

Psychology, Neo-Sociopsychology, and Paths to a Better, Less Prejudiced Society

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When it comes to psychology in general, I am a fan. I have a degree in it. At its best, psychology is an honest attempt to help people identify, ameliorate and possibly eliminate the causes of self-defeating and counterproductive thinking and behavior. It works for individuals and groups and organizations with an eye towards providing tools and techniques to mitigate negative outcomes.

There are many definitions of psychology and there are multiple versions of psychology. General psychology is illuminating. Clinical psychology is helpful. Organizational Psychology is productive. Social Psychology is useful... and then there's Activist Social Psychology. Now, that as they say in *The Land of Oz*, is a horse of a different color.

Gordon Allport's classic definition of social psychology is - "the scientific attempt to understand and explain how the thought, feeling, and behavior of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others (Allport 1954). By and large, social psychology passes the "at least do no harm" test.

According to earlier editions of the book **Principles of Psychology**, cited below –

Social psychology was energized by researchers who attempted to understand how the German dictator Adolf Hitler could have produced such extreme obedience and horrendous behaviors in his followers during the World War II. The studies on conformity conducted by Muzafir Sherif (1936) and Solomon Asch (1952), as well as those on obedience by Stanley Milgram (1974), showed the importance of conformity pressures in social groups and how people in authority could create obedience, even to the extent of leading people to cause severe harm to others. Philip Zimbardo, in his well-known "prison study" (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973), found that the interactions of male college students who were recruited to play the roles of guards and prisoners in a simulated prison became so violent that the study had to be terminated early.

At that point in time, social psychology was not only energized, but also fixated on, the phenomenon of fascism; so much so that part of the research also involved the creation of the "F-Scale" whose intention it was to measure the propensity of individuals towards fascism.

According to Wikipedia –

"The California F-scale is a 1947 personality test, designed by Theodor W. Adorno and others to measure the "authoritarian personality".

The "F" stands for "fascist". Wikipedia The scale is still clinically used to measure prejudice and attitudes about power and authority. Virtually all mentions and associations with

the F-Scale focus on the fascist Right. Rarely, if ever, is there mention of the fascism of the Left, which would naturally include the socialist dictatorships responsible for the deaths of hundreds of millions of people throughout the 20th Century.

In any event, the social psychologists of the first era concerned themselves with understanding how people could be so “easily” controlled to harm other people. No prescriptive activist solutions were offered or insisted upon other than education through communication.

The rise of the Neo-sociopsychology Movement

On the hand, the activist neo-sociopsychological Movement which has succeeded traditional social psychology appears to be less interested in understanding and explaining and more interested in the architecting, manipulating, re-engineering society as a whole on the basis of the truth as the movement perceives the truth.

Neo-sociopsychology is the only form of psychology that proposes to introduce inducements where possible, and penalties as necessary, for compliance to its theories and aims. The avowed intention of activist sociopsychology is to transform society into the image approved and envisaged by the proponents themselves.

In their book, **Principles of Social Psychology – 1st International H5P Edition (2022)**, authors Stangor, Jhangiani and Tarry provide four intended takeaways:

- *Changing our stereotypes and prejudices is not easy and attempting to suppress them may backfire. However, with appropriate effort, we can reduce our tendency to rely on our stereotypes and prejudices.*
- *One approach to changing stereotypes and prejudice is by changing social norms — for instance, through education and laws enforcing equality.*
- *Prejudice will change faster when it is confronted by people who see it occurring. Confronting prejudice may be embarrassing, but it also can make us feel that we have done the right thing.*
- *Intergroup attitudes will be improved when we can lead people to focus more on their connections with others. Intergroup contact, extended contact with others who share friends with outgroup members, and a common ingroup identity are all examples of this process.*

One fundamental tenet of clinical psychology is that ethical psychologists treat people who come to them for help and who make that conscious choice. Social Psychologists study social relationships and communicate that understanding to people who choose to learn it.

Proposing to “treat” an entire society to “change our stereotypes and prejudices” and “lead people to focus more on their connections with others,” as noted above, without the knowledge and consent of those being thus changed by a self-selected cadre of those who “know better” is problematic at best. Enlisting the aid of government to do so is even more problematic, if not skirting at the edges of authoritarianism.

The Case for “Physicians” To Heal Themselves First

The idea of improving society through laws and education is not new, never needed to be inspired nor influenced by social psychology and has had some effect over time... but such efforts have also elicited the opposite of intended outcomes with some regularity. Neo-sociopsychology is not only activist, but also political, and politically prejudiced at that. It’s hard to see how politically prejudiced people can be intellectually honest enough to be counted upon by the rest of us to “fix” the prejudices of an entire society.

Those prejudices are specific, and in the public arena through the work of Elliot Aronson, the “big kahuna” of the Neo-sociopsychological movement and others. In Aronson’s examples of the prejudiced, he specifically and repeatedly cites The Right, Conservatives, Republicans and certain types of Christians. Adding a note of unintended irony in the context of his most recent book (**Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me) Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts**, Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson, Mariner Books; 4th Reprint edition, August 4, 2020) –

“Implicit in all this is my belief that social psychology is extremely important—that social psychologists can play a vital role in making the world a better place. Indeed, in my more grandiose moments, I nurse the secret belief that social psychologists are in a unique position to have a profound and beneficial impact on our lives by providing an increased understanding of such important phenomena as conformity, persuasion, prejudice, love, and aggression.”

Other and more recent overt examples of political prejudice on the part of Neo-sociopsychologists can be found in the public forum such as the 2020 blog post in Psychology Today:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/bias-fundamentals/202010/dissonance-and-political-hypocrisy> which repeatedly denigrates Republicans to make its point about political cognitive dissonance.

The only example of Democrat problems with dissonance mentioned is in the blog is -

“Interestingly, some Democrats are feeling dissonance over feeling empathy or compassion for Trump after he got sick because they are constantly outraged by Trump’s other behaviors (Logan, 2020).”

It should be obvious to anyone, especially reasonable psychologists of any stripe, that substituting one hate-worthy population with another is not a solution but a perpetuation of prejudice. You don’t say to a child: “Don’t destroy that. Here, destroy this instead” and end up with a psychologically healthy child

The 500-year history of Racial Relations Events and Dynamics in America

Back to the proposition that government should support and implement the Neo-sociopsychological model on the whole of American society. Externally imposed solutions to social problems, and in particular, to problems relating to black slavery, prejudice and racism have not fared well historically. As a single, personal example of this historical perspective, I have reviewed a total of more than 1,500 racial relations events going back to 1494 in the New World. Why 1494? Because that is the year in which European racial prejudice, slavery, and injustice were introduced to the Americas by none other than Christopher Columbus, the Spaniards, and the Portuguese.

Within less than 20 years of that date, the first recorded activism against the evils of European slavery began. According to www.blackpast.org, in an effort to create a better society by communication and by legislation, Bartolomeo de las Casas, then bishop (in what is now Haiti) petitioned the king of Spain to end the abomination of slavery. Bishop Bartolomeo initially had asked the king to cause black slaves to be sent to Hispaniola to replace the previously enslaved (and subsequently freed) native Indian population but had a change of heart and conscience. He spent the rest of his life advocating for the end of black slavery in every forum available to him.

An analysis of the patterns of racial relations events in America makes it possible to discern the changing relationship of four key dynamics: Legislation, Litigation, Violence, and Individual Initiative.

By way of minimal definition:

- Legislation – Monarchical mandates and governmental Legislation
- Litigation – Lawsuits in support of prejudice and lawsuits in opposition
- Violence – White on Black Violence and Black on White Violence
- Individual Initiative – Personal acts of achievement which individually and in their totality have made, and are making, a positive difference in prejudice and race relations. These range from personal achievements by minorities in conventional situations to individual “brave” acts of majority population members on behalf of minority advancement.

The analysis divides the relevant history into significant meaningful eras:

- The Colonial Era to American Independence (1494-1775)
- Revolution through Civil War (1776-1865)
- Reconstruction to World War II (1866-1941)
- World War II to the Rise of the Civil Rights Movement (1942-1960)
- The Civil Rights Movement Matures (1961-1990)
- The Rise of Black Power in Politics (1991-2010)
- The Ascendancy of Violent Public Demonstrations (2011-2021)

The Relative Impact of the Dynamics of Change in Prejudice Over Time

The fundamental dynamics of historical prejudice appear to interplay as follows

- The passing of legislation (either positive or negative) generates the countervailing pushback of legislation. Progress is made but not without unintended consequences. When one or another aggrieved segment of society decides that neither legislation nor litigation work well enough or fast enough, the tendency has historically been to resort to violence.
- History teaches that violence invariably breeds counterviolence. Gandhi and Mandela understood those lessons and made more positive progress by other, more productive, means in their common quest for a better society; nonviolence against the “perpetrators” being the main engine of each initiative for justice against unspeakably violent suppression.
- In the history of progress against prejudice, White on Black, Black on White, and destructive urban violence that typically includes a wide swath of collateral damage to a lot of innocent people on both sides have played their unlaudable parts. Sadly, the analysis of racial relations events shows that there has been a marked increase in violence as a solution over the past 30 years.
- The only continually bright light and inexorably advancing dynamic in this social change scenario has been through individual initiative.

The changes achieved through individual initiative have not only been consistent in their advancement of equality but also, they are largely consistent with the publicly stated program of Neo-sociopsychology... and they do that without relying on communications for effect nor on laws and law enforcement.

Individual initiatives change stereotypes and prejudices and render them irrelevant. They change social norms at the personal rather than at the impersonal governmental level. Their success confronts prejudice in the most powerful way imaginable – by example. And, most importantly, they create connections with “the others” in the context of regular, up-close and personal contact that frequently leads to friendships which in turn “forget” the differences and accentuate the commonalities. The power of individual initiative is that it avoids the pitfalls of the ancient Chinese proverb that *“a man convinced against his will remains unconvinced.”* Change that is forged in the crucible of individual initiative “sticks.” It also triggers ever-expanding ripples of acceptance, mutual respect, and prejudice-blindness.

Formulaic Big Government Programs Are Not The Solution They Want To Be

Why? Because such solutions routinely oversimplify the problems they aim to address as a result of a lack of comprehensive understanding of the issues. Legislation that builds a solution on that imperfect and incomplete foundation consequently creates densely complex solutions to solve those over-simplified problems. Neo-sociopsychologists are not much help here because they have abetted the prejudicial oversimplification of the problem of prejudice in society.

In defense of simplification of so critical an issue as social prejudice, Elliot Aronson writes -

“Nothing is safer than to state all sides of all issues, but few things are more boring. Although I have discussed controversial issues, I have not hesitated to draw conclusions. In short, I have attempted to be brief without being unfair, and I have tried to present complex material simply and clearly without oversimplifying.” Aronson, Elliot. *The Social Animal* (p. ix). Worth Publishers. Kindle Edition.

Unfortunately, the oversimplification logic here looks to be:

- We liberals are good. We don't need any fixing. and we know better what's good for everybody.
- We Social Psychologists are the best of the best and we know how to fix everybody.
- Those conservatives, Republicans, and certain Christians are bad.
- They are the ones who need fixing, and they are unwilling to fix themselves.
- Therefore, it is up to us Social Scientists to come up with a plan to fix the unfixed and get the government to enforce our plan.

Somewhere in this argument there is also the unfortunate presumption that historically disadvantaged minorities are inherently incapable of fixing either themselves or society as a whole. All of this is expressed with the utterly confident self-assurance of those who know best, no matter what the facts or the whole story might be.

It's the Lessons You Don't Learn and What You Don't Know That Matter Most

Between the inability to see much less articulate their own prejudices (to allay their own cognitive dissonance?) and the disinterest in getting to know the whole story it is difficult to see how the new Neo-Sociopsychology Plan can substantively differ or succeed where other comparable plans have failed.

To be fair, Aronson et al do “get it” when it comes to acknowledging that some programmatic solutions just don't work. Social psychology has several times confirmed, for example, that forcing people to sit and talk together about prejudice is not only unlikely to solve the problem but also to make it worse. The famous, though problematic, Robbers Cave Experiment (**The Robbers Cave Experiment: Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation**, by Muzafer Sherif, O.J. Harvey, B. Jack White, Wesleyan University Press, 1988) did tease out two dynamics that are still relevant in the conversation about prejudice.

The first was the finding that forcing opposing and mutually prejudiced groups to be together and to talk together about their differences more often results in reinforcing the differences and the antagonisms rather than ameliorating or eliminating them. A finding which Neo-sociopsychologists seem to have overlooked or minimized in their championing of precisely that technique in their great plan for improving society.

The other relevant finding was that what did seem to meaningfully lessen prejudice, and increase mutual respect, although apparently only situationally, was getting diverse groups to work on solving a common problem together. It was also recognized that the problem had to constitute a substantial threat to both groups, especially their collective safety or existence. The conclusion was that only a ‘real world’ peril would be enough to engage all concerned. Then there's the problem of continually coming up with problems that meet the required criteria.

To be fair, the experiment was criticized as much as it was celebrated, and the criticisms eventually caused the Robbers Cave experience findings to be abandoned by their authors. One positive outcome was that Elliott Aronson picked up on enough of this event to eventually mold his own variant (which he claimed was “invented” by himself and his students) – that he called The Jigsaw Technique. This teaching technique continues to be used by some educational institutions under some circumstances and it is seen as a teaching function.

It is partly the intention of the balance of this article to show how in not following through on the potential learning above, and in remaining incognizant (intentionally or not) of, among other things, the relevant information to follow leaves Neo-sociopsychologists susceptible to criticisms of technique, intention, and authority.

Not Everybody Will Always Understand You and Agree – It’s Not Because They’re Wrong

Let’s start with something some psychologists might consider “common sense” - mandatory diversity and sensitivity training, particularly in the areas of prejudice and race. It stands to reason that getting people to sit together and talk about common issues should be a good way to make things better for everybody. As we have seen above in the first finding of the Robbers Cave Experiment, that approach has proven as likely to make things worse as it was to making things better. There are more recent examples that agree.

In more recent times there has been a virtual explosion in diversity and sensitivity training course, suppliers and programs. Have things gotten better as a result? There is at least one author who makes a case that it not only has not made things better but also it has on too many occasions made it worse.

Borrowing from the Amazon “blurbs” about author Pamela Newkirk’s latest book (**Diversity, Inc. – The Fight for Racial Equality in the Workplace** – October 20, 2020 Bold Type Books) –

“Diversity has become the new buzzword, championed by elite institutions from academia to Hollywood to corporate America. In an effort to ensure their organizations represent the racial and ethnic makeup of the country, industry and foundation leaders have pledged hundreds of millions of dollars to commission studies, launch training sessions, and hire consultants and diversity czars. But is it working?”

In Diversity, Inc., award-winning journalist Pamela Newkirk shines a bright light on the diversity industry, asking the tough questions about what has been effective—and why progress has been so slow. Newkirk highlights the rare success stories, sharing valuable lessons about how other industries can match those gains. But as she argues, despite decades of handwringing, costly initiatives, and uncomfortable conversations, organizations have, apart from a few exceptions, fallen far short of their goals.”

Glass Houses and Stone Throwing

Let's turn to the matter of Aronson's disinterest in considering the broad context of an issue is "boring." It somehow feels that considering relevant context "boring" is an exercise in prejudice; at the very least, prejudice in its original, literal sense – making decisions without the benefit of full and comprehensive consideration.

By his own admission, Aronson (in **The Social Animal**) admitted to the huge impact that ignorance of the complete context of a situation can invalidate psychological experiments, metrics, and results –

"I was unaware of the possible weakness in the Janis and Field experiment until it was called to my attention, gently but firmly by one of my former students, who pointed out that it was weighted unintentionally against women in much the same way IQ tests were once weighted against rural and ghetto residents. The topics of the persuasive arguments included civil defense, cancer research, the German World War I military leader von Hindenburg, and so on—topics the culture of the 1950s encouraged men to take an interest in while women were encouraged toward more "feminine" matters. I realized that the results may simply have meant that people are more persuasible on topics they aren't curious or knowledgeable about.

Indeed, my speculations were confirmed by a subsequent series of experiments by Frank Sistrunk and John Mc- David. In their studies, they used a variety of topics, some of typically greater interest to men and others applying more to the interests and expertise of women. Their results showed that although women were more persuasible on the masculine-oriented topics, men were more persuasible on the topics that traditionally have appealed to women. Both sexes, it seems, tend to be gullible about things they don't know or care much about... We don't even look at scientific data critically if they support our biased beliefs and stereotypes about some group.

In the next section, we will introduce some concepts about which Aronson is highly unlikely to know anything whatsoever. They are relevant to the context of understanding that can determine, or at least affect, the success or failure of any of any initiative designed to inform, motivate, and persuade people to change their view of themselves or others. The formula for social improvement laid out in Principles of Social Psychology as described above should include these and perhaps many other considerations of which Neo-sociopsychology is unaware but that can provide The Plan with authority, elevate its chances of success, and open the door to considering other, possibly better, avenues for achieving their goals.

Cultureography – an innovative dimension of American diversity

As a marketing and social research consultant and veteran of Yankelovich Research, I developed a systemic model for dimensionalizing the decisional ecosystems of individuals and groups. TiMM™ (The index of what matters Most) is a quantitative and qualitative methodology involving a 20-30- minute survey instrument that uses intensity metrics to quantify the micro-values systems, lexicons, and change vectors that make up the holistic context that defines how people decide what they decide and why they value what they value. The methodology measures not merely the distribution of responses but also the intensity of responses down to the individual level on a 21-point scale. The more systemic and holistic your understanding of a target audience the more likely it is that you will be able to succeed in communications for effect against that target audience.

Having acquired data on more than 30,000 respondents to a combination of client marketing surveys using the same cultureographic methodology gave me a chance to analyze the aggregate in depth for differentiations and commonalities in decisioning and valuing. That, in turn led to the “first-cut” insights that there are three primal decisional modalities: In the US, the distribution of those segments is - Intrinsically Active (44%), Intrinsically Inactive (46%), and Intrinsically Reactive (10%). The modalities are likely to exist in other populations but equally likely to manifest as different distribution in each.

The data was rich enough to dig deeper and sub-segment the primal modalities into actionable populations.

Intrinsically Active sub-segments:

Advocates, who have an axe to grind... and are willing to use it.

Sophisticates, who have no trouble holding diametrically opposed positions.

Mechanists, who create their own reality to the benefit of themselves and others.

Conventionals, who tend to follow rules and resent non-rule-followers.

Intrinsically Inactive sub-segments:

Caretakers, who take no interest in most things and feel powerless anyway.

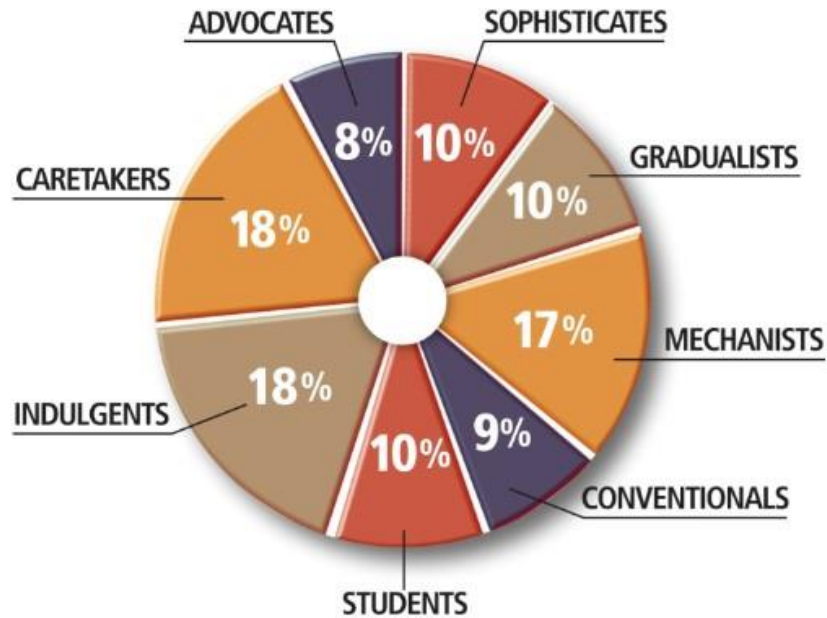
Indulgents, who devote all energy and passion to one overriding interest.

Students, who study much and act little.

Intrinsically Reactive sub-segments:

Gradualists, who only act when cognitive dissonance forces their hand.

For maximum success, each cultureographic segment should be addressed in a holistic consideration of their particular micro values systems, lexicons, and change vectors (a mathematical calculation of their openness to change.) A generic approach will generate less numerous and less enthusiastic response.



Decisional Cultureographies

Obviously, any generic communications, instructions, mandates, regulations, or legislation will be evaluated differently and acted upon differently through each of the cultureographic lenses.

A Possible Validating Connection Between Cultureography and Voter Turnout

Cultureography is one way to understand attitudinal/behavioral phenomena in the US. It appears to be reciprocally validated by such things as voter turnout in elections. General elections historically generate lower voter turnout than presidential elections. While General elections have averaged turnouts of about 50–60% through most our history, only about 40% of those eligible to vote go to the polls in midterm elections. For historical consistency, the turnout number is percentage of voting age population (VAP).

If we apply the cultureographic model distribution to the electorate, Gradualists (Cultureographic Reactives) who constitute 10% of the population would account for the typical “swing vote” percentage in those elections where specific issues precipitate behavior that would otherwise remain inactive.

Moreover, when Reactives revert to their Cultureographic Inactive modality (as in typical “off-year” elections) the total non-voter percentage rises closer to 60%; again, a number approximately correlating to 60(+) percent of VAP. This allows for a very interesting, and sobering, calculation. If half the electorate doesn’t vote, and the half that does vote gets divided 50/50, then about 25% of the population calls the shots for one party or the other. The remaining 75% either sit it out or go along.

There Is Such a Thing as Genetic Predisposition

In this section, I propose to wander over to a relevant although incessantly controversial discussion of DNA and RNA. Let me state categorically and unequivocally that I do not speak to the genetic theory of capacity or capability but to matters of inclination, disposition, and proclivity. I see the distinction paramount to its relevance to the discussion of social psychology.

There is genuine, positive, science that confirms the existence of genetic codes that predispose humans to many consequences, including attitudes that influence behavior. In likely all of these cases the ultimate expression and actualization of that genetic code depends on other factors, but that does not negate the potential influence of DNA on prejudice – for good or ill.

One can argue that the predisposition to prejudice is an encoded primal mechanism in all humans as well as most other animals. The etymology of the word prejudice is simple. To exercise a prejudice is essentially to decide about or to do something without thoughtful deliberation or methodological calculation. Neuroscience tells us is that prejudice is exercised in the amygdala of the brain. That organ and the prejudicial process exerted in its confines is the reason there are humans alive today.

Before intellectualization assigned pre-judging things a bad rap, the instinctual response was the best way of staying alive on the primordial savannah. If you took the time to deliberate about the possibility that the approaching presence might be a friend or a predator, you were unlikely to get to the end of your deliberation before its jaws crushed your skull like a ripe melon. Either you charged or you ran for your life. The intuitional response was a lifesaver; unless of course you intuit to run in the wrong direction and end up going off an unseen precipitous cliff. If we subscribe to Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection, it is only natural to conclude that those who made the intuitive break away from the nearest predator were more likely to survive to reproduce, even if some of them went over the cliff. Those who stood still, considering the possibilities while the predator drew ever nearer were not available to reproduce. In the first instance, the continual re-occurrence of survival eventually turned the epigenetically generated DNA sequences turned into consistently transferred genetic codes that favored intuitive thinking and action over delivery and sedentary approaches.

This kind of genetic transfer is never likely to occur with 100% consistency in any population. But it is possible that certain populations will carry and actualize the genetic code in a plurality and even in a majority of cases.

In 2013, on the cover of its 125th anniversary issue, National Geographic Magazine posed the question: **Why do we EXPLORE?** The answer, in part was DNA. Apparently, populations which are known for extensive explorations (Micronesian Natives, for one, come to mind; along with Spaniards, Portuguese, Dutch, English, French, Americans, and Vikings to mention notable others) possess a greater likelihood to inherit a particular variant of a gene named DRD4. The conversation which the National Geographic made popular was further expanded upon by Tom Cheshire in his 2013 book **The Explorer Gene: How Three Generations of One Family Went Higher, Deeper, and Further Than Any Before** about the Piccard family, which did exactly that.

National ethnicities are by and large consistent with homogenous DNA maps

If the logic of the Explorer Gene DNA model holds up, then it is reasonable to think in terms each country as a sort of separate and distinct gene pool. In the case of most national ethnicities the largest populations typically manifest essentially homogenous traits – physical and others. That is something that can be expected when the homogeneity of nation-defining traits is present in the largest percentage of the population.

Eighty-seven percent of the German population is genetically German. A slightly lower number (88%) of England’s population is essentially English/Welsh. Poland is 96.9% Polish. 62% of Mexico’s population is Amerindian-Spanish and 84.8% of Spain’s population is Spanish.

When it comes to genetic distribution in a country, America’s population clearly an exception.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Ancestry: 2000, issued June 2004; 2015 American Community Survey.

Rank	Ancestry Group	Population	%
1	German	46,403,053	16.7%
2	Black/African-American ¹ (non-Hispanic)	38,785,726	14.0%
3	Mexican (of any race)	34,640,287	12.5%
4	Irish	33,526,444	12.1%
5	English	24,787,018	8.9%
6	American ¹	22,746,991	8.2%
7	Italian	17,285,619	6.2%
8	Polish	9,385,766	3.4%
9	French	8,272,538	3.0%
10	Scottish	5,409,343	1.9%
11	Puerto Rican	5,174,554	1.9%
12	Norwegian	4,445,030	1.6%
13	Dutch	4,289,116	1.5%
14	Swedish	3,933,024	1.4%
15	Chinese	3,852,099	1.4%
16	Asian Indian	3,303,512	1.2%
17	Scotch-Irish	3,046,005	1.1%
18	Russian	2,843,400	1.0%
19	West Indian (non-Hispanic)	2,824,722	1.0%
20	Filipino	2,717,844	1.0%

1- Respondents who self-selected “American”

Just Because Science Hasn't Mapped a Polish Gene Doesn't Mean it Doesn't Exist

According to my personal DNA test results, 98% of my genes are essential Polish DNA, with only 2% "other." Nearly 97% of Poland's population is primarily "Polish." Given the facts of Polish history, it is unlikely that the wanderlust/explorer gene is high in the national population. But for literally thousands of years, Polish people have been described as being genetically coded for individual liberty; a notion that has been historically supported the fact that Polish kings have been elected by independence-addicted nobles since 1573. Furthermore, a single dissenting vote (the *Liberum Veto*) could undo the entire session's work of the national legislature, which proved not to be a good thing. No one may have yet identified the specific gene that drives individuality and independence, but there is much evidence of how such a gene would manifest if it did exist, and Poland could be its exemplar. Poles have fought long and hard over their 1000-year history to gain, to keep, and to regain their independence. In the late 18th Century, Poland was partitioned by the Austrians, Russians, and Prussians. It ceased to exist as a nation for nearly a century and a half before being reconstituted after WWI.

In 1804, the Haitian people rose to oust the French and attain independence. Napoleon sent an army to make sure that didn't happen. One of the elements of that army was a contingent of Polish Legionnaires who had joined the French Army in the hope that France would help restore Poland after its partition and erasure by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. Once the Poles arrived in Haiti and realized that they were about to help Napoleon crush a fight for the independence of the Haitian people, the Polish Legionnaires switched sides and played a pivotal role in Haiti's fight to become the first self-governing black republic in the New World. Their deeds are enshrined in the second Haitian Constitution. Haiti's first head of state Jean-Jacques Dessalines called Polish people "the White Negroes of Europe," which was then regarded a great honor, as it meant there is a brotherhood between Poles and Haitians.

Here again is a solid argument against the prevailing Neo-sociopsychological argument that citizens can, and should, be subliminally conscripted and induced to agree with and conform to the dictates of professionals who presume to know what is best for society but lack an adequate understanding of their own prejudices and limitations along with an adequate and respectful appreciation of their target audience. This is the case for any number of reasons we have discussed.

There Has To Be A Better Path To Equity And Inclusion

So then, is there no alternative path to a “better society” through the mandates and dictates of Neo-sociopsychology? Yes, there is such a path and admittedly Elliott Aronson took a few steps along this road. So did a number of others who perceived the value of the principle underlying Aronson’s Jigsaw Method. Obviously, Muzafer Sherif and the team that undertook the Robbers Cave Experiment deduced it and saw it work.

We have seen that, over the course of more than 500 years, the most consistently effective dynamic of race relations has proven to be Individual Initiative. The most immediate assumption is that by individual initiative is meant that someone of color who rises up to lead some movement or another and then that movement makes a difference in society, or a similar individual gets into a role that has traditionally been exclusive to race and gender majorities.

Those kinds of individual initiative that have made a difference in race relations includes the high-profile successes and achievements of notable and newsworthy individuals. But equally, or even more importantly, it also includes (and in far greater numbers and ever increasing) the members of historically disadvantaged groups ranging from Blacks, Hispanics, and Women, to Gays, Lesbians and others who simply go to work, do their job, and do it well.

These are the small-circle changes that surround anyone from such a minority who gets into a role, proves themselves as individuals, and through interpersonal relationships in their professional environment blur and often erase the prejudice divide on a day-to-day basis. These may not seem so significant or exciting, but they are better markers of real progress.

This dynamic not only provides a potential model to build upon, but it also points to what might prove to be a new, better, venue for effecting the very things that social psychologists have enumerated as necessary for the advancement of equality: changing stereotypes and prejudices, changing social norms, closer connections between diverse groups and the recognition of a common identity through common cause. We have tried fixing the prejudice problem in the legislative chamber, in the courts, in the streets. We keep trying and are succeeding at fixing the problem in the classroom and in the media. The one place we haven’t tried, with the right approach that is, is the workplace.

Concepts such as The Robbers Cave experiment, Aronson’s Jigsaw Methodology and other comparable situations, including thousands of years of military team training, have shown that diverse groups of people grow together when they work together on a real common cause of significant importance to each member of the group and to the group as a whole. For hundreds of years, the military version of this insight has turned citizens into comrades in arms, typically in as little as 16 weeks. The key words in this case are work, common, important to all, and real. What is meant by “real” in this case is that the common cause should not be about reducing prejudice but that reducing prejudice (as in the case of Aronson’s Jigsaw) be a byproduct of the working together better and of the meaningful outcome of that work.

Maybe it's time to rethink the venue of choice for social transformation

I believe that we can make the most progress towards equality, inclusion, and bi-directional respect when we create situations where diversity is measurably productive; when we can repeatedly and regularly see the value of diversity at work in the course of typical team engagements at work.

The workplace is already organized for teamwork, for rewards for productive collaboration, and for circumstances that provide consistent and readily visible demonstrations of the efficacy of working together. The one thing that needs some “tweaking” is the goals and ground rules.

After working as an innovation, strategy, and team productivity consultant for more than thirty years, I have discerned a pattern and a process for getting diverse teams to simultaneously meld and produce highly creative and highly productive outcomes. There are principles from that learning that can be applied to turbo-charging the Robbers Cave effect and applying it to a day-to-day work process for improving cross-diversity relations, bringing out the best in each individual, and improving both the workplace and the productivity. I have come to appreciate that the most effective route to equity and inclusion is to show how diversity can improve productivity. My version of the process is called Thinking Together Out Loud Together.

The workplace principles that have proven the case:

- People who think together out loud focus on the developing ideas more than on where the ideas come from.
- They begin to participate in the development of each other's thinking rather than judging each other's thinking.
- They begin to see how their thinking converges into better thinking.
- Higher order solutions become the byproduct of better goals and better processes.
- Shoot for a higher goal. Cooperation and Collaboration are mechanical solutions to teamwork. Escalate the goal and construct the process to deliver Collegiality. By its very nature, Collegiality is all about inclusion because collegiality is based on mutual respect for each other as a contributor as well as for the contribution that can be made.
- Collegiality taps into and unleashes the most under-utilized resource that each individual brings to the team – their collective native intelligence. Collective native intelligence is the sum total of what makes us individuals and what makes us diverse. It represents the totality of our individual dispositions, experiences, culture, talents, achievements, failures... and so on. Multiply that by the collective native intelligence of the group and that manifests the collective native intelligence of the group. Moreover, it expands the opportunities for the team to connect across an exponentially expanded number of commonalities.
- Each meeting of the collegially connected team needs to drive for a meaningful, recognizable, quantifiable outcome in the meeting. This “small” achievement cements both the work and the bonds.

- The power of Thinking Together Out Loud Together in this way is unmatched in its ability to leave each participant with an improved sense of self worth along with respect for others on the team.

In the end, it will take more than one approach to significantly reduce prejudices that divide us and to increase and improve the positive connections that bind us. Some legislation will always likely be needed. Education will always continue to be essential to the process. Communications will also always part of the process.

Having said that, I believe that the things we do “inside out” by bringing out the best each of us have to bring to the table will always arrive at better results, with fewer potential unintended negative consequences. It will always prove to be less productive to convince people against their will, their nature, and their collective native intelligence.

John Krubski is the author of relevant books:

Breaking Genius - for Teams and Organizations: How you can use Thinking Whole to achieve repeatable moments of genius, on demand, for your team, your organization, and your self
(Itlcinsights October 28, 2019)

Cracking The America Code: A Plan For Getting US Back on Track
(Buoy Point Media August 1, 2012)