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The Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach, Miami, Florida, USA:  
*The Sculpture of Love and Anguish* by Kenneth Treister.  
Photo © Bildagentur-online/Schickel/Alamy

# Understanding Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination

We live in families, tribes, and nations. Our groups help us survive and provide our lives with structure. They give us bases of self-worth and imbue life with meaning and purpose. But one major problem is inherent in living within groups: It separates us from other human beings who live within other groups. Prejudice is the all-too-common consequence of this distinction between us (the ingroup) and them (the outgroup). Virtually every known culture has been hostile to members of some other culture or oppressed certain segments of its society. Indeed, recorded history is riddled with the bloody consequences of a seemingly endless parade of oppression, persecution, colonization, crusades, wars, and genocides. The violent heritage of our species led a character from James Joyce's classic novel *Ulysses* to comment, "History . . . is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (Joyce, 1961, p. 28).

We will explore the many reasons that history has been and continues to be such a nightmare of intergroup hatred and violence in two chapters, this one and chapter 11. In chapter 11, we will consider how prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination affect those targeted by these biases. We will also consider ways in which we might hope someday to awaken from this nightmare to an egalitarian reality in which people treat each other fairly, regardless of their differences.

In this chapter, we focus on:

- The nature of prejudice
- Three basic causes of prejudice
- Who is prone to prejudice
- Prejudice in the modern world
- How stereotyping arises and affects the way people perceive others and behave toward them

## Learning Outcomes

- Define *prejudice*.
- Explain why prejudice is viewed negatively and as unjustified.
- Differentiate stereotyping from discrimination.

**Prejudice** A negative attitude toward an individual solely on the basis of that person's presumed membership in a particular group.



▲ Intergroup conflicts have affected every nation. Tens of thousands of Syrians have fled a violent civil war in their homeland, only to find themselves isolated into camps as surrounding countries close their borders to new immigrants.

[Photo by United Nation Relief and Works Agency via Getty Images]



## THINK ABOUT

[Blend Images-Hill Street Studios/  
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## The Nature of Prejudice: Pervasiveness and Perspective

Virtually every person currently living on this planet has been profoundly affected by prejudice. In most if not all cultures, women are to varying degrees targets of violence and restricted in their freedoms and opportunities. Likewise, every ethnic and cultural group has been powerfully influenced by historical intergroup conflicts and oppression. Japan and China have exchanged many acts of hostility and violence over a long period of time. So have France and England. And as of this writing, tens of thousands of refugees have fled a violent civil war in Syria, only to find themselves isolated into camps as surrounding countries close their borders to new immigrants. Pick a group, and you could read volumes about how that group has been affected by prejudice.

In social psychology, **prejudice** is defined as a negative attitude toward an individual based solely on that person's presumed membership in a particular group. Thus the person is disliked not because of personal attributes or actions but simply because of being perceived to be in some supposedly undesirable group.

An interesting aspect of prejudice is that, on the one hand, many if not most people seem to be prejudiced against some group—and they usually feel that their particular prejudice is justified. On the other hand, social psychologists generally assume that prejudice against a person based simply on membership in a group is never justified. This assumption is based on three characteristics of prejudice.

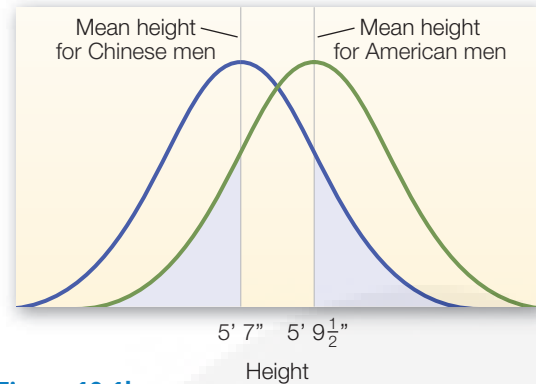
First, prejudice involves judging an individual negatively without considering the person's actual attributes or actions. Social psychologists follow the hope famously articulated by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1963/1992): "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." If someone harms you or someone you care about, you are justified in disliking that person. If a person simply practices a religion different from your own, has a different skin tone, or comes from a different country, you are not justified in disliking that person.

Second, any large category of people will include tremendous variability in virtually every possible attribute by which one might judge another person positively or negatively (Allport, 1954). There may be a group mean (what the average member of a group is like), but there also is always a normal distribution that captures the range along which most people vary from that mean. **Think of members of your own extended family—siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents. Can you think of some who are generous, some who are cheap; some who are likable, some who are unpleasant; some who are smart, some not so much; some who are honest, some who are deceitful; some who are ambitious, some who are not? If you can find variability in such a small group, imagine the variability in the many millions of people who are identified as Americans, Muslim, Hispanic, or gay.** Because of this variation, assuming anything about all members of such groups will necessarily lead to many errors. To use an example where measurable data are available, consider that although the average American (male, 5'9½", female, 5'4") is taller than the average Chinese person (male, 5'7"; female,

**Figure 10.1a****Human Variability**

Although Americans on average are taller than Chinese people, there is great variability in the height of individuals in both groups, leading to many exceptions.

[Bill Pugliano/Getty Images]

**Figure 10.1b****Overlapping Normal Distributions of Two Groups with Different Mean Heights**

The normal distribution of Chinese and American males' heights, based on the group means, might look something like this. The blue areas represent cases in which we would be incorrect if we simply assumed that an American male was taller than the average Chinese male or that a Chinese male was shorter than the average American male.

5'2½") (Yang et al., 2005), literally millions of Americans are shorter than the average Chinese person, and millions of Chinese people are taller than the average American (**FIGURE 10.1**).

The third reason social psychologists judge prejudice negatively is that it has all too often led to appalling acts of violence against innocent people—including children—who happened or were presumed to be members of particular groups. Many early social psychologists were inspired to focus on prejudice because of one of the most egregious examples of what prejudice can lead to: the Nazi Holocaust, which resulted in the deaths of an estimated 6 million Jews and 5 million members of other groups despised by the Nazis (e.g., Gypsies, Slavs, physically disabled individuals).

So that's the case for prejudice being a bad thing. People who hold prejudices usually justify them with **stereotypes**—overgeneralized beliefs about the traits and attributes of members of a particular group, such as "African Americans are violent," "Jews are cheap," "White men are racists," "Latinos are lazy," and so forth. Not all stereotypic traits attributed to a group are negative, but overall, stereotypes of outgroups tend to be negative. Later in this chapter, we will consider where these stereotypes come from, how they affect us, and how they are perpetuated. As we will learn, stereotypes provide justifications for prejudice and lead to biases against outgroups.

People holding prejudices and stereotypes often leads to **discrimination**—negative behavior toward an individual solely on the basis of membership in a particular group. Discrimination comes in many forms, ranging from cold behavior at a party to declining someone's loan application to torture and genocide. Discrimination is often the consequence of the negative attitudes (prejudice) and beliefs (stereotypes) a person holds. But because of laws, norms, and values to be egalitarian, people's behaviors are not always biased by their prejudice and stereotypes.

**Stereotype** Overgeneralized beliefs about the traits and attributes of members of a particular group.

**Discrimination** Negative behavior toward an individual solely on the basis of that person's membership in a particular group.

## SECTION REVIEW The Nature of Prejudice: Pervasiveness and Perspective

Prejudice has been a pervasive destructive force over the course of human history and continues to be so.

Prejudice is a negative *attitude* toward an individual based solely on that person's presumed membership in a particular group, without consideration of the unique individual, group variability, or potential for violence against the innocent.

Stereotypes are overgeneralized *beliefs* about the traits and attributes of members of a particular group.

Discrimination is negative *behavior* toward an individual based solely on that person's presumed membership in a particular group.

### Learning Outcomes

- Explain the connection between hostile feelings, categorizing people, and prejudice.
- Describe the relationship between self-esteem and prejudice.
- Identify why people are prone to ethnocentric biases.

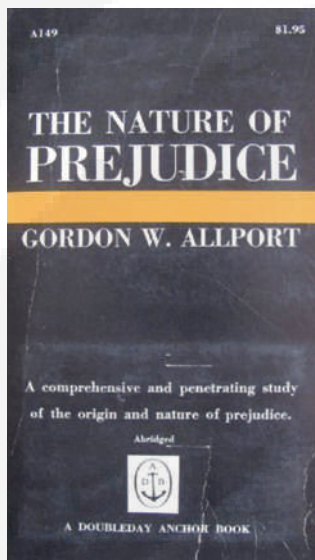
### The Roots of Prejudice: Three Basic Causes

Given all the harm that has come from prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination, why are these phenomena so prevalent? This is one of the central questions that Gordon Allport addressed in his classic book *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954). Allport proposed three basic causes of prejudice, each of which is an unfortunate consequence of some very basic aspects of human thought and feeling.

#### Hostile Feelings Linked to a Category

Allport viewed the first fundamental cause of prejudice to be a result of two basic human tendencies. First, people are likely to feel hostility when they are frustrated or threatened, or when they witness things they view as unpleasant or unjust. Second, just as we routinely categorize objects (see chapter 3), we also categorize other people as members of social groups, such as *women*, *Asians*, and *teenagers*, often within milliseconds of encountering them (Dickter & Bartholow, 2007; Fiske, 1998; Ito & Bartholow, 2009). Prejudice often results from linking hostile feelings to such salient categories of people (e.g., Crandall et al., 2011; O'Donnell et al., 2019).

Let's consider a few examples of how this might occur. Imagine a French man robbed at gunpoint by another French man in Marseilles. The victim will likely experience fear and anger, hate the robber, and hope the thief is caught and imprisoned. Now imagine a French man who is robbed by an Algerian man. He will experience the same emotions but is more likely to direct his hatred toward Algerians and may therefore want all Algerians expelled from his country. Why? When we encounter outgroup members, what is salient to us is their group membership rather than their individual characteristics. So in the latter example, the victimized individual views his experience as being mugged by an *Algerian*; thus, his negative feelings are overgeneralized to the category rather than applied only to the individual mugger whose actions caused his negative experience. In a similar vein, an Afghan woman whose niece was killed by an American guided missile is likely to hate Americans. A European American kid hassled by a Mexican American in a middle school restroom may decide he hates "Mexicans." In each of these examples, negative experiences with a single individual or a small sample of individuals leads to a sweeping negative feeling that is applied to literally millions of people who are perceived to be members of the salient group. In a finding consistent with these examples, Rosenfield and colleagues (1982) showed that when White participants were asked for money by a shabbily dressed Black panhandler, they were later less willing to



▲ Gordon Allport's book *The Nature of Prejudice* launched decades of research on the subject.

volunteer to help promote a racial brotherhood week compared to those who were initially approached by either a well-dressed Black graduate student or a shabbily dressed White panhandler.

This idea of negative feelings generalized to an entire group can help explain sudden increases in prejudice after particularly threatening circumstances arise. For example, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Americans exhibited more negative attitudes and behavior toward Muslim and Arab Americans. Although these reactions were sadly predictable, they are classic examples of prejudice: The Arab and Muslim Americans targeted had nothing to do with the attacks on the United States but were judged negatively because of their perceived group membership. Similarly, as the deadly novel coronavirus spread to the United States in early 2020, there was a substantial increase in verbal and physical attacks directed at Asian Americans (Tavernise & Oppel, 2020). The negative feelings associated with the virus were linked to China because the first major outbreak occurred there, and then President Trump reinforced this association by referring to it as “Chinese virus.” With the category linked to the negative feelings, prejudice and discrimination became the all too predictable consequence.

Sometimes, frustrations people experience fuel negative feelings and actions toward outgroups even in the absence of any inciting behavior by a member of that group. This is known as *displaced aggression*, and it can explain why in tough economic times, prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination tend to increase (e.g., Hepworth & West, 1988; Hovland & Sears, 1940; Krosch et al., 2017). Experimental research confirms this process. When European American participants are led to believe resources are scarce, their brain activity indicates that they engage in less processing of African American faces, and they reduce their resource allocations to African Americans but not European Americans (Krosch & Amodio, 2019; Krosch et al., 2017).

**Realistic group conflict theory** (Levine & Campbell, 1972) adds to Allport’s idea of hostility generalized to a group by arguing that the initial negative feelings between groups are often based on a real conflict or competition over scarce resources. If individuals in one group think that their access to land, water, jobs, or other resources is being threatened or blocked by another group, the resulting sense of threat and frustration is likely to generate negative emotions about the perceived rival group. Recent research has shown that people are more likely to harbor and express prejudice toward a particular outgroup when they view their own group as cohesive and as having collective interests possibly threatened by that outgroup (Effron & Knowles, 2015). Unfortunately, these negative feelings are often culturally transmitted from generation to generation so that intergroup hostilities are perpetuated even if the initial conflict is no longer pertinent. As a result of protracted intergroup conflict, members of the conflicting groups come to feel anxious around each other, and that intergroup anxiety can further fuel prejudice toward the outgroup (Stephan & Stephan, 1985).

### Ingroup Bias: We Like Us Better Than Them

The second cause of prejudice, according to Allport, is the tendency to prefer what is familiar over what is not. As the mere exposure effect discussed in chapter 8 shows, the more familiar we are with a stimulus, the more we like it. We like—indeed, usually love—our own families, our own towns, our own stuff, and our own group. In contrast, outgroups are less familiar, stranger, less known. They make us feel uneasy, anxious. They are harder to predict and understand.



▲ Many Asian Americans, including these two Chinese American high school students, experienced increased prejudice against them in response to the spread of the novel coronavirus to the United States in early 2020.

[Boston Globe/Getty Images]

**Realistic group conflict theory** A theory which asserts that the initial negative feelings between groups are often based on a real conflict or competition regarding scarce resources.

Taking an evolutionary perspective, some psychologists have argued that a preference for familiar others is probably something adaptive that has been selected for (e.g., Park et al., 2003). Our ancestors, living in small groups, were probably safer if they stayed close to their own. If they ventured away from their own group and encountered other groups, they may have experienced peril, including exposure to germs. In fact, when thoughts of disease are made salient, people become particularly negative toward ethnically different others (Faulkner et al., 2004). A recent study of identical twins suggested that how prone an individual is to favor their ingroup is partly genetically determined (Lewis & Bates, 2017). Allport noted that because of common backgrounds, it's also just easier to know what to say and how to behave around those who are members of the ingroup.

In addition to this familiarity-based preference for the ingroup over outgroups, most of us like ourselves and demonstrate a self-serving bias, as you'll recall from our coverage of self-esteem (chapter 6). So if I am great, then my group must be great also. Surely groups I am *not* a member of can't be as great as those to which I belong! Indeed, research has shown that ingroup pronouns such as *us* are associated automatically with positive feelings and that outgroup pronouns such as *them*

are associated automatically with negative ones (Perdue et al., 1990). So pride in one's own group and preference for one's own group over others may be a natural extension of self-serving bias. This ingroup bias can affect even political beliefs (Kosloff, Greenberg, Dechesne et al., 2010). In the lead-up to the 2008 U.S. presidential election, when undecided White voters were reminded of their race, they were more likely to believe negative rumors about the African American Democratic candidate, Barack Obama. Similarly, when undecided young voters were reminded of their age, they were more likely to believe negative rumors about the 65-year-old Republican candidate at the time, John McCain.

Social identity theory (see chapter 9) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) looks at the relationship between self-esteem and groups the other way around, reversing the causal direction. This theory proposes that a considerable portion of our self-esteem actually derives from our group memberships. Not only is my group great because I'm in it, but I am great because I am in this group! So I gain self-esteem by thinking highly of my own group and less highly of outgroups. And sure enough, wherever you travel, you meet people who are proud of their own cultures and ethnicities and think more highly of them than they do of other cultures and ethnicities.

A large body of experimental research supports the existence of ingroup bias and the validity of social identity theory. One important line of inquiry has examined whether arbitrarily formed groups immediately exhibit ingroup bias. This idea was anticipated in Jonathan Swift's (1726/2001) classic satire *Gulliver's Travels*, which describes wars breaking out between those who believe eggs should be cracked at the big end and those who believe they should be cracked at the small end.

Henri Tajfel and colleagues demonstrated this phenomenon in a seminal study in which high school students were asked to estimate how many dots were displayed on a screen (Tajfel et al., 1971). The researchers told one random set of students that they were "overestimators" and the other set that they were "underestimators." Even in such minimal newly formed groups, researchers found bias in favor of distributing more resources to members of one's own group than to the outgroup (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). We should note, however, that recent replication efforts (Kerr et al., 2018) have shown that this bias may not even occur in some cases: if it is clear to the participants that the groups



▲ During World Cups and the Olympics, we can see the basic truth that social identity theory captures: People derive self-worth from their ingroup identifications, in this case, India and Pakistan.

[DIBYANGSHU SARKAR/AFP/Getty Images]



▲ On which side would you crack the egg? Would you prefer people who pick the side you would choose over those who would pick the other side?

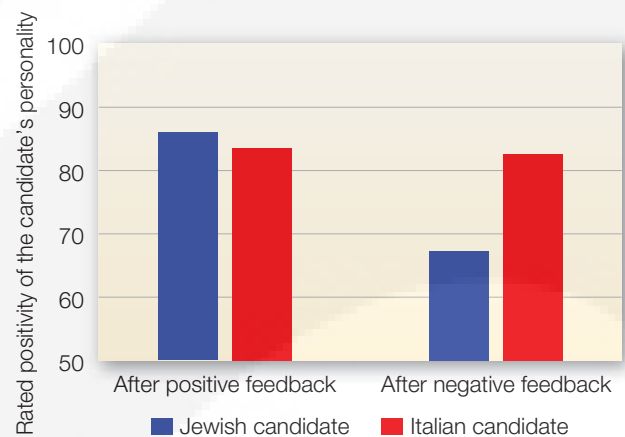
were formed randomly; if people make their resource allocations in private rather than in the presence of their group members; and in collectivist cultures, like Japan, as well as in cultures that highly value equality, like Australia.

Theory and research also suggest that in most cases, the liking for the ingroup is stronger and more fundamental than the disliking of the outgroup (e.g., Allport, 1954; Brewer, 1979). Allport noted that in many contexts, people are very accepting of bias in favor of their own children and families and of pride in their own nations. However, this “love prejudice” often has negative consequences for outgroups. An African American woman who is having trouble finding employment would feel little comfort in knowing that it’s not so much that White employers are biased against African Americans but just that they prefer to hire their “own kind.” In addition, if we view an outgroup as threatening our beloved ingroup, our ingroup love can fuel out-group hate.

A second important line of research has tested the prediction from social identity theory that ingroup bias serves self-esteem needs. From a social identity perspective, people should be especially likely to laud their own group and derogate outgroups after a threat to their personal self-esteem. In a series of studies (FIGURE 10.2), Fein and Spencer (1997) gave non-Jewish American participants positive or negative feedback on a test of social and verbal skills and then had them evaluate a woman after seeing a résumé and a videotape. For half the participants, the job candidate was depicted as Italian American; for the other half, she was depicted as Jewish American. Participants given self-esteem-threatening negative feedback rated the woman more negatively if they thought she was Jewish. In addition, participants given negative feedback and who had the opportunity to derogate the Jewish American woman showed an increase in self-esteem. And the more negatively they evaluated the Jewish American woman, the more their self-esteem increased. Subsequent studies have provided further support for the role of self-esteem threat in prejudice and stereotyping, showing, for example, that threatening Whites’ self-esteem brings negative stereotypes of African Americans and Asian Americans closer to mind (Spencer et al., 1998). When people feel bad about themselves, they seem to compensate through downward comparison by thinking more harshly of outgroups. Another example of this kind of self-esteem-protecting prejudice is *scapegoating*, a phenomenon whereby people who feel inferior, guilty, anxious, or unsuccessful blame an outgroup for their troubles (Allport, 1954; Jung, 1945/1970; Miller & Bugelski, 1948). Captain Ahab blamed the white whale, the Nazis blamed the Jews, unsuccessful North Americans blame immigrants. Experiments have shown that reminding people of the threat of natural disasters leads them to view outgroups as enemies with evil intentions (Landau et al., 2012; Sullivan et al., 2010). This tendency toward scapegoating provides someone to blame for one’s own problems and increases a sense of control over one’s life (Rothschild et al., 2012).

### Ethnocentrism, the Cultural Worldview, and Threat

The third basic cause of prejudice identified by Allport stems from the fact that each of us is raised within a particular cultural worldview and therefore has specific ideas about what is good and what is bad. If the worldview that



**Figure 10.2**

#### The Role of Self-Esteem Threat in Prejudice

After receiving negative feedback, American participants rated a woman more negatively if she was described as Jewish American than if she was described as Italian American.

[Data from Fein & Spencer, 1997]

**LaunchPad**

Social Psych in Everyday Life:  
Jennifer

**LaunchPad**

Video Activity: Prejudice and  
Patriotism Parts 1&2 (ABC What  
Would You Do Series)

**Ethnocentrism** Viewing the world through our own cultural value system and thereby judging actions and people based on our own culture's views of right and wrong and good and bad.

**THINK ABOUT**

[Janine Wiedel Photolibrary/Alamy]

**Symbolic racism** A tendency to view members of a racial outgroup as a threat to one's way of life and to express this view by rejecting social policies seen as benefiting that group.

we internalize from childhood explicitly portrays particular groups negatively, we will likely follow suit. So simply conforming to the norms and values of one's worldview can lead to prejudice. Supporting this idea, researchers have found that in places where prejudice is normative, such as the Deep South of the United States in the 1950s, the more people conform in general, the more prejudiced they tend to be (e.g., Pettigrew, 1958). More recently, Chris Crandall and colleagues (2018) showed that, after Donald Trump was elected U.S. president in 2016, Americans viewed prejudice toward groups targeted by the Trump campaign, such as Muslims and immigrants, as more acceptable. Crandall and colleagues suggested that this may explain the increase in bias-related incidents soon after Trump was elected.

The internalized worldview contributes to prejudice in another important way. Because this worldview determines our view of what is right and good, we can't help but judge others on the basis of those cultural values. This kind of judgment, called **ethnocentrism** (Sumner, 1906), often leads us to hold negative attitudes about others who were raised in different cultures. An American who finds out that people in culture Z believe in bathing only twice a year is going to have a hard time not judging the members of that culture negatively: "They're dirty and primitive!" By the same token, members of culture Z may observe the American tendency to bathe or shower virtually every day as bizarre: "They're wasteful and compulsive!" These kinds of judgments often get more serious, such as when North Americans learn of cultures that practice female circumcision or believe that women should never leave the house without covering every part of their bodies. **When are right and wrong merely matters of cultural preference? When are they a legitimate basis for judging members of another group negatively? It is very hard to say because our sense of right and wrong is intertwined with the cultural worldview in which we were raised.**

**Symbolic Racism** The theory of **symbolic racism** (Sears & Kinder, 1971) posits that the tendency to reject groups that don't conform to one's own view of the world underlies much of the racial prejudice that European Americans have against African Americans. From this perspective, many European Americans have internalized traditional, conservative Eurocentric moral values and view African Americans as a threat to the American way of life.

People who exhibit signs of symbolic racism don't think they are prejudiced toward outgroups. Rather, their negative attitudes toward these groups are expressed symbolically as opposition to policies that are seen as giving advantages to minority groups. They might deny that minorities continue to face discrimination and believe that racial disparities result from the unwillingness of people in minority groups to work hard enough. Those who are high in symbolic racism feel justified in opposing social programs that rectify social inequalities and supporting those that might curtail civil liberties of certain groups. The theory of symbolic racism has shown how prejudice is symbolically represented in diverging political opinions (Sears & Henry, 2005). In these studies, those who score high on measures of symbolic racism are more likely to support punitive anticrime policies that discriminate against minority groups (e.g., the death penalty or "three strikes and you're out" laws; Green et al., 2006).

**Terror Management Theory** We've seen that people tend to think poorly of those who seem different. But why can't people just leave it at "Different strokes for different folks"? According to the existential perspective of terror

management theory, one reason is that people must sustain faith in the validity of their own cultural worldview so that it can continue to offer psychological security in the face of our personal vulnerability and mortality. Other cultures threaten that faith: “One culture is always a potential menace to another because it is a living example that life can go on heroically within a value framework totally alien to one’s own” (Becker, 1971, p. 140).

Basing their work on this idea, terror management researchers have tested the hypothesis that raising the problem of mortality would make people especially positive toward others who support their worldview and especially negative to others who implicitly or explicitly challenge it (Greenberg et al., 2016). In the first study testing this notion, when reminded of their own mortality, American Christian students became more positive toward a fellow Christian student and more negative toward a Jewish student (Greenberg et al., 1990). Similarly, when reminded of death, Italians and Germans became more negative toward other cultures (Castano et al., 2002; Jonas et al., 2005) and non-atheists became more negative toward atheists (Cook et al., 2015). Hirschberger and colleagues (2005) found that reminders of mortality increased prejudice against physically disabled individuals because they reminded people of their own physical vulnerabilities.

In the first of a pair of studies particularly pertinent to the ongoing tensions in the Middle East, researchers found that when reminded of their own mortality, Iranian college students expressed greater support for suicidal martyrdom against Americans (Pyszczynski et al., 2006). The second study showed that politically conservative American college students who were reminded of their mortality similarly supported preemptively bombing countries that might threaten the United States, regardless of “collateral damage” (Pyszczynski et al., 2006). And in yet another troubling study, Hayes, Schimel, and colleagues (2008) found that Christian Canadians who were reminded of their mortality were better able to avoid thoughts of their own death if they imagined Muslims dying in a plane crash.

## SECTION REVIEW The Roots of Prejudice: Three Basic Causes



Gordon Allport proposed three basic causes of prejudice, each based on fundamental ways that people think, feel, and are influenced by the cultures they live within.

### Hostility plus Categorization

- We tend to feel hostility when we are frustrated or threatened.
- When negative feelings are associated with a member of an outgroup, we tend to overgeneralize those negative feelings and associated beliefs to the entire group.

### Ingroup Bias

- We prefer what is familiar, including people like us.
- A portion of our self-esteem comes from group membership, biasing us against those in outgroups.
- When our self-worth is threatened, we tend to derogate and blame members of other groups.

### Threats to One’s Worldview

- Our ethnocentrism leads us to judge people from different cultures more negatively.
- Ethnocentric biases are more severe when we feel vulnerable or when we see another’s worldview as threatening to our own.

## Learning Outcomes > The Prejudiced Personality

- Describe right-wing authoritarianism.
- Describe social dominance orientation.

**Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA)** An ideology which holds that the social world is inherently dangerous and that maintaining security requires upholding society's order and tradition. It predicts prejudice against groups seen as socially deviant or dangerous.

**Social dominance orientation (SDO)** An ideology in which the world is viewed as a ruthlessly competitive jungle where it is appropriate and right for powerful groups to dominate weaker ones.

**Figure 10.3**

### Social Dominance Orientation

These items are used to measure social dominance orientation. How would you rate your attitude toward each of them?

[Data from Pratto et al., 1994]

Prejudice is common in most if not all known cultures. However, within a culture, some people are far more prone to prejudice, stereotyping, and discriminating against outgroups than others. What accounts for these differences? One set of answers can be derived from the causes of prejudice we have already discussed. For example, people have different direct experiences with outgroups and are exposed to different kinds of information about them. They also vary in their level of self-esteem and the lessons they learn growing up about how groups differ and what those differences mean. However, research shows that there are particular kinds of people who are especially prone to being prejudiced and that people who tend to be prejudiced against one outgroup also tend to be prejudiced against other outgroups (Meeusen et al., 2018).

In response to the Nazi era, Theodor Adorno and colleagues (1950) sought to understand the roots of anti-Semitism; they found that individuals who were prejudiced against Jews were also prejudiced against other groups. Adorno and colleagues determined that these overlapping biases reflected an *authoritarian personality*. People with this prejudiced personality style possess a cluster of traits including uncritical acceptance of authority, preference for well-defined power arrangements in society, adherence to conventional values and moral codes, and a tendency to think in rigid, black-and-white terms. More modern researchers have refined this idea with a measure of **right-wing authoritarianism (RWA)** (Altemeyer, 1981, 1998; De Keersmaecker et al., 2018). Individuals high in RWA believe that the social world is inherently dangerous and unpredictable, and the best way to maintain a sense of security in both their personal and social lives is to preserve society's order, cohesion, and tradition. High RWA people dislike ethnic outgroups as well as socially deviant groups that threaten traditional norms, such as feminists, gays, and lesbians.

Other contemporary personality approaches to prejudice focus on some features related to the authoritarian personality. **Social dominance orientation (SDO)**, which was mentioned in chapter 9 (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), taps into beliefs that some people and groups are just better than others, and so society should be structured hierarchically, with some individuals and groups having higher social and economic status than others. SDO more strongly than RWA predicts dislike of disadvantaged groups that are perceived to be inferior, such as those who are physically disabled, those who are unemployed, and homemakers (Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007; **FIGURE 10.3**).

#### Items on the social dominance orientation scale

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Some groups of people are simply not the equals of others.                        | 10. Equality.   |
| 2. Some people are just more worthy than others.                                     | 11. If people were treated more equally, we would have fewer problems in this country.                        |
| 3. This country would be better off if we cared less about how equal all people are. | 12. In an ideal world, all nations would be equal.  |
| 4. Some people are just more deserving than others.                                  | 13. We should try to treat one another as equals as much as possible. (All humans should be treated equally.) |
| 5. It is not a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others.     | 14. It is important that we treat other countries as equals.  |
| 6. Some people are just inferior to others.  |   |
| 7. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on others.                |   |
| 8. Increased economic equality.  |   |
| 9. Increased social equality.  |   |

All items are measured on a *very negative* (1) to *very positive* (7) scale. Responses to 8–14 are reverse-coded before being averaged so that higher numbers on that averaged composite imply higher levels of social dominance orientation.

## SECTION REVIEW The Prejudiced Personality

Researchers have developed two useful measures of proneness to prejudice.

### Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA)

High-RWA individuals:

- view the social world as dangerous.
- are motivated to maintain collective security (societal order, cohesion, stability, tradition).
- are prejudiced against groups that threaten to disrupt collective security because they appear dangerous or deviant.

### Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)

High-SDO individuals:

- are competitively driven to maintain the dominance of some groups over others.
- are therefore prejudiced against groups that they perceive as being lower in society's status hierarchy.

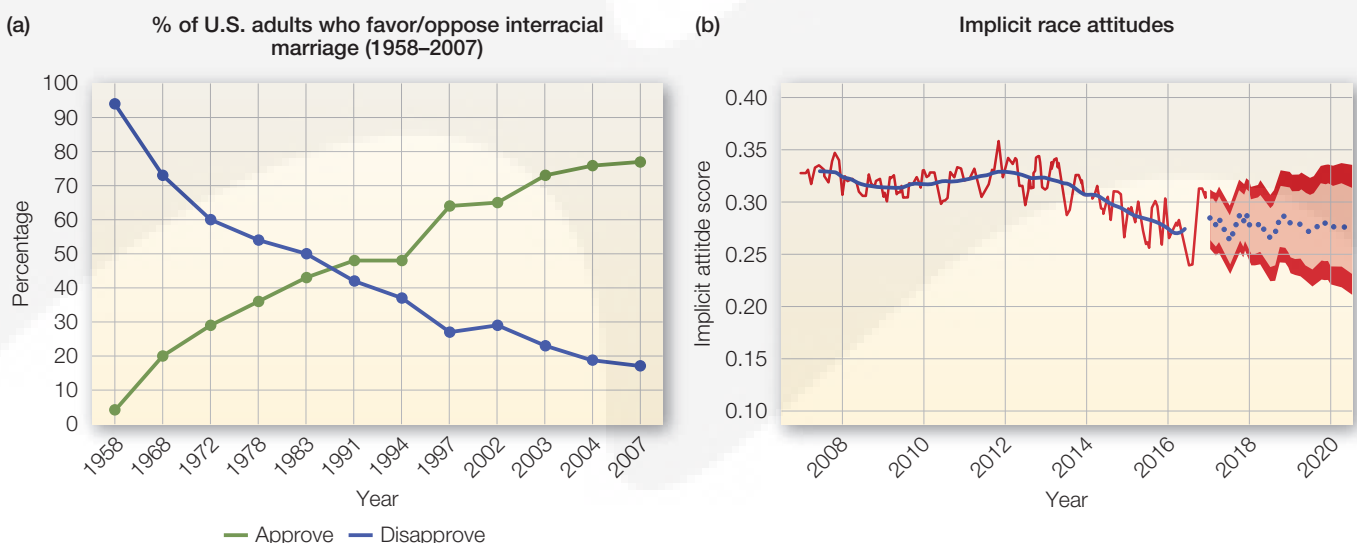
## Has Prejudice Become Less Prevalent over Time?

Dial back time to 1954. The U.S. Supreme Court had just announced the historic decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, which struck down state laws enforcing racial segregation in the public schools. The Court ruled that “separate but equal” schools for Black and White students were inherently *unequal*. The ruling was met with stark and at times violent opposition in a number of states.

In the decades since then, Americans have enacted antidiscrimination laws and elected (2008) and reelected (2012) an African American man as president of the United States. In some respects at least, the United States has made tremendous strides in race relations. In 1958, 94% of Americans surveyed opposed interracial marriage, but that number dropped to 17% by 2007 (FIGURE 10.4a; Carroll, 2007), although, unfortunately, some White Americans still are prone to negative reactions to interracial couples (Skinner & Hudac, 2017). And, an analysis of millions of American Internet respondents found that explicit and implicit attitudes regarding race became less negative between 2007 and 2016 (FIGURE 10.4b; Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019).

## Learning Outcomes

- Give evidence of both steps forward in the fight against discrimination and areas where we have room to grow.
- Define *ambivalent racism* and *aversive racism*.
- Explain how implicit racism can be revealed.



**Figure 10.4**

### Progress Against Racial Prejudice

Disapproval of interracial marriage dropped significantly between 1958 and 2007 (a). Implicit prejudice against African Americans is also declining, according to analysis of millions of American Internet respondents (b).

[Part (a): data from Carroll, 2007; part (b): data from Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019]

## LaunchPad

Video Activity: Charles Barkley Speaks to Children About Racism and Prejudice



▲ President Barack Obama gives the pen he used to sign the Matthew Shepard Act on October 28, 2009, to the parents of Matthew Shepard, Dennis Shepard, left, and Judy Shepard, third left.

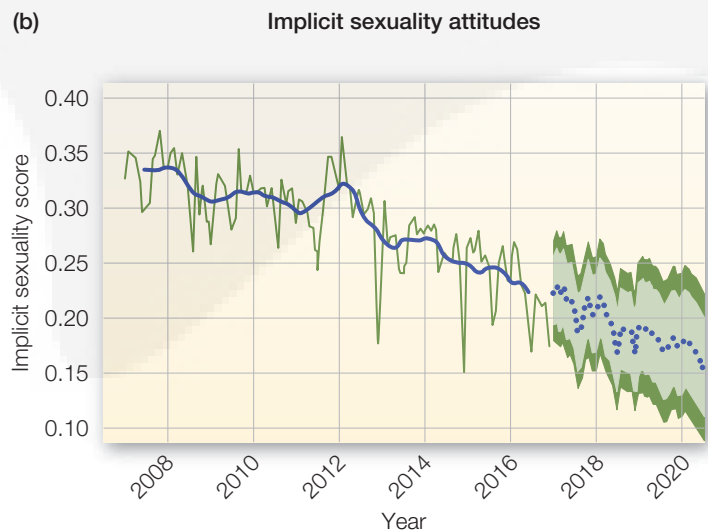
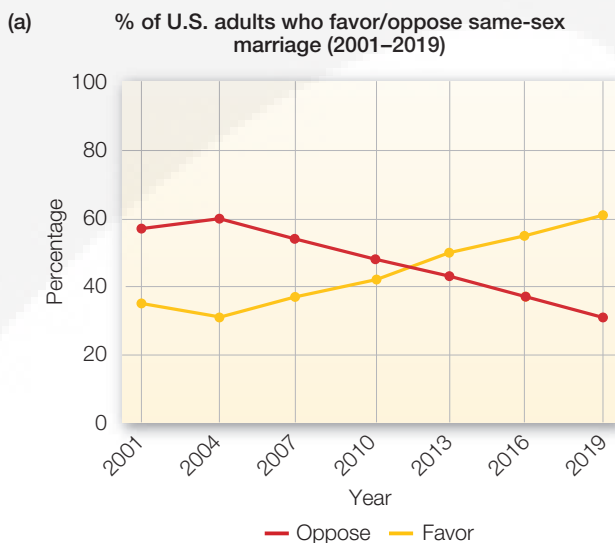
[Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP Images]

Figure 10.5

### Progress Against LGBTQ Prejudice

Today more Americans approve of same-sex marriage than disapprove (a). Implicit prejudice against gays and lesbians is also declining, according to analysis of millions of American Internet respondents (b).

[Part (a): data from Pew Research Center, 2019; part (b): data from Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019]



Similar changes can be seen with other prejudices. Countries such as Germany and Great Britain have elected female leaders over the past few decades. In 2016—almost 100 years after the 19th Amendment (1920) guaranteed women the right to vote—a major political party in the United States nominated a female presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton. The #MeToo movement, which is associated with bringing to justice powerful and wealthy men who have harassed and abused women, has also brought much-needed progress in fighting mistreatment of women (Bennett, 2020; MacKinnon, 2019). In addition, a recent study of questionnaire responses of more than 15,000 New Zealanders found that sexism was reduced between 2009 to 2016 (Huang et al., 2019).

What about prejudice against LGBTQ people? In 2009, the United States added perceived gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability to the federal definition of hate crimes through the Matthew Shepard Act. In 2010, the U.S. Senate voted to repeal the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy and struck down the ban on openly gay men and women serving in the military. In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court decided a landmark case that opened the door for same-sex couples to qualify for federal benefits previously only extended to heterosexual couples (*U.S. v. Windsor*, 2013). Evidence suggests that states making same-sex marriages legal may have contributed to these reductions in antigay bias (Ofosu et al., 2019). In 2001, 43% of Americans supported same-sex marriage, but in 2019, 61% said they supported it (FIGURE 10.5a; Masci et al., 2019). And from 2007 to 2016, American Internet respondents exhibited a reduction in explicit and implicit bias against gays and lesbians (FIGURE 10.5b; Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019). There have also been signs of progress toward acceptance of transgender individuals. In 2014, for the first time, an openly transgender person, Laverne Cox, was nominated for an Emmy for her performance in the television show *Orange Is the New Black*.

Perhaps because of this relative progress, many Americans believe that prejudice, especially against Blacks in the United States, is a thing of the past (Norton & Sommers, 2011). Blacks, however, are far from convinced. In a Pew survey, nearly half of Blacks surveyed said that they have had the experience of others treating them as if they are suspicious or unintelligent compared to only about 10% of Whites reporting having had this experience. Blacks were also six

times as likely as Whites to report having been stopped unfairly by police (Pew Research Center, 2016). So reports of the death of prejudice have been greatly exaggerated. Let's consider some of the evidence.

Even though segregation is against the law, we still live in a society that is quite segregated. **Think back to high school. Did Black students sit mainly in one part of the cafeteria, Whites in another, Hispanics in another, and Asians in yet another? Did you even attend a school or live in an area that was ethnically diverse? If people are still clustering by race and ethnicity, we might wonder whether biases still shape our preferences in whom to approach and whom to avoid.**

While attitudes toward some groups have become more favorable over time, social and political contexts can bring about new hostilities. Whereas Jews were the most salient target of religious prejudice in the United States when Allport wrote his book in 1954, in 2010 “only” about 15% of Americans surveyed reported having even a little prejudice against Jews, compared with nearly 43% who reported having at least some prejudice toward Muslims (Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, 2010). Anti-Semitism is far from gone, however; in New York City, 234 hate crimes against Jews were reported in 2019—more than a 25% increase over the prior year (Frehse, 2020)—and anti-Semitism is currently quite prevalent in many European and Asian countries (Baum et al., 2016).

Although overt expressions of discrimination and racial injustice are certainly declining, they are far from absent. Since the fall of 2014, protests have been cropping up throughout the United States in response to police killings of African Americans that have been viewed as outrageous and unwarranted. The Black Lives Matter movement aims to actively assert something that shouldn't need to be asserted. Yet it still does. On May 25, 2020, a video widely viewed on YouTube showed a White Minneapolis police officer with his knee on the neck of handcuffed African American George Floyd for over eight minutes, resulting in his death. During this time, Mr. Floyd repeatedly asserted that he could not breathe. Three other officers were present and did nothing to stop it. This killing sparked massive protests in the United States and elsewhere around the world, with some in the U.S. becoming violent. A few days after the incident, the officer who killed Mr. Floyd was charged with murder (Iati et al., 2020).

Beyond such tragic overt acts, there is ample evidence of less visible forms of discrimination that are harder to see. Beginning in the late 1950s, the civil rights campaign brought to public awareness the problem of **institutional discrimination**, unfair restrictions on the opportunities of certain groups of people by institutional policies, structural power relations, and formal laws (e.g., a height requirement for employment as a police officer that excludes most women). This form of discrimination has been so deeply embedded in the fabric of American society that it has often taken place without people even being aware that institutional practices had discriminatory effects (Pettigrew, 1958).

At a broader cultural level, societies have assigned less economic value to occupations traditionally held by women (e.g., nurse, teacher, administrative assistant), with the net result that women earn less than their male contemporaries (Alksnis et al., 2008). Particularly in higher-paying jobs (e.g., hospital administrator), equally qualified women may earn only about 79 cents to every dollar that men earn (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Semega, 2009). Are women paid less than men for the same jobs? Sometimes that is the case. But even when it is not, keep in mind that women are more likely to be



## THINK ABOUT

[timsa/Getty Images]

### LaunchPad

Video Activity: Prejudice Against Gays and Lesbians (ABC What Would You Do Series)

**Institutional discrimination** Unfair restrictions on opportunities for certain groups of people through institutional policies, structural power relations, and formal laws.



▲ The Black Lives Matter movement makes clear that America continues to struggle with racial tension and conflict.

represented in jobs that have lower earning potential (FIGURE 10.6). Other below-awareness evidence of the greater valuing of males was brought to light in a recent study of more than 600,000 social media posts from St. Petersburg, Russia, in which parents mentioned their sons more than their daughters, and posts of sons received more likes than posts of daughters (Sivak & Smirnov, 2019).

Clear signs of racial discrimination can also be found in everything from employment to housing, credit markets, the justice system, and consumer pricing (Pager & Shepherd, 2008). For example, the way in which lawyers select or exclude jury members can lead to juries that are biased against a Black defendant (Morrison et al., 2016). Once convicted, the more a Black male has “Afrocentric” facial features—in other words, the more they look like Whites’ stereotypes of Blacks—the harsher their prison sentences for the same crime tend to be (Blair et al., 2004; Kleider-Offutt et al., 2017), and the more likely they are to receive the death penalty for capital offenses when the victim was White (Eberhardt et al., 2006).

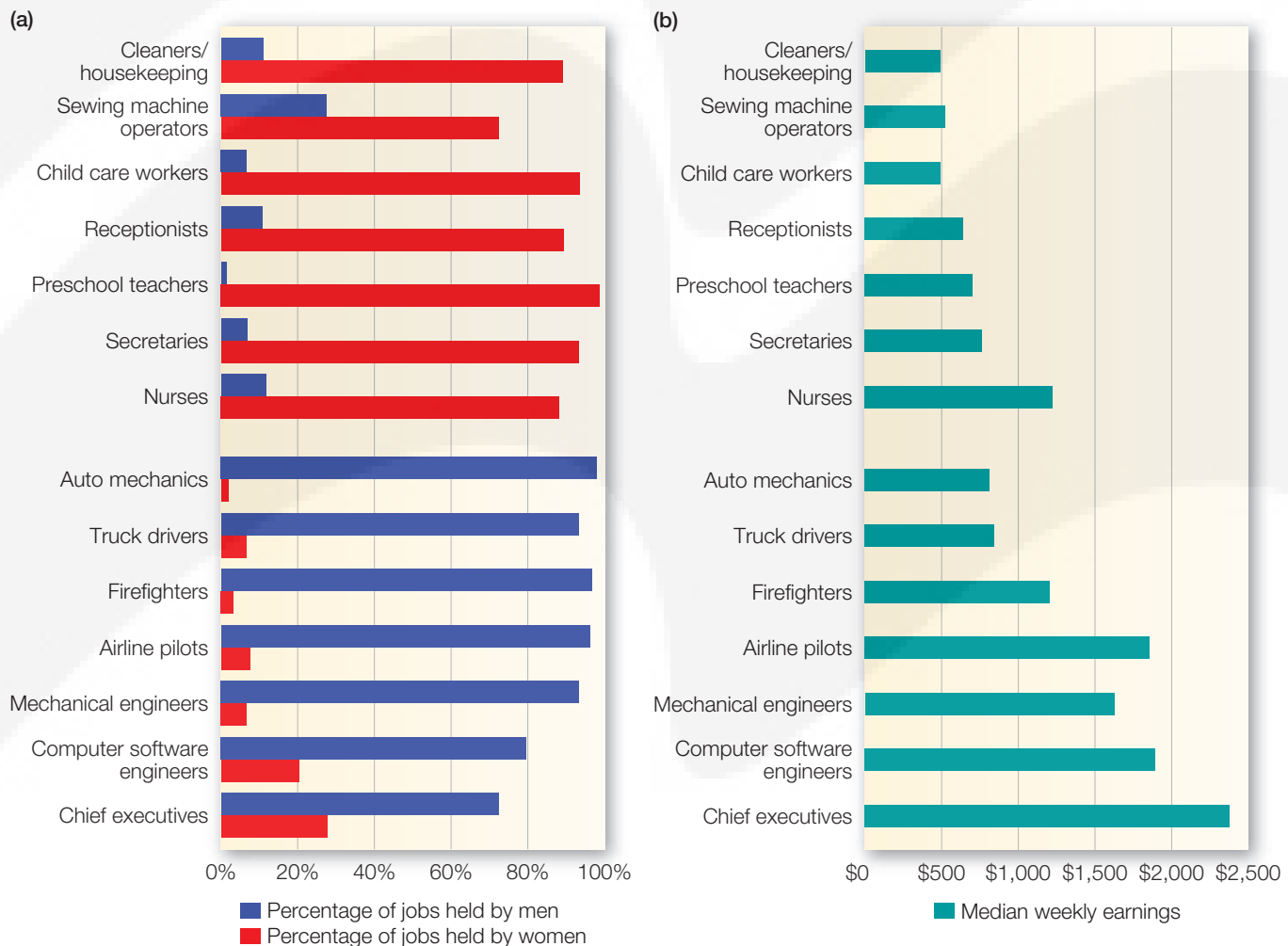
These findings indicate that in the contemporary world, we often see these subtler—or what are termed *modern*—forms of prejudice that disadvantage minorities. Because of America’s sordid history with slavery and explicit discrimination against African Americans, the study of modern forms of prejudice in the United States has focused largely on racial prejudice.

**Figure 10.6**

### Women Are Underrepresented in Higher-Paying Jobs

Women are underrepresented in some of the highest-paid fields, which perpetuates gender inequality in overall earnings.

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (a) <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>; (b) <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat39.htm>]

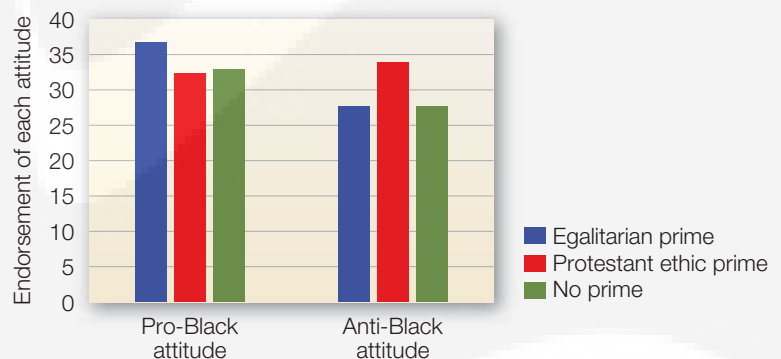


## Complexities of Modern Prejudice

Social psychologists have developed a number of related concepts to explain the subtler, more complex forms of prejudice that have emerged. Each in its own way emphasizes the need to understand how and why people might explicitly reject prejudiced attitudes but still harbor subtle biases. Here we focus on two: *ambivalent racism* and *aversive racism*.

**Ambivalent Racism** Contemporary prejudice against African Americans in the United States is often mixed with ambivalence (Katz & Hass, 1988). The term **ambivalent racism** refers to racial attitudes that are influenced by two clashing sets of values: a belief in *individualism*, that each person should be able to make it on his or her own, and a belief in *egalitarianism*, that all people should be given equal opportunities. The core idea of ambivalent racism is that many Whites simultaneously hold anti-Black and pro-Black attitudes that are linked to these contrasting values.

Depending on which set of values is primed, ambivalent people are likely to respond more strongly in one direction or the other. So how do you know which value people will affirm? Well, it depends on which value is currently most salient, or active (Katz & Hass, 1988). If people are thinking about values related to individualism, they tend to be more prejudiced, but if thinking about values related to egalitarianism, they tend to be less prejudiced. For example, when White participants were led to think about the Protestant ethic (a belief that emphasizes the individualistic value of hard work), they were more likely to report stronger anti-Black attitudes, but these individualistic thoughts did not influence their pro-Black attitudes (FIGURE 10.7). The pro-Black attitudes were no different from those of participants who received no priming. Thus, ambivalence remained, but the individualism prime shifted participants toward anti-Black attitudes. Conversely, when White participants were led to think about the value of humanitarianism, they were more likely to report pro-Black attitudes, but these humanitarian thoughts did not influence their anti-Black attitudes (again, as compared with the no-priming condition). Thus, again, ambivalence remained, but the humanitarian prime shifted participants toward more pro-Black attitudes.



**Ambivalent racism** The influence of two clashing sets of values on White Americans' racial attitudes: a belief in individualism and a belief in egalitarianism.

**Figure 10.7**

### Effects of Priming

When primed to reflect on their egalitarian values, White Americans report more positive attitudes toward Blacks, but when primed with the Protestant work ethic, their attitudes toward Blacks become more negative.

[Data from Katz & Hass, 1988]

**Aversive Racism** Sam Gaertner and Jack Dovidio's (1986) concept of **aversive racism** proposes that although most Whites support principles of racial equality and do not knowingly discriminate, they may at the same time possess conflicting, often nonconscious, negative feelings and beliefs about Blacks. Although they will consciously try to behave in line with their egalitarian values, in subtler situations, when decisions are complex and biases are easily rationalized, they may fall prey to the influence of prejudice, often without awareness that they are doing so.

For instance, discrimination is less likely to occur when applicants have especially strong or weak records (because the applicants' records do the talking) but is more likely to occur when applicants have mixed records. That is, discrimination occurs when a gray area allows race to play a role, but it can be justified through nonracial means (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). For example,

**Aversive racism** Conflicting, often nonconscious, negative feelings about African Americans that Americans may have, even though most do in fact support principles of racial equality and do not knowingly discriminate.

when a Black applicant had higher SAT scores but lower high school grades than a White applicant, high-prejudice Whites decided that high school grades were an especially important factor in college admissions decisions. But if the Black applicant had higher grades and lower SAT scores, then the high-prejudiced Whites valued those scores instead as the best indicator of future success (Hodson et al., 2002).

So prejudice is more likely to occur in situations when it can be justified by some other motive. But do all people do this, or are particular individuals most likely to act this way? To answer this question, a number of theories about prejudice suggest that it is critical to consider not just the attitudes that people are consciously willing or able to report but also those that might reside beneath their conscious awareness. Since the 1990s, there has been an explosion of interest in this concept of *implicit prejudice*.

### Implicit Prejudice

**Implicit prejudice** Negative attitudes or affective reactions associated with an outgroup for which the individual has little or no conscious awareness and that can be automatically activated in intergroup encounters.

The term **implicit prejudice** refers to negative attitudes toward a group of people for which the individual has little or no conscious awareness. Some people may choose not to admit their prejudices, whereas others may not be aware of them. Measures of implicit prejudice tap into attitudes that lie beneath the surface of what people report (Nosek et al., 2011). And, indeed, whereas a majority of White Americans don't report being prejudiced on explicit measures, most do show signs of having biases when their attitudes are assessed implicitly with either cognitive measures of implicit associations or physiological measures of affective responding (Cunningham, Johnson et al., 2004; Dovidio et al., 2001; Hofmann et al., 2005; Mendes et al., 2002).

**Physiological Measures of Bias** Measures of implicit prejudice tap into people's automatic affective response to a person or a group. Some measures do



## SOCIAL PSYCH OUT IN THE WORLD

### Do Americans Live in a Postracial World?

History was made in 2008, when the United States elected its first Black president. Less than 50 years after Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of his dream that his children would be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character, this dream seemed much closer to reality. With a multi-racial president having served two terms in the White House, many Americans began to wonder: Do we now finally live in a postracial world?

Probably not. Granted, the research we've reviewed in this chapter demonstrates that racial prejudice has changed considerably over time. The election of Barack Obama certainly signaled more positive attitudes toward African Americans. However, we've also learned in this chapter that in the contemporary world, prejudice often is ambivalent and manifests in subtle ways. Elections might be times when people try to

set aside biases to weigh the more established merits of different candidates. However, among undecided voters, implicit biases seem to play a stronger role in predicting decisions at the polls (Galdi et al., 2008; see also Greenwald, Smith, et al., 2009). Such findings suggest that negative biases still lie beneath the surface of people's consciously held values, beliefs, and intentions.

On the other hand, Barack Obama's presidency meant that every American citizen had a highly visible exemplar of a successful Black political leader. In this way, he may have tilted Americans' implicit associations of Blacks in a more positive direction. Indeed, there is some evidence that the election of Obama and exposure to his campaigns helped to reduce people's implicit racial bias, in part by providing a positive example of an African American that may counter many of the negative stereotypes that are so pervasive in mass media (Columb & Plant, 2011; Plant et al., 2009). When President Obama was the example that people brought to

this by indexing an immediate physiological reaction that people are unlikely to control or may find difficult to control. For example, when Whites are asked to imagine working on a project with a Black partner or a White partner, they often report a stronger preference for working with the Black partner. But their faces tell a different story. Electrodes connected to their brows and cheeks pick up subtle movements of the facial muscles that reveal a negative attitude when they think about working with a Black partner (Vanman et al., 2004). Similarly, when Whites are actually paired up to work with a Black partner, they show a cardiovascular response that is associated with threat: Their hearts pump more blood, and their veins and arteries contract (Mendes et al., 2002).

The brain also registers the threat response. The amygdala is the brain region that signals negative emotional responses, especially fear, to things in our environment. Whites who have a strong racial bias exhibit an especially pronounced amygdala response when they view pictures of Black men (Amodio, 2014; Phelps et al., 2000). Interestingly, however, if given more time, this initial negative attitude tends to get downregulated by the more rational dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (Cunningham, Johnson et al., 2004; Forbes et al., 2012). We'll further discuss why and how people go about controlling their prejudiced attitudes and emotions in chapter 11. For now, the primary point is that automatic negative bias leaks out in people's physiological responses.

**Cognitive Measures of Implicit Bias** Cognitive measures also tell us something about people's implicit attitudes. These measures take different forms, but they all rely on the same assumption: If you like a group, then you will quickly associate that group with good stuff; if you don't like a group, you will quickly associate that group with bad stuff. To assess such implicit associations, researchers prime people with members of different groups and measure how fast it takes them to identify good stuff and bad stuff (Dovidio et al., 2002; Fazio et al., 1995).

mind when they thought of Black people, they were less likely to be racially prejudiced.

However, we must be careful not to look at data like these and feel that we need do no more to rectify racial inequality. There are signs that the election of Obama in fact fostered a belief that Americans had achieved racial equality (Kaiser et al., 2009). Such a perception might allow people to justify keeping the status quo and not trying to change the disparities that do exist.

Obama's election also may have given Whites who are high in prejudice the moral credentials, so to speak, to think that enough has been done to improve racial equality, and they can therefore show stronger favoritism to Whites (Effron et al., 2009). For example, in one study (Effron et al., 2009), participants who varied in their level of racial prejudice indicated whether they would vote for Obama or McCain in the 2008 election or indicated whether they would have voted for Bush or Kerry in 2004. (This condition was included to

control for priming political orientation.) Subsequently, participants imagined that they were on a community committee with a budget surplus that could be allocated to two community organizations: one that primarily served a White neighborhood and one that primarily served a Black neighborhood.

When participants indicated that they would vote for Obama, especially those higher in prejudice turned around and allocated significantly less money to the organization that would serve the Black neighborhood and more money to the organization that would serve the White neighborhood. For people with strong racial biases, acknowledging and endorsing the success of a single outgroup member seems to come at a cost to broader policies that could benefit more people. The visible success of one person does not imply the success of the group as a whole. Clearly, more work needs to be done to fully realize Dr. King's dream.


For example, Fazio and colleagues (1995) reasoned that if Whites experience an automatic negative reaction to Blacks, then exposure to photographs of African Americans should speed up evaluations of negative words and slow down evaluations of positive words. To test this hypothesis, they presented participants with positive words (e.g., *wonderful*) and negative words (e.g., *annoying*) and then asked them to indicate as fast as they could whether each was good or bad by pressing the appropriate button. Each word was immediately preceded by a brief presentation of a photograph of a Black person or a White person. The results revealed substantial individual differences in White participants' automatic reactions: For many White participants, being primed with Black faces significantly sped up reactions to negative words and slowed down reactions to positive words. Other White participants did not show this pattern, and some even showed the opposite. More importantly, the more closely these people seemed to associate "Black" with "bad," the less friendly they were during a later 10-minute interaction with a Black experimenter.

Since the late 1990s, the most commonly used measure of implicit attitudes has been the *implicit association test*, or IAT (Greenwald et al., 1998), which we introduced in chapter 3. The basic logic of this test is that if you associate group A with "bad," then it should be pretty easy to group together instances of group A and instances of bad stuff, and it should be relatively difficult to group together instances of group A and instances of good stuff. This basic paradigm can be used to assess implicit associations with any group you can think of, but it has most commonly been used for race, so let's take that example. (You can take this and other versions of the IAT yourself by visiting the Project Implicit web site, at [www.projectimplicit.com](http://www.projectimplicit.com).)

In the Race IAT, people are instructed to do some basic categorization tasks (FIGURE 10.8). The first two rounds are just practice getting used to the categories. For the first round, you are presented with White and Black faces one at a time, and you just need to click on one button if the face is Black and another button if the face is White. In the second round, you categorize positive ("rainbow," "present") and negative ("vomit," "cancer") words by clicking on one button if the word is positive and a different button if the word is negative. In the third round, the task becomes more complicated as you are presented with faces or words, one at a time. Deciding as quickly as possible, you must then click one button if what you see is either a Black face or a positive word but a different button if you see either a White face or a negative word. When your cognitive network links "Black" with "bad," it's relatively hard to use the same button to categorize Black faces along with positive words without either slowing down or making lots of category errors. In contrast, if

"Black" and "bad" are closely associated in your cognitive network, you should find it much easier to use the same button to indicate that you see either a Black face or negative word, the task required in a fourth round. If you're faster with "Black" and "bad" than "Black" and "good," you're showing associations that are predictive of implicit bias.

**What We've Learned from Measuring Implicit Bias.** Research using the IAT has shown that although implicit bias has been trending down (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019), as of 2015, 48% of White and 42% of Biracial adults showed at least a slight implicit bias toward Whites, whereas

 **LaunchPad**  
Video Activity: The Implicit Association Test

 **LaunchPad**  
Science of Everyday Life:  
Implicit Association Test

**Figure 10.8**

### A Classic Measure of Implicit Racism

The Implicit Association Test measures the relative difficulty people can have in automatically associating Black faces with good thoughts.

[Data from Greenwald et al., 1998]



45% of Black adults showed at least a slight bias toward Blacks (Morin, 2015). What is less clear is what these associations mean. Some researchers have criticized the measure for confounding the tendency to associate “Black” and “bad” with the tendency to associate “White” and “good” (Blanton & Jaccard, 2006; Blanton et al., 2006). However, other evidence suggests that IAT scores do reliably assess responses that are predictive of behavior (Greenwald, Smith et al., 2009; Greenwald et al., 2015; Kurdi et al., 2019; LeBel & Paunonen, 2011). Even if we grant that the IAT is a reliable measure, some dispute continues about what it taps into. For example, people actually show stronger racial biases when they know the measure is supposed to reveal their racial biases (Frantz et al., 2004). Anxiety about being labeled racist might actually make it more difficult for people to perform the task. In addition, some researchers have noted that an association of “Black” with “bad” could mean a variety of things, such as the acknowledgment that Blacks are mistreated and receive bad outcomes or simply cultural stereotypes that might have little to do with one’s personal attitudes (Andreychik & Gill, 2012; Olson & Fazio, 2004). Other theorists suggest that implicit associations primarily tap into biases in the surrounding cultural context more than in the minds of individuals (Payne et al., 2017).

Even if we set aside the debate about the IAT in particular, a broader pattern emerges from the literature examining both implicit and explicit measures of prejudiced attitudes. Most notably, although they can be correlated, they are often quite distinct. In other words, people who have an implicit negative attitude toward a group might still explicitly report having positive feelings. But even more interesting is that people’s implicit attitudes seem to predict different kinds of behavior than their explicit attitudes. Explicit prejudice predicts overt or controllable expression of prejudice, whereas implicit prejudice better predicts subtler negative reactions to outgroup members.

For example, when researchers have analyzed interracial interactions between strangers, they have found that Whites’ explicit prejudice predicts *what* they say to a Black partner, but it’s their implicit prejudice that predicts *how* they say it (Dovidio et al., 2002). What this means is that even when explicitly well-intentioned Whites might try to say the right thing, their body language may communicate discomfort and avoidance (see also Amodio & Devine, 2006; McConnell & Leibold, 2001).

## SECTION REVIEW Has Prejudice Become Less Prevalent over Time?



Although overt discrimination is declining, modern, subtler forms of prejudice persist.

### Complexities of Modern Prejudice

- While there are examples of strides forward when considering overt expressions of prejudice, evidence of institutional discrimination reveals how biases can be so embedded in the structure of our society that discrimination can occur without intention.

### Ambivalent and Aversive Racism

- *Ambivalent racism* is the coexistence of positive and negative attitudes about Blacks resulting from clashing beliefs in individualism and egalitarianism.
- *Aversive racism* occurs when people have nonconscious, negative feelings even when they consciously support racial equality.

### Implicit Prejudice

- *Implicit prejudice* refers to automatically activated negative associations with outgroups.
- These associations can be revealed through physiological or cognitive measures, such as the IAT.

## Learning Outcomes

## Stereotyping: The Cognitive Companion of Prejudice

- Explain reasons that stereotypes develop.
- Identify reasons that people use stereotypes.
- Describe how stereotypes can skew a person's judgment.

A *stereotype* is a cognitive schema containing knowledge about and associations with a social group (Dovidio et al., 1996; Hamilton & Sherman, 1994). For example, our stereotype of the group *librarians* may contain our beliefs about the traits shared by members of that group (e.g., librarians are smart and well read), theories about librarians' preferences and attitudes (e.g., librarians probably like quiet), and examples of librarians we have known (e.g., Ms. Smith, from my school library). We may not want to admit it, but we all probably have stereotypes about dozens of groups, such as lawyers, gays, lesbians, truckers, grandmothers, goths, Russians, immigrants, and overweight individuals.

People around the globe often openly endorse certain stereotypes about various groups, but because stereotypes are so prominently promoted in cultures, even people who explicitly reject them may have formed implicit associations between groups and the traits their culture attributes to those groups. At a conscious level, you might recognize that not all librarians, if any



## SOCIAL PSYCH AT THE MOVIES

## Gender Stereotypes in Animated Films, Then and Now

Have you ever stopped to think about how the stories you learned as a child might have formed a foundation for the gender stereotypes you hold today? Children become aware of their own gender and begin showing a preference for gender-stereotypical toys and activities between two and three years of age (Encyclopedia of Children's Health, n.d.). Some of these beliefs and preferences are learned from observing their parents, peers, and siblings (e.g., Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002), but children's books, movies, and other media also play roles in reinforcing cultural messages about gender.

Consider some popular pre-women's movement children's movies. In the classic 1959 film *Sleeping Beauty*, the protagonist, Aurora, pretty and kind, cannot even regain consciousness without the love and assistance of her prince (Geronimi, 1959). Snow White cheerily keeps house and cleans up after the seven dwarfs in the 1937 animated film (Hand, 1937) until her status is elevated through marriage to a prince. *Cinderella*, released in 1950, feels more obviously oppressed by the forced domestic labor and humiliation by her stepmother and stepsisters, but again, she can only escape her fate through the love of a wealthy prince (Geronimi et al., 1950).

The common theme in these films is that beauty and innocence are the qualities a young woman should possess to achieve her Happily Ever After, which can happen only through

marriage to a handsome and well-heeled man. And older, unmarried, or widowed women are often cast as the villains in these stories, spurred to evil acts by jealousy of their younger rivals.

Reflecting cultural shifts that encourage greater agency in women, princess characters in films released more recently have become noticeably more assertive. Ariel, from *The Little Mermaid* (Clements & Musker, 1989), is willful and adventurous, eager to explore the world beyond her ocean home. But even so, she needs the permission of her authoritative father and the love of a man to realize her dreams. Along the way, she even trades her talent (her voice) to undergo severe changes to her body (legs instead of a tail) for the opportunity to woo her love interest.

In other modern animated films, the portrayals of princesses have become more complex and counter-stereotypic. First, there has been an effort to present characters from different cultures, with protagonists who are Middle Eastern (Jasmine in *Aladdin*, 1992), Native American (*Pocahontas*, 1995), Chinese (*Mulan*, 1998), African American (Tiana, *The Princess and the Frog*, 2009), Scottish (Merida, *Brave*, 2012), and Pacific Islander (*Moana*, 2016).

Second, the modern princesses in animated films are more often cast as heroic. In *Mulan*, the protagonist disguises herself as male so that she can use her fighting skills to save and rescue the male characters in the movie. In *Moana*, the titular character is an adventurous teenager who leaves the safety of her island to embark on a treacherous journey to

at all, really fit the mold of being bookish, quiet women who wear glasses. But simply hearing the word *librarian* is still likely to bring to mind these associated attributes, even if you're not consciously aware of it.

Finally, although we commonly refer to stereotyping as having false negative beliefs about members of a group, it should be clear from the librarian example that stereotypes don't have to be negative. They don't even have to be entirely false (see Jussim et al., 2015). Being well-read is a pretty positive trait, and the average librarian probably has read more than your average nonlibrarian. But even if we grant this possible difference in averages of these two groups, the assertion that *all* librarians are better read than *all* nonlibrarians is certainly false. So stereotyping goes awry because people typically overgeneralize a belief about a group to make a blanket judgment about virtually every member of that group.

Moreover, even though some stereotypes are positive, they can still have negative effects. Stereotypes can be benevolent on the surface but ultimately patronize the stereotyped group and suggest that negative stereotypes are not far behind (Siy & Cheryan, 2016).

save her people. Finally, the two *Frozen* films (2013 and 2019) tell the story of two strong and determined sisters. Elsa, the older sister, embraces her power to control ice and become a strong leader to Arendelle, and her little sister Anna bravely risks her own life to find and save Elsa. These newer princess stories highlight autonomy, strength, and independence for young women.

Of course, before we get too encouraged by these messages of equality, we might ponder whether these modern fairy tales reflect lower levels of hostile sexism toward women (gone are the evil witches and stepmothers in these more contemporary films) but still reinforce benevolent sexist beliefs about women. The female characters are still young, beautiful, and good, and their Happily Ever After still often involves getting the guy.

In fact, these benevolent views of women are manifested in children's movies more generally—if girls and women are portrayed at all, that is. Studies of G-rated family films have found that only about 30% of the speaking characters are female (Smith et al., 2010), a disparity that is also evident in prime-time television and has remained largely unchanged over 15 years (Sink & Mastro, 2017). Female characters are more likely to wear sexy or revealing clothing than their male counterparts (Sink & Mastro, 2017). Whereas male

characters are more often portrayed as having power and/or being funny, female characters are more commonly portrayed as having good motives and being attractive, although in an encouraging trend, they are also portrayed as being equally or even more intelligent (Smith et al., 2010).

It's likely that these stereotypic portrayals shape our gender schemas. A meta-analysis of more than 30 studies suggested that up to the mid-1990s, children and adults who watched more television also had more traditional views about gender (Herrett-Skjellum & Allen, 1996). Longitudinal studies have suggested that the causal arrow goes from exposure to television to gender stereotypes because the more television children watch, the more they accept gender stereotypes when they are much older (e.g., Kimball, 1986). Increasing scrutiny of these subtle ways that stereotypes are perpetuated raises



[Elisabeth LHOMELET/Getty Images]

questions for policy makers. Should films, television shows, and other media be rated on the basis of their stereotypic messages? The Swedish Film Institute thought so back in 2013. Swedish theaters began employing a feminist rating system known as the Bechdel test (Rising, 2013), which awards an A rating to films that portray two female characters talking to each other about something other than a man. It's not a perfect system, but it's a start in calling needed attention to gender bias at the movies.

## Where Do People's Stereotypic Beliefs Come From?

The cultural perspective suggests that we learn stereotypes over the course of socialization as they are transmitted by parents, friends, and the media. These stereotypes are often quite blatant in the media, but they may be represented subtly as well. For example, in American print ads, men tend to be higher in the page, and this positioning contributes to perceiving men as more dominant than women (Lamer & Weisbuch, 2019). Even small children have been shown to grasp the prevailing stereotypes of their culture (e.g., Aboud, 1988; Williams et al., 1975). People who don't endorse or actively believe stereotypes about other ethnic groups can still report on what those cultural stereotypes are (Devine, 1989). So even if we try not to accept stereotypes ourselves, we are likely to learn cultural stereotypes through prior exposure. For example, people who watch more news programming—which tends to overreport crime by minority perpetrators—are more likely to perceive Blacks and Latinos in stereotypic ways as poor and violent (Dixon, 2008a, 2008b; Mastro, 2003). This process of social learning explains how an individual picks up stereotypes both consciously and unconsciously. But how do these beliefs come to exist in a culture in the first place?

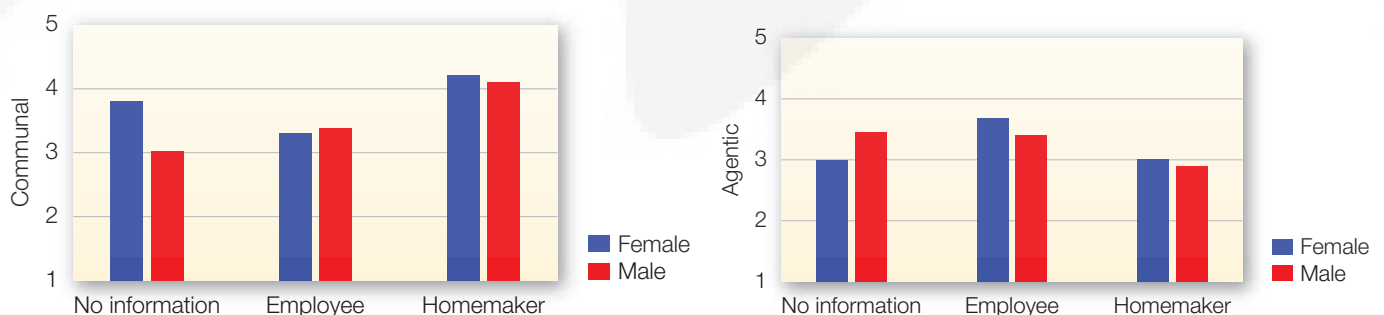
**A Kernel of Truth** Even when stereotypes are broad overgeneralizations of what a group is like, some (but not all) stereotypes may be based on actual differences in the average traits or behaviors associated with two or more groups. This is what Allport called the *kernel of truth hypothesis*. Even though this kernel might be quite small, with much more overlap between groups than there are differences, as perceivers, we tend to exaggerate any differences that might exist and apply them to virtually all members of the groups; indeed, the most prominent stereotypic attributes ascribed to a group are sometimes the most exaggerated (Eyal & Epley, 2017). However, Lee Jussim and colleagues (2015) have been particularly active in making the provocative case that many of the stereotypes people hold about groups *that have to do with specific facts*, such as the percentage of Asian Americans who complete college relative to the percentage other Americans who do so, are often quite accurate. In fact, they sometimes even underestimate (rather than overestimate) group differences. Consistent with the idea of stereotypes reflecting some level of accuracy, a recent large sample study of Americans showed that the Black-violent stereotype is stronger in states in which Blacks have a higher rate of having been convicted of violent crimes (Johnson & Chopik, 2019). However, this is just a correlation, and the causality could run the other way. It's possible that in states in which Blacks are viewed more negatively, they experience more poverty and prejudice, which contributes to their being convicted of more violent crimes.

But when it comes to personality traits, there is little support for the kernel of truth hypothesis. Consider a set of studies by Robert McCrae and colleagues (Terracciano et al., 2005). They assessed actual personalities in samples from 49 nations and then assessed the stereotypes about the personalities of people from those nations. There was good agreement across nations about what each nationality is like (e.g., Italians, Germans, Canadians). But the researchers found no correspondence between these stereotypes and the actual personalities of the people in those nations! You might think that Germans are more conscientious than Italians, but there's no evidence from the personality data that this is actually the case.

A complicating factor with the kernel of truth hypothesis is that even when facts seem to support an overall group difference, those facts don't necessarily imply innate differences. For example, it may be true that a disproportionate percentage of African American males are convicted of crimes. However, this does not mean that African Americans are more violent or immoral by nature. In most cultures, minority groups that are economically disadvantaged and targets of discrimination are more likely to get in trouble with the law. Minority-group members who are low in socioeconomic status also tend to do less well in school, but again, an attribution of innate intellectual inferiority is an unwarranted leap. So even in cases in which there is a kernel of truth, the stereotype usually leads to an unjustified jump to assumptions about essential differences in traits and abilities. And this causes problems because research suggests that attributing negative attributes to genetic differences increases prejudice (e.g., Suhay et al., 2017).

**Social Role Theory** If stereotypes don't arise from real differences in the underlying traits of different groups, where do they come from? One possibility is that they come from the roles and behaviors that societal pressures may impose on a particular group. Because of the fundamental attribution error, when people see us in a role, they jump to the conclusion that we have the traits implied by the behaviors we enact in that role. This is the basic assumption of Alice Eagly's (1987) social role theory: We infer stereotypes that describe who people are from the roles that we see people play.

Social role theory primarily has been used to explain the existence of persistent stereotypes about men and women. Men are stereotyped to be *agentic*—assertive, aggressive, and achievement oriented. Women are stereotyped to be *communal*—warm, empathic, and emotional. Are these stereotypes supported by gender differences in behavior? Yes. Men are more likely to be the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies. Women are more likely to be the primary caregivers of children. If we look only at these statistics, we will find more than a kernel of truth to the stereotype. But does this gender segregation in the boardroom and at the playground really imply sex differences in traits? Not necessarily. **FIGURE 10.9** shows what happened when people were asked to rate the traits listed in a brief description of an average man or an average woman, with either no information about the person's occupation, information that he or she was a full-time employee, or information that he or she was full-time homemaker (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). With no information, people readily applied their stereotypes, assuming that a woman is more communal than a man and that a man is more agentic than a woman. But this may just result from assumptions about social roles of men and women because occupation completely trumps anatomy: A homemaker is judged to be more communal and less agentic than an employee, regardless of that person's sex.



**Figure 10.9**

### How Social Roles Can Determine Stereotypes

With no other information, people assume that (a) women are more communal than men and that (b) men are more agentic than women. But social roles might explain these stereotypes: Homemakers (either male or female) are assumed to be more communal than employees, and employees (either male or female) are assumed to be more agentic.

The point here is that social roles play a large part in shaping our stereotypes. Social pressures can shape the roles in which various groups find themselves, and differences in stereotypes follow suit (Croft et al., 2015). The traditional stereotype of African Americans as lazy and ignorant was developed in the pre-Civil War South, when the vast majority of them were forced to work as slaves and excluded from schools. Similarly, Jews have been stereotyped as money hungry or cheap, a stereotype that developed in Europe at a time when Jews were not allowed to own land, and they needed to become involved in trade and commerce in order to survive economically. The particular stereotypes attached to groups are often a function of such historical and culturally embedded social constraints.

**The Stereotype Content Model** The stereotype content model posits that stereotypes develop on the basis of how groups relate to one another along two basic dimensions (Fiske et al., 2002). The first is status: Is the group perceived as having relatively low or high status in society, relative to other groups? The second is cooperation in a very broad sense that seems to encompass likability: Is the group perceived to have a cooperative/helpful or a competitive/harmful relationship with other groups in that society?

The answers to these questions lead to predictions about the traits that are likely to be ascribed to the group. Higher status brings assumptions about competence, prestige, and power, whereas lower status leads to stereotypes of incompetence and laziness. Groups that are seen as cooperative/helpful within the society are seen as warm and trustworthy, whereas groups that are viewed as competitive/harmful within the larger society are seen as cold and conniving (Cuddy et al., 2008). These two dimensions of evaluation, *warmth* and *competence*, have long been acknowledged to be fundamental to how we view others. When we consider that these dimensions are largely independent, we see that stereotypes can cluster together in one of four quadrants in a warmth-by-competence space (FIGURE 10.10).

People have different emotional reactions to groups whose stereotypes fit into one of these quadrants (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007). Groups that are stereotyped as personally warm but incompetent (e.g., elderly people, physically disabled people) elicit pity and sympathy. Groups perceived as low in warmth but high in competence (e.g., rich people, Asians, Jews, minority professionals) elicit envy and jealousy. Groups stereotyped in purely positive terms as both warm and competent tend to be ingroups or groups that are seen as the cultural norm in a society. To the degree that these groups are valued, they generally elicit pride and admiration. Finally, groups stereotyped in purely negative terms as both cold and incompetent (e.g., homeless people, drug addicts, welfare recipients) elicit disgust and scorn. Researchers have argued that this model is too simplistic because it fails to consider another fundamental dimension of stereotyping: perceptions of morality (Leach et al., 2007). In addition, stereotypes are often more complex than the model implies; for example, a group may be stereotyped as high in competence in some domains (e.g., sports) and low in others (e.g., academics).

**Illusory Correlations** In some instances, stereotypes develop from nothing more than a perceptual bias known as an **illusory correlation**. This is a faulty perception whereby people think that two things are related when in reality they are not. More specifically, an illusory correlation occurs when a person perceives that membership in a certain social group correlates—or goes hand in hand with—a certain type of behavior (Hamilton & Sherman, 1989; Costello & Watts, 2019).

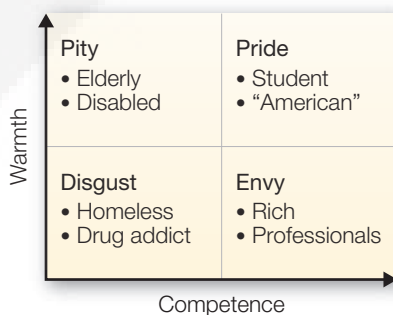
**Illusory correlation** A tendency to assume an association between two rare occurrences, such as being in a minority group and performing negative actions.

**Figure 10.10**

### The Stereotype Content Model

According to the stereotype content model, the stereotypes we have of different groups can range along two dimensions: competence and warmth. As a result, we have different emotional reactions to different types of groups.

[Data from Fiske et al., 2002]



These kinds of illusory correlations occur when two things that are generally rare or distinctive co-occur in close proximity to one another. When strange or unusual things happen, our attention is drawn to them because they stand out. And when two unusual things co-occur, our mind automatically assumes a connection. For most majority-group members, minority-group members are distinctive. Also, most people, regardless of their group membership, tend to find socially undesirable behaviors distinctive. (Fortunately, most of the time, people do good things rather than bad things!) So when ingroup members see outgroup members acting negatively—for example, in news reports about Black men accused of violent crimes—two distinctive features of the situation, a minority individual and an undesirable behavior, grab their attention. This doubly distinctive perception results in believing the two attributes go together, even when the minority group is no more likely than the majority group to engage in bad behavior (Hamilton et al., 1985).

### Why Do We Apply Stereotypes?

We have looked at where stereotypes come from, and now we consider why we apply and maintain them. Research reveals that stereotypes have four primary psychological functions.

**1. Stereotypes Are Cognitive Tools for Simplifying Everyday Life** People rely on stereotypes to simplify social perception. It would take a lot of effort to assess every person we interact with solely on the basis of individual characteristics and behaviors. Stereotypes allow people to draw on their beliefs about the traits that characterize typical group members to make inferences about what a given group member is like or how the person is likely to act. Imagine that you have two neighbors, one a librarian and the other a veterinarian. If you had a book title on the tip of your tongue, you would more likely consult the librarian than the vet—unless it was a book about animals! In other words, stereotyping is a cognitive shortcut that allows people to draw social inferences quickly and conserve limited cognitive resources while navigating a pretty complex social environment (Taylor, 1981). If stereotyping does in fact conserve mental resources, then people should be more likely to fall back on their stereotypes when they are stressed, tired, under time pressure, or otherwise cognitively overloaded. Many lines of research have shown that this indeed is the case (e.g., Kruglanski & Freund, 1983; Macrae et al., 1993).

And if stereotypes simplify impression formation, using them should leave people with more cognitive resources left over to apply to other tasks. To test this, Neil Macrae and colleagues (Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen, 1994) showed participants a list of traits and asked them to form an impression of the person being described. In forming these impressions, people were quicker and more accurate if they were also given each person's occupation. It's easier to remember that Julian is creative and emotional if you also know he is an artist because artists are stereotyped as possessing those characteristics. But having these labels to hang your impression on also frees up your mind to focus on other tasks. In this study, the other task was an audio travelogue about Indonesia that participants were later tested on. Those who knew the occupations of the people they learned about while they were also listening to the audio travelogue not only remembered more about the people but also remembered more about Indonesia.



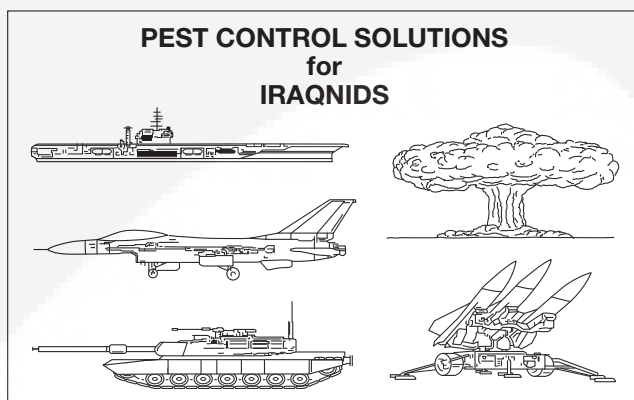
▲ The idea that stereotypes are mental heuristics that we fall back on to save time in social perception has been turned into a tongue-in-cheek T-shirt message.

**Justification suppression model** The idea that people endorse and freely express stereotypes in part to justify their own negative affective reactions to outgroup members.

**Dehumanization** The tendency to hold stereotypic views of outgroup members as animals rather than as humans.



(a)



(b)

**Figure 10.11**

Propaganda used by Americans during World War II (a) and during the 1991 Persian Gulf War (b) to dehumanize Japanese and Iraqi people, respectively.

[Part (a): U.S. National Archives and Records Administration]

**2. Stereotypes Justify Prejudice and Discrimination** Stereotypes aren't mere by-products of our limited cognitive capacities. People also are sometimes motivated to hang on to beliefs to justify their prejudices. One example is that once a country has declared war on another nation, stereotypes of that nation become more negative. In addition, encountering members of outgroups sometimes automatically elicits potent negative feelings, such as fear and disgust (e.g., Esses et al., 1993). People may generate a negative stereotype of a group to justify their feelings.

According to the **justification suppression model** of prejudice expression (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), stereotypes can provide people with supposedly acceptable explanations for having negative feelings about a group. If, for example, a person stereotypes all Hispanics as aggressive, then he can justify why he feels frightened around Hispanics. From this perspective, the negative feelings sometimes come first, and the stereotypes make those feelings seem acceptable—or even rational.

To test this idea, Chris Crandall and colleagues (2011) set up a situation in which they induced some people to have a negative feeling toward a group *prior* to forming a stereotype about that group. They did this by repeatedly pairing a group that participants knew nothing about—people from the country Eritrea—with unrelated negative words or images (e.g., sad faces) to create an implicit negative reaction to the group. In this way, half of the participants developed a negative affective association toward Eritreans, whereas those in a control group did not. Afterward, participants were given a list of traits, such as *dangerous*, *violent*, and *unfriendly*, and asked to indicate whether those traits were descriptive of people from Eritrea. Participants trained to have a negative affective reaction toward Eritreans were more likely than those in the control condition to stereotype Eritreans as cold and threatening. After all, if the people of Eritrea are perceived as cold and threatening, then one's negative feelings suddenly seem justified.

**Dehumanization.** Stereotypes justify negative behavior as well as negative feelings. One common way people justify negative behavior is by dehumanizing outgroup members. **Dehumanization** is viewing outgroup members as less than fully human. The most extreme form of dehumanization is to compare outgroup members directly with nonhuman animals. Blatant examples of this can be seen in the way that nations portray groups they intend to kill. During World War II, Nazi propaganda portrayed European Jews as disease-carrying rats, Americans portrayed the Japanese as vermin (FIGURE 10.11a), and the Japanese portrayed Americans as bloodthirsty eagles mauling innocent Japanese civilians. One of our students who served in the American military during the 1991 Persian Gulf War showed us a flyer dehumanizing Iraqi people (FIGURE 10.11b) that was circulated among the soldiers. In two studies of actual police officers, Goff and colleagues (2014) found that the more an officer implicitly associated Black people with apes, the more likely that officer was to have a record of using force on Black children more than on children of other groups.

These tendencies to think about members of outgroups as nonhuman animals have likely been partly responsible for fueling many historical examples of horrible treatment of outgroups, such as slavery, bombings, and genocide (Kteily & Bruneau, 2017). One study, for example, showed that hearing about acts of terrorism by Muslims against American and British targets in 2013 made American and British participants more likely to dehumanize Muslims and support violent countermeasures such as bombing entire countries believed to be harboring terrorists (Kteily et al., 2015).

As we discussed in our coverage of cognitive dissonance (chapter 6), when people act in ways that fall short of their moral standards, they often attempt to seek justifications. In times of extreme intergroup conflict, when innocent people are being killed, perpetrators of that violence—and even those standing by—often reduce the dissonance by regarding the victims as subhuman and therefore less deserving of moral consideration. Indeed, Castano and Giner-Sorolla (2006) found that when people were made to feel a sense of collective responsibility for their ingroup's mass killing of an outgroup, they viewed members of that outgroup as less human.

Once the outgroup has been reduced to animals who do not deserve moral consideration, the perpetrators feel less inhibited about committing further violence (Kelman, 1976; Kteily et al., 2015; Staub, 1989; Viki et al., 2013). Indeed, in one study, people were more likely to administer a higher intensity of shock to punish people described in dehumanizing (i.e., animalistic) terms than people described in distinctively human terms (Bandura et al., 1975).

**Infrahumanization.** A subtler form of dehumanization is **infrahumanization** (Leyens, Paladino et al., 2000). When people infrahumanize outgroup members, they do not compare them directly with nonhuman animals. Rather, they perceive those outgroup members as lacking qualities viewed as being unique to humans. These qualities include complex human emotions such as hope, humiliation, nostalgia, and sympathy. People attribute these uniquely human emotions more to members of their ingroup than to outgroup members (Gaunt et al., 2002; Leyens et al., 2001).

Infrahumanization has important repercussions for people's treatment of outgroup members. Cuddy, Rock, and Norton (2007) looked at people's desire to help with relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, which caused massive destruction to parts of the southeastern United States in 2005. Participants in their study were less likely to infer that racial outgroup members who suffered from the hurricane were experiencing uniquely human emotions, such as remorse and mourning, than were racial ingroup members. The more participants infrahumanized the hurricane victims in this way, the less likely they were to report that they intended to take actions to help those individuals recover from the devastation. These effects mirror other evidence indicating that Whites assume that Blacks who have faced hardships feel less pain than Whites who have faced similar hardships (Hoffman & Trawalter, 2016; Hoffman et al., 2016).

**Sexual Objectification.** Women as a group are subject to a specific form of dehumanization known as **sexual objectification**, which consists of thinking about women in a narrow way, as if their physical appearance were all that matters. Based on early theorists such as the psychoanalyst Karen Horney and the philosopher Simone de Beauvoir, Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts's (1997) **objectification theory** notes that in most if not all societies, women are objectified

**Infrahumanization** The perception that outgroup members lack qualities viewed as being unique to human beings, such as language, rational intelligence, and complex social emotions.

**Sexual objectification** The tendency to think about women in a narrow way as objects rather than as full humans, as if their physical appearance were all that matters.

**Objectification theory** A theory which proposes that the cultural value placed on women's appearance leads people to view women more as objects than as full human beings.

by being judged primarily on the basis of their physical appearance. Although objectification does not involve equating women with animals, it is a way of denying that women possess the psychological characteristics that make them fully human, such as a unique point of view and a complex mental life.

In assessing this idea, researchers found that well-known women, but not men, were perceived more like objects—cold, incompetent, and without morality—when participants were asked to focus on the women’s appearance than when they were asked to focus on the women as people (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Heflick et al., 2011). For example, in studies carried out during Barack Obama’s first term as president, they found that the first lady, Michelle Obama, was perceived as lower in warmth, competence, and morality when participants focused on her appearance. In contrast, focusing on President Obama’s appearance did not have a similar effect on ratings of him.

Objectification of women can help justify exploitation of them. Integrating objectification theory and terror management theory, Jamie Goldenberg and colleagues proposed that objectification also may help people avoid acknowledging the fact that we humans are animals and therefore mortal (e.g., Goldenberg et al., 2009). Portraying women in an idealized (often airbrushed) way and only as objects of beauty or sexual appeal reduces their connection to animalistic physicality. Supporting this view, Goldenberg and colleagues have shown that reminding both men and women of their mortality, or of the similarities between humans and other animals, increases negative reactions to women who exemplify the creaturely nature of the body: women who are overtly sexual, menstruating, pregnant, or breast-feeding. This line of research suggests that objectifying women as idealized symbols of beauty and femininity and rejecting women who seem to fall short of those ideals helps both men and women deny their own animal nature.

**3. Stereotypes Justify the Status Quo** Stereotypes don’t justify only our emotions and behavior; they also justify the status quo. Evidence suggests that the stereotypes we have of groups are often *ambivalent*—including positive traits alongside negative traits. High-status groups that are assumed to be competent are also more likely to be stereotyped as cold. Lower-status groups might be stereotyped as being less intelligent or successful but are also often seen as warm and friendly. According to *system justification theory*, these ambivalent stereotypes help maintain the status quo by justifying the way things are (Jost & Banaji, 1994). In some ways, this is the flip side of social role theory: We not only assume the traits people have by the roles they enact, we also assert that they *should* be in those roles because they have the traits that are needed for those roles.

System justification theory suggests that those who have high status in a society will often come to view those with lower status as being less intelligent and industrious than their own group to justify their own superior economic position. If advantaged members of a society didn’t generate such justifications, they would have to admit that deep injustices exist that they should all be working to rectify; such rectification would alter the status quo, with advantaged groups potentially losing their advantages and everyone experiencing upheaval.

Although higher-status people show a stronger tendency to justify the status quo, those who are disadvantaged sometimes do so as well. For example, when people are made to feel that the stability of their nation is in question, members of both lower- and higher-status ethnic groups more strongly endorse the belief that the higher-status group is relatively more competent and that the lower-status group is relatively warmer (Jost et al., 2005).

How do these complementary stereotypes play into the motivation to justify existing status differences among groups? By favoring ambivalent stereotypes, groups that are disadvantaged in terms of their status in society can still pride themselves on their warmth. With that positive stereotype to hold on to, the negative stereotypes don't seem so bad. Similarly, groups with power and status can assuage any guilt by acknowledging the warmth of those with lower status. We see this most strikingly with gender. Modern theories of gender bias point to **ambivalent sexism** (Glick & Fiske, 1996), which pairs *hostile* beliefs about women (that women are incompetent or push too hard for gender equality) with *benevolent* beliefs (that women are pure and more compassionate than men). Although women primed to think about hostile sexism are motivated to fight for greater gender equality, reminders of benevolent sexism seem to only encourage their support for the status quo (Becker & Wright, 2011).

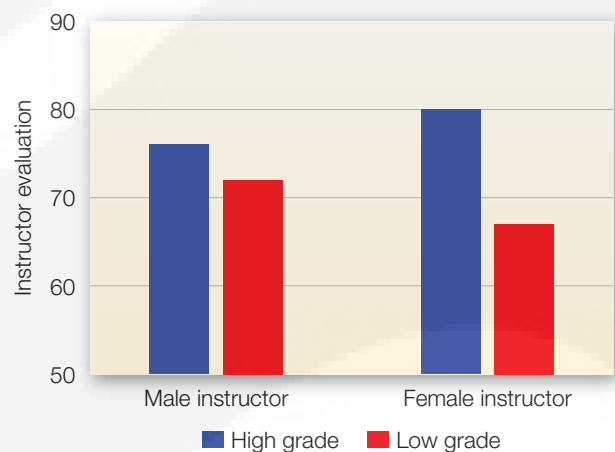
Research also suggests that people prefer outgroup members to conform to prevailing stereotypes. Women who are assertive and direct are often judged negatively, whereas the same actions by men lead to admiration (Rudman, 1998). Terror management researchers (Schimel et al., 1999) have shown that reminding people of their mortality, which motivates people to want their worldviews upheld, leads white heterosexual Americans to prefer Germans, African Americans, and gay men who conform to prevailing American stereotypes of these groups over those who behave counterstereotypically.

**4. Stereotypes Are Self-Esteem Boosters** As described previously, self-esteem threats not only increase negative feelings about outgroup members but also lead to negative beliefs about them and make negative stereotypes of such groups more accessible to consciousness (Spencer et al., 1998). Viewing members of outgroups as stupid, lazy, cowardly, or immoral can help people feel better about themselves (Fein & Spencer, 1997). Other evidence also supports the role of stereotyping in boosting the perceiver's self-esteem. For example, if a member of a disliked outgroup praises us, we shouldn't be too motivated to apply a negative stereotype. But what happens when that person gives us negative feedback?

Research by Lisa Sinclair and Ziva Kunda (1999) showed that we selectively focus on different ways of categorizing people, depending on these self-serving motivations. After all, people belong to myriad different social categories, and the intersectionality of multiple identities means that motivation can play a determining role in shaping when a person is categorized in one group or another. In their study, White Canadian participants imagined receiving either praise or criticism from a Black doctor or a White doctor. The researchers measured whether stereotypic knowledge was automatically brought to mind. Participants who were praised by the Black doctor activated positive stereotypes of doctors but not negative stereotypes about Blacks. However, participants who were criticized by the Black doctor activated the negative stereotype of Blacks and not the positive stereotype of doctors.

Further research suggests that once activated, these stereotypes likely bias people's judgments. In one study, for example, female and male faculty members received similar course evaluations from students who did well in their courses, but students who received lower grades evaluated female instructors as less competent than their male peers (FIGURE 10.12; Sinclair & Kunda, 2000).

**Ambivalent sexism** The pairing of *hostile* beliefs about women with *benevolent* but patronizing beliefs about them.



**Figure 10.12**

### Self-Esteem Threat and Gender Bias

Although student evaluations of male and female instructors are equivalent among students who perform well, students who receive a lower grade rate female instructors as less competent than male instructors.

[Data from Sinclair & Kunda, 1999]



## THINK ABOUT

[Bettmann/Getty Images]

**LaunchPad**  
Science of Everyday Life:  
Self-Esteem Threats

## How Do Stereotypes Come into Play?

So far, we have covered where stereotypes come from and why we tend to rely on them. But how do they actually work? Take a look at the guy in the photo. What's your impression of him? How did you form that impression? You might see the jacket, collared shirt, and neatly trimmed hair and think he's a young, attractive, professional man. You've just categorized him on the basis of age, appearance, educational level, and gender. He looks to be White, so we can throw a racial categorization in as well. From this, you are likely to activate some relevant stereotypes—intelligent, competent, well liked. Because you have no reason not to, you will probably be happy to apply these judgments to him. In general, we love sizing people up, and this guy seems approachable. If he asked you to help him load a dresser into his van, you would, right?

Unfortunately, many young women did just that. They categorized him as you probably did. They had no way of knowing one additional group he belonged to—serial killers. The man in the photo is Ted Bundy, who brutally raped and murdered more than 30 women, mostly college students, during the 1970s. It is likely that the categorizations activated by his appearance helped him carry out his heinous crimes.

Research has delved into the process by which we initially *categorize* a person as belonging to a group, *activate* stereotypes associated with that group, and then *apply* those stereotypes in forming judgments of that person. Let's learn more about how this process works.

**Categorization** The categories we attend to most readily for people are gender, age, and other cues that might signal how we should treat one another (Fiske & Taylor, 2008; Kurzban et al., 2001). Because telling friend from foe was a life-or-death decision for our evolutionary ancestors, our brains have also adapted to form these categorizations using whatever cues will quickly do the job. We may be particularly likely to categorize an individual as an ingrouper or outgroup by relying on cues such as accent, mode of dress, and adornment, along with other physical features, such as skin tone, body shape, and hair color. But our social categories are flexible enough to be cued by a host of things. We identify sports teams using different-colored uniforms and can guess sexual orientation based on how a person walks (Johnson & Tassinari, 2005; Johnson et al., 2007).

The categorization process isn't entirely objective. A perceiver's stereotypes and prejudices can shape how someone is categorized, especially when a person's group identity is ambiguous (Freeman & Johnson, 2016). For example, to the degree that people tend to stereotypically associate young Black men with anger, they are quicker to categorize an angry face as being Black if the person's race is rather ambiguous. Mixed-race individuals are often categorized as being members of a minority group even when they are half White (Blascovich et al., 1997; Halberstadt et al., 2011; Ho et al., 2011).

Once we categorize a person as an outgroup member, we tend to view that person in stereotypic ways. One reason this happens is that the very act of categorizing makes us more likely to assume that all members of the outgroup category are alike. Merely by categorizing people into outgroups, we tend to view those individuals as being more similar to each other—that is, more homogeneous—than they really are and as being more similar to each other than ingroup members are to each other (Linville et al., 1989; Park & Rothbart,

1982; Quattrone, 1986). This tendency is called the **outgroup homogeneity effect**. If you've ever heard someone say "Those people are all alike," you have probably witnessed this effect.

The primary explanation for the outgroup homogeneity effect is that we are very familiar with members of our own group and therefore tend to see them as unique individuals. We have less detailed knowledge about members of outgroups, so it's easier simply to assume that they are all alike. In addition, we often know outgroup members only in a particular context or role. For example, a suburban White American might know African Americans mainly as sports figures, hip-hop artists, and criminals on TV. This role-restricted knowledge also encourages viewing outgroup members as being less diverse than they actually are.

In one demonstration of the outgroup homogeneity effect, psychologists (Quattrone & Jones, 1980) asked university students to watch a video of a student from the participant's own university or from a different university make a decision (e.g., between listening to rock or classical music). The participants were then asked to estimate what percentage of people from that person's university would make the same decision. They estimated that a higher percentage of the person's fellow students would have the same musical preference when they were from a different university than when they were from the participants' own university. So when you assume that "they are all alike," you can infer that what one likes, they all like, but you probably also like to believe that "we" are a diverse assortment of unique individuals.

The outgroup homogeneity effect not only extends to the inferences we make about a person's attitudes but also leads to very real perceptual confusions. We actually do *see* outgroup members as looking more similar to each other, a phenomenon that can have profound consequences for the accuracy of eyewitness accounts (Wells et al., 2006). This type of perceptual bias was first illustrated in a series of studies in which participant ingroup and outgroup members interacted in a group discussion (Taylor et al., 1978). When later asked to remember who said what—that is, to match a comment with a person—the participants made an interesting pattern of errors. They were more accurate at remembering ingroup statements than outgroup statements. But more telling, they were likelier to mistake one outgroup member for another. These confusions happen when we group other people together on the basis of visible categories, such as gender, race, age, skin tone, and attractiveness, but they even happen when we group others on the basis of nonvisible categories, such as sexual orientation and attitudes (e.g., Klauer & Wegener, 1998; van Knippenberg & Dijksterhuis, 2000).

**Stereotype Activation** After we make an initial categorization, the stereotypes that we associate with that category are often automatically brought to mind, or *activated*, whether we *want* them to be or not. Sure, some folks have blatant negative beliefs about others that they are happy to bend your ear about. Others want to believe that they never ever judge people on the basis of stereotypes. Most of us probably are somewhere in the middle. Individuals raised and exposed to the same cultural information all have knowledge of

**Outgroup homogeneity effect** The tendency to view individuals in outgroups as being more similar to each other than they really are.



I don't know officer: They all look alike to me...

[Hagen/Cartoonstock]

which stereotypes are culturally associated with which groups (Devine, 1989). This information has made it into those mental file folders in our head, even if we have tried to flag it as false and malicious. When we meet someone from Wisconsin, we mentally pull up our Wisconsin folder on the state to be better prepared for discussing the intricacies of cheese making and the Green Bay Packers. We do this unconsciously and without necessarily intending to; the association is ingrained and automatic, based on cultural learning.

Patricia Devine (1989) provided an early and influential demonstration of automatic stereotype activation. She reasoned that anything that reminds White Americans of African Americans would activate the trait *aggressive* because it is strongly associated with the African American stereotype. To test this hypothesis, she subliminally exposed White participants to 100 words. Each word was presented so briefly (for only 80 milliseconds) that participants could not detect the words and experienced them as mere flashes of light. Depending on which condition participants were in, 80% (or 20%) of the words—some very explicit—were related to the African American stereotype (e.g., *lazy*, *ghetto*, *slavery*, *welfare*, *basketball*, *unemployed*), while the rest of the words were neutral.

Then, as part of an apparently separate experiment, participants read a paragraph describing a person named Donald, who behaved in ways that could be seen as either hostile or merely assertive. Participants primed with the Black stereotype interpreted Donald's ambiguous behaviors as more hostile than did those who didn't get this prime. Even though *aggressive* was not primed outright, because it is part of the stereotype schema for African Americans, priming that stereotype cued people to perceive the next person they encountered as being aggressive.

Importantly, this effect was the same for those who reported low and high levels of prejudice toward African Americans. However, it is important to clarify that Devine's study primed people directly with stereotypes about Blacks, not simply with the social category "Blacks" or a photo of a Black individual. Other research suggests that some people are less likely to activate stereotypic biases automatically. For example, Lepore and Brown (1997) showed that people with stronger prejudices activate a negative stereotype about Blacks when they are simply exposed to the category information (i.e., the word *Blacks*), whereas those who are low in prejudice don't show this activation at all.

Additional research has suggested that the goal of being egalitarian can itself be implicitly activated when people encounter an outgroup and can help keep negative stereotypes from coming to mind (Moskowitz, 2010; Moskowitz & Li, 2011; Sassenberg & Moskowitz, 2005). The takeaway message seems to be that although low-prejudice individuals may be aware of culturally prevalent stereotypes about outgroups, they often do not activate those stereotypes.

### How Do Stereotypes Contribute to Bias?

Once stereotypes are activated, we use them to perceive and make judgments about others in ways that confirm, rather than disconfirm, them. Stereotypes influence information processing at various stages, from the first few milliseconds of perception to the way we remember actions years in the future. Let's take a closer look at how stereotypes color people's understanding of others in ways that can have very important consequences.



## APPLICATION

### Stereotypes Influence Perception

Just after midnight on February 4, 1999, four New York City police officers were in pursuit of a serial rapist believed to be African American. They approached a 23-year-old African immigrant, Amadou Diallo, in front of his Bronx apartment building. Assuming that the police would want to see his identification, Diallo reached into his jacket and pulled out his wallet. One of the officers saw the situation differently and called out, “Gun!” The officers fired 41 bullets, 19 of which struck Diallo, killing him. Bruce Springsteen wrote a song about the incident, “American Skin (41 Shots).” The officers were acquitted of any wrongdoing by a jury in Albany, New York (about 150 miles from New York City), a decision that sparked public protest. The city eventually settled a wrongful-death lawsuit by Diallo’s family for \$3 million. Many factors likely played roles in the tragedy, but one thing is clear: In his hand Diallo held a wallet that was mistaken for a gun. Can research on stereotyping help us understand how this could happen?

Yes. In fact, this event inspired a line of research on what has come to be called the **shooter bias**. This bias has to do with the stereotyped association of Blacks with violence and crime (e.g., Eberhardt et al., 2004; Payne, 2001). We know that people process stereotype-consistent information more quickly than stereotype-inconsistent information, all else being equal. What is surprising is how quickly stereotypes can exert this influence on perception.

In three studies (Correll et al., 2002), White American participants played a video game in which they were shown photographs of Black and White men holding an object (sample images appear in **FIGURE 10.13**) and were asked to

**Shooter bias** The tendency to mistakenly see objects in the hands of Black men as guns.

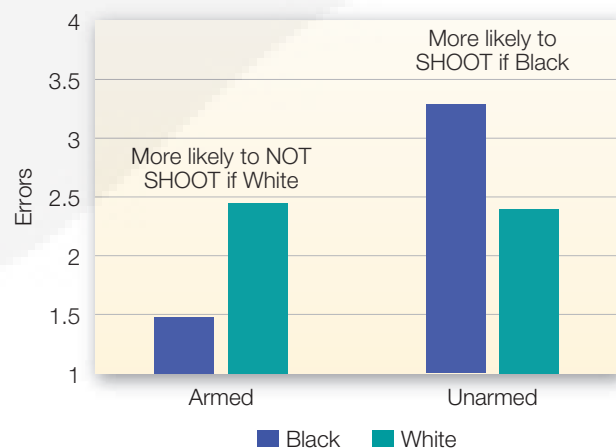
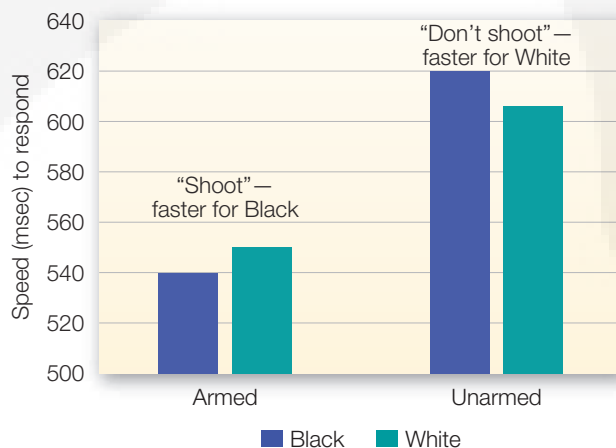


**Figure 10.13**

### The Shooter Bias

In studies that document the shooter bias, participants play a video game in which they are instructed to shoot at anyone who is armed but to avoid shooting anyone who is unarmed.

[Photos: Bernd Wittenbrink, University of Chicago, Center for Decision Research]



press the “shoot” button if the individual was holding a gun and the “don’t shoot” button if the individual was not holding a gun. The experimenters predicted that White participants would be faster to shoot an armed person if he were Black than if he were White. In addition, they should be faster to make the correct decision to not shoot an unarmed person if he was White rather than Black. The bar graph on the left in **FIGURE 10.13** shows that this is just what happened. When in another study (shown in the right graph of **FIGURE 10.13**) participants were forced to make decisions under more extreme time pressure, they made the same kind of error that the police made when they shot Diallo. That is, participants were more likely to shoot an unarmed Black man than they were to shoot an unarmed White man. Evidence from these studies suggests that these effects resulted more from the individual’s knowledge of the cultural stereotype that Blacks are dangerous than from personal prejudice toward Blacks. In fact, in a follow-up study, the researchers found that even Black participants showed these same shooter biases.

Further studies using the same shooter-game paradigm have revealed that the shooter bias is affected by a number of additional factors. People show a stronger shooter bias if the context itself is threatening—say, a dark street corner rather than a sunlit church (Correll et al., 2011). It’s also stronger when the Blacks in the photos look more prototypically Black—in other words, when they have darker skin and more typically Afrocentric features (Ma & Correll, 2010). This finding reveals part of a general tendency for stereotypes to be applied more strongly to those who seem most prototypical of a group. In fact, anything that reinforces, justifies, or increases the accessibility of a racial stereotype strengthens the likelihood that the stereotype will be applied (Correll et al.,

2007). Research suggests that people make these mistakes of misidentifying an object as a gun when it’s in the hands of someone who is Black rather than White even when perceiving 5-year-old children (Todd et al., 2016). No wonder women like Iesha Evans, a 28-year-old mother of a 5-year-old son, came out to protest police brutality in the wake of several high-profile police shootings of Black men in the summer of 2016.

The stereotype of African American men as threatening leads to another erroneous perception that may contribute to police overreacting to African American men they encounter. A series of studies has shown that non-Black Americans tend to overestimate the physical size and strength of young Black men (Wilson et al., 2017).

Law-enforcement officials across the nation have become interested in the problem of racial bias, and some have teamed up with researchers to combat these effects. In one shooter-game study of police officers and community members, both were faster to shoot an armed target if he was Black than if he was White. But police officers were less likely than community members to shoot an unarmed Black target (Correll et al., 2007; also see Correll et al., 2014). It is



▲ Iesha Evans is one of thousands of people protesting what they see as police misconduct aimed at members of the Black community fueled by implicit, if not explicit, racial bias.

[REUTERS/Jonathan Bachman]

fortunate that many law-enforcement personnel receive training that has some effect in reducing these biases.

Nevertheless, tragic errors resulting from such biases still occur. In several of the cases that sparked protests in 2016, police officers shot an African American because they feared that he was pulling a gun on them or might do so. For example, in 2014, 12-year-old Tamir Rice was shot dead by a police officer who mistook the African American child's pellet gun for a handgun (Almasy, 2015). In another incident, a police officer shot a 47-year-old African American therapist, Charles Kinsey, who was trying to assist his severely autistic patient who had wandered away from a group home and was sitting in the middle of the street playing with a toy truck. Lying on the ground with his hands in the air and a bullet in his leg, Kinsey asked the officer why he had just shot him. The officer responded, "I don't know" (Silva, 2017). ■

**Interpreting Behavior** If stereotypes actually can lead us to sometimes see something that isn't there, it should come as no surprise that they also affect how we interpret ambiguous information and behaviors (e.g., Kunda & Thagard, 1996).

Research shows that people interpret the same behavior differently when it is performed by individuals who belong to stereotyped groups. In one study (Duncan, 1976), White students watched a videotape of a discussion between two men that ended just after one of the men shoved the other. Was the shove harmless horseplay, or was it an act of aggression? If participants (who were White) watched a version of the tape in which the man delivering the shove was White, only 17% described the shove as violent, and 42% said it was playful. However, if they watched a version in which the same shove was delivered by a Black man, 75% said it was violent, and only 6% said it was playful.

In fact, stereotypes influence the interpretation of ambiguous behaviors even when those stereotypes are primed outside conscious awareness. When police and probation officers were primed beneath conscious awareness with words related to the Black stereotype and then read a vignette about a shoplifting incident, they rated the offender as being more hostile and deserving of punishment if he was Black than if he was White (Graham & Lowery, 2004).

Many other studies have similarly shown that stereotypes associated with race, social class, gender, or profession can lend different meanings to the same ambiguous information (e.g., Chaxel, 2015; Darley & Gross, 1983; Dunning & Sherman, 1997). Evidence indicates that stereotypes set up a hypothesis about a person, but because of the confirmation bias, we interpret ambiguous information as evidence supporting that hypothesis.

**The Ultimate Attribution Error** Stereotypes also bias our explanations of interpretation after events have played out. You may remember that we tend to make self-serving attributions for our own experiences: Good things happen because of us, and bad things happen because of the situation. We show a similar bias when we make attributions for fellow ingroup members and exactly the opposite tendency when explaining the behavior of outgroup members (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). This is called the **ultimate attribution error** (Hewstone, 1990; Pettigrew, 1979). When an outgroup member does something negative, or when an ingroup member does something positive, this is consistent with our automatic preference for ingroups over outgroups (Perdue et al., 1990). We infer that it's the dispositional character of the groups that caused the behaviors: *We* do good things because *we* are good people. *They* do bad things because *they* are bad people.

**Ultimate attribution error** The tendency to believe that bad actions by outgroup members occur *because of their internal dispositions* and good actions by them occur *because of the situation*, while believing the reverse for ingroup members.

Of course, every now and again, we might be forced to admit that an outgroup member performed well or behaved admirably and an ingroup member performed or behaved poorly. But in such cases, the attribution veers toward the situation. Attributing negative outgroup behavior to the person but positive outgroup behavior to the situation reinforces negative stereotypes about the outgroup and belief in the superiority of the ingroup. Not surprisingly, this tendency is strongest in ingroup members highest in prejudice against the outgroup (e.g., Greenberg & Rosenfield, 1979).

The ultimate attribution error has been applied primarily to ethnic prejudice, but stereotypes also influence how people make attributions for men's and women's behavior (e.g., Deaux, 1984). When men succeed on a stereotypically masculine task, observers tend to attribute that success to the men's dispositional ability, but when women perform well on the same task, observers tend to attribute that success to luck or effort. Likewise, men's failures on stereotypically masculine tasks are often attributed to bad luck and lack of effort, whereas women's failures on the same tasks are attributed to their lack of ability. In this research, both men and women often exhibit this pattern of attributions: Regardless of their gender, people tend to explain men's and women's behaviors in ways that fit culturally widespread stereotypes.

**Stereotypes Distort Memory** Finally, stereotypes bias how we recall information. Back in chapter 3, we described a study in which White participants were shown a picture of a Black man in a business suit being threatened by a young White man holding a straight razor (Allport & Postman, 1947). As that participant described the scene to another participant, who described it to another participant, and so on, the story tended to shift to the razor being in the Black man's hand and the business suit being on the White man. Rumors often can distort the facts because our stereotypes bias what we recall (and what we retell) in ways that fit our expectations. Since that initial demonstration, similar findings have also been shown even when the stereotype isn't evoked until *after* the information has been encoded—and for a wide range of stereotypes regarding ethnicity, occupation, gender, sexual orientation, and social class (e.g., Dodson et al., 2008; Frawley, 2008).



## APPLICATION

### Stereotypes Tend to Be Self-Confirming

The phenomena we've discussed are just a few of the many ways in which stereotypes systematically bias how we think and make judgments about other individuals and groups. A harmful consequence of this influence is that stereotypes reinforce themselves, which makes them relatively impervious to change (Darley & Gross, 1983; Fiske & Taylor, 2008; Rothbart, 1981). Stereotypes lead us to attend to information that fits those stereotypes and to ignore information that does not. When we do observe behaviors that are inconsistent with our stereotypes, we tend to explain them away as isolated instances or exceptions to the rule (Allport, 1954). Because stereotypes can be activated unconsciously, people may not even be aware that stereotypes are biasing what they perceive. Instead, they believe that their reactions to and interpretations of stereotyped individuals are free of prejudice because they assume that they are looking at the world objectively. When it comes to stereotypes, believing is seeing. ■

## SECTION REVIEW Stereotyping: The Cognitive Companion of Prejudice



Stereotypes can help promote and justify prejudice, even if they are positive.

### Where Do Stereotypes Come From?

- A kernel of truth that is overblown and overgeneralized
- Assumptions about group differences in traits inferred from group differences in social roles
- Generalizations about a group's warmth and competence that are based on judgments of cooperativeness and status
- Illusory correlations that make unrelated things seem related

### Why Do We Apply Stereotypes?

- To simplify the process of social perception and to conserve mental energy
- To justify prejudice and discrimination, including by dehumanizing, inhumanizing, or objectifying others
- To justify the status quo and to maintain a sense of predictability
- To maintain and bolster self-esteem

### How Do Stereotypes Affect Judgment?

- Categorization increases the perceived homogeneity of outgroup members, thereby reinforcing stereotypes.
- Stereotypes can be activated automatically, coloring how we perceive, interpret, and communicate about the characteristics and behaviors of outgroup (and ingroup) members.
- Stereotypes influence how we perceive and interpret behavior, as well as how we remember information.
- Because of these biases, stereotypes tend to be self-perpetuating, even in the face of disconfirming information.

## CRITICAL LEARNING EXERCISES

1. Think about a relative or friend who has a prejudice against a particular group. How would the theories and research in this chapter explain the person's prejudice? Can you think of any factors involved that are not covered in the chapter?
2. Go to [www.projectimplicit.com](http://www.projectimplicit.com). Take the IAT regarding your implicit associations with three of the social identities available there (e.g., Black, old, disabled). If you seemed to have negative associations with any of them, why do you think that might be? And if not, why not?
3. Think of two stereotypes that are prevalent in your culture. Do you think they are based on kernels of truth? If so, why? If not, what other factors discussed in the chapter could account for those particular stereotypes? Can you think of any factors not covered in the chapter that also contribute to stereotypes?
4. Given the four psychological functions of stereotypes, what do you think could be done at a societal level to reduce both their prevalence and their role in biased judgments and behavior against stereotyped groups?



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