DYNAMICS OF
PREJUDICE

THE LIMITATION OF AGGRESSION IS THE FIRST
AND PERHAPS THE HARDEST SACRIFICE WHICH
SOCIETY DEMANDS FROM EACH INDIVIDUAL.

Sigmund Freud

DYNAMIC APPROACH TO INTOLERANCE

An attempt has been made in this study to present an objective analysis and a systematic interpretation of the particular type of group hostility known as ethnic intolerance. Although this analysis is primarily an effort to contribute to a scientific theory of human behavior—its social basis and psychological motivation—we hope that the diagnosis so arrived at will prove useful in planning a cure for one of the major disorders in contemporary American society: ethnic discrimination and aggression. The authors believe that "pure" science, without the practical applications implied in its findings, is a sterile abstraction. True, the development of social science depends upon objective study unbiased by any wish for immediate practical applications. But research into the significant problems confronting society today must, necessarily, arrive at findings which have important implications for social planning and action.

Hostilities among groups—nations, classes, ethnic groups, or families —are alike in being directed by members of one group against those of another group in the name of certain collective symbols of identification. Such group hostility can thrive very well alongside of friendly, even intimate, relations between individuals of the two hostile groups, the accepted individual being considered an exception to his group. It is true that in many important respects the kinds of hostility among social groups differ widely. The particular goals that groups strive for, the particular social contexts in which they interact, all affect the forms of hostility. But if human behavior is to be understood and explained, the principles of group hostility in general must be determined. In other words, it is necessary to formulate and establish propositions which will cover the whole range of intergroup hostility and which will have a generalized explanatory value, even though they may not explain particular variations. They may even be derived from the intensive study of only one or a few types of group hostility.

The plan for any type of research must assume a theoretical framework, a body of hypotheses with central bearing on the phenomena under

investigation. If the research produces significant results, these validate, to some degree, the hypotheses which were initially assumed; if the research does not produce such results either the hypotheses or the research procedures are proved inadequate or invalid. For the research reported and discussed in these pages, particular hypotheses were selected which seemed likely to help in answering the central question: *What are the factors essentially associated with anti-Semitism and are these factors also associated with anti-Negro attitudes?* Obviously, the hypotheses had to be part of a central theory of human behavior and social organization, since the purpose of the study was to clarify their interconnection with anti-Semitic and anti-Negro attitudes. Since no such theory has as yet found general acceptance, a tentative choice was made. The body of theories chosen to analyze human motivation was that of the dynamic theory of personality. In choosing psychoanalytic theory, it was recognized that the application of the theory beyond the individual, and particularly to the larger organization of society, was still relatively undeveloped. Yet it was our conviction—and especially so after having finished the study—that this theory seemed an exceedingly fruitful one in accounting for certain aspects of human behavior in society. This does not mean that, in basing our investigation on the psychoanalytic theory, the theory was regarded as a closed and finished system of propositions. On the contrary, it was assumed that a vast labor of reformulation and systematic testing remained to be done; indeed this study represents, among others, an effort to test the validity of dynamic theories of human behavior as they apply to phenomena of group interaction.

Compared with the relatively comprehensive formulation of psychoanalytic theory as applied to the individual and his motivation, no single view of the modern social organism within which the individual functions seemed equally adequate to cover the problems under investigation. Hence it was necessary to utilize various theoretical formulations on the organization of group life in a modern, industrialized society.

On the basis of these considerations, the following major hypotheses were evolved, which were then to be tested in an intensive study of a relatively small, but homogeneous, group.

First, hostility toward outgroups is a function of the hostile individual's feeling that he has suffered deprivations in the past.

Second, hostility toward outgroups is a function of the hostile indi-

vidual's anxiety in anticipation of future tasks, as inferred from his expectations of deprivation.

From the first and second hypotheses followed certain sub-hypotheses: (1) Past or anticipated deprivation leads to intolerance only if the individual has initially felt an obligation to succeed in mastering the task at hand. (2) Self-respect and self-love prevent an individual, so situated, from accepting failure as his own and he therefore ascribes it to aggressive and/or amoral behavior by an outgroup. (3) Once the individual has blamed a particular outgroup for his own failure to gain self-respect, those characteristics within the individual which are unacceptable to himself are fought by externalizing them and projecting them onto members of an outgroup.

The *third* hypothesis was that when the individual blames the outgroup for his failure at mastery of past and future experiences, and projects undesirable characteristics denied in himself onto members of the outgroup, such behavior is the consequence of a lack of ego strength and of inadequate controls which favor irrational discharge and evasion rather than rational action.

Related to this hypothesis was the sub-hypothesis that the individual blames his own inadequate integration on existing authorities. He feels that they do not provide the strong support he needs to be able to ignore or to deny his own ego weakness and often they are attacked with a simultaneous demand for stronger authorities.

Ethnic intolerance can be viewed in terms of the individual's position within the social structure either statically or dynamically. Therefore, as a *fourth* major hypothesis, it was assumed that ethnic intolerance was related more to the individual's dynamic movement within the structure of society than to his societal position at a particular moment. It was assumed that ethnic intolerance was more related to the individual's mobility within the social structure than to his economic situation, or his political or religious attitudes at any one time. As a sub-hypothesis it was assumed that intolerance would be more related to downward social mobility, while it was assumed that upward social mobility would be associated with ethnic tolerance.

At this point, it should be emphasized that these hypotheses were to be tested in a community where at least two important ethnic minorities were present, and that there are other communities where only one important minority is involved. It was expected that all phenomena connected with ethnic intolerance which seem to be concentrated on a single minority, where only one is present, would be separated among the

various minorities, where more than one is present. Such findings, though testable only in part, would tend to confirm the underlying assumption of the hypothesis that intolerance is a function of the structure and needs of society and not a function of the presence or absence of a particular ethnic minority.

It may be added that no claim is made that these hypotheses are universally applicable. They seemed useful in understanding hostility within modern industrialized communities which are characterized by a complex division of labor. Group hostilities take on different aspects in primitive cultures, in predominantly agricultural societies, and in cultural areas which are in a period of particular transition. Under those conditions other hypotheses might be required for understanding the particular forms in which group hostility may operate. In particular, the whole complex of special factors and conditions of the South, with its particular historical traditions and its transitional economy, were ruled out. However, it may well be that the question of ethnic hostility and of its political consequences, particularly in their relation to fascism, will in the main be decided in the big cities. Urban population is most subject to the instabilities of industrialism and urban areas contain the bulk of the population.

Despite the foregoing, it was felt that theoretical considerations of economic, social, and psychological hypotheses alone were not a sufficient basis for planning procedures in social research. They had to be supplemented by a backward look at the context in which similar phenomena have been appearing in the past, in order to correctly assess the more or less relevant contexts for the study at hand.

In recent times, the outstanding instance of ethnic intolerance, anti-Semitism, had its roots in Germany after the first World War. The chief promoters and followers of the anti-Semitic movement were former soldiers, unable to reintegrate themselves successfully into society. If ethnic intolerance should approach critical limits in the near future, and in this country, the reasons may well be similar to those which accounted for its development in Germany. Thus, theoretical as well as practical considerations suggested demobilized soldiers as the particular group of individuals to be studied.

Since a basic hypothesis was that persons who believe they have experienced deprivations are more disposed to ethnic intolerance, and since it was plausible that ex-soldiers who had undergone major deprivations in varying degrees might be specially responsive to intolerant agitation, it

seemed fitting to study ex-soldiers, rather than other groups. In this context, it should be realized that the army experience was not only one of deprivation but also one of security in the case of basic necessities and, for much of the time, orderliness of living.

The followers of Hitler had a strong desire to see violent change in the structure of a society which they felt had let them down, and they wished also to regain those advantages which the army had offered: the opportunity for hostile discharge against an enemy; a regulation of their lives which made it unnecessary to assume responsibility or make choices; security as regards food, shelter, clothing, and spending-money; and a relief from responsibility for their families.

Precisely because veterans have experienced all these things and also because of the prestige they once enjoyed, they may become a pivotal group in shaping postwar policy if and when the social and economic situation should lead to dissatisfaction and a desire for change. For the same reason, veterans as a group may become pawns in the formation of pressure groups.

It was not intended, of course, to compare soldiers with civilians and thus to arrive at specific differences in their attitudes. It was felt that it would be sufficient to study the veterans who then formed the most active part of the male population. Moreover, the problem of matching veterans with civilians of the same age, experience, personality characteristics, etc., had become nearly insoluble with the almost universal conscription of young men in the United States. The selection of veterans as the sample to be studied had several other advantages. It made it possible to hold certain variables relatively constant such as those of recent experiences, age, and, most important of all, the need to remake one's place after having been away in the army. Nor did military service interfere in the determination of factors underlying ethnic intolerance.

Therefore, the group selected for intensive study was a random sample of 150 male veterans of World War II who were residents of Chicago. Because of the added complexity of studying both urban and rural veterans, the sample was limited to an urban area. Therefore the conclusions on intolerance in this study do not necessarily apply to rural populations.

Veterans who had been officers were excluded from the study since their war experiences were sharply at variance with those of enlisted men. Most of the former came from social and economic backgrounds which differed markedly from those of enlisted men. Because of this restriction, the sample tended to represent the economic lower and lower middle classes more adequately. This was not unrealistic, for recent German his-

tory has shown that it was from these classes that the most ardent and energetic supporters of anti-Semitic parties were recruited. The men who tended to become officers were also more likely to possess some leadership qualities and overt intolerance among such individuals, if it developed, would be likely to take another pattern. However the facilities of the study were not large enough to sample adequately both officers and enlisted men and the former were excluded.

Other limitations, as to age, length of service, and the like were included in order to enhance the homogeneity of the sample. (Full details of the sampling procedure are described in the Appendix.) Members of those ethnic groups toward which hostility is most frequently directed were not included, i.e., Negroes, Jews, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans.