5

Perceiving groups

What's it about?

(Social Psychology pp. 141–190)

This chapter is about **stereotypes**, **prejudice**, and **discrimination**. The kind of characteristics that are included in stereotypes can be positive or negative, accurate or inaccurate. Personal experiences, social roles, emotions, and social learning contribute to stereotypes. Motives to form stereotypes can be traced to mastery, connectedness, and justifying existing social inequalities.

Weblink: An example of discrimination. Shopping while Black
http://thinkprogress.org/justice/2013/10/23/2826451/barneys-shopping-black/

Stereotypes can be activated by salient cues, use of group labels, and the presence of a group member. Activated stereotypes can serve as a bias for making judgments or guiding action toward a **social group**. This activation can be measured explicitly and implicitly. People form stereotypes more when they have less capacity, strong emotions, or more power. Effects of stereotypes may be overcome by suppressing stereotypic thoughts, by correcting for their impact on judgments, or by exposure to counterstereotypic information. People tend to seek evidence to confirm the stereotype, interpret evidence to fit the stereotype, compare information to stereotypic standards, and constrain evidence to fit the stereotype.

In order to overcome stereotypes, contact with out-group members must expose people to stereotype-inconsistent information that is repeated (thus cannot be explained away), involves many group members (thus subtyping is prevented), and comes from typical group members (thus no contrast will occur).

Chapter topics

- Forming impressions of groups: Establishing stereotypes *(SP pp. 146–162)*

- Using stereotypes: From preconceptions to prejudice *(SP pp. 162–178)*

- Changing stereotypes: Overcoming bias to reduce prejudice *(SP pp. 178–186)*

FORMING IMPRESSIONS OF GROUPS: ESTABLISHING STEREOTYPES

Ask yourself

- What kinds of characteristics are included in stereotypes?
- Why do people form and use stereotypes?
- Why do observations of individual group members often lead to stereotypes of their groups that are biased and exaggerated?

What you need to know

THE CONTENT OF STEREOTYPES *(SP pp. 146–149)*
- Stereotypes include many types of characteristics   - Stereotypes can be either positive or negative   - Stereotypes can be accurate or inaccurate
SEEKING THE MOTIVES BEHIND STEREOTYPING *(SP p. 149)*
MOTIVES FOR FORMING STEREOTYPES: MASTERY THROUGH SUMMARIZING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES *(SP pp. 150–159)*
- Between-group interactions generate emotion   - People notice some members more than others   - Some information attracts more attention than other information   - Social roles trigger correspondence biases   - Social roles and gender stereotypes   - Learning stereotypes from the media   - Gender stereotypes and the media
MOTIVES FOR FORMING STEREOTYPES: CONNECTEDNESS TO OTHERS *(SP pp. 159–160)*
- Learning stereotypes from others   - Social communication of stereotypes
MOTIVES FOR FORMING STEREOTYPES: JUSTIFYING INEQUALITIES *(SP pp. 160–162)*

THE CONTENT OF STEREOTYPES

(SP pp. 146–149)

Stereotypes include many types of characteristics

In 1922, Lippmann introduced the term stereotype as "pictures in the head"; that is, simplified mental images of what groups look like, and what they do.

Next to physical appearance, interests, goals, activities, occupations, and characteristics, stereotypes also incorporate personality traits, and emotions or feelings.

Stereotypes can be either positive or negative

Stereotypes can include negative, but also positive, characteristics.

Even positive stereotypes can have negative consequences: overestimated uniformity (while people like to be thought of as unique), rigid expectations, and reinforcement of the group's weakness and dependence.

While the set of beliefs might be positive, "benevolent sexism" reinforces the weakness and dependence of women as a group.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY: Are you sexist? [see ch05-RA-01.doc]

Stereotypes can be accurate or inaccurate

Some stereotypes are accurate in direction and/or degree. This is not surprising because people "sort themselves" into groups, creating real group differences that may be reflected in stereotypes.

Stereotypes can also be inaccurate. There are a lot of examples of inaccurate stereotypes (SP p. 148). In one sense, every stereotype is inaccurate when it is viewed as applying to every group member.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY: Stereotypes [see ch05-RA-02.doc]

Weblink: Is race for real?
www.pbs.org/race/001_WhatIsRace/001_00-home.htm

Weblink: Understanding race
www.understandingrace.org/home.html

SEEKING THE MOTIVES BEHIND STEREOTYPING
(SP p. 149)
Early theorists traced prejudice and negative stereotypes to deep inner conflicts in individuals with authoritarian personalities. These are individuals who cannot accept their own hostility, believe uncritically in the legitimacy of authority, and see their own inadequacies in others.

However, prejudice and stereotyping seem to be the rule rather than the exception, so it's not only a few disturbed individuals who are prejudiced and have stereotypes.

MOTIVES FOR FORMING STEREOTYPES: MASTERY THROUGH SUMMARIZING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
(SP pp. 150–159)
Positive or negative impressions of individual group members form an important part of people's overall impressions of a group, even when people have interacted with only one or two members.

Henderson-King and Nisbett (1996) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.71.4.654] demonstrated in their experiment that a single group member's acts can activate thoughts and feelings about the entire group, even when the group is familiar (SP p. 150).

Between-group interactions generate emotion

People feel uncertain and concerned when interacting with novel groups, which influences stereotypes. The emotions are provoked by uncomfortable group encounters, and are transferred to the group itself when an interaction with a group is frequently accompanied by those specific emotions. This process is called classical or evaluative conditioning.

People notice some members more than others

Our attention is drawn to what is unusual, unexpected, or salient. Therefore, distinctive individual group members have a disproportionate impact on the formation of group stereotypes. This was demonstrated by Rothbart et al. (1978) [DOI:10.1016/0022-1031(78)90013-6] (SP p. 153).

Some information attracts more attention than other information

The formed impressions of groups remain unchanged when encountering other group members whose appearance or actions are quite ordinary.

This is because associations are formed between unusual or distinctive characteristics and rare or infrequently encountered groups.

However, these associated characteristics might not actually be related, leading you to incorrectly overestimate certain characteristics of a group. This incorrect overestimation illustrates that you have formed an illusory correlation.

Hamilton and Gifford's (1976) [DOI:10.1016/S0022-1031(76)80006-6] research on group impressions demonstrated such an illusory correlation (SP p. 153).

Social roles trigger correspondence biases

Observing behaviors of a group has a big impact on our impressions, even when these behaviors are shaped by a group's social role. The outcome of ignoring social roles as a cause of behaviors (a correspondence bias, see SP Chapter 3) is the formation of stereotypes.

A lot of facts suggest that stereotypes of groups reflect the social roles that are occupied by those groups (see SP pp. 154–158).

Social roles and gender stereotypes

Men and women have the tendency to act in ways that are appropriate for their roles, which leads observers to incorrectly attribute their behaviors to the inner characteristics of men and women. This contributes to gender stereotypes.

This was demonstrated by Hoffman and Hurst's (1990) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.58.2.197] research on stereotype formation of fictitious groups (SP pp. 155–156).

Learning stereotypes from the media

Our experience with members of other groups also comes indirectly from the media, in which biased messages are sent by stereotyping and underrepresenting particular groups.

Romer et al. (1998) [DOI:10.1177/009365098025003002], for example, found that Blacks are overrepresented as crime suspects and Whites as victims, when compared to actual statistics (SP p. 156).

Weblink: Decreasing stereotypes through the media. The Cheerios commercial with the mixed-race family
www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/31/cheerios-commercial-racist-backlash_n_3363507.html

Gender stereotypes and the media

Commercials, cartoons, and other media reinforce gender stereotypes (for examples see SP pp. 158–159). This increases the observers' acceptance of gender stereotypes.

MOTIVES FOR FORMING STEREOTYPES: CONNECTEDNESS TO OTHERS

(SP pp. 159–160)

Learning stereotypes from others

Stereotypes and prejudice can be picked up by children through observing and imitating parents' and teachers' words and deeds, which reflect **social norms**. When stereotypes and prejudice are deeply embedded in social norms, children learn them as part of growing up.

Social communication of stereotypes

Social communication may also strengthen stereotypes. Impressions formed by second-hand information (being told by others) are more stereotypic than impressions formed by first-hand information (observing about the group yourself), and remain stereotypic after direct experience with the group.

MOTIVES FOR FORMING STEREOTYPES: JUSTIFYING INEQUALITIES

(SP pp. 160–162)

Stereotypes often serve to justify and rationalize existing social inequalities by portraying groups as deserving their social roles and positions on the basis of their own characteristics (for examples see SP pp. 160–162).

A reason for this justification is the "belief in a just world"; people deserve what they get, and get what they deserve, which comforts us.

This belief leads us to blame victims for their misfortunes, which was demonstrated by Lerner and Simmons' (1966) [DOI:10.1037/h0023562] research (SP p. 160).

RESEARCH ACTIVITY: Perceptions of the homeless [see ch05-RA-04.doc]

Weblink: The Heterosexual Privilege Scale
www.depts.ttu.edu/scc/Virtual_Library/Handout_1.php?id=privilege

So what does this mean?

Stereotypes include many types of characteristics, which can be positive or negative, accurate or inaccurate. Stereotypes can be learned through personal experience with group members, which may cause a bias because people notice extremes; associations are formed between unusual characteristics and infrequently encountered groups, which might not actually be related. Social roles, emotions generated by between-group interactions, and social learning all contribute to stereotypes. Stereotypes and **discrimination** are often accepted and endorsed as right and proper by members of a particular group, becoming **social norms**. Motives to form stereotypes can be traced to mastery, connectedness, and justifying existing social inequalities.

USING STEREOTYPES: FROM PRECONCEPTIONS TO PREJUDICE

Ask yourself

- How are stereotypes activated?
- What impact do stereotypes have on our judgments and actions?
- Can we overcome stereotype effects?

What you need to know

ACTIVATION OF STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICE *(SP pp. 162–165)*
• What activates stereotypes? • Stereotypes can be activated automatically • Prejudice can be activated automatically
MEASURING STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICE *(SP pp. 165–167)*
IMPACT OF STEREOTYPES ON JUDGMENTS AND ACTIONS *(SP pp. 167–171)*
• Effects of cognitive capacity • Effects of emotion • Effects of power
TRYING TO OVERCOME PREJUDICE AND STEREOTYPE EFFECTS *(SP pp. 171–172)*
• Suppressing stereotypes and prejudice • Correcting biased judgments • Activating counterstereotypic information
BEYOND SIMPLE ACTIVATION: EFFECTS OF STEREOTYPES ON CONSIDERED JUDGMENTS *(SP pp. 174–177)*
• Seeking evidence to confirm the stereotype: Just tell me where to look • Interpreting evidence to fit the stereotype: Well, if you look at it that way • Comparing information to stereotypic standards: That looks good, for a group member • Constraining evidence to fit the stereotype: The self-fulfilling prophecy • Self-fulfilling prophecies in school and at work

ACTIVATION OF STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICE

(SP pp. 162–165)

What activates stereotypes?

Stereotypes can be activated by obvious and salient cues, use of group labels, and the presence of a group member.

Studies showed that a single member of a group can increase the likelihood of stereotypical thinking (SP pp. 162–163).

Stereotypes can be activated automatically

When a category is used more often, it becomes more accessible. And the more accessible it is, the more it is used.

When stereotypes are used so often, their activation becomes automatic. Stereotypic information is brought to mind by cues, either consciously or unconsciously noticed, that relate to group membership.

Wittenbrink, Judd, and Park (2001) [DOI:10.1006/jesp.2000.1456] demonstrated that stereotypes can be activated automatically (SP p. 163).

Prejudice can be activated automatically

Whether feelings about a group and specific trait information can also be activated automatically can be measured using physiological measurement (for instance EMG [electromyography]), priming techniques, or the IAT [Implicit Association Test] (see SP p. 165).

MEASURING STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICE

(SP pp. 165–167)

People's stereotypes and prejudice can be measured explicitly by asking about them. However, these measures can be distorted by social desirability biases.

Stereotypes and prejudice can also be measured implicitly, based on difficult to control aspects of people's performance, like the speed and accuracy of their response. However those implicit measures are distorted by situational or social factors.

Currently, researchers often use both measures because they predict different sorts of consequences. This way the fullest possible picture is produced of people's impressions and reactions to other groups.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY: What does the IAT *really* measure? [see ch05-RA-05.doc]

Weblink: More information about "modern racism" and subtle prejudice
www.units.muohio.edu/psybersite/workplace/modernweb.shtml

IMPACT OF STEREOTYPES ON JUDGMENTS AND ACTIONS
(SP pp. 167–171)
Activated stereotypes can serve as a bias for making judgments or guiding action toward a group.

This was demonstrated by Payne's (2001) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.81.2.181] research, showing that guns are identified faster when primed with a Black face than when primed with a White face. Also, Correll et al.'s (2002) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.83.6.1314] study demonstrated that people "pulled the trigger" more quickly if the person was Black (SP p. 168).

Effects of cognitive capacity
When people are under time pressure, when the information is too complex to process adequately, and almost everything that diminishes an individual's cognitive capacity, increases the effect of stereotypes on judgments. This is supported by research on stereotyping (SP pp. 168–169).

CASE STUDY: Prejudice toward migrants is difficult to think about [see ch05-CS-03.doc]

Effects of emotion

Strong emotions increase stereotyping by disrupting careful processing and short-circuiting attention.

Fear, anxiety, and sadness influence our perceptions of individual group members (SP p. 170).

Effects of power

Power leads to stereotyping because (a) the powerful have less need than the powerless to perceive others accurately; and (b) many stereotypes support the social position of the powerful and the broader system that gives groups differential access to power.

TRYING TO OVERCOME PREJUDICE AND STEREOTYPE EFFECTS

(SP pp. 171–174)

Effects of stereotypes may be overcome by suppressing stereotypic thoughts, by correcting for their impact on judgments, or by exposing oneself to counterstereotypic information. These tactics require motivation and cognitive capacity.

Suppressing stereotypic thoughts

Suppression of stereotypic thoughts was demonstrated by Macrae et al., 1994 [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.67.5.808] and Macrae et al., 1998 [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.74.3.578]) (SP p. 172). However, suppressed thoughts can rebound, and sometimes suppression is not possible.

Correcting biased judgments

Virtually everyone may be affected by stereotypes. When acknowledging stereotypic thoughts and making a conscious effort to correct these judgments, one can also overcome stereotypes.

Overcorrection, which is making overly positive judgments of stereotyped groups, may also take place, as Harber (1998) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.74.3.622] has shown in his study.

Trying to avoid appearing prejudiced can have negative effects, such as withholding honest feedback. In addition, it takes time and mental resources to correct judgments.

Activating counterstereotypic information
Stereotypes can be weakened by forming counterstereotypical mental images (Blair et al., 2001 [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.81.5.828]) (SP p. 174).

CASE STUDY: Trying to overcome stereotype effects [see ch05-CS-04.doc]

BEYOND SIMPLE ACTIVATION: EFFECTS OF STEREOTYPES ON CONSIDERED JUDGMENTS
(SP pp. 174–178)
We generally believe stereotypes are accurate because information that we learn seems to be consistent with our expectations, and because people agree with each other on these stereotypes.

When a judgment is important and we devote attention to it, we can go beyond stereotypes and collect individuating information

Seeking evidence to confirm the stereotype: Just tell me where to look
People spend more time reading and thinking about stereotypic information than about stereotype-inconsistent information, are more likely to ask for further stereotype-consistent information, and remember mostly information that is consistent with the stereotype. This in contrast to perceiving individuals (see SP Chapter 3).

Thus bias influences people's observations and memories to fit stereotypes, which grow even stronger.

Interpreting evidence to fit the stereotype: Well, if you look at it that way

The interpretation of ambiguous information is influenced by the activation of a stereotype. This was supported by Sagar and Schofield's (1980) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.39.4.590] study showing that the same behavior was interpreted differently depending on the group the actor belonged to (SP p. 175).

Comparing information to stereotypic standards: That looks good, for a group member

Stereotypes can also affect our judgments by shifting our standards for these judgments. These standards are affected by group stereotypes.

This is demonstrated by Biernat and Manis' (1994) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.66.1.5] study on judgments of essay topics.

Constraining evidence to fit the stereotype: The self-fulfilling prophecy

Stereotype-consistent behavior can be elicited by acting in ways that produce behaviors that confirm our expectations, which is termed the self-fulfilling prophecy (see SP Chapter 3).

People seek less information from a target in an interview, and ask fewer questions, when the target person is a member of a stereotyped group.

Self-fulfilling prophecies in school and at work

Teachers' expectations of students' behavior may be based on **social categorization**, and influence student achievement. Research demonstrated that classroom teachers generally give more attention and encouragement to boys than to girls, and have lower expectations of Black children than they do of White children. This can have devastating consequences.

Employers' expectations can influence the outcome of applications for job openings and restrict the opportunities of employees already on the job.

Word et al. (1974) [DOI:10.1016/0022-1031(74)90059-6] demonstrated that participants conducted briefer interviews and sat further away when interviewing Black applicants, who reacted in a less confident and effective manner.

So what does this mean?

Stereotypes can be activated by salient cues, use of group labels, and the presence of a group member. Stereotypes and **prejudice** can be measured explicitly and implicitly; however both measures have their distortions. Activated stereotypes can serve as a bias for making judgments or guiding action toward a group. People form stereotypes more when they have less capacity, strong emotions, or more power.

Effects of stereotypes may be overcome by suppressing stereotypic thoughts, by correcting for their impact on judgments, or by exposure to counterstereotypic information. People tend to seek evidence to confirm the stereotype, interpret evidence to fit the stereotype, compare information to stereotypic standards, and constrain evidence to fit the stereotype.

CHANGING STEREOTYPES AND REDUCING PREJUDICE

Ask yourself

- Can stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination be reduced by direct contact between members of different groups?
- What are the barriers to stereotype change?
- How can these stereotype defenses be overcome?

What you need to know

BARRIERS TO STEREOTYPE CHANGE *(SP pp. 179–181)*
- Explaining away inconsistent information
- Compartmentalizing inconsistent information
- Differentiating atypical group members: Contrast effects
OVERCOMING STEREOTYPE DEFENSES: THE KIND OF CONTACT THAT WORKS *(SP pp. 181–184)*
- Repeated inconsistency: An antidote for "explaining away"
- Widespread inconsistency: An antidote for subtyping
- Being typical as well as inconsistent: An antidote for contrast effects
REDUCING PREJUDICE THROUGH CONTACT *(SP p. 184)*

BARRIERS TO STEREOTYPE CHANGE

(SP pp. 179–181)

The **contact hypothesis** suggests that stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination can be reduced under certain conditions by direct contact between members of different groups.

Weblink: More information about the contact hypothesis

http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/contact_hypothesis.htm

However, the reality is that even when contact contradicts a stereotype, this may not undermine it because some powerful mechanisms can be triggered.

Explaining away inconsistent information

The idea that a stereotype can be changed by a single inconsistent experience is called conversion.

A barrier to stereotype change is that people often explain inconsistent information away, for instance they interpret specific behavior as the result of special circumstances, instead of the actor's true nature.

Compartmentalizing inconsistent information

When information cannot be explained away, people can still defend their stereotypes by resorting to **subtypes**. We merely create an "exception-to-the-rule" subcategory, allowing stereotypes to hold for most members of the specific group.

Differentiating atypical group members: Contrast effects

Another way to defuse stereotypic inconsistent information is by seeing stereotype-disconfirming individuals as remarkable or exceptional people.

Stereotypic expectations serve as a background against which group members are judged. When a group member shows unexpected behavior, this causes a contrast effect. Through these effects, members who deviate seem even more different than they really are.

OVERCOMING STEREOTYPE DEFENSES: THE KIND OF CONTACT THAT WORKS

(SP pp. 181–184)

People with more intergroup contact tend to be less prejudiced. This cannot be totally due to the possibility that low prejudice produces contact.

Repeated inconsistency: An antidote for "explaining away"

Stereotype change requires counterstereotypic behaviors to be performed more often.

Widespread inconsistency: An antidote for subtyping

Stereotype change requires counterstereotypic behaviors to be performed by more group members. This was demonstrated by Weber and Crocker (1983) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.45.5.961] (SP p. 180).

Being typical as well as inconsistent: An antidote for contrast effects
Stereotype change requires counterstereotypic behaviors to be performed by typical group members.

However, when getting to know an individual group member, feelings about this member may not generalize to other members of the group. Stereotype change is only possible when a member is not treated as an exception to the rule, so this member should repeatedly remind others of his or her group membership.

REDUCING PREJUDICE THROUGH CONTACT
 (SP p.184)

Building up a close relationship with an opposite-group member can result in more positive evaluations of the group as a whole. In addition, knowing that someone from your group has a member of the other group as a friend reduces negative feelings towards this group. This was demonstrated by Wright et al. (1997) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.73.1.73] and Desforges et al. (1991) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.60.4.531] (SP p. 182).

These results of laboratory settings can be generalized to other settings. Research shows that people feel relatively positive about groups that live nearby, and people who have friends who are members of other groups are less prejudiced against the out-groups.

Although not all stereotypes ought to be changed (see SP p. 183), contact of the right type can break down negative stereotypes.

CASE STUDY: The power of contact: seeing is believing [see ch05-CS-05.doc]

So what does this mean?

The **contact hypothesis** suggests that **stereotypes**, **prejudice**, and **discrimination** can be reduced under certain conditions by direct contact between members of different groups. However, stereotypes may remain unchanged because people can explain away inconsistent information, compartmentalize inconsistent information, or differentiate atypical group members. Contact situations must expose people to stereotype-inconsistent information that is repeated (thus cannot be explained away), involves many group members (thus **subtyping** is prevented), and comes from typical group members (thus no contrast will occur). People will evaluate out-groups more positively when a person from the in-group builds up a close relationship with an opposite-group member.