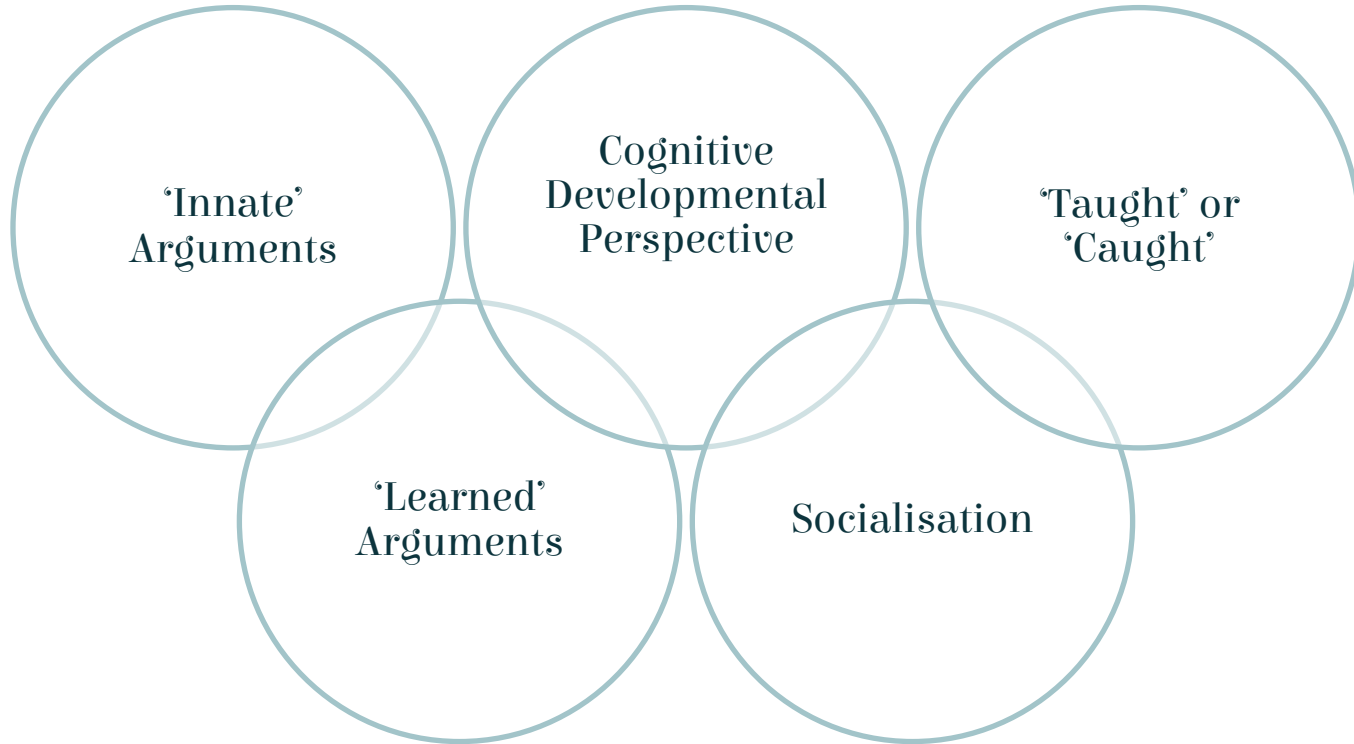


Prejudice Development and Reduction



Dr Katie Sullivan

Prejudice Development



“Prejudice is not taught by the
parent, it is caught by the child.”
(Allport, 1954)



The 'Innate' Arguments

Evolutionary Psychology Perspective

- Humans evolved to favour in-groups for survival, leading to out-group wariness.
- This predisposition is adaptive, not inherently prejudiced, but creates a foundation for bias.

Key Theories

- Coalitional Psychology: Humans evolved to track group membership for cooperation and protection.
- Minimal Group Bias: Even arbitrary group distinctions trigger favouritism.

Empirical Evidence

- Mahajan et al. (2011): Infants (6 months) prefer own-race faces, suggesting early in-group preference.
- Hamlin et al. (2007): Infants prefer “helpful” characters, showing early moral categorisation.



The ‘Learned’ Arguments

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977)

- Prejudice develops through modelling and reinforcement from parents, peers, and media.

Developmental Intergroup Theory (Bigler & Liben, 2006)

- Children actively construct categories and stereotypes based on environmental cues.

Empirical Evidence

- Aboud & Doyle (1996): Children’s racial attitudes strongly correlate with parental attitudes.
- Bigler et al. (1997): Classroom labeling (e.g., “blue group” vs “yellow group”) increases bias.

Normative Influence

- Rutland et al. (2007): Children adjust prejudice based on perceived group norms.



Innate or Learned?

Cognitive Developmental Perspective

- Young children show rigid stereotypes due to limited cognitive flexibility (Piagetian Framework)
- Aboud (1988): Prejudice peaks in middle childhood, declines as perspective-taking improves

Interactionist View

- Prejudice is not fixed—it changes as children develop cognitively and as social norms shift (Doyle & Aboud, 1995; Raabe & Beelmann, 2011; Rutland, & Killen, 2015)
- Prejudice is not hardwired, but early biases interact with socialization: Evolutionary predispositions (favouring in-group) + cultural learning → full prejudice



Learning through Socialisation

Early Childhood:

Children begin categorising people by race, gender, and age.



Middle Childhood:

Stereotypes become more rigid; ingroup bias intensifies.



Adolescence:

Increased exposure to diverse perspectives can challenge stereotypes, but peer pressure may reinforce them.

Bigler & Liben (2007): Children exposed to group labels and segregation (even arbitrarily) develop stronger stereotypes.

Baron & Banaji (2006): Implicit bias is detectable in children as young as 6 years old.



SOCIALISATION



“Prejudice is not taught by the parent, it is caught by the child.” (Allport, 1954)

Direct Teaching Does Occur

- Sinclair et al. (2005): Parental messages about race predict children's attitudes.
- While indirect transmission is common, explicit teaching also plays a role.

Role of Media & Institutions

- Robinson et al. (2008): Media underrepresentation of minorities shapes children's attitudes.
- Media stereotypes and structural segregation reinforce prejudice beyond family influence.



“Prejudice is not taught by the parent, it is caught by the child.” (Allport, 1954)

Allport's statement captures the implicit nature of prejudice transmission, supported by observational learning and normative influence.

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However, it understates explicit teaching and institutional factors.

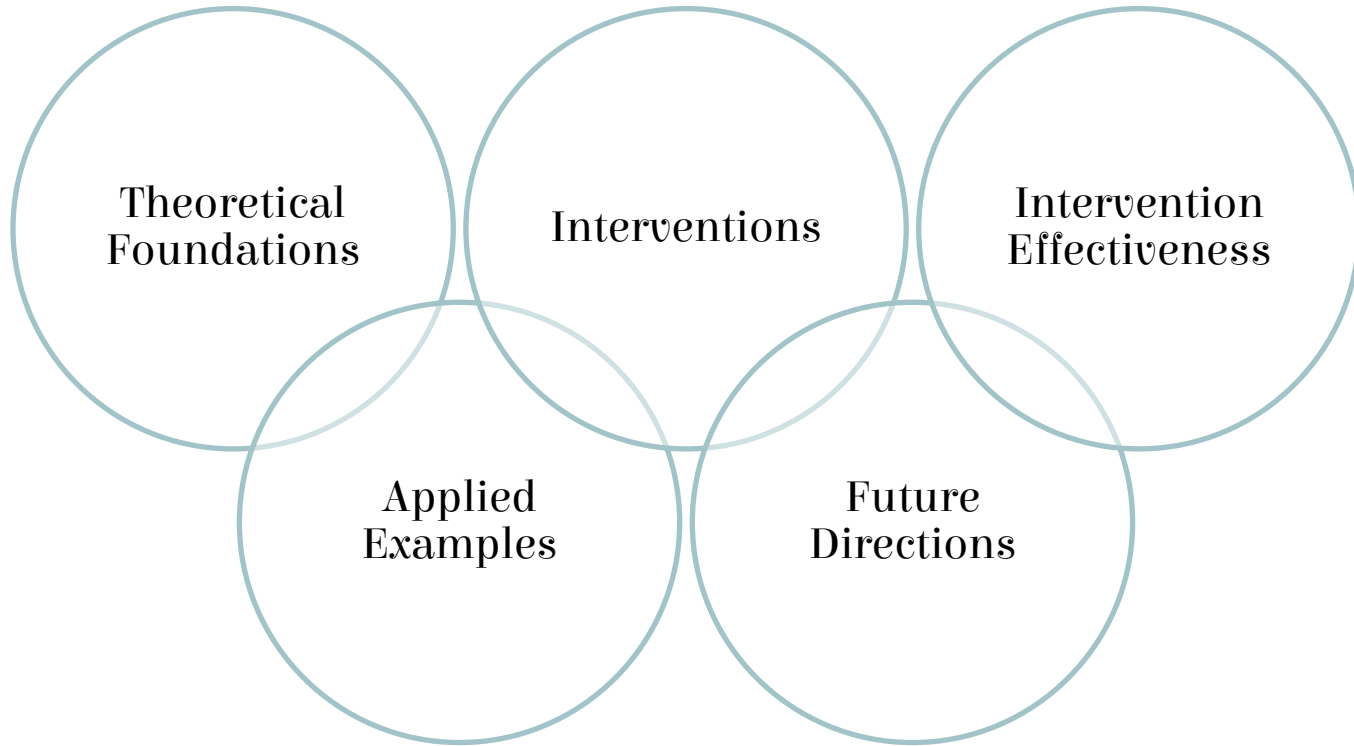
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Modern research favours an interactionist view: prejudice develops through both implicit absorption and explicit instruction, shaped by cognitive development and cultural norms.

“Prejudice is not taught
by the parent, it is
caught by the child.”
(Allport, 1954)!!!!



Prejudice Reduction



Theoretical Foundations

Allport's Contact Hypothesis (1954)

- Conditions for success: equal status, common goals, cooperation, institutional support.
- Meta-analysis by Pettigrew & Tropp (2006): contact generally reduces prejudice, but effects vary by context and group type.

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

- Prejudice stems from in-group/out-group categorisation.
- Interventions often aim to recategorize groups (e.g., “common ingroup identity model”).

Cognitive Approaches

- Based on dual-process models: automatic stereotype activation vs. controlled inhibition (Devine, 1989).
- Strategies: perspective-taking, counter-stereotypical exemplars, mental imagery (CBT-inspired approaches; Birtel & Crisp, 2015).



Prejudice Interventions

Intergroup Contact

- Generally positive but limited long-term impact and weaker effects for deeply entrenched biases (Paluck et al., 2019)

Cognitive/Individual Approaches

- Perspective-taking: mixed results; often short-term effects.
- Exposure to counter-stereotypical exemplars: promising for implicit bias reduction, but data is limited (FitzGerald et al., 2019).
- Mental imagery interventions: based on CBT principles; can reduce anxiety and bias in controlled settings (Birtel & Crisp, 2015).

Cooperative Learning & Jigsaw Classroom

- Based on interdependence theory.
- Effective in school settings for reducing racial prejudice (Warring et al., 1985)

Diversity Training & Education

- Widely used in organisations
- Evidence is weak: many programs lack rigorous evaluation; effects often short-lived or even backfire (Paluck & Green, 2009)

Media & Narrative Interventions

- Positive portrayals and storytelling can shift attitudes.
- Evidence suggests small but meaningful effects, especially when combined with other strategies



Applied Examples

Robbers Cave Experiment (Sherif et al., 1961)

- **Context:** Two groups of boys at a summer camp were placed in competitive situations, leading to intergroup hostility.
- **Intervention:** Introduced superordinate goals (e.g., fixing a broken water supply) requiring cooperation.
- **Implication:** Structural conditions (shared goals, interdependence) are critical for prejudice reduction.

Jigsaw Classroom (Aronson, 1978)

- **Context:** Developed to reduce racial tension in desegregated schools.
- **Method:** Students worked in small, diverse groups where each member had unique information needed to complete a task.
- **Outcome:** Increased empathy, reduced prejudice, improved academic performance.



Are they effective?

What does the evidence say?

Meta-Analytic Evidence (Paluck, Porat, Clark & Green, 2021)

- Small, short-term effects on explicit attitudes.
-
- Implicit bias interventions often fail to produce lasting change.
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- Behavioural outcomes (e.g., hiring decisions, voting) rarely shift significantly.

Intergroup Contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006)

- Contact generally reduces prejudice across contexts.
-
- Stronger effects when Allport's optimal conditions are met (equal status, cooperation, common goals, institutional support).

Are they effective?

What does the evidence say?

Cognitive & Implicit Bias Interventions

- **Perspective-taking (Vescio et al., 2003; Adida et al., 2018; Szekeres et al., 2024; FitzGerald et al., 2019):**
 - Initially promising, but recent reviews show mixed results.
 - Often fails to generalize beyond the immediate context.
- **Counter-stereotypical exemplars (Gonzalez et al., 2021; Dertinger, 2019; FitzGerald et al., 2019):**
 - Can temporarily reduce implicit bias (e.g., exposure to female leaders reduces gender bias).
 - Effects decay quickly without reinforcement.
- **IAT-based training (Devine et al., 2012; Federal Judicial Centre, 2012; FitzGerald et al., 2019):**
 - Some interventions show short-term reductions (up to 8 weeks)
 - Evidence for sustained behavioural change is minimal

Are they effective?

What does the evidence say?

Diversity Training

- Common in workplaces, but effectiveness is questionable:
 - Many programs lack rigorous evaluation.
 - Some studies show backfire effects (reactance, increased bias).
 - Best practice: Combine training with organizational policy changes and accountability mechanisms.
- (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016; Kalev, 2023; Burnett & Aguinis, 2023)

Narrative & Media Interventions

- Positive portrayals and storytelling can shift attitudes modestly.
- Works best when:
 - Characters are relatable.
 - Messages avoid overt persuasion (reduces resistance).
- Effects are usually attitudinal, not behavioural.
- Paluck & Green, 2009; Bilali & Staub, 2016; Kalla & Broockman, 2023; Sutton et al., 2007)

Why do they fail?

Short Duration & Lack of Reinforcement (Paluck et al., 2021)

- 76% of interventions were “light touch” (e.g., single-session exercises). These produced small, short-lived effects, often disappearing within weeks.
- Prejudice is deeply ingrained through years of socialization; brief interventions cannot counteract this without sustained reinforcement.

Focus on Individuals, Ignoring Structural/Systemic Factors

- Many interventions target individual attitudes (e.g., implicit bias training) but fail to address institutional practices that perpetuate inequality
- Individualistic approaches overlook systemic constraints, while structural interventions (e.g., policy changes, accountability systems) are essential for durable change (Madva, 2016).
- Diversity training without organizational reform often shows no measurable impact on hiring or promotion patterns (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016)

Measurement Issues

- Self-reports are vulnerable to social desirability bias, leading participants to underreport prejudice
- Explicit measures often show improvement post-intervention, but this may reflect impression management, not genuine attitude change (Croucher et al., 2019)
- Most studies measure attitudes, not real-world behaviours (e.g., hiring decisions, resource allocation).
- Few interventions demonstrate behavioural change, limiting practical relevance (Paluck & Green, 2009).



Future Directions

Integrated Approaches

- Multi-level interventions to tackle both individual bias and structural inequality (Paluck et al., 2021).
- Embedding bias training within organizational hiring reforms improves outcomes compared to training alone (Kalev, 2023)

Longitudinal Research

- Most studies assess effects immediately or within weeks; few track changes over months or years.
- Habit-breaking intervention reduced implicit race bias over 12 weeks, showing the value of sustained engagement (Devine et al., 2012)

Behavioural Metrics

- Bias Interrupters Toolkit recommends tracking hiring funnel metrics and demographic patterns to evaluate real-world impact of interventions. (biasinterrupters.org)
- Interventions should be judged by behavioural outcomes, not just attitudinal shifts (Paluck & Green, 2009)



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

