

## INTRODUCTION

# The changing place of prejudice: a migration underground

### The secret life of subtle prejudice

You used to be able to spot them a mile away. Bigots. If they weren't wearing white hoods, you could count on their willingness to identify themselves in conversation by their unabashed use of racial epithets and sexist stereotypes. They were the co-workers telling homophobic jokes in the break room. They were the people who insisted that a woman could never be president because her pre-menstrual syndrome might one day lead to nuclear war. Bigots – loud and proud and easy to recognize from their behavior and conversation. The bigot was able to find justification and comfort in a deeply rooted set of ideas supported by prejudice at cultural and institutional levels.

Regardless of the precise stereotypes, people of color, women, poor people, and sexual minorities have historically been represented as genetically inferior. Since the 1950s, academics, activists, and policy-makers have made serious efforts to focus on social and political conditions, and to challenge the very concept of a biological basis of "race."<sup>1</sup> The sixties and seventies saw massive social movements advocating civil rights, feminism, and gay liberation. There have been distinctive shifts that indicate a greater willingness to understand the shaping

role of environmental factors, to explore differences without always assuming deficits, and at least to *pretend* to value egalitarianism and equal opportunity. As biological and social sciences have challenged claims regarding the biological basis of human differentiation, legislative (e.g. *Brown vs. Board of Education*) and cultural transformations have made overt racism, sexism, and homophobia less socially acceptable. Many individuals now acknowledge that prejudice has had devastating consequences, but they also believe that prejudice is largely a thing of the past.

That overt and conspicuous bigotry has decreased is supported by research. In the United Kingdom, in 1987, 75% of people polled expressed the view that homosexuality was always or mostly wrong. By 2008, only 32% expressed this view.<sup>2</sup> In 1989, a third of British men agreed with the statement, “A man’s job is to earn money; a woman’s job is to look after the home and family.” By 2008, agreement with that statement had dropped to 17%.<sup>3</sup> In the early 1960s, only one third of white Americans believed that blacks and whites should be allowed by law to marry one other. By 1995, four of every five whites believed they should be.<sup>4</sup> Are such changes in reported attitudes reflecting heartfelt beliefs or is this surface reporting? Susan Fiske<sup>5</sup> observes that the more public the arena, and the more abstract the principle, the more marked the change in attitudes toward tolerance. For instance, in the United States, 68% of respondents endorsed racial segregation in schools in the 1940s and only 4% endorsed it by 1995. This sounds like tremendous progress. But while most white Americans now report being willing to live next door to a black family, 70% report that they would move away if blacks came into their neighborhood in “great numbers.” Whites appear, then, to be more supportive of equal rights in principle than of equal rights in practice. When commitment is required to perform specific actions involving their own lives and the status of their own group, they are much less receptive to the idea of equality. For example, only about 15% of whites

believe that the government should help African Americans improve their living standards because of past discrimination. Among Britons, a substantial number of people think that equal opportunity measures for blacks and Asians have “gone too far.”<sup>6</sup>

On the one hand, overt bigotry appears to have decreased, but on the other hand, people are not necessarily willing to give up their own privileged status. Dominant groups appear increasingly tolerant, but when it comes to sacrificing some of their own comfort or endorsing government assistance for subordinate groups, they are disinclined to favor these remedies. In terms of racial and ethnic attitudes, it appears, then, that whites’ attitudes toward ethnic minorities in the early part of the twenty-first century are ambivalent and consist of both positive and negative elements. There is a consensus among social scientists that prejudice has changed in the last several decades. The number of individuals *reporting* prejudiced attitudes has decreased. At the same time, the *location* of prejudice has changed; it now resides underground, in a subtler form. This change of location in social space can manifest in a discrepancy between what people report and how they behave. Angela Davis<sup>7</sup> talks about the *migration* of racism. “It moves, it travels, it migrates, and it transmutes itself.”<sup>8</sup> Her analysis of the ability of racism to change its form and location can apply to other forms of prejudice as well. It is this changing place of prejudice that is examined in this book.

### **Benign bigotry: an introduction to the harm of subtle prejudice**

Given the changing nature of prejudice and its often covert and unconscious forms, how do we go about studying it? How do we make subtle prejudice visible, and how do we reveal its effects? This book examines various manifestations of subtle prejudice. This analysis harnesses the power of social psychological theory and research to explain common, everyday manifestations of subtle

prejudice and deconstructs the myths created to maintain these attitudes. I will use *benign bigotry* as an umbrella term to describe subtle prejudice – prejudices that are automatic, covert, often unconscious, unintentional, and sometimes undetectable by the target. The term is not intended to suggest that the subtle forms of bigotry described in this book are less harmful than other forms. They are not. In fact, benign bigotry is extremely harmful because it is insidious. With an understanding of benign bigotry comes the recognition that behaviors and attitudes may appear harmless and even positive, when they represent only a shift in the salience, not the strength, of prejudice. In the remaining pages of this introduction, I discuss some of the technical and analytical ways by which social psychologists examine subtle forms of prejudice. Some of this research focuses on one particular kind of bigotry and some applies to various myths and faulty assumptions. The introduction ends with a discussion about the scope of this book.

Because of the changing place of prejudice, social psychologists now distinguish between explicit and implicit prejudice.<sup>9</sup> Explicit prejudice is a set of feelings about others that are consciously accessible, seemingly controllable, and self-reported. Racism based on explicit prejudice is referred to as *old-fashioned* or *overt* racism. Implicit prejudice may or may not be consciously accessible, and may be difficult or impossible to control. Implicit prejudice is believed to be a consequence of years of exposure to associations in the environment, it tends to be impervious to conscious control, and it is relatively stable. Racism based on implicit prejudice has various names: *subtle*, *covert*, *modern*, *ambivalent*, or *aversive*. Because prejudice has changed, we can no longer detect its presence simply by interviewing people and asking whether or not they dislike certain groups. Most people would not admit to being prejudiced nowadays and many of them truly believe they are not prejudiced. This subtle form of prejudice is often studied by capturing the difference between overt self-reports of attitudes and results

obtained using more covert measures in which research participants are unaware that their prejudice is being studied.

Scholars in any of the social sciences may study prejudice and bigotry but it is my contention that social psychologists are well positioned to study subtle forms of prejudice because they, more than those in other disciplines, rely on the experimental method. The experimental method allows the researcher to recreate real-life settings through controlled situations in which measures of prejudice can be taken without the research participant realizing that prejudice is being examined. For instance, a personnel manager might be asked to evaluate resumes of job candidates. The manager is asked to carefully review the applications and to decide whether or not each candidate should be hired. Unbeknownst to the manager, the resumes have been manipulated so that some of the resumes have women's names at the top, while others have men's. The candidates' qualifications are equivalent in the two sets. How qualified is each applicant? Research finds that the answer to that question depends on whether the evaluator believes the applicant to be a woman or a man. Do evaluators have any idea sexism is being measured? Probably not. Do they believe they are discriminatory? Probably not.

Another way to study subtle prejudice using the experimental method is to set up a situation in which respondents can be given the option of responding without appearing that they are actually biased. John Dovidio and Samuel Gaertner's<sup>10</sup> research compares people's tendency to express old-fashioned (overt) racism and what they describe as *aversive* (subtle, ambivalent) racism. They surveyed two sets of white students from the US: one group in 1989 and the second in 1999. In the first phase of the study, they asked students about their racial attitudes (the overt measure). Students responded to statements such as: "*Blacks shouldn't push themselves where they are not wanted,*" and "*I would probably feel somewhat self-conscious dancing with a black person in a public place.*" Later, in the second phase of

the experiment, students were asked to select applicants for a peer counseling program, using interview excerpts as the basis for their choices. The information was manipulated such that the job candidate was either African American or white, and had one of three types of qualifications: clearly strong, ambiguous, or clearly weak. Students were asked whether or not they would recommend each job candidate, and how strongly. Note that, from the student raters' point of view, there was nothing about this procedure that would suggest the students' prejudice was being measured, except at the earlier and seemingly disconnected phase of the experiment. Dovidio and Gaertner hypothesized that, due to the continued emphasis in the US on egalitarian values, the general trend toward the expression of less prejudiced attitudes would be reflected from the earlier sample to the later one. They predicted that over the ten-year testing period, students' overt attitudes about African Americans would become more tolerant. They also speculated that bias in favor of whites and against African Americans would still appear in the subtler measure of assessing job candidate qualifications. Their hypotheses were borne out in their results. Students surveyed in 1999 had lower overt prejudice scores than did those surveyed in 1989. In terms of the students' ratings of job candidates, an interesting pattern emerged that is consistent with the notion of subtle prejudice. There were no differences in the recommendations for black and white candidates who had strong and weak qualifications – clearly qualified black and white students were recommended for hire, while clearly unqualified black and white candidates were not. However, black candidates with ambiguous qualifications were recommended less often than were whites with ambiguous qualifications. When a white job candidate's qualifications were ambiguous, students rated the candidates as if their qualifications were strong, whereas when a black candidate's qualifications were ambiguous, they rated the candidates as if they were weak. Thus whites seem to have been given the benefit of the doubt by other

whites, a benefit not extended to African Americans. Dovidio and Gaertner write:

Because [subtle] racists consciously recognize and endorse egalitarian values, they will not discriminate in situations in which they recognize that discrimination would be obvious to others and themselves . . . However, because aversive racists do possess negative feelings, often unconsciously, discrimination occurs when bias is not obvious or can be rationalized on the basis of some factor other than race. (p. 315)

So, although the students in the 1999 study reported less overt prejudice, they manifested subtle prejudice through the differential treatment of black and white candidates who had ambiguous qualifications. The fact that the discrimination against black candidates and favoritism of white candidates only took place when the applicants had ambiguous qualifications is significant because, in real life, many people's qualifications are not clearly outstanding or clearly deficient. Most individuals fall in the middle. Comedian Chris Rock agrees that most Americans are average, and points out that "average" has different consequences depending on one's race:

Now when you go to a class there are 30 kids in the class: 5 smart, 5 dumb and the rest they're in the middle. And that's just all America is: a nation in the middle, a nation of B and C students . . . [A] black C student can't even be the manager at Burger King. Meanwhile the white C student just happens to be the President of the United States of America!<sup>11</sup>

Chris Rock is referring to the widely known fact that the President of the United States at the time, George W. Bush, was a marginally good student. This observation is borne out in Dovidio and Gaertner's findings – subtle prejudice often operates in ambiguous conditions in which there is a lot of room for idiosyncratic interpretation. When a white person's qualifications are ambiguous, people tend to elevate that person, whereas when a black person's

qualifications are ambiguous, people tend to devalue that person. Many of the examples in this book deal with applications for employment because the consequences of benign bigotry affect people's livelihood and their ability to work and earn income.

Subtle prejudice can also be measured using physiological measures – comparing what participants *say* (an explicit measure) with physiological measures (e.g. changes in heart rate, sweating) indicative of how they *feel* (implicit measures). The implicit measure that has received the most attention since the mid 1990s is the Implicit Association Test (IAT). The IAT measures the strength of association between mental constructs.<sup>12</sup> This computer-based task is essentially a sorting task during which the participant combines people, objects, or symbols with evaluative statements. For instance, a typical IAT on race would have the participant sort white faces and black faces and sort “Good” (e.g. paradise) and “Bad” (e.g. abuse) words at a fast pace. The ease (speed) with which one can sort black faces using the same response (a key press) as for “Good” or for “Bad” words is compared to the ease with which one can sort white faces sharing the same response as “Good” or “Bad” words. This speed reflects the strength of associative links between blacks and goodness/badness and between whites and goodness/badness. Whites tend to sort faces more quickly if white faces are aligned with “good” words and black faces aligned with “bad.”<sup>13</sup> This means that whites react more quickly when the prompt matches the dominant stereotype and react more slowly if the association challenges the stereotype. Studies tend to find a discrepancy between results on the IAT, an implicit measure of attitudes, and responses from self-report surveys, which capture explicit measures of attitudes. This discrepancy suggests that the implicit responses from the IAT reveal one's unguarded, actual attitudes whereas responses from explicit measures reflect one's attitudes filtered through impression management.



### Sources of subtle prejudice

Where does subtle prejudice come from? It comes from an internal conflict in people who want to comply with their non-prejudiced ideals, but who are still affected by the stereotypes about groups in the culture that surrounds them. Prejudiced values and ideas originate from many sources and influences. Prejudiced attitudes can come from the media, from growing up in a prejudiced familial environment, and from not having much contact with people different from oneself. Because of norms against prejudice and anti-discrimination legislation (in many cases it is illegal to discriminate), many people's prejudices take on hidden and sometimes unconscious forms. Subtle racism, for instance, is different in significant ways from *old-fashioned racism*. Old-fashioned racism might produce beliefs articulated as: "*Blacks are lazy,*" or "*Blacks are stupid.*" Differently phrased, but no less pernicious, subtle racism produces statements that disguise prejudice, sometimes even from the speaker. "*I don't have anything against blacks,*" one might say, "*but this particular applicant is not a good fit for our company.*"

### Features of subtle prejudice

What are the features of subtle prejudice? First, subtle prejudice tends to be automatic, covert, unconscious, ambiguous, ambivalent and often unintentional. As will be demonstrated throughout this book, prejudice isn't merely antipathy toward a given group. The content of many prejudices consists of both negative and positive attributes. Unfortunately, "positive" attributes often function to perpetuate a target group's subordination in that the target is perceived as incompetent or in need of protection. It is the ambivalent feelings and subtle behaviors that explain, for instance, how it happens that one member of a minority group is discriminated against in a workplace while another is not. Subtle prejudice

also tends to manifest in ambiguous conditions, as was demonstrated in the evaluation of applicants with mixed qualifications in the Dovidio and Gaertner study described above.

Second, unlike the extreme and overt prejudice of hate group members, subtle prejudice is not assumed to be the result of individual psychopathology but rather of the collision of two processes: normal cognitive processes, such as shortcuts in thinking and hasty generalizations, and the influence of sociocultural and historical processes, such as laws and policies that relegate certain groups to low status (e.g. laws prohibiting same-sex marriage). This is not to imply that prejudice is normal or that those who are prejudiced cannot help themselves and are therefore excused from self-examination. It does mean that categorizing and generalizing are part of our cognitive make-up – we all make generalizations that simplify our social worlds. However, *what* we generalize, *who* we categorize, and the content of our stereotypes can be modified and changed, and certainly should be modified and changed in the case of prejudice and discrimination.

Third, most people go out of their way to appear non-prejudiced – to themselves and to others; in many cases they truly believe they are not prejudiced. These three features make subtle prejudice insidious because they cause it to be widespread, normalized, resistant to change, and difficult for both the perpetrators and the targets to detect. The work on subtle bias suggests that, while we still find evidence of overt prejudice in people, these more contemporary forms of prejudice may account for the persistence of disparities in society.

### Schemas and prejudice

It is clear that all of us categorize people, objects, and events. All of us, regardless of where we live or how much money we earn, create *schemas*, mental frameworks of beliefs, feelings, and assumptions

about people, groups, and objects. Schemas help us make sense of the world. We incorporate new information into already existing schemas so that we do not have to treat all new information as though it is totally unfamiliar, requiring slow, deliberate, and thorough examination. Schemas, the foundation for assumptions, help us interpret our world and organize new information. When applied to categorization of people, schemas often manifest as stereotypes. Schemas work as filters that help us determine what aspects of a person or object are important to observe carefully and what can be disregarded, thus minimizing the drain on cognitive resources. They affect what we pay attention to and what we will remember later.

### Power and prejudice

All of us create and utilize these cognitive structures to help us make sense of the world. Prejudice, however, including seemingly benign bigotry, necessarily involves power. Power, in addition to privilege, interacts with schemas to produce benign bigotry. Although both powerful and powerless people can be prejudiced, the prejudice of the powerful is more consequential. In terms of an organization, the prejudice of CEOs and middle managers can affect who gets hired, promoted, and fired. If receptionists in that same organization have prejudices, their prejudices will affect fewer people and have less of an impact.<sup>14</sup> On a national scale, the prejudices of presidents, Supreme Court justices, and lawmakers reverberate through a society in a way that the prejudice of a factory worker does not. In addition, individual prejudices that tap into common stereotypes are reinforced in the media and have more staying power. Another hallmark of power and prejudice is the tendency for the powerful to harbor prejudiced attitudes toward the powerless and to see their lack of power as having been caused by some deficiencies in their characters.<sup>15</sup> So one thing to

keep in mind about prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination is, *Who is doing it?*

Throughout this book, in addition to referring to *majority* and *minority* groups, I will also use the terms *high status* and *low status* groups, and *dominant* and *subordinate* groups, to refer to groups with more or with less access to resources, power, and privilege in a society, regardless of actual group size. For instance, women are the numerical gender majority; however, they are a subordinate group because they lack power, resources, and status, relative to men. Those in power have more influence over their own lives and the lives of those immediately around them, but they also have more influence over cultural messages about who is valued and who is not, and who is considered normal and who is considered deviant. Racism, as an example, is based on a *system* involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices, as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals. Racist ideas are also supported by decades, even centuries, of historical trends, laws, and policies that support them.

Beverly Daniel Tatum defines *cultural racism* as the images and messages in a culture that affirm the assumed superiority of white people and the assumed inferiority of people of color. Tatum uses a metaphor that equates cultural racism to smog in the air. “Sometimes it is so thick it is visible, other times it is less apparent, but always, day in and day out, we are breathing it in. None of us would introduce ourselves as ‘smog-breathers’ (and most of us don’t want to be described as prejudiced), but if we live in a smoggy place, how can we avoid breathing the air?”<sup>16</sup> Tatum’s point is that while many individuals may not feel prejudiced, or believe they do not discriminate, everyone is involved in prejudice. We all see the same cultural messages about high status and low status groups, whether by viewing television, using the Internet, or being subjected to discriminatory laws and Supreme Court decisions. None of us can disengage from racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism. All of us

are part of a system that values certain groups and devalues others. Tatum illustrates the ongoing cycle of racism by using a metaphor describing a moving walkway that you might see at an airport. The overt or *active* racist, to use Tatum's term, walks fast on the conveyor belt, which is moved along with racist ideology. Subtle racists, what Tatum terms *passive* racists, stand still on the moving walkway, exerting no visible effort, but, nonetheless, the conveyor belt moves them along in the same direction it moves active racists. Some people will feel the movement of the conveyor belt under their feet and choose to walk in the opposite direction, actively working against racism. But unless they turn around and walk in the opposite direction they are carried along with the others in racist traditions and practices.

*Benign Bigotry: The Psychology of Subtle Prejudice* addresses six commonly held cultural myths and faulty beliefs that are based on assumptions that *seem* relatively benign but actually foster and justify prejudice and discrimination. Each chapter provides a detailed discussion and dismantling of one of the six myths. Each chapter includes references to real-world events that illustrate the myth; examples in popular culture and politics; a discussion of the myth and corresponding stereotypes associated with it; a presentation of the "facts" about the phenomenon via systematic research studies (i.e. how and why the myth is believed); a discussion highlighting real-life consequences; and, finally, recommendations for the reduction of the beliefs that perpetuate the myth.

The first chapter, "Those people all look alike": the myth of the other, examines the tendency to erase individual differences in people who are different from oneself. Social psychologists refer to "they all look alike" thinking as the *outgroup homogeneity effect*, and the chapter moves this concept from the laboratory to the interpersonal, business, social, and political settings in which it is experienced on a daily basis. The chapter begins with a description of how, shortly after September 11, 2001, there was a dramatic

increase in hate crimes in the US against Muslims, and against those who were thought to be Muslims or Arabs. Anyone who appeared “different” or from “over there” was a target, including Sikhs and Persians. One result of treating all members of a category as if they are the same is that they become interchangeable in people’s minds. This phenomenon helps support, for example, Americans conflating Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein in the lead-up to the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. Americans saw little difference between the two men, and because of this, the invasion may have become more palatable. I also discuss how the *they all look alike* phenomenon may have contributed to why many of the Guantánamo Bay detainees were apparently captured by mistake.<sup>17</sup> Also discussed in this chapter, both in terms of actual events and systematic experimental research, is human *categorization*, and concepts related to the outgroup homogeneity effect including *ingroup favoritism* and *outgroup derogation*, the *ultimate attribution error*, the *linguistic intergroup bias*, *dehumanization*, and *scapegoating*. Finally, the chapter ends with strategies for change that are relevant to the outgroup homogeneity effect. These include *intergroup contact*, *stereotype suppression*, *values confrontation*, and the role of *empathy* in prejudice reduction.

Chapter 2, “They must be guilty of something”: myths of criminalization, takes aim at how individual thought processes such as mental shortcuts, the formation of stereotypes, and internalized cultural schemas interact to construct an assumption that those who are accused of a criminal act are, in fact, guilty of something. This thinking impacts criminal investigations, police interrogations, suspect confessions, jury decision-making, views about the death penalty, and ideas about individuals who have been falsely convicted and later exonerated. Because of stereotypes about African Americans and Latinos, this chapter necessarily discusses real-life events and experimental evidence on racial and ethnic bias in the criminal justice system as well as media coverage of

crime. The chapter ends with strategies to reduce bias during police investigations, defense strategies to minimize bias against defendants, and suggestions for changes in policy.

Chapter 3, “Feminists are man-haters”: backlash mythmaking, examines the popular belief that feminists dislike men. Relatively few women describe themselves as feminists even when they support feminist ideology. This reluctance is due in large part to women’s concern that, in doing so, they will be viewed as male-bashers.<sup>18</sup> Feminists are believed by some to be responsible for a variety of social ills such as young men entering college at a lower rate than young women<sup>19</sup> and the supposed decline in “manliness” in American culture.<sup>20</sup> Chapter 3 examines people’s beliefs and stereotypes about feminists as well as feminists’ actual beliefs and attitudes. What does feminism actually critique and advocate? Do feminists really dislike men more than do non-feminists? These questions are examined through a review of the few empirical studies that have looked at this issue. Rather than finding that feminists dislike men, evidence suggests that non-feminists actually feel more hostility toward men than do feminists. Why does the myth of the feminist man-hater endure? This question is addressed in the chapter, as are the questions of why feminism is vilified and why there is cultural hostility toward strong, assertive, and non-traditional women. Attempts to trivialize the feminist movement are documented as well. Finally, strategies for change address the possibility of modifying masculine gender roles, the positive impact of gender and women’s studies courses, and changes in workplace policies.

“Gays flaunt their sexuality”: the myth of hypersexuality, is the popular belief explored in Chapter 4. The concepts of *illusory correlation* and *vividness* are used to help elucidate why people tend to “see” hypersexuality only in lesbians and gay men and not in heterosexuals. Heterosexual privilege is discussed as it helps explain why some groups are seen as normal, with behavior deemed as

natural, while other groups are seen as foreign and deviant. In fact, the same behavior that is criticized in homosexuals is celebrated and expected in heterosexuals. Nonetheless, the belief that homosexuals flaunt their sexuality impacts how lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are treated in their professional lives, whether or not they are viewed as adequate parents, and whether or not anti-gay violence is prosecuted. Strategies for change in Chapter 4 include the importance of institutional support for lesbian and gay rights, the role of increased contact and cooperation between gay and straight people as a strategy to reduce prejudice, and the role that *cognitive dissonance* can play in reducing homophobia and heterosexism.

Chapter 5, “I’m not a racist, I’m colorblind”: the myth of neutrality, addresses the appeal of being racially colorblind in a time of decreased overt prejudice and increasingly prevalent norms of non-prejudice. In a multiracial society, is it possible, or even desirable, to be colorblind? There have been many legal and policy attempts at, for instance, “colorblind” admissions policies. Many people believe that colorblindness is the key to ending discrimination, while others use colorblindness in a cynical attempt to maintain white privilege and to pressure people of color into assimilation. I examine the research on people’s ability not to notice others’ race and ethnicity. What sort of political attitudes are held by those who espouse colorblindness? Do they tend to be racially tolerant, for instance? I also compare multicultural and colorblind approaches to prejudice reduction. Chapter 5 includes *decategorization* and *recategorization* as strategies to reduce prejudice.

Chapter 6, “Affirmative action is reverse-racism”: the myth of merit, deals with the ever-controversial topic of affirmative action in the United States. If you only consider media coverage of affirmative action, you would probably believe that the typical affirmative action program involves quotas and that unqualified women and ethnic minorities are hired over better-qualified white men. This chapter explains the difference between “equal



opportunity” and affirmative action, and addresses the reasons benign bigotry makes actual equal opportunity impossible and affirmative action necessary. I then look at the stages of employment and college admissions procedures during which subtle prejudice can be manifest. I examine the social psychological literature on gender and ethnic patterns in *entitlement* as well as explanations of success and failure. Affirmative action must be considered in the context of privilege. Finally, strategies for change include suggestions for affirmative action plans including the differentiation between *process-oriented* and *goal-oriented* approaches. Additionally, a discussion of the importance of affirmative action from the leadership in organizations is crucial. Other strategies for reducing bias during interviews, the importance of standardized performance criteria, and the challenges of mentoring and “diversity” training are discussed.

#### Some caveats

Having outlined what this book covers, I should note some of its limitations. First, researchers make a distinction between different levels of influence on a person’s behavior. The macrosystem consists of social–structural factors such as laws and religious institutions. The microsystem refers to individuals interacting in particular environments such as work, family, or school. This book focuses mainly on prejudice from a social psychological perspective and will thus tend to focus on *individual* attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Unlike other social sciences, such as sociology and anthropology, which use society and culture as the unit of analysis, psychology is primarily focused on the individual. Analysis of social structures is also key to addressing issues of prejudice. Therefore, a key feature of this presentation is that I make explicit connections between social psychological research and theory, and macro issues such as institutions, laws, and policies, as well as the mass media.

Second, prejudice involves both a *perpetrator* – the prejudiced or discriminatory individual, and a *target* – the recipient or victim of prejudice. In this book, I devote the majority of space to the psychology of the prejudiced individual (the perpetrator) and to the impact of prejudice on the target, and less to the psychology of the target of prejudice. Third, this book is less about what people *are actually like* – which stereotypes are true and which are false – and more about *perceptions* and *beliefs* about others that are based on social categories. Explanations about social groups are rarely based on people's direct *experiences* with those groups, and instead are more likely to be reflective of beliefs (and mythologies) shared by members of a culture.

Fourth, most of the research I describe in this book is from studies conducted in the US with American participants. There are also several studies from the UK and a few from other parts of the world. When I describe a study, I identify the demographic characteristics of the participants whenever they are available. Also, many studies on ethnic prejudice have focused on white participants, with African Americans as the targets of prejudice. The field of social psychology knows less about white stereotypes regarding other ethnic groups or the stereotypes of non-whites directed towards whites and other people of color. Finally, I include some anecdotes in this book. However, this book much more heavily emphasizes coverage of systematic research studies using experimental methods. To the extent that I rely on anecdotes, I do so only to illustrate patterns found in studies. In other words, any anecdotes I report are supported by empirical research studies.

The name of this book is *Benign Bigotry*, and this title is ironic. Bigotry is never benign, even when it exists in the form of subtle prejudice. *Benign Bigotry* is meant to capture the hidden nature of subtle prejudice; the *apparently* innocent assumptions people make based on prejudice. Of course, technically, the content of prejudices and stereotypes can be positive or negative. I can have a prejudice

in favor of a certain type of music, for instance. But stereotypes are always harmful to the people who are targets of them. Even when stereotypes appear to be flattering (e.g. African Americans are good athletes, Asians are the model minority), they demand that the target either conforms or risks disappointing the holder of the stereotypes. People we stereotype are not seen as having their own individual opinions, preferences, and desires, but rather are judged as members of a group. Stereotypes erase a person's individuality. Stereotypes control and constrain people. Those who hold the stereotypes are also harmed. In his discussion of how racism negatively affects whites, Derald Sue<sup>21</sup> describes racism as a clamp on one's mind, distorting one's perception of reality. He explains that in maintaining one's schemas, one's perceptual accuracy is diminished. Individuals become members of categories rather than unique people. The harm to people of color diminishes white people's humanity because whites lose sensitivity to hurting others. And stereotyping nearly always involves the loss of the ability to empathize. Racism is also bad for whites because they misperceive themselves as superior, thereby engaging in elaborate self-deception. Prejudice in members of dominant groups can result in the guilt of recognizing their own privilege at the expense of others. This recognition can manifest in shame, defensiveness, and even outbursts of anger.

Understanding the nature of subtle prejudice – that prejudice comes in subtle, ostensibly “benign” forms – should not let us off the hook. We can no longer allow ourselves to think that only the Ku Klux Klan or skinheads are prejudiced. We cannot distance ourselves from bigotry once we understand that bigotry, even in a “benign” form, is part of the air we breathe, and has devastating consequences.

#### NOTES

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