



Social Psychology

# The psychodynamics of prejudice: A bibliographic review

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### Abstract

The present research aims to investigate how the psychoanalytic theory of the intrapsychic functioning of the prejudiced can help to delimit the psychic characteristics of this social evil. Methodologically speaking, we conducted a bibliographic review, a study of the selected documentary sources in an orderly, systematized and documented way, with clearly delimited criteria and procedures. Seventeen articles were selected and each one was studied and analyzed. As a main result, we concluded that prejudice is, basically, a mechanism of identification. The primary functions it serves are directed towards the maintenance of good object relations and the narcissistic cohesion of the Self in the face of the threat of its destruction by the sense of ambivalence. Hence, the individual needs to protect the identifications that are the basis of his/her Self through defense mechanisms that place both the genesis and the product of his/her anguishes on others, fundamentally perceived as different.

**Keywords:** prejudice; psychodynamics; psychoanalysis; ambivalence; identification.

## A PSICODINÂMICA DO PRECONCEITO: REVISÃO BIBLIOGRÁFICA

### Resumo

A intenção da presente pesquisa foi investigar como a teoria psicanalítica do funcionamento intrapsíquico do preconceituoso pode ajudar a delimitar as características anímicas desse mal social. Como metodologia, utilizou-se a pesquisa bibliográfica, isto é, um estudo das fontes documentais selecionadas de maneira ordenada, sistematizada e documentada, com critérios e procedimentos claramente delimitados. Dezessete artigos foram selecionados e cada um deles foi estudado, fichado e analisado. Como principal resultado, pôde-se concluir que o preconceito é, no fundo, um mecanismo de identificação. As funções primordiais a que atende são voltadas à manutenção das boas relações objetais e à coesão narcísica do *self* ante a ameaça de sua destruição pela sensação da ambivalência. Dessa forma, o indivíduo precisa proteger as identificações que são a base da constituição do seu *self* por meio de mecanismos de defesa que colocam tanto a gênese quanto o produto de suas angústias em outros, fundamentalmente percebidos como diferentes.

**Palavras-chave:** preconceito; psicodinâmica; psicanálise; ambivalência; identificação.

## LA PSICODINÁMICA DEL PREJUICIO: REVISIÓN BIBLIOGRÁFICA

### Resumen

La intención de esta investigación fue explorar como la teoría psicoanalítica del funcionamiento intrapsíquico de personas con prejuicios puede ayudar a delimitar las características anímicas de ese mal social. Metodológicamente, utilizamos la investigación bibliográfica, un estudio de las fuentes documentales seleccionadas de manera ordenada, sistematizada y documentada, con criterios y procedimientos claramente delimitados. Diecisiete artículos fueron seleccionados, estudiados, fichados y analizados. Como principal resultado, se pudo concluir que el prejuicio es, en el fondo, un mecanismo de identificación. Las funciones primordiales a que atiende están dirigidas al mantenimiento de las buenas relaciones objetivas y la cohesión narcisista del *self* frente a la amenaza de su destrucción por la sensación de la ambivalencia. De esta forma, el individuo necesita proteger las identificaciones que son la base de la constitución de su *self* por medio de mecanismos de defensa que colocan la génesis y el producto de sus angustias en otros, fundamentalmente percibidos como diferentes.

**Palabras clave:** prejuicio; psicodinámica; psicoanálisis; ambivalencia; identificación.

### 1. Introduction

Prejudice is a classic theme in psychology and a phenomenon as old as the advent of society. In a historical analysis, Snowden (1995) demonstrates that prejudiced attitudes have existed since the Greek-Roman antiquity. It was in 1950, however, that Gordon Allport formulated one of the first consistent theories on the subject. In his book *The Nature of Prejudice*, Allport (1979, p. 22) proposes the concept of “an aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group.”

Since Allport, theorists of different approaches have advanced their formulations on prejudice, but most of these studies focus on specificities of the object or on specific types of its manifestation rather than on bias as a global phenomenon (Duckitt, 1992). Crandall and Eshleman (2003) argue that, despite this historical segmentation of studies, prejudice is primarily an emotional state that, like other emotional states, generates a tension in the body that can serve as an incen-

tive or motivation for action. Thus, all specific types of prejudice share at least the same core and can, thus, be studied together.

The focus of this article is to try and understand prejudice through the intrapsychic mechanisms of the phenomenon, and not the specifics of its targets. Assuming that all types of prejudice share the same core, however, we can use the formulations of these studies to advance theoretically in the attempt to achieve a broader construction. As it cannot be denied that the studies that have contributed most to advances in the understanding of prejudice have been the papers on racial prejudice (Duckitt, 1992; Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), we will briefly review some of the most significant contemporary findings in this field.

The latest theories about racial prejudice argue that prejudice has changed over the years. Due to a series of political and social changes in the post-World War II world, societies with more consolidated democracies have established themselves in which egalitarian, humanitarian, and libertarian values stand as social norms (Lima & Vala, 2004). In these new environments, the expression of genuine prejudice, which shows itself openly and directly, can no longer be accepted. Instead of being extinguished, however, prejudice has found new ways of expressing itself to meet this new social configuration, using more subtle, masked, and indirect forms. Various theories, such as aversive racism, modern racism, ambivalent racism, subtle prejudice, and cordial racism have diagnosed this change; but it is the work by Crandall and Eshleman (2003) that best explains how this mechanism came into play.

Being prejudice an emotional state that motivates the action, this always seeks its expression. As contemporary social norms evaluate this attitude negatively, however, the subject, being socialized in this new social configuration, understands these attitudes as irrational, unjust or shameful (Lima & Vala, 2004) and does not want to be seen or even feel prejudiced. Thus, individuals become motivated to suppress prejudices. This new scenario creates a situation of conflict, after all, two ambivalent and diametrically opposed motivations act on the subject simultaneously: the expression and suppression of prejudice. In order to be able to respect both motivations, the individual finds a solution by creating a commitment: the motivation of expression can be achieved by adapting to social norms, that is, by avoiding the motivation to suppress prejudices. This adaptation is based on being able to justify one's prejudiced action.

“A justification is any psychological or social process that can serve as an opportunity to express genuine prejudice without suffering external or internal sanction” (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003, p.425), which can be easily recognized by its explanatory nature: it is based on “logical” arguments of why, on some occasions, prejudices may be acceptable or even desirable and usually occur in situations that are ambiguous enough to justify a wide range of individual responses.

In line with the previous authors, but increasing the scale of the individual to society, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) developed the Theory of Social Dominance, which argues that people tend to organize themselves in societies that reinforce patterns of domination between social groups. This happens because the groups and institutions that put them in power create legitimizing myths for social inequalities and can use them as justifications for the expression of their prejudices. According to Crochik (1996), these myths can be classified as stereotypes and consist of the set of predicates the culture attaches to a particular group, whose primary function is the naturalization of the different degrees of value in the hierarchy of the roles played in society. Their existence is due to the cultural needs of maintaining the status quo, being an indispensable tool for the continuation and reproduction of the moral values society is based on.

A psychich process very well described by Sigmund Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1976) refers to motivations that need to find expression, forces that work against their accomplishment, and the formation of a compromise between them. His theory on the dynamics and economics of the human psyche, that is, the functioning of the conscious and unconscious intrapsychic forces, is of great value for the study of psychic phenomena. The concepts of instinctual drive, repression, symptom and the relation between them constitute the basis of individual mental functioning and seem to be largely forgotten by contemporary works in the academic field of prejudice.

As prejudice is a multifactorial phenomenon, understanding the theme of its study is beneficial through a plurality of theoretical perspectives. According to Duckitt (1992), historically, prejudice has been studied mainly in three theoretical perspectives: the sociological, the cognitive and the psychoanalytic. In contemporary times, however, the vast predominance of studies in this specific field of knowledge happens through social psychology, especially in Brazil. Therefore, the

present article aims to contribute to the diversification of this field of study by investigating the influence of the dynamics of intrapsychic forces and the role of the unconscious in the formation of prejudice. Therefore, key studies within the proposed theme were selected, studied, registered and analyzed and, based on this material, a critical and integrative description was elaborated of the diverse theories raised regarding the psychodynamics of prejudice.

## 2. Method

The method used for the construction of this article was the bibliographical research. For Lima and Miotto (2007), this method consists of a study of the selected documentary sources in an orderly, systematized and documented way, with clearly delimited criteria and procedures, and which aims not only to review the specialized bibliography, but to constantly search to grasp and understand the reality.

To systematize the bibliographic review, an adaptation of the tool elaborated by Conforto, Amaral, and Silva (2011) was carried out for the purposes of this article. Therefore, the first step was to list, by means of preliminary studies, some Primary Sources, basically consisting of classical or broadly conceptualized studies on the subject of prejudice, with the objective of a first approximation with the object and the consolidation of a consistent theoretical base for future bibliographic analyses.

The second step was to carry out a bibliographic survey of Secondary Sources, that is, scientific articles, book chapters, dissertations and theses that related our object of study (the prejudice) to the theory chosen for its analysis (psychoanalysis). This survey consisted of three stages.

In the first one, a broad search was performed in previously selected databases (BVS-Psi, Scielo, PsycNet, and PubMed), using the following keywords: “prejudice and psychoanalysis”, “prejudice and Freud”, “prejudice and Klein”, “prejudice and Winnicott”, and “prejudice and Lacan”. As some of the databases surveyed were international, the keywords were also used in their English and Spanish correspondents. In the second stage, preliminary analyses were carried out with the intention of filtering the documents that are relevant to the present study. These analyses consisted of three filters: 1. reading of the title, the abstract and the keywords; 2. reading the introduction, the conclusion and, in the case of theses and

dissertations, the specific chapter on the subject of prejudice; 3. complete reading of the remaining material.

The exclusion criteria were, in order of importance: 1. the study did not objectively address the subject of prejudice; 2. it did not use psychoanalysis as an analytic theory; and 3. study the subject of prejudice rather than the prejudiced individual. In addition, references that did not provide summaries or were not written in English, Portuguese or Spanish were discarded in the first filter, while studies without an online version or which did not exist in local libraries or bookstores were excluded in the second filter.

In the third stage, important articles referenced in the works selected in the previous phase of the bibliographic survey were identified. Again, the three filters mentioned above were applied to the selection of the relevant works. In this stage, all the texts of the classical psychoanalytical authors referenced were also surveyed for the sake of a theoretical review before the actual bibliographic analysis. With a view to greater methodological rigor, the entire bibliographic selection process, from the search results in the databases to the filtering of the referenced articles, was documented and can be consulted in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Bibliographic survey table.

Database	Search date	Studies Found	Studies Excluded			Selected Studies
			Filter 1	Filter 2	Filter 3	
BVS-Psi	08/17/2017	39	16	17	5	1
Scielo	08/17/2017	18	10	4	1	3
PubMed	08/17/2017	95	88	3	3	1
PsycNet	08/17/2017	365	345	7	8	5
References	09/12/2017	19	8	4	0	7
	Total	536	467	35	17	17

After completing the selection stages of the bibliography, the selected studies were categorized in themes according to their theoretical or empirical proximity to the proposed study object. The purpose of this step is to enable both intra and inter-category comparison. In order to guide and systematize the whole analysis process, a reading and registration script was also developed, in accordance with Lima and Mito (2007), for the sake of greater methodological rigor in the comparison of the collected data. Thus, identification data (title, author, year, type), characteristics (objective, concepts used, context), and contributions to research (descriptions, reflections, insights) were documented. The categorization and qualification of the data obtained are shown in Table 2.



Table 2.2. Data qualification table.

Source	Authors	Year	Type	Main Concept	Main underlying theories	Category	Context
BVS-Psi	Vital, M.	2012	Thesis	False Projection	Freud / Horkheimer and Adorno	Differentiation	Social
PSYCNET	Mclean, H. V.	1944	Article	Scapegoat	Freud	Ingroup identification	Theoretical
PSYCNET	Parens, H.	2007a	Article	Hostile destructivity	Freud / Winnicott	Oedipal anxieties	Clinical
PSYCNET	Aviram, R.	2007	Article	Identification	Freud / Klein	Ingroup identification	Theoretical
PSYCNET	Hinshelwood, R. D.	2007	Article	Negative narcissism	Freud	Ingroup identification	Clinical
PSYCNET	Steiner, J.	2016	Article	Narcissistic structure	Freud	Oedipal anxieties	Clinical
PUBMED	Money-Kyrle, R.	1960	Article	Unconscious envy	Freud	Oedipal anxieties	Clinical
References	Bird, B.	1957	Article	Unconscious envy	Freud	Oedipal anxieties	Clinical
References	Fonagy, P.; Higgitt, A.	2007	Chapter	Introjection	Freud / Winnicott	Libidinal connection	Theoretical
References	Parens, H.	2007b	Chapter	Hostile destructivity	Freud / Winnicott	Oedipal anxieties	Clinical
References	Scharff, D.; Scharff, J.	2007	Chapter	Stranger anxiety	Freud / Winnicott	Libidinal connection	Clinical
References	WIRTH, H.	2007	Chapter	Stranger anxiety	Freud / Klein	Oedipal anxieties	Social
References	Young-Bruehl, E.	2007	Chapter	Neurotic structure	Freud	Oedipal anxieties	Theoretical
References	Parens, H.	2007c	Chapter	Hostile destructivity	Freud / Winnicott	Oedipal anxieties	Clinical
SCIELO	Bloom, J.	2008	Article	Neurotic structure	Freud	Oedipal anxieties	Social
SCIELO	Souza, M.; Birman J.	2014	Article	False Projection	Freud / Horkheimer and Adorno	Differentiation	Social
SCIELO	Villac, D.	2016	Article	False Projection	Freud / Horkheimer and Adorno	Differentiation	Social

Finally, each work was studied and registered, and the collected data were analyzed in order to understand all the nuances of the arguments proposed in each article and their relationship with the theoretical formulations of the other authors. The results will be presented in a critical and integrative way, aiming for the clear and concise description of the theories on the psychodynamics of prejudice, from its genesis to its function, as present in the texts selected for this research.

### 3. Results

According to the proposed method, in total, 536 works were found that met the criteria proposed for the Secondary Sources. Of these, 467 were excluded in the first filter, 35 in the second filter, and 17 in the third filter. At the end, 17 works were chosen to carry out this bibliographic review. The thematic categorization divided the works studied into four clusters related to the main hypotheses of each author's theory: Oedipal anxieties, ingroup identification, failures in the process of libidinal connection and failures in the process of differentiation. Next, we will explain each of them and present each author's theory separately.

The first cluster argues that prejudice is generated in an attempt to rid the individuals of anxieties about their first libidinal objects. These anxieties would be caused by inadmissible unconscious impulses destined to the beloved objects. The authors selected for this cluster were Bird (1957), Money-Kyrle (1960), Steiner (2016), Wirth (2007), Parens (2007a, 2007b, 2007c), Young-Bruehl (2007) and Bloom (2008).

Bird (1957) argues that prejudice and its psychodynamics are a product of the Oedipus complex, beginning as an impulse of envy, originating in the Id, directed at a person libidinally invested and perceived by the individual as most favored. These impulses are of such magnitude that they are unable to maintain friendly contact with these subjects. In an attempt to maintain this contact, the superego incorporates the "anticipation of revenge" of the envied person and uses it to retaliate the envy of the individual himself through castration. The ego, now attacked by the superego, feels guilty and protects itself from this feeling by projecting envy into another person or group who is socially stigmatized. In this way, the author understands prejudice as a way for the ego to prevent the loss of desired objects that comes into action precisely when this relationship is threatened by feelings of envy.

Money-Kyrle (1960) also blames an unconscious drive of envy that the ego controls through projection. For the author, this projection works through a split of the bad aspects of the Self that are deposited in convenient targets to receive these aspects. Beyond projection, however, it is possible for the ego to use negation to control envious impulses. Through negation, the individual deforms the object of prejudice, depriving it of enviable quality, or deforms reality, denying the value of that quality. Thus, prejudice would be a misuse of the mechanisms of negation and projection, activated by a feeling of unconscious envy. In the same text, the author argues that the nature of individual prejudices is directly related to the nature of the superego and the ego ideal. It is precisely those personality aspects that are capable of generating guilt – derived from the superego – or shame – deriving from the ego ideal – which are more likely to be split off from the Self and projected onto the object.

Steiner (2016) argues that splitting and projecting unwanted aspects of the Self is the central mechanism of prejudice. Narcissism is the main responsible for this type of attitude, though, and finds its origins in early Oedipal anxieties. When the idealized mother-baby couple is invaded by a third element, the individual feels despised and withdrawn from his/her place that, until then, was unique. This movement can generate feelings of humiliation, requiring narcissistic defenses to protect the ego. The mechanism used is the projection of these vulnerable aspects of the Self into an object to be humiliated in its place. Thus, the function of this kind of narcissistic organization is to protect the Self from Oedipal anxieties by finding an external target to project and to free itself from the vulnerability felt by its annihilation in the object encountered.

According to the same author, the convenient objects to allocate this projection are precisely the objects the narcissistic organization perceives as different. In 1918, Freud recognized this ability by theorizing the narcissism of small differences, in which “it is precisely the minor differences in people who are otherwise alike that form the basis of feelings of strangeness and hostility between them” (Freud, 1918, p.? as quoted in Steiner, 2016, p.290). As the projected elements are hated by the Self, their targets also become hated, entailing the need to exclude, humiliate and even annihilate them to maintain egoic security. This security is achieved through the ability to sustain, after projection, an idealized identity, free from failures that are not part of the individual anymore.

According to Wirth (2007), prejudice is based on neurotic structures threatened by anxiety that can arise from the fear of both, losing the object and being punished by it. The first fear develops from separation anxiety, which generates in the individual fear of disapproval of the libidinal object. Thus, engaging with strangers or unknown individuals is understood as potentially disapproving for their caregivers, resulting in the behavior of avoiding what is different. The second, on the contrary, develops from the fear of being destroyed by the libidinal object, and in the attempt to protect oneself, resulting in mistrust, narcissistic rage, self-destructive tendencies, and aggressive differentiation of the external world. These two types of anxiety share a single mechanism, the cleavage of good and bad aspects of the Self, and the externalization of these split aspects into outer objects.

Two types of externalization are possible: projection and projective identification. In projection, the rejected parts of the Self are first suppressed and then projected into the stranger. Thus, these impulses are perceived as coming from the target of the projection and are then avoided. This is the case of the anxiety of losing the object. In projective identification, undesirable impulses are repressed only partially in the individual, and because they remain in consciousness, their projection only brings about partial relief of anxiety. Hence, the person develops a constant need to control the target or even extinguish it in an attempt to also extinguish his/her own impulses, as in the case of the fear of being punished by the object.

Parens (2007a, 2007b, 2007c) argues that there are two types of prejudice: benign and malignant prejudice. The former would be a byproduct of natural development and the development processes of object relations. The main point is that all individuals tend to favor the groups they belong to, to the detriment of others, because of the identifications established in individual development and the anxieties towards strangers. The second, despite resting on the same development processes, is impregnated by hatred.

According to the author, this hatred is added in this equation through excessive traumas during the maturation process. These traumas generate a feeling of hostile destructiveness (HD) and create an intense ambiguity in the individual. This hostile destructiveness is not innate, nor does it arise spontaneously, but it is generated through a very specific condition: an experience of traumatic displeasure. Traumatic experiences can happen throughout life but, for the author, the

intense emotional pains caused by the first libidinal objects are the main responsible for the development of large amounts of destructive aggressiveness.

As the traumas caused by the Self's first objects of love provoke ambivalence, the individual needs to raise defense mechanisms to be able to get rid of the great amount of hostile destructiveness that presses for discharge and, at the same time, he/she needs to protect his/her libidinal objects. This latter mechanism is what results in the development of prejudice. With the help of the defenses of displacement, inhibition, split, projection, rationalization and denial at an earlier time, or reductionism, caricature, depreciation and vilification after the latency phase, large amounts of hostile destructiveness will be transposed into groups of individuals recognized as different by the process of identity formation.

Young-Bruehl (2007) and Bloom (2008) are critical towards the attempt to map the same root for different types of prejudice. For the authors, each discriminated group has its own irreducible specificity and its unique victim status. Thus, they argue that each type of prejudice is related to a different kind of neurotic personality structure and that the different psychic needs and the defense mechanisms erected to supplant them grant the prejudiced his/her specific target. While recognizing that these distinct structures may blend in various ways, the author argues that most people have a major prejudice that respects the pattern of their personality structure.

In this context, there are three ideal types of preconceived structures: hysterical, obsessive, and narcissistic (Young-Bruehl, 2007). The first is recognized by the way it uses the split or dissociation into opposing Selves, one good and one evil. The evil Self is then perceived as inferior, primitive, while the good is idealized as the norm. The repressed desires of the Self do not find their way through the symptom of their own body but, instead, prejudiced hysterics create their symptoms in the bodies of others, recognizing their inferiority through the projection of the mostly sexual desires that were repressed in the split. In this way, their victims are seen (or imagined) as possessing an archaic, primitive, grotesque sexual power. A personification of the repressed impulses of the Id. The kind of prejudice associated with this neurotic structure is racism.

The second structure is the obsessive one, characterized by rigid, moralistic and rationalist conventionality. Because it is the offspring of a very severe or very defective superego, this structure is notably paranoid against all other identity

groups to which it does not belong, because it projects its superegoic anguish into these objects. The types of prejudice related to this structure are anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

Finally, the third structure described is narcissism, associated with phallogocentric men who do not tolerate the idea that there are bodies or persons different from themselves. These prejudiced are unable to understand the difference, and transform everything that is not “me” into “mystery” or “nothing”. The prejudices targeted by this structure are sexism and homophobia.

The second thematic cluster believes that the core prejudice lies in the internalization of group ego ideals that are prejudiced by identifying the individual with the groups to which he/she belongs. In this way, aggressiveness directed at the different would be an attempt to identify with the equals. Its representative authors are McLean (1944), Hinshelwood (2007) and Aviram (2007).

McLean (1944) believes that prejudice is primarily an unconscious process of identification with the attitudes present in the group the individual is a part of in the early years of life, i.e. the family. By wanting to assert his/her belonging to the group, the individual tends to follow the same ego ideal of the group, and if this ego ideal contains prejudiced attitudes, the individual will tend to incorporate those attitudes. But even if prejudice is embodied by the ego ideal, it will only turn into action if the subject somehow feels insecure towards his own ego ideal. Feelings of inferiority or anxiety, when not supported by the ego, tend to be shifted to a scapegoat who will then be treated with discrimination. The dislocation process of this anguish allows both individual and group self-esteem to remain intact in view of anguish and anxieties.

According to Hinshelwood (2007), the superego and ego ideal are fundamental to prejudice. His theory postulates that prejudices are socially determined by biased values, such as white supremacy for example. Only individuals with a very hostile superego, full of aggressive instincts, derived from the death drive, use these values in discriminating behaviors. For the author, this superego is formed by a split of negative aspects of the ego and it generates a pathology called negative narcissism, in which the good object is hated even when it tries to satisfy the needs of the Self. Consequently, he/she also hates the parts of the Self that cherish the assertion of the life drive and an enriching relation with the good object. The hypothesis of this author suggests that this structure serves as a “link” that couples

the prejudiced and intolerant attitudes present in society through the ego ideal, that is, internalized social values arising from the object relations of the individual.

Aviram (2007) is a critic of the academic literature who treats prejudice only in its individual aspect and does not look at the group phenomenon. Consequently, he joins psychoanalytic aspects with the theory of social categorization (Allport, 1979), which consists of individuals' natural bias to prefer their ingroups and discriminate against their outgroups. For the author, the primordial ingroup is the family and, therefore, identification with these objects happens in early childhood. Thus, the individual-caregiver relationship becomes the experience of the Self. If this first identification fails to respond to the dependency of the individual, the identification can be directed to ingroups beyond the family and the acceptance of these groups becomes the experience of the Self. As the Self identified with the ingroup wants to be accepted and loved by its members (the internalized good objects), it needs to reject its negative aspects in order to gain a sense of security. Hence, the bad objects are projected into the outgroups, which facilitates their differentiation with the Self, generating gains in self-esteem regarding the justification of aggressiveness targeted at them.

The third thematic cluster believes that failures concerning care in the first libidinal relationships cause disorganization of the Self that needs to erect defenses with a view to their integration. It is represented by the authors Scharff and Scharff (2007), and Fonagy and Higgit (2007).

Scharff and Scharff (2007) believe that prejudices have affective, cognitive and cultural roots and operate at both individual and social levels. But the main point of his whole argument is that the family is the link that connects all these roots to the individual. By becoming parents, spouses tend to fantasize, idealize, and project on the child a mixture of ego ideals and family fears, burdens, and traumas. Thus, already in the first days of life, the baby is under the full influence of the conscious and unconscious activities of the family dynamics. When these dynamics are ruled by insecure libidinal connections, intrigues, and traumas, these issues tend to be transmitted to children and predispose them to the development of prejudice because, as they do not have a good relationship with their relatives, the anxiety towards strangers is felt as terrifying, because it attacks the cohesion of the Self, and therefore facilitates the use of the mechanisms of displacement, projection, and projective identification for the sake of defense against this danger.

Fonagy and Higgitt (2007) propose that the basis of the prejudice is caused by disorganization in the processes of libidinal connection and identification with the first objects. When caregivers fail to mirror the baby's Self, the baby identifies and introjects the caregiver's Self, which becomes an intrusive aspect within his own Self. This aspect creates a notion of incoherence in the true Self, which, in order to attain cohesion, needs to get rid of the former by using projective identification. It is very important to the individual that the target of this projection is close, because the Self needs to prove that the projection was effective, through the perception of responses of humiliation and shame, in order to be able to feel superior and integrate again. At some point, only the humiliation of the target will no longer be able to maintain the cohesion of the projecting Self, and it will seek satisfaction in the fantasy of eliminating the projected aspects.

Finally, the last thematic cluster considers that defects in the mechanisms of identification and projection, founders of the differentiation between individual and world, distort the material reality by confusing it with the psychic reality. These are the Frankfurtians, represented by Villac Oliva (2016), Vital (2012) and Souza and Birman (2014).

Villac Oliva (2016), articulating between critical theory and psychoanalysis, argues that the founding defense mechanisms of prejudice are identification and projection. These two mechanisms are closely linked with the formation of the personality and the individual's designation of meaning to the world. By retaining parts of objects and then returning them to the external world, the subject constitutes his/her inner world and achieves differentiation. For the author, if this mechanism fails and there is a perversion of the original projection, the individual falls into the false-projection, whose main characteristic is a "paranoid lack of reflection on the part of those who practice it" (Souza & Birman, p.255, our translation). This specific type of projection creates a distortion of reality, using the external transposition of impulses inherent to the Id of the individual, which are inadmissible or unbearable to the superego. These impulses cannot be tolerated because they threaten the integrity of the subject by arousing guilt, a feeling of inadequacy between impulses and the ego ideal.

Vital (2012), and Souza and Birman (2014), deepening this discussion with the articulation of Freud's "The Inquietant", argue that this concept refers to an experience that at the same time attracts and seduces, shocks, terrifies and causes



repulsion. Freud (1919/1976c, p.220, as quoted in Souza & Birman, 2014, p.256, our translation) explains this sensation as “that terrifying variety that goes back to the long known, to the very familiar”. In this way, the disquieting causes the sensation of anguish and helplessness because it refers precisely to a very familiar stranger, the unconscious itself. Now repressed, the unconscious contents are recognized in the objects and cause the experience of the unsettling. To conclude the approach of the two theories, the authors postulate that, in recognizing the return of repressed impulses based on the unsettling experience, the ego, which cannot accept these impulses as inherent to itself by superegoic influence, projects them to the exterior by deforming the reality in the false-projection.

#### 4. Discussion

Based on the research, description, and analysis carried out thus far, mainly in the descriptive, comparative and integrative analyses exposed in the last points, we observe that the theoretical line that the selected authors follow most is the Freudian psychoanalysis. Certain Kleinian and Winnicottian influences are observed in certain formulations (such as the use of projective identification or the emphasis on the individual's environment, for example), or even the coupling of psychoanalysis with Horkheimer and Adorno's critical theory; fundamentally, however, the authors instrumentalize propositions and concepts in Freud's writings to formulate their theories.

As for the analysis of the theories themselves, we can conclude that the authors understand that prejudice is the result of a mechanism that seeks to preserve the integrity of the Self in the face of the threat of its disintegration. The main point of confluence among all the theories studied is that the function of the phenomenon in question is to protect the individual from a possible disruption of his identity. With regard to the genesis of prejudice and its mechanisms of action, however, there are theoretical disagreements. The dissonant arguments were presented in the four clusters resulting from the thematic categorization: Oedipal anxieties, identification with ingroups, failures in the libidinal connection processes and failures in the process of differentiation.

If we try, based on the theories surveyed, to explain the link between the four clusters described, we will present a theory of prejudice as a failure of integration between the identification processes of childhood, that is, the first object connections of individuals, and their impulses. The central point is the fact that these

impulses would cause ambivalence, that is, conflicting feelings of love and hatred for the first libidinal objects. These feelings cause severe anxiety in the individual, who fears that hating the object would also mean their destruction, or, less intensely, the loss of a good relationship between the two parties. After a superegoic structuring, these impulses also cause a feeling of guilt, because the superego considers them inadmissible and castrates the individual for feeling them.

To get rid of anxiety and guilt, the subject puts into action defense mechanisms that aim to eliminate ambivalence, either by displacing the ultimate hatred for an object with which the individual has no libidinal connection, or by the first conflicting impulses and their projection into other individuals. These defense mechanisms, then, distort reality by externalizing the contents and conflicts that are internal and thus materialize targets that are essentially psychic. The authors also agree that the receptacles of these contents are always subjects perceived as, in some way, inferior to the individual and his objects. Some authors argue, in line with the Social Dominance Theory, that these receptacles are already socially placed through cultural stigmata and are introjected into the individuals' ego ideal, but it is Steiner (2016) who best explains their process of choice. For this author, the defenses raised are guided by a narcissistic structure, which, as it seeks to protect the Self, needs to find something other than itself and its identifications to allocate its contents. As, for Narcissus, the only beauty lies in the mirror, all persons who are recognized as different (and therefore belonging to outgroups) are objects susceptible to prejudice.

There are two questions, however, which this generalist theory has not covered yet: "Why are there several gradations in how bias is exposed"; and "Why are there different objects that are used as targets for prejudice?". For the first, Parens' theory (2007a, 2007b, 2007c) on the accumulation of hostile destructiveness seems to be more appropriate. After all, the power of the aggressive discharge can only be related to the amount of hatred in the individual that presses for this discharge, which is defined by the intensity of the traumas that person suffered. For the second, it was Young-Bruehl (2007) who provided the explanation, that the targets chosen to allocate the contents the individual did not admit respect the nature of these contents and the structuring of their personality. Each individual, depending on his/her neurotic structure, has specific contents that are perceived as causing conflict. In this way, these specificities in the contents find points of con-

tact with certain culturally produced characteristics or stigmas (Crochik, 1996) and generate the different targets of the prejudices.

We can conclude, therefore, that Crandall and Eshleman (2003) are right to diagnose prejudice as affection with motivations of expression. This affection, in short, is the result of a complex mechanism of protection of the integrity of the Self. In its genesis, however, this mechanism is not intended for purposes of segregation or discrimination. All it wants is to protect the individual from the destruction of his identity. The point is that this protection invariably leads to the attack of others whom the narcissistic structure needs to understand as different, that is, not belonging to the fundamental, internalized and libidinally invested in-group: the family. These different persons then become threatening; after all, after the prejudiced's defense mechanisms act, their own existence refers them to what they so much want to deny and even eliminate. It is here that discrimination and discourses of hatred take shape.

Although this article helps to understand the phenomenon of prejudice through an integrative review of various psychoanalytic formulations concerning the genesis and intrapsychic function of prejudice, we understand that the only theoretical quality of the method used is a limitation of the study. Future research needs to examine the practical applicability of this theory, mainly using methodological designs that permit observing the importance of the identification mechanisms towards the development of the Self, the role of ambivalence as misleading of the narcissistic cohesion of the Self and the relation between the different types of psychic structuring, defense mechanisms and social targets of prejudice.

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