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## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction

### A DIALOGUE

Stereotypes wear the black hats in social science. Although the term in its modern guise has been around almost as long as social science itself, and thousands of papers have been devoted to elucidating one or another of its many facets, during this entire period almost no one has had anything good to say about stereotypes. Everyone from talk show hosts to pop psychology gurus deride them. Many of us feel we are the victims of stereotypes held by others, and we deplore racists and sexists, who seem to use more than their share of these filthy things. Stereotypes are the common colds of social interaction—ubiquitous, infectious, irritating, and hard to get rid of. And yet that kind of universal judgment always makes me a little nervous. Is there nothing good we might say about stereotypes?

When people tell me that stereotypes are bad and evil things, I sometimes ask them to conduct a thought experiment. “Imagine,” I say, “that you could redesign the human mental apparatus so that no one would ever hold a stereotype again. What would that entail? How might one proceed with this redesign project?” This thought experiment forces people to think about what stereotypes really are. After all, we have to know what we are dealing with before we can eliminate it. Let’s imagine the following dialogue, in which OP is an Obnoxious Psychologist and RP is a Random Person. We come in toward the beginning of the dialogue, and OP is asking RP what is objectionable about stereotypes.

OP: Perhaps you would like to tell me what you are getting rid of before you do it.

RP: You mean what I think stereotypes are?

OP: That will work for starters.

RP: Well, they’re unfair statements we make about individuals because they belong to a particular group.

OP: And what is the basis of these unfair statements?

RP: People seem to assume that just because a person is black or gay, there are a whole lot of other things he or she might be.

OP: Let's stick with one group for the moment—say, male homosexuals. So you are saying that people tend to assume that because a person is a gay male, he has several traits he shares with other gays.

RP: Exactly.

OP: That kind of statement seems to me quite complex. Can you help me analyze it?

RP: It seems simple enough to me, but I'll go along with you.

OP: Perhaps I'm just a little simple-minded, but please humor me. A person making such a statement must assume that gays are all alike, at least with regard to some characteristics.

RP: That's right.

OP: So our perceiver thinks that all gay males like opera and cats and are effeminate.

RP: Something like that.

OP: But it is surely true that many gays love neither opera or cats and are not effeminate in any meaningful sense.

RP: Certainly that is true, OP.

OP: And surely most of the people who would stereotype gays realize that far from all fit the stereotype.

RP: Well, I know some people who think that all gay men are effeminate.

OP: Really? I guess I don't normally run into such extreme stereotyping. Would you say that most people who stereotype gays think that way?

RP: Not everyone.

OP: Most are not that extreme?

RP: Yeah, I would have to concede that most people don't think that *all* gays are effeminate.

OP: But that makes a mockery of your earlier statement that stereotypes are applied to everyone.

RP: Well, I didn't mean literally everyone. Just most.

OP: Suppose I could prove to you that most people realize that gay men are not generally effeminate, that only a minority are. Would you still see that as part of the stereotype?

RP: It seems a bit awkward, doesn't it?

OP: It seems that way to me. What can it mean, then, for a person to hold a stereotype that gay men are effeminate?

RP: It must mean that when they meet a gay man they have never met before, they will just assume he is effeminate.

OP: I think you're on to something here. So even if most gay men are not effeminate, and even though our perceiver (let's call her Janice) knows this, she still tends to see individual gay men in this way.

RP: That's it. That's the problem.

- OP: So, as I gather from what you are saying, the problem isn't that Janice has a faulty generalization, but that she misapplies it. Even though she understands that most gay men are not effeminate, she still tends to assume that a random gay man is effeminate.
- RP: That's certainly part of it. But there are other times when people really are wrong. They assume that most people in a group have some feature, and in point of fact they don't.
- OP: So there may be some people who assume that most gay men are effeminate, when in fact only a small minority are.
- RP: That's what I meant to say.
- OP: So now we have two problems. The first is that people may have incorrect generalizations about other groups, and the second is that they may use some generalizations to make incorrect judgments about individuals.
- RP: Yes.
- OP: Well, let's save the issue of incorrect generalizations for the moment, and discuss the issue of whether generalizations are correctly or incorrectly applied. Do you think that bears are dangerous?
- RP: Of course.
- OP: So you'd be afraid of one if you met it in the wild.
- RP: Of course.
- OP: But, statistically, your chance of getting attacked by a bear you meet in the wilderness must be pretty small.
- RP: I'll have to take your word for that. What's your point? I thought we were discussing gay men.
- OP: My point is that you have a stereotype that bears are dangerous, and you act on the basis of that stereotype even though it probably fits only a minority of actual bears. And yet you complain that people act on the basis of generalizations about gay men that are probably no more or less true.
- RP: I see what you mean. (*Pause*) Now that I think about it, I think the reason I am afraid of bears is that bears are generally more dangerous than other animals.
- OP: Now that's fairly interesting. So what you seem to be saying is that since bears are more dangerous, say on average, than pussy cats, armadillos, and goldfish, you think it is sensible to be more afraid of them? You are playing the creature laws of averages.
- RP: I think that's what I meant.
- OP: So stereotypes are really comparisons we make between groups? When a person says that gay men are effeminate, she is not saying that all gay men fit this description, but only that a higher percentage of gay men than straight men fit?
- RP: Yes, that seems reasonable.
- OP: It does seem reasonable. But I get a little nervous when things seem reasonable. Let's push ahead with a counterexample. Suppose someone said that gay men are smarter than average. Would that count as a stereotype?

- RP: Well, I suppose in some sense. But it doesn't seem quite the same.
- OP: Why not?
- RP: Well, it really doesn't hurt anyone to say they're smart. I don't think gays would be offended if people said they were smart, even if they weren't any smarter than anyone else.
- OP: So if we think about eliminating stereotypes, are you prepared to eliminate the positive ones as well as the negative ones?
- RP: Well, frankly, I'm not terribly concerned about the positive ones. So I guess I would focus on the negative ones. Those are the ones I'd want to get rid of.
- OP: Have you given any thought to how you might do this? That is, how could you design a mind that filtered out negative stereotypes about gays, but not positive ones?
- RP: This is a thought experiment after all. I'll just design the mind that way.
- OP: Don't be cute. That's my job. Let's consider the following. Imagine two groups of people who both believe that gay men are, by and large, kind and caring. Now, the members of Group A—say, university students—think that, if true, such a generalization is positive and cool. So according to your rule, we would not have to redesign the stereotype maker of these students. But the members of Group B—say, a bunch of oil rig workers—think that kind and compassionate men are not real men. For them, this is a negative stereotype; they just don't like wussy men. So according to your strategy, we want to get rid of this generalization for Group B, and we have to redesign their stereotype maker. I wonder if you could speculate with me as to how that might be done. Presumably when we redesign our mental apparatus, we are talking about fundamental changes, the kind that one is born with.
- RP: You're not going to get me this time; I see where you're leading. How could we do this for one group of people and not another?
- OP: You're catching on. But it's more complex even than that. We could presumably apply our redesign engineering to some people and not others at birth or at time of conception, but I doubt that we'd be able to know ahead of time who will be oil rig workers and the like. In other words, we don't know who needs the revised stereotype maker at birth.
- RP: Well, since this is a thought experiment, perhaps we could make the changes later in life, after we've had a chance to see how they turn out.
- OP: So you're proposing a kind of mental machinery recall program?
- RP: Something like that.
- OP: But surely there would be problems with that as well. For example, how are you going to decide which generalizations you want to get rid of? Surely it will be hard at a basic level to distinguish between positive and negative generalizations. And the reasons for that are pretty clear, and we don't need to get into details about neurons and the like. What we consider to be positive and negative varies from person to person, culture to culture, situation to situation. For example, beliefs that gay men are artistic would be seen as positive in the context of a

fund-raiser for an arts organization, but not in the context of a discussion of how to prepare a new construction site or plan the takeover of a major corporation.

RP: You made your point. Let's do get on with things.

OP: To be sure. I guess what you want to do at this point is design a mental apparatus that will not distinguish between positive and negative generalizations. I think we agree that this is difficult to do.

RP: Yes, I agree. Let's move on here.

OP: Getting a little impatient, are we? Okay. Well, we seem to agree that stereotypes are generalizations about groups—both positive and negative.

RP: That's right.

OP: And so we want to get rid of generalizations about groups?

RP: That would seem to follow, OP.

OP: Well, let's think about that. Clearly you are uncomfortable with generalizations such as that gay men are effeminate, love opera, and the like.

RP: Certainly I am.

OP: Well, let's think about a few other generalizations about people—stereotypes, if you will. How do you feel about saying that men who have been in prison are likely to be violent in the future? Would you want to make sure that people never formed that generalization?

RP: I guess I'm supposed to say yes.

OP: That would be helpful. I'm not trying to lead you astray here. You did say that you wanted to get rid of generalizations about people, and I've given you another example.

RP: And I've admitted, just to make you happy, that I would want to get rid of the stereotype about male ex-prisoners.

OP: And so—having got rid of that stereotype, that generalization—you would be perfectly happy to have dinner with such a person, walk with him through dark alleys, and generally treat him like one of your gang. In other words, you wouldn't be afraid of him in any way.

RP: Of course I would be afraid of him.

OP: But on what basis?

RP: Well, people who do time are violent.

OP: Sounds like a generalization to me.

RP: But the generalization about male ex-prisoners is true, and the one about gay men isn't.

OP: But it turns out that most male ex-prisoners never commit violent crimes, so this generalization probably doesn't apply to anything like all men who have been in prison; yet you insist on using it. It sounds just as irrational as using generalizations about gay men. I'm not persuaded that there's a difference here.

RP: Then I guess I'm irrational.

OP: Surely no more than most people. But rather than be so critical of ourselves,

let's sneak up on this issue from another angle. How do you feel about the generalization that ripe, red apples taste good?

RP: That seems fine.

OP: Now what about a generalization that Honda makes reliable and good cars?

RP: Well, I'm not sure about that. I had a Honda several years ago that was a dog, and I have several friends who really won't drive Hondas because they think they're bad cars.

OP: So you wouldn't buy another Honda?

RP: That's right. Cars are expensive, and I wouldn't want to take a chance. Does that make me irrational too?

OP: Maybe; maybe not. Let's see where our argument goes. Suppose—just for the sake of argument—that I could prove to you that Hondas are terrific cars, based on consumer surveys, engineering reports, and the like. Would you then be tempted to buy a Honda?

RP: Probably not.

OP: I suspect most people would say the same thing. Most people who felt the way you do and had a miserable experience probably wouldn't take a chance, either. But I'm less interested in whether you're a rational consumer than in the status of your generalization. I'm claiming that your generalization about Hondas is faulty, and yet you insist on using it. But I thought you had earlier agreed that incorrect and faulty generalizations should be screened out.

RP: But you're talking about cars, and I was talking about people.

OP: Do you think there's a difference?

RP: It's obvious there is.

OP: Are you sure that there is a difference in terms of how the mental apparatus treats data? It strikes me as self-evident that we form generalizations and think about cars, dogs, and people in about the same ways. I do understand that gay men are neither dogs nor Hondas, but I can't seem to come up with a good reason for why generalizations about these categories differ much in terms of how we get them. Can you?

RP: Perhaps if I had more time.

OP: Yes, the world would clearly be a better place if we just had more time to think. But we do need to move on. So humor me just for a moment, and let's assume that the differences are more apparent than real. It just seems to me that your modified mental apparatus is going to have trouble distinguishing between generalizations about people and anything else. I know of no evidence that the present mental apparatus does this, and it's hard for me to imagine that we could build it in a way to do so. Generally, cognitive systems are not sensitive to stimulus properties in this way. A generalization is a generalization. So if I read you correctly, you want to abolish the capacity to generalize about everything.

RP: Of course not. I've already said, if you'd only listen, that I only want to abolish incorrect generalizations.

OP: So what makes a generalization incorrect?

RP: Obviously when there are substantial cases that do not fit.

OP: And how substantial? For example, if I say that ripe, red apples taste good, there are clearly some exceptions.

RP: Of course.

OP: And many exceptions should there be before you say it's a faulty generalization? Over 50%?

RP: That seems sensible.

OP: Any generalization that doesn't capture at least 50% of known cases is faulty and basically incorrect?

RP: That's what I'm claiming.

OP: Well, let's play with that a bit. Let's return to my example of you and a bear in the woods. You agreed that, statistically, most bear–people encounters result in no harm to either party unless you count a little anxiety. Do you still want to give up your generalization that bears are dangerous?

RP: No. I would still be afraid of a bear I met in the woods.

OP: But you might have to give up that generalization if you impose the truth criterion. In fact, I think I could prove to you that many of the generalizations we use about animals, things, and groups of people fit fewer than 50% of the individuals in that group, and yet we continue to use these generalizations. You have already indicated that you'd avoid ex-prisoners, even though most are not violent; that you'd be afraid of bears, even though most would not harm you, that you wouldn't buy a Honda, even though a majority are perfectly fine cars. Perhaps you are not so irrational after all. Sometimes generalizations can be very useful even if they are generally not true. Even if the generalization, or stereotype, that bears are dangerous is generally not true, I think we would not want to create a mental apparatus that was unresponsive to such potentially important if low-probability events. So I will continue to base my behavior on the statistically erroneous stereotype that bears are dangerous. And I will make no apologies for that. Wouldn't you agree?

RP: I suppose. Do I have a choice?

OP: You always have a choice. The problem seems to be that every time we find a potentially bad feature of stereotypes, we find that we can't get rid of just that feature. We either have to take the bad with the good, or not generalize about the world around us.

RP: That seems to be where we are. I find that discouraging. In fact, I'm now depressed, and I want to end this.

OP: Well, please don't jump off any bridges on this account. Perhaps as we work our way forward, we will find some answers. We are sure to find that the answers will not be quite as simple as we would hope, and we may have to reformulate our questions in the process. Let's see if we can get out of this intellectual swamp that we have created for ourselves.

RP: That *you* have created for us.

OP: Perhaps.

## SOME BACKGROUND

### Our Reactions to Stereotypes

Among other things, this dialogue reveals how difficult it is to have a clear sense of what stereotypes are. As OP consistently reminds us, it is not so clear how stereotypes differ from ordinary generalizations, and it is also not clear that they can or even should be avoided. To give up our capacity to form stereotypes, we would probably have to give up our capacity to generalize, and that is a trade none of us should be willing to make. The ability to generalize is a central, primitive, hard-wired cognitive activity (Schneider, 1992).

I raise this issue of our evaluation of stereotypes informally here, because one of the many reasons why we have had trouble coming to intellectual grips with these villains of the social world is that we have spent valuable time and energy condemning rather than in trying to understand (see Brown, 1965, for a related argument). Because we have reacted so negatively to stereotypes, we have also tended to ignore some of the important questions about their nature and use. Yes, often stereotypes are negative, untrue, and unfair. But as we will see, sometimes they are none of these things. Sometimes they are even useful (although we tend to give them different names in such circumstances), and they may even be essential. So assumptions about whether stereotypes are good or bad do not seem to buy us much. There are times for moral outrage, and there are times when we need the courage to bully our way ahead toward our goal of understanding.

### The History of Stereotypes

The word “stereotype” itself comes from the conjunction of two Greek words: *stereos*, meaning “solid,” and *typos*, meaning “the mark of a blow,” or more generally “a model.” Stereotypes thus ought to refer to solid models, and indeed the initial meaning of the term in English referred to a metal plate used to print pages. As Miller (1982) points out, such a term is likely to give rise to at least two connotations: rigidity and duplication or sameness. When applied to people, then, stereotypes are rigid, and they stamp all to whom they apply to with the same characteristics. It should be noted that the actual term was used as early as 1824 (Gordon, 1962; Rudmin, 1989 ) to refer to formalized behavior, and by the early part of the 20th century it was regularly used to refer to rigid, repetitive, often rhythmic behavior patterns (Schroeder, 1970). But the most familiar use of the term refers to characteristics that we apply to others on the basis of their national, ethnic, or gender groups.

### Early Conceptions and Studies

#### LIPPMANN'S PERSPECTIVE

In that sense, the term was first used by the distinguished journalist Walter Lippmann in his book *Public Opinion* (1922). This was not a passing reference, either; he devoted a substantial portion of his book to a discussion of the concept. Lippmann viewed stereotypes as general cognitive structures, and he used the term to account for errors and biases in our conceptions of the world.



Lippmann also struck a modern theme by noting that such knowledge structures are useful:

There is economy in this. For the attempt to see all things freshly and in detail, rather than as types and generalities, is exhausting, and among busy affairs practically out of the question. . . . But modern life is hurried and multifarious, above all physical distance separates men who are often in vital contact with each other, such as employer and employee, official and voter. There is neither time nor opportunity for intimate acquaintance. Instead we notice a trait which marks a well known type, and fill in the rest of the picture by means of the stereotypes we carry about in our heads. (pp. 88–89)

These pictures in our heads are not inevitably based on experiences. Indeed, Lippmann saw them as being driven by personality processes, functioning as rationalizations to maintain social standing. He also, however, made it perfectly clear that stereotypes are not, for that reason, inevitably false. Perhaps the most remarkable features of Lippmann's treatment are the ways in which he anticipated much of what we now take to be the modern perspective on the topic, despite his lack of training in social science and psychology.<sup>1</sup>

#### KATZ AND BRALY'S STUDIES

Actually, most of Lippmann's discussion dealt with various errors of thinking and was not specifically concerned with traits ascribed to groups of people. However, most of the first empirical studies did concern such trait attributions particularly to ethnic groups,<sup>2</sup> while still preserving Lippmann's notions of error. The studies of Katz and Braly (1933, 1935) are most famous. They asked Princeton University students to check traits they thought described 10 racial and ethnic groups. Those traits with considerable consensus of endorsement for a particular group were seen as stereotypic of that group. So, for example, 78% of subjects thought that Germans were scientific-minded, 84% thought that Negroes (in the terminology of that time) were superstitious, and 54% thought that Turks were cruel. In the second study (Katz & Braly, 1935), the rank order of preferences for the 10 groups (a crude prejudice measure) rated was identical to the rankings in terms of the average desirability of the traits ascribed to the groups. This began a long tradition of seeing stereotypes and prejudice as closely linked.

The 1930s were years of major interest in measurement of attitudes as a bridge between culture and individual behavior. Katz and Braly saw prejudice or attitudes toward groups as really attitudes toward labels or race names, and these attitudes in turn were thought to reflect culturally derived stereotypes or images about people representing those groups. Thus, as cultural products, stereotypes helped to explain the effects of culture on prejudice and discrimination. For the next 20 years or so, most studies on stereotypes continued the same basic focus. Although various definitions of stereotypes were offered, the working definition was in terms of traits ascribed to various racial and ethnic groups. Naturally social scientists trying to understand discrimination looked for the negative features of stereotypes. So stereotypes, which were assumed to be largely reflections of the culture rather than of individual experiences with people from these groups, promoted a negative evaluation (prejudice), which in turn justified discrimination.

### ***More Modern Conceptions***

#### PERSONALITY AND PREJUDICE

With the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950), stereotypes began to be considered manifestations of a general prejudiced attitude. Stereotypes were still thought to predict discriminatory behavior, but their source tended to be seen as localized more in personality dynamics rather than in the larger culture. Stereotypes were viewed less as pictures in people's heads than as traits assigned to overly simplified categories, and while everyone sometimes employs such categories, their use was considered especially likely among people with prejudiced personalities.

This research effort had begun in the early 1940s as an attempt to understand the roots of anti-Semitism in the context of Nazi Germany. The research soon showed that those respondents who were prejudiced against Jews also had deep-seated prejudices against other groups. Thus anti-Semitism was only one part of a more general "ethnocentrism"—prejudice against those from other groups. Ethnocentric individuals in turn showed a more general set of attitudes that came to be called the "authoritarian personality."<sup>3</sup> Authoritarians turned out, not surprisingly, to have antidemocratic tendencies and to look a lot like Nazis. They liked clear authority structures, had an almost mystical allegiance to conservative values ("the good old days"), and were rigidly opposed to behaviors that upset their own strong sense of what was good and proper. In the definition of such a personality syndrome, stereotypes were considered reflections of deep-seated hatreds and prejudices.

The authoritarian personality research team was most impressed with the extent to which stereotypes were used to discriminate self from outgroups by making such groups homogeneous and negative. Stereotypes were rigidly held by such people as a protection against having to think about individual differences among members of hated outgroups. Stereotypes were also thought to protect against threat from negative tendencies that the prejudiced person was trying to repress. That is, the content of stereotypes came from a projection of negative characteristics to others; thus the content of stereotypes must inevitably be negative. Stereotypes tended to drive experience, rather than the reverse. Finally, in this research, stereotyping was likely to be a general process and not restricted to particular groups. Because a prejudiced person was struggling with any number of unresolved conflicts and with a host of repressed but active "dirty" tendencies, the choice of a particular target group for projection was basically irrelevant, although the authors did recognize that Western cultural history made some groups "better" targets than others.

*The Authoritarian Personality* was one of the most influential books in modern psychology. It deeply affected how social scientists thought about prejudice and stereotyping, as well as attitude and personality. Although the authors of that work did not believe that only authoritarians could be prejudiced, in practice the bright but narrow spotlight of social science was thrown on such wicked folks. This work also fostered a general agreement that stereotypes represented major pathologies of social cognition: They were fundamentally incorrect and derogatory generalizations about groups of people; they were not based on experience (or at least were profound corruptions of that experience); and they were relatively impervious to empirical disconfirmation.

### ALLPORT'S CONTRIBUTION

In 1954 Gordon Allport published what remains the seminal book on prejudice, *The Nature of Prejudice*. Allport's background made him ideally suited to this task. He had a clear sense of the extent to which attitudes and values could serve multiple functions for the individual, and he taught at Harvard University where, in the Department of Social Relations, he rubbed shoulders with sociologists and anthropologists (so that the idea of looking at individual behavior in a cultural milieu came naturally to him). In addition, Allport's former student and then colleague, Jerome Bruner, was at that time one of the major forces in the "new look" in perception—an approach that favored examination of the role of values, attitudes, and social factors in basic perception and cognition. This work would later become an important stimulus for the cognitive revolution, and so it is no accident that in 1954 Allport featured the cognitive underpinnings of stereotypes.

Allport's book is perhaps most famous for having introduced the notion of the "prejudiced personality," a watered-down version of the authoritarian personality. However, he actually devoted more of his book to discussions of various cognitive factors involved in prejudice and stereotyping. In particular, he noted that it is a part of our basic cognitive natures to place things and people in categories, which are the cognitive buckets into which we pour various traits, physical features, expectations, and values—the stuff of stereotypes.

Allport recognized both that categorization and the use of categories are inevitable in our daily commerce with complex worlds, and also that inevitably errors will result. Although we all categorize other people and use stereotypes to some extent, prejudiced people think about their categories differently than do relatively unprejudiced people. In particular, the unprejudiced person is more likely to use what Allport called "differentiated categories," those that allow for exceptions and individual variation.

### ***Changing Conceptions: Process and Content***

#### THE DEAD END OF CLASSIC RESEARCH

Important as the classic Katz–Braly, authoritarian personality, and Allport conceptions were, by the late 1960s they had ceased to generate exciting research. The literature from this period is littered with reports of stereotypes of Group A by Group B, debates over fairly minute issues, and little attention to larger problems. By the early 1970s, it appeared that the study of stereotypes had run out of steam. Brigham's (1971a) classic review covered about 100 studies (limited to ethnic stereotypes), and his general tone about what had been learned was somewhat pessimistic. He suggested that many issues, even basic definitional ones, remained unresolved. For example, some authors felt that stereotypes refer to incorrect generalizations about groups, while others suggested that stereotypes have the same cognitive status as any generalization. Some saw stereotypes as due to faulty reasoning, while others viewed them as due to faulty experience, if fault was to be found at all. Most theorists described stereotypes as generally negative, but there was disagreement about whether that was a defining property. One gets the feeling from the Brigham review that stereotypes had become a sterile field of study, with little to show for all the heated ar-

gument by way of empirical generalizations. Brigham pointed the way to a more modern conception by recognizing that stereotypes had been narrowly defined, involved more than trait assignments to groups, and were not necessarily rogue cognitive constructs.

#### THE SOCIAL COGNITION PERSPECTIVE

In the past few decades, stereotype research has taken on new life, and there have been two major changes in the cast of the research. First, emphasis has shifted from studying the *content* of stereotypes through trait ascriptions to studying the cognitive *processes* involved in stereotyping (Hamilton, Stroessner, & Driscoll, 1994). Stereotyping (process) has replaced stereotypes (content). Second, there have been changes in examining which groups are specific targets of stereotyping.

The 1970s were years of extraordinary development in cognitive psychology, and during the 1980s this perspective was applied rigorously to the study of how we perceive, remember, and think about people and social events. Cognitive psychology generally, and social cognition more particularly, emphasized the role of abstract knowledge structures (called variously “schemas,” “prototypes,” “theories,” etc.) in processing information about others. Stereotypes seemed closely related to these other types of constructs (Schneider, Hastorf, & Ellsworth, 1979) and could easily be construed as general theories or cognitive structures in their own right. Although there were early suggestions (e.g., Allport, 1954; Fishman, 1956; Gordon, 1962; Vinacke, 1957) that stereotypes could profitably be considered as closely related to other products of normal cognitive activity, and a few studies during the 1960s and 1970s had a clear cognitive focus, the real beginnings of the cognitive approach to stereotyping can be dated from the publication of a book edited by David Hamilton (1981a) containing a number of classic papers.<sup>4</sup>

*Advantages of the Social Cognition Approach.* The social cognition perspective has come to dominate social psychology generally, as well as the study of stereotypes (Hamilton & Sherman, 1994; Jones, 1982; Schneider, 1996; Stangor & Lange, 1994; Stephan, 1985, 1989). There are advantages to this approach. When stereotypes are seen as a normal part of the cognition family, most of the classic issues such as truthfulness, bias, and rigidity are cast in more tractable forms. Within the social cognition tradition, stereotypes are simply generalizations, and there are at least two advantages to construing stereotypes this way. First, we can “piggyback” our analyses on the existing research from cognitive psychology. Modern cognitive psychology also has produced many insights into the ways our generalization help us process information; stereotypes benefit from being seen in that light.

Second, when we stress the continuities between the ordinary processes involved in generalizations and those involved in stereotyping, we tend not to dismiss stereotypes as products of corrupt minds and diseased culture. We open the range of possible approaches when we analyze instead of condemning.

*Problems with the Social Cognition Approach.* Heavy reliance on the social cognition approach is not cost-free, however (Schneider, 1996). The social cognition perspective does not place much emphasis on the content of stereotypes. For example, although the content of Janice’s stereotypes about gay males and Hispanics may be

radically different, they will help her navigate the social world in about the same ways. It matters less what Janice thinks about gay or Hispanic people than how she arrived at her stereotypes and how she uses them. Her thought process are also seen as relatively context-free. It doesn't much matter whether she is thinking about gays at a gay bar or at the local health club. To be sure, the *content* of her thoughts may be affected by her location, but her *ways* of thinking should not be all that much different.

None of these biases is necessarily bad, but we need to recognize that there are losses as well as gains. On the negative side, the social cognition perspective does not easily nurture questions about whether stereotypes are true or false, positive or negative, acquired from individual experience or cultural tuition, shared or individual. Thus these classic issues in the study of stereotypes have been relatively ignored for the past couple of decades.

#### THE NEW LOOK IN CONTENT

Another factor that rejuvenated the study of stereotyping was the dramatic increase of interest in gender differences and in discrimination against women during the 1970s and 1980s. In part this mirrored an increasing cultural interest in sexism; concern with gender stereotypes has been a relatively late development (Eberhardt & Fiske, 1996).

*Ethnicity and Race.* Traditionally, most studies of stereotyping focused on race, nationality, and ethnic groups. The areas of race relations, discrimination, and the like have always provided a meeting ground for various social scientists. It has been obvious for many decades that in a culture so permeated by a history of racism, one could not understand relations among races solely in terms of one academic discipline. However, the tendency during the early days of social science was to assume that the most basic problem was prejudice. To be sure, understanding prejudice required studying the cultural milieu in which it arose, and this in turn required understanding the economic, social, and political forces that supported such negative attitudes. But there was general (although far from complete) agreement that the psychology of prejudice was key.

That assumption, largely implicit, changed during the turbulent decades of the 1960s and 1970s. It became clear that social pressures were often more important predictors of discrimination than overt prejudice (Harding, Proshansky, Kutner, & Chein, 1969). Political activists, for their part, were unhappy with the slow progress that had been made in reducing prejudice, and sometimes expressed the view that social scientists knew little or nothing about the arts of such change. They found that the quickest and most effective way to get the sorts of changes they wanted was through direct political, legal, and economic pressure. Legislative bodies, courts, and the streets rather than educational institutions became the laboratories of race relations during this period, and court rulings, economic boycotts, and threats of violence rather than prejudice reduction became the weapons of choice in fighting racism. These strategies were effective in the short run, regardless of other negative consequences or questions about long-term effectiveness. In this context, *psychological* approaches to racism and discrimination were shunted aside as being too slow at best and ineffective at worst.

*Gender.* At about this same time, people began to mount effective political, economic, and social programs for change in the status of women. Many female social scientists had been interested for decades in what we now think of as women's issues. But there were relatively few women in prestigious academic positions, and women's issues were usually seen as peripheral to "real" social science. However, during the 1970s as more women began academic careers, a larger base of support began to accumulate for the study of women's issues, gender roles, family, and the like, even among those female social scientists whose main research interests lay in other directions.<sup>5</sup> Thus there was a natural core of interest in gender stereotyping as well as discrimination against women.

To summarize, then, from the 1970s and 1980s onward, there has been renewed interest in stereotyping. This has resulted not only from the rise of social cognition within social psychology, but also from the larger numbers of people who have become interested in larger issues of discrimination—in this case, gender as opposed to race discrimination.

## **SOME CLASSIC ISSUES**

There have been well over 5,000 empirical studies of stereotypes, broadly defined, in the past 70 or so years. In this long history, the same basic issues keep cropping up. Some of these, I argue, are best left aside, but others get restated from time to time precisely because in one form or another they remain important.

### **Definition**

In trying to make sense of the disagreements, no issue could be more important than that of definition. What exactly is a "stereotype"? Before we get to the meat of the issue, it may be worthwhile pausing for a moment to think about why definitional issues are so important.

### ***The Purpose of Definition***

#### DEFINITIONS PARTITION

Definitions do a lot of the heavy lifting in science, and they do so in two ways. First, they draw boundaries by including some exemplars and excluding others. They partition a particular domain into things that count and others that do not. Thus, if we were to define stereotypes as beliefs about African Americans, we would include a host of attitudes and values about this group but would exclude similar sorts of beliefs about Hispanics and professors, to name two other groups. In cultures where African Americans were not prominent, there could be no stereotypes at all by this definition. There might be circumstances in which that were appropriate, but most social scientists would, I suspect, think that the universe of beliefs about blacks is not so tightly knit and separate as to require severance from nominally similar beliefs about other groups, such as Hispanics. Put another way, most of us believe that studying beliefs about both groups illuminates both areas to their mutual gain; therefore, this particular partitioning of beliefs is overly restrictive for the general study of stereo-

typing. That is not to suggest that beliefs about African Americans and Hispanics are so similar as to be interchangeable, but the point here is that stereotypes are more than beliefs about a particular group.

We could, of course, define the notion of “stereotype” more broadly. For example, we might define stereotypes as beliefs about people or even as beliefs about any category, so that we have stereotypes about cars, trees, butterflies, and professors. That definition is probably too broad because it makes us consider too many disparate things, and it rides roughshod over potentially important differences in the ways we think about Hondas and gay males.

Definitions, then, ought to make us include the right number and kinds of instances. What the “right” number and kinds are, of course, reflect choices. Definitions are not epistemologically neutral; they divide the world the way someone wants it divided. Normally in science, we try to use definitions to organize the world into scientifically useful categories—those that illuminate and make our science more efficient. At the same time, definitions have theoretical, political and ethical consequences.

#### DEFINITIONS ENCAPSULATE THEORIES

Definitions partition, but they also pack in a fair amount of theoretical baggage (often in sneaky or unplanned ways). Definitions are ways that theorists try to sell their ways of looking at a domain. *Caveat emptor*. Definitions obviously constrain us in terms of what exemplars they allow. So a definition making error a central component would not allow us to consider generalizations that are basically accurate. That might or might not be a problem. If one feels that error is an essential quality of stereotypes—in other words, that inaccurate generalizations differ in kind from accurate ones—one might well want to partition the domain in just that way. If, on the other hand, one is committed to a theory that inaccurate and accurate generalizations are more similar than different, one would not want to stress this difference as a part of the definition.

#### DEFINITIONS AS A FOCUS ON FEATURES

Obviously, then, definitions draw our attention to some features and indirectly shunt attention away from others. That is neither good nor bad per se. It is not right or wrong. It is not correct or incorrect. Such evaluative terms do not properly qualify definitions. There is no such thing as a right or wrong definition—one that is true or false. Rather, the term “definition” is more properly qualified by adjectives such as “useful” or “not useful,” “viable” or “not viable,” “accepted” or “not accepted.”

There are typically many features associated with a given category, but in definitions of the category some features are essential and others are merely interesting corollaries of the category. For instance, if we were interested in defining gender, we would regard various genetic features and perhaps those sexual and secondary sexual characteristics that result from such genetic differences as essential. There may, in practice, be other features distinguishing males from females (e.g., height, strength, and style of dress) that we consider derivative or nonessential.

Similarly, when we try to define stereotypes, we should focus on the essential features—on those that are fundamental to the partitioning of the domain. Other fea-

tures may be less essential; they are “along for the ride,” so to speak, although explaining their whys and wherefores may be theoretically interesting and practically important. Obviously, theorists may disagree as to which features are essential and which merely corollary. Earlier theorists tended to assume that stereotypes must be inaccurate, so for them inaccuracy and error were essential features. For most modern theorists error is not an essential feature, so their definitions tend not to include this feature as defining. This does not mean that error is an irrelevant feature for modern theorists; in fact, most would probably assume that many, perhaps most, stereotypes are inaccurate in important ways. But not including this feature in the definition leaves the accuracy question quite open to debate, and also encourages us to focus on the similarities between accurate and inaccurate generalizations about groups of people. That’s what we want to do these days.

### ***Some Definitions***

In due course I offer a definition, but before doing so I review several earlier definitions and then discuss some of the features that have been highlighted by such definitions. Just so that the reader can get some idea of the range of definitions, I list several classic ones here:

- “a fixed impression which conforms very little to the facts it pretends to represent and results from our defining first and observing second” (Katz & Braly, 1935, p. 181).
- “A stereotype is a stimulus which arouses standardized preconceptions which are influential in determining one’s response to the stimulus” (Edwards, 1940, pp. 357–358).
- “Whether favorable or unfavorable, a stereotype is an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category” (Allport, 1954, p. 187).
- “a collection of trait-names upon which a large percentage of people agree as appropriate for describing some class of individuals” (Vinacke, 1957, p. 230).
- “Stereotyping has three characteristics: the categorization of persons, a consensus on attributed traits, and a discrepancy between attributed traits and actual traits” (Secord & Backman, 1964, p. 66).
- “a belief that is simple, inadequately grounded, or at least partially inaccurate, and held with considerable assurance by many people” (Harding et al., 1969, p. 4).
- “An ethnic stereotype is a generalization made about an ethnic group concerning a trait attribution, which is considered to be unjustified by an observer” (Brigham, 1971a, p. 29).
- “A stereotype refers to those folk beliefs about the attributes characterizing a social category on which there is substantial agreement” (Mackie, 1973, p. 435).
- “A structured set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a group of people” (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1979, p. 222).
- “those generalizations about a class of people that distinguish that class from others” (McCauley, Stitt, & Segal, 1980, p. 197).
- “sets of traits attributed to social groups” (Stephan, 1985, p. 600).



“a collection of associations that link a target group to a set of descriptive characteristics” (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986, p. 81).

“highly organized social categories that have properties of cognitive schemata” (Andersen, Klatzky, & Murray, 1990, p. 192).

“a positive or negative set of beliefs held by an individual about the characteristics of a group of people. It varies in its accuracy, the extent to which it captures the degree to which the stereotyped group members possess these traits, and the extent to which the set of beliefs is shared by others” (Jones, 1997, p. 170).

It is readily apparent that there is no real consensus on what stereotypes are. It is, however, also fairly clear what the dimensions of disagreement are, and to these I now turn.

### **Features of Stereotypes**

The definitions above seem to disagree on at least three things. The most obvious is whether stereotypes are generally inaccurate. The second is whether stereotypes are bad not only in their consequences, but in the reasoning processes that gave them birth. Third, there are questions about whether stereotypes are shared among people or whether an individual’s beliefs, perhaps shared by no one else, can constitute a stereotype.

### ***Are Stereotypes Inaccurate?***

#### DATA AND SPECULATION

Whether stereotypes are accurate is a reasonable question, and one that is extremely difficult to answer. Many of the definitions above stress inaccuracy as an essential feature of stereotypes. I take up the accuracy issue in greater detail later in this book (Chapter 9), but for now I simply suggest that although most theorists have assumed that stereotypes are inaccurate, there is little direct, hard, empirical support for this assumption (Judd & Park, 1993; Mackie, 1973; McCauley, 1995). On the one hand, it is not hard to show that many beliefs about groups are in error. For example, LaPiere (1936) found that Armenian workers in Southern California were stereotyped as dishonest, deceitful, and troublemakers, despite the fact that such workers were less likely to appeal for welfare and had generally better records before the law than the average worker. Schoenfeld (1942) found that people had personality stereotypes of people based on their first names, and it seems unlikely that first names account for much in the way of actual personality traits.

#### THE KERNEL-OF-TRUTH HYPOTHESIS

On the other hand, some theorists have maintained what has come to be known as the “kernel-of-truth hypothesis.” This suggests that many (although not necessarily all) stereotypes are based on some empirical reality, although they may exaggerate the extent to which a particular group can be characterized in a certain way. There are some demonstrations that stereotypes of groups match the features that these

groups claim for themselves, and that for at least some groups stereotypes match actual measured personality traits (Abate & Berrien, 1967; Campbell, 1967; Judd & Park, 1993; Swim, 1994).

Even if the kernel-of-truth notion is correct, it is likely that many (probably most) stereotypes are exaggerated generalizations, in the sense that groups are seen as having more of some feature that would be justified by empirical data. However, just to complicate matters, there are even demonstrations (e.g., McCauley & Stitt, 1978) that some stereotypic beliefs are not exaggerated enough—that groups are seen as less extreme on some characteristics than would be justified by data.

It is not hard to figure out why so many social scientists have assumed that stereotypes are inaccurate. As I have suggested, it is easy to find evidence that at least some stereotypes are untrue or based on little or no evidence. Another suspicious fact is that when reporting stereotypes, most people focus on negative traits, and it seems unlikely that most groups are characterized mainly by such negative features. And, of course, the social scientists who did early research on stereotypes were, by and large, committed to eliminating discrimination and improving race relations; quite apart from their having a vested interest in believing that negative stereotypes of people were false, such social scientists were likely to have had quite different experiences with members of minority groups than the average subject in their experiments had had.

#### THE WAYS OF INACCURACY

One major problem with all this is that many theorists have not been precise as to what they think accuracy is. I discuss the accuracy issue extensively in Chapter 9, but for now let me mention just three ways in which our stereotypes might be inaccurate.

The crudest form of inaccuracy, and one that seems to be the most prototypic, is just seeing a group as being wrongly placed on some dimension. We might, for example, see professors as conservative when they are in fact liberal.

Second, we may make errors about groups by perceiving too much or too little group homogeneity for a given trait. Perceived homogeneity is important, because it affects how confidently we predict whether a person fits the group stereotype (see Chapters 3 and 7). Obviously, if all or nearly all members of a group are highly intelligent, we can be confident that any given member will be intelligent. On the other hand, if a given group is highly variable, we will be less confident about whether a given individual fits the stereotype.

This leads to a related form of inaccuracy occurring not at the group level, but when we apply group stereotypes to individuals. In many respects, the logic of going from the general to the particular is even more perilous than forming generalizations from particular instances. We all know that even excellent restaurants sometimes serve bad food, friendly dogs can bite, and kind-looking professors can be gruff. Thus even when our generalizations are basically accurate, they can still lead to mistakes when applied to concrete individuals.

#### THE STATUS OF OUR GENERALIZATIONS

It is obvious that we all have and use thousands of generalizations about groups of people, not to mention animals, plants, and the objects around us. Many, perhaps even most, of these generalizations are quite accurate *qua* generalizations (although of course they tolerate exceptions), and many others are probably basically correct al-

though exaggerated. Do we then partition the domain of such generalizations such that the correct ones are not counted as stereotypes? Is that wise? Although it is possible that accurate generalizations differ from inaccurate ones in some fundamental way, this is not obviously the case, and so we should be wary of making inaccuracy a defining feature of stereotypes. I do not.

### ***Are Stereotypes Bad?***

When one reads the literature on stereotypes, one cannot avoid the conclusion that stereotypes are generalizations gone rotten. Several commentators (Brigham, 1971a; Gardner, 1973) have noted that if stereotypes are nothing more than generalizations, the term loses all meaning. Somehow stereotypes ought to be worse than most generalizations; they come with a slap to the face. I have begun this chapter with a challenge of sorts: If stereotypes are so bad, what is so bad about them? What makes them so different from ordinary generalizations? We have already seen that because inaccuracy remains an open issue, we probably do not want to define stereotypes as merely inaccurate generalizations about groups of people. Is there something else?

#### STEREOTYPES HAVE NEGATIVE CONTENT

One possibility is that stereotypes are bad because they emphasize the negative rather than the positive features of groups. Our interest in stereotypes obviously is fueled by the negative features that seem to support prejudice and can do real damage to members of stereotyped groups.

However, as the opening dialogue makes clear, the evaluative nature of the content of stereotypes can hardly be a defining feature. I might have a stereotype that college students tend to work hard. Is that a good or a bad thing? I think of it largely as positive, but one could imagine others (friends who want to party) who might see that as a negative feature. Karlins, Coffman, and Walters (1969) reported that 48% of their Princeton University sample described Jews as ambitious. Good or bad? Well, ambition is generally good, but one suspects that this ambition has a rather aggressive and grasping cast as part of the traditional Jewish stereotype.

We should avoid being overly precious. Obviously, almost no one has a good word to say on behalf of traits such as laziness or stupidity—but the fact is that many traits can be seen as positive in some situations and negative in others, as good by one group and bad by another, as worthy when embedded among other positive traits and as a bit sinister when part of a more negative constellation. The more important point is this: There is no a priori reason to assume that positive and negative generalizations are fundamentally different except in their consequences. Approaches such as the authoritarian personality research did emphasize that negative generalizations stem from psychological defenses in a way that positive ones do not, but on balance it seems too limiting to see that as the essential difference between all positive and all negative generalizations for all people. The evaluative nature of beliefs about others, therefore, ought not to be a defining feature of stereotypes.

#### STEREOTYPES ARE BASED ON FAULTY REASONING

Another reason commonly given for why stereotypes are bad is that they result from faulty reasoning processes. Certainly we are entitled to a strong suspicion that the

generalizations about Hispanics formed by an overt racist differ from those formed by a community organizer not only in how positive they are, but in how they came to be. One possibility, for example, would be that the community organizer forms correct generalizations on the basis of direct and extensive contact with individuals, whereas the racist harbors incorrect ones based on hearsay and corrupt experiences driven by his or her emotions and prejudices. This certainly is what the early stereotype researchers had in mind.

From Lippmann onward, various students of the concept have noted that stereotypes are usually based on insufficient information—that they are rogue generalizations. Two further, often implicit, assumptions have often tagged along. The first is that somehow people are letting their cultures think for them; instead of forming their own generalizations from experience, they are using cultural ready-to-wear generalizations. The second is that since stereotypes are often used aggressively by prejudiced people, stereotypes must be driven by prejudice. This in turn means that stereotypes were more results of wishes and desires than of “objective” experience. In any case, it has been alleged that stereotypes are generalizations that are not derived from rational or otherwise “good” cognitive processes.

*Letting Cultures Do Our Thinking.* In hindsight, neither of these assumptions need be true. It is quite possible for us to form our own stereotypes without help from the culture, although we often receive various cultural boosts. Even so, we would hardly want to disallow the use of generalizations that are provided at second hand rather than based on individual experience. I have it only on hearsay that cobras are dangerous, but I would be ill advised to test this myself. Obviously, parents and our educational systems try to teach people useful (and, we can hope, largely correct) generalizations to guide their lives—generalizations that we do not expect will have to be reconfirmed throughout life.

Though we all get irritated at others (and occasionally at ourselves) for letting what turn out to be stupid and unsubstantiated generalizations guide behavior, the fact that we do not always verify our generalizations about people makes such generalizations no different from many others that we routinely use. In other words, we may be irrational by this criterion (although not by my lights), but that putative irrationality is not limited to our stereotypes of people.

*Experiences.* One problem with the idea that individual experience is superior to culture is that it is not clear what “good” and “bad” data for generalizations are. How many bad experiences do I have to have with a particular breed of dog before I am justified in concluding such dogs are mean? How many experiences do I need to have with a particular ethnic group to conclude that its members are smart or lazy? And suppose my own experiences have been highly parochial. Imagine, if you will, that I have been attacked by five collie dogs in the last year, and I have concluded that collies are mean and vicious. In general, five attacks seems sufficient justification for this particular stereotype. But now suppose we discover by reading a *Consumer’s Guide to Dogs* that collies are even-tempered and kind, so that I happen to have been the victim of a chance distribution of naughty collie behavior. This would indicate that my own generalization is generally incorrect, but it hardly follows that it is bad in the sense of having been arrived at in some peculiarly biased way. I did the best I could do with the evidence before me.

Moreover, our own experiences with most groups are a bit like viewing a yard through a picket fence. We can see only parts at a time. For example, a store owner in a Hispanic part of town may have daily hassles with his or her Hispanic customers in terms of shoplifting and the like. This store owner's experiences certainly justify the generalization that Hispanics tend to commit lots of crimes, although for the larger city they may or may not be more crime-prone than others. The person who observes students primarily at the library will form different generalizations about them than someone who sees them primarily at bars on Saturday night will. The irony is that some students of stereotypes complain because people use hearsay or culturally provided generalizations without using their own individual experiences. Others complain because people rely too heavily on their own biased experiences. Unfortunately, we don't get to dictate the kinds of experiences people have.

*Prejudiced Thinking.* It has also been asserted that the cognitive processes underlying generalizing are corrupted in highly prejudiced individuals. Although we can gain a great deal by studying the cognitive processes of extremely prejudiced people—those whose thought processes seem to have lost the gyroscope of reality—we lose perspective by concentrating on these crabbed and rotten kinds. The stereotypes that the Archie Bunkers of the world hold need not be taken as prototypic. To do so is to pack too much into a working conception of stereotypes.

#### STEREOTYPES ARE RIGID

The very term “stereotype” etymologically refers to a kind of rigidity, and we ignore word origins at our peril. Fishman (1956) and others have declared that stereotypes are rigid and resistant to change. Some are. We all know racists whose favorable contacts with individual members of minority groups leave their stereotypes unfazed. Indeed, I have a stereotype or two of my own that I would be loath to give up in the face of mere evidence. And yet most of us have stereotypes that do change, albeit slowly, and that don't seem to be that rigid. So we ought not to include rigidity as an essential characteristic, although we should try to remember that a few people have many rigid stereotypes and many have a few.

#### STEREOTYPES DO NOT ENCOURAGE THINKING ABOUT INDIVIDUALS

Others have argued that although stereotypes may be generalizations, they are applied too freely and indiscriminately; they do not allow for exceptions. It is unclear what we ought to make of this claim. I have several bad experiences with collies, form a stereotypes that they are mean, and then assume that every collie I meet is vicious. That hardly seems the height of openness to new experiences, but it is the stuff of everyday generalization. Generalizations are like that. They are useful precisely because they free us from having to think about each new individual member of whatever category. And because no good deed (or cognitive achievement) goes unpunished, it is also the stuff of everyday experience that using generalizations in this way will lead to errors in our judgments. Obviously, some errors are more important than others. I may think that red apples are likely to taste good and may be disappointed at the occasional sour one, but my disappointment is personal and basically irrelevant to the rest of the world. My generalization about collies may keep me from hav-

ing a perfectly nice collie as a pet, but again it is hard to claim cosmic importance for this error. However, when I fail to hire a hard-working black man because I believe that black men are lazy, the error has more important consequences for the man I have rejected, and may have legal consequences for me as well. But consequences aside, it seems clear that stereotypes do not fundamentally differ from other generalizations in terms of their tendency toward overgeneralization, and therefore let's strike this as an essential part of our definition of stereotypes.

#### WHY ARE STEREOTYPES BAD?

The point is that many stereotypes share at least one of the problems described above, but so do most generalizations. Therefore, it doesn't seem useful to make fault a part of the definition of stereotypes (see Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981, for related arguments). Why then do we dislike stereotypes so much? I think the answer has more to do with the politics of interpersonal behavior than with the ways our minds work. It is probably not overly cynical to suggest that stereotypes are simply generalizations that somebody doesn't like (Brigham, 1971a). It is not hard to understand why professors would object to being seen as lazy, lawyers as greedy, and computer programmers as nerdy. Well, then, what about the stereotype that Asian Americans are smart and hard-working? Why would anyone object to these positive characterizations? One reason might be that, as a generalization, it allows for no variation; seeming to shout that *all* Asian Americans are smart might offend Asian Americans who treasure their diversity. Furthermore, saying that someone is smart may be an indirect way of saying that this person isn't sociable or athletic. So even positive generalizations can impose straightjackets.

Of course, animals and plants we see as dangerous have their good points and deliver occasional pleasant surprises as well. However, there is one big difference between the world of things and people: Lawyers object when they are seen as greedy, whereas cobras and bears rarely complain that they are maligned. In a sense, then, my generalization about lawyers becomes a stereotype only when a lawyer (or a lawyer-friendly person) chooses to object. This is not a trivial fact, as it weaves its way through the fabric of everyday life and politics. However, the central point is that generalizations about bears and professors share many of the same cognitive features, and often the main ways in which they differ depend on how they play themselves out in our social worlds.

#### ***Are Stereotypes Shared or Individual?***

Before 1970 or so, most social scientists who studied stereotypes assumed them to be generalizations shared with other members of a particular culture, and that assumption found its way into several of the classic definitions. This was an easy assumption to make. After all, in the days before television and when segregation along race, ethnic, gender, religious, and class lines was more pronounced than it is now, most of what most people knew about other groups came from hearsay and limited exposure to stereotyped portrayals on radio and in the movies. In the 1930s it would have been comparatively rare for a white person in the United States to know an individual black person at all well, so white stereotypes of blacks had to be based primarily on culturally transmitted information rather than detailed individual experiences. Men and women used to lead more segregated lives than they do now, and even members

of different religious groups tended to have limited contact.<sup>6</sup> Thus the fact that the stereotypes that most people reported in these early studies matched culturally prescribed views should come as no surprise. Moreover, to investigators searching for the culprit for stereotypes, it seemed obvious that culture is the answer. Presumably children are taught stereotypes by their parents, schools, and churches; such stereotypes are reinforced by culturally created social realities and by limited contact with individuals from other groups.

Even today the content of many stereotypes is shared among people, and many of the stereotypes we most care about do seem to have at least a partial cultural basis (Stangor & Schaller, 1996). This is not trivial, because stereotypes that are shared by large numbers of people do seem to have a legitimacy and a reality that more individual stereotypes probably lack (Gardner, Kirby, & Finlay, 1973). Nonetheless, this raises an important issue: Are stereotypes shared because of cultural tuition, because of common experiences, or for some other reason? The older tradition tended to treat people as passive products of their culture, and did not invite speculation about individual cognitive processes. My own bias is to see the cognitive underpinnings of stereotypes as fundamental, and then to ask why stereotypes are often shared.

There is a middle ground of sorts. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981a) and self-categorization theory (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994) both emphasize the importance of social interactions in the development, use, and maintenance of stereotypes (Augoustinos & Walker, 1998). Culture doesn't force itself upon us, but rather provides templates that help us organize our social experiences in ways that facilitate effective interpersonal behavior. The real action is in the give and take of our everyday interactions with others. Culture may provide stereotypes for us to deploy strategically, provide motives for us to explain some group differences, or channel our social experiences in ways that encourage certain stereotypes. Thus within this approach culture is a player, and an important one, in the development of stereotypes, but its role is often indirect and hard to document.

The truth is that we cannot separate the roles of culture and individual experiences in forming stereotypes or any other product of our thought systems (Schneider, 1996; Spears, Oakes, Ellemers, & Haslam, 1997; Stangor & Jost, 1997). Cultures provide categories for our cognitive activity. It is no accident that Americans are more likely to classify people on the basis of race, gender, or occupation than on the basis of religion or hair color. U.S. culture provides lessons on important ways that categories differ. This is not necessarily bad; after all, we expect children to be taught the differences between playing in the street and playing on a playground, and we want to be told which foods are healthy and which not. By the same token, we also learn important lessons about what differences are relatively unimportant. Those of us raised in U.S. culture, for example, make little of the differences between those with blond and those with dark hair (although there are clear stereotypes based on hair color—see Chapter 13). When we meet people, we tend to classify them in terms of their occupation or parental status, and not in terms of whether they grew up on a farm; matters could, of course, be different in different settings or different cultures. Furthermore, the products of our cognitive activities have social and cultural consequences that channel our thinking.

The point is this: Although it is appropriate to focus on cognitive activities somewhat apart from cultural contexts, we also lose important perspectives and insights by ignoring the social dimension, as the social cognition perspective traditionally has. In the latter chapters of this book (especially Chapters 9–14), I address some of the

traditional social and cultural issues, and take up once again the question of why so many stereotypes seem to be widely shared.

### **A Return to Definitions**

What, if anything, does this have to say about the core question of definitions? What do we need to include in our definition of stereotypes? As we have seen, a good many features have been claimed as essential to stereotypes, but my “take” is that they are generally not. Let me again be clear about what this means. I have argued that many of the traditional features of stereotypes are corollary rather than essential or defining. We should not define stereotypes in terms of their target group, their accuracy or inaccuracy, or whether they have or have not been produced by the larger culture. Such things may be true of some or most stereotypes, but to define stereotypes in terms of these features softens our focus on the more central features.

### ***Essential Features of Stereotypes***

What then are the essential qualities of stereotypes? The most basic definition I can offer, the one with the fewest constraining assumptions, is that *stereotypes are qualities perceived to be associated with particular groups or categories of people*. This definition captures at least the essential qualities that stereotypes must have, in the sense that everyone would agree on this much. Note that the definition does not place limitations on what these features might be; they could be traits, expected behaviors, physical features, roles, attitudes, beliefs, or almost any other qualities. It also is not restrictive about the types of categories that might be considered as gist for the stereotype mill. In fact, it is important to note (see Chapter 4 for further discussion) that there is no principled distinction between categories and features. Although it seems natural to think that helpfulness is a feature of the teacher category, we could just as easily say that being a teacher (“teacherness,” if you will) is associated with the category of helpful people. The distinction between categories and features has more to do with cultural definitions of what a category is and with what we see as important in a given situation than with any special psychological requirements.

This definition has a “vanilla,” even gutless, quality in its refusal to take stands on many of the traditional issues that have animated the stereotype literature. As I have argued, this is probably all to the good. On the other hand, it does embody one strong assumption—namely, that stereotypes involve associations between categories and qualities—and this focuses our attention on the mental representation of stereotypes in terms of memory structures (Stangor & Lange, 1994; Stephan, 1989).

### ***Associations***

#### THE ADVANTAGE OF ASSOCIATIONS

The main advantage of association metaphors is that cognitive psychology offers a wide range of formal models of associative networks and other modes of representation (see Carlston & Smith, 1996; Smith, 1996) on which we can draw. I should be clear that I am using “association” in the loosest possible sense here, and this does not represent a commitment to associative network models as the way stereotype in-



formation is represented. All I claim here is that feature–category relationships vary in strength and can be measured as such. A secondary advantage is that the strength of associations is typically reasonably easy to conceptualize and measure, so that a number of measurement strategies can be used.

#### STRENGTH OF ASSOCIATION

All modern conceptions of stereotypes recognize that features are differentially associated with categories. For example, intelligence is probably more closely tied to the category of professor than to that of bus driver, and intelligence is more closely related to the professor category than is the propensity to drive an old car. There are many ways we might conceptualize strength in this context. We might mean that professors, on average, have more of the trait than bus drivers. Alternatively, we might mean that intelligence more readily comes to mind in thinking about professors than about bus drivers. Strength could signify that a higher percentage of professors than bus drivers are above some threshold of intelligence. In this book, I tend to use probabilities as the measure of choice. Thus, when I say that intelligence is more closely associated with professors than bus drivers, I mean that people will judge that professors are more likely to be intelligent than bus drivers. However, that is not a principled decision, but one of convenience. It is usually easier to discuss strength in this domain in terms of probabilities, and it is also an idea that has great intuitive appeal.

#### GENERALIZATION AND DIFFERENTIATION

One of the problems with thinking about stereotypes in terms of probabilities of a group's having certain features is that these probabilities can be quite high without differentiating one group from another. Consider your generalizations about college professors, Jews, career women, homeless people, persons with AIDS, or baseball players. As you think about what features one of these groups (say, homeless people), does it occur to you to say that homeless people have hearts, are taller than 4 feet, have some body hair, have five toes on each foot, and had two biological parents? Do you think of homeless people as physically dirty, as behaviorally disturbed, as badly clothed? Those features fit my stereotype of homeless persons, and yet far fewer homeless people are physically dirty at any given time than have five toes on each foot. So why do you not list toes as a part of your stereotype? Well, you answer, because nearly everyone has five toes on each foot. So being physically dirty and exhibiting behavior problems seem to differentiate domicile-disadvantaged individuals from domicile-advantaged individuals in ways that toes do not. To be sure, this is somewhat misleading, because there are a good many other things that distinguish these two generalizations. Having behavioral problems may be seen as more central to the sociology and psychology of homelessness than toe count; more to the point, one may build a "picture in our heads" about homeless persons based on their behavior and physical state, but not on the basis of common human features. Nonetheless, the point remains that physical state, even though less strongly associated with homelessness, is more discriminating than number of toes.

Several psychologists (e.g., Campbell, 1967; McCauley et al., 1980; Tajfel, 1981a) have made such differentiation central to the conception of stereotypes. Perhaps not every feature contained in a stereotype is good at differentiating the group from oth-

ers, but a large number seem to be (e.g., Diehl & Jonas, 1991; Ford & Stangor, 1992), and generally people are fairly sensitive to differences between groups (e.g., Krueger, 1992). Moreover, informally it seems that when people make public statements about their stereotypes, they usually intend to make a statement about some differentiating feature of a group. So to say that homeless people are dirty is really to say that homeless people are more dirty than the average person (or “nice” people), and to say that lawyers are greedy is implicitly to compare them with doctors and professors.

One important reason why features are associated with groups is that such features help discriminate one group from another. It is a close call as to whether differentiation is important enough to become part of our definition of stereotypes. On balance, however, I think that including it muddies some waters from which we expect clarity. Let’s stay on target and keep it simple.

### ***Stereotypes as Theories***

Having pleaded for simplicity, I must somewhat guiltily argue for another important feature. Although many, perhaps most, stereotype researchers are comfortable with heavy reliance on fairly passive associative network models without additional complication, I am not. To be sure, a perceiver who finds that members of a particular group probabilistically behave in a particular way or have a particular appearance will probably come to form associations between those features and the group category, whether or not he or she feels inclined to do so. Associations sometimes just happen. But often we have theories about why groups tend to exhibit certain features—a fact that has received increasing attention in this area (e.g., Anderson & Sedikides, 1991; Furnham, 1988; Martin & Parker, 1995; McGarty, Yzerbyt, & Spears, 2002; Murphy, 1993b; Murphy & Medin, 1985; Wittenbrink, Gist, & Hilton, 1997; Wittenbrink, Hilton, & Gist, 1998; Wittenbrink, Park, & Judd, 1998; Yzerbyt, Corneille, & Estrada, 2001; Yzerbyt, Rocher, & Schadron, 1997). Is there anyone who does not have an explanation, correct or not, for why African American males dominate many sports in the United States? Do we not have a range of theories, some matters of political contention, for whatever differences we observe between males and females? Does anyone assume that homosexuality, mental illness, or artistic accomplishment simply shows up unannounced one day?

Although people’s theories about their stereotypes constitute an important theme throughout this book, on balance it seems wiser not to incorporate this feature into the present definition. For one thing, there may be some associations that do not call upon theoretical knowledge or that incorporate theories only as a justification for empirically derived associations. Furthermore, understanding lay theories about groups and their features may help us understand why people associate particular features with particular groups, but usually this will not affect how we measure stereotypes or how they affect behavior.

## **PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION**

This book focuses on stereotypes, but we must consider their relationships to the feelings we have about other people and our behavior toward them. There are two related reasons why this is important. First, stereotypes are inherently private. Although my stereotypes owe a lot to my social and cultural milieus, in the final analy-

sis I own them and you do not. Moreover, I may have less control than I would wish over their expression, but I generally enjoy the conceit that I can choose whether you or anyone else knows what my beliefs are. The bottom line is that my beliefs are of no concern to you unless and until I display them in some way. I'm tempted to say that beliefs harm no one unless openly expressed, but they may create mischief for the people who hold them (Wheeler, Jarvis, & Petty, 2001). That is not a moral point, but a simple matter of pragmatics. It then follows that, interesting as stereotypes may be, their importance rests on how and when they are translated into behaviors. From this perspective, trying to study stereotypes without discussing their relationships to prejudice and behavior is a bit like packing for a long journey, boarding the plane, and flying to our destination, only to find ourselves in an endless circling pattern over our destination. Unfortunately, social psychologists have not devoted much or nearly enough attention to discrimination compared to stereotypes (Fiske, 2000b).

"Prejudice" refers to the feelings we have about others, and "discrimination" to our behavior. Nonetheless, trying to define prejudice and discrimination is a bit like trying to define pornography: It is hard, but people know it when they see it—or at least they think they do. Unfortunately, just as people debate whether the nudes in *Playboy* or *Playgirl* are porno, so people can (and do) argue about whether a hiring policy emphasizing certain qualifications that effectively exclude disproportional numbers of African Americans is or is not "real" discrimination. Often our political dialogue and even our legal reasoning are guided by "I know it when I see it," and in some contexts this may work. However, as social scientists, we cannot afford to be so imprecise. If we cannot be clear about what the constructs we deal with are, how can we expect informed debate about issues that need debating?

## Prejudice

The word "prejudice" comes from the Latin *praejudicium*, which means "a preliminary hearing or presumption" and is closely related to *praejudico*, meaning "to pre-judge." The modern English word has preserved much of that meaning. In popular use, the word "prejudice" also has the connotation of a negative judgment, although we also often say that someone is prejudiced in favor of something or someone. In such cases we often have to explicitly mark it as such in contrast to the unmarked word "prejudice," which almost always connotes negativity. *Prejudice can then be defined as the set of affective reactions we have toward people as a function of their category memberships.*

Although almost no one has anything good to say on behalf of prejudice, it, like stereotyping, results from perfectly normal cognitive tendencies. Prejudging is as normal and almost as much a part of our basic (and, I daresay, primitive) mental toolbox as is categorization. Every day in countless ways, I must decide whether to approach or avoid certain people, situations, and things. I have neither time nor inclination to read every book, watch every TV program, join every organization that wants my time and money, climb every mountain, conquer every continent, or sail every sea. It's not going to happen. I, like you, tend to watch TV programs that have appealed to me in the past, and to favor books by authors whose past books I have liked.

Obviously, judgments based on past experience or what we have read or heard are often quite fallible. Our prejudgments, our prejudices—positive and negative—inevitably limit our experiences and deny us important information. I see a Sylvester

Stallone movie, and on the basis of that experience decide I never want to see another. In making this judgment, I may be closed-minded, snobbish, priggish, or stupid—indeed, prejudiced—but then aren't we all sometimes? But, at the same time, our prejudgments allow us to meander through life more efficiently and live to ripe old ages, given that they help us avoid dangerous encounters with naughty people, beasts, substances, and situations. We are willing to pay the price of somewhat impoverished experiences for safety and mental calm. We actually have little choice in the matter, evolution having decided for us that this is a bargain (Keith, 1931; Kurzban & Leary, 2001).

There are, of course, important differences between prejudices against people and other forms of prejudgment. Pragmatically, people complain about our judgments of and behaviors toward them, but things do not. This keeps us on our mental toes when we judge others. Probably the most important differences theoretically are that prejudices against people tend to be embedded more deeply into our mental matrices and are also more likely to receive some cultural support. Some prejudices are superficial and socially inconsequential; my prejudices against Stallone movies have shallow resonances in my mental life and are not apparently widely supported in U.S. culture. On the other hand, some prejudices (say, against eating dog meat for Westerners) reek of culture. Moreover, my prejudices—pro and con—about Asians, Hispanics, males, and females may or may not find ready support in my culture, but they are certainly more tightly integrated into my belief structure than my prejudices about Mexican and Thai food (both entirely positive).

### Discrimination

By this point, no one will be surprised to learn that the kinds of discrimination we decry are firmly rooted in rather ordinary cognitive and behavioral processes. The word “discrimination” springs from the Latin *discrimino*, meaning “to divide or separate.” And whatever else discrimination involves, it is based on division of people into categories. Discrimination has a range of meanings in everyday life, some of which are positive. So we can speak of a discriminating art collector or wine enthusiast. To be sure, there is a slight hint of snobbery in such usage—as if the discriminating person is dividing the world in highly refined ways not readily available to the rest of us—but still, in many contexts, it is good to be able to divide intelligently.

However, most of the time when we use the term “discrimination,” we have in mind the use of category information in making judgments and behavioral choices about people. Even that, however, is much too broad. I doubt that most people would call my university's failure to admit people with SAT scores of 350 (verbal) and 375 (math) and barely passing high school grades discrimination, even if those people are members of disadvantaged ethnic or racial groups. Most universities and colleges discriminate on the basis of test scores and high school grades; some businesses may hire people with certain kinds and amounts of education, plus what they take to be relevant skills. My failures to invite homeless people to meals and a sleepover in my guest room would not be seen as discrimination by most people, nor would my limiting my friends to well-educated people. Obviously, all of us use category information all the time to include or exclude people—and no one gives it a second thought, let alone labeling it as discrimination. Something more is needed, and that something more is a sense that the use of category information is *unjustified* in some

sense. Unfortunately, what seems unjustified to one person may not to another, and so we have continuing debates. Still, to get on with things for the time being, *let's define discrimination as the unjustified use of category information to make judgments about other people.*

In the United States at the moment, both liberals and conservatives agree that members of most racial and ethnic groups should not be excluded from most organizations and jobs. They are on their way to being able to say the same for gender. However, discrimination against homosexuals and criminals is still routinely practiced and widely approved. Then there are grey areas, such as disability status. Present law requires that organizations provide reasonable accommodations for those with physical and mental disabilities to be able to perform jobs or get an education. However, it is far from clear that the majority of employers or other Americans support the idea that disability should be a protected category in this way. Other cases that do not at present constitute legal discrimination could present tangled issues for the future. Should a transsexual male be allowed to dress in female clothes and use women's restrooms, even if it makes the other employees uncomfortable? Should a devoutly religious Christian woman be allowed to decorate her desk with religious icons and to place religious tracts on the desks of coworkers, even though both practices offend many Jewish and Muslim (and, for that matter, Christian) coworkers? Where do we draw the line on Christmas decorations?

These questions do not have easy answers. For every case in which we can get a fairly good consensus for the existence of discrimination, the same principles applied to other cases will not seem as clear. For the time being, then, let us stick with our definition of discrimination as unjustified use of category information in making decisions about others, with the understanding that what appears justified to one person may not seem so to another.

### **Relationships among Components**

Roughly speaking, “stereotypes” are category-based beliefs we have about people; “prejudice” is a set of affective reactions or attitudes; and “discrimination” refers to behavioral tendencies. Beliefs, affect, and behavioral tendencies do not easily separate themselves in our everyday lives, and they do not do so in our research endeavors. However, while it may seem natural to think of these three as part of the same package, they are clearly distinct. Beliefs may give rise to affect, but there are cool as well as red-hot beliefs. Our affective reactions to things may stir our passions and dictate our behavior, but not always. Sometimes our behaviors seem inexplicable, performed without any relevant or at least understandable preceding cognition or emotion.

There is a well-honed model for how these components are related (e.g., Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000)—that is, the standard model of attitudes. According to this model, we have beliefs about objects. Each of these beliefs is associated with one or more goals or desires; if we believe that the attitude object facilitates achieving our goals, we will feel positively toward it, and (obviously) we will feel negatively if the object hinders goal achievement. Some beliefs generate strong affective reactions, others relatively weak ones. The affect and beliefs in their turn give rise to behavioral tendencies, the exact nature of which is determined by the appropriateness of various behaviors to achieve the goals. Under certain circumstances, the behavioral tenden-

cies will be activated in actual behavior. Obviously, social norms, laws, and considerations of expediency will affect the whether, when, and how of this translation. The standard model thus implies a strong causal or at least temporal sequence from beliefs to affect to behavioral tendencies to behavior.

This model is a useful way to think about such matters. Consider this example: Donna believes that gay males seduce young boys into their lifestyle. Because that belief is antagonistic to her moral values, she has a strong negative emotional reaction to gays. This leads her to avoid the one or two gay males she knows about, to insist that her church condemn homosexuality, and (when she can) to vote against pro-gay politicians. That sort of scenario is common enough.

Still, matters are surely more complex. It isn't hard to talk to Donna about her attitudes toward homosexuals; she's willing to admit that she has a strong negative prejudice toward them and is proud that she discriminates against them. As we discuss her beliefs, we soon find that Donna doesn't actually have any hard evidence that gay men seduce boys—but she's heard stories, thank you very much, and that's all she needs. We begin to get the feeling that maybe Donna's prejudices are driving her beliefs, rather than the reverse way it's supposed to be. We soon discover that a number of Donna's beliefs in this area are strongly held but weakly supported by actual evidence. That our stereotypes are often rationalizations for our prejudices has long been recognized (Allport, 1954; Hoffman & Hurst, 1990; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Katz & Braly, 1935; Rutland & Brown, 2001; Vinacke, 1949).

Thus we cannot blithely assume that the standard attitude model is correct all or even most of the time (Dovidio, Brigham, Johnson, & Gaertner, 1996; Mackie & Smith, 1998). Our emotions and passions can affect our beliefs as much as the reverse. Some behavior is carefully thought out, designed to further specific goals. Other actions are mindless, and affect is in the driver's seat. Sometimes behavior affects attitudes; practice makes perfect, and continuing to perform particular behaviors may lead us to like them more. Not only are there multiple "feedback loops" among beliefs, affect, and behavior, but each can arise independently of the others. Culture and classical conditioning can create positive or negative affect in the complete absence of relevant beliefs, sometimes even contradicting them. For example, I, along with most Americans, happen to have a mild aversion to snakes, despite having caught many of them as a boy and despite beliefs about them that are almost entirely positive. People may honestly believe that whites and blacks are equal in all the ways that count, and still have mild to strong distaste when interacting with someone of the other race. Behavior can result almost entirely from various social and situational pressures without having been dictated by affect or beliefs. There is no one simple equation linking stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination, but it is still vitally important that we examine their relationships (see Chapter 8).

### PLAN OF THIS BOOK

The concept of stereotypes has been around for well over half a century, and during much of that period it has been a topic of lively research interest. Despite the radical change in the 1970s in how stereotypes were viewed, some of this older research is still instructive and is covered selectively. There are five substantive parts to this book. After this chapter and another devoted to measurement of stereotypes, the

next four chapters (Chapters 3–6) are devoted to various cognitive perspectives on stereotypes and stereotyping. Chapters 7–8 examine the role of stereotypes in intergroup conflict, prejudice, and discrimination. Chapters 9 and 10 discuss where stereotypes come from and how they might be changed. Chapters 11–14 explore the content of various stereotypes.

### **Chapters 3–6: Social Cognition**

As indicated earlier, the social cognition perspective is largely responsible for rejuvenating the study of stereotyping and has dominated the area for more than two decades. At various points in the evolution of social cognition, stereotypes have been seen as analogous to several different constructs that have held center stage. Stereotypes have been viewed as products of categorization, schemas, implicit personality theories, and hypotheses to be tested. These tend to be overlapping constructs, and probably no theorist (least of all I) would claim that any single metaphor explains everything of importance about stereotypes. Indeed, one implicit theme of the present book is that stereotypes are not any one thing; rather, they are best seen as complex products of several different mental activities.

As such, each of these metaphors can illuminate part of the larger picture, and it would be fairest to consider these metaphors as foci of investigation rather than as mutually exclusive approaches. Each of these metaphors emphasizes certain features of stereotypes not emphasized by the others. For example, implicit personality theory approaches tend to focus on the structure—the interrelationships of the components—of stereotypes. Schema models focus more on memory representations of stereotypes. Categorization models alert us to the fact that when people are categorized as one thing rather than another, we tend to emphasize similarities to others in the group and to exacerbate differences between categories. Models that see stereotypes as hypotheses draw our attention to the provisional nature of most stereotypes and suggest how this might affect how we interact with and gain new information about people.

### **Chapters 7–8: Ingroups, Outgroups, Prejudice, and Discrimination**

Stereotypes both result from and affect our behavior toward others. As I have indicated in the preceding section, the relationships between stereotypes and behavior are not simple. Chapter 7 discusses the role of group membership in stereotyping and prejudice. Common experience suggests that stereotypes are especially likely to flourish when members of one group think about those from another, often competing, group. Not only do we think about ingroups and outgroups differently, but group categorization gives rise to stereotypes. Chapter 8 discusses the many relationships of stereotypes and stereotyping to prejudice and discrimination, further expanding our consideration of the role of experiential and cultural factors and their interactions.

### **Chapters 9–10: Evolution and Change**

Stereotypes do not arise mysteriously; nor, once they show up, do they stay fixed in culture and individual minds. Chapter 9 explicitly considers stereotype development.

Stereotypes are obviously based to some extent on individual experiences, and so accuracy issues are discussed fully in this chapter. The cultural and social contexts of stereotype development are also considered. Chapter 10 takes up considerations of stereotype change, and again focuses both on stereotype change as a fundamental cognitive issue of belief change and on various cultural factors that may encourage or inhibit change. I argue that we cannot understand stereotype change merely in terms of decontextualized cognitive processes; our stereotypes are too much embedded in the larger cultural milieu for this to work.

### **Chapters 11–14: Content of Stereotypes**

For all its advantages, the social cognition perspective does not speak gracefully to such questions as why stereotypes include some traits but not others, and why some groups are victimized more by stereotypes than others are. As I have argued elsewhere (Schneider, 1991), the social cognition approach generally makes a strong assumption that the content of our cognitive systems is basically irrelevant to how information is processed. There are clearly ways in which this is true, and the assumption has proved to be a powerful tool in allowing us to understand our cognitions about people.

If content is basically irrelevant, then it should make little difference whether we study stereotypes of women, football players, or homeless people. As a matter of fact, much of the recent research on stereotyping has been fueled by interest in gender studies. Thus a large percentage of recent research has concerned stereotypes of women (and, less often, men). Another large category of studies has dealt with stereotypes of ethnic groups, especially blacks. However, there have been relatively fewer investigations (especially recently) of stereotypes of various occupations, car ownership, choices about how to spend one's leisure time, or style of dress. We know relatively little about stereotypes of criminals, people with AIDS, and homeless persons, despite the fact that such stereotypes do exist and undoubtedly interfere with our abilities to solve the problems faced by such people.

Our social categories differ in a great many ways, some of which are likely to be important than others. For example, some categories (such as race, age, and gender) give us plenty of visual help in determining category membership, whereas it is less easy to tell whether someone is lesbian or straight, depressed or not, a Jew or a Catholic. Some social groups have associated roles and norms that dictate behaviors and appearances, whereas others do not. Some groups are easy to join, whereas membership in other groups is assigned at birth. And so it goes. Does any of this make any difference to how stereotypes are used to judge others? Traditionally, these questions have not been salient, and I hope to provide some preliminary answers in Chapters 11–13.

We have also tended, over the years, to ignore issues about the nature of features that are part of stereotypes. Obviously, such features differ from group to group. Common stereotypes suggest that Germans are efficient, Hispanic Americans are family-oriented, and Asian Americans are smart. Apart from the positive or negative qualities of stereotypic traits, there are other linguistic ways in which such features differ. Somehow cleverness seems to differ fundamentally from intelligence, restlessness is not quite the same as anxiety, and shyness seems to have different connotations from those of introversion. Furthermore, some traits may be easy to ac-



quire, and others hard to lose, in the face of behavioral evidence. Chapter 14 explores how specific types of traits get attributed to groups and how those features may vary.

### Notes

1. To fans of the great psychologist-philosopher William James, it will come as no surprise to learn that while an undergraduate at Harvard, Lippmann was deeply influenced by James. Although James never wrote about stereotyping, his intellectual fingerprints (not to mention his lively style) are immediately evident in the passage just quoted. It is also no accident that Gordon Allport—whose Harvard lineage from James was also clear, if more indirect—picked up many of these same themes in his famous book on prejudice (to be discussed in a few pages).
2. The very first studies were done on occupational stereotypes (Rice, 1926; Litterer, 1933; Gahagan, 1933). People were asked to judge the occupations of pictures of men from magazines and newspapers. There was some consensus (often erroneous) about which occupations went with which pictures, and the authors interpreted this as evidence of stereotypes of the appearance of people in various occupations. There is also an extensive early literature on judgments of intelligence and success from photographs (e.g., Anderson, 1921; Gaskill, Fenton, & Porter, 1927; Landis & Phelps, 1928; Pintner, 1918). Rice (1928) devoted a chapter in his book on politics to the influence of stereotypes on political attitudes, although his account added nothing to Lippmann's. Despite the fact that this research on occupations and intelligence predates the Katz–Braly research, it was the latter that set the tone for most subsequent research in this area.
3. The television character Archie Bunker was a clear exemplification of the authoritarian personality syndrome—and not by accident.
4. It could be argued with considerable justice (and force) that important work by Henri Tajfel and his students in England emphasized the cognitive underpinnings of stereotyping throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The fact of the matter is, however, that Tajfel's work became dominant in England and influential in the United States only after the social cognition revolution of the late 1970s. However, the Hamilton book provided a useful synthesis and some new theoretical perspectives at just the right historical point.
5. And it should also be said that many male social scientists were active as direct participants or as strong supporters from the sidelines.
6. We sometimes forget all this. I grew up in a rural area outside Indianapolis in the 1950s. Until I went to college, I had never met a Jew (and then only one), and had never exchanged more than a few hundred words (total) with African Americans. I did not meet any Asian Americans until I went to graduate school, and I doubt that I even knew that Mexican Americans existed except as people who came by periodically to pick crops. I knew no Catholics well, other than a cousin who had married into that faith and confirmed various stereotypes by having a dozen or so children. I doubt that I knew there were such people as homosexuals; certainly lesbians were off my radar screen. I knew few adult women who worked outside the home, and all of them were either teachers, bookkeepers, or secretaries. There were only four TV channels, and they featured such “enlightened” programs as *I Love Lucy* and *Amos 'n' Andy*. My experiences (or lack thereof) were certainly parochial but hardly unique. And some people claim that those were the good old days, when life was simple and pure.