Social Psychology of Prejudice:

Historical and Contemporary Issues

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Prejudice as Social Norms

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Over the past century, stereotyping and prejudice have remained essential topics in social psychology. However, the assumed fundamental underpinnings of intergroup beliefs have changed over time, following the general social-psychological Zeitgeist. In the first half of the century, the focus was primarily upon norm-based theories in which prejudice was treated primarily as an ingroup phenomenon–a shared social construct. In the last half of the century, however, social psychologists focused more on intergroup contact approaches, assuming that prejudice is determined primarily through contact with members of outgroups, rather than through sharing of ingroup norms. However, this trend appears to be changing, as researchers have again returned to norm theories and once again applied them to issues of intergroup attitudes. The goal of this chapter is to summarize this field, with a particular emphasis on classic and contemporary research concerning the role of social norms as determinants of expressed intergroup beliefs and behaviors.

Classical Approaches

Early social psychologists considered prejudice to be the result of society and societal norms, and much research was conducted to support these theories (Bolton, 1935; Lewin, 1952; Lippitt, 1949; Marrow & French, 1945). The fundamental assumption of this research is that intergroup beliefs are determined in large part through social transmission—observation of others and communication with them. Generally, information about appropriate characteristics of, and attitudes and behavior toward members of social groups can be considered as *memes* —artifacts of human culture that are transmitted among individuals (Dawkins, 1976). As the result of this communication, both stereotype knowledge as well as norms about application (e.g. the appropriateness of using negative stereotypes in conversation) become part of the social fabric of the local culture. Intergroup beliefs, like other social knowledge, are expected to be developed primarily through social comparison with the beliefs and behaviors of relevant others. Individuals are motivated to understand social categories and their meanings, and turn to relevant others to do so. Thus, intergroup beliefs and their appropriateness are communicated, shared, negotiated, and "co-constructed."

Katz and Braly's (1933) classic experiments on racial prejudice supported the idea that stereotypes and prejudice are based on societal norms. Students were provided with a list of 84 adjectives and asked to indicate which traits were most characteristic of ten racial and national groups. They found high consensus among the students in assigning characteristics to the different groups, suggesting that there is societal agreement about stereotypes. Furthermore, consensus did not seem to be the result of interaction or familiarity with the members of the groups rated, but rather seemed to be more the result of shared social norms. Although the assignment of characteristics to the relatively unfamiliar groups, including Turks, Chinese, and Japanese, was found to be low in consensus (suggesting that there were no clear norms for these groups), characteristics assigned to the most familiar groups, including Americans, Irish, and English, were also less consensual than characteristics assigned to groups with which people were comparatively less familiar, including Negroes, Germans, Jews, and Italians. Furthermore, participants held negative and consensual intergroup attitudes even about groups with whom they were relatively familiar, such as Negroes, Irish, and Italians.

Cantril (1941) considered the role of group socialization processes in extreme forms of prejudice and discrimination. According to his model, as individuals enter new social groups and begin to identify with them, they adopt the group's "frame of reference." As Cantril points out this even occurs in cases where the belief, actions, and customs of the group are extremely hostile and violent. As individuals internalize the group norms and actively participate in the group's customs, they may even engage in horrifying intergroup acts in accordance with the group's established norms. For instance, Cantril noted that lynch mobs in the southern states and the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime are powerful examples of the influence group members can have on the intergroup attitudes and behaviors of individuals.

This notion that prejudice is developed and maintained as a result of group socialization is also the basis of Sherif and Sherif's (1953) group-norm theory. According to this theory, prejudice develops as a result of group formation, identification, and continuous interaction. Once groups are formed, group members learn the appropriate attitudes about their and other groups from the other group members. Group members pressure each other to conform to group norms and standards, and deviants from the group's norms are often ignored, punished and even rejected (Schachter, 1951). Sherif and Sherif's theory makes the important prediction that changing group attitudes will be more effective than changing individual attitudes because individual beliefs are first and foremost group beliefs (social norms).

The Sherifs' famous summer camp experiments (Sherif & Sherif, 1953; Sherif et al., 1955; 1961) provided a striking example of how quickly group norms can develop and how they can create prejudice.

Once the boys at the camp were divided into two groups, and as competition between the groups increased, prejudiced norms quickly followed. The boys increasingly favored their own group, as expressed in both attitude and behavior, even when the outgroup consisted of children who had been close friends prior to the experiment. Thus, stereotyping and prejudice were again the consequences of clearly defined group norms within highly cohesive groups.

In his classic book on prejudice, Allport (1954) considered group-norm theory as one of major theories of prejudice. According to this theory, "all groups (whether ingroups or reference groups) develop a way of living with characteristic codes and beliefs, standards, and 'enemies' to suit their own adaptive needs" (p.39). Groups use both subtle and gross pressures to ensure that individual group members obey group norms. As Allport pointed out, support for this theory of prejudice was found in the relative ineffectiveness of attempts to change individual attitudes. Again, Allport pointed out that that it is easier to change group than individual attitudes (Allport, 1954; Sherif & Sherif, 1953).

Chein (1946) also suggested that conformity is an important dimension of intergroup prejudice, stating that: "Much prejudiced behavior does not stem from prejudiced attitudes or motives, nor even from faulty information, but rather from the need to conform to prevailing social norms or from simple inertia" (p. 415). Chein indicated that individuals frequently do not accept or develop friendships with members of particular outgroups because other members of their group also do not. Chein also implied that intergroup attitudes could effectively be changed at the group level, noting that legislative measures that prevent discriminatory practices in employment, education, housing, and other areas may reduce prejudice in part by changing social norms.

Early research confirmed a basic prediction of group norm theory—that interventions designed to change group attitudes can be particularly effective. Indeed, researchers targeted entire communities, housing projects, factories, and school systems, and with the help of their respective leaders and the implementation of new group policies, created new, more positive, group norms. In one relevant study, Marrow and French (1945) examined stereotypes of women older than age 30 at the Harwood Manufacturing Corporation. At the time of their study, women over 30 were no longer being hired because, according to top management and plant supervisors, these women did not attain adequate speed in production, were frequently absent, were slow to learn new skills, and had a shorter working life. However, in a sample of 700 existing female employees, the researchers found that women over 30 actually surpassed younger women in production, ability to learn new specialized skills, attendance records, and annual rate of turnover–the criteria established by top management prior to the study as indicators of

a valuable worker. Once this information was obtained, top management worked with the researchers to re-educate the plant supervisors by having them view the findings of the study, asking them about the highly satisfactory performance of older women in their units, and holding discussions on how the stereotype of older women had developed and why people believed it. Through these changes in the attitudes of the group, individuals' attitudes changed and the policy of hiring older women became a reality in the plant.

Lewin (1952) also demonstrated that creating new group norms influences individual group member's attitudes. Lewin (1952) conducted an experiment on changing food habits with six Red Cross groups of women volunteers. The alleged objective of his study was to increase the use of beef hearts, sweetbreads, and kidneys. Three of the groups heard a detailed lecture in favor of using these three meats linking the problem of nutrition with the war effort and emphasizing the vitamin and mineral value. The other three groups also heard a comprehensive lecture on the pros of eating these three meats, and then were given a chance to discuss this program in a group of people similar to them. A follow-up showed that only 3% of the women who heard the lectures served one of the meats that they never served before, whereas 32% of the women who participated in the group discussion served one of three meats. Thus, knowledge alone does not appear to be sufficient for changing individual's beliefs. Only women who were given the opportunity to discuss the program with a group of women similar to themselves were likely to follow through with the program (see also Bolton, 1935; Lippitt, 1949).

Other early theory and research supported a link between conformity and prejudice, as assessed through variation in Authoritarianism. According to the Authoritarian personality approach, prejudice stems from a strict upbringing, which creates a person who strictly follows authority figures, has conventional moral standards, and who is hostile towards outgroup members (Adorno et al., 1950). Although frequently considered a personality "disorder," Authoritarianism is in large part the result of norm transmission–these children learn their beliefs from caregivers or people surrounding them in their early childhood who create a strict, conventional norm in which outsiders are not accepted. Thus, the beliefs of ingroup members, family, and friends appear to be an important contributor to individuals' intergroup attitudes. Indeed, Lindzey (1950) found that individuals who are high in prejudice were also more likely to conform to authority norms than individuals low in prejudice.

Although Authoritarianism represents in large part a conformity process, it does not seem to account for all of the variance in prejudice. Pettigrew (1959) proposed that the greatest proportion of prejudice is a function of individuals conforming to group or societal norms. He

(Pettigrew, 1958) investigated the role of personality and sociocultural factors in the intergroup attitudes of White South Africans toward Africans, and Whites in the southern and northern states toward Blacks. Participants completed measures of Authoritarianism, social conformity, and intergroup attitudes. He found that participants high in Authoritarianism were more likely to be prejudiced against Blacks, but also that individuals high in likelihood of conforming to social norms were more likely to be prejudiced against Blacks. In addition, he found that conformity accounted for heightened racial hostility, even controlling for authoritarianism, where as the opposite was not true. Again, racial prejudice was due more to conformity to social norms than to authoritarian personality.

If prejudice is due to social norms, then racial attitudes are expected to vary as a function of the local norms of a particular group or society. Supporting this hypothesis, Watson (1950) found that individuals who recently moved to New York City and who had come into contact with anti-Semitic people became more anti-Semitic in their attitudes. Similarly, Pettigrew (1958) found that as White southern men entered the army, where the social norms were less discriminatory than they were used to, they became less prejudiced against Blacks. In addition, research with Indiana steel workers and West Virginia coal miners showed that individuals' racial attitudes were different when they were at work than when they were not at work (Minard, 1952; Reitzes, 1953). For example, Minard (1952) found that White and Black coal miners in West Virginia were integrated below ground but almost completely segregated above ground. And, while at work, he found that attitudes were less discriminatory and there was little racial conflict. However, when the workers returned to their homes and communities, there was almost no interaction between the two groups in their social lives, and attitudes and behavior were more negative. This research clearly demonstrates that people to conform to the local social norms, and one outcome of this conformity may be prejudice.

Gardner (1973) suggested that stereotypes are beliefs shared in the community regarding the characteristics of various groups, and that it is their shared or consensual nature that distinguishes stereotypes from other beliefs. Gardner and colleagues have demonstrated the social implications of consensus in stereotypes (Gardner, 1973; Gardner, 1994; Gardner, Kirby, & Findlay, 1973; Gardner, Kirby, Gorospe, Villamin, 1972; Gardner & Taylor, 1968). In one study, Gardner, Kirby, and Findlay (1973) examined the importance of consensus in the communication of ethnic stereotypes. In their study, 9th and 12th graders were presented with attributes from stereotypes obtained using Katz and Braly's (1933) method by Karlins, Coffman, and Walters (1969). Twelve attributes were used for each group and were divided into three

categories of attributes that were high, medium, or low in consensus according to the percentage attribution. Participants were either given four of these attributes from each category or two randomly selected from each category and then asked to identify the ethnic group represented by the traits. Results of their study showed that participants made more correct identifications when presented with the highly consensual attributes rather than attributes medium or low in consensus. Furthermore, 12th graders were more correct than 9th graders in their identification of the groups indicating that consensus gets better as individuals become older, and overall participants indicated that the task was more difficult as consensus decreased. Thus, their findings suggest that the greater the extent to which stereotypes are consensually shared by a group, the more meaningful the information is to members of that particular group.

Intergroup Contact Approaches

In the 1970's and 80's, as psychology became increasingly more focused on (individual) social cognition, a change in conceptualizing the foundations of prejudice also occurred. During this time, models of stereotype formation (cf. Eagly & Kite, 1987; Hamilton & Gifford, 1976; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Rothbart & John, 1992; Stephan, 1985) as well as approaches to stereotype change (Brewer & Miller, 1984; Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Rothbart & John, 1985) focused on intergroup contact as the driving force. According to these models, stereotypes develop not so much through the acceptance of ingroup norms, but rather as a direct result of interactions with outgroup members.

In terms of stereotype development, contact models assume that stereotypes develop through direct (but biased) observation of the behaviors of members of different social groups, for instance as a result of illusory correlations (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976), biased memory search (Trope & Thompson, 1997) or memory (Fyock & Stangor, 1994), and through erroneous extrapolations on the basis of existing social roles (Eagly & Kite, 1987). Furthermore, within this approach intergroup contact is assumed to be the most effective method of changing intergroup beliefs. In support of these approaches, research has demonstrated that stereotypes are sensitive to the actual characteristics of social groups (e.g. Weber & Crocker, 1983), and that intergroup contact is successful in changing perceptions of social groups under certain conditions, especially if intergroup cooperation and a successful goal relevant to both groups are present (Aronson et al., 1978; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Sherif et al., 1961; Sherif, 1966).

There are, however, difficulties with assuming that stereotypes are formed and changed primarily through direct contact with members of the outgroup. For one, stereotypes and prejudice can be developed about groups with which the individual has had very little or even no direct

contact (Hartley, 1946; Maio, Esses, & Bell, 1994). Furthermore in the intergroup contact literature, attitudes are found to change through exposure to group members only in very limited conditions (Hewstone, 1996; Rothbart & John, 1985; Stephan, 1985) and contact rarely leads to a change in attitudes toward the group as a whole (cf. Hewstone & Brown, 1986).

Recent Research on Prejudice and Social Norms

In the past decade, and perhaps in part as a result of the difficulties inherent in intergroup contact approaches, social psychologists have revisited norm theories of prejudice, and renewed their interest in investigating the influence of social norms on intergroup beliefs (Ruscher, 2001; Stangor et al, 2001b). Furthermore, this contemporary research has expanded the traditional approaches in many ways–particularly by being more specific about the nature of the underlying social norms, by considering a broader variety of dependent measures, and by relying more exclusively on experimental rather than correlational research findings.

Several recent research reports have demonstrated that information about the perceived beliefs of others can create and change intergroup attitudes and behaviors. In one study, Wittenbrink and Henly (1996, Experiment 3) gave high and low prejudiced white participants—as determined on the basis of scores on McConahay, Hardee, and Batts' (1981) Modern Racism Scale—the expectation that other individuals believed that African Americans had either a large proportion or small proportion of negative characteristics. Participants then completed the Modern Racism Scale again. Results indicated that high prejudiced participants expressed more favorable attitudes toward African Americans after they had been provided with positive, as opposed to negative, feedback about the beliefs of others, but initially low prejudiced individuals did not show any change as a result of the opinion feedback.

In another relevant study, Haslam, Oakes, McGarty, Turner, Reynolds, and Eggins (1996) asked Australian students to make estimates about the percentage of members of a given ingroup (Australians) and a given outgroup (Americans) that possess certain characteristics. Participants then were provided with information that either (a) other ingroup members or (b) prejudiced outgroup members were in agreement or disagreement with the participants' original beliefs. Haslam et al. found that people changed their stereotypes of national groups so that they were more similar to the beliefs allegedly held by members of a desirable ingroup (other unprejudiced students at one's college), and they changed their stereotypes away from the beliefs allegedly held by an undesirable outgroup (prejudiced people).

Stangor, Sechrist, and Jost (2001a) conducted three experiments studying how perceptions about the beliefs of relevant ingroup members

influence racial stereotypes and attitudes. In one experiment, European American students first indicated their beliefs about positive and negative stereotypes of African Americans, and then estimated the beliefs of fellow students at their university. One week later, we provided participants with (false) information indicating that, according to our prior research, the students were actually either more or less favorable in their evaluation of African Americans than the participants had originally estimated. Ostensibly as a result of a computer error, participants were then asked to estimate their racial beliefs again. We found that the participants expressed significantly more positive attitudes toward African Americans when they had learned that other people held more favorable stereotypes than they had originally estimated and they became more negative toward African Americans when they learned that others held less favorable stereotypes than they had originally assumed. These changes were strong in magnitude, and have been found to persist when assessed again up to 2 weeks later (Stangor et al. 2001b). In addition in a second experiment we found that consensus effects were stronger for people who were exposed to information about the opinions of ingroup rather than outgroup members, and that this change occurred even when it was assessed in private on a different measure, and at an unrelated experimental session.

In addition to creating new intergroup beliefs, we also assessed the hypothesis that perceived consensus would make intergroup beliefs more resistant to change (Stangor et al., 2001a, Experiment 3). One week after estimating their own attitudes toward African Americans, participants were provided with information that their beliefs were either shared or were not shared by other students at their university. Then, in an attempt to change their beliefs, they were given allegedly "objective" information about the actual traits possessed by African Americans, supposedly as determined by actual research. Results showed that perceptions of agreement with others strengthened racial stereotypes, such that participants who had been given information that others shared their beliefs (high perceived consensus) showed less opinion change as a result of the supposedly "objective" information, on both positive and negative stereotypes, in comparison with participants who were given information that others did not share their beliefs (low perceived consensus).

Based on the assumption that the stereotypes are determined in large part by interpersonal communications, another line of research has focused directly on the role of communication in the development and change of stereotypes and prejudice (Schaller and Conway, 1999; Ruscher, 2001). Prejudice is communicated in everyday interaction in both blatant and subtle forms, including direct expression of attitudes toward members of other groups, jokes, and facial expressions (Ruscher, 2001). Prejudiced communication reflects categorization of ingroups and outgroups, and in doing so, it serves several purposes, such as protecting

the ingroup's status and furthering ingroup enhancement. Furthermore, because humor is based on the fact that the group beliefs are shared, prejudiced communication is used as a method for ingroup members to indicate that they too hold these beliefs, thereby creating positive impressions (Ruscher, 2001).

In addition, the contents of interpersonal communications may be influenced by individuals' goals and motives. For example, Ruscher and colleagues have found that when given a consensus motivation, such as being asked to achieve consensus and to think as a team, dyads increasingly focused their conversation around stereotype-consistent information (Ruscher, 2001; Ruscher & Duval, 1998; Ruscher & Hammer, 1994; Ruscher, Hammer, & Hammer, 1996). When a negative stereotype is revealed about a target person, dyads talk about the stereotype and focus on information to support the stereotype in forming impressions of that person. The assumption is that the members of the dyads want to find things that they agree upon and want to be liked by each other, and that they use negative stereotypes as a means of achieving similarity and consensus. Of course this communication tends to validate and strengthen the stereotype.

The Role of Subtle Norms

Although the research described so far provides general support for norm theories of prejudice, other research has expanded these basic findings in several ways. One interesting result is that racial beliefs can be substantially changed by even very subtle normative information, such as simply overhearing information about another ingroup member's beliefs. For example, Greenberg and Pyszczynski (1985) examined the influence of overhearing an ethnic slur or derogatory ethnic label on individuals' perceptions of a member of the targeted group. White participants read about a vignette in which a Black or a White person was said to have either won or lost a debate. Participants then overheard either an ethnic slur ("nigger"), a neutral remark, or did not overhear any comment. Following this manipulation, participants rated the debating skills of the debaters. Results showed that when the Black debater had lost, participants rated him more negatively when they overheard the ethnic slur than in conditions where the ethnic slur was absent. The ethnic slur had no effect when the Black debater won, or on ratings of the White debater. This study suggests that simply overhearing a derogatory ethnic label can effect attitudes towards members of that ethnic group, especially when the target's behavior is consistent with the group stereotype, because it sets up a norm in which expressing racist attitudes is acceptable (see also Kirkland, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1987; Simon & Greenberg, 1996).

In another relevant study, Henderson-King and Nisbett (1996) had participants overhear another White student talking on a cellular phone

about a friend who had been assaulted and robbed. In describing the incident, the student noted that the assailant was either White or Black. Participants then completed several questionnaires, including a measure of perceived antagonism. Henderson-King and Nisbett found that simply overhearing that an African American had committed an assault (a stereotype-consistent act) increased the extent to which Whites perceived Blacks as antagonistic and hostile. There was no effect on participants' perceptions of Whites after hearing that a White person had committed the same crime. Taken together, these studies suggest that overhearing a negative belief expressed by a single individual is sufficient to create a social norm of racial antipathy.

One limitation of the research just described is that it is not always completely clear whether the belief change represented public compliance with social norms or if it was more internalized. However, Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, and Vaughn (1994) found that the normative features of social situations could influence people's privately-expressed attitudes toward racism. In their research they asked White participants five questions regarding how their college should respond to acts of racism. They then heard another student from their university either condone or condemn racism. Results showed that hearing another student condemn racism increased participants expressed anti-racist opinions and hearing someone condone racism reduced antiracist expressions, in comparison to a control condition in which no information about others' opinions was provided. In addition, these results occurred regardless of whether participants' responses were spoken publicly in the presence of the person making the comment and the experimenter or written privately on a questionnaire and sealed in an envelope, suggesting that informational internalization did occur (see also Blanchard, Lilly, & Vaughn, 1991).

Sechrist and Stangor (2001a) explored the extent to which perceived the group beliefs of other could influence implicit attitude and behavioral measures. In Experiment 1, we found that high prejudice participants who were provided with information that their (negative) beliefs were shared by other students at their university subsequently sat farther away from an African American target than participants who were informed that their beliefs were not shared. On the other hand low prejudice participants who were provided with information that their (favorable) beliefs were shared by others subsequently sat closer to an African American target than participants who were informed that their beliefs were not shared. Furthermore, the correlation between expressed attitudes (on the Pro-black scale; Katz & Hass, 1988) and behavior (seating distance) was significantly greater for participants in conditions were their beliefs were supported by their ingroup. Thus, perceived group beliefs appear to increase attitude-behavior consistency in the domain of racial relations, and this occurred even on a non-reactive behavior (the participants did not know that their seating distance was being observed).

In a second experiment, we examined whether learning that one's racial attitudes are consistent with group beliefs would alter the mental representation of those beliefs such that they would become more closely associated with the category label in memory, and thus be more quickly activated upon exposure to the relevant category label. This prediction was based on current models of stereotypes which suggest that stereotypes are mentally associated with category labels in memory (Dovidio, Evans, & Tyler, 1986; Kunda & Thagard, 1996; Stangor & Lange, 1994; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 1997), and thus which come to mind when the category is activated. We found that participants who learned that their stereotypes of African Americans were shared with others (consistent with the ingroup norm) were significantly faster at identifying those same stereotypes as words after being primed with a word associating them with African Americans (black) than neutral primes, but this difference did not occur for participants who had learned that their stereotypes were inconsistent with their ingroup's beliefs. Thus, as expected, stereotypes that are perceived as shared by the group are more cognitively accessible, in the sense that they come to mind quickly on exposure to the category label, and thus facilitate their identification as words.

Contextual Determinants of Norm-based Beliefs

The preceding sections have focused on the general influence of social norms on individuals' intergroup attitudes, demonstrating both that even very subtle communications can change beliefs, and that these communications can produce long-term, internalized cognitive changes. However, contemporary research has also considered more complex hypotheses about the influence of norms on intergroup attitudes, including the possibility that the social context may influence which of potentially competing norms may be present at any given time, that individuals may differ in terms of which norms are found most relevant, and that this variability in activation influences social judgments. We discuss these findings in this section.

One prediction that derives from norm models is that, if there are competing social norms present, the norms that are currently the most cognitively accessible will be more influential, in comparison to norms that are currently less accessible. One way that we have tested this hypothesis is by comparing competing norms of *fairness* and *egalitarianism* (e.g. "Everyone should be treated equally, regardless of social category membership") with social norms that condone the use of categories to promote exclusion (e.g. "It is OK to exclude women from fraternities, because that is the way the campus Greek system works," "all-women schools are necessary to promote the self-esteem of women").

Sechrist, Stangor and Killen (2001) examined the reasons brought to bear on evaluations of decisions by campus organizations, such as

fraternities and religious groups, to exclude others on the basis of gender or religious affiliation. Participants read vignettes that were designed to activate either egalitarianism or stereotype-justifying social norms, and rated the extent to which the decisions described in the vignettes were perceived as justified. They then were asked to rate a second target vignette, which could have been perceived in either egalitarian or stereotypical terms. The egalitarian priming vignette described a situation in which members of a fraternity decided to continue the tradition of excluding Catholic men from joining their group (this was seen as unjustified by virtually all participants). In the stereotype-condoning priming vignette, members of a fraternity decided to continue the tradition of excluding women from joining their group (and this was seen as justified by virtually all participants). The target vignettes described situations in which either members of a student Jewish Organization excluded Catholics, or members of a Student Catholic Organization excluded women (these vignettes tended to be rated more moderately). In addition to rating the target vignettes, participants were asked to list reasons why they made their judgment, and these justifications were coded for egalitarian and social-conventional principles. Results demonstrated that exclusion in the target vignettes was seen as more appropriate in the stereotype-condoning prime than in the moral prime conditions, and this pattern was found on both the rating measure as well as the justifications. Thus, the tendency to see exclusion from social groups as appropriate seems to be determined by whether egalitarian or conventional (stereotype) norms are currently more accessible.

Decisions regarding racial acceptance or rejection may also vary across different judgmental contexts, and these differences may be the result of different social norms being brought to bear in different contexts. As an example, although many European-Americans may be willing to vote for an African-American mayor in their city, or to become friends with their African-American co-workers, they may nevertheless be willing to exclude African Americans as partners in intimate relationships. In fact, recent research has shown that, although in 1958 most white Americans said they would *not* be willing to vote for a well-qualified black candidate, in 1994 over 90 percent said they would (Davis & Smith, 1996). On the other hand, the percentage of inter-racial marriages as a percent of all marriages has increased from only .4% to 2.2% between 1960 and 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1992). These findings indicate that racial exclusion is not a uniform construct–it varies according to the specific social situation being judged.

Killen, Stangor, Horn, and Sechrist (in press) hypothesized that the difference between judgments about the appropriateness of racial exclusion in intimate versus non-intimate situations was due to differences in the perceived relevance of egalitarian versus exclusion condoning norms. Students were asked to indicate whether it was

appropriate for a person to indicate that they were unwilling to interact with an opposite gender person in two non-intimate relationships—*Voting* (a college student said that he or she would not vote for an individual for student government president because he or she was of the other race) and *socialization* (stating that he or she did not want to go to a baseball game with another friend because an opposite sex college student of the other race would also be going to the game), as well as one intimate relationship, *dating* (expressing the opinion that he or she did not want to go out on a date with an opposite race college student). We found that exclusion judgments in the voting and socialization vignettes were seen as inappropriate, whereas exclusion in the dating vignettes was seen as appropriate by the majority of the participants. Furthermore, when asked to indicate why they saw the behaviors as appropriate or not, participants in the non-intimate conditions indicated that their decisions were based on norms of egalitarianism (everyone should be treated equally), whereas in the intimate conditions the justifications were in terms of personal choice (an individual can choose who he or she wishes to date). Thus we interpreted these different judgments in terms of differential activation of social norms about the appropriateness of racial exclusion in different social contexts.

Another way of investigating the role of social norms is to study how they change in childhood across developmental level. This represents a particularly interesting venue for doing so, because norms have such an important influence on children. Children spend a great deal of time interacting with friends, and peers have powerful influence on their attitudes and behaviors, including trivial matters, such as clothes and music, as well as important attitudes and behaviors that may impact their lives in the future, both mentally and physically (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Larson & Richards, 1991; Berndt, 1992; 1996). For example, studies have found that peers influence adolescents' drugs use (Chassin, Presson, Montello, Sherman, & McGrew, 1986; Urberg, Cheng, & Shyu, 1991), sexual behavior (Berndt & Savin-Williams, 1993), aggression (Cairns, Cairns, Necerman, Gest, & Gariépy, 1988), and school achievement and college aspirations (Epstein, 1983).

In our research we have found that norms about the appropriateness of racial and gender exclusion do vary across age (Killen, Pisacane, Lee-Kim, & Arila-Rey, 2001; Theimer, Killen, & Stangor, 2001). Killen and Stangor (2001) interviewed children and adolescents pertaining to judgments about exclusion of peers from peer group activities on the basis of their gender and race (for instance, is it okay or not okay for girls to exclude boys from a ballet club?). We found that children seven years of age and younger were influenced almost exclusively by norms of egalitarianism, arguing that it was always wrong to exclude an individual from a group, even if the activity was non-stereotypical. Thirteen-year old

children, on the other hand, were more influenced by stereotypes about appropriate group behavior. They were more likely than the younger children to allow exclusion when group functioning was threatened and responded that exclusion is justified in such situations to protect effective group functioning ("the boys are bad at ballet, and the girls won't want them"). These findings suggest that the appropriate norms change across age level, with corresponding judgmental consequences. However, the sources and patterns of these changes still remain to be discovered.

Not all people are equally influenced by social norms, and social norms are not used in the same manner to apply to all social groups. As a result, intergroup attitudes may be more due to perceived social norms for some individuals than for others and may be more likely to be applied to some social groups than to others. In our research, we tested the hypothesis that social norms would have a bigger influence on beliefs about groups with which individuals did not have much direct contact (that is, for unfamiliar groups), in comparison to groups that were more familiar. In this research (Sechrist & Stangor, 2001b) participants indicated their own attitudes, as well as their perceptions of the attitudes of the other students at their university, about 18 social groups. Furthermore, we chose those groups such that 9 of them were particularly familiar for college students (e.g. college students, professors) and 9 were more unfamiliar (e.g. construction workers, pilots). As expected, the correlation between participants' perceptions of their own attitudes and the attitudes of others was higher for groups that were unfamiliar to them than for groups that were familiar to them. Thus, individuals particularly used their perceptions of the beliefs of other people to develop attitudes toward groups for which they had little or no direct information.

In a second study, we examined whether some people might be more influenced by perceived social norms than others. Specifically, we examined whether individuals for whom conforming to others is important are especially likely to use perceived social norm information as a basis for forming specific intergroup attitudes. We found that individuals with higher needs for conformity (as assessed by a simple conformity measure) showed a higher correlation between their attitudes and the perceived attitudes of others. This finding also is consistent with Allport's (1962) notion that conformity is the missing link that "explains why and how societal forces eventuate into patterns of acceptance or discrimination."

Conclusion

Social scientists have spent much research effort studying the origins of stereotypes and prejudice, as well as methods to make intergroup attitudes more favorable. The research reported here confirms that the attitudes of members of individuals' ingroups play an exceedingly important role in creating, maintaining, and potentially changing the

intergroup attitudes of individuals. Although the basic finding that norms are important determinants of intergroup beliefs, as they are in all social attitudes, seems intuitive, it has not in our opinion recently received the theoretical or empirical attention it deserves. However, taking seriously the role of social norms in intergroup relations leads to some important conclusions about the development of intergroup beliefs and suggestions for their amelioration.

In terms of their development, both classic and contemporary research demonstrates that stereotypes and prejudice are learned in large part through social communication and social interaction. Stereotypes are just as strong, and prejudice just as negative, about groups with which we have little contact as they are about groups with which we have frequent, everyday interaction. These results are difficult to account for from an outgroup-interaction perspective, but follow naturally from the sharing of social norms among ingroup members. Furthermore, social norms have strong influence on both the explicit expression of stereotypes and prejudice as well as the implicit cognitive representations of group beliefs–the knowledge itself.

These findings also have implications for the potential of stereotype change. Most basically, attempts to change intergroup attitudes will primarily be successful when they include attempts to change social norms. Recent approaches based on the positive role of intergroup contact treat stereotype change primarily at an individual level. However, the social norms perspective demonstrates that simply providing positive intergroup contact with members of social outgroups will not be sufficient to produce attitude change, unless those changes are supported by corresponding changes in social norms. Individuals may develop their beliefs in part through direct perception of social groups, but those beliefs are either solidified or weakened through perceptions of the extent to which they are shared with others.

These results suggest, then, that interventions that involve providing information about the favorable attitudes of others may be particularly likely to lead individuals to change their intergroup attitudes to be more favorable. In targeting whole social groups and societies and focusing change attempts on these groups as a whole, perhaps we can create new norms for these societies that focus on acceptance, regardless of gender, class, religion, or race.

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