombe, 1997). Perceived prejudice and discrimination, however, do have strong, consistent effects and relationships to other dimensions, and it is these consistently stronger effects that we consider below.

The Stress Model

Let me turn now to a second viewpoint that clearly emphasizes, by contrast, the "downside" of perceived discrimination, namely, a stress model. Perceiving oneself to be a target of prejudice or discrimination is, I contend, a psychosocial stressor. It is a stressor because it elicits cognitive appraisals of threat, such that victims impute stable, malevolent motives and intentions to the antagonist(s) and see themselves as a deliberate target of nasty attitudes and behaviour by the antagonist(s). Moreover, perceived prejudice and discrimination are often unpredictable social stressors, entailing greater adaptation costs for the target than would a predictable or controllable stressor.

If perceived prejudice and discrimination are indeed stressors, they should produce psychological consequences known to result from stress, such as negative affect, reported stress, and psychological or psychiatric symptoms. However, since outgroup threat usually heightens own group identification (Dion, 1979, 2000), another predictable consequence or correlate of perceived prejudice and discrimination should be increased identification with one's own group - the counterpart in the individual to greater cohesion in the larger group. Identifying with one's own group (or ingroup) and receiving support from it should ultimately reduce stress resulting from discrimination. This stress model of perceived discrimination has now been supported with several ethnic and racial groups in Canada in research by my colleagues and me, as well as by other studies conducted independently by investigators in other countries.

Dion and Earn's (1975) were the first researchers to document in the psychological laboratory the affective consequences from experiencing anti-Semitism. An experimental situation was contrived in which we successfully varied the likelihood that a sample of Jewish undergraduate men at the University of Toronto either could or could not attribute a failure to anti-Semitism on the part of several individuals they thought they were interacting with. In the "prejudice" condition, the participants believed the other men were all Gentiles, who knew that the participant himself was Jewish and believed he was the only Jewish person present in the situation. In the "no prejudice" condition, no information about religious or ethnic background about him or the others was solicited or made available, thus presumably precluding an attribution to prejudice. After experiencing failure during subsequent interaction with others, participants rated themselves on positive and negative aspects of the Jewish stereotype as well as self-esteem traits and also completed a Mood Adjective Check List, a multivariate measure of affect.

Dion and Earn's (1975) findings clearly supported a stress model. First, on stereotypic self-ratings, Jewish men in the prejudice condition evaluated themselves more strongly on positive, but not negative, aspects of the Jewish stereotype - evidence, once again, of heightened ingroup identification as a consequence of the putative stressor of perceived prejudice. Second, those in the prejudice condition also reported feeling more aggression, greater sadness, higher anxiety, and heightened self-consciousness on the affect measure than those in the no prejudice condition. Those in the prejudice condition also rated themselves lower in social affection on the mood scales than those in the no prejudice condition, though this was considerably stronger when they thought their evaluations were going to be made available to their antagonists for inspection as opposed to the experimenter only - a second experimental variation in Dion and Earn's (1975) study.

Two features tell us that this pattern of affect responses is a stress reaction. First, the affect scales can be pooled together to form an overall verbal index of stress. On this stress index, Jewish men in the prejudice condition scored higher than those in the no prejudice condition. Second, we standardized their affect scores and compared them to those from a study by Lazarus (1964) of film-mediated stress, a known stressor, in which men had viewed a subincision ritual, a painful operation on a man's genitals (Dion et al., 1978). Mean difference scores between the prejudice vs. no prejudice conditions and difference scores for the known stressor vs. no stressor conditions were highly similar across the different affect scales, especially aggression, sadness, social affection, and egotism. The only exception is that viewing the subincision ritual understandably elicited greater anxiety in men in Lazarus's film stressor condition than did the prejudice condition relative to their respective control conditions.

That perceived prejudice and discrimination are stressors is also supported by correlational studies of other ethnic groups conducted in Toronto. For example, Pak, Dion, and Dion (1991) explored whether these previously obtained effects involving stress and ingroup identification would generalize to university students from a "visible" minority in Toronto, such as Chinese, describing experiences of racial discrimination from their own lives beyond the laboratory. These Chinese students completed measures of per-
ceived discrimination, psychological symptoms, and attitudes toward Chinese. The stress model of discrimination was once again clearly supported. Specifically, Chinese university students who reported having encountered racial discrimination in Canada had higher psychological symptom scores but also indicated more positive attitudes towards the Chinese (i.e., higher ingroup cohesion) than their counterparts reporting no experiences of discrimination.

A comparative study of Koreans in Toronto by Kim (1988) for his doctoral thesis in psychology at Queen’s University also supports the stress model of perceived discrimination. His findings likewise revealed clearly that being discriminated against is stressful for members of this Asian-ancestry minority group in Toronto. Reported experiences of discrimination by Korean immigrants to Canada and Korean-Canadians related positively to higher levels of reported stress, anxiety, depression, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, psychosocial, and especially hostility and interpersonal sensitivity, on a symptoms checklist measure. Further, Korean respondents reporting experiences of discrimination in Canada also indicated being prouder of being Korean and identifying more strongly as a Korean than those reporting no experiences of discrimination.

Nor is the evidence of a relationship between perceived or experienced discrimination and reported stress limited to ethnic group members in Toronto or Canada. Liebkind (1996), for example, surveyed a sample of Vietnamese youth and adults who had arrived in Finland as refugees between 1979 and 1989. Among the men, the best single predictor of stress symptoms, as assessed by the Hopkins Symptom Check List-25, was reported experiences of prejudice and discrimination in public places. This relationship between perceived discrimination and stress was obtained after having controlled for the effects of pre-migration experiences, in particular whether or not the refugee had witnessed killings. Since Vietnamese men had a more positive orientation toward acculturating to Finnish society than their female counterparts, Liebkind (1996) showed that the Vietnamese men may have found the negative acculturation experiences of prejudice and discrimination especially frustrating, which in turn was reflected in more symptoms of anxiety and stress than others. [For yet further research evidence of the stressfulness of perceived discrimination, see Dion (in press)].

Of course, different ethnic groups in Toronto and elsewhere vary in the extent of discrimination they perceive and encounter. Dion and Kawakami (1996) analyzed survey data collected by telephone interviews in the early-1990s from over 900 respondents, both female and male, in Toronto representing six ethnic groups, including visible minorities such as Blacks, South Asians, and Chinese, as well as the White minorities of Italians, Jews, and Portuguese. Respondents reported perceptions of group discrimination (i.e., whether or not their ethnic group was discriminated against in a number of domains) as well as personal discrimination (i.e., whether they personally had experienced discrimination).

Domains for group discrimination included obtaining work, getting unskilled jobs, getting skilled jobs, getting a college education, obtaining executive positions in business, joining clubs, obtaining loans or credit, obtaining government jobs, obtaining management positions in government, and being considered for promotion or advancement. The group discrimination domains also covered how they were paid, how they were treated by the courts, and how they were portrayed by the media. The personal discrimination measure included the same domains.

The preceding survey study relating ethnicity to perceived discrimination made two key conclusions. Overall, in each and every ethnic group, survey respondents reported considerably more group discrimination than personal discrimination. This is the “personal/group discrimination discrepancy” phenomenon first identified by Crosby (1982) and later explored by Donald Taylor and his colleagues from the late-1980s (e.g., Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990) to the present. However, the tendency to see one’s group rather than oneself as a target of discrimination is much more evident and greater among visible minorities than “White” minorities (Dion, 2001; Dion & Kawakami, 1996).

Another important finding from the survey study is the hierarchy of perceived discrimination across the sample of ethnic groups in Toronto. For both personal and group discrimination, “visible” minorities perceived more discrimination than White minorities. Black respondents, especially, stood out, even among visible minorities. On average, twice as many Black respondents perceived group discrimination across domains than did those in any of the White minorities. In the mid-1980s, however, it was South Asians in Toronto, among this same set of six ethnic groups, who were most prone to see their group as being discriminated against, and more so than Blacks. These two racial-ethnic groups, then, have changed places of first and second rank in the ethnic hierarchy of perceived discrimination within the relatively short time frame of a decade.

Of course, one does not have to be an ethnic or minority group member to show the stressful consequences of perceived discrimination, if you encounter
Hannah (1974) showed experimentally at Memorial University in Newfoundland that the stress comes from being discriminated against and treated unfairly on the basis of any arbitrary characteristic and not merely from membership in an oppressed group. Participants in Hannah's study, who were young White men, were recruited on the promise of monetary payment for participating in an experiment and had their expectations partially disabused in two discrimination conditions on the grounds that the project was running out of funds. They were deprived of a goodly portion of their expected remuneration, either by a chance flip of a coin (chance discrimination) or arbitrarily on the grounds that members of their sex were otherwise readily available and not that desirable as participants anyway (arbitrary discrimination). These conditions were compared to a no-discrimination condition (no reduction in promised pay) and another control condition providing baselines for two behavioural measures—(1) performance on a Stroop interference task, and (2) a request to volunteer time to help the experimenter—and an attitudinal measure, rated feelings about the task. Perceived choice was manipulated orthogonal to the discrimination induction by giving participants the option to select an easy or a difficult version of the Stroop task to work on. However, like a standard choice induction in a cognitive dissonance experiment, they were subtly pressured to select the difficult one, while retaining the illusion of choice.

Discrimination produced after-effects on both the behavioural and attitudinal measures. The experience of discrimination, whether chance or arbitrary, lowered Stroop task performance compared to the no discrimination or control conditions. Arbitrary discrimination also led participants to volunteer less time to help the experimenter and to report more negative feelings about the task than the other conditions. However, even with arbitrary discrimination, the perception of even a semblance of control over which Stroop task to perform eliminated the negative attitudinal after-effects of discrimination and had some ameliorating influence on Stroop task performance. In sum, Hannah's (1974) experiment indicated that (1) discrimination on the basis of an arbitrary trait is stressful, even for White, majority group members, with both behavioural and attitudinal after-effects, and (2) perceived control may help to counter or to buffer the stressfulness of "arbitrary" discrimination.

Hardiness. If perceived prejudice and discrimination are stressful—and they certainly seem to be—what, if anything, could "buffer" or protect an individual against them? Dion, Dion, and Pak (1992) explored the personality dimension of hardiness in a study of Toronto's Chinese community as a possible buffer of discrimination-related stress. A sense of personal efficacy and control over one's environment is associated with better health and greater resilience in the face of various stressors. Several authors (Kobasa, 1979; Maddi & Khoshaba, 1994) emphasize "hardiness"—a personality composite consisting of a sense of control, commitment, and challenge—as an important moderator of the relationship between stressful life events, on one hand, and physical or mental illness, on the other. "Hardy" people are less prone to suffer the ill effects of various life stresses upon their physical and mental health because they appraise stressful life events positively and optimistically and deal decisively and effectively with the stressors they confront.

The personality construct of hardiness may be one factor facilitating the health and adaptation of some immigrants and minority group members in a receiving society. Kuo and Tsai (1986) explored hardiness and mental health among Asian-Americans and Asian immigrants to the Northwestern U.S. Even using a hardiness measure with low reliability (viz., three items from Rotter's locus of control scale), hardiness nevertheless related negatively to depression.

Dion et al. (1992) examined whether individual differences in hardiness among members of Toronto's Chinese community would affect the positive relationship we had previously found between discrimination and psychological stress symptoms. From the stress model for perceived discrimination, we hypothesized that perceived discrimination and psychological symptoms would correlate positively for our Chinese community respondents. From the hardiness literature, we also expected the positive correlation between perceived discrimination and stress symptoms to be considerably stronger for Chinese community members low in hardiness than for those high in hardiness. Hardiness was operationalized in terms of a composite index of perceived personal control and self-esteem, these being positively intercorrelated with one another. We also included measures of life stress rated for undesirability and required readjustment to insure that any correlation between perceived discrimination and psychological symptoms was not merely a result of other stressful life events rather than perceived discrimination.

Dion et al.'s (1992) results clearly supported both the stress and hardiness hypotheses. Discrimination related positively to psychological symptoms in their Chinese community respondents. Moreover, as predicted, the positive relationship of discrimination and psychological symptoms was markedly higher among Chinese community respondents low in hardiness.
than for those high in hardness. Indeed, for those high in hardness, discrimination and reported psychological symptoms were effectively unrelated, whereas they related reasonably strongly for those low in hardness. Alternative interpretations for these relationships in terms of differential life stresses or differential exposure to discrimination in the two hardness groups were also ruled out. Although correlational evidence points weaker inferences than experimental studies, it does appear that personality-based hardness helps to buffer discrimination-related stress. Does it do so, however, for groups other than ethnic Chinese in Toronto?

Foster and Dion (2001) also explored whether the beneficial relationship of hardness to discrimination-related stress is due to buffering versus denial with a sample of White women students at the University of North Dakota in the U.S. as participants, and the findings likewise favor a buffering interpretation. As well, the buffering effect of hardness for women seems to be mediated by the types of attributions they make. Specifically, "hardy" women confronting a situation in which they are apparently discriminated against on the basis of gender are more likely to make specific rather than global attributions as well as unstable rather than stable attributions than do their less hardy counterparts, despite the fact that perceived unfairness of the discrimination is equal in the two hardness groups. In other words, hardy women in an apparent discrimination situation coped better by seeing the gender discrimination as a unique and unusual occurrence than did their less hardy counterparts.

Yet there may be boundary conditions for the stress-buffering effect of hardness in minority and subordinate group members (Dion, in press; Dion et al., 1992). For example, hardness in the Chinese community study was associated with several background factors likely to facilitate successful coping and adaptation to Toronto, such as a higher level of education, a higher-status occupation, and greater reported proficiency with English. Based on these findings, we believe a strong sense of personal control or active mastery—that is, hardness—will buffer stress due to discrimination if, and perhaps only if, it is accompanied by other factors, such as a good education and a good occupation, that facilitate coping. Likewise, in Foster and Dion's (2001) study with White women as participants, White women high in hardness possessed higher self-esteem than their less hardy counterparts.

Relative Deprivation and Discrimination Theories

Finally, let us consider the perspectives of relative deprivation and discrimination theories, which attempt to help us understand an interesting paradox, namely, that members of oppressed groups do not always, or even often, respond to disadvantage, deprivation, and discrimination, by becoming militant or seeking redress. Two theoretical perspectives—relative deprivation theory and discrimination theory, respectively—offer different conceptual frameworks to predict when and why members of an oppressed group will become militant and respond to their disadvantage with attempts to instigate social change, such as political protest and militancy.

Relative deprivation (hereafter RD) theory—as its title implies—assumes one's feelings of deprivation with respect to social, economic, or other status dimensions are not absolute but instead relative, depending on the individual or group with whom one compares. So, according to this perspective, an individual who suffers a setback or deprivation will feel less deprived and be less angry if the people she or he compares with have also suffered the same fate, but will feel relatively more deprived if the others with whom they are comparing themselves have not had the same negative experience.

RD theorists propose different types of relative deprivation defined by orthogonally crossing two dimensions. One dimension concerns the focus of comparison and defines the distinction between egoistic and fraternalistic RD. Egoistic RD occurs when an individual feels deprived relative to others in their own group. For example, a woman who feels more deprived or discriminated against than other women would be in a state of egoistic relative deprivation. Fraternalistic RD is another type and occurs when one's ingroup is perceived to be at a disadvantage compared to an outgroup.

The second independent dimension defining types of relative deprivation is the cognitive-affective distinction. Cognitive RD concerns the perception of inequality, while affective RD refers to the extent of resentment over inequalities. Considered together, these two dimensions define four possible types of RD. Previous reviews of RD theory (e.g., Dion, 1986) indicate that of the four types of RD, it is primarily affective, fraternalistic RD that best predicts militancy, protest reactions, and desires to effect social change.

Discrimination theory is an elaboration of the stress model of perceived discrimination. The core idea is that perceived discrimination is not necessarily identical or synonymous with relative deprivation, even though one might expect them to be highly related. Basically, it is an empirical generalization resulting from several studies comparing the power of relative deprivation and perceived discrimination measures.
across different groups to predict criteria of interest. Findings in these studies indicate that perceived discrimination and relative deprivation often do not correlate with one another. These studies consistently suggest that perceived discrimination measures are more powerful and consistent predictors of criteria of interest, such as reported militancy, than are the different RD measures, with the notable exception of affective, fraternalistic RD.

Birt and Dion (1987) compared perceived discrimination to the four RD types in a sample of gay and lesbian respondents in Toronto – two groups who confront considerable discrimination. Few effects for measures of relative deprivation were found. By contrast, perceived discrimination predicted increased militancy, decreased satisfaction, and a decreased sense of perceived control, in the form of lowered beliefs that the world is an easy or a just place. The perceived discrimination measure included nine items that were concrete instances of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (e.g., decreased career options, poor service in shops, loss of friends on revealing one’s sexual orientation, etc.) and four questions concerning the extent and perceived future course of discrimination perceived to be directed against gays and lesbians. An example was: “Do you think gays and lesbians suffer more or less discrimination than other groups in Toronto?” with the response scale ranging from “much less” to “much more.”

That these findings are not idiosyncratic or unique to gays and lesbians in Toronto was shown by an unpublished study of ethnic Chinese students at the University of Toronto. In the Chinese study, the perceived discrimination measure consisted of items assessing perceived differential treatment or status, as well as perceived discrimination for Chinese in general in Toronto and for Chinese students at the University of Toronto, and their guess as to whether the situation was getting better or worse. The perceived discrimination measure and measures of cognitive egoistic RD, and affective fraternalistic RD served as predictors.

Criteria included measures of militancy (a 20-item attitudinal measure assessing intention to protest and seek redress for poor or differential treatment of Chinese people in Toronto), group vitality (the perceived strength of the Chinese as an ethnic group in Toronto), as well as satisfaction with different aspects of life in Toronto, and the perceived fairness of Canadian society. Perceived discrimination consistently predicted all of these criteria, whereas relative deprivation measures predicted only one of the four criteria. In particular, affective fraternalistic RD correlated positively with militancy. The greater the per-
ceived discrimination, and the greater the affective fraternalistic RD, the more militant the Chinese students were in their expressed attitudes. Also, cognitive-egoistic RD related negatively to satisfaction.

Finally, Dion and Kawakami (2000) also compared the predictive efficacy of perceived discrimination and relative deprivation measures with University of Toronto women as participants. Measures of satisfaction, locus of control, group vitality, militancy, support for affirmative action, and feminist attitudes served as the criteria of interest. Given previous findings, we tested two hypotheses: (1) perceived discrimination would correlate more consistently with these criteria than relative deprivation measures, and (2) of the different types of relative deprivation, affective, fraternalistic RD would best predict militancy and related attitudes.

Both hypotheses were clearly borne out. Specifically, perceived discrimination consistently correlated with most criteria, relating positively to attitudes promoting social change (viz., militancy, support for affirmative action policies, and feminist attitudes) but negatively to sense of personal and group well-being (namely, sense of satisfaction, sense of perceived personal and environmental control, and group vitality). For the RD measures, only affective, fraternalistic RD measure was a successful predictor, being positively related to group vitality, militancy, and feminist attitudes. Feminism among university women related, at least in part, both to perceived discrimination and relative deprivation of the affective, fraternalistic variety.

CONCLUSION

So, in conclusion, perceived prejudice and discrimination have now been shown to be pivotal dimensions in the psychology of ethnic and intergroup relations as well as the psychology of immigration and acculturation. They are especially important for predicting reactions of oppressed individuals and groups for three reasons: (1) For some groups and for some individuals within these groups, perceived prejudice may provide an opportunity to buffer one’s self-esteem in response to negative feedback or evaluations from majority or dominant group members, (2) perceived prejudice and discrimination are stressful, although “hardy” people may be somewhat less susceptible to discrimination-related stress, and (3) perceived prejudice and discrimination also relate to desires to take corrective social action, such as protest and militancy, and related collective-oriented responses. Indeed, for several different groups that are targets of discrimination, perceived discrimination predicts more efficiently and consistently several social
attitudes reflecting militancy and protest than does relative deprivation.

For further discussion of theory and research on the social psychology of prejudice and discrimination from the perspective of the bigot as well as the target, the interested reader may wish to consult a review chapter by Dion (in press) in the Comprehensive Handbook of Psychology.

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Résumé
Jusqu'à présent, la plupart des chercheurs qui ont étudié les préjugés ont employé une stratégie unidirectionnelle lorsqu'ils cherchaient à savoir pour quelles raisons et à quel moment la majorité - ou les membres d'un groupe dominant - exprimait des préjugés à l'égard des membres d'une minorité - ou des membres d'un groupe dominé - sans tenir compte des effets que les préjugés et la discrimination ont sur les victimes. En revanche, le programme de recherche que je dirige depuis 25 ans se penche sur la « phénoménologie » des préjugés et de la discrimination au point de vue de la victime et cherche à répondre notamment aux questions suivantes : que signifie, pour les victimes de préjugés, le fait d'être l'objet de discrimination fondée sur des caractéristiques arbitraires, telles que l'origine ethnique, la race, la religion, le sexe, l'orientation sexuelle, etc.? Quels sont les corrélats sociaux, psychologiques et affectifs de la discrimination, ainsi que les conséquences pour les personnes qui souffrent de préjugés et de discrimination en raison de leur appartenance à une minorité ou à un groupe dominé? Cet article présente une sélection de mes travaux de recherche sur la « phénoménologie » des préjugés et de la discrimination, en plus de nombreux modèles théoriques que j'ai utilisés et élaborés dans le but d'approfondir la question.

References
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