Prejudice, Ethnocentrism and Racism

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A major consequence of immigration is that people of diverse origins and identities have to work out and establish reasonably harmonious relationships if they are going to live together in a plural society (Berry, 1990). The discipline of Social Psychology has studied this issue for almost a century, and has found the concept of prejudice to be useful in its examination. Two forms of prejudice are considered here: ethnocentrism and racism.

Recent analyses (Berry & Kalin, 1995) have raised the question: "What conditions need to be met, in order to manage successfully a multicultural society?" In our view, there needs to be general support for cultural diversity as a valuable resource for a society. Second, there should be overall low levels of prejudice in the population. Third, there should be generally positive mutual attitudes among the various ethnocultural groups that constitute the society. And fourth, there needs to be a degree of attachment to the larger national society. These four elements constitute a conceptualization of prejudice that is appropriate for understanding contemporary immigrant-receiving societies.

Ethnocentrism theory began with an initial insight of Sumner (1906) that in most intergroup situations "one's own group is the centre of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it" (Sumner,

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1906, pp. 27–28). He made a basic distinction between the ingroup (the group(s) to which one belongs) and the outgroup (all other groups) and proposed that one's ingroup is usually evaluated more positively than outgroups. This ethnocentric tendency for ingroup favouritism has been identified in many societies, leading LeVine and Campbell (1972) to claim that it is a universal feature of intergroup relations. The concept of ethnocentrism has also been used as a synonym for general antipathy towards all outgroups. For example, the ethnocentrism scale of Adorno et al. (1950) has served as a general measure of intolerance for those who differ from oneself, and even as a rejection of diversity as a whole. In this usage, the concept of ethnocentrism moved beyond a relative preference for one's own group over others, to become (when reversed in direction) a concept similar to that of tolerance.

Ethnocentrism theory has been employed at both the group and individual levels of analysis. Collectively, groups may exhibit relative preferences with respect to others (e.g., in immigration policy, or social discrimination practices), while individuals within groups can vary widely in their degree of intolerance and ingroup/outgroup favouritism. This distinction between group and individual levels has been central to most explanations of prejudice, and both are considered essential for a complete theory of intergroup relations (Duckitt, 1992).

This broad version of ethnocentrism theory is considered to be appropriate for research in current multicultural societies.

Ethnocentrism is conceptualized as a lack of acceptance of cultural diversity, a general intolerance for outgroups, and a relative preference for one's ingroup over most outgroups. Evidence for ethnocentrism may be sought at the group-level through analyses of data by ethnic origin and at the individual-level through correlational analyses. The core issue being addressed is whether ethnocentrism is sufficiently low to maintain harmonious relations in immigrant-receiving societies.

Contemporary theoretical and empirical research has identified racism as another form of prejudice. It has all the core features of ethnocentrism, plus two further elements. First, it is directed against those who are visibly different; that is, the targets are identifiable by physical attributes that are considered

to be relatively permanent ("racial") characteristics of the group. Second, racism is directed against those who are relatively powerless in society; that is, the victims are not usually in a position to avoid, or to retaliate against, racism. As such, racism is a form of prejudice that is likely to be long lasting and particularly harmful to its victims.

Prejudice can be identified as having its roots in sociocultural factors and as having expression through individual psychological processes and action (see Figure 1). There are three kinds of psychological variables involved: cognition (the processes of perception, categorization and attribution); evaluation (the phenomena of prejudice and attitudes); and overt behaviour or action on the part of the individual (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Sociocultural and Psychological Factors in intergroup Relations
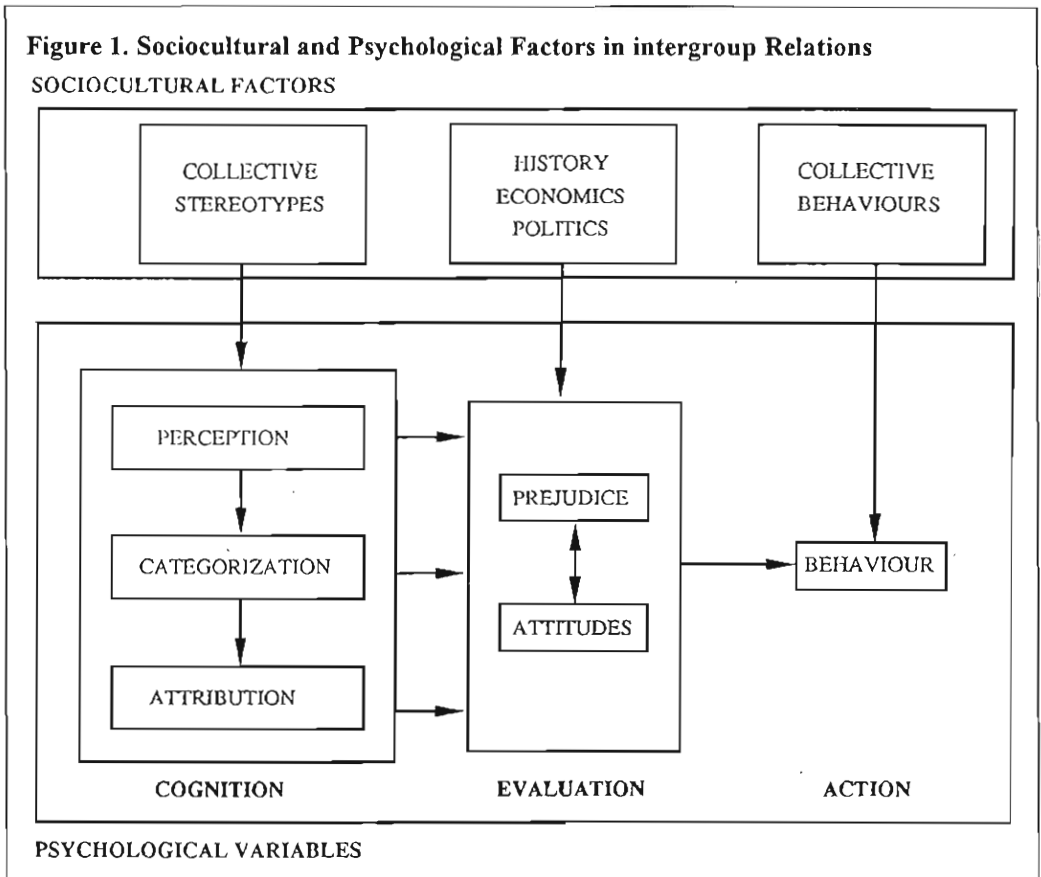
There is considered to be a sequence to these psychological activities, beginning with the perception of similarities and differences among individuals in a population (e.g., tallness/shortness; long hair/short hair; light skin/dark skin etc.). This is followed by a cognitive categorization of individuals into groups based on perceived patterns of similarities and differences (e.g., males/females; blacks/whites etc.). The act of categorization, by itself, is currently thought to have two consequences: the exaggeration of perceived similarity within categories, and of perceived differences between categories. Third, psychological characteristics are attributed by the perceiver to individual members of the categories; because of the effects of categorization noted above, this attribution tends to overgeneralize the similarity of characteristics within, and the difference between, the groups. This whole sequence, while rooted in these three fundamental psychological processes, is also guided by collective images that have been widely shared in the sociocultural context (at top of Figure 1), probably for many generations.

A second set of psychological processes follows, involving the making of value judgements and the exhibiting of personal preferences. When these are linked to a specific group, the concept of attitude is employed; these can be both favourable or unfavourable. However, when there is a generalized value judgement, the concept of prejudice (including both ethnocentrism and racism) is used; this is typically a negative or hostile evaluation, although in principle positive prejudices are possible. The development and holding of such attitudes and prejudices are rooted in an individual's affective-emotional system, but they are also known to be linked to numerous historical, economic and political factors in the sociocultural system in which one has grown up (at top of Figure 1).

The third psychological variable is individual action, in which the cognitions and evaluations of the individual become expressed in actual behaviour. These behaviours are subject to personal motivations, but they are also either encouraged or suppressed by collective behaviours in society, such as laws, or social movements. It is important to note that individuals do not always express their cognitions and evaluations of ethnic groups in overt ways; hence, psychologists have had to develop measurement techniques to dig more deeply and indirectly into the phenomena of stereotypes, prejudice and attitudes.
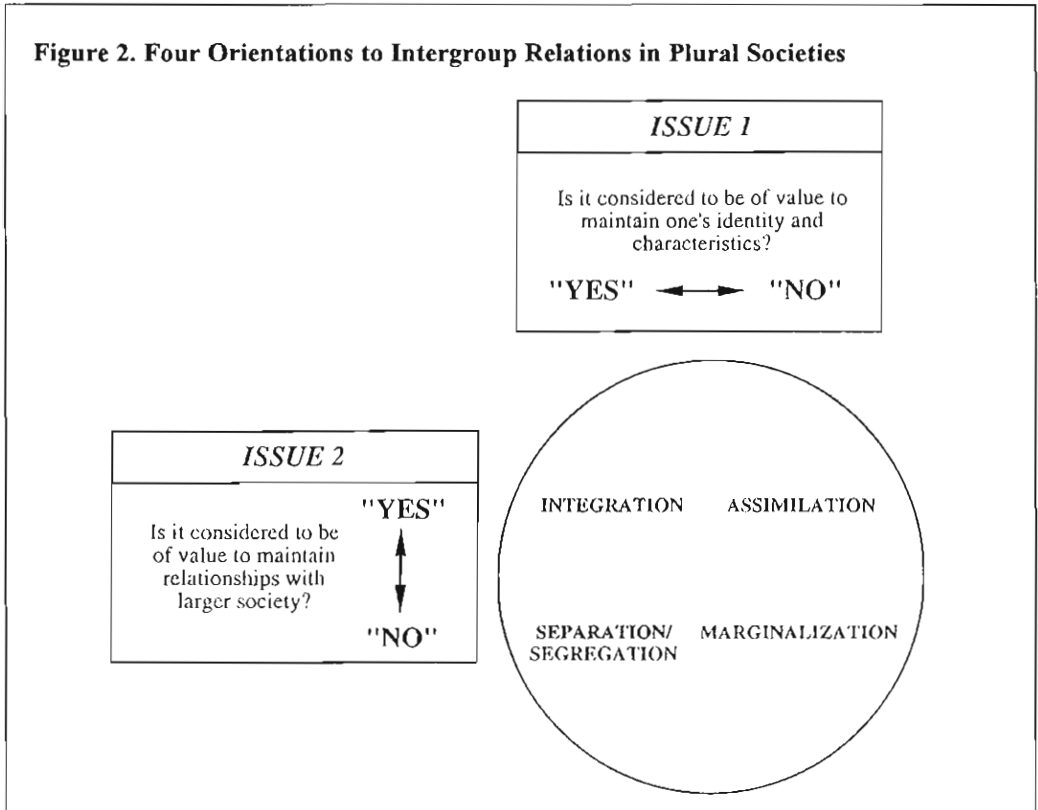
The successful management of intergroup relations in plural societies requires policies and programmes that will control and limit the emergence and display of prejudice. At the present time, a number of states are experimenting with multiculturalism as a way of achieving this goal. One way of understanding this approach is to note that in most culturally plural societies, all groups and individuals confront two issues during their daily interactions. These are: cultural maintenance (to what extent one's cultural identity and characteristics are considered to be important, and their maintenance strived for); and contact and participation (to what extent should they become involved with other cultural groups, or remain primarily among themselves).

When these two underlying issues are considered simultaneously, a conceptual framework (Figure 2) is generated which posits four strategies of acculturation and intercultural relations (Berry, 1984a). These two issues can be responded to on attitudinal dimensions, represented by bipolar arrows. For purposes of presentation, generally positive or negative ("yes" or "no" responses) to these issues are illustrated, and intersect to define four strategies. These strategies carry different names, depending on which group (the dominant or nondominant) is being considered. From the point of view of nondominant groups, when individuals do not wish to

maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures, the Assimilation strategy is defined. In contrast, when individuals place a value on holding onto their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others, then the Separation alternative is defined. When there is an interest in both maintaining one's original culture, while in daily interactions with other groups, Integration is the option; here, there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, while at the same time seeking to participate as an integral part of the larger social network. Finally, when there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (often for reasons of enforced cultural loss), and little interest in having relations with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination) then Marginalization is defined.

In Canada, while numerous attempts were made historically to assimilate Canada's diverse population to British cultural norms, by 1956 the Federal Government's view was that assimilation had not worked anywhere in the contemporary world, and that it was impracticable as a general policy. In 1971, the Prime Minister announced a policy of multiculturalism, the key elements of which were designed to achieve harmonious intercultural relations by promoting simultaneously cultural maintenance, and intergroup contact and participation in the larger society. This is clearly an integration policy, in the terms used here. (See Berry 1984b, and Berry & Laponce, 1994, for a more detailed description and analysis of the policy).

For the most cultural groups in Canada, their articulated goals express some version of this integrationist policy. For example, Aboriginal Canadians generally seek cultural self-determination within the larger Canadian society, and most French-Canadians

Figure 2. Four Orientations to Intergroup Relations in Plural Societies

ISSUE 1

Is it considered to be of value to maintain one's identity and characteristics?

"YES" ⟷ "NO"

ISSUE 2

Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with larger society?

"YES"

↕

"NO"

INTEGRATION   ASSIMILATION

SEPARATION/   MARGINALIZATION
SEGREGATION

(particularly those outside Québec) generally espouse the same goal.

More recent immigrant-derived cultural group organizations all express this preference for some degree of cultural maintenance, combined with full rights to participation in the larger society.

At the individual level, the views of acculturating individuals in non-dominant groups have been assessed in hundreds of studies (reviewed by Berry et al 1989; Berry & Sam, 1996). In most studies, the clear preference is for integration, with least desire for marginalization. Depending on the group, either assimilation or separation fall in second or third place in the reference hierarchy.

In the larger society, there is also general support for integration (Berry & Kalin, 1995). For example, on a scale of Multicultural Ideology (measuring acceptance of both cultural maintenance and intergroup contact), in a national sample (N = 3325) the ratio of

those supporting to not supporting is 69% to 27%, and this has been gradually increasing since the 1970's. There is thus at the present time a clear consensus: National policy, cultural group goals, and individuals in both the various cultural groups and in the larger society all generally agree that the Multicultural arrangement (integration, as defined here) is the most suitable way to proceed.

Of course, there are specific factors operating in Canada that may not be present in other countries. It is thus not possible to generalize from Canadian conceptions, policies and empirical findings to Finland. Parallel research is needed in order to discover whether the multicultural / integration option is appropriate and acceptable to all concerned. It is to be hoped that this will be the case, since the alternatives of assimilation, segregation and marginalization all carry with them heavy social and psychological costs.

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