

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CULTURAL CONTACT

Deborah A. Prentice and Dale T. Miller

ETHNIC diversity currently preoccupies a sizable segment of U.S. society, from employers and school administrators, who must manage diversity within institutional settings, to politicians and social scientists, who must formulate policies for addressing the competing claims of different ethnic groups. The issue of diversity is fraught with anxiety. Ethnic conflicts in many countries around the world attest to the potential for relations across cultural boundaries to go seriously and destructively awry. Moreover, Americans' own struggles with race have left many pessimistic about the prospects for achieving positive, stable relations between ethnic groups. With new waves of immigrants coming from Asia and Latin America and higher birth rates among minority than majority groups, the U.S. population is becoming, and will continue to become, ethnically and culturally more diverse. Thus, how to promote positive relations across group boundaries is a question of paramount importance.

Thirty or forty years ago, psychologists thought they had an answer to this question. The contact hypothesis posited that if members of different ethnic groups interact with each other on an equal-status basis in pursuit of common goals, positive intergroup relations will result (Allport 1954). This hypothesis was so appealing that it spawned hundreds of studies designed to test and refine its claims. The results have been less than encouraging. Yes, equal-status contact can have positive results, but only if many conditions obtain: the contact should be meaningful and have the potential to extend beyond the immediate situation; the individuals should be as similar as possible on all dimensions besides group membership; the contact should be voluntary, extended in duration, and varied across contexts; and so on (for a more complete list, see Stephan 1985). In short, the main conclusion to draw from this liter-

ature is that contact between members of different ethnic or cultural groups has positive consequences if the conditions of contact are ideal. Needless to say, practitioners of positive intergroup relations have not found that conclusion terribly helpful.

From a theoretical point of view, what is striking about research on the contact hypothesis, in retrospect, is its lack of attention to the psychological processes underlying the effects of contact. Investigators have directed their work toward the more pragmatic question of how we should structure society's organizations and institutions to foster positive intergroup attitudes. In line with this pragmatic emphasis, they have sought to identify social, situational, and structural factors that moderate the effects of intergroup contact. The psychological processes that are triggered by contact and, in turn, shape the outcomes of contact have not been a central focus of the research.

Those psychological processes are the central focus here. This book explores the psychology of cultural contact. It is dedicated to the premise that what is in people's heads—how they think and feel about themselves and others, how they view changes in society, how they understand culture and diversity, and how they react to difference—plays a critical role in determining the outcomes of contact across group boundaries. This analysis certainly does not deny the importance of economic, political, and social structural factors, nor does it give causal primacy to the psychological. Indeed, several of the chapters in this volume describe ways in which structural factors, such as majority-minority status, place in the social hierarchy, and relative social power, shape individual psychology. Our claim is simply that the psychological level of analysis is also important for understanding cultural contact. What individuals think and feel matters and cannot be subsumed by these other factors.

This volume represents the attempts of a group of social psychologists to grapple with issues arising from increasing cultural diversity and cultural contact within American institutions. The individual chapters differ along many dimensions. Some make theoretical contributions; others have an empirical focus. Some describe initial results from new lines of investigation; others represent the fruits of decades of research. They vary in their scope, their theoretical orientation, and their methodology. And perhaps most strikingly, they reveal the authors' sharply different views on both the magnitude of racial and cultural problems in this country and the nature of their solutions. Despite these differences, all of the chapters reflect the conviction that psychology can help us in understanding and improving the outcomes of contact between racial and cultural groups.

NORMATIVE ASSUMPTIONS

Before we can evaluate the implications of psychological theory and research for the improvement of intergroup contact, we need to specify the normative assumptions that guide our notions of improvement. How should members of different ethnic and cultural groups relate to one another? History provides us with four models of American ethnic relations that together serve as a useful framework for thinking about the various forms that a multicultural society might take (see Fredrickson, this volume). One is the ethnic hierarchy model, in which a dominant group claims rights and privileges not to be shared with other, subordinate groups. A second is the one-way assimilation model, in which minority groups are expected to conform to the mainstream culture to achieve full citizenship. A third is the cultural pluralism model, in which groups retain their distinctive cultures while adhering to a set of rules and understandings that enable them to live together. Finally, fourth is the group separatism model, in which culturally distinct groups withdraw from mainstream society and form autonomous, self-governing communities. Recent academic discussions of diversity have tended to favor the cultural pluralism model, although the United States is a long way from any kind of societal consensus on the matter.

Of course even if the country could agree on the desirability of cultural pluralism, numerous questions would remain. Most focus on how precisely to strike a balance between the claims of ethnic identity and the formulation and application of society-wide rules and understandings. Answers to these questions require contributions from many sources—demographers, economists, historians, sociologists, legal scholars, and political scientists all have much to offer. But for the individual level of analysis—for an understanding of how individuals function in a culturally plural context—we turn to psychologists.

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS

Psychological analyses of cultural contact focus on theoretical constructs that are presumed to mediate between objective features of the environment and the individual's reaction to them. The three constructs that have been most prominent in analyses of contact and of intergroup relations more generally are social identities, collective representations, and intergroup attitudes. These constructs inform all of the contributions to this volume. We briefly describe the properties of each of them in turn.

Social Identities

Social identities are conceptions of self and others that are derived from membership in social groups. Theories of social identity begin with the observation that people categorize themselves and others, just as they categorize other animate and inanimate objects, on the basis of salient perceptual dimensions. Distinctions of race and gender serve as obvious bases for categorization and therefore are prominent among people's social identities. Categorization is a primitive, inevitable, and, by most accounts, necessary feature of human cognition, though it is also flexible. The categorization of any particular individual depends not just on his or her characteristics but also on properties of the perceiver and the social context (see Gaertner et al., this volume).

Most theories of social identity go on to posit that people have a need to feel good about themselves and, by extension, about the social groups into which they categorize themselves. This combination of self-esteem enhancement and group identification produces a tendency to favor one's own group at the expense of other groups—so-called ingroup favoritism. Like categorization, self-esteem enhancement is viewed as primitive and inevitable, though its role in producing ingroup favoritism has been questioned (for a critique of this aspect of social identity theory, see Sidanius et al., this volume). Nevertheless, most theories agree that some ingroup-outgroup boundary is central to how people think about their social worlds and that individuals on either side of the boundary are evaluated quite differently.

A few theories of social identity take the fact of social categorization in a different direction, positing processes other than self-esteem enhancement that combine with categorization to influence intergroup relations. For example, recent work in cultural psychology and anthropology has documented the human tendency to essentialize some group differences. People believe that certain groups (such as, in the United States, racial and ethnic groups) have essences that differentiate them from each other and that make their members who they are. This tendency to see certain groups as composed of different kinds of people may contribute to the perception that differences that occur across these group boundaries are both fundamental and immutable (Miller and Prentice, this volume). It may therefore encourage participants in such disputes to adopt a strategy of withdrawal and self-segregation rather than attempt to resolve their differences by achieving common ground.

Finally, still other theories argue for the importance of the power differences that accompany social categorization. These theories assume that status hierarchies are an inevitable feature of social systems and that contact across group boundaries functions primarily to sustain sta-

tus hierarchies. The most psychological of these theories traces social hierarchy to a psychological construct known as social dominance orientation: the extent to which an individual believes in the legitimacy and desirability of group-based hierarchy (Sidanius et al., this volume). Social dominance orientation contributes to the working of hierarchy-enhancing forces and hierarchy-attenuating forces within a society. These forces act in opposition, resulting in a hierarchical equilibrium that reflects a degree of group-based social hierarchy that is neither morally offensive nor structurally destabilizing.

Theories of social identity offer a psychological account for many of the observed outcomes of cultural contact. They trace these consequences to psychological processes that are inevitable and, in most cases, not subject to conscious control. Different versions of the theory hold different forms of ethnic relations to be most stable: self-esteem enhancement theories, with their focus on the divisive effects of an in-group-outgroup boundary, suggest that harmony requires one-way (or possibly two-way) assimilation; essentialist theories suggest that pluralism produces a pull toward some degree of group separatism; and power theories argue for the inevitability of ethnic hierarchy. As regards cultural pluralism, all of the theories agree on one feature of the categorization process that makes pluralism possible: its flexibility. Although some form of categorization is inevitable, the basis of that categorization depends on many factors that are subject to modification: the perceiver's goals and expectations, the salience of particular categories, and the structure of the social context. Moreover, categorization can occur at multiple levels simultaneously, such that individuals can categorize themselves both as members of distinct ethnic groups and as members of the superordinate group, Americans (Gaertner et al., this volume; for limits on this flexibility, however, see Brewer, von Hippel, and Gooden, this volume). The flexibility of categorization is at once a source of optimism and pessimism for cultural pluralism: it suggests that this form of ethnic relations is certainly possible, but that it is inherently unstable and therefore is likely to require substantial structural support to be viable in the long run.

Virtually all of the chapters in this volume draw on these ideas about categorization and group identification, though the particular version of the theory to which they subscribe and the use they make of it differ from chapter to chapter.

Collective Representations

Collective representations are beliefs, values, interpretive attitudes, and other habits of mind that are socially shared within a particular group,

society, or culture. They include beliefs about groups and about the appropriate relation between groups; implicit theories of human nature and the causes of human behavior; and representations of self, other, and the boundary between the two. Collective representations are best conceived as properties of the group rather than of the individual members of the group. That is, individuals need not personally subscribe to the group's collective representations; they simply need to know that those representations reflect what "we" think, feel, and do.

Collective representations exert a powerful influence on the meanings and consequences of cultural contact. Perhaps the most obvious example is the deleterious effect that discriminatory stereotypes against African Americans have had on race relations in the United States. But stereotypes are not the only collective representations that play such a role. Another example is the belief in essential differences between racial and ethnic groups, which, as we already noted, influences the strategies used to deal with group conflict and the optimism with which those strategies are employed (Miller and Prentice, this volume). Still other examples are the legitimizing myths that provide moral and intellectual justification for systems of group-based social hierarchy (Sidanius et al., this volume). Relations across ethnic and racial group boundaries are regulated to a considerable extent by these collective representations of how they are and should be conducted.

Collective representations of the relative standing of different ethnic groups also have a powerful effect on the individual members of those groups, though that effect is not always simple or predictable. Consider, for example, the consequences of membership in devalued or stigmatized groups. One might expect, as many researchers initially did, that the collective representations of one's group are internalized—that is, that members of devalued groups incorporate that devaluation into their self-concepts. In fact, reactions to stigmatizing collective representations are much more complex than that. Although some groups do show a tendency to internalize disadvantage, others disengage or disidentify from the society that devalues them (see Crocker and Lawrence, this volume). Indeed, in the face of devaluation in one context, individuals show a remarkable ability to find their way to another context that affords them a more positive identity (Steele and Sherman, this volume).

Collective representations can also influence the outcome of cultural contact when that contact brings into conflict differing cultural views. For example, consider collective representations of self and other. In the United States, a highly individualistic culture, the distinction between self and other is critical. Individuals are viewed as separate and autonomous entities, free agents, whose behavior is guided by their own thoughts, feelings, and preferences. By contrast, in Japan, a more collec-

tivistic culture, the distinction between self and other is blurred. Individuals are viewed not as bounded wholes but as fundamentally connected to one another, with behavior guided by others' thoughts, feelings, and preferences more than their own. These differences in collective representations of self and other produce striking differences in how members of these two cultures analyze the causes of an individual's behavior (Norenzayan, Choi, and Nisbett, this volume), evaluate the actions of friends and strangers (Iyengar, Lepper, and Ross, this volume), and react to choices made by self and others (Iyengar et al., this volume). It is easy to imagine how these profoundly different worldviews can generate cultural misunderstandings in contact situations.

Cultural differences have particular relevance to contact situations that involve collective representations of conflict. Cultures hold sharply different views of the meanings of conflict, the conditions under which it occurs, and the appropriate way to treat it. In European American cultures, for example, conflict is seen as arising when there is interference between the activities, beliefs, or preferences of two self-determined individuals. It is a negative state, to be avoided if possible and resolved quickly if not. The goal of that resolution is to eliminate the conflict with minimal infringement on the ideas, interests, and rights of the two conflicting parties. By contrast, in Asian and Asian American cultures, conflict is seen as a natural and inevitable outgrowth of long-term relationships. It is therefore to be managed, not avoided. Conflict management is oriented toward minimizing the negative consequences of the disagreement before it escalates to confrontation. The goal is to maintain the relationship rather than to satisfy the interests of the two conflicting parties (Markus and Lin, this volume). Again, it is easy to imagine how these different understandings of conflict can clash when they come into direct contact with each other.

As for the implications of collective representations for the viability of cultural pluralism in this country, they are equivocal. We have, in our cultural repertoire, collective representations that support this form of ethnic relations, though most Americans view the importance these representations accord to ethnic group membership with some misgivings (see Sears, Citrin, Cheleden, and van Laar, this volume). Moreover, work on cultural differences suggests that considerable cultural education is essential if we expect members of different groups to live and work together under conditions of mutual understanding and respect.

Attitudes

Intergroup attitudes, and especially prejudice, have traditionally been the central construct in social psychological research on racial and cul-

tural contact, both as determinants of the valence of intergroup relations and as targets of interventions. That attitudes play a critical role in intergroup relations is beyond dispute, but how much they matter, especially relative to other psychological and nonpsychological constructs, is currently a subject of considerable debate (see Green, Abelson, and Garnett, this volume).

The most well-developed account of the origins and consequences of intergroup attitudes is symbolic politics theory (Sears et al., this volume). According to this theory, people respond to ethnic groups in light of long-standing attitudes acquired through the socialization process. There is nothing inherently special about ingroup identity, nor about the distinction between ingroup and outgroup within this framework. Rather, individuals are expected to manifest a strong ethnic identity or outgroup prejudices only if the conditions of their socialization have fostered these predispositions. Socialization can as easily lead to a weak ethnic identity as a strong one; it can produce tolerance as well as prejudice.

Symbolic politics theory argues that the socialization histories of different ethnic groups have produced radically different attitudes among the members of those groups. For example, whites have been socialized to have a very weak ingroup identity, since their ethnicity has been of little significance in most regions of the country. Societal stereotypes and other collective representations have left them with generally benign outgroup attitudes, with one exception: whites have been socialized to hold strongly negative views of blacks. For blacks, by contrast, the conditions of their socialization have produced a highly crystallized ingroup identity. Their low status in society, combined with the impermeable boundaries, strict inclusion criteria (such as the “one drop” rule), and high political profile of their group, have left them with strong group consciousness and perceptions of group interest. They think and behave very much as social identity theories would predict: their relations with other groups and their politics more generally are informed—indeed, shaped—by their strong ethnic identity.

The implications of symbolic politics theory for our notions of the form that ethnic relations should take are twofold. First, the theory places no constraints on the types of political and social arrangements of which humans are capable. Its central psychological mechanism—socialization—privileges no particular arrangements over others. At the same time, the theory points to the fact that current socialization practices tend to favor some forms of ethnic relations over others. In particular, because political norms in the United States have traditionally emphasized individual over group rights, conventional socialization practices have left most Americans only modestly supportive of claims

for ethnic group recognition and accommodation. As a result, cultural pluralism, American style, is likely to have a distinctly individualistic flavor.

THE CHAPTERS

Now we turn to a more specific consideration of the chapters in this volume. They are organized into three sections, reflecting the three major questions that have animated research in this general area:

1. How important is ethnic identity to people's thoughts and feelings about themselves and others?
2. How do members of different ethnic and cultural groups differ?
3. How does the particular history of race relations in the United States shape the outcomes of cultural contact today?

The Claims of Ethnic Identity

Our first perspective on the importance of ethnic identity is a historical one. George Fredrickson, in chapter 2, describes the varying forms that ethnic relations have taken in U.S. history. He organizes his description around the four models of ethnic relations we cited earlier: ethnic hierarchy, one-way assimilation, cultural pluralism, and group separatism models. In his analysis, these models have both descriptive and normative significance: each represents the form that relations between ethnic groups have taken at some time and place in the United States and also serves as an ideal-type model of the form these relations might take in the future. Fredrickson ends the chapter with an expression of the prevailing view, at least in the academy, that cultural pluralism is indeed the most promising alternative.

In chapter 3, David Sears and his colleagues evaluate the claim that increasing ethnic diversity in this country will inevitably lead to ethnic balkanization. This claim rests on the assumption that increasing diversity produces more ethnic tension and more negative attitudes toward members of other ethnic groups. In addition, it heightens the salience of one's own ethnicity and increases support for group-rights systems of political representation. Do we see this pattern occurring in the United States? Sears and his colleagues bring data from public opinion surveys to bear on this question. They find that increasing diversity is producing more tension and polarization around political issues particularly relevant to minorities. But they do not find any increase in outgroup antagonism, ethnic self-identification, or support for political systems organized around group rights. Instead, they find an older pattern of anti-black

sentiment among a sizable proportion of the white population, a prejudice that dictates these people's attitudes toward policies affecting any minority group.

In chapter 4, Jim Sidanius and his colleagues provide an overview of social dominance theory, a far-reaching account of ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation. As we described earlier, social dominance theory analyzes status hierarchies as an inevitable feature of social systems and argues that contact across group boundaries functions primarily to sustain these hierarchies. At the individual level, hierarchies are controlled by social dominance orientation. The most provocative and controversial claim of this theory is that differences in the degree of hierarchy within any institution, organization, or society can be traced to differences in the social dominance orientation of its members. In their contribution, Sidanius and his colleagues provide an overview of their theory and contrast it to its two most prominent competitors: social identity theory and symbolic politics theory.

The final chapter in this section, by Patricia Gurin, Timothy Peng, Gretchen Lopez, and Ratnesh Nagda, offers a sharply different and much more optimistic view of pluralism than do Sidanius and his colleagues. These investigators contend that diversity and group identity can, under certain circumstances, be congenial to democracy and community. They report on the Intergroup Relations, Conflict, and Community Program, a curricular and living-learning program aimed at helping students understand the relationship between groups and democracy. The program incorporates elements of many psychological approaches to improving intergroup relations (for example, many of the conditions identified in investigations of the contact hypothesis) but also focuses more heavily than most approaches on difference and on making group boundaries salient. The chapter examines the impact of this program on intergroup perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. It also examines the role of preexisting power differentials, hypothesizing that group identity is threatening for members of dominant but not of subordinate groups. The results Gurin and her colleagues report attest to the importance of both of these factors. Their research serves as an experiment in cultural pluralism. Can we acknowledge and celebrate group differences and still have unity?

Cultural Differences: Real and Imagined

The next set of chapters is concerned with cultural differences. Psychological research on the perception of differences between groups has tended to focus on error—either the overestimation of differences that are

in fact trivial or nonexistent, or the underestimation (or failure to appreciate) of differences that are significant. And consistent with the liberal politics and pragmatism that have characterized research in this area, both theory and data have focused either on real differences that are benign in content or on imagined differences that are invidious in content. We begin the section with two chapters on the overperception of difference.

In chapter 6, Samuel Gaertner and his colleagues review their program of research on the Common Ingroup Identity Model. The goal of this model is to explore how we can utilize the cognitive processes that usually produce intergroup bias—especially the processes of categorization—to produce an intergroup structure that reduces the perception of invidious differences between groups. In particular, these researchers show that inducing members of different groups to think of themselves in terms of a superordinate group identity—one that they share—leads them to think about, feel, and act more positively toward each other. Moreover, invoking this superordinate identity does not require individuals to forsake their subgroup identities. Indeed, for some outcomes (such as generalization of positive attitudes and behaviors beyond the immediate situation), recognizing both connection (superordinate group identity) and difference (original subgroup identity) is optimal.

In chapter 7, Dale Miller and Deborah Prentice present the category divide hypothesis: the claim that a difference will seem wider, more pervasive, and more difficult to resolve when it occurs between members of different social groups than between members of the same social group. The logic of this hypothesis is as follows: People's perceptions of the magnitude, pervasiveness, and mutability of a difference between two individuals depend on what they see as the source of that difference. When they encounter a difference between members of different social groups, group membership provides one obvious answer to the question, why do these two people differ? And when the groups in question are seen as differing in their essences—as defining different social kinds—then the difference is seen as a chasm, across which no bridge can be built. So the category divide hypothesis does not apply to differences between all social groups, only those that people essentialize. It provides a psychological account for the pessimism people have about the possibility of resolving differences across group boundaries.

The remaining three chapters in this section document real, psychological differences between members of different cultures. In chapter 8, Ara Norenzayan, Incheol Choi, and Richard Nisbett seek to uncover the true nature of cultural differences in social inference. Previous studies have shown that members of East Asian cultures are much less likely to commit the “fundamental attribution error”—that is, to overestimate

the extent to which an individual's behavior reflects his or her dispositions, beliefs, or preferences rather than something about the situation or context in which the behavior occurred—than are members of Western cultures (see Miller 1984). In this chapter, the authors probe more specifically the locus of the difference. Is it that people engaged in European American cultural contexts think less dispositionally than people engaged in East Asian cultural contexts? That Westerners are less sensitive to situational information than are Easterners? They find that both Easterners and Westerners think dispositionally; the two cultures converge on the extent to which dispositional information is used to explain and predict the behavior of others. Where they diverge is in the extent to which they consider situational information as well. Westerners simply do not, regardless of how salient or predictive the situational information might be. Easterners, on the other hand, take situational factors into account when information about those factors is available (and especially when it is salient).

In chapter 9, Sheena Iyengar, Mark Lepper, and Lee Ross document cultural differences in how individuals represent the social world. Their primary claim is that in European American cultures contexts the boundary between the self and another person (any other person) is primary, whereas in East Asian cultures the boundary between the ingroup (the self and other members of important groups) and the outgroup is primary. To test this claim, the authors adapted a number of research paradigms that have been used to demonstrate self-other differences among members of Western cultures and added a distinction between ingroup and outgroup others. For example, their first study was concerned with trait ascription. Previous research has shown that Westerners assign more traits to others than to self. The authors asked students of Caucasian and Asian descent to assign traits to self, an ingroup member, and an outgroup member. The results showed that Caucasian students assigned fewer traits to self than to ingroup or outgroup members, but that Asian students assigned fewer traits to self and ingroup members than to outgroup members. A similar pattern was shown for attributional charity (Asian students show charity to ingroup members as well as self) and for intrinsic motivation (Asian students are intrinsically motivated by ingroup member choices as well as their own).

Finally, in chapter 10, Hazel Markus and Leah Lin suggest that most models of contact and conflict among groups are rooted in European American and particularly Anglo-American collective representations of conflict and are tied to specific European American understandings of the source, nature, and consequences of conflict. In an effort to reveal

that contact and conflict can be understood and modeled in a diversity of ways, they stitch together a widely scattered set of observations and findings to describe some practices and meanings of conflict in four different cultural contexts: European American, Asian American, Mexican American, and African American. The European and Asian cases follow directly from the differences in conceptions of self and other documented by Iyengar and her colleagues in chapter 9 and also by Markus and her colleagues in earlier work (see Markus and Kitayama 1991). But the other two cases are more complex and not as well captured by the familiar distinctions between individualistic and collectivistic psychologies. In Mexican American culture, conflict is defined as a loss of harmony between individuals. Status differences are critical, as is *simpatía*: the ability to respect and understand another's feelings. Conflict occurs in a context in which people are striving to maintain harmonious, unequal relationships, and as a result, Mexicans try to avoid conflict if at all possible. When avoidance strategies fail, confrontational discussions do occur. However, these confrontations maximize the possibility of reestablishing harmony. The final goal in the Mexican American context is a mutual coordination of feelings rather than the resolution of an issue. By contrast, in African American culture, the meaning of conflict is simultaneously individual and relational. It is conceived as individuals having differing points of view, but the focus is on the discrepancy, rather than on the consequences of the discrepancy. In African American cultural contexts, people tend to confront others about points of disagreement in an attempt to resolve the problem that initially caused the disagreement. But unlike in European American contexts, resolution depends on the compelling presentation of arguments rather than on attempts to appeal to some objective truth.

Taken together, the five chapters in this section offer strikingly different answers to the question of what drives cultural groups apart. Chapter 6 by Gaertner and his colleagues, and especially our own contribution (chapter 7), suggest that by overgeneralizing differences between ourselves and particular members of other cultural groups, or by failing to recognize the superficiality of these differences, we frequently forego opportunities for productive engagement and reconciliation. By contrast, the three chapters on cultural differences suggest that by failing to recognize that an interpersonal difference is cultural or by misinterpreting its cultural meaning, we frequently create occasions of miscommunication and alienation. It is easy to say that individuals should strive to avoid both of these errors, but the inherent tension between them makes this goal difficult to achieve. Indeed, the higher the threshold one sets for avoiding one error, the lower the threshold necessarily becomes for

making the other. This tension also exists for researchers who study the real and perceived bases of cultural differences, for by choosing to study one error over the other, they run the risk of either overlooking real cultural differences or reifying superficial or illusory ones.

The Psychology of Race in the United States

The final section of the book contains a diverse set of chapters that deal with the psychology of race in the United States. It begins, in chapter 11, with Marilynn Brewer and her colleagues addressing the question of how newcomers to an organization—in this case, students entering college—are incorporated into the organizational structure and culture. The authors are especially interested in how the outcomes and processes underlying this incorporation vary depending on whether the newcomers are Caucasian or members of a non-Asian ethnic minority group. Thus, they examine whether the relation between identification with one's ethnic group and identification with the university differs for members of majority and minority groups. The results from two studies, one conducted at the University of Michigan and the other at UCLA, indicate that it does. For whites, the relation between ethnic identification and institutional identification is zero; for ethnic minorities, the relation is negative. These findings call into question the optimism that Gaertner and his colleagues have about dual identities. In many contexts, ethnic minorities may find (or at least perceive) that their ethnic identities conflict with superordinate institutional or organizational identities. In these cases, they may not be able to adopt a dual identity and thereby receive the benefits of both connection and difference.

In chapter 12, Jennifer Crocker and Jason Lawrence attempt to account for a puzzle: Why is it that members of stigmatized groups—especially African Americans—do not have low self-esteem? Surveys show that blacks have levels of self-esteem comparable to those of whites, even though the feedback about themselves they get through interactions with others has to be considerably more negative. Do these results indicate that the prevailing theories of self-esteem, which point to the importance of reflected appraisal, are misguided? And how can these theories account for the fact that Asian Americans—a successful minority group, by many standards—have significantly lower self-esteem than members of other groups? The solution to this puzzle, according to the authors, is that whites, blacks, and Asians base their self-esteem on different sources of information. In particular, whites and Asians base their self-esteem on others' approval to a much greater extent than do blacks. Blacks show a pattern of more internal and less contingent sources of

self-esteem. As a result, they are better insulated against the effects of devaluation and discrimination.

Chapter 13 addresses a similar theme from a very different perspective. Claude Steele and David Sherman present what they term the “afforded psychology” of welfare mothers, afforded in the sense that it is a response to a life situation that enables the development of some psychological characteristics more than others. This afforded psychology has two major features: a strong commitment to self-sufficiency and independence (in the sense of not being economically dependent on other people in their lives), and a lack of trust in the available opportunity structure. Steele and Sherman present the results of interviews with twenty women at a homeless shelter in the Bronx. They use these interviews to substantiate their psychological model and to explore more broadly the bases of these women’s sense of identity and self-esteem. In the latter connection, their results complement those of Crocker and Lawrence: the factors they identify as important to participants’ identity and sense of self-worth are very different from those identified in previous studies using college-student populations. More generally, their analysis serves as an excellent example of how social psychologists approach social problems, a contribution that is most evident in the section that compares their theory with other social science theories of welfare dependency.

We turn, in chapter 14, from welfare mothers to white supremacists and hate-crime perpetrators. Donald Green, Robert Abelson, and Margaret Garnett report the results of a survey designed to compare systematically the views of hate-crime perpetrators, white supremacists, and the general public. Respondents were people known to have participated in hate-crime activity in North Carolina between 1986 and 1995, and a comparison sample drawn from the general population in North Carolina. Results show that white supremacists and hate-crime perpetrators are not notably more frustrated economically or more pessimistic about the financial futures of their communities than are ordinary people. But, they fear diversity: the specter of race-mixing, immigration, and the blurring of gender roles looms much larger in their minds than in the minds of the general public. It is their discomfort with social change, rather than heightened feelings of economic resentment, that sets these individuals apart.

Finally, in chapter 15, James Jones offers a theoretical perspective on race, culture, and intergroup relations that unites many of the ideas in the foregoing chapters. He argues that most analyses of racism have defined it as a belief in the biological inferiority of others (most commonly, African Americans) compared to the self (most commonly, European Americans). In so doing, they have ignored what Jones terms “cul-

tural racism”: the belief that another’s culture is inferior to one’s own. Jones argues that recent attempts to combat biological racism have left cultural racism relatively intact. He describes the nature of cultural racism and examines its consequences for African Americans and for race relations in this country.

PARTICULARISM IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The chapters in this volume have significance beyond their substantive contributions; they also reflect a paradigm shift that has occurred in social psychology over the last two decades. Traditionally (and somewhat stereotypically), social psychologists have seen themselves as engaged in the discovery of the universal principles and invariant processes underlying social behavior. Their goal has been to identify psychological laws that hold across all people in all times and all places. They have viewed individual differences, including those arising from social group membership, as a nuisance—a threat to the universality of the process in question. When confronted with such differences, their typical strategy has been to identify a psychological variable that can explain the difference as yet another manifestation of the underlying (and invariant) process. Thus, gender differences have been traced to differences in influenceability, interpersonal sensitivity, or emotionality; race differences to differences in liberalism, anxiety, or reactions to a white experimenter; cultural differences to differences in individualism or collectivism; and so on. To the extent that researchers have examined individual differences, it has been as a way of studying a common, underlying psychology.

In recent years, there has been a fundamental change in how social psychologists think about individual and group differences. Instead of seeing them as a nuisance to be explained away, researchers increasingly view them as the heart of the matter, the substantive findings of interest. The most extreme advocates of this point of view argue that at least some differences between social groups provide us with evidence of separate psychologies. These researchers (including several represented in this volume) have moved away from the pursuit of universal processes that operate for all people; they maintain that at least some observed group differences demarcate qualitatively different ways of thinking. A more moderate position holds that these differences may or may not define separate psychologies, but they certainly are interesting. In this view, evidence for differences across well-defined social boundaries indicates, at the very least, that a study is capturing something important and meaningful about people’s real-life experiences.

This shift in how social psychologists interpret difference is, in

large part, a result of increasing cultural diversity, both in the worlds that researchers inhabit and in the populations from which they draw their research participants. Studies that have included men and women, blacks and whites, Japanese and Americans, have turned up evidence for psychological differences between these groups that cannot be easily reconciled with universalist notions. As a result, social psychological theories are becoming more particularistic, and gender, racial, and cultural differences are becoming topics worthy of study in their own right.

The chapters in this volume reflect this growing particularism. In them, we learn that members of different ethnic groups have sharply different political dispositions (Sears et al.); that the determinants of their academic achievement and self-esteem differ (Brewer et al.; Crocker and Lawrence); and that their experiences of a college campus differ (Gurin et al.). We learn that not all social categories are perceived similarly—some are essentialized (Miller and Prentice). We learn that different cultures offer strikingly different analyses of the causes of human behavior (Norenzayan et al.), see themselves in different relations to their ingroups (Iyengar et al.), and approach conflict in different ways (Markus and Lin). And we learn about the distinctive psychologies of white supremacists (Green et al.) and welfare mothers (Steele and Sherman).

Another aspect of this paradigm shift has been an increasing eclecticism on the methodological side. This change, too, is reflected in the research presented in this volume. Although some of the chapters describe the results of traditional laboratory experiments, these are the minority. Most use survey methods to tap into individuals' thoughts and experiences in context. Some use cultural comparisons, both to identify cultural differences that might arise in multicultural contact settings and to provide insight into our own culture through comparison with another. Some provide in-depth analyses of particular groups using survey and interview techniques. And a number use multiple methodologies to test the various predictions of their theoretical frameworks.

Of course, not all social psychologists have embraced this new particularism. Many of them still orient their research toward the discovery of universal psychological processes; many still seek out psychological variables that can explain away individual and group differences; and many, perhaps most, still conduct the majority of their research in the laboratory. But there is no question that the field is more tolerant of particularism now than in the past, and that tolerance has opened the way to new theories of cultural contact, more eclectic methodological approaches, and stronger connections to research in anthropology, sociology, and other social sciences.

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR AMELIORATING GROUP CONFLICT

Finally, the chapters in this volume have important implications for ameliorating group conflict. Conventional wisdom in social psychology has emphasized the inherent divisiveness of group boundaries. In the best-known demonstration of this point, Muzafer Sherif and his colleagues found that simply dividing twenty-two previously unacquainted boys into two groups of eleven and placing the groups in competition resulted in the bitterest kind of intergroup conflict and hostility (Sherif et al. 1961). Subsequent research has demonstrated that competition is not necessary to produce antagonism between groups: even dividing people according to a meaningless criterion leads them to favor members of their own group at the expense of other groups (Tajfel and Turner 1986). These and many similar findings have led social psychologists to a very pessimistic position on intergroup relations. As Roger Brown (1986) summarized: "Conflict between groups is like a sturdy three-legged stool. It is sturdy because two legs are universal ineradicable psychological processes, ethnocentrism and stereotyping, and the third leg is a state of society, unfair distribution of resources, which has always existed everywhere" (533).

The recommendations for improving intergroup relations that have emerged from this literature focus on obscuring group boundaries and emphasizing commonalities. These recommendations are grounded in strong empirical evidence: numerous studies have demonstrated that groups get along better to the extent that they are similar—in status, attitudes, goals, procedures, friends, enemies, and so on. The best example of this approach in the present volume is the work of Gaertner and his colleagues, which has demonstrated quite convincingly the positive consequences of a common ingroup identity. Several of the other chapters take a similar perspective on promoting intergroup harmony.

But most of the chapters challenge the idea that we can or should deemphasize group differences. They offer evidence for the inevitability of group differentiation, the psychological importance of ethnic identity, and the reality and ubiquity of cultural differences. They suggest that attempts to emphasize common ground will often fail (a fact to which many practitioners of positive intergroup relations can attest). And some even call into question the morality of obscuring, rather than celebrating, group differences. In short, the message that emerges from this volume is that any strategy for ameliorating group conflict and promoting intergroup harmony will have to embrace cultural pluralism and acknowledge diversity.

We are left, then, with the question of how to recognize and appreciate ethnic and cultural differences without reifying divisive group boundaries. This question is considerably more complex and difficult to answer than the one with which social psychologists began research on cultural contact almost a half-century ago. But we believe that this formulation represents real progress in the field's efforts to understand and overcome group conflict. We hope that our volume will contribute to this ongoing project.

REFERENCES

- Allport, Gordon. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Brown, Roger. (1986). *Social psychology*. 2nd ed. New York: Free Press.
- Markus, Hazel, and Kitayama, Shinobu. (1991). Culture and self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224–53.
- Miller, Joan. (1984). Culture and the development of everyday social explanation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46, 961–78.
- Sherif, Muzafer., Harvey, O. J. , White, B. Jack, Hood, William, and Sherif, Carolyn. (1961). *Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation: The Robbers Cave Experiment*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Book Exchange.
- Stephan, Walter. (1985). Intergroup Relations. In Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson (eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (3rd ed., vol. 2, pp. 599–658). New York: Random House.
- Tajfel, Henri, and Turner, John. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In Stephen Worchel and William Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (2nd ed., pp. 7–25). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

20
Blank