

# **Social Psychology of Prejudice:**

*Historical and  
Contemporary Issues*

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*Lewinian Press*

*B=F(P,E)*

For Charlotte and Jasper

PUBLISHED BY LEWINIAN PRESS  
1415 Jayhawk Boulevard  
Lawrence, Kansas 66045

Printed in the United States of America.

*Cover photo* © Doug Hitt, 1996.

*This book is based on a conference supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 9910732. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.*

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# How I Came to be a Prejudice Researcher

Laurie Rudman

I was 10 years old, and dad was driving off with my older sister Carol, whom I worshipped. When he returned, my parents announced she would not be coming back. She wanted to marry Lenny—a young African American she had met in college. I couldn't understand what the problem was. The one time he came to our house, I sat on his lap and was thrilled with the way he laughed at my jokes. Years later, he would head the United Way in Chicago, but even then he was generous and kind. My father had taken Carol to Northeast Minneapolis and told her to make a choice. It was either “those people” or her family. My sister got out of the car.

I knew what prejudice was from television, where I saw Blacks rioting in protest and Martin Luther King, Jr. exhorting all Americans to defeat racism, once and for all. But I had no idea it lived under my own roof until the day I lost my sister. Racism seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, to be a stupid, terrible mistake. My resolve to work against it may have begun as a result of my personal loss, but it is replenished every day by constant reminders that we are far from realizing King's dream. Racial profiling, police brutality, and the backlash against Affirmative Action are symptoms of a disease that continues to cripple every one of us. It is right that we should spotlight inequalities in education, employment, and the justice system in the fight against prejudice. But in doing so, let's not forget the quieter toll that racism takes on children, no matter their ethnicity, when they learn that the people they love and depend upon are blinded by bigotry, deeply flawed, and that there is no such thing as unconditional love in their home.

