

# Prejudice and Bias

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**Stereotypes are over-simplified ideas about groups of people based on characteristics, which can include race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. Stereotypes can have both positive as well as negative connotations. Prejudice refers to thoughts, attitudes, and feelings about a group not based on actual experience. Discrimination involves acting in a certain way toward a group.**



## Definition

Prejudice is prejudgement or forming an opinion before becoming aware of the relevant facts of a case. This often refers to preconceived judgment towards a certain social group.

## Processes That Contribute to Prejudice

There are three main processes which contribute to prejudice. The first one is power, which is defined as the ability to control the behavior of other people.

**Power can be divided into three main categories:**

**Economical power**, which is power held by wealth. Economical power can be characterized by the ability to take control over in properties or organizations.

**Personal power**, which is held by an individual. Different kinds of power may be held by

an individual person including defensive, economic, as well as a destructive power.

**Political power**, which is the power helped by a political group. It includes enforcing laws as well as favoring certain political views in order to support certain groups of people.

The second process that contributes to prejudice is prestige, which refers to a good reputation. For example, people who have different occupations, such as doctors, lawyers vs service workers. The third process is class, which is divided into the lower, middle and upper class. People in the lower class are perceived to be lazy and poor; however, people in the upper class are perceived to be rich because they work hard.

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**These can include:**

- Race
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Religion

Stereotypes can have both positive and negative connotations.

## The Role of Emotion in Prejudice

Emotions are considered to be responses to cognitive evaluation or appraisals. Appraisals are defined as ways of perceiving events or people according to significant evolutionary themes, including disease, loss, or attack. Appraisals are also attuned to moral/social problems, such as greed, impurity, and injustice. For example, an appraisal of an individual who is behaving in an irresponsible, unfair, lazy way tends to result in eliciting anger. Emotion may be elicited by outgroups via activating either type of appraisal.

## The Role of Cognition in Prejudice

People make their decisions based on the information and knowledge that is most readily available. In other words, people make most of their judgments depending on the availability heuristic. For example, in the Czech Republic, the discussions in social settings and in the media about the gypsy populations focus on the high crime rate and the stereotypical poverty among this population; so a company would simply decide not to hire a gypsy in their company, even though they don't have any personal experience. People usually use schemas when they process social information, which means this could be due to schema processing.

## Stigma and Ethnocentrism

Social stigma is defined as an extreme discrediting and disapproval of a person by society. Which comes in two different forms, social stigma, and self-stigma.

When we talk about social stigma, we are talking about a variety of key concepts, including prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes. Usually, we encounter social stigma when we are looking at a condition such as mental health problems, medical conditions, or other issues including criminality as well as sexual orientation. Social stigma and its components are affected by and may vary based on the sociopolitical context.

For example, many people may believe that mentally ill patients are violent, this is

considered an example of a stereotype as it involves a cognition or a belief which is generalized to a group of people or a population. Prejudice would be if this cognition or belief leads on to negative affect or emotion, so if you start becoming scared of mentally ill patients, that would be prejudice. Finally, if these prejudices and stereotypes lead to a change in our behavior, then this can lead to discrimination. Like, if you are scared of mentally ill patients, you might not want to hire them in your company or live close to them.

All these discriminatory experiences, prejudices, and negative stereotypes may be internalized by individuals. As they internalize, these individuals may feel like they need to avoid society and interacting with it, or rejected by society. For example, an individual who suffers from AIDS or HIV and feels its stigma may deny that they have the condition and not seek medical care. In addition to that, they may also suffer from mental health issues, such as depression.

## Processes Related to Stereotypes

Pygmalion effect, also known as a self-fulfilling prophecy, is characterized by stereotypes, which lead to behaviors that affirm the original stereotype or beliefs. Individuals may themselves be impacted in this way by stereotypes others have. Examples of the self-fulfilling prophecy effect may be illustrated in different settings including social settings, workplace, as well as the classroom.

Stereotype threat refers to a self-fulfilling fear that one is at risk of confirming negative stereotypes. Spencer studies illustrated this threat to examining stereotypes in math function and gender. The performance was directly influenced by preconditioning with/without stereotype.

## References

[What's behind prejudice?](#) via apa.org

[To what extent is prejudice biological, cognitive, and sociocultural?](#) via iseibpsychology2012.wikispaces.com

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