

2 Prejudice in adolescence: teenagers on the crossroads of attitudes

In the following chapter the theoretical framework of the present study is set. The central topic of the present study, prejudice and specifically prejudice in adolescence, is first defined and conceptualised by identifying its three interrelated components. Then, through the comparison of the normative and descriptive approaches of prejudice research, the initial questions pertaining to prejudice in adolescence are addressed and the uncertainties of defining the opposite of prejudice are tackled. The nature of prejudice is further elaborated through the concept of Group-Focused Enmity.

In the second part of the chapter some of the most influential developmental theories are presented with emphasis on development in adolescence. The theories presented are then synthesised and a framework for the present study is set. The framework is populated by factors influencing prejudice in adolescence, which are described in the final part of the chapter.

2.1 Definitions and approaches

One important question when studying the prejudiced attitudes of the adolescents is that of definitions: Can the same definition of prejudice be applied among adults and adolescents? In case of children, there is consensus that their prejudice qualitatively differs from the prejudice of adults, as it is less coherent and rarely consistent with behaviour (Aboud, 2005). Yet there is no specific definition of prejudice in adolescence. However, the general definitions found in the social psychological literature seem sufficient for adolescents because of their universality, as they do not have implications or limitations concerning the age-groups they should be valid for.

In his classic book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Allport (1954) defined prejudice as “an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalisation. It

may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual who is a member of that group” (p.10). Brown (2011) points out that it is misleading to even consider whether the generalisation about a group is faulty, as suggested by the definition of Allport (1954). He argues that the evaluation of an attitude as faulty “implies that we could have some way of establishing its ‘correctness’” (p.5), which is not possible. Later prejudice definitions no longer stress that the content of prejudice be incorrect.

Though there are major differences between the definitions used by diverse authors since Allport (1954), both Brown (2011) and Fishbein (2002, p.33) point out that nearly all definitions of prejudice agree that “... *it is a negative attitude toward others because of their membership in a particular group.*” Csepeli (2005) points to further special characteristics of prejudices: they resist contradictory experiences and information and are not the results of logical consideration (p.490).

In the present study, prejudice is defined in line with the synthesis of earlier definitions by Fishbein (2002) and Brown (2011), including the shared component of prejudice (Bar-Tal & Teichman, 2005; Brown, 2011), viewing it as a group process:

For the purposes of this study prejudice is a negative attitude held by members of a group towards members of another group because of their membership in that particular group.

This does not mean that all members of a group are similarly prejudiced against members of another group but indicates that prejudices are collectively created.

Going beyond the common characteristics of the definitions of prejudice, we should ask ourselves what a prejudiced attitude actually is. Is it a way of thinking, a feeling, or rather some sort of behaviour? And is it always something negative? There have been very different answers to these questions in the social psychological and sociological literature so far, which, in some cases, entirely contradict each other. In fact, the substance of the phenomenon of prejudice is not that obvious at all.

Ehrlich (1973) has identified three interrelated components of (prejudiced) attitudes (Smith & Mackie, 2000, p.385; Fishbein, 2002): The *cognitive component* represents the information connected to a given outgroup (i.e., the stereotypes concerning the group members). The *affective component* represents the feelings of the individual towards the given outgroup. Finally, the

behavioural component represents the actions the individual takes (took or would take) when coming into contact with the members of the given outgroup. Brown (2011) includes a similar differentiation in the way he defines prejudice “as an attitude, emotion or behaviour towards members of a group which directly or indirectly implies some negativity towards that group” (p. 11).

Although the three components of prejudice are interrelated, it is possible (and often occurs) that people *act* contrary to their beliefs or that they *feel* differently than how they *think*. This discrepancy can be especially salient in case of the prejudices of children. Concerning the differences between the prejudiced attitudes of the children and the adults, Aboud (2005) points out that as their cognitive systems are not fully developed, it more often occurs in case of children that they do not show consistency between attitudes and behaviour. In their case, attitudes might be more driven by concrete situational cues, often unrelated to their beliefs (Aboud, 2005).

It is, however, not only in case of the children that the actual behaviour differs from the affections or cognition of the individual. For instance, Eröss and Gárdos (2007) criticise Hungarian quantitative studies on ethnic prejudices, arguing that the research had not been clearly distinguishing among the three components. They argue that both the approach to the issue and the way the data are analysed lead to serious misinterpretations in case of the assumptions concerning discrimination potential based on the answers given to a questionnaire. In their view, those conflicts which are predicted by the outcome of the xenophobia indices used in questionnaires are fortunately not present in Hungary. So there is a great discrepancy between the cognitive-affective and the behavioural components of the ethnic prejudices. They suggest that researchers concerned about real social conflicts should not focus on the cognitive-affective components but rather on behaviour. The origins of discrimination should be understood principally as in the end interpersonal behaviour is what counts and not affections (Eröss & Gárdos, 2007).

The suggestions of Eröss and Gárdos (2007) might be acceptable from a policymaker's point of view; however, there are certain mechanisms that suggest that emotions and cognitions of the members of a majority group have such effects on minority group members even without any behavioural manifestation, which might lead to stereotype threat. In case minority group members are familiar with the stereotypes against their group, they might start to believe in the content of these stereotypes and act in accordance with them. This self-

fulfilling prophecy mechanism, *stereotype threat* (Steel & Aronson, 1995; Neményi, 2007), can, for example, lead to lower performance of black students on IQ-tests, when they know that their intelligence is measured, because of their familiarity with the stereotype of blacks being unintelligent (Steel & Aronson, 1995).²

In the present study, all components of prejudice are considered, but no direct assumptions are made about the future actions of the respondents solely based on their answers to a questionnaire.

2.1.1 *The normative and the descriptive approach*

The question of whether prejudices can only be negative or also positive prejudgements about a group remains undecided. Brown (2011) takes up this issue and points out that the early works usually restricted their understanding of prejudice to the negative side. Recently, however, some researchers have argued that prejudice can also have positive content and still function as (negative) prejudice through subtle types of control and exploitation (Dovidio, Glick, & Rudman, 2005). For example, Glick & Fiske (1996) argue that the ultimate effect of the positive-sounding stereotypes about women is to define women as dependent on, and hence subordinate to, men (Brown, 2011, p.6). Erős described two ideal type approaches of prejudice research: normative and descriptive. The two approaches can be well separated from each other based on the positions they take concerning the nature of prejudice (Erős, 2007).

Scholars categorised by *the normative approach* argue that although positive prejudices could be possible, negative prejudices, both open and latent, should be dealt with first, as these are the socially relevant ones. As Brown (2011) puts it, "... the kind of prejudice that besets so many societies in the world today and which so urgently requires our understanding is usually the negative variety" (p. 4). According to the normative approach, these massive negative attitudes toward different groups of the society are anti-democratic and hinder solidarity. Prejudices are not a "normal" part of human nature, but are learned throughout the process of *socialisation* by an individual's family, school, and

2 In cases where black participants were not told about the purpose of the test, they performed significantly better. This difference did not occur in case of White participants (Steel & Aronson, 1995).

peers, as well as the media and dominant culture. No prejudice is harmless. Words alone can be hurtful, even if they do not ultimately lead to discrimination or violence. Though it might not be possible to completely demolish prejudices, there are certain ways to reduce them. Education, intergroup contact and, if needed, legal sanctions can lead to such changes in the long run.

According to the *descriptive approach* prejudices are not negative by nature and should not be understood in normative terms. Concerning the underlying cognitive mechanisms, there is no difference between positive and negative prejudices. Prejudices can be directed toward any group of objects (e.g., spinach), as well as toward any group of people (the Roma, artists, etc.). Categorizing and making prejudgments are necessary parts of understanding and processing the world around us. Though prejudices might lead to certain actions, the relationship between the two is way too complicated to predict behaviour based on attitudes. Prejudices cannot be removed entirely from the society, though through certain mechanisms their intensity might be weakened (Erős, 2007).

Taking the theories presented below, the classical ones of Adorno and his colleagues (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950) and of Allport (1954) have all the characteristics of the ideal type of the normative approach. The theories of Tajfel (Tajfel, 1980) and Fishbein (Fishbein, 2002) are obviously classifiable under the label of the descriptive approach as well as the point of view of Eröss and Gárdos (2007) in their above presented critical arguments. The approach of Aboud (Aboud, 1988; 1993; 2005; Aboud & Amato, 2003) has characteristics of both approaches, as she both argues for the necessity of action against prejudices and incorporates Tajfel's *Social Identity Theory* (Tajfel, 1980).

The approach of the present study, similar to that of Aboud (1988; 1993; 2005; Aboud & Amato, 2001), could be understood as a synthesis of the two ideal types. In the present study, it is argued that socialisation is of great importance and that prejudices are reducible through education and legislation. Still, we do not debate the findings of Tajfel (Tajfel, 1980) concerning the cognitive mechanisms and group dynamics behind prejudices.

2.1.2 *Opposites of prejudice*

When regarding prejudice from a developmental aspect, a further question arises, concerning the starting point and direction of the development. Should we talk about the development of prejudiced attitudes or the development of tolerant attitudes? Do we learn to be prejudiced or to be tolerant? As has been mentioned above in connection with the ideal type of the normative approach, classical theories from the 1950s (see e.g., Allport, 1954; Adorno et al. 1950) have rather had the notion of *becoming or learning to be prejudiced*. Allport's (Allport, 1954) theory of prejudice acquisition suggests that children learn to be prejudiced especially from their parents and that this is closely connected to the parenting style. The influential theory of Adorno and his colleagues (Adorno et al., 1950) on the authoritarian personality structure, based on the Freudian psychoanalytical approach, has also argued that it is the parenting style experienced in early childhood that accounts for the authoritarian personality structure which then leads to prejudiced attitudes in adulthood. These approaches, as Smith and Mackie (2000) conclude, were comforting for the public, as people with prejudices could be seen as the exception rather than the rule, so prejudices were understood to be *the problem of other people*.

From the 1960s on, new theories, categorised as the *descriptive approach*, were developed, which aimed at understanding the simple cognitive processes behind the prejudiced attitudes. The most influential of these is the *Social Identity Theory* of Tajfel and Turner (1986). These theories did not stress the social context, and viewed prejudices as rather inevitable concomitants of the human nature. Those social psychologists (i.e., Nesdale, 1999; Fishbein, 2002; Verkuyten, 2002) following them have found that majority group children as young as three years old have developed ethnic identity; by the age of five they show in-group bias. Most importantly, these theories more often refer to the decline of prejudiced or biased attitudes throughout and after childhood. Even though they do not refer to the learning of tolerance, one can conclude that according to these theories, children start from a rather highly prejudiced or biased view, which then more or less disappears due to their cognitive development.

In answering the question whether it is tolerance or prejudice that develops throughout childhood and adolescence, the two strands of theories discussed above – the normative and descriptive approaches –, tell us that: 1. Prejudice is learned (normative approach) and 2. Prejudice is present in young children and

its level declines by age (descriptive approach). Soneither of these approaches look at tolerance at all.

Phillips and Ziller (1997) criticise prejudice research for having a narrow scope and not elaborating on the concept of *nonprejudice*. As they argue, nonprejudice is based on a universal orientation in interpersonal relations, which should be investigated as a substantive entity. They criticise the researchers for only studying prejudice, as it is a "...negative approach to the study of interpersonal relations, and this negativity will be reflected in the knowledge of interpersonal relations (i.e., that prejudice is inevitable)"(p. 420). Unfortunately no theory of nonprejudice has been elaborated for teenagers, and in their article Phillips and Ziller (1997) do not deal with the issues of development or age.

Aboud, in her integrative framework on the development of prejudice (Aboud, 2005), identifies *respect* as the opposite of prejudice. Bar-Tal and Teichman (2005) in their framework on the development of stereotypes and prejudice, refer to the intensity of prejudice, which in this sense does not include an opposite state. Prejudice can be intense, moderate or maybe even of less intensity, but it is always there.³

In the present study a continuum from tolerance through ambivalence to full prejudice is drawn. Tolerance refers to the total freedom from prejudices. Ambivalence is a state in which the individual harbours certain prejudiced attitudes in addition to tolerant ones. Finally, fully prejudiced individuals view members of the outgroup only in negative terms and have negativity on all components of prejudice. In this sense, tolerance as the opposite of prejudice is not the state in which someone likes another individual because of his-her group belonging; rather, tolerance means being free from category-based evaluation.

2.1.3 *Group-Focused Enmity*

Prejudices against various outgroups are likely to be inter-related. Namely, if a person is prejudiced against one group, the chances of this person having prejudice towards another group are higher than in case of a person who is tolerant towards this group (for an overview see Son Hing & Zanna, 2010).

3 This might have to do with the context from which the framework emerged, namely the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Allport (1954) pointed out that “One of the facts of which we are most certain is that people who reject one out-group will tend to reject other out-groups” (p. 68). Recent research was able to confirm Allport’s assumption, and it was proven by German data that prejudices against nine different outgroups are interrelated and that this relation is stable through a longer time period (Zick, Wolf, Küpper, Davidov, Schmidt, & Heitmeyer, 2008). The phenomenon is referred to as the “Syndrome of Group-Focused Enmity”, and researchers argue that its components share a common ideological core, the ideology of inequality, which they also prove empirically (Heitmeyer, 2002; Zick et al., 2008; see the section of the present study on *Social Dominance Orientation* in Chapter 2.4.1). This interrelation of negative attitudes towards various outgroups was also proved to exist in seven European countries including Hungary (Zick et al., 2011).

In this sense prejudice should be understood as a general disposition towards people who are different from the ingroup. This difference is based on their group belonging. Still, not all outgroups are rejected by prejudiced people and there is variation across cultures and times in the identification of the groups which are generally not seen as part of a certain society or community. For the present study it is important to explore whether or not anti-Roma prejudice is embedded in the broader context of Group-Focused Enmity and prejudices against which other outgroups are parts of the syndrome.

2.2 Theories on the development of prejudice in adolescence

The theories dealing with the acquisition or development of prejudiced attitudes usually focus on young children and do not go beyond middle childhood. In some cases, though, they have implications on the changes in preadolescence or adolescence. So when describing the most influential theories in the following paragraphs, a focus is made on their implications concerning preadolescence or early adolescence and adolescence.

Theories are presented in their historical order, as each build upon previous work. First, two classical theories are described: the learning theory of Allport (1954) and the theory of cognitive development by Piaget (1970). Though much of the relevance of these theories was disapproved by empirical studies in the last decades, their core concepts still influence the newer theories regarding the subject of the present study. Next, the *Social Identity Theory* of Tajfel and

Turner (1986) is presented. Even if this theory does not have any direct implication on the development of prejudiced attitudes in adolescence, it has been a milestone in the way social scientists and psychologists understand the cognitive mechanisms and group dynamics behind prejudices. Finally, two of the most recent theories are described in detail which both integrate different approaches and explanatory factors of the development of prejudiced attitudes. Lastly the theories are synthesised and a framework for the present study is set up in which factors influencing prejudices in adolescence are organised. However, the question remains whether these theories are applicable in the particular case of the Hungarian adolescents of the new millennium, especially, as these theories all have been elaborated in and tested for multi-ethnic or multicultural settings of Northern America, Western Europe, and Israel. Compared to the above-mentioned countries, Hungary is ethnically much more homogeneous, and it has gone through a very different cultural-historical development in the 20th century than the countries from which the theories originate. Therefore, this issue should be considered.

2.2.1 *Allport's learning theory*

Allport, in his highly influential 1954 book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, clearly states his view that no child is born with prejudices in its mind (Allport, 1954). He also poses the following question: "*How is prejudice learned?*" (Allport, 1954,p.281⁴) which he answers in three consecutive chapters: "*Conforming*", "*The Young Child*", and "*Later Learning*". In the following paragraphs, an overview of his answers will be given with a special focus on adolescence.

Allport (1954) suggested that there are several factors playing a role in the process of prejudice acquisition from early childhood throughout adolescence, out of which he identifies parental influence as the most important one. Parental influence works in two parallel ways. One way is simple learning from the parents. This is mostly possible for two reasons. First, children would like to please their parents, and they realise that the parents are most pleased when they are mimicked. So if the parents are openly prejudiced, the children will repeat their statements, sometimes even without completely understanding the

4 Please note that the page numbers refer to the 1958 edition of *The Nature of Prejudice*.

categories they refer to. The other reason for this is conformity. As the family is the most common environment and most important reference group in early childhood, the child develops attitudes which conform to this environment. This is, of course dominated, by the views of the parents.

The second method of parental influence in the acquisition of prejudices is the parenting style. Allport (1954) argues that certain parenting styles and home atmospheres lead to prejudiced attitudes in adulthood, whereas others lead to the development of more tolerant personalities. In his view, children whose parents teach them the particular importance of obedience and who threaten to love them less in case the children do not follow their demands, will more likely become prejudiced adults.⁵ On the other hand, in those families in which the parents create a secure and loving atmosphere, the child will grow up to believe in the principles of equality and trust, which is followed by tolerance toward the members of outgroups.

According to Allport (1954), it is important to note that these two mechanisms of parental influence usually have similar directions. In most cases, parents who have strongly prejudiced attitudes, which they openly express in front of the child, are also the ones whose parenting style is characterised by obedience. The opposite is also true: those parents having a tolerant world-view most likely also raise their children in a tolerant atmosphere.

Allport (1954) suggests that prejudices in children and adolescents develop in three consecutive stages, followed by an additional final phase. Throughout this development, the intergroup attitudes of children become more and more coherent, integrated, and structured.

1. At the stage of *pre-generalised learning* until the age of around 6 years, besides the above described mechanisms of parental influence, the child learns that people are categorised into different groups and that these

5 This complicated mechanism is described through quite simple, though maybe not that obviously logical steps: Because of the “love-reduction”, the children start to feel lonesome and sad. Only their parents have the power to give them parental love, so the power and will of the parents becomes a crucial element in the child’s life. This way the child will learn that power and authority, rather than trust and tolerance, guide human relationships. This leads to a hierarchical view of the entire society in which equality is not possible. It should be pointed out that this explanation very much resembles the mechanism leading to authoritarian personality structure described by Adorno and his colleagues in their highly influential Theory of the Authoritarian Personality (Adorno et al., 1950).

Youths Trapped in Prejudice

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Váradi, L.

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