

## INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

This is the first issue of the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* in many years to be devoted to a special topic. It emerged after much discussion among the editors about the value of dedicating resources to a single topic and the value of the topic itself. We hope that readers will agree that the papers comprising this issue on unconscious<sup>1</sup> forms of stereotyping and prejudice make such allocations a worthwhile investment.

Research on unconscious stereotyping and prejudice highlights a diversity of features. From a casual observation of the submissions received by this journal alone, it is clear that the interest this topic has generated in recent years is substantial and reflects a more general interest in understanding cognition and evaluation as they unfold in particular social contexts. But there is more to notice about this briskly expanding field than quantity. In only a decade, research on the unconscious aspects of stereotyping and prejudice has produced remarkable advances in our thinking about the extent to and the manner in which beliefs (stereotypes) and attitudes (prejudice) can operate without awareness or control. Many unsettling discoveries now reveal that well-intentioned individuals can express stereotypes and prejudice previously assumed to be present only in explicitly prejudiced others. Together, the strong presence and occasional absence of unconscious stereotyping and prejudice revealed in this research should be of relevance not only to those directly interested in these issues but also to scientists and policy makers who are concerned with understanding the complexity of social decision-making and prepared to advocate policy based on sound scientific evidence.

The research presented in this issue has obvious relevance for social psychological theory and for understanding the nature of unconscious social cognition. The experiments represent a new wave of research with theoretical leverage that is unprecedented in social psychology's examination of stereotyping and prejudice. In addition, the research procedures reflect methodological gains that have accrued from judicious borrowing of techniques as well as development of original ones that allow access to forms of consciousness previously denied to

<sup>1</sup> Not everybody will agree with its wisdom, but I use the term "unconscious" here to explicitly gain control over the meaning of a term predominantly associated with psychoanalytic theory. Differing aspects of conscious and unconscious thought, feeling, and behavior are dealt with in the papers themselves, primarily those concerning *awareness* and *control*.

experimentation. Besides providing insight about consciousness and social cognition, these research techniques show how socially meaningful processes can be subjected to increasingly precise measurement.

Fazio and Dunton are interested in which of the many and competing social identities an individual possesses will dominate in a judgment of that person. Among the strengths of their paper is the application of multidimensional scaling to measure which identities emerge as primary and their continuing examination of the relationship between motivation to control prejudice and automatic race prejudice. Neil Macrae and his colleagues engage us in a recurring question in recent research: Are stereotypes automatically activated under any and all circumstances in which a target is encountered, or do conditions exist under which personal judgment is free of beliefs about social groups? Their research challenges those who think of stereotype activation as ubiquitous to consider the possibility that some processing goals can hinder such automatic activation. Bill von Hippel and his collaborators alert us to the utility of a measure that has enjoyed success in the adjoining field of intergroup perception. Their finding that an implicit measure of prejudice based on the abstract-concrete use of language is correlated with independent judgments of a target's personality is among the first to show that superficially discrepant implicit measures may capture similar underlying dimensions. Jack Dovidio and his colleagues show that explicit and implicit measures of prejudice each have their unique fields of prediction and in so doing they evenhandedly identify the conditions under which both forms of attitudes may have impact. Finally, Mark Chen and John Bargh show the impressive effects of automatic stereotype activation as it culminates in self-fulfilling prophecies.

These papers are prototypes of a new breed of research that is changing not only our thinking about stereotyping and prejudice but also a wider range of fundamental questions regarding social cognition, feeling, and behavior. Their success comes from strong grounding in theory that is eclectic, methods that are rigorous, and replication that is reassuring. Collectively, they expand our expectations of the contributions that social psychology can offer.

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