

Macat

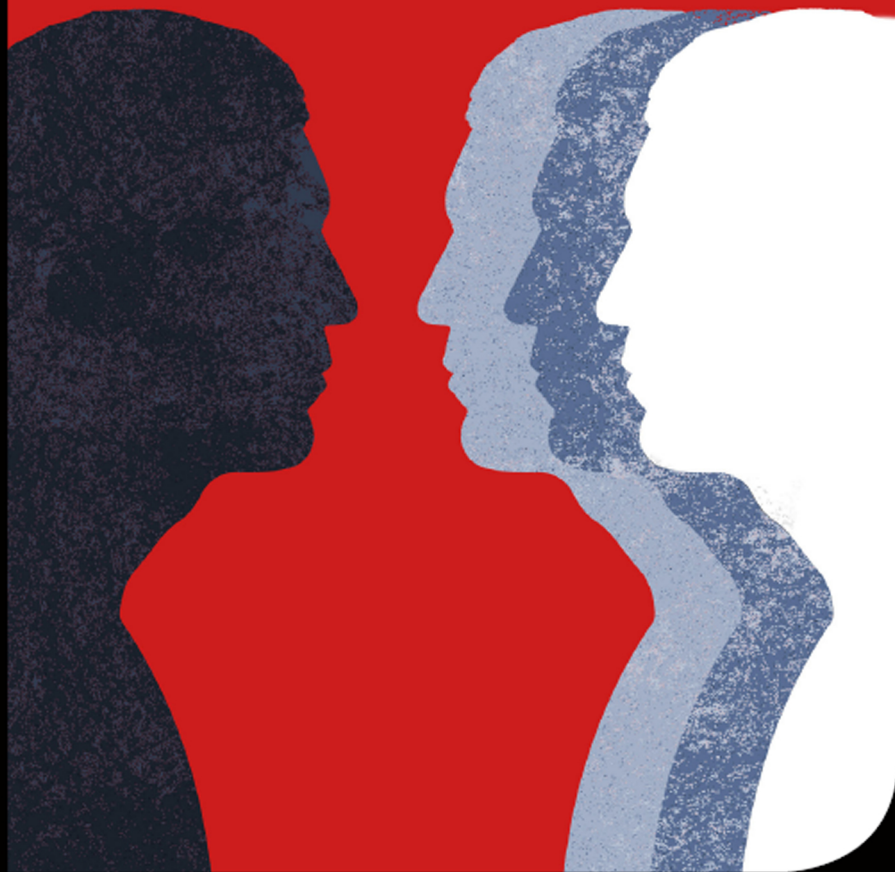


Library

A MACAT ANALYSIS

GORDON W. ALLPORT'S

THE NATURE OF PREJUDICE





An Analysis of

Gordon Allport's

The Nature of Prejudice

Alexander O'Connor



Copyright © 2017 by Macat International Ltd
24:13 Coda Centre, 189 Munster Road, London SW6 6AW

Macat International has asserted its right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the copyright holder of this work.

The print publication is protected by copyright. Prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, distribution or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, permission should be obtained from the publisher or where applicable a license permitting restricted copying in the United Kingdom should be obtained from the Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, Barnard's Inn, 86 Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1EN, UK.

The ePublication is protected by copyright and must not be copied, reproduced, transferred, distributed, leased, licensed or publicly performed or used in any way except as specifically permitted in writing by the publishers, as allowed under the terms and conditions under which it was purchased, or as strictly permitted by applicable copyright law. Any unauthorised distribution or use of this text may be a direct infringement of the authors and the publishers' rights and those responsible may be liable in law accordingly.

www.makat.com
info@makat.com

Cover illustration: Etienne Giffillan

Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.
Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data is available upon request.

ISBN 978-1-912303-52-6 (hardback)
ISBN 978-1-912127-62-7 (paperback)
ISBN 978-1-912282-40-1 (e-book)

Notice

The information in this book is designed to orientate readers of the work under analysis, to elucidate and contextualise its key ideas and themes, and to aid in the development of critical thinking skills. It is not meant to be used, nor should it be used, as a substitute for original thinking or in place of original writing or research. References and notes are provided for informational purposes and their presence does not constitute endorsement of the information or opinions therein. This book is presented solely for educational purposes. It is sold on the understanding that the publisher is not engaged to provide any scholarly advice. The publisher has made every effort to ensure that this book is accurate and up-to-date, but makes no warranties or representations with regard to the completeness or reliability of the information it contains. The information and the opinions provided herein are not guaranteed or warranted to produce particular results and may not be suitable for students of every ability. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, damage or disruption arising from any errors or omissions, or from the use of this book, including, but not limited to, special, incidental, consequential or other damages caused, or alleged to have been caused, directly or indirectly, by the information contained within.

CONTENTS

WAYS IN TO THE TEXT

Who Was Gordon Allport?	9
What Does <i>The Nature of Prejudice</i> Say?	10
Why Does <i>The Nature of Prejudice</i> Matter?	12

SECTION 1: INFLUENCES

Module 1: The Author and the Historical Context	15
Module 2: Academic Context	21
Module 3: The Problem	25
Module 4: The Author's Contribution	29

SECTION 2: IDEAS

Module 5: Main Ideas	34
Module 6: Secondary Ideas	39
Module 7: Achievement	43
Module 8: Place in the Author's Work	47

SECTION 3: IMPACT

Module 9: The First Responses	52
Module 10: The Evolving Debate	57
Module 11: Impact and Influence Today	62
Module 12: Where Next?	66

Glossary of Terms	71
People Mentioned in the Text	78
Works Cited	83

THE MACAT LIBRARY

The Macat Library is a series of unique academic explorations of seminal works in the humanities and social sciences – books and papers that have had a significant and widely recognised impact on their disciplines. It has been created to serve as much more than just a summary of what lies between the covers of a great book. It illuminates and explores the influences on, ideas of, and impact of that book. Our goal is to offer a learning resource that encourages critical thinking and fosters a better, deeper understanding of important ideas.

Each publication is divided into three Sections: Influences, Ideas, and Impact. Each Section has four Modules. These explore every important facet of the work, and the responses to it.

This Section-Module structure makes a Macat Library book easy to use, but it has another important feature. Because each Macat book is written to the same format, it is possible (and encouraged!) to cross-reference multiple Macat books along the same lines of inquiry or research. This allows the reader to open up interesting interdisciplinary pathways.

To further aid your reading, lists of glossary terms and people mentioned are included at the end of this book (these are indicated by an asterisk [*] throughout) – as well as a list of works cited.

Macat has worked with the University of Cambridge to identify the elements of critical thinking and understand the ways in which six different skills combine to enable effective thinking.

Three allow us to fully understand a problem; three more give us the tools to solve it. Together, these six skills make up the **PACIER** model of critical thinking. They are:

ANALYSIS – understanding how an argument is built

EVALUATION – exploring the strengths and weaknesses of an argument

INTERPRETATION – understanding issues of meaning

CREATIVE THINKING – coming up with new ideas and fresh connections

PROBLEM-SOLVING – producing strong solutions

REASONING – creating strong arguments

To find out more, visit **WWW.MACAT.COM**.

CRITICAL THINKING AND THE NATURE OF PREJUDICE

Primary critical thinking skill: REASONING

Secondary critical thinking skill: EVALUATION

With his 1954 book *The Nature of Prejudice*, American psychologist Gordon Allport displays the crucial skill of reasoning, producing and organizing an argument that was persuasive enough to have a major impact not only in universities, but also on government policy.

The question that Allport tackled was an old one: why are people so disposed to prejudice against those from other groups? Earlier psychologists had suggested a number of reasons, especially in the case of racial prejudice. Some had suggested that racism was a learned behaviour, conditioned by negative experiences of other races; others that there was an objective rationale to negative racial stereotypes.

Allport, however, reasoned that prejudice is essentially a by-product of the necessary mental shortcuts the human brain uses to process the vast amount of information it takes in. Because our brains want to use as little effort as possible, they regularly fall back on simple stereotypes – which easily generate prejudice. Gathering strong evidence for this hypothesis, he reasoned, clearly and persuasively, that our natural cognitive approach is the most significant factor in accounting for prejudice. Going further still, Allport also reasoned that, once this was better understood, social scientists would be able to influence policy-makers to curb discrimination by law.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE ORIGINAL WORK

Gordon Allport (1897–1967) was born in Indiana in the United States. He studied at Harvard University, and went on to work there for 40 years. He made huge contributions to the field of personality psychology and his influence is still felt today. Allport lived through important and unsettling historical times, including the Holocaust and the American Civil Rights Movement. This gave him a burning desire to tap into psychological explanations for the violent, discriminatory behavior of so many people. He was convinced that social science had a vital role to play in giving governments policy guidance to reduce the evil of discrimination.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF THE ANALYSIS

Dr Alexander O'Connor did his postgraduate work at the University of California, Berkeley, where he received a PhD for work on social and personality psychology.

ABOUT MACAT

GREAT WORKS FOR CRITICAL THINKING

Macat is focused on making the ideas of the world's great thinkers accessible and comprehensible to everybody, everywhere, in ways that promote the development of enhanced critical thinking skills.

It works with leading academics from the world's top universities to produce new analyses that focus on the ideas and the impact of the most influential works ever written across a wide variety of academic disciplines. Each of the works that sit at the heart of its growing library is an enduring example of great thinking. But by setting them in context – and looking at the influences that shaped their authors, as well as the responses they provoked – Macat encourages readers to look at these classics and game-changers with fresh eyes. Readers learn to think, engage and challenge their ideas, rather than simply accepting them.

‘Macat offers an amazing first-of-its-kind tool for interdisciplinary learning and research. Its focus on works that transformed their disciplines and its rigorous approach, drawing on the world’s leading experts and educational institutions, opens up a world-class education to anyone.’

**Andreas Schleicher,
Director for Education and Skills, Organisation for Economic
Co-operation and Development**

‘Macat is taking on some of the major challenges in university education ... They have drawn together a strong team of active academics who are producing teaching materials that are novel in the breadth of their approach.’

**Prof Lord Broers,
former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge**

‘The Macat vision is exceptionally exciting. It focuses upon new modes of learning which analyse and explain seminal texts which have profoundly influenced world thinking and so social and economic development. It promotes the kind of critical thinking which is essential for any society and economy. This is the learning of the future.’

Rt Hon Charles Clarke, former UK Secretary of State for Education

‘The Macat analyses provide immediate access to the critical conversation surrounding the books that have shaped their respective discipline, which will make them an invaluable resource to all of those, students and teachers, working in the field.’

Professor William Tronzo, University of California at San Diego



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

WAYS IN TO THE TEXT

KEY POINTS

- Gordon Allport was an American psychologist who had a profound and lasting impact on his field.
- *The Nature of Prejudice* gives a comprehensive understanding of the psychology of prejudice, explaining how and why prejudice exists.
- The ideas that Allport put forward in *The Nature of Prejudice* shaped the study of prejudice for decades and are still relevant today.

Who was Gordon Allport?

Gordon Willard Allport (1897–1967) was born in Montezuma, Indiana, the youngest of four sons. One of his elder brothers, Floyd Henry Allport,* was an influential social psychologist* himself and played a key role in developing Gordon's career. Floyd studied psychology at the prestigious Harvard University and encouraged Gordon to enroll there as an undergraduate. The two brothers later went on to collaborate on a book on personality psychology.*

After gaining his degree in philosophy and economics in 1919, Allport headed for Europe, teaching in Istanbul, Turkey, for a period. He also visited Sigmund Freud*—who became known as the father of psychoanalytic therapy*—in Vienna in 1920. Allport returned to Harvard that same year to begin a PhD in psychology, earning his

doctorate in 1922. The university then awarded Allport a traveling fellowship, and he returned to Europe to study Gestalt psychology* in Berlin and Hamburg. This new school of psychology placed particular emphasis on the cognitive* (or conscious thought). The experience shaped Allport's later work and influenced his move toward the use of cognitive theory rather than psychodynamic* or behaviorist* thinking.

Allport returned to Harvard University in 1924, where he worked first as an instructor and then as a professor for the best part of four decades until his death in 1967. He was elected president of the American Psychological Association in 1939.

Published in 1954, Allport's fourth book, *The Nature of Prejudice*, is his best-known work and is considered one of the most important and influential texts in social psychology. Allport is also known as one of the founders of personality psychology and wrote a number of books on the subject, including the influential *Becoming: Basic Considerations for Psychology of Personality* in 1955.

What Does *The Nature Of Prejudice* Say?

Allport wanted to integrate already-existing research on prejudice* with his own ideas to show that:

- prejudice is widespread
- prejudice does not have a single cause, but is the result of many different factors
- prejudice and discrimination can be limited and, ultimately, combated.

Decades of research have followed *The Nature of Prejudice*, but the majority of Allport's conclusions stand up today, and the original ideas he explained in the book are still relevant. Allport's highly influential

intergroup contact hypothesis* was first outlined here. This hypothesis suggests that if people have increased experience of a group outside their own, then their attitudes toward that group will improve.

With *The Nature of Prejudice*, Allport changed the focus of personality psychology. The Freudian analytic approach, in which a person's childhood experiences are thought to shape his or her unconscious and forge the personality, had some support. But at the time the book was published in 1954, behaviorism was the approach that dominated. Behaviorism puts forward the idea that we are all effectively blank slates and that our character traits* are created by external, environmental factors. Allport looked at both the Freudian and behaviorist approaches, and considered both to be too extreme. Freud's psychodynamic approach didn't seem to recognize the importance of conscious thought (the cognitive), while behaviorism appeared to deny the importance that thought processes and experience, whether conscious or unconscious, could have on someone's personality. Allport expressed his support for a more cognitive approach, suggesting that personality is formed by conscious mental activities such as attitudes, beliefs, and memory processing. This was a significant shift in the field of psychology, and Allport's work in *The Nature of Prejudice* helped develop the field of social cognition.*

Allport argues in his book that prejudice has many causes and that all human beings are capable of it. His theory suggests that prejudice is the result of cognitive processes, of patterns of thinking and beliefs. One of these cognitive processes, the "least-effort principle,"* was described by Allport before anyone else in relation to prejudice. In the least-effort principle, a person uses generalizations and stereotypes* as a mental shortcut to form a view of someone, rather than taking the longer route, drawing on memory and judgment. Allport said that these stereotypes, or shortcuts, are often based on visible features, such as a person's race.

Allport's intention in writing *The Nature of Prejudice* was to make a

positive difference, as prejudice and discrimination were widespread in the United States and the rest of the world. The book was written when the shocking details of the Holocaust* had recently become known and the American Civil Rights Movement,* which was fighting for greater rights for minority groups, was gaining momentum. *The Nature of Prejudice* developed new ideas, but also offered a comprehensive look at all the existing theories on the subject. Allport found the idea of behaviorism negative, because it put forward the notion that change could come about only through a modification in the environment in which people were living. So in this framework the only way it would be possible to change prejudice would be to alter the poor economic situations in which certain groups lived. Allport suggested that how people think about things—cognition—was a much more significant factor in conquering prejudice. He believed that once it was better understood *why* prejudice occurred, social scientists would then be moved to act to influence policy-makers to curb discrimination by political means. *The Nature of Prejudice* was widely read and admired when it was first published, and some anti-discrimination laws were indeed introduced in the years after it appeared. It could be concluded that Allport's ideas in *The Nature of Prejudice* had some influence in reducing prejudice and discrimination. There is little hard evidence of a direct link, however, so it is not possible to say exactly *how much* social change Allport's psychological investigation of prejudice concretely achieved.

Why Does *The Nature of Prejudice* Matter?

The Nature of Prejudice is essential reading for anyone interested in personality and psychology. In 2005, a collection of essays to mark the 50th anniversary of the book was published. Called *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport*, each essay paid tribute to Allport's core themes. Written by the most influential prejudice researchers working in psychology—such as John Dovidio* and Susan Fiske*—the essays

give credit to Allport for paving the way for most contemporary social psychological research on prejudice. In his introduction, Dovidio says, “There is no debate that Gordon Allport’s (1954/1979) *The Nature of Prejudice* is the foundational work for the social psychology of prejudice. Contemporary prejudice researchers and scholars regularly refer back to this work not only for apt quotations, but also for inspiration. Social science instructors often pair Allport’s book with recent articles. Indeed, any student of prejudice ignorant of Allport would be rightly considered illiterate.”¹

The Nature of Prejudice is also invaluable reading for anyone interested in the growth of the human rights movements of the mid-twentieth century. In particular, Allport’s ideas about prejudice act as a historical record of the early times of the American Civil Rights Movement. This is because his ideas represent the central arguments that were put forward by the movement, aiming to reduce prejudice and discrimination and improve the rights of minority groups. In addition, the book also supported and informed legislation intended to fight discrimination in the United States. Allport believed that “legislation, if enforced, may be a sharp tool in the battle against discrimination.”²

Finally, Allport gave balanced consideration to many different theories of prejudice. He drew from most areas of psychology, including clinical, * social, personality, and developmental* psychology. Not only does *The Nature of Prejudice* provide an introduction to the broader field of psychology, it also emphasizes that most psychological phenomena are determined by a number of different factors.

NOTES

¹ John F. Dovidio et al., *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport* (Abingdon: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 1.

² Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 442.

References

- Akhtar, Salman , and Mary Kay O'Neil , eds. On Freud's "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." London: Karnac Books, 2011.
- Allport, G. W. "Gordon W. Allport." In History of Psychology in Autobiography, edited by E. Boring and G. Lindsay , vol. 5, 1–25. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967.
- The Nature of Prejudice. New York: Basic Books, 1979.
- Personality: A Psychological Interpretation. New York: Henry Holt, 1937.
- Cleburne v. Cleburne Living Center, Inc. , 473 US 432—Supreme Court 1985, 464.
- Crocker, Jennifer , and Brenda Major . "Social Stigma and Self-Esteem: The Self-Protective Properties of Stigma." Psychological Review 96, no. 4 (1989): 608–630.
- Devine, Patricia G. "Stereotypes and Prejudice: Their Automatic and Controlled Components." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 56, no. 1 (1989): 5–18.
- Dovidio, John F. , Peter Glick , and Laurie A. Rudman . "Introduction: Reflecting on The Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport." In On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport, 1–15. New York: Wiley, 2005.
- On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport. Abingdon: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- Elms, Alan C. Uncovering Lives: The Uneasy Alliance of Biography and Psychology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, 79–80.
- Haggblom, Steven J. , Renee Warnick , Jason E. Warnick , Vinessa K. Jones , Gary L. Yarbrough , Tenea M. Russell , Chris M. Borecky , Reagan McGahhey , John L. Powell , Jamie Beavers , and Emmanuelle Monte . "The 100 Most Eminent Psychologists of the 20th Century." Review of General Psychology 6, no. 2 (2002): 139–152.
- Herek, Gregory M. "Religious Orientation and Prejudice: A Comparison of Racial and Sexual Attitudes." Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 13, no. 1 (1987): 34–44.
- Hjelle, L. A. , and D. J. Ziegler . Personality Theories: Basic Assumptions, Research, and Applications. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992.
- Katz, Irwin . "Gordon Allport's The Nature of Prejudice." Political Psychology 12, no. 1 (1991): 125–157.
- Nicholson, Ian A. M. Inventing Personality: Gordon Allport and the Science of Selfhood. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003.
- Pasamanick, Benjamin . "A Comparative Study of the Behavioral Development of Negro Infants." The Pedagogical Seminary and Journal of Genetic Psychology 69, no. 1 (1946): 3–44.
- Pettigrew, Thomas . Preface to The Nature of Prejudice, by John F. Dovidio , Peter Glick , and Laurie A. Rudman . New York: Basic Books, 1979.
- Pettigrew, Thomas F. "Gordon Willard Allport: A Tribute." Journal of Social Issues 55, no. 3 (1999): 415–428.
- Pettigrew, Thomas F. , and Linda R. Tropp . "A Meta-analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 90, no. 5 (2006): 751–783.
- Skinner, Burrhus Frederic . About Behaviorism. New York: Random House, 2011.
- Zipf, George . Human Behavior and the Principle of Least Effort: An Introduction to Human Ecology. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1949.
- Zirkel, Sabrina , and Nancy Cantor . "50 Years after Brown v. Board of Education: The Promise and Challenge of Multicultural Education." Journal of Social Issues 60, no. 1 (2004): 1–15.