STEREOTYPES

Main Source: Psychology and You by McMahon and Romano

nerd frail clever
Stereotype

**Definition:**
A fixed set of beliefs about a group that is generalised to all or most group members – may or may not be accurate.
A Positive Aspect of Stereotyping

A basis for simplifying and understanding our environment and the complex social world.
A Negative Aspect of Stereotyping

A potential problem if it leads to prejudice, discrimination and rigidity in our views of others.
Perpetuating Stereotypes

• People often apply a stereotype in such a way as to reject incoming information that contradicts it.

• We tend to notice instances that support our views and ignore those that don’t.
Example:

- Men who believe women drivers are worse than men drivers may ignore all cases of bad male driving and good female driving.

- If they do notice the opposing cases, they put them into a “chance happening” category.
**Definition:** Holding a negative attitude towards the members of a group, based solely on people’s membership of that group.

When someone is prejudiced against a group, he/she tends to evaluate all members of that group negatively, overlooking their individual characteristics.
Ingroup | Majority group
---|---
believe they are superior
believe the minority group is different and does not belong
see themselves as more powerful and important
feel insecure, fearing that the minority group may become more powerful and important

Outgroup | Minority group
---|---
Blumer, 1961
Ingroup: White plantationists. Southern States of USA before 1863

Outgroup: African slaves

Whites believed they were racially and biologically superior.

They treated African slaves like animals who could be bred and chattels that could be mistreated.

The whites saw themselves as more powerful and important.

The whites feared that the slaves would rebel, try to gain power and, after the abolition of slavery, use their vote to gain equality and marry/mix with “our women”.

Historical Example
In a social environment where fellow human beings are referred to in these terms, no reduction in prejudice is likely to occur.

Stereotypes are rigidly applied.

The laws and customs of the society support the perpetuation of inequality and injustice.
Modern Prejudice

According to Pederson and Walker, 1997, modern prejudice is...

• more subtle
• more hidden
• more likely to be expressed in hidden, acceptable ways

In other words, we conceal our prejudice better, but it still exists.
Factors that **may** reduce prejudice...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustained contact</th>
<th>Mutual interdependence</th>
<th>Superordinate goals</th>
<th>Equality of status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close, prolonged contact can lead people to re-evaluate negative stereotypess <strong>BUT ONLY IF THERE IS...</strong></td>
<td>That is, the two groups have to depend upon each other in some way (read the famous study by Sherif, 1956). <strong>BUT THIS IS MORE EFFECTIVE IF THERE ARE...</strong></td>
<td>A goal that can only be achieved if both groups work together to achieve it</td>
<td>The laws and customs of the society support the view that all people are equal or do not in any way promote institutionalised inequality</td>
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Cognitive Interventions for reducing PREJUDICE

• Beware of stereotypes - get to know individuals from “outgroups”
Cognitive Interventions for reducing PREJUDICE

• Seek individuating information as an antidote for stereotyping

Tell me about yourself. Tell me about yourself.
Cognitive Interventions
for reducing PREJUDICE

- Question “just world” beliefs - notions that the world is basically fair and people get what they deserve

This 3-year-old Syrian refugee, who drowned in the Mediterranean Sea in 2015, never experienced a just world.

This little boy, who was photographed completing his homework by the light of a McDonalds window, has fewer opportunities in life than most students in our school.
Cognitive Interventions for reducing PREJUDICE

• Be aware of self-fulfilling prophecies - people may be influenced by your expectations of them.
Cognitive Interventions for reducing PREJUDICE

• Look for common ground.
Ways of Measuring Attitudes

Two Basic Methods

Observation
- Controlled investigation of behaviour
- Dropped letter method

Self-Report
- Surveys
- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Likert Scales
- Other Scales
Ways of Measuring Attitudes

Two Basic Methods

Observation

- **Characteristics**
  - objective
  - can be unobtrusive
  - must be based on inferences about attitudes, i.e. conclusions based on people’s behaviour about what they think and feel

Self-Report

- **Characteristics**
  - subjective
  - influenced by the participant’s desire to appear socially acceptable
  - Likert Scales allow you to measure both the strength and the direction of the attitude