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Prejudice

A white policeman yelled, "Hey boy! Come here!" Somewhat bothered, I retorted: "I'm no boy!" He then rushed at me, inflamed, and stood towering over me, snorting, "What d'ja say, boy?" Quickly he frisked me and demanded, "What's your name, boy?" Frightened, I replied, "Dr. Poussaint, I'm a physician." He angrily chucked and hissed, "What's your first name, boy?" When I hesitated he assumed a threatening stance and clenched his fists. As my heart palpitated, I muttered in profound humiliation, "Alvin." He continued his psychological brutality, bellowing, "Alvin, the next time I call you, you come right away, you hear? You hear?" I hesitated. "You hear me, boy?"^1

Hollywood would have had the hero lash out at his oppressor and emerge victorious. But in the real world, Dr. Poussaint simply slunk away, humiliated—or, in his own words, "psychologically castrated." The feeling of helplessness and powerlessness that is the
harvest of the oppressed almost inevitably leads to a diminution of self-esteem that begins even in early childhood. Many years ago, Kenneth and Mamie Clark demonstrated that black children, some of whom were only 3 years old, were already convinced that being black was not a good thing; they rejected black dolls, feeling that white dolls were prettier and generally superior. This experiment suggests that educational facilities that are "separate but equal" are never equal since the separation itself implies to the minority children that they are being segregated because there is something wrong with them. Indeed, this experiment was specifically cited in the landmark Supreme Court decision (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954) that declared segregated schools to be unconstitutional.

This diminution of self-esteem is not limited to blacks; it affects other oppressed groups as well. In a study similar to the Clark and Clark experiment, Philip Goldberg demonstrated that women have been taught to consider themselves the intellectual inferiors of men. In his experiment, Goldberg asked a number of female college students to read scholarly articles and to evaluate them in terms of their competence, style, and so on. For some students, specific articles were signed by male authors (e.g., John T. McKay); and for others, the same articles were signed by female authors (e.g., Joan T. McKay). The female students rated the articles much higher if they were "written" by a male author than if they were "written" by a female author. In other words, these women had "learned their place"; they regarded the output of other women as necessarily inferior to that of men, just as the black youngsters learned to regard black dolls as inferior to white dolls. This is the legacy of a prejudiced society.

But things do change. After all, the Clark and Clark experiment was conducted in the 1940s; the Goldberg experiment was conducted in the 1960s. Significant changes have taken place in American society since then. For example, the number of blatant acts of overt prejudice and discrimination has decreased sharply, legislation on affirmative action has opened the door to greater opportunities for women and minorities, and the media are beginning to increase our exposure to realistic images of women and minorities doing important work in positions of power and influence. As one might expect, these changes are reflected in a gradual increase
in self-esteem of the members of these groups. For example, in recent years, scientific research indicates that African-American children have become more content with black dolls than they were in 1947.1 Moreover, as Janet Swim and her colleagues3 have shown, people no longer discriminate against a piece of writing simply because it is attributed to a woman.

While this progress is important and encouraging, it would be a mistake to conclude that prejudice and discrimination have ceased to be serious problems in our country. Even though most overt manifestations of prejudice tend to be both less frequent and less flagrant than they used to be, prejudice continues to exact a heavy toll on its victims. Every year we must still bear witness to numerous hate crimes, the burning of African-American churches,4 and countless miscellaneous acts of prejudice-induced violence, as well as lesser outrages—like the futility of trying to get a cab to stop for you late at night in an American metropolis if you happen to be a black man. What is prejudice? How does it come about? How can it be reduced?

Stereotypes and Prejudice

Social psychologists have defined prejudice in a variety of ways. Technically, there are positive and negative prejudices; I can be prejudiced against modern artists or prejudiced in favor of modern artists. This means that, before I am introduced to Sam Smear (who I've been told is a modern artist), I will be inclined to like or dislike him—and I will be inclined to expect to see certain characteristics in him. Thus, if I associate the concept modern artist with effeminate behavior, I would be filled with shock and disbelief if Sam Smear were to swagger through the door looking as though he could play middle linebacker for the Green Bay Packers. If I associate the concept of modern artist with the radical end of the political spectrum, I would be astonished if Sam Smear were wearing a Newt Gingrich political button.

In this chapter, I will not be discussing situations that concern prejudice “in favor” of people; accordingly, my working definition of prejudice will be limited to negative attitudes. I will define prejudice as a hostile or negative attitude toward a distinguishable group based
on generalizations derived from faulty or incomplete information. For example, when we say an individual is prejudiced against blacks, we mean he or she is oriented toward behaving with hostility toward blacks; the person feels that, with perhaps one or two exceptions, all blacks are pretty much the same. The characteristics he or she assigns to blacks are either totally inaccurate or, at best, based on a germ of truth the person zealously applies to the group as a whole.

In his classic book *The Nature of Prejudice*, Gordon Allport reported the following dialogue:

*Mr. X:* The trouble with the Jews is that they only take care of their own group.

*Mr. Y:* But the record of the Community Chest campaign shows that they gave more generously, in proportion to their numbers, to the general charities of the community, than did non-Jews.

*Mr. X:* That shows they are always trying to buy favor and intrude into Christian affairs. They think of nothing but money; that is why there are so many Jewish bankers.

*Mr. Y:* But a recent study shows that the percentage of Jews in the banking business is negligible, far smaller than the percentage of non-Jews.

*Mr. X:* That's just it; they don't go in for respectable business; they are only in the movie business or run night clubs.9

This dialogue illustrates the insidious nature of prejudice far better than a mountain of definitions. In effect, the prejudiced Mr. X is saying, "Don't trouble me with facts; my mind is made up." He makes no attempt to dispute the data presented by Mr. Y. He either distorts the facts in order to make them support his hatred of Jews or he bounces off them, undaunted, to a new area of attack. A deeply prejudiced person is virtually immune to information at variance with his or her cherished stereotypes. As famed jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., once said, "Trying to educate a bigot is like shining light into the pupil of an eye—it constricts."

It is reasonably safe to assume that all of us have some degree of prejudice—whether it is against an ethnic, national, or racial group,
against people with different sexual preferences, against specific geographical areas as places to live, or against certain kinds of food. Let's take food as an example: In this culture, most people do not eat insects. Suppose someone (like Mr. Y) were to tell you that caterpillars or earwigs were a great source of protein and, when carefully prepared, extremely tasty. Would you rush home and fry up a batch? Probably not. Like Mr. X, you would probably find some other reason for your prejudice, such as the fact that most insects are ugly. After all, in this culture, we eat only aesthetically beautiful creatures—like lobsters!

Gordon Allport wrote his book in 1954; the dialogue between Mr. X and Mr. Y might seem somewhat dated to the modern reader. Do people really think that way? Is there anyone so simple-minded as to believe that old, inaccurate stereotype about Jewish bankers? Perhaps not. But some 20 years after Allport's dialogue, a similar statement was made—not by an ordinary citizen but by the person who, at that time, was the single most powerful military officer in the United States. General George S. Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a public speech referring to "Jewish influence in Congress," said, "it is so strong you wouldn't believe, now... They own, you know, the banks in this country, the newspapers. Just look at where the Jewish money is." And, in 1997 when the Nixon Watergate tapes were released, we had the privilege of overhearing a conversation between Nixon and H. R. Haldeman, in which our former president expressed a similar set of negative feelings about Jews.

The kind of generalization of characteristics or motives to a group of people expressed by General Brown and President Nixon is called stereotyping. To stereotype is to assign identical characteristics to any person in a group, regardless of the actual variation among members of that group. Thus, to believe blacks have a natural sense of rhythm, or Jews are materialistic, is to assume that virtually all blacks are rhythmic or that virtually all Jews go around collecting possessions. We learn to assign identical characteristics at a very young age. In one study, fifth-grade and sixth-grade children were asked to rate their classmates in terms of a number of characteristics: popularity, leadership, fairness, and the like. The children of upper-class families were rated more positively than the children of lower-class families on every desirable quality. It seems
the youngsters were unable to judge their classmates on an individual basis; instead, they had stereotyped them according to their social class.

As we have seen in Chapter 4, stereotyping is not necessarily an intentional act of abuse; it is frequently merely a way we humans have of simplifying our view of the world, and we all do it. Most of us have a specific picture in mind when we hear the words “New York cab driver” or “Italian barber” or “high-school cheerleader.” To the extent that the stereotype is based on experience and is at all accurate, it can be an adaptive, shorthand way of dealing with complex events. On the other hand, if the stereotype blinds us to individual differences within a class of people, it is maladaptive and potentially dangerous.

For example, many white people in our society tend to associate black people with violent behavior. How might this stereotype lead to inequitable and oppressive actions against blacks? Charles Bond and his colleagues addressed this issue in a study comparing the treatment of black versus white patients in a psychiatric hospital run by an all-white staff.11 In their research, they looked at the two most common methods staff members used to handle incidents of violent behavior by patients: excluding the individual in a “time-out” room or restraining the individual in a straitjacket, followed by the administration of a sedative drug. An examination of hospital records over an 85-day period revealed that the harsher method—physical restraint and sedation—was used against black patients nearly four times as often as against white patients, despite the fact that there was virtually no difference in the number of violent incidents committed by blacks and whites. Moreover, this discriminatory treatment occurred even though the black patients, on average, had been diagnosed as less violent than the white patients when they were first admitted to the hospital. Over time, however, the staff came to treat black and white patients equally, with the use of restraint against blacks declining dramatically after the first month of residence in the hospital. Evidently, prejudice against blacks as a group was in operation when black patients were relative newcomers to the hospital; then, as familiarity between white staff members and a particular black patient increased, prejudiced behavior against that individual diminished. Thus, this study suggests that the familiarity that comes with prolonged interracial contact can
potentially reduce unfair stereotyping and pave the way for recognition of individual characteristics. But, as we shall see later in this chapter, contact between the races, in itself, is usually insufficient to break down well-entrenched stereotypes and bigotry.

To illustrate further the insidious effects of racial or ethnic stereotypes, consider the case of minority-group members who are convicted of crimes and sent to prison. When they come up for parole, will their racial or ethnic status outweigh other information—such as life circumstances or good behavior while in prison—used to make a parole decision? Research indicates that such a cognitive bias exists. Galen Bodenhausen and Robert Wyer\(^\text{12}\) asked college students to read fictionalized files on prisoners who were up for parole and to use the information contained in the files to make a parole decision. Sometimes the crimes “fit” the offenders—for example, when a Latino, Carlos Ramirez, committed assault and battery or when an upper-class Anglo-Saxon, Ashley Chamberlaine, committed embezzlement. In other instances, the crimes were inconsistent with the stereotypes. When prisoners’ crimes were consistent with subjects’ stereotypes, the students tended to ignore other relevant information—such as good behavior in prison—and were harsher in their recommendations for parole. Thus, when persons behave in a way that conforms to our stereotypes, we tend to blind ourselves to information that provides clues about why they really behaved as they did. Instead, we assume that it must be something about them, not their life circumstances, that caused their behaviors.*

How many of Bodenhausen and Wyer’s subjects had ever been assaulted by a Latino or lost money to an Anglo-Saxon embezzler? Few if any—for most stereotypes are based not on valid experience but rather on hearsay or images concocted by the mass media or generated within our heads as ways of justifying our own prejudices.

*I hasten to add that these data are derived from college students in a hypothetical situation; accordingly, taken by themselves, they do not demonstrate that parole officers behave the same way. It is likely that parole officers are more experienced and more sophisticated than the subjects in this experiment. What the experiment does demonstrate is a cognitive bias that exists even in intelligent, well-meaning people—and, unless we are vigilant, any of us might make the same kind of error.
and cruelty. Like the self-fulfilling prophecy discussed earlier in this book, it is helpful to think of blacks or Latinos as stupid or dangerous if it justifies depriving them of an education or denying them parole, and it is helpful to think of women as being biologically predisposed toward domestic drudgery if a male-dominated society wants to keep them tied to a vacuum cleaner. Likewise, it is useful to perceive individuals from the lower classes as being unambitious, stupid, and prone to criminal behavior if we want to pay them as little as possible for doing menial work or keep them out of our neighborhoods. In such cases, stereotyping is, indeed, abusive.

In the early 1990s, President Clinton’s attempt to remove the restrictions against homosexuals serving in the military was met with sturdy opposition. Ancient stereotypes were invoked as some military leaders and politicians predicted dire consequences and a lowering of morale if these citizens were allowed to wear a uniform. The cosmic joke, of course, is that, over the years, thousands of gays and lesbians have been quietly and skillfully performing their patriotic duty in the armed forces without causing trouble.

The quality of the stereotype is not always insulting per se. But it should be clear that stereotyping is harmful to the target, even if the stereotype seems to be neutral or even positive. For example, it is not necessarily negative to attribute “ambitiousness” to Jews, “a natural sense of rhythm” to blacks, or an “artistic temperament” to homosexuals. But these generalizations are abusive, if only because they rob the person of the right to be perceived and treated as an individual with his or her own individual traits, whether positive or negative.

Moreover, in most cases, stereotyping is not benign; it is directly insulting and can have a debilitating effect on the members of the targeted group. Let us highlight one striking example: In the 1990s, Claude Steele noted a disturbing crisis in the educational welfare of African-American students. Put simply, among college students, there is an academic performance gap between blacks and whites; moreover, the dropout rate for blacks is nearly twice that of whites. While there are many possible historical and societal explanations for this phenomenon, Steele feels that they fall short; they cannot account for the fact that the gap in school achievement between blacks and whites is as great for students with high preparation (as measured by earlier grades) as it is for those with low
preparation. In other words, something seems to be happening that keeps even very bright, and well-prepared black students from performing as well as white students with the same level of ability and preparation.

In researching this problem, Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson\textsuperscript{15} reasoned that a major contributing factor might involve apprehensiveness among black students (in highly evaluative educational contexts) about confirming the existing negative stereotype of "intellectual inferiority." Steele and Aronson dubbed this apprehension the \textit{stereotype threat}. They reasoned that this extra burden of apprehensiveness, in turn, might actually interfere with students' ability to perform well on evaluative tasks like tests. In a remarkable experiment, Steele and Aronson administered a difficult verbal test (the Graduate Record Examination), individually to black and white Stanford University students. Half of the students were led to believe that the investigator was interested in measuring their intellectual ability; the other half were led to believe that the investigator was merely testing the test—and that it had nothing to do with their actual ability.

The results were clear: White students performed equally well, regardless of whether or not they believed the test was being used as a diagnostic tool. Black students who believed the test was non-diagnostic of their abilities performed as well as white students; in contrast, those who were led to believe that the test was measuring their abilities performed more poorly than white students. Such is the power of stereotypes.

\textit{Stereotypes and Attributions}

Stereotyping is a special form of attribution. As we saw in Chapter 4, when an event occurs, we try to attribute a cause to that event. Specifically, if a person performs an action, observers will make inferences about what caused that behavior. For example, if the tight end on your favorite football team drops an easy pass, there are many possible explanations: Perhaps the sun got in his eyes; maybe he was distracted by worry over the ill health of his child; maybe he dropped the ball on purpose because he bet on the other team;
maybe he "heard footsteps" and got scared; or perhaps he just happens to be an untalented player. Note that each of these above attributions about the cause of the tight end's bobble has a very different set of ramifications. You would feel differently about him if he were worried about his child's illness than if he had bet on the other team.

As you know, this need to find a cause for another person's behavior is part of the human tendency to go beyond the information given. It is often functional. For example, suppose you have just moved into a strange town where you have no friends and you are feeling very lonely. There is a knock on the door; it is Joe, a neighbor, who shakes your hand and welcomes you to the neighborhood. You invite him in. He stays for about 20 minutes, during which time you and he have an interesting conversation. You feel really good about the possibility of having discovered a new friend. As he gets up to leave, he says, "Oh, by the way, if you ever need some insurance, I happen to be in the business and I'd be happy to discuss it with you," and he leaves his card. Is he your friend who happens to be selling insurance, or is he pretending to be your friend in order to sell you insurance? It is important to know because you must decide whether or not to pursue a relationship with him. To repeat, in making attributions, the individual must go beyond the information given. We do not know why the tight end dropped the pass; we do not know Joe's motivation for friendly behavior. We are guessing. Thus, the attributer's causal interpretations may be accurate or erroneous, functional or dysfunctional.

In an ambiguous situation, people tend to make attributions consistent with their beliefs or prejudices. Thomas Pettigrew has dubbed this the ultimate attribution error.16 If Mr. Bigot sees a well-dressed white Anglo-Saxon Protestant sitting on a park bench sunning himself at three o'clock on a Wednesday afternoon, he thinks nothing of it. If he sees a well-dressed black man doing the same thing, he is liable to leap to the conclusion that the man is unemployed—and Mr. Bigot is apt to become infuriated because he assumes his own hard-earned money is being taxed to pay that shiftless, good-for-nothing enough in welfare subsidies to keep him in fancy clothes. If Mr. Bigot passes Mr. Anglo's house and notices that a trash can is overturned and garbage is strewn about, he is apt to conclude that a stray dog has been searching for food. If he
passes Mr. Garcia's house and notices the same thing, he is inclined to become annoyed and to assert that "those people live like pigs." Not only does prejudice influence his attributions and conclusions, his erroneous conclusions justify and intensify his negative feelings. Thus, the entire attribution process can spiral. Prejudice causes particular kinds of negative attributions or stereotypes that can, in turn, intensify the prejudice.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Gender Stereotypes.} A particularly interesting manifestation of stereotyping takes place in the perception of gender differences. Kay Deaux and her associates have shown that it is almost universal for women to be seen as more nurturant and less assertive than men. It is possible that this perception may be entirely role related—that is, traditionally women have been assigned the role of homemaker and thus, may be seen as more nurturant.\textsuperscript{18} At the other end of the continuum, evolutionary social psychologists\textsuperscript{19} suggest that female behavior and male behavior differ in precisely those domains in which the sexes have faced different adaptive problems. From a Darwinian perspective, there are powerful biological reasons why women might have evolved as more nurturant than men. For example, among our ancient ancestors, for anatomical reasons, women were always the early care-givers of infants; those women who were not nurturant were less likely to have had many babies who survived.

Although there is no clear way of determining whether or not caregiving is more likely to be part of a woman's genetic nature than a man's, it does turn out that the cultural stereotype is not far from reality. As Alice Eagly, Wendy Wood, and Janet Swim\textsuperscript{20} have shown, compared to men, women do tend to manifest behaviors that can best be described as more socially sensitive, friendlier, and more concerned with the welfare of others, while men tend to behave in ways that are more dominant, controlling, and independent. It goes without saying that there is a great deal of overlap between men and women on these characteristics; all of us have been around some men who are socially sensitive and some women who are not. And that's precisely the issue. Whether the reality underlying the stereotype is social or biological, the application of the stereotype to all women or all men deprives the individual of her and his right to be treated as an individual with specific characteristics and talents.
Needless to say, gender stereotyping often does depart from reality and can therefore be particularly harmful. For example, in an experiment performed in 1974 by Shirley Feldman-Summers and Sara Kiesler, when confronted with a successful female physician, male college students perceived her as being less competent than a successful male physician. In a similar study, Kay Deaux and Tim Emsweiler found that, if the sexual stereotype is strong enough, even members of the stereotyped group tend to buy it. Specifically, male and female students were shown a successful performance on a complex task by a fellow student and were asked how it came about. When it was a man who succeeded, both male and female students attributed his achievement to his ability; when it was a woman who succeeded, students of both genders concluded that her achievement was largely a matter of luck.

But this research was done a quarter of a century ago. As we have noted, American society has undergone many changes since then. Have these changes impacted the stereotypes held of women? Not as much as one might imagine. In 1996, Janet Swim and Lawrence Sanna did a careful analysis of over 50 rather recent experiments on this topic and discovered that the results are remarkably consistent with those of the earlier experiments. Swim and Sanna found that, although the gender effects are not large, they are remarkably consistent: If a man was successful on a given task, observers tended to attribute his success to ability; if a woman was successful on that same task, observers tended to attribute her success to hard work. If a man failed on a given task, observers tended to attribute his failure either to bad luck or to lower effort; if a woman failed, observers felt the task was simply too hard for her ability level.

Research has also shown that young girls have a tendency to downplay their own abilities. John Nicholls found that, while fourth-grade boys attributed their own successful outcomes on a difficult intellectual task to their abilities, girls tended to derogate their own successful performances. Moreover, this experiment showed that while boys had learned to protect their egos by attributing their own failures to bad luck, girls took more of the blame for failures on themselves. In a more recent experiment, Deborah Stipek and Heidi Gralinski showed that the tendency girls have to downplay their own abilities may be most prevalent in
traditionally male domains—like math. Specifically Stipek and Galinski found that junior high-school girls attributed their success on a math exam to luck, while boys attributed their success to ability. Girls also showed less pride than boys following success on a math exam.

Where do these self-defeating beliefs come from? In general, they are almost certainly influenced by the prevailing attitudes of our society—but they are most powerfully influenced by the attitudes of the most important people in the young girl’s life: her parents. In one study, Janis Jacobs and Jacquelynne Eccles explored the influence of mothers’ gender stereotypic beliefs on the way these same mothers perceived the abilities of their 11- and 12-year-old sons and daughters. Jacobs and Eccles then looked further to see what impact this might have on the children’s perceptions of their own abilities. Those mothers who held the strongest stereotypic gender beliefs also believed that their own daughters had relatively low math ability and that their sons had relatively high math ability. Those mothers who did not hold generally stereotypic beliefs did not see their daughters as less able in math than their sons. These beliefs, in turn, had an impact on the beliefs of their children. The daughters of women with strong gender stereotypes believed that they did not have much math ability. The daughters of women who did not hold strong gender stereotypes showed no such self-defeating belief.

This phenomenon of self-attribution may have some interesting ramifications. Suppose a male tennis player loses the first set in a best-of-three-sets match by the score of 6–2. What does he conclude? Probably that he didn’t try hard enough or that he was unlucky—after all, his opponent did have that incredible string of lucky shots. Now suppose a female tennis player loses the first set. What does she conclude? Given Nicholls’s data, she might think she is not as skilled a player as her opponent—after all, she did lose 6–2. Here comes the interesting part: The attributions players make about their failure in the first set may, in part, determine their success in subsequent sets. That is, men may try harder to come from behind and win the next two sets and the match. However, women may give up, thus losing the second set and the match. This is, in fact, what seems to happen. In a systematic investigation of this phenomenon, the outcomes of 19,300 tennis matches were
examined. In those matches where a player lost the first set, men were more likely than women to come back and win the second and third sets. Women were more likely to lose a match in straight sets. This phenomenon occurs even among professional tennis players—who surely regard themselves as talented and able.

Marlene Turner and Anthony Pratkanis carried the notion of debilitating self-attributions a step further by demonstrating that negative self-attributions generated by the manner in which women are selected for a job, can impede their actual performance on the job. Specifically, Turner & Pratkanis were interested in investigating some possible unfortunate side effects of affirmative action programs. As you know, affirmative action programs have been generally beneficial inasmuch as they created employment opportunities for talented women who had been previously overlooked when applying for these positions. Unfortunately, there can be a downside as well: Some of these programs unintentionally stigmatized talented women by creating the illusion that they were selected primarily because of their gender rather than their talent. What effect does this have on the women involved? In a well-controlled experiment, Turner and Pratkanis led some women to believe that they were selected for a job because of their gender, while others were given a difficult test and were then told they were selected for that job on the basis of their meritorious performance on the test. Those women who were told they were selected because of their gender (not their merit) derogated their own abilities. In addition, they tended to engage in self-handicapping behaviors; specifically, when the task required a great deal of effort, the women who believed they were preferentially selected simply did not try as hard as the women who believed they were selected on the basis of merit.

**Blaming the Victim**

It is not always easy for people who have never experienced prejudice to understand fully what it is like to be a target of prejudice. For relatively secure members of the dominant majority, empathy does not come easily. They may sympathize and wish that it weren't so, but frequently a hint of self-righteousness may nevertheless
creep into their attitudes, producing a tendency to lay the blame on the victim. This may take the form of the “well-deserved reputation.” It goes something like this: “If the Jews have been victimized throughout their history, they must have been doing something wrong” or “If she got raped, she must have been doing something provocative” or, “If those people [African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, homosexuals] don’t want to get into trouble, why don’t they just . . .” (stay out of the headlines, keep their mouths shut, don’t go where they’re not wanted, or whatever). Such a suggestion constitutes a demand that the out-group conform to demands more stringent than those set for the majority.

Ironically, this tendency to blame victims for their victimization, attributing their predicaments to their own personalities and disabilities, is often motivated by a desire to see the world as a just place. As Melvin Lerner and his colleagues have shown, people tend to assign personal responsibility for any inequitable outcome that is otherwise difficult to explain. For example, if two people work equally hard on the same task and, by a flip of a coin, one receives a sizable reward and the other receives nothing, observers show a strong tendency to rate the unlucky person as having worked less hard. Similarly, negative attitudes toward the poor—including blaming them for their own plight—are more prevalent among individuals who display a comparatively strong belief in a just world. Apparently, we find it frightening to think about living in a world where people, through no fault of their own, can be deprived of what they deserve or need, be it equal pay for equal work or the basic necessities of life. By the same token, if 6 million Jews are exterminated for no apparent reason, it is somehow comforting to believe they might have done something to warrant such treatment.*

Further understanding of the phenomenon of victim blaming comes from Baruch Fischhoff’s work on the hindsight bias, a phe-

*The astute reader may have noticed that this is a milder form of our tendency to derogate a person we have victimized. In Chapters 5 and 6, we saw that, when one person hurts another, the aggressor tends to derogate the target, turn the victim into a nonperson, and hurt that other person again. Now we see that, if one person notices that another person has gotten the short end of the stick, he or she somehow feels the victim must have done something to deserve it.
nomenon we discussed in Chapters 1 and 4. As you may recall, re-
search reveals that most of us are terrific Monday-morning quar-
terbacks: After we know the outcome of an event, the complex 
circumstances surrounding its occurrence suddenly seem crystal 
clear; it seems as if we knew it all along, and if asked to predict the 
outcome, we could have done so without difficulty. But this is an il-
lusion.

In an interesting set of experiments, Ronnie Janoff-Bulman 
and her co-workers demonstrated the power of the hindsight bias 
in increasing subjects’ beliefs that rape victims were responsible for 
their own victimization.32 They had their subjects read accounts of 
a date between a man and a woman who had met earlier in a col-
lege class. The accounts were identical except for the concluding 
sentence, which for half of the subjects read, “The next thing I 
knew, he raped me,” but for the other half read, “The next thing I 
knew, he took me home.” After being advised to disregard their 
knowledge of the actual outcome of the date, subjects were then 
asked to predict the likelihood of several possible outcomes, in-
cluding the one they had read. Even though the events leading up 
to the outcome were exactly the same in both versions of the story, 
subjects who read the rape outcome were more likely to predict that 
the rape would occur than were those who read the “take home” 
outcome. What’s more, subjects exposed to the rape scenario 
tended to blame the woman’s behavior—such as letting the man 
ki ss her—for the negative outcome of the date. The implications of 
these findings are unsettling. To understand and empathize with a 
victim’s plight, we must be able to reconstruct events leading up to 
the victimization from the victim’s point of view. But, as we have 
seen, it is all too easy to forget that—unlike us—victims did not 
have the benefit of hindsight to guide their behavior.

Prejudice and Science

Scientists are trained to be objective and fair-minded. But even 
they can be influenced by the prevailing atmosphere. Louis Agas-
sz, one of the great U.S. biologists of the 19th century, argued that 
God had created blacks and whites as separate species.33 In a simi-
lar vein, in 1925, Karl Pearson, a distinguished British scientist and
mathematician, concluded his study of ethnic differences by stating: "Taken on the average and regarding both sexes, this alien Jewish population is somewhat inferior physically and mentally to the native [British] population." On the basis of his findings, Pearson argued against allowing the immigration of Eastern European Jews into Great Britain. Most contemporary scientists would demand more valid arguments than those put forward by Agassiz and Pearson. For example, the vast majority of psychologists are sophisticated enough to view most standard IQ tests as biased instruments that unintentionally discriminate in favor of white, middle-class suburbanites by stating examples in terms and phrases more familiar to children reared in the suburbs than to children reared in the ghetto or on the farm. Thus, before we conclude it was stupidity that caused a black person, a Latino, or the resident of a rural community to do poorly on an IQ test, we demand to know whether or not the IQ test was culture-free.

But such sophistication does not guarantee immunity. The traps that well-intentioned people can fall into in a prejudiced society can be very subtle. Let me offer a personal example involving sexism. In the first edition of this book, while discussing individual differences in persuasibility, I made the point that women seem to be more persuadable than men. This statement was based on an experiment conducted in the late 1950s by Irving Janis and Peter Field. A close inspection of this experiment, however, suggests that it was weighted unintentionally against women in much the same way IQ tests are weighted against rural and ghetto residents. The topics of the persuasive arguments included civil defense, cancer research, von Hindenburg, and so on—topics the culture had trained men and boys to take a greater interest in than women and girls, even more so in the 1950s than today. Thus, the results may simply indicate that people are more persuadable on topics they don’t care about or don’t know about. Indeed, these speculations were confirmed by a subsequent series of experiments by Frank Sistrunk and John McDavid. In their studies, they used a variety of topics, some of typically greater interest to men and others applying more to the traditional interests and expertise of women. Their results were clear: While women were more persuadable on the masculine-oriented topics, men were more persuadable on the topics that traditionally have appealed to women. Of course, the
mere fact that women and men are raised not to be interested in certain topics is itself an unfortunate consequence of sex discrimination.

In 1970, when I was writing the first edition of this book, I was unaware of the possible weakness in the experiment by Janis and Field until it was called to my attention (gently but firmly) by a friend who happens to be both a feminist and a social psychologist. The lesson to be gained from this example is clear: When we are reared in a prejudiced society, we often accept those prejudices uncritically. It is easy to believe women are gullible because that is the stereotype held by the society. Thus, we tend not to look at supporting scientific data critically, and without realizing it, we use the data as scientific support for our own prejudice.

Some Subtle Effects of Prejudice

The fact that we live in a society with racist and sexist overtones can have subtle but important effects on the behavior of the dominant majority, as well as on the behavior of women and minority-group members. A good deal of this behavior occurs without awareness. In an important set of experiments, Carl Word and his associates first trained white Princeton students to interview applicants for a job. Their observations revealed huge differences in the way interviewers interacted with black and white applicants. When the applicant was black, the interviewer unwittingly sat slightly farther away, made more speech errors, and terminated the interview 25 percent sooner than when the applicant was white. Do you suppose this had an effect on the performance of the job applicants? In a second experiment, Word and his colleagues trained their interviewers to treat white students in the same manner that the interviewers had treated either the white applicants or the black applicants in the previous experiment. The experimenters videotaped the students being interviewed. Independent judges rated those who had been treated like the black applicants as being more nervous and less effective than those treated like the white applicants. The results of this experiment lead us to suspect strongly that when women or minority-group members are being interviewed by a white Anglo-Saxon male, their performance may suffer, not be-
cause there is anything wrong with them but because, without necessarily intending it, the interviewer is likely to behave in a way that makes them uncomfortable.

Even if we never find ourselves in the position of the interviewers in the study above, we interact with people every day—men, women, young people, old people, blacks, whites, Asians, Latinos, and so on. And our preconceptions about what they're like often influence our behaviors in such a way as to elicit from them the very characteristics and behaviors we expected in the first place. I have referred to the phenomenon elsewhere as the self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, imagine that you and I had never met, but a mutual acquaintance had warned me that you are a cold, aloof, reserved person. When we finally meet, I would likely keep my distance and remain cool and aloof. Suppose that, in reality, you are generally warm and outgoing. My behavior would not afford you the opportunity to show me what a warm, outgoing person you really are. In response to my behavior, you would probably keep your distance from me, and my expectation that you're less than a warm, friendly person would have been confirmed.

This is but one of many situations in which “belief creates reality.”38 When we hold erroneous beliefs or stereotypes about other people, our responses to them often cause them to behave in ways that validate these erroneous beliefs. As sociologist Robert Merton wrote, this self-fulfilling prophecy generates and perpetuates a “reign of error.”39 If people hold stereotypes of women as passive and dependent, or of blacks as lazy and stupid, they may treat them as such and inadvertently create the very behaviors or characteristics associated with these stereotypes. “See,” they say to themselves, “I was right all along about those people.”

Of course, not all of us hold rigid stereotypes about members of other groups. We often embrace social beliefs only tentatively and work to determine whether or not they are accurate. Frequently we use social interactions to test our hypotheses about what other people are like. But there are pitfalls inherent in our hypothesis-testing strategies. That is, the strategies we use to test our hypotheses about other people can produce confirming evidence, even when the hypotheses themselves are incorrect. Recall (from Chapter 4) the experiments by Mark Snyder and William Swann. In one of those experiments, when individuals were asked to test the hypothesis that a
person might fit the profile of an extrovert, they chose "extroverted" questions (e.g., "What would you do if you wanted to liven things up at a party?"). When they were asked to test the hypothesis that the person might fit the profile of an introvert, they chose "introverted" questions (e.g., "What factors make it hard for you to really open up to people?"). As you know, Snyder and Swann found that the nature of the question helps determine the response. That is, people who were neither particularly extroverted nor introverted will look extroverted when they answer the first type of question and will look introverted when they answer the second type of question.

Taken together, results of the above studies make it easy to understand why stereotypes are resistant to change. When we hold beliefs about others, the self-fulfilling prophecy ensures that we create a social reality in line with our expectations. And even when we're open-minded enough to test the accuracy of our beliefs, we often unknowingly use "testing" strategies that confirm those beliefs—even when the beliefs are erroneous.

Despite their best efforts to be open-minded, many otherwise decent people are still capable of subtle acts of prejudice. Indeed, many investigators believe that indirect—and perhaps more insidious—forms of prejudice have largely replaced the blatant kinds of racial bigotry expressed by many white Americans in the past. Today, most people probably think of themselves as unprejudiced, even though they may continue to discriminate against minority-group members in less obvious ways.

The kind of subtle racism I'm describing is exactly what David Frey and Samuel Gaertner discovered when they looked at the helping behavior of whites toward a black individual. In their study, they found that white subjects were just as willing to help a black student as a white student, but only when the person needing help had demonstrated sufficient effort. But when led to believe that the student had not worked hard enough at the task, subjects were more likely to refuse a black student's request for help than a white student's. These findings suggest that subtle racism tends to emerge when it can be easily rationalized: It would be hard to justify refusing to help a minority person whose need for help stemmed from circumstances beyond his or her control—without feeling and looking like a bigot. But when withholding help seems
more reasonable—such as when the person asking for help is “lazy”—people can continue to act in prejudiced ways while protecting an image of themselves as unprejudiced.

In a related experiment, Patricia Devine demonstrated that all of us are aware of the commonly held stereotypes associated with minorities. When prejudiced people encounter a minority person, the common stereotypes enter their minds and, on some level, impact the way they relate to that person. Devine found that, under ordinary circumstances, those of us who are relatively unprejudiced can exert conscious vigilance that serves to prevent these stereotypes from popping into our minds and affecting our beliefs and behavior. But she also found that, under extraordinary circumstances (in which conscious control is minimized), even those of us who are relatively unprejudiced slip into automatic prejudice and end up thinking or behaving in accord with the common stereotype.

Subtle Sexism and Gender-Role Socialization. Subtle forms of prejudice are also directed toward women. Daryl and Sandra Bem suggest that prejudice against women in our society is an example of a nonconscious ideology—that is, a set of beliefs we accept implicitly but of which we are unaware because we cannot even conceive of alternative conceptions of the world. In this culture, for example, we are socialized in such a way that it becomes difficult for us to imagine a woman going out to work as a truck driver or a custodian while her husband stays home taking care of the kids, mending socks, and cleaning house. If we were to hear of such a situation, many of us would leap to the conclusion that something was wrong with that couple. Why? Because such an arrangement is not held to be a real option in our society. Much as a fish is unaware that its environment is wet, we don’t even notice the existence of this ideology because it is so totally prevalent.

Recall the example in Chapter 1 in which little Mary received a Suzie Homemaker set (“complete with her own little oven”) for her 9th birthday. By the time she reached age 9, she had been conditioned to know that her place was in the kitchen. This conditioning was so thorough that her father was convinced that “housewifery” was genetic in origin. This is no mere fantasy. Even the first picture books very young children read tend to transmit these role stereo-
types. Indeed, studies by Ruth Hartley indicate that, by age 5, children have already developed clearly defined notions of what constitutes appropriate behavior for women and men. This non-conscious ideology can have important consequences for society. For example, Jean Lipman-Blumen reports that the vast majority of women who, in early childhood, acquired a traditional view of their gender role (that is, "a woman's place is in the home") opted not to seek advanced education; on the other hand, those women who acquired a more egalitarian view of gender roles showed a much stronger tendency to aspire to advanced education.

Current trends in the direction of raising women's consciousness are proving to be beneficial to women. Extrapolating from Lipman-Blumen's findings, one would predict that, as traditional gender-role stereotypes continue to crumble, there will be an increase in the number of women who seek advanced education. In fact, this has already begun to happen: In 1980, women undergraduates outnumbered men on the nation's college campuses—a trend that continued through the mid-1990s. Looking at professional training, although at this writing men still outnumber women in traditionally male domains like engineering, in more gender-neutral fields like psychology, the majority of graduate students are women. The elevation of women's consciousness also is proving beneficial to men. As women widen their interests and enter new occupations, the role prescriptions for men are becoming less restrictive.

Let us broaden this example. In recent years, our society has become increasingly aware of the discrimination and stereotyping that occur as a result of differential gender roles. The notion of gender roles, or roles appropriate to one's biological sexual identity, is useful in understanding the pressures society places on both men and women. Traditionally, males have been expected to be the breadwinners, the initiators, and the aggressors, all the while hiding their softer emotions and their vulnerabilities. Traditionally, femininity has consistently been correlated with high anxiety, low self-esteem, and low social acceptance. As mentioned previously, women are seen as warmer, more sensitive, and more expressive but less competent and decisive. The female role has been centered on the home, children, and marriage, with limited access to higher status or more differentiated jobs.
This gender-role stereotyping has serious consequences. In an interesting experiment, Natalie Porter and Florence Geis\textsuperscript{51} showed that, compared to their male counterparts, even female graduate students were not given much credit for intellectual leadership. College students were shown a picture of either a group of men or a group of women sitting around a table. The picture was described as a group of graduate students working on a research project. They were asked to guess which member contributed most to the group. Their strong tendency was to choose the person sitting at the head of the table. In another condition, college students were shown a picture of a mixed-gender group (two men and three women) sitting around a table. When a man was at the head of the table, the subjects overwhelmingly named him as the greatest contributor. When a woman was at the head of the table, she was hardly chosen at all. Indeed, each of the men in the picture received more “votes” than all three of the women combined. The results of this experiment provide an excellent example of what is meant by a nonconscious ideology inasmuch as the results were similar for male and female subjects; moreover, the women were severely underchosen by feminists as well as nonfeminists.

The experiment by Porter and Geis indicates that the perpetrators of discriminatory behavior against women are not always men; such action is far more common among women than we realize. Moreover, an experiment by Robert S. Baron, Mary Burgess, and C. F. Kao\textsuperscript{52} showed that such displays of sexism by women against women often go undetected. In their experiment, male and female subjects read a series of 12 vignettes that described a person behaving in a sexist manner against women. When the person taking the sexist actions was female, both male and female subjects were less likely to label the actions as sexist. Further, they saw the behavior as less extreme and less intense than if the perpetrator was male.

The gender-role socialization process has led many people to regard the roles of females and males as characteristically rigid and limiting. Researchers in this domain find such traditional labeling antithetical to a rich, full growth process. For example, Sandra Bem advocates that people reduce this gender-role stereotyping by becoming more “androgynous”: According to Bem, both men and women should be encouraged to be both instrumental and expressive, both assertive and yielding, both masculine and feminine—depending
upon the situational appropriateness of these various behaviors. To illustrate, when asking for a pay raise, assertiveness is an adaptive, desirable action—for men and women alike. Behaving in a coy, passive, or timid manner probably will not get you your raise. When reconciling after an argument, however, yielding is an adaptive, desirable action—for men and women. Assertiveness may serve to increase the tension.

But the road to androgynous behavior is not an easy one. Women, like the members of many minority groups, are often rewarded for actions that tend to support the prevailing cultural stereotype—that they are inferior, passive, and dependent. Consequently, the self-fulfilling prophecy is in effect: If a woman attempts to view herself as different from the socially accepted norm, she will probably experience some discomfort because her behavior will be discrepant from the self-concept she has been developing since childhood. For example, as mentioned earlier, if a male truck driver and a housewife changed roles, much dissonance would be aroused, especially when interacting with their peers. In this manner, a socially conditioned stereotype tends to be perpetuated. If a woman attempts to deviate too much from her rigid gender role by being assertive or by seeking an unconventional job, she risks the loss of friendships and may evoke even more prejudiced feelings in others. Accordingly, if individuals need to compare themselves to similar others, stepping out of an accepted role is less likely to occur.

There is, however, good reason to believe that popular conceptions of appropriate behavior for men and women are becoming more flexible. Linda Jackson and Thomas Cash found that men and women described as androgynous were actually perceived as more likable and better adjusted than those who acted only in ways consistent with traditional gender roles. But here's the catch: When women behaved in a stereotypically masculine manner—to the exclusion of traditionally feminine behavior—they were liked least of all. Similarly, when men behaved only in stereotypically feminine ways, they were considered less well adjusted than women who engaged in exactly the same behaviors. The lesson here seems to be that it may be acceptable for individuals to engage in cross-gender behavior as long as they are careful to balance it with behaviors considered appropriate for their own sex. To return to our example,
the idea of a woman being a truck driver would probably raise fewer eyebrows if she were also a superb cook, seamstress, or amateur ballet dancer. Likewise, a man who chooses to stay home and care for the children might meet with greater social approval if he were also an ace fisherman or handy with a wrench.

Gender-role socialization has many consequences. In a series of experiments in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Matina Horner55 found that women actually fear success, especially when it seems inappropriate to the expectations of their role. In her studies, when female undergraduates were asked to write a story about “Anne, who finds herself at the top of her medical school class,” the women were likely to describe Anne’s future as an unhappy one, with the character either trying to minimize her own achievement or suffering negative consequences as a result of her success. Interestingly enough, more recent experiments have demonstrated that the same thing happens to men—if they experience success in a nontraditional setting. Specifically, men who were told that “John” was at the top of his nursing school class anticipated more negative consequences than did women who were told that “Anne” was at the top of her nursing school class. Thus, the fear-of-success phenomenon is similar to the persuasibility phenomenon; both men and women exhibit behaviors symptomatic of this effect; when and how depends on the situation.

I think two important lessons can be learned here. First, although there may be some differences between the behavior of men and women, many of these differences can be traced to the different situations in which men and women find themselves. That is, women initially may seem more persuasible or afraid of success because they are being evaluated according to the rules of a man’s game. Lo and behold, when men are evaluated according to women’s rules, they seem more persuasible, afraid of success, or whatever. Moreover, even when men and women behave identically, they are very often judged by different standards. For example, as we saw earlier, when a woman succeeds, her success is usually attributed to hard work or luck, while a man’s success is attributed to ability. Thus, before we leap to the conclusion that one gender is inferior to the other in any domain, we must carefully examine the context within which the behavior occurs and whether a double standard is being imposed when the behaviors of men and
women are evaluated. Remember Aronson’s first law: People who do crazy things are not necessarily crazy. Likewise, people who do “inferior” things are not necessarily inferior.

The second lesson has to do with the realization that all of us—men, women, boys, girls, blacks, Latinos, Asians, whites, rich, poor, homosexuals, heterosexuals—are the victims of confining stereotyped roles. It would be naive to miss the obvious fact that some roles are more restricting and debilitating than others. However, it would also be foolish to fail to realize that one group’s effort to free itself from the chains of prejudice indirectly benefits all of us. As we learn to accept another person’s out-of-role behavior, our own out-of-role behavior will also become increasingly accepted—and we will become freer to fulfill our potential as human beings.

**Prejudice and the Media**

The media play an important institutional role in sustaining prejudice. Not too long ago, newspapers tended to identify the race of a nonwhite criminal or suspect but never bothered to mention the wrongdoer’s race if he or she happened to be white. This undoubtedly contributed to a distorted picture of the amount of crime committed by nonwhites. And until the door was opened wide by Bill Cosby and Michael Jordan, it was rare to see a black face on television in a nonstereotypic role or in a commercial. Several years ago, when African-Americans were limited to roles like the characters in “Amos ’n Andy” or the song-and-dance man on a variety show, the stereotype that blacks are stupid, shiftless, lazy, and have a natural sense of rhythm was reinforced.

During the past 20 years, this situation has changed—but how much? Given the tremendous popularity enjoyed by the groundbreaking “Bill Cosby Show” in the 1980s and the ubiquitous, graceful presence of such cultural icons as Oprah Winfrey and Michael Jordan, it is tempting to assume that the changes have been dramatic. But although African-Americans have appeared with greater frequency in the media in recent years (endorsing products or hosting talk shows), where drama is concerned, they tend to be
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concentrated in virtually all-black situation comedies or are featured as token characters in otherwise all-white shows. Let's look at prime-time dramas—the bellwether of American television fare. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, George Gerbner, a distinguished scholar, conducts periodic, exhaustive surveys of the media. According to Gerbner's findings, during the past 15 years, the percentage of African-Americans appearing in prime-time dramas has fluctuated between 6 percent and 16 percent, with no clear upward trend during that period.

The situation is even more extreme in other forms of communication and entertainment. Let's look at something simple and common—like the humorous cartoon. Several years ago, one of my students, Ruth Thibodeau, performed a thorough analysis of all of the cartoons appearing in The New Yorker magazine between 1946 and 1987. She found that the appearance of African-American characters was extremely rare. Moreover, in the early years of her study (the 1940s and 1950s), every time an African-American appeared in a cartoon, he or she was presented in a highly stereotypical role. Accordingly, the frequency of African-American characters actually decreased over the years as it became less acceptable to depict racial minorities in a stereotypical manner. Thibodeau was startled to find that, in the entire 42-year period, only a single African-American appeared as a central character in a cartoon in which race was completely irrelevant. That's once in 35,874 cartoons! Thibodeau concluded that, in cartoons, a black person is simply not depicted as a representative of an ordinary citizen.

Going back to prime-time TV, the overall picture for other recognizable minorities is even bleaker. Gerbner found that, in the 1990s, slightly more than 1 percent of the characters in prime-time dramas were Latino and less than 1 percent were either Asian or Native American. The presence of gays and lesbians is extremely rare—and, when they do appear, it is most frequently in stereotypic roles. This is not inconsequential; for most of us, television provides an important source of information about the world. Accordingly, the infrequent and unrealistic portrayal of racial or sexual minorities is misleading and almost certainly harmful because it promotes the illusion that these are inconsequential members of our society—people who don't experience real adventures, ordinary prob-
lems, or human emotions.* Moreover, the dearth of positive role
models in the media undoubtedly fosters feelings of inferiority and
estrangement among minority-group members—especially chil-
dren.

Similar problems have affected the portrayal of women. For
many years, when the media did show women in prime-time TV
dramas, advertisements, or children’s books, they were almost never
portrayed as authority figures, intellectuals, or adventurous people.
Instead, they were typically viewed as attractive but simplen minded
“girls” who worried excessively about which laundry detergent to
use and who depended on men for guidance on important issues. In
the 1990s, with the advent of such powerful, competent characters
as Murphy Brown and the televising of women’s basketball, this
trend began to shift. However, although this change is encourag-
ing, there is still a drastic imbalance. According to George Ger-
brner’s analysis, in prime-time dramas, male characters outnumber
women by almost two to one, and women are portrayed as victims
of violent crime far more frequently than men. Similarly, news-
paper comic strips, which are widely read by children, tend to perpetu-
ate gender stereotypes. An analysis of 14 widely syndicated comic
strips—such as “Peanuts,” “Spiderman,” and “The Wizard of Id”—
found that women were represented as main characters only 15
percent of the time. In addition, only 4 percent of female characters
were shown in working roles, even though roughly 69 percent of
women in the United States are actually employed outside of the
home.59

What are the implications of widespread stereotyping of women
in the media? On a subtle level, we tend to believe or accept things
we see with great frequency—unless there are powerful reasons
against doing so. Moreover, it is very difficult for us to account for
what is not represented. Thus, if we hardly ever see women in power-

*A noteworthy exception to this general trend involved the “coming out” of
Ellen DeGeneres on television in 1997, in which the actress (as well as the charac-
ter she portrays) revealed herself as a lesbian. Interestingly enough, this was one of
the most widely viewed episodes in TV sit-com history—and, although a number
of conservative groups threatened boycotts, the revelation was generally accepted
by the American public.
ful roles, it is easy to conclude that they are incapable of using power effectively or that they prefer the laundry room to the boardroom.

Let's take this a step further. When internalized, such stereotypes may have debilitating effects on women's perceptions of their own life possibilities. Florence Geis and her colleagues suggest that traditional portrayals of women in television commercials provide implicit scripts for women's behavior that may inhibit their achievement aspirations. In one study,69 these researchers showed some subjects stereotyped commercials with women portrayed as sex objects or subservient homemakers catering to the needs of men. Other subjects saw commercials in which the roles were reversed: with, for example, a husband proudly serving a delicious meal to his wife who has just come home after a hard day's work. When asked to imagine their lives "ten years from now," female subjects who saw commercials depicting women as subservient homemakers and sex objects were more likely to de-emphasize careers and other achievement themes. Viewing stereotyped commercials did not simply depress women's aspirations temporarily during the experiment. On the contrary, female control subjects who saw no commercials at all expressed the same low level of achievement aspiration as women exposed to the traditional commercials. Women who saw role-reversed commercials, however, aspired to the same high level of achievement as male subjects. Interestingly enough, the aspirations of male subjects were unaffected by either traditional or nontraditional commercials. These findings suggest that sex-stereotyped commercials reflect a cultural image of women as second-class citizens and that a steady diet of such commercials serves to restrict women's conceptions of goals available to them. Moreover, repeated exposure to nonsexist alternatives would presumably enhance women's expectations for achievement and career success.

Causes of Prejudice

What makes people prejudiced? Is prejudice natural or unnatural? Evolutionary psychologists have suggested that animals have a strong tendency to feel more favorably toward genetically similar others and to express fear and loathing toward genetically dissimi-
lar organisms, even if the latter have never done them any harm. Thus, prejudice may be built in—an essential part of our biological survival mechanism inducing us to favor our own family, tribe, or race and to express hostility toward outsiders. On the other hand, it is conceivable that, as humans, we are different from the lower animals; perhaps our natural inclination is to be friendly, open, and cooperative. If this is the case, then prejudice does not come naturally. Rather, the culture (parents, the community, the media) may, intentionally or unintentionally, instruct us to assign negative qualities and attributes to people who are different from us.

Although we human beings may have inherited biological tendencies that predispose us toward prejudicial behavior, no one knows for sure whether or not prejudice is a vital and necessary part of our biological makeup. In any case, most social psychologists would agree that the specifics of prejudice must be learned—either through imitating the attitudes and behavior of others or through the ways in which we construct our own psychological reality. As we have seen, a powerful determinant of prejudice is embedded in our need for self-justification. In the previous two chapters, for example, we have seen that, if we have done something cruel to a person or a group of people, most of us will try to derogate that person or group in order to justify our cruelty. If we can convince ourselves that a group is unworthy, subhuman, stupid, or immoral, it helps us to keep from feeling immoral if we enslave members of that group, deprive them of a decent education, or aggress against them. We can then continue to go to church and to feel like good Christians because it isn't a decent fellow human we've hurt. Indeed, if we're skillful enough, we can even convince ourselves that the barbaric slaying of old men, women, and children is a Christian virtue—as the crusaders did when, on the way to the holy land, they butchered European Jews in the name of the Prince of Peace. Again, as we have seen, this form of self-justification serves to intensify subsequent brutality.

Of course, there are other human needs in addition to self-justification. For example, there are status and power needs. Thus, an individual who is low on the socioeconomic hierarchy may need the presence of a downtrodden minority group in order to be able to feel superior to somebody. Several studies indicate that a good predictor of prejudice is whether or not a person's social status is low or
declining. For example, Jennifer Crocker and her colleagues found that college women who belonged to low-status sororities expressed more prejudice and disparagement of other sororities than members of higher-status sororities did. Similarly, when researchers investigated the prejudice of whites against blacks or of Gentiles against Jews, they found that those whose social status is low or declining are apt to be more prejudiced than those whose social status is high or rising. Moreover, it has been found that white people who are at or near the bottom in terms of education, income, and occupation not only are the highest in their dislike of blacks but also are most likely to resort to violence in order to prevent the desegregation of schools.

These findings raise some interesting questions. Are people of low socioeconomic and educational status more prejudiced because (1) they need someone to feel superior to, (2) they most keenly feel competition for jobs from minority-group members, (3) they are more frustrated than most people and therefore more aggressive, or (4) their lack of education increases the probability of their taking a simplistic, stereotypical view of the world? It is difficult to disentangle these variables, but it appears that each of them contributes to prejudice. Indeed, there is no single cause of prejudice. Prejudice is determined by many factors. Let’s look at some of the major determinants.

In this chapter, we will look at four basic causes of prejudice: (1) economic and political competition or conflict, (2) displaced aggression, (3) personality needs, and (4) conformity to existing social norms. These four causes are not mutually exclusive—indeed, they may all operate at once—but it would be helpful to determine how important each one is because any action we are apt to recommend in an attempt to reduce prejudice will depend on what we believe to be the major cause of prejudice. Thus, for example, if I believe bigotry is deeply ingrained in the human personality, I might throw my hands up in despair and conclude that, in the absence of deep psychotherapy, the majority of prejudiced people will always be prejudiced. This would lead me to scoff at attempts to reduce prejudice by reducing competitiveness or by attempting to counteract the pressures of conformity.

Economic and Political Competition. Prejudice can be considered to be the result of economic and political forces. According to this
view, given that resources are limited, the dominant group might attempt to exploit or derogate a minority group in order to gain some material advantage. Prejudiced attitudes tend to increase when times are tense and there is conflict over mutually exclusive goals. This is true whether the goals are economic, political, or ideological. Thus, prejudice has existed between Anglo and Mexican-American migrant workers as a function of a limited number of jobs, between Arabs and Israelis over disputed territory, and between northerners and southerners over the abolition of slavery. The economic advantages of discrimination are all too clear when one looks at the success certain craft unions have had, over the years, in denying membership to women and members of ethnic minorities, thus keeping them out of the relatively high-paying occupations the unions control. For example, the period between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s was one of great political and legal advancement for the civil rights movement. Yet in 1966 only 2.7 percent of union-controlled apprenticeships were held by black workers—an increase of only 1 percent over the preceding 10 years. Moreover, in the mid-1960s, the U.S. Department of Labor surveyed four major cities in search of minority-group members serving as apprentices among union plumbers, steamfitters, sheetmetal workers, stone masons, lathers, painters, glaziers, and operating engineers. In the four cities, they failed to find a single black person thus employed. Clearly, prejudice pays off for some people. While enlightened legislation and social action over the past three decades have produced significant changes in these statistics, the situation remains far from equitable for minority groups.

Discrimination, prejudice, and negative stereotyping increase sharply as competition for scarce jobs increases. In one of his classic early studies of prejudice in a small industrial town, John Dollard documented the fact that, although there was initially no discernible prejudice against Germans in the town, it came about as jobs became scarce:

Local whites largely drawn from the surrounding farms manifested considerable direct aggression toward the newcomers. Scornful and derogatory opinions were expressed about these Germans, and the native whites had a satisfying sense of superiority toward them. . . . The chief element in the permission to be aggressive against the Germans was rivalry for jobs and status in the local wooden ware
plants. The native whites felt definitely crowded for their jobs by the entering German groups and in case of bad times had a chance to blame the Germans who by their presence provided more competitors for the scarcer jobs. There seemed to be no traditional pattern of prejudice against Germans unless the skeletal suspicion against all outgroupers (always present) can be invoked in its place.67

Similarly, the prejudice, violence, and negative stereotyping directed against Chinese immigrants in the United States fluctuated wildly throughout the 19th century—spurred largely by changes in economic competition. For example, when the Chinese were attempting to mine gold in California, they were described as "depraved and vicious ... gross gluttons ... bloodthirsty and inhuman."68 However, just a decade later, when they were willing to accept dangerous and arduous work building the transcontinental railroad—work that white Americans were unwilling to undertake—they were generally regarded as sober, industrious, and law-abiding. Indeed, Charles Crocker, one of the western railroad tycoons, wrote: "They are equal to the best white men. . . . They are very trusty, very intelligent and they live up to their contracts."69 After the completion of the railroad, however, jobs became more scarce; moreover, when the Civil War ended, there was an influx of former soldiers into an already tight job market. This was immediately followed by a dramatic increase in negative attitudes toward the Chinese: The stereotype changed to "criminal," "conniving," "crafty," and "stupid."

These data suggest that competition and conflict breed prejudice. Moreover, this phenomenon transcends mere historical significance; it seems to have enduring psychological effects as well. In a survey conducted in the 1970s, most antiblack prejudice was found in groups that were just one rung above the blacks socioeconomically. And, as we might expect, this tendency was most pronounced in situations in which whites and blacks were in close competition for jobs.70 At the same time, there is some ambiguity in interpreting the data because, in some instances, the variable of competition is intertwined with such variables as educational level and family background.

In order to determine whether competition itself causes prejudice, an experiment is needed. But how can we proceed? Well, if
conflict and competition lead to prejudice, it should be possible to produce prejudice in the laboratory. This can be done by the simple device of (1) randomly assigning people of differing backgrounds to one of two groups, (2) making those two groups distinguishable in some arbitrary way, (3) putting those groups into a situation in which they are in competition with each other, and (4) looking for evidence of prejudice. Such an experiment was conducted by Muzafer Sherif and his colleagues71 in the natural environment of a Boy Scout camp. The subjects were normal, well-adjusted, 12-year-old boys who were randomly assigned to one of two groups, the Eagles and the Rattlers. Within each group, the youngsters were taught to cooperate. This was done largely by arranging activities that made the members of each group highly interdependent. For example, within each group, individuals cooperated in building a diving board for the swimming facility, preparing group meals, building a rope bridge, and so on.

After a strong feeling of cohesiveness developed within each group, the stage was set for conflict. The researchers arranged this by setting up a series of competitive activities in which the two groups were pitted against each other in such games as football, baseball, and tug-of-war. In order to increase the tension, prizes were awarded to the winning team. This resulted in some hostility and ill will during the games. In addition, the investigators devised rather diabolical devices for putting the groups into situations specifically designed to promote conflict. In one such situation, a camp party was arranged. The investigators set it up so that the Eagles were allowed to arrive a good deal earlier than the Rattlers. In addition, the refreshments consisted of two vastly different kinds of food: About half of the food was fresh, appealing, and appetizing; the other half was squashed, ugly, and unappetizing. Perhaps because of the general competitiveness that already existed, the early arrivers confiscated most of the appealing refreshments, leaving only the less interesting, less appetizing, squashed, and damaged food for their adversaries. When the Rattlers finally arrived and saw how they had been taken advantage of, they were understandably annoyed—so annoyed that they began to call the exploitive group rather uncomplimentary names. Because the Eagles believed they deserved what they got (first come, first served), they resented this treatment and responded in kind. Name calling escalated into food throwing, and within a very short time a full-scale riot was in progress.
Following this incident, competitive games were eliminated and a great deal of social contact was initiated. Once hostility had been aroused, however, simply eliminating the competition did not eliminate the hostility. Indeed, hostility continued to escalate, even when the two groups were engaged in such benign activities as sitting around watching movies. Eventually, the investigators succeeded in reducing the hostility. Exactly how this was accomplished will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Scapegoat Theory of Prejudice. In the preceding chapter, I made the point that aggression is caused, in part, by frustration and such other unpleasant or aversive conditions as pain or boredom. In that chapter, we saw that there is a strong tendency for a frustrated individual to lash out at the cause of his or her frustration. Frequently, however, the cause of a person’s frustration is either too big or too vague for direct retaliation. For example, if a 6-year-old boy is humiliated by his teacher, how can he fight back? The teacher has too much power. But this frustration may increase the probability of his aggressing against a less powerful bystander—even if the bystander had nothing to do with his pain. By the same token, if there is mass unemployment, who is the frustrated, unemployed worker going to strike out against—the economic system? The system is much too big and much too vague. It would be more convenient if the unemployed worker could find something or someone less vague and more concrete to blame. The president? He’s concrete, all right, but also much too powerful to strike at with impunity.

The ancient Hebrews had a custom that is noteworthy in this context. During the days of atonement, a priest placed his hands on the head of a goat while reciting the sins of the people. This symbolically transferred the sin and evil from the people to the goat. The goat was then allowed to escape into the wilderness, thus cleansing the community of sin. The animal was called a scapegoat. In modern times the term scapegoating has been used to describe the process of blaming a relatively powerless innocent person for something that is not his or her fault. Unfortunately, the individual is not allowed to escape into the wilderness but is usually subjected to cruelty or even death. Thus, if people are unemployed or if inflation has depleted their savings, they can’t very easily beat up on the economic system—but they can find a scapegoat. In Nazi Germany, it was the
Jews; in 19th-century California, it was Chinese immigrants; in the rural South, it was black people. Some years ago, Carl Hovland and Robert Sears found that, in the period between 1882 and 1930, they could predict the number of lynchings in the South in a given year from a knowledge of the price of cotton during that year. As the price of cotton dropped, the number of lynchings increased. In short, as people experienced an economic depression, they probably experienced a great many frustrations. The frustrations apparently resulted in an increase in lynchings and other crimes of violence.

Otto Klineberg, a social psychologist with a special interest in the cross-cultural aspects of prejudice, describes a unique scapegoating situation in Japan. The Burakumin are a group of 2 million outcasts scattered throughout Japan. Although there are no inherited racial or physical differences between the Burakumin and other Japanese, they are considered unclean and fit only for certain undesirable occupations. As you might imagine, the Burakumin usually lived in poor, slum areas. Their IQ scores were, on average, some 16 points lower than that of other Japanese. Burakumin children were absent from school more often, and their delinquency rate was three times higher than that of other Japanese children. According to Klineberg, it was considered taboo for a member of the Burakumin to marry outside of his or her group. They are an invisible race—an out-group defined more by social class than by any physical characteristics. They can be identified only by their distinctive speech pattern (which has developed from years of nonassociation with other Japanese) and their identity papers. Although their historical origins are unclear, they probably occupied the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder until an economic depression led to their complete expulsion from Japanese society. Now the Japanese consider the Burakumin to be innately inferior, thus justifying further scapegoating and discrimination.

It is difficult to understand how the lynching of blacks or the mistreatment of the Burakumin could be due only to economic competition. There is a great deal of emotion in these actions that suggests the presence of deeper psychological factors in addition to economics. Similarly, the zeal with which the Nazis carried out their attempt to erase all members of the Jewish ethnic group (regardless of economic status) strongly suggests that the phenomenon was not exclusively economic or political, but was (at least in part) psychological. Firmer evidence for the existence of psycho-
logical processes comes from a well-controlled experiment by Neal Miller and Richard Bugelski. Individuals were asked to state their feelings about various minority groups. Some of the subjects were then frustrated by being deprived of an opportunity to attend a film and were given a difficult series of tests instead. They were then asked to restate their feelings about the minority groups. These subjects showed some evidence of increased prejudicial responses following the frustrating experience. A control group that did not go through the frustrating experience did not undergo any change in prejudice.

Additional research has helped to pin down the phenomenon even more precisely. In one experiment, white students were instructed to administer a series of electric shocks to another student as part of a learning experiment. The subjects had the prerogative to adjust the intensity of the shocks. In actuality, the learner was an accomplice of the experimenter who (of course) was not really connected to the apparatus. There were four conditions: The accomplice was either black or white; he was trained to be either friendly or insulting to the subject. When he was friendly, the subjects administered slightly less intense shocks to the black student; when he insulted them, they administered far more intense shocks to the black student than to the white student. In another experiment, college students were subjected to a great deal of frustration. Some of these students were highly anti-Semitic; others were not. The subjects were then asked to write stories based on pictures they were shown. For some subjects, the characters in these pictures were assigned Jewish names; for others, they were not. There were two major findings: (1) After being frustrated, anti-Semitic subjects wrote stories that directed more aggression toward the Jewish characters than did subjects who were not anti-Semitic, and (2) there was no difference between the anti-Semitic students and the others when the characters they were writing about were not identified as Jewish. In short, frustration or anger leads to a specific aggression—aggression against an out-group member.

The laboratory experiments help to clarify factors that seem to exist in the real world. The general picture of scapegoating that emerges is that individuals tend to displace aggression onto groups that are disliked, that are visible, and that are relatively powerless. Moreover, the form the aggression takes depends on what is allowed or approved by the in-group in question: In society, lynch-
ings of blacks and pogroms against Jews were not frequent occurrences unless they were deemed appropriate by the dominant culture or subculture.

I used the past tense in the preceding sentence because it is comforting to believe that extreme forms of scapegoating are a thing of the past. But, in the present decade, events have taken place that have caused many of us a great deal of consternation. For example, when the Soviet Union fell apart, we were momentarily encouraged as all of Eastern Europe gained its freedom. Unfortunately, in much of the region, this new freedom was accompanied by increased feelings of nationalism, which have, in turn, produced additional prejudice and hostility against out-groups. Thus, in the Balkans, for example, intense nationalism led to eruptions of hostility throughout the region—most notably, in Bosnia. In addition, economic hardship and frustrated expectations in Eastern Europe has resulted in anti-Semitism throughout the region.

*The Prejudiced Personality.* As we have seen, the displacement of aggression onto scapegoats may be a human tendency, but not all people do it to the same degree. We have already identified socioeconomic status as a cause of prejudice. Also, we have seen that people who dislike members of a particular out-group are more apt to displace aggression onto them than are people who do not dislike members of that out-group. We can now carry this one step further. There is some evidence to support the notion of individual differences in a general tendency to hate. In other words, there are people who are predisposed toward being prejudiced, not solely because of immediate external influences, but also because of the kind of people they are. Theodor Adorno and his associates76 refer to these individuals as authoritarian personalities. Basically, authoritarian personalities have the following characteristics: They tend to be rigid in their beliefs; they tend to possess conventional values; they are intolerant of weakness (in themselves as well as in others); they tend to be highly punitive; they are suspicious; and they are respectful of authority to an unusual degree. The instrument developed to determine authoritarianism (called the F scale) measures the extent to which each person agrees or disagrees with such items as these:
Sex crimes such as rape and attacks on children deserve more than mere imprisonment; such criminals ought to be publicly whipped, or worse.

Most people don't realize how much our lives are controlled by plots hatched in secret places.

Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn.

A high degree of agreement with such items indicates authoritarianism. The major finding is that people who are high on authoritarianism do not simply dislike Jews or blacks; rather, they show a consistently high degree of prejudice against all minority groups.

Through an intensive clinical interview of people high and low on the F scale, Adorno and his colleagues have traced the development of this cluster of attitudes and values to early childhood experiences in families characterized by harsh, threatening parental discipline. Moreover, people high on the F scale tend to have parents who use love and its withdrawal as their major way of producing obedience. In general, authoritarian personalities, as children, tend to be both insecure and highly dependent on their parents; they fear their parents and feel unconscious hostility toward them. This combination sets the stage for the emergence of an adult with a high degree of anger, which, because of fear and insecurity, takes the form of displaced aggression against powerless groups, while the individual maintains outward respect for authority.

It is instructive to note that, in a study of authoritarianism in the former Soviet Union, Sam McFarland and his colleagues found that people high on the F scale tend to be in favor of overthrowing their newly acquired democracy and restoring the former Communist regime. Ideologically, this is quite different from American authoritarians, who tend to be anti-Communist. The common link, of course, is not a specific ideological belief but rather a kind of conventionalism and respect for authority. In other words, both American and Russian authoritarians are linked by their need to conform to the traditional values of their culture and by a tendency to be suspicious of new ideas and of people who are different from themselves.
Although research on the authoritarian personality has added to our understanding of the possible dynamics of prejudice, it should be noted that the bulk of the data are correlational. That is, we know only that two variables are related; we cannot be certain what causes what. Consider, for example, the correlation between a person's score on the F scale and the specific socialization practices he or she was subjected to as a child. Although it is true that adults who are authoritarian and highly prejudiced had parents who tended to be harsh and to use conditional love as a socialization technique, it is not necessarily true that this is what caused them to develop into prejudiced people. It turns out that the parents of these people tend themselves to be highly prejudiced against minority groups. Accordingly, it may be that the development of prejudice in some people is due to conformity through the process of identification, as described in Chapter 2. That is, a child might consciously pick up beliefs about minorities from his or her parents because the child identifies with them. This is quite different from, and much simpler than, the explanation offered by Adorno and his colleagues, which is based on the child's unconscious hostility to and repressed fear of his or her parents.

This is not to imply that, for some people, prejudice is not rooted in unconscious childhood conflicts. Rather, it is to suggest that many people may have learned a wide array of prejudices on Mommy's or Daddy's knee. Moreover, some people may conform to prejudices that are limited and highly specific, depending upon the norms of their subculture. Let's take a closer look at the phenomenon of prejudice as an act of conformity.

*Prejudice through Conformity.* It is frequently observed that there is more prejudice against blacks in the South than in the North. This prejudice often manifests itself in stronger attitudes against racial integration. For example, in 1942, only 4 percent of all southerners were in favor of the desegregation of transportation facilities, while 56 percent of all northerners were in favor of it. Why? Was it because of economic competition? Probably not; there is more prejudice against blacks in southern communities where economic competition is low than in northern communities where economic competition is great. Are there relatively more authoritarian personalities in the South than in the North? No.
Thomas Pettigrew administered the F scale widely in the North and in the South and found the scores for northerners and southerners to be about equal. In addition, although there is more prejudice against blacks in the South, there is less prejudice against Jews in the South than there is in the nation as a whole; the prejudiced personality should be prejudiced against everybody—the southerner isn’t.

How then do we account for the animosity toward blacks that exists in the South? It could be due to historical causes: The blacks were slaves, the Civil War was fought over the issue of slavery, and so on. This could have created the climate for greater prejudice. But what sustains this climate? One possible clue comes from the observation of some rather strange patterns of racial segregation in the South. One example, concerning a group of coal miners in a small mining town in West Virginia, should suffice. The black miners and the white miners developed a pattern of living that consisted of complete integration while they were under ground and complete segregation while they were above ground. How can we account for this inconsistency? If you truly hate someone, you want to keep away from him; why associate with him below ground and not above ground?

Pettigrew has suggested that the explanation for these phenomena is conformity. In this case, the white miners are simply conforming to the norm that exists in their society (above the ground!). The historical events of the South set the stage for greater prejudice against blacks, but it is conformity that keeps it going. Indeed, Pettigrew believes that, although economic competition, frustration, and personality needs account for some prejudice, the greatest proportion of prejudiced behavior is a function of slavish conformity to social norms.

How can we be certain that conformity is responsible? One way is to determine the relation between a person’s prejudice and that person’s general pattern of conformity. For example, a study of interracial tension in South Africa showed that those individuals who were most likely to conform to a great variety of social norms also showed a higher degree of prejudice against blacks. In other words, if conformists are more prejudiced, prejudice may be just another thing to conform to. Another way to determine the role of conformity is to see what happens to people’s prejudice when they
move to a different area of the country. If conformity is a factor in prejudice, we would expect individuals to show dramatic increases in prejudice when they move into areas where the norm is more prejudicial and to show dramatic decreases when they are affected by a less prejudicial norm. And that is what happens. In one study, Jeanne Watson found that individuals who had recently moved to New York City and had come into direct contact with anti-Semitic people became more anti-Semitic themselves. In another study, Pettigrew found that, as southerners entered the army and came into contact with a less discriminatory set of social norms, they became less prejudiced against blacks.

The pressure to conform can be relatively overt, as in the Asch experiment. On the other hand, conformity to a prejudicial norm might simply be due to the unavailability of accurate evidence and a preponderance of misleading information. This can lead people to adopt negative attitudes on the basis of hearsay. Examples of this kind of stereotyping behavior abound in the literature. For example, consider Christopher Marlowe's play *The Jew of Malta* or William Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*. Both of these works depict the Jew as a conniving, money-hungry, cringing coward. We might be tempted to conclude that Marlowe and Shakespeare had some unfortunate experiences with unsavory Jews, which resulted in these bitter and unflattering portraits—except for one thing: The Jews had been expelled from England some 300 years before these works were written. Thus, it would seem that the only thing with which Marlowe and Shakespeare came into contact was a lingering stereotype. Tragically, their works not only reflected the stereotype but undoubtedly contributed to it as well.

Even casual exposure to bigotry can affect our attitudes and behavior toward a group that is the victim of prejudice. For example, research has demonstrated that merely overhearing someone use a derogatory label—such as a racial or ethnic epithet—toward a given group can increase our likelihood of viewing someone from that group—or someone merely associated with that group—in a negative light. In one experiment, Shari Kirkland and her co-researchers asked subjects to read a transcript of a criminal trial in which a white defendant was represented by a black attorney, whose picture was attached to the trial transcript. While reading the transcript, the subject "overheard" a brief exchange between two experimental confederates, who were posing as subjects. Some
subjects heard the first confederate call the black lawyer a “nigger,” while other subjects heard the confederate call him a “shyster.” In both conditions, the second confederate expressed agreement with the first confederate’s derogatory opinion of the black lawyer. With this conformity dynamic in place, the experimenters then asked the subject to evaluate the attorney and the defendant. An analysis of these ratings revealed that subjects who overheard the racial slur rated the black lawyer more negatively than those who overheard a derisive comment unrelated to the lawyer’s race. Moreover, the white defendant received particularly harsh verdicts and highly negative evaluations from subjects who heard the racial slur against the black attorney. This latter finding indicates that conformity to the prejudiced norms can have damaging effects that extend beyond the initial target of racism.

Bigoted attitudes can also be fostered intentionally by a bigoted society that institutionally supports these attitudes. For example, a society that supports the notion of segregation through law and custom is supporting the notion that one group is inferior to another. Thus, in the days of apartheid, one investigator interviewed white South Africans in an attempt to find reasons for their negative attitudes toward blacks. He found that the typical white South African was convinced that the great majority of crimes were committed by blacks. This was erroneous. How did such a misconception develop? The individuals reported that they saw many black convicts working in public places; they never saw any white convicts. Didn’t this prove blacks were convicted of more crimes than whites? No. In fact, the rules forbade white convicts from working in public places! In short, a society can create prejudiced beliefs by its very institutions. In our own society, forcing blacks to ride in the back of the bus, keeping women out of prestigious clubs, and preventing Jews from staying at exclusive hotels are all part of our recent history—and create the illusion of inferiority or unacceptability.

Stateways Can Change Folkways

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that separate but equal schools were, by definition, unequal. In the words of Chief Justice Earl Warren, when black children are separated from white children on the basis of race alone, it "generates a feeling of inferiority
as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone. Without our quite realizing it, this decision launched our nation into one of the most exciting, large-scale social experiments ever conducted.

In the aftermath of this historic decision, many people were opposed to integrating the schools on “humanitarian” grounds. They predicted a holocaust if the races were forced to mingle in schools. They argued that laws cannot force people to get along with each other. This echoed the sentiments of the distinguished sociologist William Graham Sumner, who, years earlier, had stated, “Stateways don’t change folkways.” What Sumner meant, of course, is that you can’t legislate morality or tolerance. Many people urged that desegregation be delayed until attitudes could be changed.

Social psychologists at that time, of course, believed that the way to change behavior is to change attitudes. Thus, if you can get bigoted white adults to become less prejudiced against blacks, then they will not hesitate to allow their children to attend school with blacks. Although they should have known better, many social scientists were relatively confident that they could change bigoted attitudes by launching information campaigns. They took a “sixteen-millimeter” approach to the reduction of prejudice: If prejudiced people believe blacks are shiftless and lazy, then all you have to do is show them a movie depicting that blacks are industrious, decent people. The idea is that you can combat misinformation with information. If Shakespeare believes Jews are conniving bloodsuckers because he has been exposed to misinformation about Jews, expose him to a more accurate range of information about Jews and his prejudice will fade away. If most white South Africans believe blacks commit virtually all the crimes, show them the white convicts and they’ll change their beliefs. Unfortunately, it is not quite that simple. Whether prejudice is largely a function of economic conflict, conformity to social norms, or deeply rooted personality needs, it is not easily changed by an information campaign. Over the years, most people become deeply committed to their prejudicial behavior. To develop an open, accepting attitude toward minorities when all of your friends and associates are still prejudiced is no easy task. A mere movie cannot undo a way of thinking and a way of behaving that has persisted over the years.

As the reader of this book has learned, where important issues are involved, information campaigns fail because people are in-
clined not to sit still and take in information that is dissonant with their beliefs. Paul Lazarsfeld, for example, described a series of radio broadcasts in the early 1940s designed to reduce ethnic prejudice by presenting information about various ethnic groups in a warm, sympathetic manner. One program was devoted to a description of Polish-Americans, another to Italian-Americans, and so forth. Who was listening? The major part of the audience for the program about Polish-Americans consisted of Polish-Americans. And guess who made up most of the audience for the program on Italian-Americans? Right. Moreover, as we have seen, if people are compelled to listen to information uncongenial to their deep-seated attitudes, they will reject it, distort it, or ignore it—in much the same way Mr. X maintained his negative attitude against Jews despite Mr. Y’s information campaign and in much the same way the Dartmouth and Princeton students distorted the film of the football game they watched. For most people, prejudice is too deeply rooted in their own belief systems, is too consistent with their day-to-day behavior, and receives too much support and encouragement from the people around them to be reduced by a book, a film, or a radio broadcast.

The Effects of Equal-Status Contact. Although changes in attitude might induce changes in behavior, as we have seen, it is often difficult to change attitudes through education. What social psychologists have long known, but have only recently begun to understand, is that changes in behavior can affect changes in attitudes. On the simplest level, it has been argued that, if blacks and whites could be brought into direct contact, prejudiced individuals would come into contact with the reality of their own experience, not simply a stereotype; eventually, this would lead to greater understanding. Of course, the contact must take place in a situation in which blacks and whites have equal status; throughout history many whites have always had a great deal of contact with blacks, but typically in situations in which the blacks played such menial roles as slaves, porters, dishwashers, shoe-shine boys, washroom attendants, and domestics. This kind of contact only serves to increase stereotyping by whites and thus adds fuel to their prejudice against blacks. It also serves to increase the resentment and anger of blacks. Until recently, equal-status contact has been rare, both because of educational and occupational inequities in our
society and because of residential segregation. The 1954 Supreme Court decision was the beginning of a gradual change in the frequency of equal-status contact.

Occasionally, even before 1954, isolated instances of equal-status integration had taken place. The effects tended to support the notion that behavior change will produce attitude change. In a pioneering study, Morton Deutsch and Mary Ellen Collins examined the attitudes of whites toward blacks in public housing projects in 1951. Specifically, in one housing project, black and white families were assigned to buildings in a segregated manner; that is, they were assigned to separate buildings in the same project. In another project, the assignment was integrated; black and white families were assigned to the same building. Residents in the integrated project reported a greater positive change in their attitudes toward blacks after moving into the project than did residents of the segregated project. From these findings, it would appear that stateways can change folkways, that you can legislate morality—not directly, of course, but through the medium of equal-status contact. If diverse racial groups can be brought together under conditions of equal status, they stand a chance of getting to know each other better. As Pettigrew has recently found, this can increase understanding and decrease tension, all other things being equal. It should be noted that the Deutsch and Collins study took place in public housing projects rather than in private residential areas. This is a crucial factor that will be discussed in a moment.

The Vicarious Effects of Desegregation. It wasn’t until much later that social psychologists began to entertain the notion that desegregation can affect the values of people who do not even have the opportunity to have direct contact with minority groups. This can occur through the mechanism referred to in Chapter 5 as the psychology of inevitability. Specifically, if I know that you and I will inevitably be in close contact, and I don’t like you, I will experience dissonance. In order to reduce dissonance, I will try to convince myself that you are not as bad as I had previously thought. I will set about looking for your positive characteristics and will try to ignore, or minimize the importance of, your negative characteristics. Accordingly, the mere fact that I know I must at some point be in close contact with you will force me to change my prejudiced attitudes about you, all other things being equal. As we saw earlier,
laboratory experiments have confirmed this prediction: For example, children who believed they must inevitably eat a previously disliked vegetable began to convince themselves that it wasn't as bad as they had previously thought. Similarly, college women who knew they were going to spend several weeks working intimately with a woman who had several positive and negative qualities developed a great fondness for that woman before they even met her; this did not occur when they were not led to anticipate working with her in the future.

Admittedly, it's a far cry from a bowl of vegetables to relations between blacks, Latinos, and whites. Few social psychologists are so naive as to believe that deep-seated racial intolerance can be eliminated if people reduce their dissonance simply by coming to terms with what they believe to be inevitable events. I would suggest that, under ideal conditions, such events can begin to unfreeze prejudiced attitudes and produce a diminution of hostile feelings in most individuals. I will discuss what I mean by "ideal conditions" in a moment; but first, let us put a little more meat on those theoretical bones. How might the process of dissonance reduction take place?

Turn the clock back to the late 1950s. Imagine a 45-year-old white male whose 16-year-old daughter attends a segregated school. Let us assume he has a negative attitude toward blacks, based in part on his belief that blacks are shiftless and lazy and that all black males are oversexed and potential rapists. Suddenly, the edict is handed down by the Justice Department: The following autumn, his fair-haired young daughter must go to an integrated school. State and local officials, while perhaps not liking the idea, clearly convey the fact that nothing can be done to prevent it; it's the law of the land, and it must be obeyed. The father might, of course, refuse to allow his child to obtain an education or he could send her to an expensive private school. But such measures are either terribly drastic or terribly costly. So he decides he must send her to an integrated school. His cognition that his fair-haired young daughter must inevitably attend the same school with blacks is dissonant with his cognition that blacks are shiftless rapists. What does he do? My guess is that he will begin to reexamine his beliefs about blacks. Are they really all that shiftless? Do they really go around raping people? He may take another look—this time, with a strong inclination to look for the good qualities in blacks rather than to concoct and exaggerate bad, unacceptable qualities.
would guess that, by the time September rolls around, his attitude toward blacks would have become unfrozen and would have shifted in a positive direction. If this shift can be bolstered by positive events after desegregation—for example, if his daughter has pleasant and peaceful interactions with her black schoolmates—a major change in the father’s attitudes is likely to result. Again, this analysis is admittedly oversimplified. But the basic process holds. And look at the advantages this process has over an information campaign. A mechanism has been triggered that motivated the father to alter his negative stereotype of blacks.

My analysis strongly suggests that a particular kind of public policy would be potentially most beneficial to society—a policy exactly the opposite of what has been generally recommended. As mentioned previously, following the 1954 Supreme Court decision, there was a general feeling that integration must proceed slowly. Most public officials and many social scientists believed that, in order to achieve harmonious racial relations, integration should be delayed until people could be reeducated to become less prejudiced. In short, the general belief in 1954 was that the behavior (integration) must follow a cognitive change. My analysis suggests that the best way to produce eventual interracial harmony would be to start with behavioral change. Moreover, and most important, the sooner the individuals realize integration is inevitable, the sooner their prejudiced attitudes will begin to change. On the other hand, this process can be (and has been) sabotaged by public officials by fostering the belief that integration can be circumvented or delayed. This serves to create the illusion that the event is not inevitable. In such circumstances, there will be no attitude change; the result will be an increase in turmoil and disharmony. Let’s go back to our previous example: If the father of the fair-haired daughter is led (by the statements and tactics of a governor, a mayor, a school-board chairman, or a local sheriff) to believe there’s a way out of integration, he will feel no need to reexamine his negative beliefs about blacks. The result is apt to be violent opposition to integration.

Consistent with this reasoning is the fact that, as desegregation has spread, favorable attitudes toward desegregation have increased. In 1942, only 30 percent of the whites in this country favored segregated schools; by 1956, the figure rose to 49 percent; in 1970, to 75 percent. Finally, in 1980, as it became increasingly clear that school desegregation was inevitable, the figure ap-
proached 90 percent. The change in the South (taken by itself) is even more dramatic. In 1942, only 2 percent of the whites in the South favored integrated schools; in 1956, while most southerners still believed the ruling could be circumvented, only 14 percent favored desegregation; but by 1970, as desegregation continued, just under 50 percent favored desegregation—and the figures continued to climb in the 1980s. Of course, such statistical data do not constitute absolute proof that the reason people are changing their attitudes toward school desegregation is that they are coming to terms with what is inevitable—but the data are highly suggestive.

In a careful analysis of the process and effects of school desegregation, Thomas Pettigrew raised the question of why, in the early years of desegregation, violence occurred in some communities, such as Little Rock, Arkansas, and not in others, such as Norfolk and Winston-Salem, North Carolina. His conclusion, which lends further support to my reasoning, was that “violence has generally resulted in localities where at least some of the authorities give prior hints that they would gladly return to segregation if disturbances occurred; peaceful integration has generally followed firm and forceful leadership.” In other words, if people were not given the opportunity to reduce dissonance, there was violence. As early as 1953, Kenneth B. Clark observed the same phenomenon during desegregation in some of the border states. He discovered that immediate desegregation was far more effective than gradual desegregation. Moreover, violence occurred in those places where ambiguous or inconsistent policies were employed or where community leaders tended to vacillate. The same kind of thing happened when military units began to desegregate during World War II: trouble was greatest where policies were ambiguous.

But All Other Things Are Not Always Equal. In the preceding section, I presented an admittedly oversimplified view of a very complex phenomenon. I did this intentionally as a way of indicating how things can proceed theoretically under ideal conditions. But conditions are seldom ideal. There are almost always some complicating circumstances. Let us now look at some of the complications and then proceed to discuss how they might be eliminated or reduced.

When I stated that prejudice was reduced in an integrated housing project, I made special note of the fact that it was a public
housing project. Some complications are introduced if integration involves privately owned houses. Primarily, there is a strong belief among whites that, when blacks move into a neighborhood, real estate values decrease. This belief introduces economic conflict and competition, which militate against the reduction of prejudiced attitudes. Indeed, systematic investigations in integrated private housing show an increase in prejudiced attitudes among the white residents.56

Moreover, as I mentioned, the experiments on the psychology of inevitability were done in the laboratory, where the dislikes involved in the studies were almost certainly not as intense or deep-seated as racial prejudice is in the real world. Although it is encouraging to note that these findings were paralleled by the data from actual desegregation efforts, it would be naïve and misleading to conclude that the road to desegregation will always be smooth as long as individuals are given the opportunity to come to terms with inevitability. Frequently, trouble begins once desegregation starts. This is often due, in part, to the fact that the contact between white and minority-group children (especially if it is not begun until high school) is usually not equal-status contact. Picture the scene: A 10th-grade boy from a poor black or Latino family, after being subjected to a second-rate education, is suddenly dropped into a learning situation in a predominantly white, middle-class school taught by white, middle-class teachers, where he finds he must compete with white, middle-class students who have been reared to hold white, middle-class values. In effect, he is thrust into a highly competitive situation for which he is unprepared, a situation in which the rules are not his rules and pay-offs are made for abilities he has not yet developed. He is competing in a situation that, psychologically, is far removed from his home turf. Ironically enough, these factors tend to produce a diminution of his self-esteem—the very factor that influenced the Supreme Court decision in the first place.57 In his careful analysis of the research on desegregation, Walter Stephan58 found no studies indicating significant increases in self-esteem among black children, while 25 percent of the studies he researched showed a significant drop in their self-esteem following desegregation. In addition, prejudice was not substantially reduced. Stephan found that it increased in almost as many cases as it decreased.

With these data in mind, it is not surprising to learn that a newly integrated high school is typically a tense place. It is natural for minority-group students to attempt to raise their self-esteem.
One way of raising self-esteem is to stick together, lash out at whites, assert their individuality, reject white values and white leadership, and so on.99

Let me sum up the discussion thus far: (1) Equal-status contact under the ideal conditions of no economic conflict can and does produce increased understanding and a diminution of prejudice.100 (2) The psychology of inevitability can and does set up pressures to reduce prejudiced attitudes and can set the stage for smooth, nonviolent school desegregation under ideal conditions. (3) Where economic conflict is present (as in integrated neighborhoods of private domiciles), there is often an increase in prejudiced attitudes. (4) Where school desegregation results in a competitive situation, especially if there are serious inequities for the minority groups, there is often an increase in hostility of blacks or Latinos toward whites that is at least partially due to an attempt to regain some lost self-esteem.

Interdependence—A Possible Solution

School desegregation can open the door to increased understanding among students but, by itself, it is not the ultimate solution. The issue is not simply getting youngsters of various races and ethnic backgrounds into the same school; it’s what happens after they get there that is crucial. As we have seen, if the atmosphere is a highly competitive one, whatever tensions exist initially might actually be increased as a result of contact. The tension that is frequently the initial result of school desegregation reminds me somewhat of the behavior of the young boys in the summer camp experiment by Muzaffer Sherif and his colleagues.101 Recall that hostility was produced between two groups by placing them in situations of conflict and competition. Once the hostility was established, it could no longer be reduced simply by removing the conflicts and the competition. As a matter of fact, once distrust was firmly established, bringing the groups together in equal-status, noncompetitive situations served to increase the hostility and distrust. For example, the children in these groups had trouble with each other even when they were simply sitting near each other watching a movie.

How did Sherif eventually succeed in reducing the hostility? By placing the two groups of boys in situations in which they were
mutually interdependent—situations in which they had to cooperate with each other in order to accomplish their goal. For example, the investigators set up an emergency situation by damaging the water-supply system. The only way the system could be repaired was if all the children cooperated immediately. On another occasion, the camp truck broke down while the boys were on a camping trip. In order to get the truck going again, it was necessary to pull it up a rather steep hill. This could be accomplished only if all the youngsters pulled together—regardless of whether they were Eagles or Rattlers. Eventually, there was a diminution of hostile feelings and negative stereotyping. The boys made friends across groups, began to get along better, and began to cooperate spontaneously.

The key factor seems to be mutual interdependence—a situation wherein individuals need one another in order to accomplish their goal. Several researchers have demonstrated the benefits of cooperation in well-controlled laboratory experiments. Morton Deutsch, for example, has shown that problem-solving groups are both friendlier and more attentive when a cooperative atmosphere is introduced than when a competitive atmosphere prevails. Similarly, research by Patricia Keenan and Peter Carnevale has shown that cooperation within groups can also foster cooperation between groups. That is, cooperative relations that are established in one group often carry over when that group is later called upon to interact with a different group. In their study, groups that engaged in a cooperative task were more cooperative in a subsequent negotiation with another group compared to groups that had initially worked in a competitive fashion.

Unfortunately, cooperation and interdependence are not characteristic of the process that exists in most school classrooms, even at the elementary level. We have already alluded to the competitive nature of the process; let us take a closer look at it. First, let's define it. Whenever people interact, two things exist simultaneously. One of these things is the content and the other is the process. By content, I simply mean the substance of their encounter; by process, I mean the dynamics of the encounter. In a classroom, for example, the content could be arithmetic, geography, social studies, or music; the process is the manner in which these lessons are taught. It goes without saying that the content is of great importance. However, the importance of the process is frequently underestimated. But it is through the process that pupils learn a great deal about the world they live in. In-
deed, I would even go so far as to say that, in some respects, the process is a more important source of learning than the content itself.

I was provided with a golden opportunity to observe classroom process some years ago when I was called in as a consultant to the Austin, Texas, school system. Desegregation had just taken place; this was followed by a great deal of turmoil and a number of unpleasant incidents. My colleagues and I entered the system, not to smooth over the unpleasantness but, rather, to see if there was anything we might do to help desegregation achieve some of the positive goals envisioned for it. The first thing my colleagues and I did was to systematically observe the process. We tried to do this with fresh eyes—as if we were visitors from another planet—and the most typical process we observed was this: The teacher stands in front of the class, asks a question, and waits for the children to indicate that they know the answer. Most frequently, 6 to 10 youngsters strain in their seats and wave their hands to attract the teacher’s attention. They seem eager to be called on. Several other students sit quietly with their eyes averted, as if trying to make themselves invisible. When the teacher calls on one of the students, there are looks of disappointment, dismay, and unhappiness on the faces of those students who were eagerly raising their hands but were not called on. If the student who is called on comes up with the right answer, the teacher smiles, nods approvingly, and goes on to the next question. This is a great reward for the child who happens to be called on. At the same time that the fortunate student is coming up with the right answer and being smiled upon by the teacher, an audible groan can be heard coming from the children who were striving to be called on but were ignored. It is obvious they are disappointed because they missed an opportunity to show the teacher how smart and quick they are.

Through this process, students learn several things. First, they learn there is one and only one expert in the classroom: the teacher. They also learn there is one and only one correct answer to any question the teacher asks—namely, the answer the teacher has in mind. The students’ task is to figure out which answer the teacher expects. The students also learn that the payoff comes from pleasing the teacher by actively displaying how quick, smart, neat, clean, and well behaved they are. If they do this successfully, they will gain the respect and love of this powerful person. This powerful person will then be kind to them and will tell their parents what wonderful
children they are. There is no payoff for them in consulting with their peers. Indeed, their peers are their enemies—to be beaten. Moreover, collaboration is frowned upon by most teachers; if it occurs during class time it is seen as disruptive, and if it takes place during an exam, it is called cheating.

The game is very competitive and the stakes are very high; in an elementary-school classroom, the youngsters are competing for the respect and approval of one of the two or three most important people in their world (important for most students, anyway). If you are a student who knows the correct answer and the teacher calls on one of your peers, it is likely that you will sit there hoping and praying he or she will come up with the wrong answer so you will have a chance to show the teacher how smart you are. Those who fail when called on, or those who do not even raise their hands and compete, have a tendency to resent those who succeed. Frequently, the “losers” become envious and jealous of the successful students; perhaps they tease them or ridicule them by referring to them as “teacher’s pets.” They might even use physical aggression against them in the school yard. The successful students, for their part, often hold the unsuccessful students in contempt; they consider them to be dumb and uninteresting. The upshot of this process—which takes place, to a greater or lesser extent, in most classrooms—is that friendliness and understanding are not promoted among any of the children in the same classroom. Quite the reverse. The process tends to create enmity, even among children of the same racial group. When ethnic or racial unfamiliarity is added, or when tension brought about by forced busing flavors the stew of an already unhappy process, the situation can become extremely difficult and unpleasant.

Although competitiveness in the classroom is typical, it is not inevitable. In my research, I found that many classroom teachers were eager to try more cooperative techniques. Accordingly, my colleagues and I developed a simple method wherein children were put into interdependent learning groups; we systematically compared their performance, satisfaction, and liking for one another with the responses of children in more traditional, competitive classroom situations. We called our method the jigsaw technique because it works very much like a jigsaw puzzle.

An example will clarify: In our initial experiment, we entered a fifth-grade classroom of a newly desegregated school. In this classroom, the children were studying biographies of famous Ameri-
The upcoming lesson happened to be a biography of Joseph Pulitzer, the famous journalist. First, we constructed a biography of Pulitzer consisting of six paragraphs. Paragraph one was about Pulitzer's ancestors and how they came to this country; paragraph two was about Pulitzer as a little boy and how he grew up; paragraph three was about Pulitzer as a young man, his education, and his early employment; paragraph four was about his middle age and how he founded his newspaper; and so forth. Each major aspect of Joseph Pulitzer's life was contained in a separate paragraph. We mimeographed our biography of Joseph Pulitzer, cut each copy of the biography into six one-paragraph sections, and gave every child in each of the six-person learning groups one paragraph about his life. Thus, each learning group had within it the entire biography of Joseph Pulitzer, but each child had no more than one-sixth of the story. Like a jigsaw puzzle, each child had one piece of the puzzle, and each child was dependent on the other children in the group for the completion of the big picture. In order to learn about Joseph Pulitzer, each child had to master a paragraph and teach it to the others. Students took their paragraphs and went off by themselves to study them. In learning the paragraphs, the children were free to consult with their counterparts in one of the other learning groups. That is, if Johnnie had been dealt Pulitzer as a young man, he might have consulted with Christina, who was in a different learning group and had also been dealt Pulitzer as a young man. They could use each other to rehearse and clarify for themselves the important aspects of that phase of Joseph Pulitzer's life. A short time later, the students came back into session with their six-person groups. They were informed that they had a certain amount of time to communicate their knowledge to one another. They were also informed that, at the end of the time (or soon thereafter), they would be tested on their knowledge.

When thrown on their own resources, the children eventually learned to teach and to listen to one another. The children gradually learned that none of them could do well without the aid of each person in the group—and that each member had a unique and essential contribution to make. Suppose you and I are children in the same group. You've been dealt Pulitzer as a young man; I've been dealt Pulitzer as an old man. The only way I can learn about Pulitzer as a young man is to pay close attention to what you are saying. You are a very important resource for me. The teacher is no
longer the sole resource—or even an important resource; indeed, the teacher isn't even in the group. Instead, every kid in the circle becomes important to me. I do well if I pay attention to other kids; I do poorly if I don't. I no longer get rewarded for trying to please the teacher at your expense. It's a whole new ball game.

But cooperative behavior doesn't happen all at once. Typically, it requires several days before children use this technique effectively. Old habits are difficult to break. The students in our experimental group had grown accustomed to competing during all of their years in school. For the first few days, most of them tried to compete—even though competitiveness was dysfunctional. Let me illustrate with an actual example, typical of the way the children stumbled toward the learning of the cooperative process. In one of our groups there was a Mexican-American boy, whom we will call Carlos. Carlos was not very articulate in English, his second language. He had learned over the years how to keep quiet in class because frequently, when he had spoken up in the past, he was ridiculed. In this instance, he had a great deal of trouble communicating his paragraph to the other children; he was very uncomfortable about it. He liked the traditional way better. This is not surprising because, in the system we introduced, Carlos was forced to speak, whereas before he could always deindividuate himself and keep a low profile in the classroom. But the situation was even more complex than that; it might even be said the teacher and Carlos had entered into a conspiracy—that they were in collusion. Carlos was perfectly willing to be quiet. In the past, the teacher called on him occasionally; he would stumble, stammer, and fall into an embarrassed silence. Several of his peers would make fun of him. The teacher had learned not to call on him anymore. The decision probably came from the purest of intentions—the teacher simply did not want to humiliate him. But, by ignoring him, she had written him off. The implication was that he was not worth bothering with; at least the other kids in the classroom got that message. They believed there was one good reason why the teacher wasn't calling on Carlos—he was stupid. Indeed, even Carlos began to draw this conclusion. This is part of the dynamic of how desegregation, when coupled with a competitive process, can produce unequal-status contact, and can result in even greater enmity between ethnic groups and a loss of self-esteem for members of disadvantaged ethnic minorities.105

Let us go back to our six-person group. Carlos, who had to report on Joseph Pulitzer's young manhood, was having a very hard
time. He stammered, hesitated, and fidgeted. The other kids in the
circle were not very helpful. They had grown accustomed to a com-
petitive process and responded out of this old, overlearned habit.
They knew what to do when a kid stumbled—especially a kid whom
they believed to be stupid. They ridiculed him, put him down, and
teased him. During our experiment, it was Mary who was observed
to say: "Aw, you don't know it, you're dumb, you're stupid. You don't
know what you're doing." In our initial experiment, the groups were
being loosely monitored by a research assistant who was floating
from group to group. When this incident occurred, our assistant
made one brief intervention: "Okay, you can do that if you want to. It
might be fun for you, but it's not going to help you learn about Joseph
Pulitzer's young manhood. The exam will take place in an hour." No-
tice how the reinforcement contingencies had shifted. No longer did
Mary gain much from putting Carlos down; in fact, she now stood to
lose a great deal. After a few days and several similar experiences, it
began to dawn on the students in Carlos's group that the only way
they could learn about Joseph Pulitzer's young manhood was by pay-
ing attention to what Carlos had to say. Gradually, they began to de-
velop into pretty good interviewers. Instead of ignoring or ridiculing
Carlos when he was having a little trouble communicating what he
knew, they began asking probing questions—the kinds of questions
that made it easier for Carlos to communicate what was in his mind.
Carlos began to respond to this treatment by becoming more re-
laxed; with increased relaxation came an improvement in his ability
to communicate. After a couple of weeks, the other children con-
cluded that Carlos was a lot smarter than they had thought he was.
They began to see things in him they had never seen before. They
began to like him. Carlos began to enjoy school more and began to
see the Anglo students in his group not as tormentors but as helpful
and responsible people. Moreover, as he began to feel increasingly
comfortable in class and started to gain more confidence in himself,
his academic performance began to improve. The vicious cycle had
been reversed; the elements that had been causing a downward spiral
were changed—the spiral now began to move upward.

Within a few years, my students and I replicated this experiment
in scores of classrooms across the country. The results are clear and
consistent. Children in the interdependent jigsaw classroom grow to
like each other better, develop a greater liking for school, and develop
greater self-esteem than children in the traditional classroom. The in-
crease in liking among children in the jigsaw classroom crosses ethnic and racial boundaries. The exam performance of members of ethnic minorities is higher in the jigsaw classroom than in the traditional classroom. For example, in one study my colleagues and I found that, within 2 weeks of participating in the jigsaw groups, minority-group children increased their performance almost an entire letter grade, without any cost to the performance of the other children. Finally, teachers enjoyed using the technique and found it to be effective. Most of the teachers who agreed to use the jigsaw method as part of our experiment continued to use it after the experiment was over.

Several recent experiments indicate that the jigsaw method’s effectiveness in reducing prejudice is not limited to young children. In one such experiment, Donna Desforges and her colleagues had college students interact with a confederate who was portrayed as a former mental patient. The students were led to expect him to behave in a rather weird manner. The interactions were part of a structured learning situation, with some of the students interacting with the “former mental patient” in a jigsaw group, while others interacted with him in a more traditional learning climate. The results are striking: Those in the jigsaw group were quickly able to let go of their stereotypical expectations; they liked him better and enjoyed interacting with him more than did those who encountered him in the more traditional learning situation. Moreover, people who went through the jigsaw session described mental patients, in general, far more positively.

Underlying Mechanisms. Why does the jigsaw strategy produce such positive results? One reason for its effectiveness is that this cooperative strategy places people in a favor-doing situation. That is, each individual in a group, by sharing his or her knowledge with the other members, is doing them a favor. You will recall that, in Chapter 5, we discussed an experiment by Mike Leippe and Donna Eisenstadt that demonstrated that people who acted in a way that benefited others subsequently came to feel more favorably toward the people they helped.

A different but complementary mechanism was nicely illustrated in an experiment by Samuel Gaertner and his colleagues demonstrating that what seems to happen is that the process of cooperation lowers barriers between groups by changing the cognitive categories people use. In other words, cooperation changes our tendency to categorize the out-group from “those people” to “us people.” In addition,
the jigsaw technique encourages the development of empathy. Recall that, in the preceding chapter, I mentioned that increasing one's empathy—the ability to put oneself in another's position—is beneficial to human relations, enhancing helping behavior and decreasing aggression. In the classroom, the best way to maximize learning—especially in the jigsaw situation—is to pay close attention to the child who is speaking. For example, if I am in a jigsaw group with Carlos and want to learn what he knows, not only must I listen attentively to him, but I must also put myself in his shoes in order to ask him questions in a clear, nonthreatening manner. In the process, I learn a lot not only about the subject, and not only about Carlos, but also about the process of seeing the world through another person's eyes.

This was beautifully demonstrated in an experiment by one of my students, Diane Bridgeman. Bridgeman administered a sequence of cartoons to 10-year-old children, half of whom had spent 8 weeks participating in jigsaw classes. The cartoons were aimed at measuring a child's ability to empathize. In one cartoon, for example, a little boy looks sad as he says good-bye to his father at the airport. In the next frame, a letter carrier delivers a package to the child. When the boy opens it, he finds a toy airplane—and promptly bursts into tears. When Bridgeman asked the children why the little boy cried, almost all of them told her the reason: The airplane reminded the child of being separated from his father, which made him sad. So far, so good. Now for the crucial part. Bridgeman asked the children what the letter carrier who delivered the package was thinking. Most children of that age make a consistent error, based on the egocentric assumption that their own knowledge is universal; specifically, they erroneously assume that the letter carrier would know the boy was sad because the gift reminded him of his father's leaving. The responses of the children who had participated in the jigsaw classes followed a different pattern, however. Because of their jigsaw experience, they were better able to take the letter carrier's perspective; they knew he was not privy to the same information they had and that he wasn't aware of the scene at the airport. Accordingly, the jigsaw children realized the letter carrier would experience confusion at the sight of a little boy crying over receiving a nice present. In sum, participation in jigsaw groups has a general impact on a child's ability to see the world through another person's eyes; this seems to be a major cause of the beneficial effects described above.
One of the most encouraging ramifications of this increase in empathy is that the usual tendency people have of giving themselves the benefit of the doubt can now be extended to other people, including people who aren't members of their own ethnic or racial group. Let me explain. You will recall that in making attributions about the cause of failure, people tend to give themselves the benefit of the doubt—but rarely extend that benefit to others. Thus, if I do poorly on an exam, I tend to conclude that I was sleepy or that the questions were unfair; but if you do poorly on an exam, I tend to conclude that you were stupid or lazy. In a series of experiments, my colleagues and I corroborated this finding: We found that, in a competitive situation, not only do children attribute their rivals' failures to lack of ability, they also attribute their rivals' successes to luck. But here is the interesting part: We also found that, in a cooperative situation (like jigsaw), children are as generous with their partners as they are with themselves; they attribute their partner's success to skill and their failure to an unlucky break. This is exciting because, when we can begin to think of members of other races and ethnic groups with the same generosity we extend to ourselves, the ultimate attribution error breaks down and prejudice is reduced at a deep level.

My students and I invented the jigsaw technique in 1971. Subsequently, similar cooperative techniques were developed by others. Using both the jigsaw method and these other cooperative strategies, the striking results described in this chapter have been repeated in thousands of classrooms in all regions of the country and abroad. John McConahay, a leading expert on race relations, has called cooperative learning the single most effective practice for improving race relations in desegregated schools.

The Challenge of Diversity. Diversity in a nation, in a city, in a neighborhood, or in a school is an exciting thing. Desegregation has given us the opportunity to benefit from that diversity. But in order to maximize those benefits, it is vital for us to learn to relate to one another across racial and ethnic lines in as harmonious a way as possible. It goes without saying that we have a long way to go before achieving anything resembling racial and ethnic harmony in this country. The introduction of cooperative learning into our classrooms has helped move us toward this goal. As the century was drawing to a close, the problems and challenges of an ethnically diverse nation were graphically depicted by the Pulitzer
Prize-winning reporter David Shipler. A skillful observer, Shipler traveled the length and breadth of this country interviewing a wide variety of people about their racial feelings and attitudes. His rather bleak conclusion is summed up in the title of his book, *A Country of Strangers.* Shipler’s observation is that most Americans simply do not have close relationships with people of other races; therefore, a great deal of suspicion and misunderstanding prevails. Reading Shipler’s book reminded me of a statement made to me by a Texas school principal in 1971, when desegregation was causing problems in his school: “Look, professor, the government can force black kids and white kids to go to the same school,” he said, “but no one can force them to enjoy hanging out with each other.” (The astute reader will recognize this as a variation on the theme struck by William Graham Sumner, described earlier in this chapter.)

As if to underscore his point, that same day, during lunch time, as I wandered around the schoolyard, what I saw was not an integrated school—far from it. What I saw were several clusters of self-segregated groups: Black youngsters clustered together in one group; Latino youngsters clustered together in another group; white youngsters clustered together in still another group. Needless to say, it is not surprising to find that people of the same race and ethnicity might prefer one another’s company. And, by itself, there is certainly nothing wrong with that—unless such preferences become rigidified into exclusionary behavior. A few months after initiating the jigsaw technique in that same school, when I happened to walk through the schoolyard, I was suddenly (and quite unexpectedly) struck by the realization that virtually all of these clusters of students were fully integrated. No one “forced” the youngsters to like one another; they were actually choosing to relate to one another across racial and ethnic boundaries. The jigsaw experience was clearly easing some of the earlier distrust and suspicion. I recall thinking, “This is how it’s supposed to be!”

Two centuries of de facto segregation may have turned most of our nation’s adults into “a country of strangers,” but those tens of thousands of children who have experienced learning together cooperatively give us hope for the future—a hope that they will eventually grow into adults who have learned to enjoy and benefit from diversity—who have learned to like and respect one another and who will continue to learn from one another.