Understanding the Psychology of DIVERSITY

THIRD EDITION

The updated **Third Edition** of this bestseller presents a highly readable examination of diversity from a unique psychological perspective to teach students how to understand social and cultural differences in today's society. By exploring how individuals construct their view of social diversity and how they are defined and influenced by it, author B. Evan Blaine and new coauthor Kimberly J. McClure Brenchley present all that psychology has to offer on this critically important topic. The new edition features chapters on traditional topics such as categorization, stereotypes, sexism, racism, and sexual prejudice, in addition to chapters on nontraditional diversity topics such as weightism, ageism, and social stigma. Integrated throughout the text are applications of these topics to timely social issues.

NEW AND KEY FEATURES

- **Seventeen new *Diversity Issues* boxes** explore income inequality, bullying, anti-immigrant prejudice, racial microaggressions, gay parenting, fat shaming, elder abuse, multiple stigmatized identities, and much more.
- ***Making Connections* questions** interspersed throughout chapters encourage readers to think more deeply about the issues and concepts just covered.
- **In-text learning aids,** including summaries, key terms, further readings, and suggested websites, help students master the material and take their understanding beyond the book.
- **New *For Further Reading*** entries, often articles from *American Psychologist*, encourage readers to explore issues and policies associated with chapter topics.

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BLAINE • MCCLURE BRENCHLEY

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B. EVAN BLAINE
KIMBERLY J. MCCLURE BRENCHLEY

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Third Edition

To Patti and Kate, with love.
—EB

This is for my husband, James, my son, Jackson, and my parents, Pat and Wayne, whose immeasurable love and support have been vital to me. This is also for all those who have taught me the true meaning of Isaiah 1:17: "Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed."
—KMB

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Preface

This Book's Purpose

The academic study of diversity has become a mainstay of undergraduate curricula. "Diversity" courses can be found in humanities as well as social science departments, in general education programs offered to first-year students as well as disciplinary courses taken by majors. This type of college curricula seems to reflect a broader societal concern about teaching students how to understand the social and cultural differences in our communities. Indeed, liberally educated students *should* have some tools for thinking about diversity. That's where this book comes in.

Students can study diversity from many perspectives—college courses on diversity often reflect historical and sociological, as well as artistic and literary, voices, and perspectives. However, if the study of diversity includes the need to understand the presence of, as well as the problems and issues associated with, social and cultural difference in our society, then psychology has much to offer. This book attempts to draw together a basic psychology of diversity for students in diversity-related courses that are taught within and outside of psychology departments. This book expands and improves on *The Psychology of Diversity: Perceiving and Experiencing Social Difference* (Blaine, 2000) by being a primary rather than a supplementary textbook, by expanding on the range of social differences covered, and by incorporating diversity-related social issues into the text. The book's level and language assumes no background in psychology among its readers so that it will be a serviceable text for diversity courses that are taken by students with majors other than psychology. This book was not written as a psychology of prejudice text; nevertheless, it covers enough of that material that the book could serve as a primary textbook in junior or senior level psychology courses on prejudice.

A note about striking a balance between the academic study of diversity and more personal responses to injustice and inequality is in order. When we study diversity, we confront the fact that social injustices exist. Too much emphasis on social injustices (e.g., where they originate, how they can be addressed) adds a political element to the book which may be intrusive. Avoiding social injustices altogether, however, intellectualizes problems and issues that students—particularly minority students—already face. It seems that a course on the psychology of diversity should provide a safe space for students to think about the moral implications of inequality. In writing this book, we avoid explicit (but probably, given our own social and political attitudes, not implicit) polemic regarding social injustice

and leave to both the instructor and student to strike their own balance between academic learning and social advocacy. However, Chapter 12 shows students that much has been learned about how to reduce inequality, intergroup conflict, and discrimination and provides instructors with a framework for advocacy/social action projects and discussions.

This Book's Organization

The book's 12 chapters could be divided, for the purposes of organizing a course, into three units. Chapters 1 through 4 comprise a "Basic Concepts in a Psychological Study of Diversity" unit. These chapters cover concepts and processes for understanding social difference in general, including dimensions and definitions of diversity (Chapter 1); social categorization, stereotypes, and stereotyping (Chapter 2); social processes that shape diversity including the self-fulfilling prophecy (Chapter 3); and prejudice (Chapter 4). Chapters 5 through 9 constitute an "isms" unit that might be termed "Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination Toward Specific Groups." This set of chapters applies and illustrates the concepts learned in prior chapters. This set of chapters covers racial stereotypes and racism (Chapter 5), gender stereotypes and sexism (Chapter 6), sexual stereotypes and heterosexism (Chapter 7), obesity stereotypes and weightism (Chapter 8), and age stereotypes and ageism (Chapter 9). The final three chapters address "Further Topics in a Psychological Study of Diversity," including social stigma and the consequences of and responses to stigma (Chapters 10 and 11), and methods for responding to inequality (Chapter 12).

The book also includes Diversity Issues—short (one to two-page) content set-asides that address practical issues and problems associated with diversity and responses to diversity. Collectively, the Diversity Issues provide a "social issues" flavor to the text, and questions posed to the student–readers encourage them to make connections between academic principles and applied issues and problems. Some of the Diversity Issues topics include Hate Speech, Using the N-Word, The Glass Ceiling and the Maternal Wall, The Gender Pay Gap, and the *Sesame Street* Effect.

How to Use This Book

Three pedagogical features are woven into this book, each coded with a symbol, that will assist you in planning class discussions, assignments, and student projects. Here are some ideas for how to use each in your course.

DI Diversity Issues

This symbol identifies the short interludes, called Diversity Issues, to the main chapter story to cover practical problems and issues that relate to or illustrate chapter concepts. Minimally, each diversity issue can be the focus of a class discussion; you can

use them to draw out students' experiences and views on that issue. They can also be expanded to lecture topics, if you are interested in pursuing them yourself or in following students' interest, by adding supportive readings, video, guest lecturer, or other resource. Diversity issues can also be the basis for writing assignments, such as an assignment in which students find and summarize a research article on the issue, or another in which students clip a newspaper or Internet news item related to the issue and present it in class. Finally, a diversity issue can be the starting point for student research projects. For example, students might make some controlled observations about when they hear the N-word used in conversations as a means of finding out about the situational or social variables that influence its use.

Making Connections

This symbol means that student–readers are being asked questions whose goal is to get them to think more deeply about the concepts they have just read about, and to make connections between concepts and applications. The Making Connections questions also help students pause and review concepts just read before reading further. You can use these questions to stimulate discussion in class, develop short writing assignments, or as a focus for small-group discussions. They can also be appropriated as essay questions on exams.

Websites of Interest and Web Exercises

This symbol indicates a website that is particularly well suited for applying or extending students' learning on chapter concepts. The URL is provided, along with a description of the site and directions for finding the intended content. Some of these references also include some type of learning task such as answering a question from the Web materials or gathering some information to test or illustrate an idea. Web exercises can be easily turned into student assignments or, with a little technological assistance, Web-based presentations of an issue discussed in class.

Finally, there are **For Further Reading** resources at the end of each chapter, following the **Key Terms**. Here classic or provocative readings are provided with a description of why it is good reading and what contribution the reading makes to the larger chapter-learning objective. Some of these readings will be more accessible to the psychology major than to the nonmajor, but you can choose which to recommend—or add your own favorite extra readings—based on the background of your class.

What's New for the 3rd Edition?

The 3rd edition features the following:

- Several topics are added or lengthened to incorporate new research and theory around categorization, stereotyping, and prejudice. These include a new section on the neuropsychology of social categorization and expanded coverage of stereotype accuracy and the measurement of automatic prejudice.

- A new chapter on sexual prejudice and heterosexism covers sexual minority categories, sexual orientation, stereotypes of sexual minorities, sexual prejudice, and discrimination of sexual minorities.
- Expanded coverage of the contemporary social issues that connect to stereotyping and prejudice through the adding of 17 new Diversity Issues. New for the 3rd edition are DIs on income inequality, bullying, anti-immigrant prejudice, racial microaggressions, gay parenting, fat shaming, elder abuse, multiple stigmatized identities, and many more.

Instructor Teaching Site

A password-protected site, available at **www.study.sagepub.com/blaine3e**, features resources that have been designed to help instructors plan and teach their course. These resources include an extensive test bank, chapter-specific PowerPoint presentations, lecture notes, discussion questions to facilitate class discussion, class activities, links to SAGE journal articles with accompanying review questions, and links to web resources.

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Introduction to the Psychology of Diversity

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- The guiding concepts in a psychological study of diversity
- Dimensions of diversity studied by psychologists
- A statistical snapshot of American diversity
- The meanings and usages of the term *diversity*
- Diversity as a social construction and social influence

Each of us lives in a diverse social world. Although we are frequently unaware of it, our lives unfold within social contexts that are populated by people who are different—both from us and each other. The people who populate the situations in our day-to-day lives may differ in many ways, such as their ethnic identity, sex, cultural background, economic status, political affiliation, or religious belief. The specific dimensions of difference do not matter nearly as much as the fact that we think, feel, and behave within diverse social contexts. Two important ideas follow from the fact that we, as individuals, are perpetually embedded in diversity.

First, because individuals are literally part of the social contexts in which they behave, those *situations cannot be understood independently of the people in them.* Have you ever been amazed that you perceived a situation, such as a job interview, much differently than a friend? Perhaps you approached the interview with optimism and confidence, regarding it a potentially positive step in your career

goals. Your friend, however, may have viewed the same scenario as threatening and bemoaning how it would never work out. This illustrates how social situations are, in vital part, constructed and maintained by people. We project our own attitudes, feelings, expectations, and fears onto the situations we encounter. Applied to our social contexts, this principle says that the differentness we perceive between ourselves and other people, or among other people, may be inaccurate. As we will learn in subsequent chapters in this book, there are times when we project too much social difference onto our contexts and the people in them. At other times, however, we underestimate the diversity around us. So, the diversity of our lives is partly a function of us—our individual ways of thinking and emotional needs.

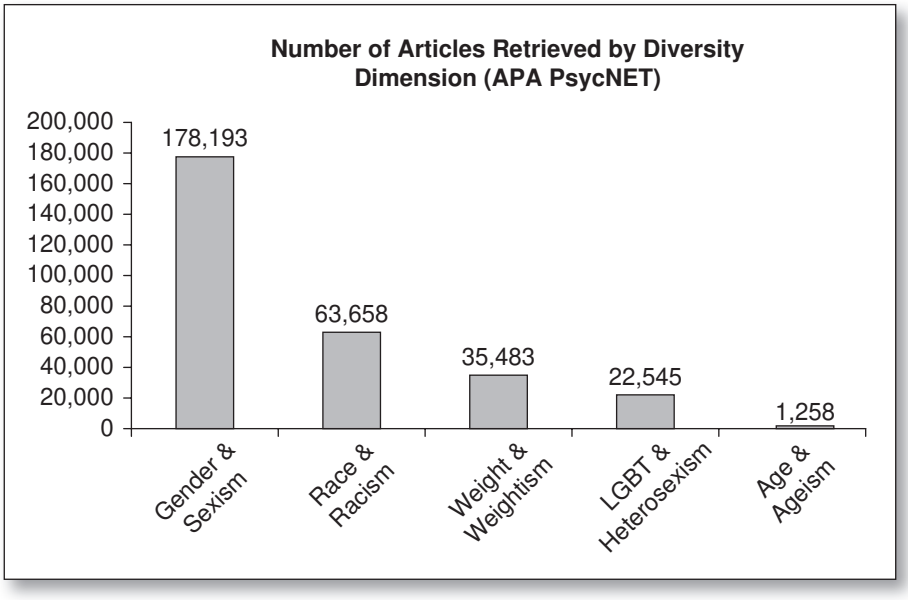
Second, because people live and behave in diverse social contexts, then *individuals cannot be understood independently of the situations in which they act and interact*. Are you sometimes a different person, or do you show a different side of yourself, as your social setting changes? For example, do you display different table manners when eating with your friends at the café than during a holiday meal with the family? Do you think of yourself differently in those situations? If so, then you realize how we are, in vital part, social beings. Our behavior and identity are constructed and maintained by the situations in which we act and live. Likewise, our thoughts and actions flex with the situational norms we encounter. If we are interested in explaining who we are and why we behave the way we do, we must look to the social context for insight. The diversity of our social contexts is laden with informative clues to help us demystify our own behavior and confront our attitudes and beliefs.

In sum, if we are to fully understand the diversity of our classroom, community, or nation, we must appreciate that it is more than statistics about race and gender. Diversity and the individual are inextricably linked; therefore, the study of one must include the other. This book examines how we can better understand diversity by studying how the individual constructs it, and how we can better understand the individual by learning how she or he is defined and influenced by social diversity. These two principles of the psychology of diversity will be revisited and elaborated at the end of this chapter. First, we must consider what diversity is and examine some of the common ways that term is used.

Diversity Is Social Difference

What is diversity? According to the dictionary, **diversity** is the presence of difference. However, the most common usages of diversity refer to *social* difference, or differences among people. People can differ in so many ways; to appreciate the range and types of diversity in the United States, and to introduce the dimensions of diversity that are addressed in this book, let's develop a statistical snapshot of the social differences of Americans from the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau statistics and other recent national surveys. Figure 1.1 displays the research activity in the social scientific research literature on the five dimensions of diversity that we address in this book.

Figure 1.1 Research Activity on Dimensions of Diversity From 1887 to the Present



Gender

The study of gender, including related topics like sex roles and sex differences, is by far the most researched aspect of diversity. Gender is a good case study for understanding that majority-group status is conferred by status and control over resources and not mere statistical majority. Figures from the 2010 U.S. Census show that females and males make up 51% and 49% of the U.S. population, respectively (Howden & Meyer, 2011). Put another way, there are about 97 males in America for every 100 females and, because women tend to live longer than men, they become more of a statistical majority as they age. Although, statistically speaking, women are a majority group, women have historically endured second-class status relative to men in many life domains. For example, even with legal protections against discrimination of women in the workplace, in 2011, a gender wage gap still existed such that women earn about 80 cents for every dollar earned by men (Hegewisch, Williams, & Henderson, 2011). We will take up gender diversity, including gender stereotypes and sexism, in Chapter 6.

Race

The second most researched aspect of diversity involves race and other related topics such as racial identity and racism. Racial distinctions are based on physical and facial characteristics, skin color, and hair type and color that developed in response to particular geographic and climatic forces. The most common race labels are limited in that they combine color-based racial notions (e.g., White,

Black) with ethnic and linguistic (e.g., Asian, Hispanic) elements. Moreover, many people now identify themselves on government surveys as biracial or multiethnic (e.g., having parents from different racial or ethnic groups). To deal with this complexity, the U.S. Census Bureau treats ethnic background and race as different concepts so that, for example, Hispanic people can identify themselves as White only, Black only, some other race, or even biracial. Measures of race and ethnic background (appropriately) defy simple snapshots of racial and ethnic diversity of Americans. Still, a general picture of who we are as Americans in racial-ethnic terms would be helpful.

In 2000, Whites constituted about 69% of the American population, with Black (about 12%) and Hispanic/Latino (about 12%) people comprising minority populations of about the same size. In 2010, 64% of Americans were White, 13% were Black, and 16% were Hispanic, with people from other racial categories (e.g., Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander) making up the remaining 7% of the population (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). These figures indicate that Hispanics are now the largest minority group in the United States. Indeed, the total U.S. population grew by 27 million people in the last decade, and growth in the Hispanic population accounted for over half of that growth. In terms of racial identity, most Hispanic people consider themselves from one race, with about half of the Hispanics on the 2010 census listing their race as White. Most of the other half identified themselves as Black or "some other race," which was a catch-all category to include a variety of nationality-based responses (e.g., Mexican). The U.S. Census allowed respondents to choose more than one racial category to describe themselves in 2000. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of White and Black biracial Americans more than doubled and the number of White Asian biracial Americans nearly doubled (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Although the absolute numbers of biracial Americans is small, this is a rapidly growing racial category. By 2015, 6.9% of American adults reported at least two races in their background, and 10% of all babies born in 2015 were multiracial (Pew Research, 2015). We will learn more about issues surrounding multiracial identity in Chapters 2 and 4 (see also Diversity Issue 1.1 in this chapter).

About 1 in 5 Americans speaks a language at home other than English, and about one half of those people speak little or no English. Spanish is the most common language spoken in those homes where English is not, or rarely, spoken. Indeed, there are about 35 million first-language Spanish-speaking Americans (roughly the population of California), making Spanish literacy an increasingly important concern in government, business, and education. Look around your class: The changing nature of the American population is reflected in the makeup of your college or university student body. In 1990, about 20% of college students were non-White (9% Black, 6% Hispanic, 4% Asian). In 2008, just 18 years later, minority college students (14% Black, 12% Hispanic, 7% Asian) constituted 33% of the college population (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2008). We will take up racial diversity, including racial and multiracial identity, racial stereotypes, and racism, in Chapter 6.

Weight

Body shape and size is a visible aspect of diversity. Research on the consequences of overweight and obesity for health, social opportunity, and well-being has exploded in the past several years. For evidence of that, look at Figure 1.1. In the first edition of this book (published in 2007), the number of articles retrieved from PsychNET on some aspect of weight was about 10,000, making weight the least researched of the diversity dimensions pictured in Figure 1.1. Not even 10 years later, over 40,000 articles are available on some aspect of weight. Currently, about 2 out of every 3 American adults are overweight (having a body mass index, or BMI, over 25), and 1 in 3 is obese, having a BMI of 30 or more (Flegal, Carroll, Ogden, & Curtin, 2010). Obesity rates are higher among women than among men, among racial and ethnic minority groups than among Whites, and among lower income compared with middle- and high-income persons. Overweight/obesity is an important issue in a study of diversity for several reasons. First, body size informs self-image and self-esteem. Second, prejudice and discrimination against people because of their (heavy) weight is widespread and, unlike most other forms of discrimination, legal. Third, overweight and obesity are associated with tremendous loss of social status and opportunity. In Chapter 8, we will discuss stereotypes associated with being overweight and the widespread weight-based discrimination that exists in many areas of society.

Sexual Orientation

Estimates vary of the percentage of LGBT (a term including lesbian, gay male, bisexual, and transgendered) individuals in the population due to two factors: the reluctance of some people to disclose their sexual orientation on a survey and the error inherent in small sample surveys. The most recent and best data on the percentages of LGBT Americans come from the National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior, a survey of 5,965 randomly selected Americans from ages 14 to 94. Regarding homosexual identity, about 3% of male and 9% of female adolescents identify themselves as gay or bisexual. Among adults, 7% of men and 5% of women identify as either gay or bisexual (Herbenick et al., 2010). Same-sex sexual behavior is somewhat more common than homosexual identity: Among adults ages 40 to 49, 10% to 15% of men and 10% to 12% of women report having participated in same-sex oral sex in their lifetimes (Herbenick et al., 2010). Sexual diversity is noteworthy because, relative to gender and race, it is an invisible status and this greatly affects whether one is a target of gay-related prejudice and how one copes with prejudice. We take up concepts of sexual orientation and identity, and the stereotyping and discrimination of LGBT individuals in Chapter 7.

Age

Age diversity receives relatively little research attention, but that should change with the expected growth of the senior citizen population in the next 20 years. The median (or 50th percentile) age for the U.S. population is 36.5 years. The typical female is older than the typical male due to the longer life expectancy for women. For

people born in the early 1990s, which includes many readers of this book, average life expectancy is 72 years for males and 79 years for females (Arias, 2011). The aging of the Baby Boom generation (those born between 1946 and 1964) means that in 2011, the first wave of Baby Boomers will turn 65. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people who are age 65 and older now represent 14% of the population, and the percentage is predicted to reach 20% by 2040 when the last wave of Baby Boomers reaches retirement age. The rapid growth of the senior citizen population has implications for eldercare, health care, and other issues. We will consider age-related stereotypes and ageism in Chapter 9.

Making Sense of Diversity

These statistics offer a glimpse of the extent of social differences around us. But how do we make sense of this diversity? When we talk about diversity, *how* do we talk about it? Do we regard diversity as a good thing or a bad thing, as something to be preserved and celebrated, or something to be overcome? Is diversity more of a political or a social word? Diversity can be approached from several intellectual perspectives, each imparting a different meaning to the concept. Before introducing a psychological perspective on diversity, let's clarify what is meant by diversity from demographic, political, ideological, and social justice perspectives.

Diversity as a Demographic Concern

A common use of diversity involves the range or proportion of social differences that are represented in a group of people, organization, or situation. When used in this way—often in concert with social statistics—the term reflects demographic concerns. To understand the nature of social differences, and how they differ from individual differences, try this exercise. The next time you attend the class for which you are reading this, look around and consider the many ways that the people in that class differ. Physically, they have different dimensions, such as weight and height, and characteristics, such as hair color and style. Psychologically, they have varying levels of self-confidence and anxiety. Intellectually, they differ in their verbal ability and intelligence. Finally, the students in your class probably differ in the social categories or groupings of which they represent, such as sex, ethnicity, cultural background, and religion. Notice how the first three (physical, psychological, and intellectual) are examples of *individual* differences—each student probably differs from every other student on that dimension. Social differences, however, refer to groupings or categories of individuals such as male and female; Catholic, Jewish, or Protestant; or single, divorced, or married. People are *socially* different when they associate with, or are members of, different social categories. Demographers, as scientists of vital and social statistics, study diversity using social categories.

Social categories are also useful and informative tools for a psychological study of diversity. They help us organize and remember other information about people, operating something like computer files in which social information is arranged and stored. As a result, when an individual's social category is brought to mind, that related

information—such as our attitudes, beliefs, and expectations about people in that category—becomes very accessible. Try this free association task. What images or thoughts come to mind when you think of the social category *poor*? If you imagine a person who was lacking in intelligence or motivation to make something of himself, dressed in shabby clothes, and living in the bad section of town, you begin to see how social categories are rich with information about a person's characteristics and behavior, and how the concept of diversity is influenced by the kind of information we associate with dimensions of social difference.

Social categories are also useful for describing people: That is, we commonly identify others by their social characteristics. In describing a person to a friend you might say, "You know, she's Hispanic, an engineering major, and a Sigma Tau. . . ." How many social categories are employed in that description? Compared to descriptions of others that cite individual differences, such as their height, optimism, and grade point average, descriptions that involve *social* differences are more available and informative. Social identification is not limited to our thinking about other people; we also identify ourselves in social terms. If asked to describe yourself, you would likely use many social terms such as Asian American, female, Catholic, or Republican. Because we identify ourselves in social terms, we are conscious of the beliefs and assumptions that other people typically associate with those categories.

Psychologists and demographers, therefore, share a common interest in social categories. But whereas demographers analyze social statistics, psychologists are interested in how social differences relate to individual behavior. Clearly, dimensions of social difference are important to our thinking about ourselves and other people. The significance of social differences, however, goes beyond the mere fact that we think of people in terms of their social groups. Social categories are laden with a great deal of information that influences how we perceive and experience our social world.

Diversity as a Political Concern

Sometimes the term diversity refers to specific dimensions of social difference that typically include sex, race, ethnicity, and to a lesser extent, physical disability. This meaning may stem from the 1978 Supreme Court *Bakke* decision in which diversity was viewed as a goal that could justify admitting students to a university based on their race. If so, diversity in a political perspective refers to particular social groups who have experienced disadvantage and discrimination (i.e., women, Blacks, Hispanics, and other ethnic minority groups). To have a diverse corporation or university, for example, is to include (or not exclude) members of historically disadvantaged social groups. This definition, however, fails to acknowledge that many social groups other than women and racial minorities have experienced injustice in our society, including gays and lesbians, the poor, released convicts, Muslims and Jews, and obese people.

This conceptualization—that diversity is the presence of people from historically disadvantaged social groups or categories—has political overtones and is limiting to a psychological study of diversity in two ways. First, recall that one of the principles of this book is that we construct diversity through our perceptions, beliefs, expectations, and behavior toward people based on social dimensions. But if diversity is linked

predominantly to women and ethnic minorities, then the range of social difference (or *important* social difference) is preset for us by a particular legal definition of diversity. Although the motives for including members of historically disadvantaged groups in our schools and businesses are noble, this political meaning of diversity restricts the actual diversity of our social environment.

Second, the political usage of diversity focuses too much attention on social differences that are visible. Although some social differences are visible, others are not so obvious. For example, can you tell which of your classmates is learning disabled, Jewish, or gay? Perhaps you *think* you can based on their behavior or appearance, but in fact, those judgments are probably not very accurate. From a psychological standpoint, diversity need not be limited to visible dimensions of social difference. Indeed, whether our social differences are visible or hidden from others is an important factor in understanding their influence on our psychological and social adjustment.

In sum, a psychological approach to diversity includes obvious dimensions of social difference as well as those which are less apparent or even unobservable. Psychological and political approaches to diversity, however, share an important feature—the recognition that there is a greater psychological burden associated with being a member of some social categories than others and some of this burden *is* attributable to past oppression and injustice.

Diversity as an Ideological Concern

Thus far we have considered that the concept of diversity is both a demographic and political concern. If social difference is a fact of life in our schools, communities, and nation, why is the concept of diversity such a controversial and divisive topic? The controversy that surrounds the term diversity is due to a third meaning that incorporates qualities that *should* be present in a diverse society. The qualities that should accompany social diversity are subjective and, as a result, open to debate and controversy. Not surprisingly, people take different positions on why diversity is valuable or desirable. Ideological perspectives on diversity tend to be one of three types: the melting pot, multiculturalism, and color-blindness.

The Melting Pot

For decades, the United States has taken great pride in the America-as-melting-pot idea, and its prominent symbol, the Statue of Liberty. Emma Lazarus's poem, mounted on the base of Lady Liberty, illustrates the melting pot:

> *. . . Give me your tired, your poor,*
> *Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,*
> *The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,*
> *Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,*
> *I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*
>
> Emma Lazarus, 1883

People who use the term diversity in this way tend to believe that a diverse society should be one where all people are welcome, where social differences are accepted and understood, and where people with social differences relate harmoniously. In the film *Manhattan Murder Mystery*, when a gentlemanly neighbor is suspected of murdering his wife, Larry (Woody Allen) retorts: "So? New York is a melting pot." This parody is nevertheless instructive: The **melting pot** ideal involves the acceptance of others' difference if they are (or perceived to be) otherwise devoted to the majority-group values and goals, such as working hard and being a responsible citizen. This melting pot view of diversity is reflected in an essay by Edgar Beckham, who coordinates Wesleyan University's Campus Diversity Initiative: "How unfortunate, especially in a democracy, that we fail to note how insistently diversity also points to unity." Beckham (1997) argues that diversity requires a unifying context in which social differences among people can work together for the benefit of everyone. So the melting pot embodies a vision of a school, community, or nation in which differences among people—especially those that relate to ethnicity and cultural heritage—are blended into a single social and cultural product. Critics of the idea that diversity evolves toward a blending of difference argue that the melting pot conveys assimilationist values, and thus is little more than an offer of acceptance from the majority group on the majority group's terms. Alternative metaphors that convey more egalitarian and inclusive attitudes toward nonmajority groups include the mosaic, kaleidoscope, or tossed salad. These metaphors offer a vision in which diverse social traditions and values are preserved, forming elements of a larger product whose identity is multiplex and changing rather than unitary and static. These metaphors reflect a multicultural approach to social difference.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is the name given to beliefs or ideals that promote the recognition, appreciation, celebration, and preservation of social difference. People who espouse multiculturalism value the preservation of the separate voices, cultures, and traditions that comprise our communities and nation. A patchwork quilt, rather than a melting pot, provides a helpful metaphor for appreciating multiculturalism. In fact, quilts and quilting projects are used by educators to teach diversity concepts in elementary school-age children. A song written by Lauren Mayer, and part of the *Second Grade Rocks!* educational curriculum, expresses this idea:

We are pieces of a quilt of many colors
See, how we blend together in harmony
And each piece is not complete without the others
Stitching a quilt made of you and me.

Music & lyrics by Lauren Mayer © 2004

In multicultural approaches to diversity, patches of people, each with a distinct cultural or national heritage, become sewn into a large social quilt. The patches are connected to each other, perhaps by a common commitment to some overarching

value such as democracy or freedom. In the spirit of the metaphor and the values surrounding multiculturalism, the quilt preserves the uniqueness of social and cultural groups while at the same time uniting them for a superordinate purpose. Critics argue that multiculturalism too easily becomes laden with identity politics, in which preserving the rights and privileges of minority groups takes priority in the "quilt-making" enterprise. Multiculturalism in this critique can include a priority of making reparations to minority groups for past discrimination or exclusion. So, although the quilt metaphor is pleasant to imagine, it may be difficult to work out in policy. Limited resources and the democratic process often require that we prioritize and make distinctions among minority social groups' rights and interests.

Color-Blindness

As an ideology, **color-blindness** attempts to consider people strictly as individuals, ignoring or de-emphasizing racial or ethnic group membership. To adopt color-blindness is to try to remove race from one's thinking and as a factor in understanding the way people are treated. Color-blindness is generally an ideology held by the racial majority about, or toward, racial minority persons. Also inherent in color-blindness is an assimilationist hope: that people from racial minority groups will downplay their racial and ethnic differences and adapt to mainstream norms (Wolsko, Park, & Judd, 2006). Proponents of color-blindness believe that racial diversity in communities, businesses, and schools is a valuable goal, but that greater diversity should be achieved by making decisions based on factors other than race. Critics of color-blindness argue that erasing, or attempting to erase, race from one's thinking about individuals blinds perceivers to the ways racial bias and discrimination is generated and maintained by institutions, policies, and traditions (Wingfield, 2015). Moreover, being color-blind also implies being blind to one's own race. For European American people, this means avoiding the realities of White privilege in many aspects of society.

Melting pot, multiculturalist, and color-blindness notions of diversity have different implications for individuals from minority groups. In melting pot and color-blind ideologies, racial and ethnic minorities gain acceptance to the extent that they assimilate and adopt majority-group customs. In a multicultural society, minority groups' culture and customs are accepted and preserved by the majority group. Which ideology is better for minorities? The research is mixed: Some work shows that multiculturalism is threatening to Whites and contributes to prejudice against minorities (Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010; Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011). Other research finds that multiculturalism decreases, and color-blindness increases, minorities' perception of bias against their group (Plaut, Thomas, & Goren, 2009; Gutierrez & Unzueta, 2010).

Regardless of whether you believe that melting pot, multicultural, or color-blindness ideals are desirable or even possible, we must acknowledge that diversity is often used in a manner that conflates description and ideology—what is and what should be. With regard to diversity, the three ideologies described above are statements of what some people feel *should* be in a socially diverse environment. We will approach

our study of diversity regarding it neither as inherently desirable nor undesirable, but simply as an important characteristic of our social world.

Diversity and Concern for Social Justice

Diversity is not something that is inherently good or bad, but many dimensions of social difference are associated with inequality and disadvantage. Therefore, diversity is also a concern of individuals who value and strive for social justice. Social justice exists when all the groups of people in a society are afforded the same rights and opportunities and when their life outcomes are not unfairly constrained by prejudice and discrimination. As the diversity of a community increases, so does the potential for some groups of people to be disadvantaged relative to other groups. In a socially just community, the accomplishments and well-being of some people are not won at the expense of others.

We know that America is a diverse society, but how socially just are we? Much data suggest that although all Americans enjoy similar rights and opportunities, not all realize comparable outcomes. Here are a few examples that highlight the divergent life outcomes of Whites compared with racial and ethnic minority individuals and the wealthy compared with the poor (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). All U.S. citizens are entitled to free public education through Grade 12, but not all of them get it. In 2009, 92% of Whites had earned a high school diploma, but only 84% and 62% of Blacks and Hispanics, respectively. In principle, all people should have access to health care, if not from their employer, then from a government health care program such as Medicaid. In 2009, however, 16% of White, 21% of Black, and 32% of Hispanic individuals had no health insurance. Even for people with insurance, racial disparities in health outcomes are common. For example, Blacks with diabetes were less likely to be screened for, or receive, hemoglobin testing than Whites with the illness, and five times more likely than Whites to have a leg amputated due to the complications of diabetes (Sack, 2008). We will consider racial discrimination in health care in Chapter 5.

In a socially just society, people will not be victimized because of their group membership. However, according to Bureau of Justice data from 2009, Blacks are about 50% more likely to be a crime victim, and about three times more likely to be a victim of a robbery, than Whites are (Truman & Rand, 2010). Although Blacks are about 12% of the U.S. population, they are about 50% of those arrested for crimes, and they are imprisoned at a rate six times higher than Whites. These statistics paint an unsettling image. In a nation devoted to its citizens' life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, racial and ethnic minorities and poor people have less of these than White and wealthy people do.

Psychologists have long approached the study of diversity with an underlying concern for identifying, explaining, and correcting social injustice. For example, Kenneth and Mamie Clark's (1940) work showing that Black children preferred to play with White than with Black dolls was instrumental in the Supreme Court's 1954 decision declaring that racially segregated schools were unconstitutional. Psychologists' concern for social justice is also evident in the way research on stereotyping and prejudice has been conducted. The great majority of research articles on stereotypes and

stereotyping (numbering in the tens of thousands) have examined Whites' beliefs and preconceptions about Blacks, while only a relative handful of articles have examined Blacks' stereotypes of Whites. When stereotyping processes should be the same in both directions, and thus equally understandable from either group's perspective, why does this research bias exist? Stereotypes held by empowered, majority group members—like Whites and males—are much more problematic because stereotypes can cause, support, and justify discrimination of minority group individuals. Because leadership positions in business and government have traditionally been, and continue to be, disproportionately held by White people, their stereotypic beliefs about Blacks have the potential to become institutionalized and contribute to institutional forms of discrimination. So psychologists have combined their basic research questions (e.g., What are the processes that lead to stereotyping?) with concerns for understanding and potentially addressing social injustice. As a final bit of evidence for the social justice agenda of psychologists, consider the mission statements of the two national psychological societies in the United States. The stated purpose of the American Psychology Association is to "advance psychology as a science and profession and as a means of promoting health, education, *and human welfare*" (italics added). Likewise, the mission of the Association for Psychological Science is to "promote, protect, and advance the interests of scientifically oriented psychology in research, application, teaching, and *the improvement of human welfare*" (italics added).

Diversity is accused of buzzword or PC status, according to many.

What is meant by that characterization? What meaning of the term *diversity* is being dismissed with these labels?

Let's pause and sum up. A psychological study of diversity shares with demographers and policy makers an interest in social categories and historically disadvantaged groups. However, the most prominent theme in a psychological study of diversity is the concern with social justice. So, as we proceed through the chapters of this book, we will strive to gain a psychological understanding of diversity *and* acknowledge the social injustices faced by people from various social groups. At the end of the book (Chapter 12), we will focus directly on interventions and strategies for reducing prejudice and promoting social equality and harmony. This book must also address two shortcomings in the psychological research on social difference. First, research attention to diversity has been dominated by a small number of dimensions: gender and, to a lesser extent, race and disability (see Figure 1.1). Race and gender affect our thinking about others more than other social categories do; this may explain the greater research activity on those dimensions of diversity. The research priorities displayed in Figure 1.1 may also reflect broader societal efforts, and the psychological research involved in those efforts, to extend equal rights all based on gender and race. Still, there are many other dimensions of diversity and social injustices that affect the members of those groups that students of the psychology of diversity must confront. Second, psychological research

Figure 1.2 The Goals of a Psychological Study of Diversity

A psychological study of diversity must

- examine how diversity shapes our own identities and behavior.
- examine how we shape the diversity of our social worlds.
- confront a wide range of diversity dimensions, not just those that are associated with historical disadvantage.
- recognize the social injustice that attends many dimensions of diversity, and use our scientific knowledge to respond to injustice.
- recognize not just social differences, but also the diversity within, and similarities between, groups of people.

favors finding differences between groups of people over similarities between, and differences within, groups of people (Jones, 1994). For example, tens of thousands of studies document the (relatively few) psychological differences between men and women. This same research obscures, however, both the many ways that men and women are alike as well as the diversity within the populations of men and women. A psychology of diversity must therefore accentuate shared qualities between, and diversity within, groups of people. The goals of a psychological study of diversity are listed in Figure 1.2.

The Psychology of Diversity: A Conceptual Framework

A psychology of diversity considers how individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behavior are intertwined with their diverse social environments. At the beginning of this chapter, I introduced two principles that form a framework for a psychological study of diversity. First, social difference is constructed and maintained by individuals, and second, social difference exerts influence on individuals. Let us consider further the interdependence of the individual and his or her social context.

Diversity Is Socially Constructed

The Individual Is a Social Perceiver

As individuals living in a social world, we confront and process volumes of social information each day. From others' skin color to facial characteristics, from their clothing preferences to political attitudes, we sift through, organize, and make sense of countless pieces of social information. Although we can be very fast and efficient in the way we process these data, psychological researchers have demonstrated that we commonly make mistakes and exhibit inaccuracies in our thinking about other people and our social world. These tendencies and errors have consequences for our conclusions and judgments about our social world and the people who comprise it. We tend to rely on information that is most available in our memory banks to help us make judgments about other people, and this information leads us to make mistakes in judging the

diversity of our social environments. Consider this: What proportion of your college or university student population is made of physically disabled individuals? Do you have to guess? On what information will you base your guess? Most of us have rather infrequent interactions with disabled individuals and tend not to notice them around campus. Based on our own interactions with and memory for disabled students, we would probably underestimate their numbers in the student population. In sum, the extent of diversity that we perceive in our schools, organizations, and communities is influenced by our natural limitations and biases in dealing with an overwhelming amount of social information.

Our attention and memory for social information tends to be organized by social categories, which, in turn, can distort differences and obscure similarities between members of different categories. Information about the characteristics of, for example, women and men are organized and stored in different memory structures. Although there are advantages to storing social information in this way, separating male and female information in memory leads to an overemphasis of the differences between men and women as well as an underappreciation of the ways that men and women are the same. The popular *Men Are From Venus, Women Are From Mars* books and videos suggest that the differences between men and women are vast and inexplicable (Gray, 1992). Psychological theory and research helps us see, however, that gender diversity—the extent to which men and women are different—is distorted by our use of social categories.

The Individual Is a Social Actor

Not only are we social perceivers, we also act within our social contexts in ways that have implications for diversity. We typically bring into our interactions with other people a set of beliefs and expectations about them. These expectations can function in two ways: guiding the way we act toward other people and influencing the way others react to us. Here's an example. Psychological studies have demonstrated that most of us feel tension and uncertainty in interactions with physically disabled people. These feelings may stem from the belief that handicapped individuals have special needs with which we are uncomfortable or unfamiliar. Our beliefs about disabled people may lead us to avoid them, or keep our interactions with them brief and superficial, thereby contributing to their differentness from us. Moreover, our suspicious and avoidant actions actually contribute to, rather than ameliorate, their marginalization and dependence on others. In other words, our behavior often sends signals to other people about their differentness and how they are expected to act, leading them to live up to (or, more commonly, down to) those expectations. In this way, our behavior toward others actually alters the extent of difference in our social environment.

Finally, our actions toward socially different others are also driven by our feelings about ourselves. We have discussed how we think of ourselves in terms of our social categories and affiliations. These social identities are value laden; we are proud of being, for example, Jewish, Latino, or female. Because we are emotionally invested in our social categories and memberships, we want them to compare favorably with other social groups. The desire to have our social group look good compared to others

invariably guides us to behave in ways that create or enhance differences between us. In short, the diversity we perceive in our schools or communities may result in part from our needs to feel good about our own social groups.

Diversity Is a Social Influence

To study how the individual and the social context are interdependent, we must recognize that our behavior is influenced by a variety of social forces, one of which is our differentness from others. Therefore, we not only perceive social difference in our environments, many of us *experience* diversity, too. We are aware that we are different from other people in many ways, such as in our skin color, family background, and religious beliefs. This experience is psychologically important because being different from others influences the way we think and feel about ourselves and interact with other people.

Influence on Identity

Psychologists have learned that our identities—whom we regard ourselves as—incorporate the impressions and beliefs others hold regarding us. The experience of diversity acknowledges that we live among people who, themselves, are constructors of their social world. In other words, other people categorize *you* based on dimensions of social difference (just as you tend to do to them). Other people may not know you personally, but as a member of some (often visibly apparent) social group about which they have prior knowledge, you are known to them to some degree. The *you* that is known to other people, and based largely on your social group affiliation, may differ sharply from how you view yourself. The discrepancy between our identities and the way other people identify us has profound implications for our psychological well-being and social adjustment. Imagine a disabled individual who views herself in the following terms: intelligent, Italian American, athletic, Republican, and outgoing, but is viewed by others primarily in terms of her disability. How frustrating it must be to realize that other people think of you as disabled (and the negative qualities associated with being disabled) when you do not think of yourself in that way, or when disabled is just one (and perhaps a relatively unimportant) part of who you are. One's social identities, and the beliefs and assumptions that other people associate with those identities, have important implications for one's psychological identity and well-being. In sum, a psychological appreciation of diversity must include an understanding of the experience of being different from others.

Influence on Behavior

The experience of diversity extends beyond how we identify ourselves and includes how we behave. Just as our actions toward others that are guided by category-based expectations have implications for the perception of diversity, others' behavior toward us follows *their* beliefs and expectations about us and influences how we experience a diverse world. Others' beliefs and expectations about the traits and behaviors of the members of a social group comprise a role—a script for conducting oneself in the ongoing drama of life. However, social roles are a double-edged sword. On one hand,

they are comfortable contexts in which to live because playing the expected role brings the approval of others. On the other hand, social roles are limiting; they constrain what a member of a social group should be or do. For example, there is still a strong collective belief in this society that women are best suited for roles that involve nurturant, supportive, and helpful behavior. Not surprisingly, women greatly outnumber men in such occupations as elementary school teacher, nurse, and secretary. Adopting this female role in one's behavior is associated with opportunities in those vocational areas, as well as a cultural stamp of approval at playing the woman role appropriately, but also place women at an economic disadvantage. You can see, then, how our behavior is not ours alone, but is shaped by cultural forces that stem directly from social differences.

Summary

- Diversity is difference based on one's sex, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, national background, income and education level, first language, religion, and appearance—and these are just the major categories of social difference!
- A psychological study of diversity must consider how social categories are tools for viewing and evaluating other people; that diversity is not limited to historically disadvantaged or visible groups; that diversity is an escapable and value-neutral aspect of our daily living; and that a concern for social justice must accompany the study of social difference.
- The psychology of diversity is based on two principles. One, through our thoughts, judgments, and actions, we shape and distort the raw material of objective social differences. Two, the diverse social contexts in which we live shape our identities and actions.

DI Diversity Issue 1.1: Does White + Black = Black?

Barack Obama has a White mother and a Black father, making him the most famous biracial or multiracial person in America. And yet, most people think of Barack Obama as Black rather than biracial. Indeed, he was hailed in the media as the first Black president of the United States. In *Dreams of My Father*, President Obama tells of his conscious decision to think of himself as a Black American (Obama, 2004). How do you think of people who are of mixed-race background? Do you think of a biracial person in terms of one race and, if so, which one? Researchers Destiny Peery and Galen Bodenhausen (2008) examined this question by having White people look at racially ambiguous faces that either were or were not paired with information about the biracial/bicultural background of the person. What did they find? Compared with the no-information condition, when participants were given information about the biracial background of the person, they reflexively categorized the face as Black rather than White. However, when asked for more thoughtful, deliberate responses, the participants acknowledged the person's biracial identity. This study suggests that Whites automatically categorize multiracial people into minority categories, but also that knowing another person is from a mixed-race background helps White perceivers think about people in multiracial/multiethnic terms.

- Consider your own racial and ethnic background. Who were your parents and grandparents, in terms of their country of origin, language, race, and religion? Does your identity reflect that multicultural background?

- If you have a multiracial or multiethnic identity, does your identity reflect a melting pot, multicultural, or color-blind model of diversity? In other words, are your racial identities mixed together to form a unique cultural product (you), are there elements of each heritage preserved and existing side-by-side in you, or do you not think of yourself in terms of racial or ethnic categories at all?

DI Diversity Issue 1.2: Income Inequality

Income inequality refers to the distribution of wealth and income in the population and is often captured in the income gap between the rich (defined here as the wealthiest 1% of families) and everyone else. The Great Depression and World War II eras saw a marked change in income distribution from the previous Gilded Age, with the top 1% of families receiving 11% and the bottom 90% receiving nearly 68% of the income. However, the gap between the top 1% and the lowest 90% of families has steadily increased over the past 30 years. According to recent data, the top 1% of families now receive 22.5% in all income and the bottom 90% of families receive only 50% (Saez, 2013). What is an acceptable or fair gap between the ultra rich and the large majority of middle- and low-income families is open to debate, but a 2014 Pew Research Center survey show that most American adults view the rich/poor gap as either a "very big" (47%) or "moderately big" (27%) problem.

Income inequality is correlated with health outcomes such that countries with higher inequality have higher death and infant mortality rates, shorter life expectancies, and higher rates of depression and obesity (Lochner, Pamuk, Makuc, Kennedy, & Kawachi, 2001). We would expect poverty and poor health outcomes to be highly correlated, and they are, but income inequality alone predicts poor health outcomes even among the wealthy. Correlations do not prove that inequality causes health declines in a population, so how can we understand the relationship? Some scholars argue that income inequality erodes social cohesion, and contributes to anxiety and stress for all members of the population, and these factors help explain the poor health outcomes of high-income inequality countries (Inequality.org, n.d.).

- How does being aware that the super rich are getting richer and average working people are not affect you psychologically? Emotionally? Does that inequality change your behavior? Discuss.

KEY TERMS

diversity 2
melting pot 9
multiculturalism 9
color-blindness 10

FOR FURTHER READING

Boatright-Horowitz, S. L., & Soeung, S. (2009). Teaching White privilege to White students can mean saying good-bye to positive student evaluations. *American Psychologist, 64*(6), 574–575. doi: 10.1037/a0016593
This article discusses the consequences of trying to confront racism, particularly White students' racial attitudes, in the classroom for students' evaluations of their course and teacher.

Fassinger, R. E. (2008). Workplace diversity and public policy: Challenges and opportunities for psychology. *American Psychologist, 63*(4), 252–268. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.63.4.252
This article discusses barriers to greater diversity in the American workplace.

Wingfield, A. (2015, September). Colorblindness is counterproductive. *The Atlantic.* Retrieved from http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/color-blindness-is-counterproductive/405037/
This essay offers a critique of colorblind ideology from sociological research.

ONLINE RESOURCES

United States Census Bureau
http://www.census.gov/

A great site to appreciate the diversity of Americans. From the main page follow the "People & Households/American Community Survey" link. The American Community Survey is an annual look at Americans' income, education, race and ethnicity, disability, and more.

United States Census Bureau 2011 Statistical Abstract
http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/hist_stats.html

The U.S. Census Bureau's Statistical Abstract shows historical data: current and past census figures for demographics and many other variables. This site allows one to appreciate changes in American diversity across time.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
http://www.cdc.gov/

This site is excellent for finding basic prevalence statistics on diversity dimensions such as obesity and disability, and also how those dimensions relate to health. From the main CDC page, use the index to find pages on overweight/obesity (under *O*) and disability and health (under *D*).

National Center for Healthcare Statistics
http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/

For those interested in seeing how health-related outcomes are related to disability, obesity status, or demographic variables. From the main page, use the index to find research on disability and health (under D), then continue on to "more data and statistics."

National Center for Education Statistics
http://nces.ed.gov/

For those interested in seeing how educational outcomes vary by gender or race. From the main page, go to Tables/Figures, then Search Tables/Figures. Select a year and type in "gender" to get a feast of educational data for males and females.

National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior
http://www.nationalsexstudy.indiana.edu/

Findings from a large representative survey of Americans' sexual behaviors, conducted in 2010, including data on same-sex identity and behavior.

United States Department of Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines
http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.shtml#latest

For the latest definitions, measurement, and data on poverty.

The U.S. Census Bureau also has a poverty section: http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty.html

American Religion Data Archive
http://www.thearda.com/

A site with membership statistics of religious denominations in the United States. ARDA also provides learning modules for studying social issues that are related to religion in America (e.g., Evangelicalism, science, and homosexuality).

The Pluralism Project
http://pluralism.org/index.php

This site, through advocacy, resources, and research, enables people to explore the diversity of religions and faith traditions in the United States. From the home page, go to "America's Many Religions." Pick a religion to find links to statistics, news, essays, and multimedia presentations.

American Psychological Association
http://www.apa.org/

A national organization of academic and practicing professional psychologists. A good place to learn what psychologists do and how they do it.

Association for Psychological Science
http://www.psychologicalscience.org/

A national organization of psychology more devoted to the scientific and research than to the professional aspects of psychology.

Inequality.org
http://inequality.org/income-inequality/

For information and analysis on wealth and income inequality.

Administration for Community Living
http://www.acl.gov/

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services arm for aging programs, resources, and research.

2

Categorization and Stereotyping

Cognitive Processes That Shape Perceived Diversity

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Social categorization and the sources of our social categories
- The effects of categorizing people on perceived diversity
- Stereotypes and their effect on perceived diversity
- How stereotypes confirm themselves in our thinking

Our study of diversity must begin with how we think about people who are different from ourselves. Two cognitive processes—categorization and stereotyping—frame our study of social thinking. Social categorization and stereotyping help shape the social world we perceive. This chapter will consider social categorization and stereotyping in turn, followed by a discussion of their implications for understanding people who are socially different from ourselves.

Social Categorization

How many people will you interact with, encounter, see, think about, or imagine today? Think about it for a minute—the number is probably several hundred people, or higher, for a typical day. Each of those individuals has a particular age, body shape,

race or ethnicity, appearance, hair style, and language. If you were to take notice, you would likely find that they also differ in their income, political orientation, religion, health status, and many other ways. We obviously cannot possibly remember the distinctive qualities of even a small fraction of the people we encounter. So what happens to all that social information? Making sense of the diversity around us involves a great deal of information processing, often more thinking than we have time for or care to do. To ease this information processing burden, we employ categories, because thinking about categories of people (e.g., rich, middle-professional class, middle-working class, and poor people) requires less attention and less memory resources than trying to remember individual characteristics. **Social categorization** involves thinking about people primarily as members of social groups rather than as individuals and refers to the process by which we place people into groups based on characteristics like gender or ethnicity. Social categories organize and economize our thinking about other people, especially those who are different from ourselves. In the following pages, we must address two fundamental questions about social categorization. First, how do we decide which category (or categories) to use when people can be categorized in many different ways? Second, how does social categorization affect our thinking about other people? We acknowledged above that social categories are beneficial for at least one reason—they help us economize on our everyday thinking about people. In what ways, however, do social categories influence our perceptions of others?

Think of someone you know well, such as a roommate or friend. Make a mental list of the possible social categories to which this person could be assigned. Most people are part of many social groups; some are easily visible; others are not. We have considered why social categorization is fundamental to social information processing, but how do we select the social categories? Or do they select themselves?

The Neuropsychology of Categorization

Age, sex, and race are regarded by psychologists as **primary social categories**. Primary categorizations occur first and fastest when we consider other people. We notice, too quickly to be able to think about it, other peoples' age, sex, and race before noticing other categorizations that might apply to them. Researchers measured subjects' brainwave activity in the part of the brain devoted to attention as they simultaneously presented pictures of Black and White male and female targets. The race of the targets was noticed in about one tenth of a second, and subjects noticed the targets' sex only slightly slower. Other research suggests that we make age-based categorizations nearly as quickly (Brewer & Lui, 1989). This means that primary categorization is **automatic**—that is, it is spontaneous, unreflective, and uncontrollable. The social categories race, sex, and age are similar in several respects, and this may shed light on why they are primary categories. As David Schneider (2004) points out, each of these categories has physical markers that are visible and easily identified. Skin color and facial features help us identify race. Body shape and stature enable sex categorizations. Finally, hair color and skin type help distinguish older from younger people.

The fact that we categorize people in terms of their race, sex, and age in a fraction of a second indicates that social categorization should be connected to areas of the brain that control automatic processing of stimuli. How is the brain involved in social categorization, and what does neuropsychology teach us about stereotypes and stereotyping? Based on early research with animals and humans that focused on learning, emotional reactions, and threat detection, the amygdala emerged as a possible center of automatic stereotypic judgments. The amygdala is a part of the brain that processes and evaluates inputs with emotional significance, and indeed the amygdala has been linked to the processing of social information (Adolphs, 2009). Researcher Elizabeth Phelps and her colleagues conducted one of the earliest studies of the amygdala's role in social categorization using functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI, technology. White participants viewed unfamiliar Black and White faces while the activation of their amygdalae was assessed via fMRI (Phelps et al., 2000). They found greater amygdala activation when participants viewed Black compared with White faces, and this activation was correlated with measures of implicit (or automatic) racial bias based on reaction time and startle eye blink. This basic finding—greater amygdala activation in response to Black compared to White faces—has been replicated often by other researchers using different categorization tasks (see Amodio & Lieberman, 2009). Whereas early fMRI research focused on White participants' categorization of White and Black faces, amygdala activation in response to Black faces has also been observed in African American participants (Leiberman, et al., 2005). How could Black individuals have automatic bias against their own racial group? The best explanation argues that negative race stereotypes are so engrained in American culture that everyone, regardless of race or ethnicity, passively acquires them through socialization and repeated uncritical exposure.

Other regions of the brain are involved in social categorization and bias, as Jennifer Richeson and her colleagues (2003) found in a fascinating study. White participants took a test of implicit (automatic) racial bias and a Stroop test. In the Stroop test, one has to name the color of a word while the word itself may be a different color name, which is very distracting. Needless to say, the Stroop test requires a high level of executive attention and control to do accurately. Those two tests were strongly negatively correlated, meaning that participants who had high executive control showed low implicit racial bias. Separately, participants did the fMRI face categorization part of the study. Richeson et al. found that participants' right dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC), and not the amygdala, was active when shown pictures of black males. The DLPFC is associated with executive control, a finding that was corroborated by the large positive correlation of DLPFC activation with the Stroop scores. Finally, the study found that DLPFC activity—which is essentially a measure of the strength of one's executive control—reduced the correlation between implicit racial bias and Stroop scores. What does this mean? The amygdala was not activated in response to unfamiliar Black faces because participants overrode that impulse with higher level executive control, and the fMRI data confirmed it. The study shows that it is possible to inhibit one's automatic racial bias, but it takes cognitive resources, and those resources are often in short supply.

Subsequent research by David Amodio and Patricia Devine (2006) helps us see the distinct neuropsychology of prejudice and stereotyping. They measured implicit *evaluation* by having participants respond to Black and White faces that were paired with pleasant and unpleasant stimuli in a reaction-time task. The implicit *stereotyping* task measured the association of a series of descriptive words (e.g., *athletic*) with the categories of Black and White, again via reaction time. Their study found evidence of both prejudice and stereotyping among White participants, but these responses were largely independent of each other. Moreover, the affective or evaluative aspects of categorization appear to involve the amygdala, whereas the cognitive or stereotypic aspects of categorization appear to involve the areas of the brain responsible for executive control, like the DLPFC (Amodio & Lieberman, 2009). We shall study prejudice, the evaluation of social categories, and diversity, more closely in Chapter 4.

Beside the amygdala and the DLPFC, two other areas of the brain are implicated in primary social categorization (Kubota, Banaji, & Phelps, 2012). To categorize people into racial categories, one must first be able to do face detection (recognizing a face as different from an object) and face recognition (associating a face with a racial category). Using fMRI methods, researchers have observed greater fusiform face area (FFA) activation in participants viewing same-race compared with other-race faces (Ronquillo, et al., 2007). Furthermore, participants with pro-White racial bias tend to show greater FFA activation—or, in other words, "see" larger differences between Black and White faces. This reveals the influence of socialized racial bias on perception (Brosch, Bar-David, & Phelps, 2013). Finally, the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) is an area of the brain that helps, along with the DLPFC, control the expression of racial bias. A review of recent fMRI research in this area suggests that the ACC monitors conflict between one's automatic racial biases and more egalitarian and socially approved explicit racial attitudes. The DLPFC, in turn, assists in the suppression of implicit bias, allowing explicit (and presumably less biased) racial attitudes to emerge in behavior. These key areas of the brain that are involved in social categorization are shown in Figure 2.1 on page 40.

Beyond Categorization

Although categorizing people by their race, sex, and age occurs automatically in our social thinking, many other dimensions of diversity—some much more important to us than primary differences—are available to further organize and simplify our social worlds. Question: How do we decide what category, from among the many available, to use to think about someone? Answer: Beyond the primary categories, whatever characteristic of that person commands or occupies our attention is likely to inform our social categorization. Psychological researchers have found that categorization is driven by attention. The more we attend to an aspect of a person—such as one's weight, race, or physical disability—the more likely it is that we will categorize that individual with similar people we have noticed in the past (Smith & Zarate, 1992). Following this attention principle, social categorization can occur because of a distinctive feature (e.g., wheelchair user), because a situation highlights a category (e.g., at work you may think in terms of employee versus customer), or because a category is associated with a perceived threat to our values (e.g., Muslims, for many American Christians). Let's consider the factors that guide our attention and, in turn, social categorization.

Perceptual Similarity

People who appear to be similar in some respect tend to be grouped together in our minds. The primary categories mentioned above share many similar features, but even beyond those fundamental categories, the principle of perceptual similarity guides our thinking about people. For example, people with a physical disability can be thought of as a group even if those people are otherwise quite different.

Distinctive features activate categories for two reasons. First, people who share a distinctive characteristic tend to be associated in memory, even if they are different in many other ways. When we see, for example, a person walking with the assistance of a cane or walker, we recall other similar people we have encountered. Because of their association in memory, we tend to think of those people as a group. Second, information about salient categories is immediately available to the perceiver compared to other, less salient categories. It is easier for us to notice and remember other information about people with disabilities than, for example, gay men and lesbians because, unlike sexual orientation, physical disabilities themselves are salient and memorable. Some common, distinctive social categories include sex, race, and ethnicity (to the extent that it is perceptually salient, such as through language differences), as well as physical disability, obesity, economic status, and age.

The perceptual salience of a characteristic is partly due to the situation in which it is encountered. Shelley Taylor and her colleagues have found that **solo status**, such as being the only woman on a committee or the only Asian student in a class, commands others' attention (Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978). In one study, participants watched a group of six students discuss a topic; the groups consisted of each possible distribution of men and women (e.g., six men, no women; five men, one woman, etc.). Participants then evaluated the contributions of a given group member. The results showed that the significance attributed to a group member's comments was inversely proportional to the size of their minority group. In other words, as people become more noticeable in a group, acquiring more solo status, their actions stand out and acquire greater importance in perceivers' eyes. This occurs even when the quantity of the member's contribution to the group remains the same across the various group types. Other research shows that evaluations of minority or solo status individuals are more exaggerated (Taylor & Fiske, 1978). We will take up solo status again in Chapter 6 when we learn about how females deal with solo status. In sum, distinctive attributes—whether that distinctiveness is inherent or situationally enhanced—is a basis for social categorization.

How do dress codes and uniform policies in schools or workplaces relate to solo status?

Do tattoos and piercings, through which people express their individuality, make them (ironically) more likely to be categorized by others?

Accessibility

Our social thinking is also governed by categories that are accessible. We are more likely to group people by frequently used categories, or categories that have just recently been used, than categories we rarely use. If we are accustomed to thinking about people in terms of a certain dimension, we will tend to activate these categories to deal with new or unknown social situations, thus adding to their accessibility.

In a demonstration of the influence of accessible social categories on social perception, researchers primed the category *women* or *Chinese* (or no category) by presenting one of these words for very short durations to study participants via computer (Macrae, Bodenhausen, & Milne, 1995). After the priming task, participants viewed a videotape (ostensibly to rate the tape) of a Chinese woman reading. Thus, participants' impressions of the person in the tape could be based on either social category: her sex or her ethnicity. In a final task, participants identified computer-presented trait words manipulated to include some that were typical of the social categories women and Chinese. The results were striking. Those participants who were primed with the category woman were faster in recognizing the women-typical traits, but slower in recognizing the Chinese-typical traits, than were the participants who had no social category prime. Parallel findings occurred for those who were primed with the Chinese category. They more quickly responded to Chinese-typical words, and more slowly to women-typical words, than did people with no category prime.

This study makes two important points. First, when more than one social category can be used to think about someone, *accessible* social categories—ones that we have recently used—take precedence. Second, when an accessible social category is appropriated to process social information, other relevant categories are inhibited—that is, they become less helpful than if we had no social category to work with. Here we see another aspect of the efficiency of social categories: When one is activated for use, others are deactivated until the social information processing is complete.

Perceived Threat

Earlier we learned that the amygdala processes social information that is unfamiliar or threatening. A third factor that guides social categorization is whether a person is perceived as potentially threatening. Research by Saul Miller and his colleagues demonstrates that when we perceive potential threat or harm in another person, we are much more likely to categorize that person as a member of an out-group (Miller, Maner, & Becker, 2010). **In-groups** and **out-groups** refer to social groups or categories of which we are, and are not, a member, respectively. In one study, these researchers had White participants categorize the race of White and Black faces as quickly and accurately as possible. The faces were selected to have either angry or happy expressions. The researchers hypothesized that, for typical White participants, angry Black males would be the most threatening and therefore should be most quickly categorized as an out-group member. As they predicted, participants correctly categorized the race of the angry Black male faces in just under 500 milliseconds (or one-half second), faster than any other type of face. Happy White female faces were the least threatening, and indeed participants were slowest in categorizing those faces.

List three of your in-groups. Now list some out-groups—groups of which you are not a member. Is it harder to identify your out-groups? Why?

To sum up, our social categorizations are not random. Some categories select themselves by virtue of their visual distinctiveness; others because of their frequent use. Categorization also occurs when we want to define ourselves as different from people who are unfamiliar and threatening. Armed with some basic knowledge about social categorization, let us further examine how social categories influence the diversity we perceive in our social world.

What Do Social Categories Do?

Social Categories Economize Our Social Thinking

What if you kept your e-mails in one large file on your computer or phone? Finding an e-mail from a particular person or on a specific topic would necessarily involve looking through the whole list—an inefficient filing system to say the least. Obviously a categorization system with folders and subfolders makes storing and locating any individual e-mail much easier. The same principle operates in dealing with social information. Placing people in categories facilitates efficient social information processing, enabling us to combine individuals who have a similar quality or status into a group. As a result, thinking about groups of people requires fewer cognitive resources than thinking about individuals, leaving us better equipped to face the many other demands on our cognitive resources.

Researchers did a series of experiments designed to examine the cognitive efficiency of social categories (Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen, 1994). They had participants form an impression of a hypothetical person while doing a simultaneous cognitive task. The researchers reasoned that if social categories conserve cognitive resources, then people who are allowed or encouraged to use them in an impression-formation task should have more resources available to do other things. In one study, participants were shown a list of 10 traits (presented one by one on a computer) that described a hypothetical person named John. The traits included those typical of, for example, an artist (e.g., creative, temperamental) or a doctor (e.g., responsible, caring). Some of the participants were assigned to see an appropriate social category label (*artist* or *doctor*) appear above the trait words; others did not see the category label. While they were doing this impression-formation task, participants were also listening to a tape-recorded, factual lecture on Indonesian geography. After the tasks were complete, participants were given a 20-item multiple-choice test on the facts in the audiotaped lecture. The results confirmed the researchers' idea: Those who formed their impressions of John with the assistance of an explicit social category scored significantly better on the test of the lecture facts than those who did not have a category made available to them. In short, using a social category made the trait task easier and left those people with more resources for listening to and remembering the lecture.

A follow-up study showed that this influence of social categories on the performance of a simultaneous cognitive task was not merely intentional—an effect that participants thought should occur so they behaved accordingly. In a similar study, Macrae and his colleagues primed the social category word, by flashing it for merely a fraction of a second on the computer, and then presented the trait (Macrae, Milne, et al., 1994). Still, participants who formed impressions of Jim with the aid of a social category (albeit one that they did not recognize!) performed better on a simultaneous but unrelated cognitive task compared to those who did not receive a social category prime. Together, these studies demonstrate the ability of social categories to economize cognitive resources, such as attention and memory, and make them available for other needs.

Social Categories Guide Social Judgments

It is well established that social categories, and the beliefs that we associate with them, influence our thinking about people from other groups (Hamilton & Sherman, 1994). Social category–based beliefs set up expectations for people from a particular group, and much research shows that these expectations influence our perceptions and judgments of people based on their group membership.

For example, researchers investigated the effects of class-based categorization on judgments of a child's academic performance (Baron, Albright, & Malloy, 1995). They had participants watch a video tape of a girl playing near her home and in a neighborhood playground. In the low social class condition, the home and playground were urban and run down; in the high social class condition, the home and playground were spacious, well kept, and obviously exclusive. Participants also watched a (bogus) tape of the child taking an intelligence test. The results showed that social class affected the ratings of the child's academic ability, but only when they had no information about the child's academic ability. Participants who had categorized the child as from a low socioeconomic background evaluated her test performance more negatively than those who believed she was an upper middle-class student. However, this social categorization effect did not occur when the participants were given information about the child's academic abilities. This study shows how categorization affects the way we think about people but also suggests that the influence of social categories, as a basis for judgments of others, may be overridden by other, more relevant information.

In another study, participants studied some information about a basketball player and then listened to a taped radio broadcast of an actual basketball game involving the player (Stone, Perry, & Darley, 1997). After the broadcast, participants rated the attributes and performance of the player. The information about the player, however, was manipulated in two ways. Participants were led to believe that the player was either Black or White (social information) and that he possessed either low or high athletic ability (individual information). The results revealed that participants' ratings of the player were influenced only by the social information. Those who believed the player was Black rated him as having higher physical and basketball ability than did participants who believed he was White. However, the White player was attributed with more effort than the Black player. This study also demonstrates the power of social

categories to influence our perceptions of individuals and suggests that individualistic (and seemingly more accurate) information can be overridden by social categorical information.

The influence of social categories over our thinking about socially different people cannot be separated from the beliefs and knowledge we associate with a particular group of people. In the study described above, a simple social category can determine whether we see an athletic performance as due to athletic ability or effort (Stone et al., 1997). This influence of social categories, however, depends on the association of particular traits and abilities with a social category. In other words, we perceive athletic ability in the performance of a Black athlete not just because we think of him as Black, but also because we associate certain traits with the members of his group. This leads us to the second basic cognitive process through which we order and understand our social worlds: the stereotype.

Stereotyping

Categories help economize our cognitive resources, but they also help organize knowledge and experience with people from other social groups. When we categorize people based on a group membership, we risk discarding a great deal of individual information. We recover some of this information by developing a general description, called a *stereotype*, of the people in a social category and associating it in memory with that category. A **stereotype** is a set of beliefs about the members of a social group and usually consists of personality traits, behaviors, and motives (Allport, 1954). Stereotypes are also assumed to be beliefs about people from social groups. That is, when we stereotype people, we also apply a set of beliefs that represent the qualities of a group to *individuals* from that social group.

To learn how social categories and stereotypes are linked in memory, try this: What traits and behaviors come to mind when I say professor? Intelligent? Nerdy? You likely have little trouble accessing a general description of a typical professor because that stereotypical information is closely associated with the category *professor* in your mind. In addition to personal traits, that stereotype probably carries information about professors' education, income, and perhaps their social and political attitudes. In terms of our e-mail folder metaphor, stereotypes are essentially brief summaries of the contents of a folder. They provide a general idea of what is in the folder and save us the work of sifting through every individual element for that information.

As with social categorization, some stereotyping occurs automatically (Devine & Sharp, 2009). That is, the association between some social categories and the traits and beliefs we associate with those categories is so well learned that stereotyping occurs unintentionally. Mahzarin Banaji and Curtis Hardin (1996) had participants view words that were either related to females (e.g., *mother, nurse*), males (e.g., *father, doctor*), or unrelated to gender, followed by a gender pronoun (e.g., *him, her*). The words were displayed on a computer screen for about two tenths of a second, too quickly for participants to actually read the words. Following these words, a gendered pronoun

appeared (e.g., *him, her*) and participants had to decide whether the pronoun was male or female by pressing a computer key. Participants made faster associations between male words and pronouns, and female words and pronouns, than between gender-inconsistent words and pronouns. Thus, even though the participants were unaware of the connections they were making, their responses showed that gendered descriptors (stereotypic traits) and the appropriate gender pronouns (social category) were connected in their memory. Moreover, automatic stereotyping occurred even when participants declared, via questionnaire, that they did not hold gender stereotypes.

Is automatic stereotyping inevitable? No, a variety of conditions can get in the way of the automatic activation of a stereotype when we are exposed to someone from a stereotyped group (Devine & Sharp, 2009). First, even though it occurs outside of our control, automatic stereotyping still takes cognitive resources like attention. Numerous experiments show that perceivers who are made cognitively busy by having mental tasks to do engage in less stereotyping than perceivers with a full complement of attention (Gilbert & Hixon, 1991). In other words, a member of a stereotyped group must have our attention for stereotypes about his or her group to be activated in us. Second, the context in which we perceive or interact with a person from a stereotyped group affects how much we stereotype that person. For example, participants were more biased against an Asian target when the target was seen in a classroom context compared to a basketball court; the opposite pattern of bias occurred when the target was Black (Barden, Maddux, Petty, & Brewer, 2004). In that study, seeing an out-group member in a stereotype-inconsistent situation prevented the stereotyping that occurred when the Asian target was seen in a classroom context.

Other research shows that the goal of an interracial interaction also changes the stereotyping that occurs in that situation. In one study, White participants interacted with a Black partner under one of three conditions: They were instructed to evaluate their partner (and thus have superior status relative to their partner), get along with him or her (and have equal status), or be evaluated by their partner (and have inferior status) (Richeson & Ambady, 2001). Race stereotyping in the White participants occurred less in the equal and inferior status than in the superior status interactions. Here we see how interaction goals can undercut stereotyping, a topic we will consider at greater length in Chapter 12. Third, automatic stereotypes can be inhibited if we are motivated to avoid them. Motivation to avoid stereotyping another person may occur because the individual values fair-mindedness (Moskovitz, Salomon, & Taylor, 2000), has been instructed by an authority to not stereotype (Lowery, Hardin, & Sinclair, 2001), or wants to make a good impression on the person (Sinclair & Kunda, 1999). In summary, stereotyping can occur spontaneously when confronted with someone from an out-group, but automatic stereotyping can also be brought under our conscious control with the proper motivation and practice. Our ability to overcome well-learned and unconscious biases, and the techniques that help us think in less stereotypic ways, will be considered again in Chapter 12.

Where Do Stereotypes Come From?

Thus far we have learned about the *processes* of stereotyping—how and why we stereotype other people. Let's shift our focus now to stereotype *content*—the characteristics

that we associate with people from other social groups. Below we will consider some general rules that apply to the content of stereotypes, regardless of the specific group, followed by a discussion of where stereotype content comes from. In later chapters, we will confront the content of our stereotypes of specific groups based on race (Chapter 5), gender (Chapter 6), sexual orientation (Chapter 7), weight (Chapter 8), and age (Chapter 9).

Generally, the content of stereotypes is marked by two qualities. First, stereotypic beliefs tend to be dispositional; that is, they inform us about the inner qualities of individuals based merely on their group membership. Given that we cannot readily see an individual's personality traits or abilities, stereotyping is potentially valuable and advantageous in social interactions. The problem is that behavior is caused by *both* inner, dispositional and outer, situational factors. Thus, stereotypes are over informed by dispositional information and inherently inaccurate.

Second, the evaluative content of stereotypes tends to be negative. Research demonstrates that our stereotypes of many social groups—including Blacks, women, poor and unemployed people, gays and lesbians, people with physical and mental disabilities, and overweight people—are predominantly composed of negatively valued qualities (Allon, 1982; Brigham, 1974; Eagly & Mladinic, 1989; Farina, Sherman, & Allen, 1968; Furnham, 1982a; Gibbons, Sawin, & Gibbons, 1979; Herek, 1984). There are exceptions to this *stereotypes are negative* rule, but even people we positively stereotype (e.g., Asian Americans are intelligent) are limited by the narrowness and uniformity of those positive beliefs (see Diversity Issue 2.2 to think more about positive stereotypes). In sum, the dispositional assumptions inherent in stereotyping are negative, inaccurate, and are applied uniformly to each individual in that social category. Moreover, the negative traits and emotions associated with stereotyping form the basis for prejudice, a topic to be addressed in Chapter 4.

When does a stereotype go from being a useful cognitive strategy to being prejudicial and unfair? Can you draw a clear separation between the two?

Operating together, social categorization and stereotyping influence our understanding of the social differences that surround us, but where do our stereotypes come from? Stereotypic beliefs are derived from personal exposure to people from other social groups, our attention to the covariation of unusual events and people, and are learned from family and other cultural conduits.

Personal Exposure

When we know little about the members of another group, we rely on personal contact with or observations of them to inform our beliefs about the whole group (Rothbart, Dawes, & Park, 1984). Our observations of and experiences with socially different people contribute to stereotypes in two ways.

First, our stereotypic beliefs are informed by the social roles that we observe group members occupy. For example, we might observe that many more women than men

are elementary school teachers and nurses. As a result, we may assume that women as a group are nurturant and helpful, erroneously believing that women's association with these roles reflects a correspondent inner quality (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). In fact, social roles are more likely assigned by society rather than chosen by the individual, so the behaviors we observe of the members of a social group in a given role do not necessarily reflect their personalities or personal preferences.

Second, our stereotypes are likely to include beliefs that help us explain others' disadvantage or misfortune. Psychologists have demonstrated that belief in a just world—where people generally get what they deserve—is a common way of thinking about others (Lerner, 1980). In light of **just world belief**, when other people experience misfortune or tragedy, it is easier to hold them responsible for their plight than to admit that bad things can happen to undeserving people. Accordingly, when we observe a group of people who face disadvantage, we tend to suppose that they have an attribute or inner flaw that somehow caused their regrettable situation. For example, rather than being seen as victims of broader economic forces such as unemployment, poor people are stereotyped as lazy and unmotivated, dispositions that cause their disadvantage (Furnham & Gunter, 1984).

Distinctive Individuals and Behaviors

Our stereotypes would be more accurate if they represented the attributes of the most typical group members. The problem is that typical group members are neither noticeable nor memorable. In fact, it is the unusual individual that grabs our attention. Atypical group members stand out; their behavior and appearance are vivid and memorable. Hence, their attributes and actions exert disproportionate influence on our thinking about all the members of that social category (Rothbart, Fulero, Jensen, Howard, & Birrel, 1978). This influence is compounded when the social group itself is relatively small or unusual. Research on the **illusory correlation** demonstrates that the co-occurrence of an unusual behavior *and* a distinctive social category is particularly influential, leading us to erroneously believe that the two things are related (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976). Illusory correlations contribute to our stereotypes, causing them to reflect more unusual behavior or attributes than is warranted. As an example of illusory correlation, consider the drag queens who often march in gay rights parades and demonstrations. Cross-dressing is an unusual behavior that coincidentally occurs with the social category *gay*. The rarity of that combination of occurrences sparks an assumption that they are related, contributing to the stereotypical (and erroneous) notion that gay men are transvestites or, more generally, sexual perverts.

In one study, participants read a series of sentences that described positive and negative behaviors exhibited by hypothetical members of a majority (Group A) or a minority (Group B) (Johnson & Mullen, 1994). In a following task administered by a computer, participants read the sentences again, but this time the group information was omitted. After deciding whether the behavior was one that was described earlier as being committed by a majority or minority group member, they pressed a key to communicate their decision. The results revealed that participants over attributed negative actions to minority group actors, and they were faster in making these decisions

compared to the other pairs of information (positive act by a minority actor, any act by a majority actor). Thus, stereotypes can arise when we erroneously connect unusual (and often negative) behaviors with unusual groups.

Socialization

Finally, cultures and societies invest in collective views of social groups, called **cultural stereotypes**. For example, beliefs about overweight people are much different (and more negative) in the United States compared to Mexico (Crandall & Martinez, 1996). Our stereotypic beliefs, in turn, are socialized by the steady influence of family members and television, two important conduits of cultural influence. Because children admire and imitate their parents, they accept parents' social attitudes rather uncritically. Parents' stereotypes are communicated to their children in many subtle ways, as in the kind of playmates that meet with their approval, warnings about neighborhoods to avoid, or casual use of racial or ethnic epithets in the home.

Cultural stereotypes tend to be learned early in life and rehearsed often. This is particularly true for people whose cultural education is limited to what is on TV or who otherwise have few opportunities to socialize with people from different ethnic, cultural, or economic backgrounds. When stereotypes are instilled early in life and go essentially unchallenged into adolescence and adulthood, they become what psychologists call dominant responses. That is, recalling well-learned, stereotypic beliefs tend to be the first response to encountering socially different people. Researcher Alan Lambert and his colleagues (2003) suggest that, as dominant responses, stereotypes are more likely to influence our thinking and behavior in public than in private situations. Public situations (e.g., shopping malls) require more cognitive resources from us; there are more things going on and more to notice, remember, and decide. In an effort to do more economical social thinking then, we tend to fall back on well-learned, stereotypic responses toward others. Indeed, much other research shows that when our cognitive resources are limited, we are more likely to stereotype other people (see Bodenhausen, 1990, for a clever illustration).

What roles do older people typically occupy? What traits do we assume fit those roles? Notice how your beliefs about older people as a group develop as you see them in situations.

Stereotypes Persist, but Why?

Psychologists have long regarded stereotyping to be part of a significant social problem (Allport, 1954). This is not only because stereotypic beliefs tend to be negative and dispositional. Once established, stereotypes are also difficult to change. Therefore, the influence of stereotypes on our thinking about, and behavior toward, other people can subtly contribute to prejudice and discrimination of people who are socially different than ourselves. Let us consider a few of the reasons for the persistence of stereotypes.

Stereotypes Are Generally Accurate

Until recently, stereotypes were assumed by the social scientific community to be inaccurate. Part of the reason for this, according to Lee Jussim and his colleagues, is that because stereotypes are associated with *social* wrongs (i.e., prejudice and discrimination), they were assumed to also be *factually* wrong (Jussim, et al., 2009). However, when stereotype accuracy is rigorously tested, most stereotypes are generally accurate. The accuracy of a stereotype can be assessed in two ways (Judd & Park, 1993; Jussim, et al, 2016). First, we can examine discrepancy scores between our perception of a group with the group's actual level on some characteristic. For example, we tend to stereotype Asian Americans as good at math, a perception that can be assessed for accuracy against Asian Americans actual math ability or achievement. Lower discrepancy scores indicate greater stereotype accuracy. Second, we can examine the correspondence of our beliefs about the difference between two groups with their actual difference. For example, we tend to stereotype women as more emotional than men. If our beliefs about the direction and size of that gender difference correspond with the actual difference, the stereotype is accurate on that criterion.

Lee Jussim and his colleagues reviewed studies that explicitly tested the accuracy of stereotypes or provided data that allowed stereotype accuracy to be tested (Jussim, Cain, Crawford, Harber, & Cohen, 2009). Their review found that most people accurately judged differences between racial- or ethnic-based in-groups and out-groups based on their racial stereotypes. Similar accuracy was found in people's use of their gender stereotypes to make judgments about the differences between males and females. Furthermore, when inaccuracies occurred, they took the form of exaggerations of true group differences no more or less than underestimations of group differences. In an update, Jussim and his researcher colleagues (2016) reviewed stereotype accuracy research published between 2009 and the present. Reviewing ten studies on gender stereotypes, they found that stereotypes were accurate in five, nearly accurate in one, and inaccurate in four. However, in those four studies, participants' gender stereotypes underestimated the true gender difference. After reviewing studies on many different kinds of stereotypes (e.g., age, personality, political), Jussim et al. (2016) concluded that, with the exception of national stereotypes, there is a high level of accuracy in stereotypes held about other groups. Other work suggests that stereotype accuracy may be more prevalent among minority, compared to majority, group individuals perhaps because people from minority groups have more to lose if they misjudge the actions of majority group people (Ryan, 1996). In that study, Black and White college students' perceptions of their own and the others' group were measured in the two ways described above. On the first measure of accuracy, the results showed that Blacks were more accurate in their beliefs about Whites compared to the accuracy of Whites' beliefs about Blacks. On the second measure, Blacks judgments about the proportion of Whites who possessed a stereotypic trait were more accurate than Whites' judgments about the proportion of Blacks who possessed stereotypic traits.

Stereotypes Confirm Themselves

A second explanation for the resistance of stereotypes to change is due to our tendency to confirm rather than disconfirm stereotypical expectations about other groups (Rothbart, Evans, & Fulero, 1979). Because much stereotypic thinking is automatic and conserves cognitive resources, we selectively attend to evidence that supports our stereotypes. By contrast, attending to evidence that our stereotypes are inaccurate or misapplied requires thoughtful and deliberate action, which few of us are motivated to do.

In a demonstration of the tendency for stereotypes to confirm themselves, researchers presented study participants with a photograph of a woman who was known (through pretesting) to be a typical-looking member of the category *older woman* (Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981). After viewing the photograph, participants were presented with statements about the woman that were either stereotype-consistent (e.g., "she likes to knit"), stereotype-inconsistent (e.g., "she is politically active"), or of mixed content (e.g., "she walks with a cane and runs her own business"). Using a computer to present the statements, the researchers measured how long it took participants to process each statement. After the computer portion of the study, participants' memory for the statements was also tested. The results showed statements that were consistent with participants' stereotype of older women were processed in less time than stereotype-inconsistent statements and were easily recalled. Stereotype-inconsistent statements were processed slowly, but were also remembered well by participants. Participants' ability to remember stereotype-inconsistent statements, however, may have been due to the extra time they spent studying the statements. Statements with mixed content (e.g., an old woman trait and a young woman trait) were processed slowly and not well remembered.

This research demonstrates that recognition and memory is better for information that is consistent with our stereotypes compared to information that is contradictory or only partly relevant to our stereotypes. Could this occur because people are aware of, and therefore act out, what *should* happen when their stereotypes are activated? Not according to recent research on implicit stereotyping (Banaji, Hardin, & Rothman, 1993). That is, when our stereotypes are activated without our knowledge—such as through the use of a subliminal prime—we still tend to recognize and recall stereotype-consistent rather than inconsistent information.

Stereotypes also resist disconfirmation because of the way we explain the behavior of people from other groups. John Seta and his colleagues (2003) had participants read about one of two targets: a minister who displayed stereotype-inconsistent (e.g., molested a teenager) or consistent behavior (e.g., volunteered to help a humanitarian organization). Then they read about and rated the behavior of the other target. When participants encountered the stereotype-inconsistent person first, they saw the normal minister's behavior as more due to his personality (e.g., he is a giving person by nature) than when they were not exposed to the deviant minister. This research, and the other studies that supported it, shows that when we encounter a person who does not fit our stereotype of that group—say, a gay male athlete—we reinforce our stereotype

by seeing more stereotype-consistent behavior in more typical group members. To sum up, our memory for and reasoning about other people's behavior is biased toward reaffirming stereotypical beliefs.

Stereotypes Diversify Through Subtypes

As we just learned, people who don't fit our stereotype can be disregarded as *exceptions to the rule* by focusing more on the behavior of typical, stereotype-confirming group members. But what do we do when we are chronically confronted with individuals who do not fit our stereotype for that group? As encounters with stereotype-inconsistent people increase, we realize that social categories may be too broad and inclusive, and hence are error prone. In those situations, **subtyping** helps preserve the stereotype of the general category while incorporating new social information by grouping stereotype-inconsistent individuals together into a new subcategory of the original category. For example, as we become more aware of women in business management roles, we will think of them as a subgroup of the general group *women* and modify our general stereotype to accommodate the differentness of the subgroup.

Patricia Devine and her colleague had White students list abilities and characteristics they associated with the group Blacks, as well as for several common subgrouping of Black individuals, including streetwise, ghetto, welfare, athlete, and businessman Blacks (Devine & Baker, 1991). Their interest was not only in the traits associated with each of these subtypes, but also with how distinctive (or non-overlapping) the subtypes were. Subtypes are likely to be most useful for accommodating atypical examples of a category if they are distinct from each other and the larger category. Their results indicated that the athlete and businessman subtypes of Blacks were the most clear and distinctive. That is, the traits associated with the athlete (physical qualities and athleticism) and businessman (well-dressed, ambitious, intelligent) subtypes differed from each other and, further, were not reflected in the overall stereotype of Blacks.

These findings suggest that subtypes not only help organize social information that is too diverse for one category to handle, they do so in a way that doesn't require alteration of the stereotype associated with that category. Because Black businessmen are organized independently of Blacks in general, the positive traits associated with Black businessmen are not incorporated into the (largely negative) stereotype of Blacks. With respect to perceiving the social world, then, subtyping is a mixed blessing. Although subtyping does extend and diversify a social category, essentially allowing more difference to exist within a social group, it also protects our general (superordinate) stereotypic beliefs from change by creating new and separate cognitive groups for individuals who do not fit the stereotype.

Review a bit: How do stereotypes perpetuate themselves?

Consequences of Social Categorization and Stereotyping for Perceiving Diversity

Although they are valuable information processing tools, social categories and stereotypes shape the diversity we perceive in our social surroundings. The very process of sorting people into categories constrains the possible ways that people can differ to group characteristics. Thus, the diversity we perceive in our surroundings is partially dependent on the complexity of our categorization systems. Simplistic, reductionistic categorizations contribute to a less diverse world than categorizations featuring an array of general and subordinate social groupings. They require fewer cognitive resources but may also lead to difficulties in our interactions with members of other groups. The process of categorization, therefore, must balance the need to distill an overwhelming amount of social information with the need to have an accurate picture of our social world and the people in it.

Still, diversity also exists *within* social categories. Even if we believed the world was composed of two categories of people (us and them), we could still find diversity in the members of the other group. As is explained below, we fail to recognize and appreciate this kind of social difference. Moreover, the true diversity within other social groups is dulled by stereotypical thinking. Operating in concert, social categorization and stereotyping have several specific implications for the social difference we perceive around us.

We Believe Groups Are More Different Than They Are

A natural consequence of categorizing objects into groups is to emphasize the distinctiveness of those groups. You will agree that a categorization system must maintain clear distinctions between categories to function efficiently. This cognitive tendency leads to a bias in our social thinking—we overestimate the difference between social groups. This bias has been documented in many studies that involve judgments of physical and social objects. In one study, children viewed pictures of three boys and three girls and assigned trait words to describe each picture (Doise, Deschamps, & Meyer, 1978). Half of the children (determined randomly) were told in advance that they would be rating pictures of boys and girls, thereby increasing the salience of that social category for those participants. Compared to the children who were *not* thinking about a boy/girl categorization, the participants who *were* described boys and girls as being more different. That is, fewer common traits were used to describe boys and girls in the children who were encouraged to categorize the photos by gender. This study shows that our perception of members of other social groups is influenced by the mere act of categorization. Applied to our own social contexts, this research suggests that some of the difference we perceive between ourselves and individuals from other social groups is spurious or manufactured, yet (as we will see in a later chapter) we behave toward those people as if those differences were genuine.

We Believe Individuals Within Groups Are More Similar Than They Are

A second consequence of thinking about people in terms of their group identification is that we tend to gloss over how different members of a social group actually are. Just as papers and notes placed into a file folder become more indistinguishable, social categorization causes us to overestimate the similarity of people in a social group. This bias is most evident when thinking about *out*-groups, groups of which we are not a member. Termed the **out-group homogeneity effect**, it means we tend to think that they (members of an out-group) are all alike, but we (members of our own group, or *in*-group) are a collective of relatively unique individuals.

There are good explanations for why we attribute more similarity to members of out-groups than is warranted. First, we categorize individuals based on a distinctive or salient characteristic. If people share a distinctive feature, we assume that they also share other qualities (Taylor et al., 1978). Secondly, we interact more with in-group, compared to out-group, members, providing us with more frequent reminders about the differences among individuals in our own group. As a result of the out-group homogeneity effect combined with our stereotype of that group, we tend to view the members of an out-group as all alike and in negative terms. These perceptions are fertile ground for prejudicial reactions such as resentment, fear, and avoidance.

In an examination of the out-group homogeneity effect, Bernadette Park and her colleagues recruited business and engineering majors to list as many types or kinds of business and engineering majors as they could (Park, Ryan, & Judd, 1992). In other words, they looked at how diverse (or homogenous) people saw their own group and a relevant out-group by measuring the subtypes that they generated for each. As they expected, people generated more subgroups for their in-group than the out-group. When this difference was held constant, the out-group homogeneity effect disappeared. In other words, the tendency to see out-group individuals as more homogenous than we see our own group members is driven by the number of subcategories we have at our disposal to know them. In another study, Park et al. (1992) manipulated the use of subgroups by having some participants sort out-group members into subgroups before measuring their perceptions of out-group individuals. The participants who were forced to sort out-group members into a variety of subcategories rated them as more variable than participants who did not do the sorting exercise.

This research discussed above shows that we have more complex cognitive structures (involving more subgroupings or types) for in-groups than we do for out-groups. One implication of this relative ignorance about who *they* are is that we might be highly influenced by evaluative information about out-group individuals. Researchers tested this idea by having participants evaluate a (bogus) application to law school under the pretext that researchers were interested in which information was most diagnostic of law school performance (Linville & Jones, 1980). The application, however, was manipulated to be from a Black or White applicant, and to have either weak or strong credentials. The participants (who were White) who reviewed the strong application rated the Black applicant as more intelligent, motivated, and likable