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TOPIC OVERVIEW

CHAPTER 11

Responding to and Reducing Prejudice

History is littered with examples of the harm that prejudice can cause. This harm can be obvious and severe, as in atrocities such as genocide, enslavement, and colonization. These atrocities often continue to affect the targeted groups many generations after their occurrence (Salzman, 2001). But prejudice can also lead to less visible discrimination in hiring, career advancement, health care, legal proceedings, and loan opportunities that exacerbate social problems (Nelson, 2009; Riach & Rich, 2004; Stangor, 2009). Psychologically, prejudice can lead members of targeted groups to feel devalued within their culture (Frable et al., 1990; Inzlicht et al., 2006). Chronically feeling socially devalued can have detrimental effects on health and well-being (Major & Schmader, 2017). In all these ways, prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination contribute to poverty, physical, behavioral, and mental health problems, as well as a sense of being excluded from mainstream society (e.g., Anderson & Armstead, 1995; Kessler et al., 1999; Klonoff et al., 1999; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018; Williams, 1999; Williams et al., 1999).

In this chapter, we focus on:

- What happens psychologically to people who are targeted by prejudice and how they cope
- The processes that influence how and whether people perceive prejudice and how they respond to it
- How even subtle encounters with prejudice and stereotypes can affect one's health, behavior, and performance and how members of stigmatized groups can remain resilient despite bias and discrimination
- Some promising strategies for reducing prejudice

Learning Outcomes

- Explain why some people are more or less likely to perceive prejudice.
- Give examples of the harmful impact of stereotypes on those targeted by them.

Prejudice from a Target's Perspective

Perceiving Prejudice and Discrimination

Membership in a group that is viewed or treated negatively by the larger society is bound to affect people in some way (Allport, 1954). Yet, as you learned in the previous chapter, for many stigmatized groups in the United States, prejudice is sometimes a lot subtler and harder to detect than it was 50 years ago. Although this might be a sign of progress, it makes it harder to pinpoint when one is the target of prejudice. Anyone who feels marginalized in society has probably faced this dilemma. Take the following quote from Erving Goffman's classic 1963 book *Stigma*: "And I always feel this with straight people [people who are not ex-convicts]—that whenever they're being nice to me, pleasant to me, all the time really, underneath they're only assessing me as a criminal and nothing else" (p. 14).

Master status The perception that a person will be seen only in terms of a stigmatizing attribute rather than as the total self.

This individual's reflection reveals the **master status** that can accompany stigmatizing attributes—the perception that others will see a person solely in terms of one aspect rather than appreciating the person's total self. As a result, stigmatized individuals are persistently aware of what sets them apart in their interactions with others. For example, when asked to describe themselves, students from an ethnic-minority background are more likely to make mention of their group identity than are students from the ethnic majority (McGuire et al., 1978).

Stigma consciousness The expectation of being perceived by other people, particularly those in the majority group, in terms of one's group membership.

When people are conscious of being stigmatized, they become more attuned to signs of prejudice. In one study, women expecting to interact with a sexist man were quicker to detect sexism-related words (e.g., *harassment*, *hooters*, *bitch*) during a computer task and were more likely to judge ambiguous facial expressions as showing criticism (Inzlicht et al., 2008; Kaiser et al., 2006).

▲ Birding while Black. In May 2020, Christian Cooper, an avid birdwatcher, described the racism he experienced when a White woman called the police, claiming that he was threatening her. In fact, he had merely asked her to leash up her dog, as the park rules require. Cooper said in an interview, "You know, the simple fact of my skin color means that I run the risk of being perceived as a menace or a threat despite the fact that I'm doing the exact same thing as anybody else in that park" (Chang, 2020).
[BRITTAINY NEWMAN/The New York Times/Redux Pictures]

Individual Differences in Perceiving Prejudice As you might suspect, not all minority-group members share equally the expectation of being the target of prejudice. People's sensitivity to perceiving bias depends on the extent to which they identify with their stigmatized group. If people normally don't think about themselves as being members of disadvantaged groups, then discrimination might not seem like something that happens to them. In contrast, people who are highly identified with their stigmatized group are more likely to recognize when prejudice and discrimination might affect their lives (Major et al., 2003; Operario & Fiske, 2001).

Members of minority groups also differ in their **stigma consciousness**—their expectation that other people, particularly those in the majority group, will perceive them in terms of their group membership (Pinel, 1999). People higher in stigma consciousness are more likely to expect their interactions with others to go poorly. Unfortunately, these expectations can sometimes lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. For example, when women particularly high in stigma consciousness had reason to think that a male stranger might be sexist, they evaluated an essay he had written more negatively, which then led him to evaluate *their* essays more negatively (Pinel, 2002). The

negative evaluations they received might have confirmed their assumption of the man's sexism, yet his evaluations might have been more positive if they had not criticized his essay first. But as we will discuss shortly, self-fulfilling prophecies are a two-way street. They also affect how those who are nonstigmatized perceive and interact with stigmatized targets.

Motivations to Avoid Perceptions of Prejudice Although stigma consciousness might lead people to sometimes overestimate their experience of prejudice, this is not the norm. Instead, it is more common for people to estimate that they personally experience less discrimination than does the average member of their group (Taylor et al., 1990). This effect, called the **person–group discrimination discrepancy**, has been documented in many groups, including women reporting on their experience of sexism and racial minorities reporting on their experience of racism. This effect has even been found among inner-city African American men, a group that is probably most likely to experience actual discrimination in employment, housing, and interactions with police (Taylor et al., 1994). Why is the tendency to avoid seeing prejudice and discrimination directed at oneself so pervasive?

Person–group discrimination discrepancy The tendency for people to estimate that they personally experience less discrimination than is faced by the average member of their group.

People may fail to see the prejudice targeted at them because they are motivated to deny that prejudice and discrimination affect their lives. Why? For one thing, this denial may be part of a more general tendency to be optimistic. Experiencing discrimination, having health problems, and being at risk for experiencing an earthquake all are negative events, and people are generally overly optimistic about their likelihood of experiencing such outcomes (Lehman & Taylor, 1987; Taylor & Brown, 1988). It might be beneficial to one's own psychological health to regard discrimination as something that happens to *other* people.

Another reason is that people may be motivated to sustain their faith that the way society is set up is inherently right and good, thereby justifying the status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Buying into the status quo brings a sense of stability and predictability, but it can lead stigmatized individuals to downplay their experience of discrimination. In one experiment, White and Latino students were put in the same situation of feeling that they had been passed over for a job that was given to someone of another ethnicity (Major et al., 2002). To what extent did they view this as discrimination? The results depended on the students' ethnicity. Among Whites, those most convinced that the social system in America is fair and that hard work pays off thought it was quite discriminatory for a Latino employer to pass them over to hire another Latino. After all, if the system is fair, and Whites have been very successful in the system, an employer has no justification for choosing a minority-group member over themselves. But among Latinos, those who saw the social system as fair were least likely to feel that it was discriminatory for a White employer to pass them over in favor of a White participant. Believing the system is fair might keep people motivated to do their best, but for members of minority groups in society, it can reduce the likelihood of recognizing discrimination when it does occur.

APPLICATION

Is Perceiving Prejudice Bad for Your Health?

Living in a society that devalues you because of your ethnicity, gender, sexual preferences, or religious beliefs can take a toll on both your mental and physical health. Several studies have shown that people who report experiencing more prejudice in their daily lives also show evidence of poorer psychological health

(Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt et al., 2014; Sutin et al., 2015). In one study of 392 African Americans, an increase in their experience of discrimination over a 10-year time period predicted chromosomal changes (i.e., shortening of telomeres) that are indicative of early aging and a shortened life expectancy (Chae et al., 2020). The intersection of two or more devalued identities can be particularly associated with negative health outcomes (Lewis & Van Dyke, 2018). Negative consequences, such as increased depression and lower life satisfaction, are especially extreme when people blame themselves for their stigma or the way people treat them.

Because our culture is infused with stereotypic portrayals of various groups, these negative effects on mental health can be quite insidious. For example, there is an ongoing debate in the United States about the use of Native American images as mascots for school and sports teams. Do these images honor the proud history of a cultural group? Or do they present an overly simplistic caricature that debases a segment of society? Research shows that exposure to these mascots might reinforce people's stereotypes of Native Americans (Angle et al., 2017) and have negative effects on Native Americans. When Native American children and young adults were primed with these images, their self-esteem was reduced, they felt worse about their community, and they imagined themselves achieving less in the future (Fryberg et al., 2008). Many of these same participants believed that these mascots are not bad but that these images might contribute to the sense that Native Americans are invisible in mainstream society except as caricatures. In response to the evidence that mascots might have insidious effects on well-being, in 2014, the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office canceled the trademark that the Washington Redskins had on the football team's name and logo because both were deemed to be disparaging to Native Americans (Vargas, 2014). However, the name and logo are still used by the team.

Prejudice can have long-term consequences for physical health as well (Contrada et al., 2000). Like any other chronic stressor, the experience of prejudice elevates the body's physiological stress response. For example, women who report being frequent targets of sexism show a greater physiological stress response (i.e., increases in cortisol, a stress-related hormone) when they believe they personally might have been targeted by bias (Townsend et al., 2011). Over time, this stress response can predict poorer cardiovascular functioning, the buildup of plaque in the arteries, and artery calcification, which increase the risk for coronary heart disease (Guyll et al., 2001; Lewis et al., 2006; Troxel et al., 2003).

Although perceiving frequent discrimination predicts poorer well-being, this correlation also implies that those who do not perceive frequent experiences of prejudice fare much better psychologically. Later, we will discuss how particular ways of perceiving and reacting to discrimination can sometimes buffer people against its negative psychological consequences (Crocker & Major, 1989). ■

The Harmful Impact of Stereotypes on Behavior

Being the target of prejudice also affects how people behave and perform. When you hold a stereotypic expectation about another person (because of group membership, for example), you may act in a way that leads the stereotyped person to behave just as you expected. For example, say that you suspect that the clerk at the café is going to be rude, so you are curt with her. She responds

by being curt back to you. Voilà! Your initial judgment seems to be confirmed. Yet you may be ignoring the fact that, had you approached the interaction with a different expectation in mind, the clerk might not have acted rudely.

This was demonstrated in a classic study of self-fulfilling prophecy, a topic we introduced in chapter 3 (Word et al., 1974). In the first of a pair of studies, White participants were asked to play the role of an interviewer with two different job candidates, one White and the other Black. When the job candidate was Black, the interviewer chose to sit farther away from him, was more awkward in his speech, and conducted a shorter interview than when the candidate was White. The racial identity of the candidate affected the way in which the interview was conducted. But does this difference in the interviewer's manner affect how the job candidate comes across during the interview? The answer is "yes."

▲ Teachers' expectations of students' abilities can subtly shape their interactions with those students in ways that confirm their stereotypes.
[nano/E+/Getty Images]

In a second study, the researchers trained their assistants to conduct an interview either using the "good interviewer" style that was more typical of the interviews with White candidates (e.g., sitting closer) or the "bad interviewer" style that was more typical of the interviews with Black candidates (e.g., sitting farther away). When the trained assistants interviewed unsuspecting White job candidates, an interesting pattern emerged: The job candidates assigned to a "bad" interviewer came across as less calm and composed than those assigned to the "good" interviewer.

More recent research shows just how subtle these effects can be. In one set of studies, when female engineering students were paired with male peers to work together on a project, a male partner's implicit sexist attitudes about women predicted the female partner's poorer performance on an engineering test (Logel et al., 2009). What were the more implicitly sexist guys doing? They were not more hostile or dismissive toward their female partners. Rather, they were more flirtatious with them, and in fact the women reported liking these men. Yet the men's flirtatious behavior led women to perform more poorly on the engineering test. Other research has shown that self-fulfilling prophecy effects are stronger when more people hold the stereotypes (Madon et al., 2018). What might be a small effect when considering the stereotyped expectations of just one perceiver becomes much larger when aggregated across many perceivers and experiences.

Confirming Stereotypes to Get Along The findings just discussed point to a powerful dilemma. Stereotypes are schemas. You'll remember from chapter 3 that schemas help social interactions run smoothly. People get along better when each individual confirms the other person's expectations. This suggests that the more motivated people are to be liked, the more they might behave in ways that are consistent with the other person's stereotypes, a form of self-stereotyping.

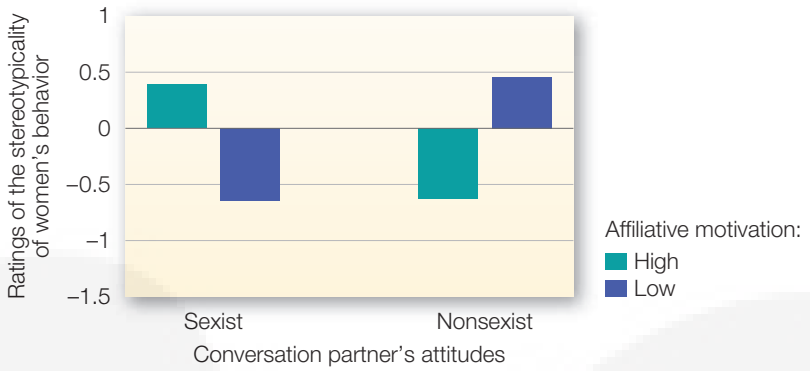
In one study of self-stereotyping (Sinclair, Huntsinger et al., 2005), women had a casual conversation with a male student whom they were led to believe had sexist or nonsexist attitudes toward women. In actuality, he was a member of the research team trained to act in a similar way with each woman and to rate his perceptions of her afterward. Those women who generally had a desire to get along with others and make new friends (i.e., they were high in affiliative motivation) rated themselves in more gender-stereotypic ways when interacting with the guy they believed to be sexist, and as shown in **FIGURE 11.1**, he also

Figure 11.1

Conforming to Stereotypes

Women who were motivated to get along with others (high in affiliative motivation) acted more stereotypically during a conversation with a man the more they believed that he had sexist views about women.

[Data from Sinclair, Huntsinger et al., 2005]



rated their behavior to be more stereotypically feminine. Women who were low in this general motivation to affiliate with others did just the opposite: If they thought their conversation partner would be sexist, they rated themselves as being more counterstereotypic, and the researcher also rated them as coming across in less stereotypical ways during their interaction. The motivation to get along can sometimes lead people to act in stereotypical ways.

Self-objectification
A phenomenon whereby intense cultural scrutiny of the female body leads many girls and women to view themselves as objects to be looked at and judged.

Objectification Although the consequences of being stigmatized often apply broadly to different groups, some are more specific. One important example is the objectification that can result from the strong focus in many cultures on women's bodies. In chapter 10, we discussed how the sexual objectification of women promotes certain stereotypes and prejudice against them. But Fredrickson and Robert's (1997) objectification theory also proposes that this intense cultural scrutiny of the female body leads many girls and women to view themselves as objects to be looked at and judged, a phenomenon that the researchers called **self-objectification**. Being exposed to sexualizing words or idealized media images of women's bodies, hearing other women criticizing their own bodies, and undergoing men's visual scrutiny of their bodies all prompt self-objectification, which increases negative emotions such as body shame, appearance anxiety, and self-disgust (e.g., Aubrey, 2007; Calogero, 2004; Gapinski et al., 2003; Roberts & Gettman, 2004). The more shame they feel, the more vulnerable they are to disordered eating, depression, and sexual dysfunction (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). These effects of self-objectification have likely contributed to the obsession with weight that has led 73% of American women to make some serious effort at some point to lose weight, compared with only 55% of men (Saad, 2011).

▲ What if we objectified men in the same way as we objectify women?

[Photography by Alicia Mariah Elfving for MotoCorsa]

Self-objectification also disrupts concentration and interferes with cognitive performance (Fredrickson et al., 1998). In one study, male and female college students were first asked to try on and evaluate either a swimsuit or a sweater. Then, wearing the particular garment while alone in a makeshift dressing room, they completed a short math test. Men were unaffected by what they were wearing, but women who were wearing the swimsuit were drawn to monitoring their appearance and consequently performed worse than if they were wearing a sweater.

Stereotype Threat Self-fulfilling prophecies and self-stereotyping are examples of how stereotypes affect behavior of members of stereotyped groups during social interactions. Other research shows that even when a person is not interacting with someone, the immediate context can bring to mind stereotypes that

can interfere with a person's ability to perform at his or her best. This was the discovery made by the Stanford researchers Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson (1995) when they conducted pioneering work on what they called *stereotype threat*, a phenomenon you were first introduced to in chapter 1, when we covered research methods.

Stereotype threat is the concern that one might do something to confirm a negative stereotype about one's group either in one's own eyes or in the eyes of someone else. Although this phenomenon has far-reaching consequences for a variety of situations, it has been studied primarily as an explanation for racial and ethnic differences in academic performance and for gender differences in standardized math test scores. Other explanations for these performance gaps have focused on whether nature (genetics, hormones, even brain size) or nurture (upbringing, educational values, access to educational resources) offers a better explanation of these performance gaps (Nisbett, 2009). Research on stereotype threat takes a distinctly social psychological view, indicating that performance can be influenced by aspects of the situation, such as the person's experience of the classroom in which he or she is taking a test.

Stereotype threat The concern that one might do something to confirm a negative stereotype about one's group either in one's own eyes or the eyes of someone else.

In one of their original studies, Steele and Aronson (1995) gave Black and White undergraduates a challenging set of verbal problems to solve. For half of the sample, the problems were described as a diagnostic test of verbal intelligence (similar to the SAT or GRE). For the other half, the same problems were described as a simple lab exercise. Although White students were unaffected by how the task was described, Black students performed significantly worse when the task was presented as a diagnostic test of intelligence (see **FIGURE 11.2**). When Black students were reminded of the stereotype that their group is intellectually inferior, they performed more poorly on the test.

In addition to undermining performance on tests of math, verbal, or general intellectual ability of minorities, women, and those of lower socioeconomic status (Croizet & Claire, 1998), stereotype threat has also been shown to impair memory performance of older adults (Chasteen et al., 2005); driving performance of women (Yeung & von Hippel, 2008); athletes' performance in the face of racial stereotypes (Stone et al., 2012); men's performance on an emotional sensitivity task (Leyens et al., 2000); and women's negotiation skills (Kray et al., 2001). As mentioned in chapter 1, meta-analyses suggest that these effects are small to medium in size (Armstrong et al., 2017; Doyle & Voyer, 2016; Gentile et al., 2018; Nadler & Clark, 2011; Picho et al., 2013).

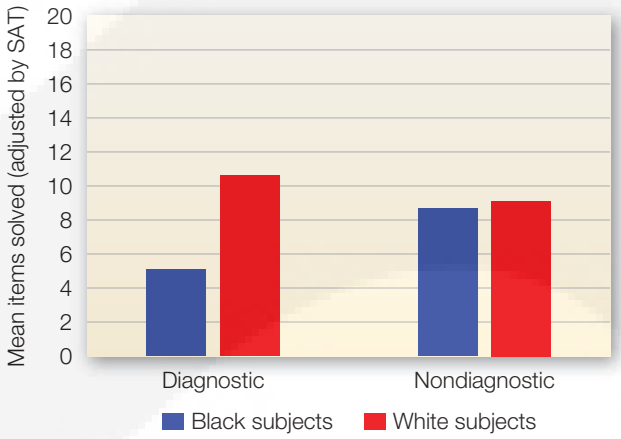


Figure 11.2

Stereotype Threat

In research on stereotype threat, Black college students performed significantly worse when a task was framed as a diagnostic test of verbal ability than as a nondiagnostic laboratory exercise.

[Data from Steele & Aronson, 1995]

Theoretically, stereotype threat is thought to impair performance under some conditions more than others (Schmader et al., 2008). The effect is strongest when:

- The stigmatized identity is salient either because of the situation (e.g., being the only women in a high-level math class) or due to stigma consciousness or group identification.
- The task is characterized as a diagnostic measure of an ability for which one's group is stereotyped as being inferior (as in Steele & Aronson, 1995).
- Individuals are led to believe that their performance is going to be compared with that of members of the group stereotyped as superior on the task.
- Individuals are aware of the stereotype and are concerned that others (or even themselves) might believe it to be true.

Researchers also have learned a great deal about the processes that contribute to the deleterious effects of stereotype threat. First, it's important to point out that those who care the most about being successful feel stereotype threat most acutely (Steele, 1997). In fact, it's partly because people are trying so hard to prove the stereotype wrong that their performance suffers (Jamieson & Harkins, 2007). When situations bring these stereotypes to mind, anxious thoughts and feelings of self-doubt are more likely to creep in (Bosson et al., 2004; Cadinu et al., 2005; Johns et al., 2008; Spencer et al., 1999). Efforts to push these thoughts away and to stay focused on the task can hijack the very same cognitive resources that people need to do well on tests and in other academic pursuits (Johns et al., 2008; Logel et al., 2009; Schmader et al., 2008). For other kinds of activities (e.g., trying to sink a golf putt, shoot a basket, or parallel park), becoming proficient means relying on skills that have become automatic over hours or even years of practice. When the situation reminds people of a negative group stereotype about those activities, they end up scrutinizing the behaviors that they normally do automatically; as a result, they trip themselves up (Schmader & Beilock, 2011).

Social Identity Threat Research on stereotype threat reveals that it's mentally taxing to perform under the pressure of presumed incompetence. A more general version of this threat is called *social identity threat,* the feeling that your group is not valued in a domain and that you do not belong there (Steele et al., 2002). For example, women working in engineering report greater social identity threat and job burnout on days when they feel their male colleagues do not respect their contributions (Hall et al., 2019). To cope with social identity threat, people might find themselves trying to juggle their various identities. For example, women who go into male-dominant domains find themselves having to suppress their more feminine qualities (Pronin et al., 2004; von Hippel et al., 2011). A minority student who excels in academics can be accused of being an "Uncle Tom" or of "acting White" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Older adults struggle to feel committed to their job when their age feels at odds with their identity as an employee (Manzi et al., 2019).

Disidentification The process of disinvesting in any area in which one's group traditionally has been underrepresented or negatively stereotyped.

On the one hand, repeated exposure to stereotype threat and social identity threat can eventually lead to **disidentification**, which occurs when people no longer feel that their performance in a domain is an important part of themselves, and they stop caring about being successful (Steele, 1997). This can be a serious problem if, for example, minority children disidentify with school. In fact, being the target of negative stereotypes can steer people away from certain opportunities if those stereotypes lead them to assume they will experience a lack of fit and belonging (Aday & Schmader, 2019; Schmader & Sedikides, 2018).

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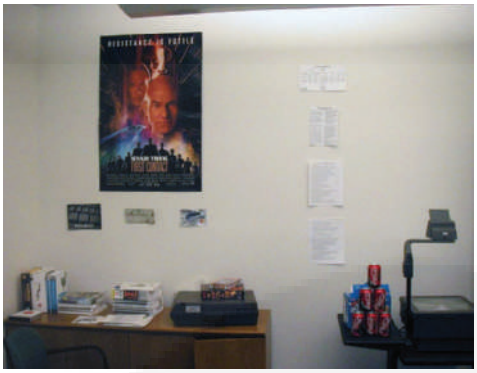
For example, women continue to be underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and math, and this is particularly true in computer science, where the percentage of women has actually decreased over the past three decades. One factor is that students have a very specific stereotype of what a computer scientist is like, and women are much more likely than men to think that it isn't like them. In one study, women expressed far less interest in majoring in computer science when they completed a survey in a computer scientist's office filled with reminders of the computer-geek stereotype than did those who completed the same questionnaire in a room that did not reinforce the conventional stereotype of computer scientists (Cheryan et al., 2009, 2017). Other research has shown that girls experience greater feelings of fit in science



◀ Women sitting at the computer scientist's desk on the left (with the *Star Trek* poster) expressed less interest in computer science as a major than did women sitting at the computer scientist's desk on the right. The geek stereotype of computer scientists might prevent women from becoming interested in this field. [Cheryan et al., 2009]

when they interact with successful female role models in the field (O'Brien et al., 2017). The takeaway message is that the ability to identify with similar others plays an important role in attracting women and minorities to fields where they have been historically underrepresented.

SECTION REVIEW Prejudice from a Target's Perspective

Regardless of how accurately prejudice is perceived, being a target of bias can have negative consequences for psychological and physical health.

Perceiving Prejudice

- Because prejudice is less overt today than it once was, it is difficult to know if and when one is the target of prejudice.
- People differ in their sensitivity to prejudice, but people commonly underestimate personal discrimination.
- People may be motivated to deny discrimination out of optimism or out of a desire to justify the social system.
- Prejudice can take a toll on a person's mental and physical health.

The Harmful Impact of Stereotypes

- Holding a stereotype can change how observers interact with targets, sometimes causing targets to act stereotypically.
- Targets sometimes inadvertently act stereotypically to get along with others.
- Self-objectification—viewing the self as an object to be looked at—can undermine health and performance.
- Stereotype threat—the fear of confirming a negative stereotype—can undermine performance.
- Social identity threat—the feeling that a group does not belong in a domain—can repel people from that domain.

What's a Target to Do? Coping with Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination

Learning Outcomes

- Identify coping strategies for stereotype threat and social identity threat.
- Outline social strategies for coping with prejudice and discrimination.
- Outline psychological strategies for coping with prejudice and discrimination, including possible ways these strategies can backfire.

The evidence we've reviewed on the effects of prejudice and stereotyping might lead us to expect targets of bias to feel rather lousy about themselves. Interestingly, a review of the literature revealed surprisingly little evidence that people stigmatized based on race, ethnicity, physical disability, or mental illness report lower levels of self-esteem than those who are not normally stigmatized (Crocker & Major, 1989). Even in the face of negative treatment and social devaluation, people can be remarkably resilient. Let's look at a few of the ways people cope with the daily jabs of stereotyping and prejudice, as well as the trade-offs these strategies can have.

Coping with Stereotype and Social Identity Threat

Research has pointed to several ways in which the negative psychological effects of prejudice and stereotypes can be reduced. These findings have important implications for educational and social policies.

Identifying with Positive Role Models When individuals are exposed to role models—people like themselves who have been successful—the stereotype is altered, and they feel inspired to do well (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004; Marx & Roman, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2003; O'Brien et al., 2017; Stout et al., 2011). In one study (Stout et al., 2011), college students were randomly assigned to either a female or a male calculus professor, and their performance over the course of the semester was tracked. The gender of the professor had no effect on men's attitudes or behavior. But women with a female professor participated more in class over the course of the semester and became more confident in their ability to do well.

Reappraising Anxiety When stereotypes are difficult to change, targets can reinterpret what the stereotypes mean. For example, often when people think that they are stereotyped to do poorly, they are more likely to interpret difficulties and setbacks as evidence that the stereotype is true and that they do not belong. They perform better, though, if they reinterpret difficulties as normal challenges faced by anyone. In one remarkable study, minority college students who read testimonials about how everyone struggles and feels anxious when beginning college felt a greater sense of belonging in academics, did better academically, and were less likely to drop out of school (Walton & Brady, 2020; Walton & Cohen, 2007, 2011). Similarly, other studies have found that getting instructions to reappraise anxiety as a normal part of test-taking improved women's and minorities' performance, and in many cases, these effects persisted even months later, when students took an actual high-stakes test such as the GRE (Jamieson et al., 2010; Johns et al., 2008). In fact, Johns and colleagues (2005) found that simply being able to interpret test anxiety as resulting from stereotype threat improved women's performance on a math test.

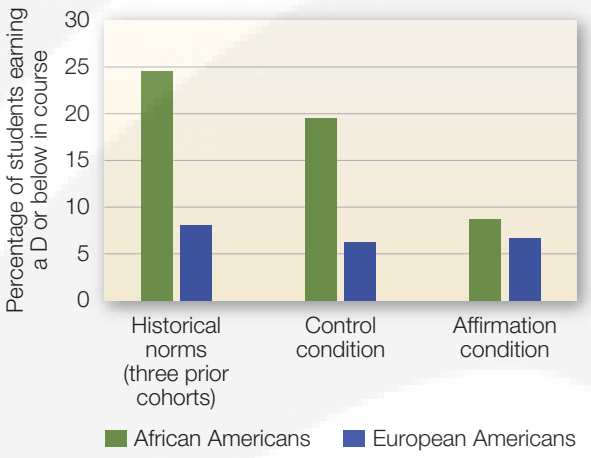


Figure 11.3

The Power of Self-Affirmation

When middle school students spent just 15 minutes at the start of the school year reflecting on their core values, the percentage of African American students who earned a D or lower at the end of the semester was reduced.

[Data from Cohen et al., 2006]

Affirming Broader Values Another possible coping strategy is *self-affirmation*. Self-affirmation theory (for a refresher, see chapter 6) posits that people need to view themselves as good and competent. When they encounter a threat to their positive self-view in one area of life, they can compensate by affirming other deeply held values. On the basis of this theory, people who are reminded of their core values might be protected from the negative effects of stereotypes. This hypothesis has been supported in several longitudinal studies (Cohen et al., 2006; Cohen et al., 2009; Miyake et al., 2010). In one study (Cohen et al., 2006; Cohen et al., 2009), students were assigned to write about either a personally cherished value or a value that others might care about but that was not central to their own lives. The researchers then tracked students' grades. This simple affirmation task had no effect on White students' academic performance. But Black students who affirmed their values were far less likely to earn low grades over the course of that semester. The positive effects on their academic performance persisted up to two years later (see **FIGURE 11.3**).

Although other researchers have not always replicated this effect (Hanselman et al., 2017), recent evidence suggests that self-affirmation works best for students who take the affirmation task seriously and are most at risk of experiencing stereotype threat (Borman et al., 2018).

Coping with Prejudice and Discrimination: Social Strategies

Just as there are a number of ways to counter the effects of stereotype threat, there are also a number of behavioral response options for dealing with interpersonal encounters with prejudice.

Confronting Those with Biases Consider the following scenario: You are working on a class project as part of a small group, and you and your team members have to take turns choosing what kinds of people you would want with you on a deserted island. One young man in the group consistently makes sexist choices (e.g., "Let's see, maybe a chef? No, one of the women can cook."). Would you say anything to him? In a study that presented women with this scenario, most said they would confront the guy in some way, probably by questioning his choice or pointing out how inappropriate it is (Swim & Hyers, 1999). But when women were actually put in this situation, more than half of them did nothing at all. People often find it difficult to confront episodes of prejudice or discrimination they observe or experience.

LaunchPad
Social Psych in Everyday Life: Responding to and Reducing Prejudice

This "do-nothing effect" isn't limited to targets put in the position of confronting an outgroup member (Crosby, 2015). White Americans often stay silent when they overhear another White person use a racial slur when referring to a Black person (e.g., Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 1985b; Kawakami et al., 2009). Confronting those who express prejudice is a lot harder than we might imagine it to be. Being silent in these situations is particularly troubling because expressions of prejudice can rub off on the observer. In one study, White participants who heard a racial slur used to describe an African American became more negative in their evaluation of the person targeted by the slur, despite the fact that in debriefings, the participants reported being appalled by the remark (Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 1985b).

Why do racist and sexist remarks often go unchallenged? One reason is because those who do the confronting are often viewed as complainers (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). This kind of "blame the victim" reaction happens even when the evidence supports the student's claim that discrimination actually occurred! In other research, when Whites were confronted with the possibility that they were biased in their treatment of others, they tried to correct their biases in the future but also felt angry and disliked the person who confronted them (Czopp et al., 2006). Even members of your own stigmatized group can be unsympathetic when you point to the role of discrimination in your outcomes (Garcia et al., 2005). These social costs can make it difficult to address bias when it does occur, particularly if you are the person targeted by the bias and in a position of relatively little power.

. . ."Fools", said I, "You do not know
Silence like a cancer grows
Hear my words that I might teach you
Take my arms that I might reach you"
But my words, like silent raindrops fell
And echoed
In the wells of silence

—*Simon & Garfunkel*

Despite the costs of confrontation, real social change requires it. This raises a question: Are other options available that might get a similar message across but in a way that minimizes these costs? According to the **target empowerment model**, the answer is "yes" (Focella et al., 2015; Stone et al., 2011). This model suggests

Target empowerment model A model which suggests that targets of bias can employ strategies that deflect discrimination, as long as those methods aren't *perceived* as confrontational.

that targets of bias can employ strategies that deflect discrimination, as long as those actions aren't *perceived* as confrontational. And even those that are confrontational can still be effective if they are preceded by a strategy designed to put a prejudiced person at ease.

Let's illustrate how this model works. In post–9/11 America, Muslims have too often been targeted by stereotypic perceptions that they endorse or are involved in terroristic activities, and perhaps as a result, they are often victims of assault (Pew Research Center, 2017). If you are Muslim, you understandably might want others to see your perspective on the world and appreciate how hurtful these misconceptions can be. However, when prejudiced White Americans were asked by an Arab American student with a Muslim-sounding name to take his perspective, they perceived him as confrontational, stereotyped him more negatively, and reported a decreased interest in getting to know him (Stone et al., 2011). But if he first asked White perceivers to think about something they value, thereby allowing them to self-affirm, his plea for empathy worked. By getting those who are highly prejudiced to reflect on their own values or positive attributes, targets can encourage majority members to take their point of view in a less threatening manner. **When have you confronted someone who was biased against you or another person? What was the cost?**

THINK ABOUT

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Compensating for Other's Biases Targets of prejudice also cope with stigma by compensating for the negative stereotypes or attitudes they think other people have toward them. For example, when overweight women were making a first impression on a person and were led to believe that that person could see them (and thus knew their weight), they acted in a more extraverted way than if they were told that they could not be seen. They compensated for the weight-based biases they expected others to have by being extra-friendly. And it worked: Those who thought they were visible were rated as friendlier by the person with whom they were interacting (Miller et al., 1995).

▲ To ease interracial tension, minority students self-disclose more to White roommates. Such disclosure is effective in reducing racial biases but does not always allow people to be themselves.

[cglade/iStock/Getty Images]

In a similar finding, Black college freshmen who expected others to have racial biases against them and their group reported spending more time disclosing information about themselves when talking with their White dormitory mates (Shelton et al., 2005). Self-disclosure is a powerful way of establishing trust and liking, so it is not surprising that Black participants who self-disclosed a great deal were liked more by their White roommates. Unfortunately, these kinds of compensation strategies can come with costs. Black students who reported engaging in a lot of self-disclosure with a White roommate also reported feeling inauthentic in this relationship. By trying to put their White roommates at ease, they might feel unable to be true to themselves.

Another potential cost of compensation is that it can disrupt the smooth flow of social interaction as people work to manage the impressions they are making (Bergsieker et al., 2010; Shelton & Richeson, 2006). For people who belong to the more advantaged group, interactions with outgroup members can bring to mind concerns about appearing prejudiced and may lead them to increase their efforts to come across as likable and unbiased (Vorauer et al., 1998). People who belong to the disadvantaged group might be most concerned about being stereotyped as incompetent and compensate by trying to

self-promote. The problem here is that interactions tend to go more smoothly when people's impression-management goals are matched. If one person cracks jokes to show how warm and likable she is while the other wants to have an intellectual conversation to bolster her perceived competence, each party might walk away from the interaction feeling misunderstood, disconnected from the other, and a bit cognitively exhausted (Richeson et al., 2003; Richeson & Shelton, 2003; Richeson & Trawalter, 2005).

APPLICATION

The Costs of Concealing

When people are concerned about being discriminated against, they sometimes choose to cope by concealing their stigma, if this is an option. This strategy is common for those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. For example, Jason Collins played professional basketball in the NBA for 12 years before coming out of the closet in April 2013. He described his experience concealing his sexual orientation in an interview with *Sports Illustrated*:

> It takes an enormous amount of energy to guard such a big secret. I've endured years of misery and gone to enormous lengths to live a lie. I was certain that my world would fall apart if anyone knew. And yet when I acknowledged my sexuality I felt whole for the first time. (COLLINS, 2013)

When Jason Collins joined the Brooklyn Nets in the spring of 2014, he became a true trailblazer—the first openly gay male athlete actively playing a major professional sport in the United States. Yet some retired players have noted that they are sure they played with gay teammates over the years. An ESPN story from 2011 quoted the Hall of Famer and basketball analyst Charles Barkley as saying, "It bothers me when I hear these reporters and jocks get on TV and say: 'Oh, no guy can come out in a team sport. These guys would go crazy.' . . . I'd rather have a gay guy who can play than a straight guy who can't play" (ESPN.com news services, 2011).

For those who are particularly aware of and worried about how others judge them, concealment can sometimes be a beneficial way to cope (e.g., Cole et al., 1997), but as Jason Collins's quote reveals, concealment comes with its own costs. Those who conceal an important aspect of their identity might struggle with the inability simply to be their authentic selves. Also, the effort it takes to be vigilant about what you say and how you act and to monitor whether others have figured out your secret can be emotionally and cognitively draining (Frable et al., 1990; Smart & Wegner, 1999). So although concealing a stigma might be one way to sidestep discrimination, it's often not an optimal solution.

▲ NBA basketball player Dwyane Wade demonstrates acceptance and support for transgender children by publicly introducing his transgender daughter Zaya to the world. [Andrew Toth/Getty Images]

Fortunately, highly publicized examples of people living more authentically can help others feel they can do the same. In 2020, another NBA star, Dwyane Wade, announced that his 12-year-old daughter, Zaya, is transgender (i.e., born

as a male, now identifying as female) saying, "She's known it for nine years. She's known since she was 3 years old. Along this way we've asked questions and we've learned. But she's known" (Wells, 2020). Wade's motivation for publicizing Zaya's gender identity is to help other families support their own children who identify as transgender or nonbinary.

Public examples of support and acceptance are perhaps an important reason suicide attempts among adolescents who identify as sexual minorities have been decreasing in recent years (Raifman et al., 2020). Still, gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens are three times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers, and a 2018 study in the United States suggested that 30 to 50% of transgender and nonbinary adolescents had attempted suicide (Raifman et al., 2020; Toomey et al., 2018). Because stigma is a threat to one's very sense of identity, it might not be a coincidence that the negative consequences of prejudice are particularly high during adolescence and young adulthood, when people are still forming an identity (Erikson, 1968). The It Gets Better Project (www.itgetsbetter.org), started by the columnist and author Dan Savage and his partner, Terry Miller, is an effort to communicate to LGBTQ+ teens that the stress of embracing their sexual identity, coming out to others, and experiencing bias will get better over time. In fact, research suggests that attitudes toward sexual minorities are generally becoming more positive over time (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019).

Seeking Social Support At the other end of the spectrum from concealment is creating and celebrating a shared identity with others who are similarly stigmatized. Earlier we mentioned that those who report encountering frequent or ongoing discrimination show signs of psychological distress. But according to **rejection identification theory**, the negative consequences of being targeted by discrimination can be offset by a strong sense of identification and pride with a stigmatized group (Branscombe et al., 1999; DeMarco & Newheiser, 2019; Postmes & Branscombe, 2002).

Rejection identification theory The idea that people can offset the negative consequences of being targeted by discrimination by feeling a strong sense of identification with their stigmatized group.

▲ In 2020, members of First Nations tribes in northwestern Canada banded together to support the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en Nation who oppose the construction of an oil pipeline on their territory.
[Erik McGregor/LightRocket via Getty Images]

Although pride in one's ethnic identity is likely supported by one's family and social circle, other identities can be stigmatized even by parents, siblings, and friends. That is why gay pride and similar movements can be so critical to a feeling of social support. In certain cases, marginalized groups band together to form broader coalitions against bias and discrimination (Craig & Richeson, 2016). For example, the term *people of color* (POC) is increasingly a label preferred by members of non-White groups because it creates a common identity united by shared experience of bias in America. When minority groups become allies, they not only gain greater social support, they also become a more powerful force for social change.

Coping with Prejudice and Discrimination: Psychological Strategies

The social strategies discussed above offer examples of how those who are stigmatized can manage their interpersonal interactions in ways that minimize their experience of bias and discrimination. But in addition to directly altering

interpersonal interactions, people also rely on a host of psychological strategies that can help them remain resilient in the face of social devaluation.

Blaming the Bias, Not Oneself As mentioned earlier, the dilemma of modern-day prejudice is that it can be very subtle. Consider an instance in which a woman is passed over for a promotion in favor of a male colleague. Is that discrimination? Or is she simply less qualified? It's often quite difficult if not impossible to know, and this situation puts those who are targeted by bias in a state of **attributional ambiguity** (Crocker et al., 1991). Crocker and her colleagues pointed out that the upside of attributing a negative outcome to prejudice is that it allows one to shift blame onto the biases of others and escape the negative feelings that might otherwise result. For example, if the woman in the example can dismiss the boss who rejected her as a sexist bigot, then she can maintain her opinion of herself as competent and intelligent. In one experiment, when Black college students learned that a White student was not that interested in becoming friends with them, their self-esteem was reduced when they didn't think the other person knew their race but was buffered when they believed their race was known (Crocker et al., 1991).

Attributional ambiguity A phenomenon whereby members of stigmatized groups often can be uncertain whether negative experiences are based on their own actions and abilities or are the result of prejudice.

You might be wondering when perceiving discrimination is or is not psychologically beneficial after we outlined all of its negative consequences. First, attributing an isolated incident to prejudice might buffer self-esteem from negative outcomes, but perceiving that discrimination is pervasive can be harmful to well-being (Eliezer et al., 2010; McCoy & Major, 2003; Schmitt et al., 2003). Second, when people blame themselves for their stigmatizing condition in the first place, they get no comfort from being the target of bias. When overweight female college students learned that a man wasn't interested in meeting them, they felt worse, not better, if they thought their weight played a factor in his evaluation (Crocker et al., 1993). Because society continues to perceive weight as something that can be controlled, these women felt responsible for being rejected. Finally, acknowledging that prejudice exists can reduce the shock when it happens to you. In one set of studies, women and minorities who generally believed that the world is unfair (compared with those who didn't) showed less physiological threat when they met and interacted with someone who was prejudiced against their group (Townsend et al., 2010).

▲ The social psychologist Tomi-Ann Roberts is one of dozens of women who have publicly shared their stories of sexual harassment by the Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein. Roberts has spent her career researching the harmful effects of objectification and sexism, work you have learned about in chapters 10 and 11.
[Dr. Tomi-Ann Roberts]

People can also protect their self-esteem more effectively by claiming discrimination when they can be certain that discrimination did occur (Major et al., 2003). In 2017, dozens of actresses, including Gwyneth Paltrow, Ashley Judd, Rose McGowan, and Angelina Jolie, publicly shared their stories of sexual harassment and abuse by Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein. The power in numbers has given other women the certainty and support to come forward to tell their horrific stories of casting calls with Weinstein. One of these women, Tomi-Ann Roberts, was an aspiring actress in her 20s when she met with Weinstein about a possible film role. She was shocked and appalled to find him naked in a bathtub, insisting that she would need to remove her top to be considered for the role. Roberts not only left the hotel suite, she gave up her plan to go into acting and instead pursued a successful career as a social psychologist studying objectification and sexism. In March 2020, Weinstein was found guilty of criminal sexual assault and rape in New York State and sentenced to 23 years in prison.

Devaluing the Domain Another coping strategy that people turn to in dealing with discrimination is to devalue areas of life where they face pervasive experiences of prejudice and discrimination. If you decide that you really don't care about working on a naval submarine, then you might be relatively unaffected by the U.S. Navy's long-standing ban (not repealed until 2010) on women serving on submarines.

The tendency to devalue those areas where your group doesn't excel seems like a pretty effective strategy for managing bad outcomes. But the whole story is more complicated. It turns out that it is not so easy to devalue those domains in which higher-status groups are more accomplished. For example, on learning that women score higher on a new personality dimension described only by the name *surgency*, men readily devalue this trait as something that is not important to them personally (Schmader, Major, Eccleston, & McCoy, 2001). But when women learn that men score higher in surgency, they assume that this trait is at least as valuable as when women are higher on it. This pattern is reflective of a general asymmetry in how stereotypes constrain men's and women's interests (Croft et al., 2015). Although women are increasingly fighting to be respected in traditionally high-status male-dominated domains, men are generally less concerned that they are underrepresented in what are more likely to be lower-status female-dominated domains (Block et al., 2019).

These pressures on groups with lower status can leave them with a difficult choice: Continue to strive for success in arenas where they are socially stigmatized because these are the domains that society considers important or call

SOCIAL PSYCH OUT IN THE WORLD

One Family's Experience of Religious Prejudice

In this chapter, we are considering the scholarly evidence on how people experience, cope with, and try to deflect discrimination. But personal experience with prejudice can cut very deep. Let's examine prejudice from the perspective of one family's account, told as part of the radio program *This American Life* (Spiegel, 2006, 2011).

We begin with a love story in the West Bank in the Middle East. A young Muslim American woman named Serry met and fell in love with a Muslim man from the West Bank. As they got to know one another, he told her how difficult it was for him and everyone he knew to grow up in the middle of the deep religious and political conflict between Israel and the West Bank. So when they decided to marry and make a life together, she convinced him that their children would have a better life in the United States, a country where she spent a much happier childhood and where people from different religious backgrounds easily formed friendships.

They settled down in the suburbs of New York City, had five children, and became a very typical American family. But when terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, their lives changed forever. Like everyone around them, they were horrified and deeply saddened by what had happened. But their friends, neighbors, and even strangers on the street began to treat them differently. Drivers would give Serry the finger, and someone put a note on her minivan, telling her family to leave the country. The situation escalated when their fourth-grade daughter came home from school in tears on the one-year anniversary of 9/11, after the school district presented a lesson for all fourth-graders, explaining that 9/11 happened because Muslims hate Christians and also hate Americans. From that day on, their once-popular daughter was the target of taunting and bullying by other kids. The situation grew worse when her teacher told the class that non-Christians and nonbelievers would burn in hell. Her nine-year-old classmates began calling her "Loser Muslim" after her teacher said that she should be transferred to another classroom. Soon her younger siblings were

into question the very legitimacy of that society by devaluing those domains (e.g., making the decision to drop out of school). For example, although Black and Latino college students get lower grades on average than their White and Asian peers, they report valuing education at least as much if not more (Major & Schmader, 1998; Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001). However, those who regard the ethnic hierarchy in the United States as unfair and illegitimate are more likely to call into question the value and utility of getting an education (Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001). If the deck is stacked against you, you might very well decide to leave the game.

One extreme form of devaluing is to create a group identity that opposes the majority group and its characteristic behaviors, ideas, and practices, in what is labeled an *oppositional culture* (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). For example, ethnic minority students (e.g., African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans) may consider doing well in school or conforming to school rules as "acting White" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). When students engage in these "White" behaviors, they may face opposition from their peers and from other members of the minority community. They may respond by identifying with their peers' oppositional culture and consequently devaluing any behavior or goal that seems to represent the majority culture. Some Black students may not put their best effort into school-related activities, or they may even avoid school altogether. This strategy can increase their sense of belonging in the oppositional culture, but it also can lead them to reject opportunities for self-improvement and economic success simply because they don't want to resemble the majority culture.

targeted by bullying, too. Eventually even her best friend turned her back on her.

This heart-wrenching story reveals how prejudice can flare up when people feel that their worldview has been threatened. As we discussed in chapter 10, because the events of 9/11 were viewed as an attack on American values by Islamic extremists, the attacks led some Americans to view all Muslims with hate and suspicion—even those with whom they had previously been friendly. But this story also reveals how different people in the same family can respond very differently to others' prejudice.

The oldest daughter's response was to renounce her religion, to try to escape that part of her identity that her peers and her teacher so clearly devalued. When she moved to a new school, she chose to *conceal* her religious background to try to avoid further discrimination.

For Serry, the mother of the family, her religion was deeply important to her, but being American was even more central to her identity. She was shocked and saddened to find that she was no longer viewed as an American, but she still believed that American values of freedom would win out in the end. As Serry explained, "I was born and raised in this country, and I'm aware of what makes this country great, and I know that what happened to our family, it doesn't speak to American values. And I feel like this is such a fluke. I have to believe this is not what America is about. I know that." In line with *system justification theory*, her belief in American values led her to minimize these events as aberrations.

Serry's husband found his vision of America as a land free of religious prejudice shattered. Like every other immigrant before him in the history of the United States, he had traveled to a new and different culture in the hope of making a better life for himself and his family. Once a very happy man with a quick sense of humor, he slipped into depression and eventually decided to return to the West Bank, where he died a few years later. Not much is said about his death, so it's not known how his experience with anti-Islamic prejudice might have eroded his health. But his choice was to return to his homeland, a place that is far from being free of discrimination from religious intolerance but where at least he could live among others who share the same stigmatized identity. Consistent with *rejection identification theory*, his identification as a Muslim from the West Bank seemed to offer him a source of psychological security.

SECTION REVIEW What's a Target to Do? Coping with Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination

People can take steps to mitigate the consequences of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.

- Ways to overcome stereotype threat include identification with role models, reappraisal of anxiety as normal, and self-affirmation.
- To address or minimize their experience of prejudice in social interactions, stigmatized targets use confrontation, compensation, concealment, and coming together.
- To minimize the negative psychological effects of social devaluation, stigmatized targets can discount negative outcomes or devalue domains where they experience discrimination. These strategies can benefit targets in some situations, but they can also backfire or create new problems.

Learning Outcomes

- Identify how institutional changes can have a positive impact on a disadvantaged group.
- Describe how preventing prejudice in intergroup relationships can work and how it can also backfire.
- Explain conditions that make optimal contact effective at reducing prejudice.
- Outline ways that prejudice can be reduced without contact.

Reducing Prejudice

Reducing prejudice essentially entails changing the values and beliefs by which people live. This is tricky for a number of reasons. One is that people's values and beliefs are often a long-standing basis of their psychological security. Another is that prejudice often serves specific psychological functions for people, such as allowing them to displace their hostile feelings or buttress their shaky self-esteem. A third difficulty arises because, once established, prejudiced views and stereotypes constitute schemas, and like other schemas, they tend to bias perceptions, attributions, and memories in ways that are self-perpetuating. Finally, people sometimes are not even aware of their prejudices and their influence. All these factors make prejudice difficult to combat.

However, although there is no one-size-fits-all solution, a number of encouraging approaches are available. We will start from the top, so to speak, and examine how prejudice can be reduced at the societal or institutional level. Given that the effectiveness of institutional change sometimes hinges on people controlling their expressions of prejudice, we will turn next to whether and when people are able to effectively do so. Finally, we discuss how to go beyond controlling the expression of prejudice to actually change people's prejudiced attitudes and ease intergroup conflict.

Working from the Top Down: Changing the Culture

Prejudice exists within a cultural context, legitimized (albeit subtly at times) by the laws, customs, and norms of a society (Hatzenbuehler, 2014; Salter et al., 2018). Thus, one of the great challenges in reducing prejudice lies in changing these laws, customs, and norms. One dramatic example occurred when the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* declared public school segregation unconstitutional. Desegregation fostered integration and reduced prejudice (Pettigrew, 1961). As we discussed in chapter 6, a change in behavior (in this case, by law) often can lead to a change in attitudes because people strive for consistency between the two.

Changing public attitudes can also lead to institutional change. In June 2020, at a time when public support of LGBTQ+ rights had never been higher, the Supreme Court ruled that it is unconstitutional to be fired for one's sexual orientation or transgender status. Around the same time, thousands of Americans across the country were coming together to protest policing practices that systematically

and tragically disadvantage Black Americans (Hetey & Eberhardt, 2018) (see **FIGURE 11.4**). Although in mid-2020 it was too soon to be sure this new social movement would lead to better policing, unprecedented shifts in cultural norms and attitudes were being exposed. For example, within three weeks after George Floyd was killed by a police officer kneeling on his neck, eight U.S. cities and three states had ordered bans on neck restraints (Kaur & Mack, 2020), and the Minneapolis city council had voted to create a more humane system of law enforcement (Milman, 2020). To counter the role of implicit racial bias, many police departments educate their employees about how to detect, avoid, and change their biases (Spencer et al., 2016). Alongside these changes, there has been a dramatic shift in public opinion, and a majority of Americans now believe that there is a larger problem of racial bias in law enforcement (Voytko, 2020).

Figure 11.4

Protesting Injustice

In the spring of 2020, thousands of people across American cities and around the world joined together to protest racial injustice and push for reforms in policing.

[Ira L. Black - Corbis/Getty Images]

In addition to changing intergroup attitudes, institutional changes can help break down stereotypes. After desegregation, when the educational structure became somewhat more (though not completely) equal, many more Black Americans were able to be successful. The more such *counterstereotypic* narratives pervade the cultural landscape, the more people encounter those who defy their preconceived ideas about certain groups. As discussed in chapter 10, when President Obama is the example that people bring to mind when thinking of Black people, they are less likely to be prejudiced (Columb & Plant, 2011; Plant et al., 2009). By increasing the diversity of different groups, affirmative action policies can help change stereotypes (Allport, 1954; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). The less a group is associated with poorer neighborhoods and jobs, lower academic performance, increased crime, and the like, the better.

Recognizing this cycle of group images and prejudice, we see how powerfully the mass media affect how majority group members perceive minority group members. *The Jeffersons* in the 1970s and 1980s, *Murphy Brown* in the early 1990s, and Glee in 2010 were important in bringing into mainstream awareness the issues faced by African American families, single working moms, and gay teenagers. And research confirms that the more people are exposed to counterstereotypic fictional examples of minority groups, the less they show automatic activation of stereotyped associations (Blair et al., 2001; Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001). In fact, an ambitious field experiment in Rwanda exposed people to one of two radio shows over the course of a year: either a soap opera with health messages or a soap opera about reducing intergroup prejudice (Paluck, 2009). Those exposed to the show about reducing prejudice displayed more positive attitudes about and behavior toward interracial marriage.

▲ The 2016 film *Hidden Figures* tells the true story of three African American women (Katherine Johnson is shown here) working as mathematicians for NASA during the Space Race of the early 1960s. Research suggests that having positive and counterstereotypic representation of people in media can be a very effective means of changing group stereotypes.

[NASA Archive / Alamy Stock Photo]

Connecting Across a Divide: Controlling Prejudice in Intergroup Interactions

As society's laws change, popular portrayals of groups become less stereotypic, and individuals within that society feel a greater responsibility to control their biased attitudes and beliefs. Indeed, research finds that people are less likely to express their prejudice publicly if they believe that people in general will disapprove of such biases (Crandall et al., 2002). As students were faced with the reality of desegregation during the 1960s and 1970s, they were also faced with the reality of needing to control, at least to some extent, their prejudicial biases

THINK ABOUT

[Fuse/Corbis/Getty Images]

and stereotypic assumptions about outgroups. **To bring it closer to home, imagine that on your first day at college, you move into your dorm room and meet your roommate. Your roommate is of a different ethnic group than you, and cultural norms and your own internal attitudes say that you should not be prejudiced. But you worry that underlying uneasiness may creep into your interactions. Will you be able to set aside any prejudices you might have and avoid stereotyping?**

A Dual Process View of Prejudice The issue of controlling prejudice takes us back to the *dual process* approach (Devine, 1989; Fazio, 1990), first introduced in chapter 3. In Process 1, stereotypes and biased attitudes are brought to mind quickly and automatically (through a *reflexive* or *experiential process*). In Process 2, people employ *reflective* or *cognitive processes* to regulate or control the degree to which those thoughts and attitudes affect their behavior and judgment.

Because prejudicial thoughts are often reinforced by a long history of socialization and cues in one's environment, they can come to mind easily, but this does not mean they cannot be controlled. For one thing, controlling one's biases requires an awareness that those biases are present, and some people are more aware of their biases than are others (Perry et al., 2015). Education can also raise awareness. Although interventions are mostly unsuccessful at changing people's implicit biases (Forscher et al., 2019; Lai et al., 2016), research is beginning to show that teaching people cognitive strategies to control their biases can improve their attitudes and intentions (Burns et al., 2017; Devine et al., 2017). Such education efforts can only be successful, however, if individuals are motivated to control their biases, which isn't always the case (Forscher et al., 2015). Even when people are motivated, their motivations can stem from different goals. When a motivation to avoid being biased stems from an internalized goal of being nonprejudiced, people can proactively keep implicit biases from influencing their decisions and judgment (Amodio & Swencionis, 2018). In many cases, though, the motivation to control prejudice stems from the perception of external pressures, such as the pressure to be politically correct or to avoid making others angry (Plant & Devine, 1998, 2009). Those who have little internal motivation to control their biases but feel externally coerced to keep quiet end up being resentful about having to censor themselves and have a stronger motivation to express their prejudice (Forscher et al., 2015; Plant & Devine, 2001). Many have posited that this built-up resentment helps explain the spike in explicit acts of prejudice in the days following Donald Trump's election (Okeowo, 2016) and the apparent rise in White supremacy (BBC News, 2017).

Given the negative consequences of extrinsically motivated efforts to suppress prejudice, how is it possible to increase people's intrinsic motivation to control prejudice? One way is to impress on them the necessity of cooperating with those with whom they are working. When people realize that they need to cooperate with an outgroup person, they can be motivated to be nonbiased in their interactions with the outgroup and even show improved memory for the unique or individual aspects of that person (Neuberg & Fiske, 1987). At some level, people realize that falling back on stereotypes to form impressions might not provide the most accurate assessment of another person's character and abilities. The need to work together on a common goal helps to cue this motivation to be accurate and allows people to set aside their biases.

More recent research taking a neuroscience perspective has uncovered the neurological mechanisms that support these two processes (Lieberman et al., 2002). Bartholow and colleagues (2006) examined specific electrical signals emitted from the brain that are indicative of efforts at cognitive control. They

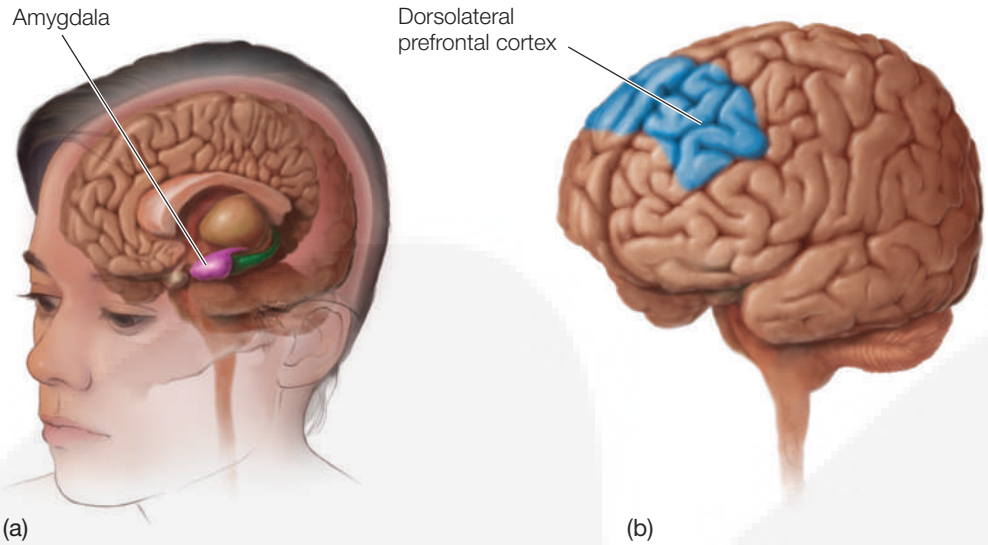


Figure 11.5

Downregulating Prejudice

Social neuroscience research suggests that the immediate amygdala responses (a) that Whites sometimes exhibit to Black faces can be downregulated by the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC) (b).

found that when White participants were presented with pictures of Black targets, the more of these signals that their brains emitted, the lower the accessibility of stereotypic thoughts. However, this occurred only when people's cognitive-control abilities were intact. When they were impaired through the consumption of alcohol, fewer of these specific signals were emitted, and participants were less able to control their tendency to stereotype others.

Additional research shows that when White participants were exposed very briefly (for only 30 milliseconds) to pictures of Black faces, they showed increased activation in the amygdala (the fear center of the brain) that correlated with the degree to which they associated "Black American" with "bad" on an implicit association test (**FIGURE 11.5**) (Cunningham, Johnson et al., 2004; Phelps et al., 2000). With such a brief exposure, people can do little to override knee-jerk reactions. What is interesting is that lengthening exposure to the faces to 250 milliseconds increased activation in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC), the region of the brain responsible for more effortful and controlled processes of judgment and decision making. Furthermore, the more DLPFC activation people experienced, the lower the amygdala activation they exhibited. These findings suggest that automatic negative attitudes that might have sprung to mind initially can be modified by more controlled processes (Cunningham, Johnson et al., 2004).

Prejudice Isn't Always Easily Controlled The research just described sounds pretty encouraging, but marshalling resources for mental control takes effort and energy. As a result, people face a few limitations when they attempt to control their biases.

The first limitation is that sometimes people make judgments of others when they are already aroused or upset. In these situations, cognitive control is impaired, so people likely will fall back on their prejudices and stereotypes. Consider, for example, a study in which White participants were asked to deliver shocks (that were not actually administered) to a White or Black confederate under the pretext of a behavior-modification study (Rogers & Prentice-Dunn, 1981). Half the White participants were angry about an overheard insult directed toward them by the confederate. When not angered, the White participants actually chose a less severe shock for the Black confederate than they did for the White confederate. However, after the White participants were angered, they shocked the Black confederate

more strongly than they shocked his White counterpart. The arousal and negative emotion caused the participants to regress to gut-level negative attitudes.

People also can have difficulty regulating their automatically activated thoughts when they are pressed for time, distracted, or otherwise cognitively busy. Teachers are more likely to be biased in their evaluations of students if they have to grade essays under time pressure. If instead they have ample time to make their judgments, they are better able to set aside their biases to provide fairer assessments of students' work (Kruglanski & Freund, 1983). People are also more capable of setting aside biases when they are most cognitively alert. This fact leads to the idea that a tendency to stereotype might be affected by circadian rhythms, the individual differences in daily cycles of mental alertness that make some people rise bright and early and make others night owls. In a study of how circadian rhythms can affect jury decision making, Bodenhausen (1990) recruited participants to play the roles of jurors in an ambiguous case where the offense either was or was not stereotypical of the defendant's group (e.g., a student athlete accused of cheating on an exam). Did participants allow their stereotypes of the defendant to sway their verdicts? Not if they were participating in the study during their optimal time of day. But if morning people were participating in the evening or evening people were participating early in the morning, their verdicts were strongly colored by stereotypes.

The Downsides of Control Strategies Even when people succeed in controlling their biases, some downstream consequences of these efforts can be negative. First, exerting mental effort in one context might make people less willing or able to exert effort afterward in another context. For example, when White college students had any kind of conversation with a Black peer, regardless of whether the conversation was even about race, they performed more poorly on a demanding computer task right afterward than when they had this conversation with another White student (Richeson et al., 2003; Richeson & Shelton, 2003; Richeson & Trawalter, 2005). In addition, trying to push an unwanted thought out of mind often has the ironic effect of activating that thought even more. As a result, the more people try not to think of a stereotypic bias, the more it can eventually creep back in, especially when cognitive resources are limited (Follenfant & Ric, 2010; Gordijn et al., 2004; Macrae, Bodenhausen et al., 1994).

Failure of control strategies can happen even when it seems that one has gotten past initial stereotypes to appreciate the outgroup person's individual qualities. In one study, participants who watched a video of a stigmatized student talking showed stereotype activation within the first 15 seconds, but after 12 minutes, the stereotype was no longer active or guiding judgment (Kunda et al., 2002). This might seem to be good news. However, if participants later learned that the person in the video disagreed with them, the stereotype was reactivated. The implication is that, in our own interactions, we might often succeed in getting past initial stereotypes, but those stereotypes still might lurk just offstage, waiting to make an appearance if the situation prompts negative or threatening feelings toward that person.

We've seen that conscious efforts to control prejudice, although well intentioned, can fail or backfire completely. The implication is that reducing prejudice requires more than employing strategies to control prejudice; it also requires going to the source and changing people's prejudicial attitudes. How do we do this?

Setting the Stage for Positive Change: The Contact Hypothesis

One strategy that seems to be an intuitive way to foster more positive intergroup attitudes is to encourage people actually to interact with those who are

the targets of their prejudice. In the late 1940s and the 1950s, as American society started to break down barriers of racial segregation, some interesting effects on racial prejudice were observed. For example, the more White and Black merchant marines served together in racially mixed crews, the more positive their racial attitudes became (Brophy, 1946). Such observations suggest that if people of different groups interact, prejudice should be reduced. There is certainly some truth to this. Research on the mere exposure effect (see chapters 8 and 14) shows that familiarity does increase liking, all other things being equal.

The problem with this strategy is that only rarely are all other things equal! If you look around the world and back in history, you quickly notice countless examples of people of different groups having extensive contact—yet their prejudices remain and even intensify. For example, recent research finds that in states where a high proportion of residents are Black, both White and Black participants have a stronger tendency to favor their own racial group over the other, as measured by an implicit association test (IAT; Rae et al., 2015; see **FIGURE 11.6**).

Why did interracial contact in the merchant marines reduce prejudice, whereas other forms of contact do not? In considering such questions, Allport (1954) proposed that contact between groups can reduce prejudice only if it occurs under optimal conditions. According to Allport's original recipe, four principal ingredients are necessary for positive intergroup contact:

1. *Equal status* between groups in the situation
2. Contact that is intimate and varied, allowing people to get *acquainted*
3. Contact involving intergroup cooperation toward a **superordinate goal**—that is, a goal that is beyond the ability of any one group to achieve on its own
4. *Institutional support*, or contact that is approved by authority, law, or custom

In the time since Allport laid out this recipe for reducing prejudice, hundreds of studies with thousands of participants have examined whether intergroup contact that meets these requirements can reduce prejudices based on such distinctions as race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and physical and mental disabilities. These studies range from archival studies of historical situations to controlled

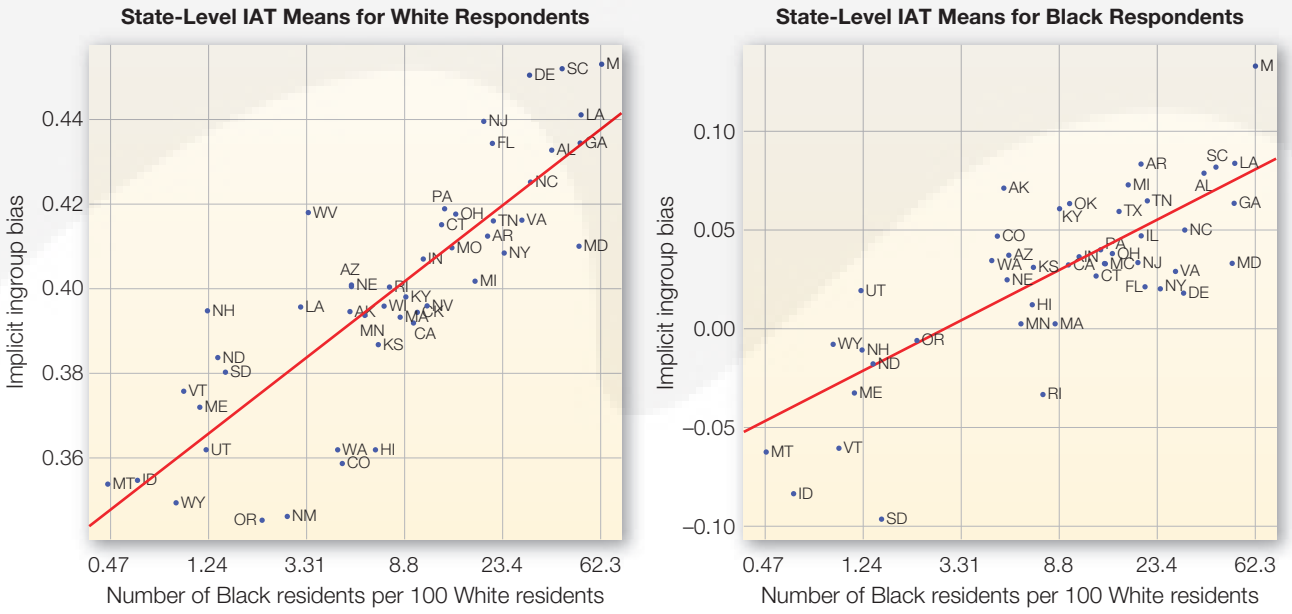
Superordinate goal A common problem or shared goal that groups work together to solve or achieve.

Figure 11.6

Implicit Racial Bias in the United States

Living in a diverse world doesn't guarantee a reduction in intergroup bias. In fact, in U.S. states where there is a higher ratio of Black to White residents, both White and Black respondents show a larger implicit bias in favor of their own racial group.

[Data from Rae et al., 2015]



interventions that manipulate features of the contact setting. Despite the diversity of methodologies, research generally finds that the more closely the contact meets Allport's requirements, the more effectively it reduces a majority group's prejudice against minorities (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005).

The Robbers Cave Study To examine these ingredients for change in more detail, let's consider a classic study by Sherif and colleagues (Harvey et al., 1961), which dramatically demonstrates both how to create a prejudice and how to use the power of superordinate goals to reduce it. Sherif and colleagues invited 22 psychologically healthy boys to participate in a summer camp in Oklahoma. Because the camp was at the former hideout of the noted Old West outlaw Jesse James, this study has come be known as the Robbers Cave study. As the boys arrived at the camp, Sherif assigned them to one of two groups: the "Rattlers" or the "Eagles." During the first week, the groups were kept separate, but as soon as they learned of each other's existence, the seeds of prejudice toward the other group began to grow (thus showing how mere categorization can breed prejudice).

During the second week, Sherif set up a series of competitive tasks between the groups. As realistic group conflict theory would predict, this competition quickly generated remarkable hostility, prejudice, and even violence between the groups as they competed for scarce prizes. In the span of a few days, the groups were stealing from each other, using derogatory labels to refer to each other (calling the rival group sissies, communists, and stinkers; the study was conducted during the 1950s!), and getting into fistfights. Was all lost at the Robbers Cave?

It certainly appeared that way until, during the third week, Sherif introduced different types of challenges. In one of these challenges, he sabotaged the camp's water supply by clogging the faucet of the main water tank. The camp counselors announced that there was in fact a leak and that to find the leak, *all* 22 boys would need to search the pipes running from the reservoir to the camp. Thus, the campers were faced with a common goal that required their cooperation. As the Eagles and Rattlers collaborated on this and other such challenges, their hostilities disintegrated. They were no longer two groups warring with each other but rather one united group working together. Successfully achieving common goals effectively reduced their prejudice.

Another way of looking at these challenges is that the Rattlers and Eagles faced a *shared threat*. In the example described above, it was the shared threat of going without water. Can you think of a historical example that led to a similarly cooperative spirit, only on a much grander scale? Many observers have suggested that the events of September 11, 2001, had a similar impact in

▶ In the Robbers Cave study, two groups of boys competing against each other at summer camp spontaneously developed prejudices against each other.

reducing some types of intergroup biases in America. During and after this tragedy, the American people were confronted with the shared threat of terrorism at the hands of Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. How did they react? In a rousing display of patriotism and goodwill, they united. Although prejudice against Muslims and Arab Americans increased, previous divisions among other groups of people were set aside—at least for a time. Research shows that the shared threat of global warming can also reduce prejudice against outgroups (Pyszczynski et al., 2012). As people think about the fate they share with others, a sense of common humanity can help reduce prejudice.

▲ In the popular television saga *Game of Thrones*, the seven kingdoms set aside their prejudices toward each other to join forces in the fight against a common threat: the White Walkers, an army of zombie warriors who threaten human existence.

[Helen Sloan-HBO/The Hollywood Archive/PictureLux/Alamy Stock Photo]

Why Does Optimal Contact Work? Although the Robbers Cave experiment is usually described as an example of how superordinate goals can help break down intergroup biases, Allport's other key ingredients for optimal contact were present as well: The boys had equal status, the cooperative activities were sanctioned by the camp counselors, and there were plenty of activities where the boys could get to know one another. But knowing that these factors reduce prejudice doesn't tell us much about why. Other research has isolated a few key mechanisms by which optimal contact creates positive change:

Reducing stereotyping. Consider that one of the most effective forms of contact involves members of different groups exchanging intimate knowledge about each other. This allows the once-different other to be *decategorized*. As a result, people are less likely to stereotype members of the outgroup (Kawakami et al., 2000).

Reducing anxiety. Optimal contact also reduces anxiety that people may have about interacting with people who are different from themselves (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). The unfamiliar can be unsettling, so by enhancing familiarity and reducing anxiety, contact helps to reduce prejudice.

Fostering empathy. Finally, optimal contact can lead someone to adopt the other person's perspective and increase feelings of empathy. This helps people to look past group differences to see what they have in common with others (e.g., Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000).

When Do the Effects of Contact Generalize Beyond the Individual? Does contact reduce only prejudice toward individuals whom you get to know? Or do these effects generalize to that person's group? If Frank, a Christian, develops a friendship with a Muslim roommate, Ahmed, during a stay at summer camp, will this contact generalize and reduce Frank's prejudice against other Muslims when he goes back to school? Here, too, the answer is not a simple "yes" or "no." Rather, it depends on a sequence of stages that play out over time (**FIGURE 11.7**) (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

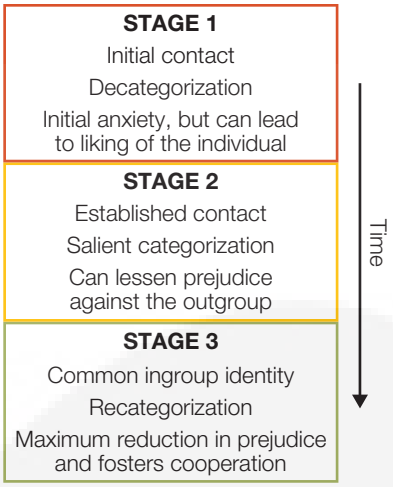
In an initial stage, as two people become friends, their sense of group boundaries melts away. Perhaps you have had this experience of talking to another person and simply forgetting that he or she is from a different group. This is decategorization at work. When sharing their love of music, Frank and Ahmed are not Christian and Muslim; they are simply two roommates and friends. Their liking for each other replaces any initial anxiety they might have felt about interacting with a member of another group.

Figure 11.7

Stages for Intergroup Contact

Positive contact with an individual from an outgroup is most likely to generalize to the outgroup as a whole when group categorization processes are initially reduced but then reintroduced over time.

[mediaphotos/E+/Getty Images]



But if Frank is to generalize his positive impression of Ahmed to other Muslims, and if Ahmed is to generalize his positive impression of Frank to other Christians, those different social categories must again become salient during a second stage, after contact has been established (Brown & Hewstone,

SOCIAL PSYCH AT THE MOVIES

Remember the Titans

Capturing the complexities of racial integration on film is no easy feat. Many movies tackle themes of racial prejudice, but the 2000 film *Remember the Titans* (Yakin, 2000) provides what might be the best cinematic example of how to reduce prejudice by applying Allport's formula for successful intergroup contact. This movie is based on the true story of separate high schools in Alexandria, Virginia, that were forced to merge in 1971 as part of a rather delayed effort to desegregate Virginia's public schools. Integrating the student body also meant integrating the football teams, and the movie chronicles the growing pains of this newly diversified group and its struggle to put together a winning season.

▲ [Disney Enterprises, Inc/Photofest]

The film centers around the head coach of the Titans, Herman Boone, played by Denzel Washington, who faces an uphill battle in training a unified team of White and Black players who previously attended separate schools, played on rival teams, and still hold deeply entrenched racial prejudices. The film clearly depicts the conflict on the football field as a microcosm of the conflict in American culture in the immediate aftermath of the civil rights movement. The movie just as effectively portrays how Coach Boone pulls his team together to clinch the state championship in 1971.

Recall that one of the elements for effective intergroup contact is the presence of *institutional support*. In the movie, this support is established at the outset when the school board decides to give the head coaching job to the former coach of the Black high school rather than to the coach of the White high school (played by Will Patton). This decision sends a clear message to the players and their parents that the school board has good intentions to integrate not only the school and the athletic programs but also the staff. Although tensions occasionally flare among the coaches, they generally work together for successful integration.

The second element for effective contact is establishing *equal status*. Coach Boone makes his hard-as-nails coaching

2005). Also, Frank's overall impression of Muslims is more likely to change if he regards Ahmed as representative of the outgroup as a whole (Brown et al., 1999). If Frank views Ahmed as being quite unlike other Muslims, then his positive feelings toward his new friend might never contribute to his broader view of Muslims. But if the category differences between them become salient and each considers the other to be representative of his religious group, then both Frank and Ahmed will develop more positive attitudes toward the respective religious outgroup more broadly.

You might be noticing a few rubs here. Effective contact seems to require getting to know an outgroup member as an individual, but this process of decategorization can prevent people from seeing that person as also being a representative of their group. There is a tension between focusing on people's individual characteristics and recognizing the unique vantage point of their group or cultural background. But understanding others' group identities is a key step in reducing prejudice against the group as a whole. This might be part of the reason that members of minority groups often prefer and feel more empowered by an ideology of *multiculturalism*, which endorses seeing the value of different cultural identities, over an ideology of being *colorblind*, whereby people simply pretend that group membership doesn't exist or doesn't matter (Plaut et al., 2009; Plaut et al., 2018; Vorauer & Quesnel, 2017).

style crystal clear to the players' parents, to the other members of his coaching staff, and to his team. But perhaps most importantly, he quite visibly metes out punishment equally to Black players and to White players. As a result, the players quickly learn that earning a starting position on the team will have nothing to do with the color of their skin. Anyone who wants to play on the team will have to work hard.

Still, the players struggle to get past their mistrust of one another. Seeing how his team continues to default to self-segregation by race, Coach Boone intervenes. When the team heads off to a training camp in two buses, he divides the players not by race but by offensive or defensive positions. To encourage contact further, he pairs White and Black players to room together for the duration of the intensive training. The overall message is that all the players, regardless of race, need to work together as a team to achieve the same *superordinate goal* of winning games.

Does this strategy of forcing players to room together work? Not at first. A White player objects to his Black roommate's iconic poster of the track and field champions Tommie Smith and John Carlos giving the raised-fist black power salute during the medal ceremony at the 1968 Olympic Games. Not surprisingly, tempers flare, and a fight breaks out. Sharing a room in the dormitory also doesn't translate into socializing during meal times. Realizing that an important ingredient—*intimate and varied contact*—is still missing,

▲ [Walt Disney/Bruckheimer Films/The Kobal Collection/Bennett, Tracy]

Coach Boone mandates that each player interview his roommate to further break down the barriers of misunderstanding and mistrust. As Allport would have predicted, the players finally begin to cooperate as a unified team after this final element of friendship is established.

Remember the Titans shows these important components of contact at work. If any of these components were missing, do you think that T. C. Williams High School still would have won the state championship in 1971? Why or why not? What lessons can we learn for creating more effective integration today?

Another potential pitfall is that although this second stage of established contact might reduce intergroup prejudice, there is no guarantee that it will promote intergroup cooperation. For this reason, researchers have suggested that a stage of recategorizing outgroups into a unified group, or **common ingroup identity**, will further reduce prejudice by harnessing the biases people have in favor of their ingroups (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). If Frank and Ahmed see each other and other members of their respective religious groups as all being part of the same camp or the same nation, then they are all in the same overarching ingroup. Perhaps this is the final dash of spice needed in the recipe of contact that will not only end intergroup prejudices but also lead to peace and cooperation.

Common ingroup identity A recategorizing of members of two or more distinct groups into a single, overarching group.

Is this vision just pie in the sky? There are hopeful signs that having a common ingroup identity can effectively reduce some manifestations of prejudice. A few years ago, a school district in Delaware instituted the Green Circle program for elementary school students. Over the course of a month, first- and second-graders in this program participated in exercises that encouraged them to think of their social world—which they designated their "green circle"—as getting bigger and bigger to underscore the idea that all people belong to one family, the human family. Students who participated in the program were more likely later to want to share and play with other children who were of different genders, weights, and races than were students in the same school who had not yet gone through the program (Houlette et al., 2004). Studies suggest that adults also can become less prejudiced, more tolerant, and more open to immigration when the common humanity among members of different groups is made salient (Kunst et al., 2015; Motyl et al., 2011).

Although these findings are surely encouraging, Allport (1954) was skeptical about people's ability to stay focused on the superordinate identity of humans, as opposed to more circumscribed national, regional, and family identities. For example, some theorists suggest that we are most likely to identify with groups that provide *optimal distinctiveness* (Brewer, 1991). Such groups are large enough to foster a sense of commonality but small enough to allow us to feel distinct from others. Geographic differences mean different languages, customs, arts, values, styles of living—all useful ways to define what feels like a shared but unique identity. Keeping salient the more abstract identity we all share is no easy chore, but superordinate goals and concerns can help.

Does Contact Increase Positive Attitudes Toward the Majority Group? It should be noted that our discussion so far has focused largely on how contact can help members of more advantaged social groups develop more positive intergroup attitudes and become invested in working toward equality (Tropp & Barlow, 2018). What about the other side of the coin? Does optimal contact also improve intergroup attitudes for the minority group member, such as the African American woman or the gay man put into contact with members of the majority group? A small body of research on this question shows that contact is more of a mixed bag for those in the minority (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Contact situations often are framed from the perspective of reducing biases held by a majority group. The risk is that minority-group members can feel stripped of an important minority identity. Furthermore, when minority-group individuals are exposed to prejudice against their group, which is more likely to occur in the initial stages of contact, this prejudice can intensify their negative attitudes toward the majority group (Tropp, 2003). Contact situations might need to be designed specifically to reduce minority-group members' own biases against the majority.

APPLICATION

Implementing Optimal Contact in a Jigsaw Classroom

Although each of Allport's conditions can improve racial attitudes (at least among the majority group), the best recipe for success is to combine all the ingredients in the contact setting (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Because the desegregation of schools seldom included all of these components for effective contact, initial evaluations of school desegregation found little success in reducing prejudice and intergroup conflict (Stephan, 1978). For example, school settings tend to emphasize competition rather than cooperation; authority figures are often mainly from the majority group, and the minority students don't feel they have equal status; and ethnic groups often segregate within the school, minimizing the opportunity for intimate contact and cooperation.

How can schools do better? Consider a cooperative learning technique developed by Elliot Aronson and colleagues called the *jigsaw classroom* (**FIGURE 11.8**) (Aronson et al., 1978). In this approach, the teacher creates a lesson that can be broken down into several subtopics. For example, if the topic is the presidency of the United States, the subtopics might include influential presidents, how the executive branch relates to other branches of the government, how the president is elected, and so on. The class is also subdivided into racially mixed groups, and one person in each group is given the responsibility of learning one of the subtopics of the lesson. This student meets with other students from other groups assigned to that subtopic so that they can all review, study, and become experts in that topic and create some kind of artifact such as a poster or a presentation to summarize their newly gained knowledge. The experts then return to their original group and take turns teaching the others what they have learned.

LaunchPad
Video Profile: The Life and Work of Elliot Aronson

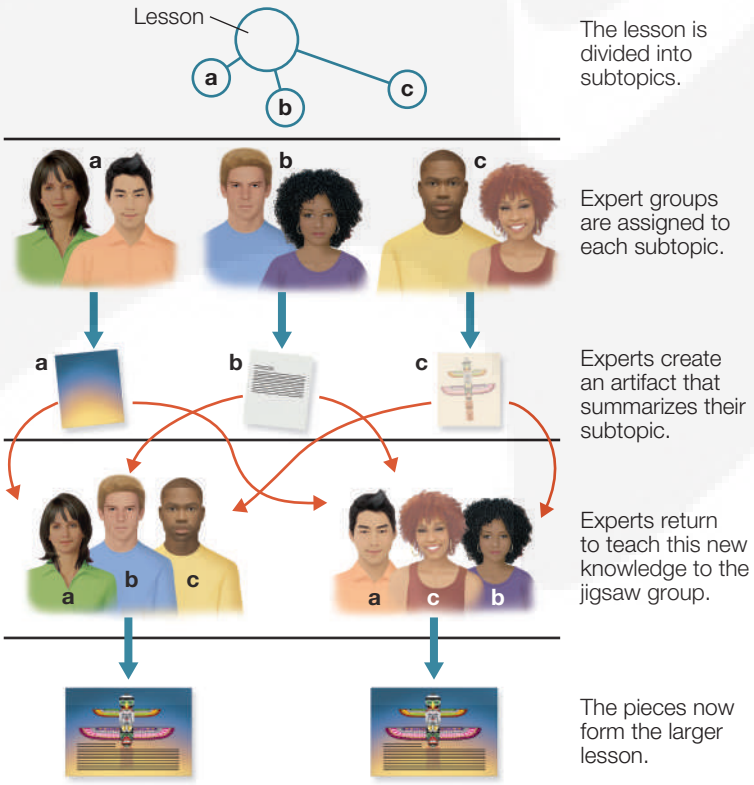


Figure 11.8

Jigsaw Classroom

In a jigsaw classroom assignment, a lesson is divided into different subtopics, and students in diverse groups are given the assignment of mastering one subtopic. These expert groups work together to create an artifact (e.g., a joint summary or poster). Then members of each expert group return to teach their newfound knowledge to the jigsaw group, where each member has now learned a piece that makes up the larger lesson. By giving every student equal status and encouraging cooperation toward a common goal, the jigsaw classroom is an effective way to reduce prejudice.

The power of this approach is its potential for embodying all of Allport's conditions for optimal contact. First, because the task is assigned by the teacher, it is authority sanctioned. Second, because the students are all in charge of their own subtopics, all the kids become experts and thus have equal status. Third, the group is graded both individually (recall our discussion from chapter 9 on accountability and social loafing) and as a group. Thus, the students share a common goal. And fourth, to do well and reach that common goal, they must cooperate in intimate and varied ways, both teaching and learning from each other. All the pieces must fit together, like the pieces in a jigsaw puzzle.

The jigsaw classroom program is generally successful, so much so that one wonders why it is not implemented more widely. One reason is that some topics in school may not lend themselves to this kind of learning approach, but still, a lot do. Compared with children in traditional classrooms, children who go through the program show increased self-esteem, intrinsic motivation for learning, and, most crucially, increased peer liking across racial and ethnic groups (Blaney et al., 1977; Hänze & Berger, 2007; Slavin, 2012). ■

Reducing Prejudice Without Contact

LaunchPad
Video: Eye of the Storm Parts I & II (Jane Elliott's Blue-Eyed/Brown-Eyed Experiment)

As we've just seen, Allport provided us with an excellent playbook for reducing intergroup prejudices through positive and cooperative contact. But sometimes people hold prejudices about groups with which they never interact. When the opportunities for contact are infrequent, can other psychological strategies reduce intergroup biases? The answer is "yes."

▲ In the aftermath of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Jane Elliott taught her third-grade class about prejudice by having them feel what it is like to be targeted by negative stereotypes.
[Charlotte Button, Photographer, courtesy of Jane Elliott]

Perspective Taking and Empathy Earlier, we mentioned that one of the reasons optimal contact can be so effective is that it creates opportunities to take the perspective of members of the other group and see the world through their eyes. Direct contact isn't the only way for people to learn this lesson. To see why, let's go back in time to 1968, just a few days after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Jane Elliott, a third-grade teacher in Riceville, Iowa, was watching the news of this tragedy and dreamed up a remarkable classroom exercise to teach her all-White class of children about the injustice of racial prejudice (Peters, 1987).

Over the next couple of days, she divided the class into two groups: students who had brown eyes and those who had blue eyes. She spent one day defining one group as the privileged and the other as the downtrodden. These designations were reflected in her actions and demeanor to the class, telling them, for example, that brown-eyed individuals are special and careful, whereas blue-eyed individuals are lazy and forgetful.

What Elliott observed from this and subsequent implementations of the exercise was a remarkable—and apparently enduring—sensitivity to prejudice. Her students became acutely aware of the harmful effects that their own prejudices could have (see Cobb & Peters, 1985). It is powerful stuff, and we encourage you to view a portion of the video in LaunchPad or search the Internet (look for "Jane Elliott" plus "A Class Divided" on Google or YouTube) to check out some video clips. In having her third-graders spend a day being stigmatized for the color of their eyes, Jane Elliott implemented an impressive exercise in perspective taking.

Perspective taking is a powerful tool for increasing empathy for the target's situation and creates a sense of connection between oneself and an outgroup. This strategy reduces prejudice against a single individual, and those positive feelings are often likely to generalize to other members of the outgroup (Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Vescio et al., 2003; Vorauer & Sasaki, 2009). For example, in one study, participants who were asked to imagine vividly the experiences of a young woman who had been diagnosed with AIDS (as opposed to taking a more objective viewpoint toward her plight) felt more empathy for AIDS victims in general as well as for her (Batson et al., 1997).

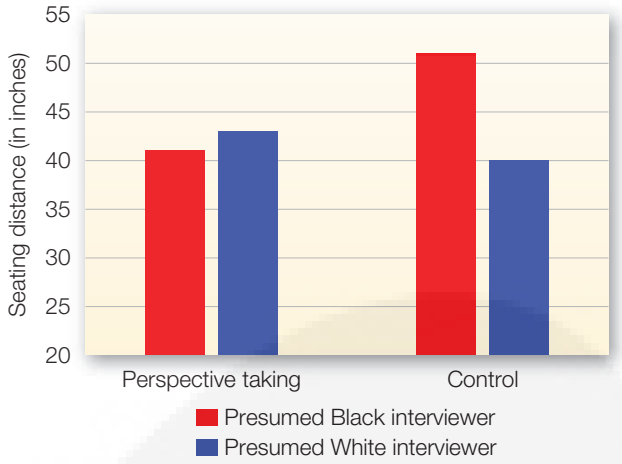


Figure 11.9

Reducing Prejudice with Perspective Taking

Although White participants in a control condition chose to keep their distance from a Black interviewer, after having vividly imagined the day in the life of a young Black man, this implicit form of bias was eliminated.

[Data from Todd et al., 2011]

Perspective taking not only reduces explicit types of prejudice but also might reduce more implicit and subtle forms of bias we described earlier. For example, imagine that you are White and that you are asked to write about a day in the life of a young Black man (Todd et al., 2011). If you are in the perspective-taking condition, you will be told to visualize what the young man might be thinking and feeling as he goes about his day. If you are in the control condition, you will be told to take a more objective approach to writing about his day. After doing your respective assignment as well as some other unrelated surveys, you are led to a different room and asked to grab two chairs from a stack and set them up for a mock-interview task between you and an assistant named either "Jake," a typical White name, or "Tyrone," a typical Black name.

Unknown to the participants who actually were in this study, the researchers measured the distance between the two chairs as an implicit measure of prejudice. They reasoned that if people had a more positive attitude toward the interviewer, they would set the chairs closer together. As you can see in **FIGURE 11.9**, participants in the control condition elected to sit farther away from Tyrone than from Jake. But if they first had to take the perspective of another young Black man during the earlier task, they sat at the same distance from the assistant, regardless of his race.

When we think about what it's like to walk a day in the life of someone else, our biases are often diminished. In fact, in one very clever study conducted in Barcelona, Spain, researchers used virtual reality to have light-skinned female participants see and feel what it would look like to walk around with darker skin. Participants who spent about 20 minutes inhabiting a virtual body with darker skin subsequently exhibited a weaker implicit negative attitude toward Blacks on an IAT than did participants who had a light-skinned virtual body; those who had an alien-looking, purple-skinned virtual body; or those who did not have a virtual body and merely saw a dark-skinned person walk in the background of their virtual world (Peck et al., 2013).

These benefits of perspective taking are impressive, but it is important to note that although perspective taking can reduce prejudicial attitudes, it is not always effective at changing people's stereotypes (Skorinko & Sinclair, 2013; Sun et al., 2016). One reason might be that people often do not accurately guess how others truly feel (Eyal et al., 2018). To become accurate in perceiving others, it's better to take the time to learn what they feel and think than to assume that we can imagine what their experience is truly like.

Reducing Prejudice by Bolstering the Self Perspective taking reduces prejudice by changing the way people think about others. But can we also reduce prejudice by changing how people think about themselves? Because some prejudices result from people's deep-seated feelings of insecurity, when their feelings about themselves are bolstered, they often can become more tolerant and compassionate toward those who are different.

You may recall a couple of theories suggesting that people take on negative attitudes toward others to protect their positive view of themselves (Fein & Spencer, 1997). For example, according to terror management theory (Solomon et al., 1991), encountering someone who holds a very different cultural worldview can threaten the belief system that upholds one's sense of personal value, which can increase fears about death. When people feel that their self-esteem is threatened, or when they are reminded of their mortality, they cling more tightly to their own worldview, which can mean derogating those with a different belief system. Therefore, one remedy for prejudice might be to bolster an individual's sense of self-esteem (Harmon-Jones et al., 1997; Schmeichel et al., 2009).

Similarly, self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988) also predicts that prejudice can be a defensive reaction to feelings of personal insecurity. In the Fein and Spencer (1997) study discussed in chapter 10, participants who received negative feedback were more likely to derogate a Jewish student. However, if participants first had the chance to think about how they lived up to their own values, they showed no such pattern of discrimination.

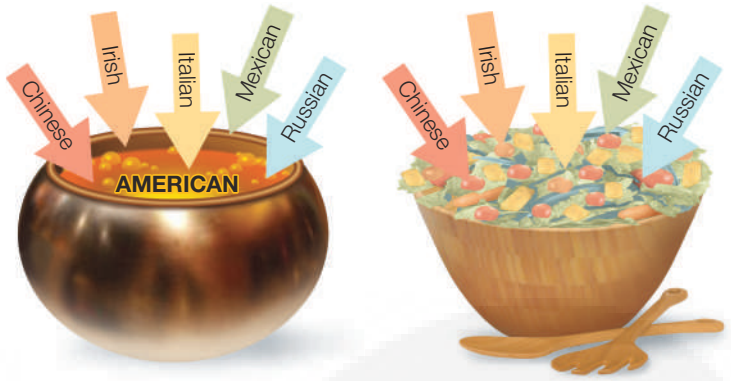
Although bolstering a person's self-esteem can reduce prejudice, there is one caveat to this effect: If the value system being bolstered is the cultural worldview threatened by the outgroup, then the effects of self-affirmation can backfire (Arndt & Greenberg, 1999). For example, although you might be able to reduce antigay prejudice by affirming people's values and abilities in areas such as athletics or sense of humor, an affirmation of their traditional family values will do little to decrease this prejudice (Lehmiller et al., 2010; Vescio & Biernat, 2003).

Reducing Prejudice with a More Multicultural Ideology In part, bolstering how people see themselves reduces prejudice because it makes people more open minded and less defensive (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). This leads us to consider perhaps a more straightforward strategy for reducing prejudice: reminding people of their tolerant values so that they are more willing to accept, if not embrace, others' differences (Greenberg, Simon et al., 1992).

Colorblind ideology A worldview in which group identities are ignored and people are judged solely on their individual merits, thereby avoiding any judgment based on group membership.

Sometimes people believe that the best way to be tolerant is to embrace a **colorblind ideology**—that is, view people only on their individual merits and avoid any judgment based on group membership. One concern with the colorblind approach is that it encourages efforts simply to control any biases or prejudices that one has toward an outgroup. Although this can sometimes be an effective way to avoid engaging in discrimination, our earlier discussion of controlling prejudice revealed that these efforts can also backfire.

Another criticism of the colorblind approach is that it can imply that everyone should conform to the status quo and act as if ethnic differences don't matter (Plaut et al., 2018). As we alluded to previously, the colorblind approach is a much more comfortable stance for the advantaged majority group than for currently disadvantaged minority groups. Whites in the United States tend to take this to the extreme, sometimes failing to mention a person's race, even when doing so is simply stating a descriptive fact about an individual that could help describe the person to whom they are referring (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Norton et al., 2006).



▲ Diversity can be described through metaphor. The melting pot depicts a colorblind approach, whereas the salad bowl emphasizes multiculturalism.

An alternative is to embrace cultural pluralism, or a **multicultural ideology**, which acknowledges and appreciates different cultural viewpoints. This view emphasizes not just tolerating but actively embracing diversity. To understand the distinction between these two ideologies, consider the metaphors used in the United States and Canada, two countries that were formed largely as a result of immigration. The United States is typically referred to as a melting pot, a place where people of different ethnicities and former nationalities might converge and blend to form a single group. In Canada, the prevailing metaphor is the salad bowl, where citizens form an integrated collective while still maintaining their distinct ethnic heritage. These two approaches can have distinct effects for marginalized groups. When institutions signal that they value the diverse perspectives and contributions from minority students, for example, those students tend feel a greater sense of belonging and perform better (Brannon et al., 2015).

Multicultural ideology A worldview in which different cultural identities and viewpoints are acknowledged and appreciated.

From a psychological perspective, these different ideologies suggest different ways of approaching intergroup relations. A colorblind approach suggests that we should *avoid* focusing on group identity, whereas multiculturalism suggests that we should *approach* group differences as something to be celebrated (Chen et al., 2016). Members of advantaged groups who endorse a multicultural ideology tend to be less implicitly and explicitly prejudiced and are more likely to seek out contact with other groups (Leslie et al., 2020; Plaut et al., 2018; Rosenthal & Levy, 2013; Whitley & Webster, 2019). Furthermore, going into an interaction with a multicultural mind-set might sidestep all of the problems we see when people are focused on avoiding being biased. This is just what Trawalter and Richeson (2006) have found. When White participants were told to avoid being biased during an interaction with Black students, they became cognitively depleted from the effort and probably less receptive to future intergroup interactions. But when they were instead told to approach the interaction as an opportunity to have a positive interracial exchange, those effects weren't present, and the interaction went more smoothly.

In a clever application of a similar idea, Kerry Kawakami and her colleagues (Kawakami et al., 2007) showed that these approach tendencies can be trained quite subtly. In one of their studies, participants completed an initial task in which they simply had to pull a joystick toward them when they saw the word *approach* displayed on a screen or push it away from them when they saw the word *avoid*. Unknown to the participants, faces were subliminally presented just before the target words appeared. Some individuals always were shown a Black face when they were cued to approach; others were shown a Black face when they were cued to avoid. After completing this task, participants had an unconscious association to approach or avoid Blacks. When they were asked to engage in an interracial interaction with a Black confederate, those in the approach condition behaved in a friendlier and more open way than those in the avoid condition. These results show that our goals for interactions can be cued and created unconsciously as well as consciously and that an approach orientation toward diverse others can be quite beneficial.

Although these findings are encouraging, embracing diversity is not without challenges. Even majority group members who try to take a multicultural

approach run the risk of being ham-handed in their efforts (*You're Asian, do you know of a good sushi restaurant I could try?*, Zou & Cheryan, 2015). Promoting diversity also makes salient both group categories and differences between groups. And in cultural-diversity training, the line between teaching about valid cultural differences and promoting unwarranted stereotypes is sometimes crossed.

Final Thoughts

Social psychology has taught us a lot about where prejudice comes from and how it is activated, and it has also shown us how it affects others and how it can be reduced. Yes, there is a long and varied list of cures, but that's because bias has many different causes and manifestations. Our interest in being egalitarian can motivate us to control our biases and become more tolerant of diversity in society (Verkuyten & Yogeeswaran, 2017). However, moving beyond a "live and let live" brand of tolerance to embracing the value of different viewpoints and perspectives may be the most effective way of achieving intergroup harmony.

Embracing the value of diversity assumes that people *want* to achieve intergroup harmony. Broader changes in cultural norms can play a powerful role in helping people internalize these motivations. The more we see others behave and interact in an egalitarian way, the more we follow suit (MacInnis et al., 2017). Reducing prejudice doesn't happen overnight. All of us will suffer relapses on the way, but cultures can shift gradually toward equality. Reducing prejudice against a segment of the population can benefit everyone in the end. For example, cross-national data from the World Bank reveals a strong positive correlation between equivalent educational opportunities for both girls and boys and the economic prosperity of a country (Chen, 2004). We can all benefit from maximizing the well-being and opportunities of everyone in society.

SECTION REVIEW Reducing Prejudice

Prejudice does not have a single cause. Various strategies are available to reduce it.

Changing the Culture

Long-term, systematic reduction of prejudice requires changing laws, customs, and norms.

Controlling Prejudice in Interactions

- Individuals can prevent their automatically activated prejudices from affecting their behavior.
- However, controlling prejudice is not always easy and can backfire.

The Contact Hypothesis

- According to Allport's conditions, optimal intergroup contact can reduce prejudice when it involves:
  1. Equal status
  2. Potential to make friends
  3. Cooperation toward shared goals
  4. Buy-in from those in power
- Optimal contact reduces stereotyping, decreases intergroup anxiety, and increases empathy for the outgroup.
- Positive effects of contact are often weaker for members of the minority group.
- The jigsaw classroom is an application of optimal contact to education.

Reducing Prejudice Without Contact

- Perspective taking increases empathy and decreases negative stereotypes.
- Bolstering people's good feelings about themselves helps them feel less threatened by those who hold different views.
- Multiculturalism is perhaps the most effective ideology for reducing biases held by the majority while also valuing diverse perspectives held by minority groups.

CRITICAL LEARNING EXERCISES

1. Do you have some identity that is negatively stereotyped or socially devalued in some domain or aspect? Can you think about a time when someone perceived you through the lens of this identity? How did it make you feel or react, and how did you cope with it?
2. When people experience instances of subtle bias, is it better to try to downplay the experience in the interest of having a smooth interaction or to confront the person who has displayed the bias? When are people likely to do one or the other?
3. Compare and contrast the difference between treating people the same regardless of their identity (i.e., being blind to their identity) and valuing the different cultural backgrounds of people (i.e., multiculturalism). Is one of these ideologies more effective for reducing bias?
4. If you had to lead, manage, or teach a diverse group of people, how would you apply research regarding intergroup contact to reduce the possible biases those people might have against one another?