

Thought Suppression, Projection, and the Development of Stereotypes

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The psychodynamic approach to stereotyping and prejudice focuses on how out-group denigration can result from people's efforts to defend themselves against unpleasant thoughts and feelings. In line with that approach, the role of defensive projection in the development of unfavorable impressions of other groups of people was investigated. Hypotheses were derived from Newman, Duff, and Baumeister's (1997) model of projection. Participants were told that they belonged to groups that might have some unfavorable attributes. When they were asked to suppress thoughts about one of those attributes, they subsequently projected it onto another group. This effect was strongest for groups that most successfully suppressed the thought (i.e., those that never mentioned the trait even once during a group discussion). In sum, when people avoid thinking about their own groups' shortcomings, thoughts about those characteristics could become highly accessible and be used to form impressions of other groups of people.

Stereotyping and prejudice are complex phenomena (Fiske, 1998), but research on these topics has traditionally been organized in terms of three broad approaches (see Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Hamilton, Stroessner, & Driscoll, 1994; Monteith, Zuwerink, & Devine, 1994). Two of those approaches—the sociocultural/social learning and cognitive perspectives—have dominated empirical work in these areas. The third classic approach, however, is the *psychodynamic* perspective. This approach focuses on the idea that stereotypes and prejudice arise from motives and needs. Theorists in this tradition hypothesize that the creation of stereotypes is directly or indirectly caused by people's efforts to construct, maintain, and defend specific self-images and to avoid the aversive feelings that could result from threats to the self. A core idea underlying psychodynamic perspectives is that stereotypes are *projections*. In other words, impressions of other groups are seen as indirectly deriving from people's perceptions of—and confrontations with—themselves (see Allport, 1954, and Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981).

The third approach, however, is distinguished from the other two by a relative dearth of empirical evidence. Most often cited as an example of the psychodynamic approach is Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford's (1950) work on the authoritarian personality. Although that program of research once seemed like a promising approach to under-

standing the dynamics of intergroup hostility, it was plagued by conceptual and methodological problems (cf. Altemeyer, 1988). In general, the psychodynamic perspective "receives very little attention in contemporary work on prejudice" (Monteith et al., 1994, p. 326).

Both affect and motivation, of course, play important roles in contemporary research on stereotyping and prejudice. People's abilities to intentionally suppress their use of stereotypes (Monteith, Sherman, & Devine, 1998) and the role of mood in moderating their expression have both been much explored (e.g., Esses, Haddock, & Zanna, 1994). In addition, a number of researchers have examined how the selective application of pre-existing stereotypes might serve to help maintain one's self-esteem (e.g., Fein & Spencer, 1997; Kunda & Sinclair, 1999). The current research, however, was designed to support a model of how motivational factors could lead to the *construction* of stereotypes and the *development* of prejudice through the process of projection. It is based on a more general model of defensive projection described by Newman, Duff, and Baumeister (1997).

DEFENSIVE PROJECTION

Sigmund Freud (1915/1948, 1920/1955; also A. Freud, 1936) suggested that when people (a) become aware that their behavior sometimes falls short of valued standards, (b) are uncomfortable with the realization that they may be predisposed to such behavior, and (c) are motivated to deny the

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offending personality traits, they subsequently become prone to seeing those very traits in others. When this occurs, these people are said to be engaging in *defensive* (or *classical*) *projection*. However, defensive projection has never been very popular as an explanatory concept among experimental psychologists (Holmes, 1968, 1978, 1981; cf. Sherwood, 1981, 1982). Newman et al. (1997), however, presented a new approach to explain how defensive projection might occur (see also Newman, Duff, Hedberg, & Blitstein, 1996). This approach involves explaining why being motivated to deny the self-relevance of particular unfavorable traits might lead those traits to become chronically cognitively accessible and easily come to mind (Higgins, 1996). If a personality trait construct is accessible for a person, then he or she will be highly sensitized to its presence in other people.

A basic assumption of the Newman et al. (1997) model is that people will frequently be confronted with the possibility that they are inclined to engage in unwanted behaviors. People can, of course, attempt to self-regulate their behavior so as to avoid behaving in a way that is consistent with an undesired trait, but there are no absolute criteria for determining the extent to which a behavior reflects a given personality trait (Hampson, 1984). As a result, it is next to impossible to avoid doing, thinking, and feeling things that could be construed in terms of the very traits one is motivated not to possess. This will lead to discomfort (cf. Higgins, 1987), and people might react by trying to avoid and suppress the thoughts that caused it (Wegner & Zanakos, 1994).

The work of Wegner and his colleagues on the consequences of thought suppression, however, reveals that the deliberate attempt to avoid specific thoughts can backfire (Wegner, 1992). Attempts to purposely avoid a thought paradoxically heighten that thought's accessibility. A number of explanations have been proposed for this *rebound effect* (e.g., Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, & Jetten, 1994; Wegner, Schneider, Knutson, & McMahon, 1991). All, however, are consistent with the idea that suppressing a thought eventually leads to frequent activation of that thought and its chronic accessibility (Higgins & King, 1981). Thus, active efforts to banish thoughts about one's unwanted attributes will have the unanticipated effect of leading those attributes to play an important role in how one construes others' behavior.

Projection is thus driven by efforts to avoid awareness of the possibility that one might possess undesirable personality traits. Therefore, Newman et al. (1997, Studies 1-4) ideographically identified their research participants' "undesired selves" with a self-report measure (cf. Ogilvie, 1987). It was hypothesized that undesired self attributes identified in this way (e.g., dishonest, lazy) would be particularly threatening and that these would be the traits that people would be most likely to project. Newman et al. (1997) also hypothesized that the tendency to avoid and suppress unwanted feedback would be most pronounced among people with repressive coping styles (Weinberger, 1990). If projection is set in motion by defensive responses to threatening material, then

repressors should be even more likely than other people to project undesired traits.

As a test of this hypothesis, participants with particular threatening traits were presented with related ambiguous behaviors. Although these behaviors could be construed in terms of socially desirable traits, across two studies repressors were more likely than other participants to infer threatening traits from behavior.

Newman et al.'s (1997) next studies provided more evidence for the role of thought suppression in projection. Participants received bogus feedback about their personalities, some of which was unflattering. Then, in the first of these studies, they had to suppress thoughts about one of the traits for which they were given threatening feedback. Finally, they made judgments about the traits of an ambiguous stimulus person. It was hypothesized that suppressing thoughts about the undesirable traits would heighten the accessibility of those trait categories (and do so through the same processes that led to chronic accessibility among repressors in the previous studies). As a result, it was predicted that people would be especially prone to interpret other people's behavior in terms of those (and not other) unfavorable traits. The findings were consistent with this prediction. The same procedure was used in Newman et al.'s (1997) final investigation, but participants were allowed to ruminate about the feedback they had received without explicit instructions to suppress. Repressors were subsequently more likely than nonrepressors to project onto others the unflattering traits that, according to the "personality test," they themselves possessed. Repressors seem to have dealt with unfavorable self-relevant information in the avoidant manner that was imposed on participants in the previous study.

Converging evidence for the model was reported by Smart and Wegner (1999; see also Mikulincer & Horesh, 1999). In Smart and Wegner's research, participants who had an eating disorder but pretended not to subsequently projected the disorder onto another person.

STEREOTYPING AS PROJECTION

Until now, the model has been applied only to understanding how individuals project threatening attributes onto other individuals. However, suppressing any thought can lead to accessibility, and any ambiguous social entity could serve as a projection screen. For example, when group membership is salient, one might wish to avoid disturbing thoughts about the nature of a group with which one identifies. If that heightens the accessibility of the threatening thoughts, one's impressions of some other group could be affected—even in the absence of any need or desire to disparage or discriminate. In addition, if other group members are forming similar impressions for the same reasons, they might reinforce each other's tendency to disparage the out-group. As a result, members of a society that puts a premium on achievement might see other

groups as being lazy and incompetent; members of another society who are uncomfortable about human sexuality might see out-groups as being oversexed and lustful; and a group that demands that people be neat and orderly could come to see others as being dirty and slovenly.

In the study described next, we predicted that suppressing thoughts about the possibility that one's group could have unfavorable characteristics would lead those traits to be projected onto another group. This study, it should be noted, was not designed to demonstrate that people in a group context spontaneously suppress thoughts about unwanted collective traits, or to shed light on the circumstances in which they will be more or less motivated to do so. Instead, it takes as its starting off point the assumption that suppression is one of a number of possible responses to feedback that derogates one's group (see Newman & Caldwell, in press) and focuses on the consequences of that kind of avoidant response.

OVERVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Participants were run in groups of 3 or 4 and told that testing had revealed that they belonged to a group distinguished by a unique psychological profile. They were then asked to discuss that profile, which (in addition to two neutral trait ratings) consisted of one favorable and two unfavorable traits. Before the discussion, they were told to suppress conversation and thoughts about one of the negative traits. Afterward, participants had the opportunity to form an impression of a group to which they did not belong.

It was expected that participants' impressions of the other group would be more unfavorable when the ratings involved trait dimensions for which they had received negative feedback than when the rating involved a trait dimension for which they had received positive feedback. Such a prediction could be derived from a number of theoretical perspectives, including those that emphasize motivational variables (e.g., social identity theory; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and those that emphasize cold cognitive processes (e.g., the anchor and adjust heuristic; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). However, it was also predicted that the most unfavorable rating of the other group would involve the negative trait about which participants had suppressed thoughts.

METHOD

Participants

One hundred fifty-seven students attending the University of Illinois at Chicago participated in the experiment for partial fulfillment of an introductory psychology course requirement. Participants were run in 18 groups of 3 and 24 groups of 4 (all mixed gender). Group size did not moderate any of the findings. One group of 3 and one group of 4 were dis-

carded because people in those groups were suspicious about the manipulations. Thus, the final sample consisted of 150 participants (108 women, 41 men, and one who did not record gender).

Procedure

Participants were told that the experimenter needed their help in determining whether a new system for measuring personality types actually worked. Participants were told that questionnaires that they had filled out in class suggested that they were of the "Epsilon" personality type. They were told that one way of determining whether the system was valid was to see if the personality profile of a typical Epsilon matched their own personalities. The participants were then given a bogus Epsilon profile. The profile consisted of five trait ratings, corresponding to the traits supposedly used to distinguish the personality types. These ratings, which corresponded to the Big Five traits typically identified in factor-analytic investigations of personality impressions (John, 1990), pertained to intellectance, emotional stability, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Each trait was defined for participants; for example, *intellectance* referred to "cognitive performance in the areas of problem solving, memory, creativity and general reasoning." The profiles always included mildly positive ratings (scores of around +1 on a scale ranging from -5 to +5) for the traits of extroversion and conscientiousness. The three other traits, agreeableness, intellectance, and emotional stability, varied from clearly negative (a score of about -3 on the same scale) to clearly positive (a score of about +3). On any profile, two were clearly negative and one was clearly positive.

Participants were given 2 min to peruse the profile. They were then told that they were to discuss the profiles for 5 min and that their conversations would be audiotaped for later analysis. The experimenter then gave participants the following instructions:

Now, I am going to ask you to discuss all the trait ratings of the profiles except for one: —. We've been running this experiment for awhile, so we've already collected enough information about what people think of that rating. In fact, I am going to ask you to not even *think* about that rating while you discuss the others. Please keep in mind I'm going to be taping this conversation. So again, what I am asking you to do now is to discuss the Epsilon profiles to answer the question, "How well do these profiles characterize your group?"

The trait rating to be suppressed (represented by "—" in the preceding instructions) was always one of the two unfavorable ones. Note that because for any given session, each of the two trait ratings *not* suppressed could be either favorable or unfavorable, six different conditions (seven groups in each) were run to ensure proper counterbalancing.

The experimenter then took the profiles from the participants and left the room. After the discussion, the experimenter returned and explained that another way to test the new method for measuring personality types was to show the participants behaviors from members of the other personality types, get their impressions of those behaviors, and see how the impressions mapped onto the theory's predictions. Participants were told that they would see behaviors from a randomly chosen personality type. In actuality, participants always saw behaviors said to be from the "Gamma" group. When the experimenter left the room, the randomly ordered behaviors were shown one at a time on a computer screen for 5 sec each. Included were six neutral behaviors and eight related to agreeableness, intellectance, and emotional stability. Of the eight behaviors corresponding to each of the three traits, one was clearly evaluatively positive, one was clearly evaluatively negative, and six were ambiguous. The behaviors relating to agreeableness and intellectance were adapted from some of those normed by Fuhrman, Bodenhausen, and Lichtenstein (1989). Those relating to emotional stability were created for use in this study.¹ In sum, the description of the Gamma group was ambiguous with respect to all three of the traits suppressed by the different groups of participants.

After viewing the behaviors, participants were given 1 min to write a few lines about their initial impressions of the Gamma group. They then had another minute to rate the Gamma group on the five personality traits (on the same 11-point scales used for original Epsilon profile).² Participants then filled out a questionnaire that consisted of demographic items and, after doing so, they were asked to try to recall as many of the Gamma group's behaviors as they could.³

Finally, participants were asked to try to recall the original Epsilon profile. Specifically, they were presented with a form similar to the one presented to them at the beginning of the

experiment but without any ratings marked on the scales. They were asked to try to reproduce the original Epsilon ratings. Participants were then fully debriefed and thanked.

RESULTS

Unless specified otherwise, analyses treat the group as the unit of analysis. This strategy controls for the problem of the interdependency of participants within groups.

Manipulation Checks

Recordings of the discussions were analyzed to verify that groups had complied with the suppression instructions. The recording of one group's discussion was lost because of an experimenter error. Two coders listened to the rest (41 overall) and recorded the number of times each trait on the Epsilon profile was mentioned. A "mention" consisted of the introduction of a trait for discussion; it did *not* consist of agreements, supportive anecdotes, or echoes, unless the topic was reintroduced.

The numbers of thoughts recorded by the coders were correlated separately for each trait (agreeableness, emotional stability, intellectance, conscientiousness, and extraversion). The five resulting correlations were z transformed (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) and averaged. The mean correlation (transformed back to an r) was .76. The number of mentions for each trait was then averaged across the coders, and the resulting means were used for subsequent analyses.

The mean number of distinct topics related to the feedback discussed by the groups was 7.1. On average, 2.8 involved filler traits (extraversion and conscientiousness). Of more interest were the other three traits. Groups discussed the positive feedback trait 1.7 times on average, and they talked about the negative feedback trait that was not suppressed 2.0 times. In contrast, the mean number of mentions of the negative feedback trait that participants were asked to avoid talking or thinking about was only 0.6. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the differences between the number of mentions of the three kinds of traits were significant, $F(2,80) = 30.03$, $p < .001$. Post hoc tests also confirmed that the suppressed trait was mentioned significantly fewer times than the other two and that the mean number of mentions of the other two did not significantly differ.

As in past research in which people were asked to suppress thoughts about personality traits (Newman et al., 1997)—or *any* thoughts (Wegner, 1992)—mentions of the forbidden thought were not entirely eliminated. Such thoughts could arise because of either suppression failures or failures to follow instructions. However, the manipulation was successful; overall, groups avoided deliberating about the part of the Epsilon profile that they were asked to banish from their thoughts.

¹A complete list is available from the authors on request.

²Projection has traditionally been conceived of as a psychological maneuver that at least temporarily increases feelings of self-worth. Indeed, Rubin and Hewstone's (1998) review revealed moderate support for the hypothesis that intergroup discrimination elevates self-esteem. Thus, for exploratory reasons, the State Self-Esteem Scale (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991) and the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) were administered at this point. Neither was correlated with the outcome variables. The State Self-Esteem Scale, however, focuses on distinct aspects of self-esteem (performance, social, and appearance), none of which were targeted by the manipulations in this study. In addition, Aberson, Healy, and Romero (2000) found the Collective Self-Esteem Scale to be unrelated to intergroup bias.

³Following recall, participants were asked to discuss their ratings for 5 min and then rate the Gammas again. Of interest was whether unfavorable ratings of the out-group would become more extreme after discussion (Myers & Lamm, 1976). No polarization was observed, but the design did not allow for the strongest test of the hypothesis. When groups began their discussions, their members' most unfavorable ratings were, on average, those associated with the suppressed negative trait—but not always. In addition, mean ratings were typically above the scale midpoint.

At the end of the study, before debriefing, participants were asked to try to recall the original Epsilon profile. Only 14 (9.3%) incorrectly indicated that a trait dimension for which they were presented with a negative rating was instead associated with a more positive rating than the trait dimension that actually did provide them with positive feedback. No groups or individual participants were dropped from analyses on this basis.

Ratings of the Gamma Group

Ratings of the Gamma group on each trait scale were averaged for the 3 to 4 members of each group. Filler trait ratings (conscientiousness and extraversion) were not analyzed, but the means for the three key variables are presented in Table 1. The pattern was as expected: The Gamma group was evaluated most harshly when the trait involved was the unfavorable one that had been suppressed, and it was evaluated most positively in the case of the trait for which participants had received positive feedback. A one-way ANOVA revealed that the differences between the ratings were significant, $F(2, 82) = 3.86, p = .025$. Post hoc pairwise comparisons revealed that the only pair of means to significantly differ were the ratings for the positive feedback trait and the suppressed negative trait, $t(41) = 2.7, p = .01$; the difference between the ratings related to the positive feedback trait and the other negative trait did not reach significance.

As noted earlier, we anticipated a pattern of results consistent with a main effect for the valence of feedback. When participants received unfavorable feedback on a trait, regardless of whether thoughts about that trait were suppressed, the out-group was expected to be rated negatively on those trait dimensions (relative to the trait for which they had received positive feedback). As discussed previously, this prediction could be derived from a number of theories. However, we also predicted that the most unfavorable ratings would be associated with the negative feedback that participants attempted not to think about. That prediction was confirmed, and it is not one that could be derived from those other perspectives.⁴

Needless to say, there are ways other than thought suppression to boost the cognitive accessibility of a trait construct. Most obviously, asking people to focus on thoughts re-

⁴As noted in the Method section, before rating the Gamma group, participants wrote a few lines about their initial impressions. Open-ended measures can be even more sensitive to accessible thoughts than structured ratings, but they are also affected by extraneous influences, making them a "noisier" dependent variable. Coding of the open-ended descriptions revealed only that participants were most likely to make comments related to agreeableness and least likely to comment on intellectance. The results of the behavior recall test—meant to serve as a secondary measure of accessibility—were also examined. On average, though, participants only recalled 5.4 of the 30 behaviors (leading, perhaps, to floor effects). Behaviors relating to the suppressed personality trait dimension were not more likely to be recalled than were others.

TABLE 1
Ratings of Gamma Group

Positive Feedback Trait		Negative Feedback Trait (Not Suppressed)		Negative Feedback Trait (Suppressed)	
<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.38	1.2	0.98	1.2	0.68	1.2

Note. Ratings could range from -5 to 5.

lated to it (i.e., *expression* instructions) could have the same effect. In this study, however, the process underlying the key results seemed to be thought suppression. As already noted, participants' overt verbalizations showed that most complied with the suppression instructions. In addition, the number of times a given group mentioned the "forbidden" trait was significantly correlated with average ratings of the Gamma group on that dimension ($r = .38, p < .025$, a relationship not found when mentions of the other traits were correlated with that or any other rating, or when mentions of the to-be-suppressed trait were correlated with the other ratings). In other words, the less participants talked about the unfavorable feedback trait (i.e., the more they suppressed it), the more negative were their associated ratings.

That finding suggested that compliance with the instructions to suppress thoughts about a specific trait might moderate the predicted results. At least one coder of the group conversations recorded a mention of the forbidden trait in the case of 25 out of the 42 groups. The other 17 groups were more successful in totally avoiding the topic.⁵ We conducted a 3 (rating: positive feedback trait, suppressed negative, other negative) \times 2 (compliance with instructions: total vs. partial) ANOVA (with the former variable within-subjects) to examine whether the expected findings would be most in evidence among groups who were most successful in suppressing thoughts. The analysis yielded the expected main effect of rating, $F(2, 80) = 5.05, p < .01$, but also a nearly significant Rating \times Compliance interaction, $F(2, 80) = 3.01, p = .055$. The pattern of means was as expected for total compliance groups and only those groups (see Table 2). Post hoc pairwise comparisons revealed that among these groups, who never mentioned the forbidden trait, ratings for the suppressed negative trait were not only significantly different from ratings for the positive feedback trait, $t(16) = 3.3, p < .01$, but also significantly different from ratings for the other negative trait, $t(16) = 2.6, p < .05$. In contrast, pairwise comparisons revealed no significant differences between the ratings for the partial-compliance groups. Overall, then, the evidence in-

⁵Data for the group for which the recording of the discussion was lost were grouped with the total-compliance group, as there was no evidence that people in this group failed to comply with the instructions. When these data are excluded, the pattern of means is almost identical, and the *p* value associated with the interaction effect is less than .07.

TABLE 2
Ratings of Gamma Group as Function of
Compliance with the Suppression Instructions

Group	N	Positive Feedback Trait		Negative Feedback Trait (Not Suppressed)		Negative Feedback Trait (Suppressed)	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Total	17	1.40	1.3	1.04	0.9	0.08	1.2
Partial	25	1.36	1.1	0.93	1.4	1.08	1.1

Note. Ratings could range from -5 to 5. "Total" suppressions groups never mentioned the to-be-suppressed trait even once; "partial" groups were judged by at least coder to have mentioned the trait.

icates that the results of this investigation represent another example of the paradoxical effects of thought suppression.

DISCUSSION

It has long been assumed that stereotypes and prejudice could reflect people's attempts to stave off threatening thoughts about themselves and the groups to which they belong. However, the psychodynamic perspective has historically taken a back seat to others. The goal of this research was to help build the case for this general approach (see also Newman & Caldwell, in press). More specifically, the goal was to show that when group members attempt to suppress thoughts about what might be some of the group's less appealing qualities, they set into motion processes that ultimately lead to the denigration of other groups of people.

The hypotheses tested were derived from Newman et al.'s (1997) model. Previous research, however, applied it only to understanding how and why individual people might be biased to attribute threatening attributes to other individuals. In a context where intergroup distinctions are salient, however, people might be motivated to suppress unwanted knowledge about the groups to which they belong. If another group is available as a target of judgment, that second group's behavior might then be construed in terms of the very traits that members of the first one attempted not to recognize in themselves.

The results of our study were supportive of that prediction. Small groups of participants were led to believe that they were members of a distinct group—"Epsilons"—and that, as members of that group, they might possess two undesirable personality attributes. At the outset of a group discussion, they were asked to avoid thinking about one of those attributes. When subsequently given the opportunity to form an impression of another group, they were more likely to project that suppressed trait than they were to infer either a positive trait that they supposedly possessed or the *other* unfavorable trait that was also said to characterize Epsilons. Thus,

out-group ratings did not simply parallel the trait ratings on the personality profile that participants received. Suppressing a trait led to it being more likely to be projected. In addition, when the analysis was restricted to groups that were most successful in suppressing traits—that is, those who never mentioned the trait they were asked to suppress—that trait was significantly more likely to be inferred than both the positive feedback trait and the other negative feedback trait.

As Newman et al. (1997), discussed in detail, the model of projection guiding this research does not conceptualize it as a direct mechanism of defense. Instead, projection emerges from (and is essentially a side effect of) a more direct response to threat—that is, though suppression. An implication of this approach is that if thoughts about evaluatively *positive* traits were suppressed, then they would also be projected. Indeed, Newman et al. (1996) presented evidence in support of that prediction. But because people are more likely to engage in chronic suppression of unpleasant than pleasant thoughts, the processes studied here are more likely to have implications for the projection of unfavorable traits.

Relation to Past Conceptualizations

Not only has little stereotyping and prejudice research in the psychodynamic tradition been conducted, but past research and theorizing have suffered from some significant limitations. First of all, as noted earlier, recent research on the motivational aspects of stereotyping has focused on variables moderating the application of stereotypes. Unlike the approach described here, that research does not address the issue of how and why particular stereotypes develop in the first place.

As for older psychodynamic approaches, Monteith et al. (1994) noted that they "appear to explain prejudiced attitudes among only a fairly small proportion of the population of highly prejudiced persons" (p. 325). That observation clearly applies to the authoritarian personality, and Monteith et al. concluded that, more generally, the "anxiety-arousing id or ego impulses" or "frustrations" said by psychodynamic theorists to drive prejudice will characterize only a relatively small subset of people (see also Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). By contrast, they argued, the cognitive approach "has focused on the intrapersonal psychological processes contributing to prejudicial biases among *all* people" (Monteith et al., 1994, p. 326). A strength of the account detailed and demonstrated in this article is that it belongs to the psychodynamic tradition—that is, it focuses on how stereotypes and prejudice can arise from the need to defend the self-concept and avoid anxiety and other bad feelings—yet it also applies to people in general.

Finally, past thinking on the topic has focused almost exclusively on the individual and only indirectly (if at all) treated stereotyping and prejudice as group-level phenomena. Prejudice in a given society was said to arise when many

different people individually had the experiences that could lead people to want to derogate members of other groups. It is not surprising, then, that psychodynamic theories could not easily account for the emergence of specific consensual stereotypes within a group of people. In fact, Ashmore and Del Boca (1981) pointed out that such theories primarily explain what causes generalized prejudices, but not specific stereotypes associated with those prejudices. The current approach treats stereotypes as cognitive underpinnings of prejudice that are constructed in a group context.

CONCLUSION

The contents of social stereotypes can derive from many sources and influences. In some cases, though, what group members eagerly attribute to out-groups might tell us less about those out-groups and more about what the in-group is terrified to confront in itself.

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