

## The Prejudiced Personality, Racism, and Anti-Semitism: The PR Scale 40 Years Later

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The relationship of prejudiced personality traits with racism and anti-Semitism was examined with 150 Asian American and White university students. The Prejudice (PR) scale, composed of 32 items from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, was administered along with the McConahay racism scale and the Selznick and Steinberg Anti-Semitism scale. Results indicated that for Whites, the PR scale was significantly correlated with old-fashioned and modern racism and anti-Semitism, replicating Gough's 1951 study (Gough, 1951XX) with the PR scale. However, no such relationship was observed for the Asian American group. This suggests that personality traits of prejudicial attitudes may be relatively stable for Whites but may not be related to outgroup bias for other racial or ethnic groups.

The study of prejudice has had a long and complex relationship with the field of psychology, and has posed a variety of conceptual and methodological challenges to assessment psychology particularly (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Duckitt, 1992). There have been various efforts to understand and measure prejudiced behaviors, attitudes, and affects; these have included experimental social psychology techniques (Tajfel & Forgas, 1981), laboratory studies of small group behavior (Rabbie & Horwit, 1988), and the development of group-specific scales of adverse bias (Sears & McConahay, 1973).

By comparison, there has been very little contemporary attention to the measurement of personality traits associated with prejudice. Since the work of Adorno (1950) and Rokeach (Rokeach, Smith, & Evans, 1960) the study of personality traits of social intolerance has been largely supplanted by

social psychological assessment methods. This shift in emphasis has been related to the reconceptualization of prejudice as a phenomena of social group identity rather than as an index of psychological disturbance or distress. Although there are advantages to group-specific measures of bias (Jacobsen, 1985; McConahay, 1986), problems of social desirability may mediate such an assessment approach. In contrast, the use of group-independent approaches to the study of prejudice may significantly avoid the problems of subject response bias.

One of the initial measures of the prejudiced personality, the Prejudice (PR) scale, was developed by Gough (Gough, 1951a, 1951c). The PR scale was the product of his thesis work at the University of Minnesota and was developed in response to guidance from Sanford concerning the authoritarian personality and social intolerance (H. G. Gough, personal communication, DATE, 1994). The original PR scale consisted of 32 items from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI; Hathaway & McKinley, 1983). The PR scale proposes to measure the experiences and beliefs associated with prejudice without explicitly addressing attitudes about specific racial, ethnic, or national groups. In his research with the PR scale, Gough (1951b) reported that

The overall picture that emerges from these item clusters is one of a harassed, tormented, resentful, peevish, querulous, constricted, disillusioned, embittered, distrustful, rancorous, apprehensive, and somewhat bewildered person. The syndrome is almost paranoid in its intensity, but is not equatable to paranoia for it lacks the excessive circumstantiality and self-deluding aspects of the latter. (pp. XXX-XXX)

Gough further noted in this same article that "All of the tendencies mentioned are socially isolating in varying degrees and would be expected to interfere with and impair the efficacy of social interaction and response" (Gough, 1951b, p. 253). In his study comprising two samples of midwestern high school students, the PR scale was significantly correlated ( $r = .49$  and  $r = .45$ , respectively) with a measure of anti-Semitic attitudes (Gough, 1951a), as well as with several of the clinical MMPI scales (Gough, 1951c). Subsequent to this original work, the PR scale was revised and included as part of the California Psychological Inventory (Gough, 1987; Gough & Bradley, 1993) as the Tolerance scale.

This study endeavored to determine whether the PR scale continues to be significantly correlated with group-specific measures of adverse bias such as measures of racism and anti-Semitism. It should be considered that Gough's original study used an (apparently) White sample; this is consistent with most of the subsequent research on prejudice and social intolerance conducted in the United States (Norman, 1994). As a consequence, it is unclear as to whether a measure of personality found to be related for Whites to outgroup bias would be equally valid with an ethnically different subject

group. Therefore, in this study I wished to determine if the PR scale would be valid with a nonwhite subsample; in this instance, Asian Americans. In sum, this study sought to determine if personality traits of prejudice as measured by the original PR scale remain substantially consistent with the initial research of Gough from 40 years ago.

### SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

Subjects were 150 university students enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses at UCLA for which they received credit for participating in this study. The sample consisted of 74 Asian American and 76 Euro-White subjects; including 53 men and 97 women. Because of the inclusion of the Anti-Semitism scale (discussed subsequently), 4 White subjects who identified themselves as Jewish were excluded from the study analysis. The median age was 19.0 years ( $SD = 4.52$ ). To reduce response bias (Sundberg & Bachelis, 1956), there was no reference made in the solicitation of subjects that issues of ethnic/racial attitudes would be studied. Subjects were instructed that they were to complete a series of personal attitude scales. The materials were administered in groups of 8 to 10 subjects and were under the supervision of a trained university research assistant. To minimize social desirability, the PR scale and the personal data blank were completed prior to the distribution and completion of the anti-Semitism and racism measures.

The study measures included the MMPI PR scale (Gough, 1951a), the Old Fashioned and Modern Racism scales (McConahay, 1986), and the Anti-Semitism scale (Selznick & Steinberg, 1969). Subjects also completed a personal data blank providing demographic information on family generational status of residence in the United States and self-ratings of socioeconomic level. Other measures not included in this study were also administered (i.e., the White Attitudes Questionnaire; Dunbar, 1994).

### MEASURES

#### PR Scale

In this study, the PR scale had a mean of 11.97 ( $SD = 5.77$ ). The coefficient of internal reliability for the PR scale was .81, with a split-half reliability coefficient of .78.

#### Anti-Semitism Scale

The Selznick and Steinberg Anti-Semitism scale (Selznick & Steinberg, 1969) consists of 11 Likert-type statements associated with negative beliefs

(e.g., trustworthiness) of Jewish persons and Jewish culture; the coefficient (alpha) of reliability for this scale was .94.

#### Old Fashioned and Modern Racism Scales

McConahay's racism measure includes two 8-item subscales of old-fashioned and modern racist attitudes. The items of old-fashioned racism are related to opposition to racial integration and espousal of segregationist attitudes. Modern racism items are related to opposition to equal employment opportunity legislation and the belief that race discrimination is no longer a problem for U.S. society. The Old Fashioned Racism scale had a reliability coefficient of .76, whereas the Modern Racism scale alpha was .84.

#### Personal Data Blank

Single-item ratings recorded subject's self-referenced socioeconomic level and family generational status. For number of generations of family residence in the United States, subjects were asked to report if they were non-U.S. born, first generation born, second generation born, and so forth. This was rated on a 5-point scale, with higher ratings corresponding to greater length of family residence in the United States. Socioeconomic level was also rated on a 5-point scale, with higher scores reflecting higher self-referenced economic level (i.e., upper class) and lower scores reflecting lower socioeconomic level.

### RESULTS

A  $1 \times 2$  analysis of variance was computed with the *PR scale* used as the dependent variable and *subject race* used as the independent variable; subject gender and number of generations of family residence in the United States were used as covariates. Results yielded a significant main effect,  $F(2, 148) = 3.40, p < .04$ , with the Asian American group having the higher total score. The covariates for subject gender,  $F = .51, p < .48$ , and family generational status,  $F = .19, p < .66$ , were not significant. For Whites, there was a significant negative relationship between the number of generations of family residence in the United States and the PR scale ( $r = -.31, p < .01$ ), Anti-Semitism scale ( $r = -.41, p < .01$ ), and modern racism scale ( $r = -.45, p < .01$ ). In addition, as is reported in Table 1, Asian American subjects had a significantly higher score than White subjects on the Anti-Semitism scale ( $T = 5.70, p < .001$ ). There were no significant relationships between self-described political orientation or reported socioeconomic status and the study measures.

TABLE 1  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Significance Tests for Asian American and Euro-White Subjects

Measure	Asian American		Euro-White		T Value
	M	SD	M	SD	
PR scale	13.23	6.04	10.67	5.36	2.74*
Old Fashioned Racism	12.89	3.01	12.46	4.19	.69
Modern Racism	9.53	2.24	9.04	2.16	1.24
Anti-Semitism	39.68	9.62	27.88	14.33	5.70**

Note. PR scale = prejudice scale.

\* $p < .01$ . \*\* $p < .01$  (two-tailed  $t$  test).

TABLE 2  
Correlational Matrix of PR Scale, With the Racism and Anti-Semitism Scales for Asian Americans and Euro-Americans

	PR Scale	Old Fashioned Racism	Modern Racism	Anti-Semitism
PR scale	—	.11	-.01	
Old Fashioned Racism	.32**	—	.47**	
Modern Racism	.42**	.62**	—	
Anti-Semitism	.54**	.34**	.44**	—

Note. Asian American subjects above diagonal; Euro-White subjects below diagonal. PR scale = prejudice scale.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Pearson correlational results yielded a distinctly different relationship for the two racial groups with the PR scale and the measures of outgroup bias. As is reported in Table 2, the measures of racism and anti-Semitism were significantly related to the PR scale scores for the Whites, whereas for the Asian American sample there was no significant relationship for the PR scale with the adverse bias measures.

## DISCUSSION

As found in this study, for the White subjects the PR scale demonstrated a positive relationship with three measures of outgroup bias whereas for the Asian American subjects no such relationship was observed. As might be expected, correlational results also demonstrate a significant relationship between traditional (old-fashioned) racism, modern racism, and anti-Semitism for both groups. This is consistent with the findings reported by

Selznick and Steinberg (1969) concerning the relationship of their Anti-Semitism scale with anti-Black attitudes. As has already been observed, the relationship of the PR scale and the other study variables was not significantly mediated by sociodemographic factors of gender, self-referenced political beliefs, or self-referenced socioeconomic level. A less consistent relationship was found with family generational status, in which it was found that for Whites the PR scale score decreased with the number of generations living in the United States—no such generational patterns were noted with the Asian American subjects.

Although the Asian American group had a significantly higher mean score on the PR scale than did the White sample, it was only with the White sample that a significant relationship between the PR scale, anti-Semitism, and racism was observed. This does not imply that other personality traits may not be related to outgroup bias for Asian Americans. As Ho (DATE, 1994, personal communication) has suggested, for Asians, culture-specific constructs such as *filial piety* may be related to authoritarianism and outgroup bias. At present there is very little known about how Asian and Asian American persons view other racial groups, particularly nonwhite groups. This is all the more complicated in the domain of personality assessment, in which measures developed with one national or racial group must be demonstrated to be reliable and valid cross-culturally. Certainly there is need for further research with Asian subjects, to clarify the role of personality in cross-cultural attitude formation.

These findings suggest that personality traits may meaningfully predict negative attitudes to ethnic and racial minorities. Accordingly, although social group processes may significantly contribute to the formulation of negative outgroup attributions, it appears that individual personality characteristics may additionally influence the development of prejudice. It is proposed that for individuals who evidence personality characteristics such as those represented by the PR scale, the susceptibility to ascribe to social ingroup attitudes may be particularly strong. That is, such characteristics predisposed persons may more readily subscribe to ingroup idealization and outgroup denigration. It may also be that persons typified by a personality style as is portrayed by the PR scale may be less open to revision of negative outgroup attributions than others.

When put in context of Gough's earlier research with the PR scale, a consistent relationship for Whites between anti-Semitism and the PR scale is observed. For the White group, the reported mean score and correlational results are essentially unchanged from Gough's (1951XX) study. This suggests that, for White Americans, personality traits of prejudice as defined 40 years ago continue to demonstrate a significant relationship to both anti-Black and anti-Semitic beliefs. This does not suggest that social attitudes as such are the same today as they were four decades ago. Rather, it appears that the psychological characteristics as measured by the PR scale continue to reflect a sensitivity if not susceptibility for Whites to endorse particularly

negative attitudes towards persons of differing ethnic, religious, and racial group memberships.

Results of this study further suggest that negative outgroup bias may incorporate negative attributions about multiple social group categories. Prejudicial beliefs may span diverse social outgroups (e.g., not only persons of color but perhaps the homeless and/or AIDS victims), and that for some persons these attitudes may be significantly intercorrelated. Finally, this study demonstrates that a cluster of personality traits related to prejudicial attitudes may be contiguous over time for specific sociodemographic groups (i.e., Whites) but not for others. Given the implications of this study, it is hoped that the role of personality traits will be investigated in the contemporary study of outgroup bias. Such an assessment methodology may contribute to the examination and mitigation of the social problems of racism and prejudice.

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