

Theories of Prejudice Formation

Normative Theory---

This perspective on prejudice formation identifies core socialization experiences as primarily responsible for the creation and reinforcement of prejudices. In this view the family, one's circle of friends, one's community, and the mass media all systematically teach attitudes---some of which are prejudices.

Scapegoating Theory---

This perspective on prejudice formation identifies the human need to displace blame for personal shortcomings and misfortunes onto some relatively powerless target group. This group typically will serve to bear the brunt of blame for a whole host of wrongs perceived by the individual. In this view, prejudice is rooted in human nature and therefore can never be fully eradicated.

Exploitation Theory---

This perspective on prejudice formation identifies conflicting economic interests as the root source of prejudice. In this view, when people are in competition for jobs and business clients, there is a tendency to subscribe to various prejudices that might help them to justify actions and policies that would discriminate against racial and ethnic groups different from one's own and with whom one is in competition.

Authoritarian Personality Theory---

This perspective on prejudice formation identifies a particular type of personality as the root source of a tendency to look upon the world in dichotomous terms of good and evil, right and wrong. This personality type is allegedly created by a harsh, punitive childhood upbringing. Persons with such a personality type are allegedly disposed to adopt prejudicial attitudes about all sorts of things.