

All prejudice isn't created equal; whites distribute it unequally to minorities

February 25 2009

The Declaration of Independence may proclaim that all men are created equal, but American whites tend to distribute their prejudice unequally toward certain members of minority groups, according to new research.

A series of six studies conducted by University of Washington and Michigan State University psychologists shows that whites react more negatively to racial minority individuals who strongly identify with their racial group than to racial minority individuals who weakly identify with their group.

The research, published in the current issue of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, provides an explanation for why some Blacks report personally experiencing more prejudice than others.

"Research has shown that the more minorities identify with their group, the more prejudice they report experiencing," said Kaiser. "Most research has explained this finding by focusing on factors within minorities that make some individuals more susceptible to perceiving prejudice than others. Our studies provide an alternative explanation by showing that whites react more negatively toward strongly identified minorities than weakly identified ones."

The researchers believe strongly identified minorities are not paranoid in claiming they experience increased levels of prejudice and weakly identified minorities are not being self-deceptive when they report experiencing low levels of prejudice. Instead, they just may simply be

reporting on reality as they experience it.

"Take a situation where a person is ambiguously rejected for a new job," she said. "A person with a strong minority identification might wonder if the rejection was due to prejudice while one with a weak minority identification might not. If you experience more prejudice you expect more prejudice. These things work in tandem and feed each other."

Kaiser and her colleague recruited nearly 400 college students for the six studies that measured whites' attitudes toward Blacks and Latinos. They also were surveyed on their general attitudes about Blacks or Latinos, depending on the study. In the studies, minorities were either described as being strongly identified (where their group was very important and a central aspect of their self) or weakly identified (where their group was less important and not at the core of their self).

She said individuals typically want to be around others who share their values and exclude people who don't share those values or world views. The research indicated that whites perceived strongly identified minorities as less likely to share similar worldviews with them relative to weakly identified minorities.

"We are not arguing that minorities should not identify with their group," said Kaiser. "Such identification can be important and provides meaning, self worth and identity.

"Some research about prejudice has tended to lump members of minorities into homogenous groups. But there is a lot of heterogeneity. People differ in looks, language ability, attitudes and many other ways, but we tend not to pay attention to these factors. That's why it is important to identify those subsets in groups, why people react to them and what are the active ingredients of prejudice. Whites need to understand that they distribute prejudice unevenly and target those who

strongly self-identify as being Black."

Source: University of Washington

Citation: All prejudice isn't created equal; whites distribute it unequally to minorities (2009, February 25) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-02-prejudice-isnt-equal-whites-unequally.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.