Controlling Other People

The Impact of Power on Stereotyping

Susan T. Fiske

This article presents a theory of the mutually reinforcing interaction between power and stereotyping, mediated by attention. The powerless attend to the powerful who control their outcomes, in an effort to enhance prediction and control, so forming complex, potentially nonstereotypic impressions. The powerful pay less attention, so are more vulnerable to stereotyping. The powerful (a) need not attend to the other to control their own outcomes, (b) cannot attend because they tend to be attentionally overloaded, and (c) if they have high need for dominance, may not want to attend. Stereotyping and power are mutually reinforcing because stereotyping itself exerts control, maintaining and justifying the status quo. Two legal cases and a body of research illustrate the theory and suggest organizational change strategies.

Issues of power and stereotyping haunt our history and our present as human beings. Without stereotypes, there would be less need to hate, exclude, exterminate. For good reasons, people object to being stereotyped, categorized, and attributed certain characteristics in common. People do not want to be stereotyped because it limits their freedom and constrains their outcomes, even their lives. In short, stereotypes exert control. Obviously, stereotypes exert control through prejudice and discrimination. Victims of stereotyping know this and rightly resist stereotypes for those reasons. I want to go beyond these fundamental truths and argue that stereotypes are controlling by their very nature and all too easily result from power, from asymmetries in control.

My argument focuses on some relationships between stereotyping and controlling others. It begins by discussing how stereotypes result from and maintain one person's control over another; it claims that stereotypes are intrinsically controlling of other people. The focus here is on how power encourages stereotyping, as well as how stereotyping maintains power. The argument also describes how powerful people can be discouraged from stereotyping by getting them to pay attention. Essentially this account rests on the motivating impetus of social structure on the individual. I suggest that social control operates through the direction and nature of attention. People in power stereotype in part because they do not need to pay attention, they cannot easily pay attention, and they may not be personally motivated to pay attention.

To illustrate these relationships between stereotyping and control, consider two real-life examples that both pertain to gender stereotyping, although the principles apply to other forms of stereotyping as well. Both examples came from legal cases in which I served as an expert witness. These cases presented superficially different but fundamentally similar cases of stereotyping; both revealed the impact of power, controlling others. Afterward, I will define terms more closely, note relevant literature, and describe some of our relevant research.

Tales of Two Women

Lois Robinson worked as a welder in a certain Jacksonville, Florida, shipyard. Jacksonville Shipyards Inc. (JSI) repaired Navy and commercial ships in dry dock—tough, sometimes dangerous work. Women made up less than 5% of the JSI workforce and less than half of 1% of the skilled craftworkers. Typically there were no or few women on any given shift, so a woman was likely to be the only woman in the crowd getting on the shipyard buses or punching out at the time clock.

Editor's note. Articles based on APA award addresses that appear in the American Psychologist are scholarly articles by distinguished contributors to the field. As such, they are given special consideration in the American Psychologist's editorial selection process.

This article was originally presented as a Distinguished Contribution to Psychology in the Public Interest, Early Career, award address at the 100th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in Washington, DC, in August 1992.

Author's note. The research reported here was supported by National Institutes of Health Grant MH41801.

Thanks are due to four anonymous reviewers and to Jennifer Canfield, John Darley, and Stephanie Goodwin for their suggestions.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Susan T. Fiske, Department of Psychology, Tobin Hall, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003.

1 The descriptions of the cases (but not their relevance to stereotypes, power, and control) also appear in Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux, and Heilman (1991).
The JSI shipyard has been described as a boys' club, a man's world, with "Men Only" painted on one of the work trailers. (When someone complained, the sign was painted over, but in a cursory way.) It is perhaps best summarized as a locker-room atmosphere, with a lot of practical joking and teasing. For example, one worker put a flashlight in his pants to show how well-endowed horses are; another carved the handle of a tool to resemble a penis, waving it in the face of the women. There was open hostility to women on the part of a few men: "There's nothing worse than having to work around women; women are only fit company for something that howls." More often, there was simply a great deal of off-color joking (including one often-repeated joke about death by rape). Obscenity and profanity were routine.

Prominent in the visual environment ("every craft, every shop") were many calendars showing women in various states of undress and various sexually explicit poses. Comparable magazines were widely shared, and pinups were torn out and posted spontaneously. Decorating various public walls were graffiti, both words and cartoons, with explicit sexual content depicting women. There were no pictures or graffiti of naked men. The workers were not allowed to bring other magazines on the job, and they were not allowed to post other material that was not work-related.

The few women workers were typically called by demeaning or sexually explicit names (honey, dear, baby, sugar, momma, pussy, cunt, etc.). They were constantly teased, touched, humiliated, sexually evaluated, and propositioned; the incidents occurred "every day all day" involving "all crafts," according to depositions.

Lois Robinson, the welder, complained about the magazines and calendars, but she was brushed off, all the way up to the top. And even at the highest levels, one manager pointed out that he had his own pinups. Another manager reminded her patriotically that pinups had brought us through World War II. Robinson eventually filed a lawsuit alleging sex discrimination due to sexual harassment in a hostile work environment; she won her case at the trial court level. JSI has appealed, and that is pending.

What does this case have to do with stereotyping, control, and power? Why was it so important to the men at JSI to keep their magazines and calendars, and why were some men so openly hostile to the women? One answer lies in the social structure, specifically the dramatic power asymmetries between the men and women at JSI. It was a man's world where men controlled the distinctly male atmosphere, the coin of social acceptance, and the tangible rewards. Women as a group were radically powerless: outnumbered, out of place, and on trial. Men thus controlled the work environment and shaped it to their own needs. Essentially, one cause of stereotyping at JSI was the men's impurity; they did not need the women for any workplace rewards. The power structure at JSI contributed to the generally aversive and stereotypic work environment. I will describe the mechanisms in more detail shortly.

Moving from the male workers in general to the specific upper-level managers who heard and rejected Robinson's complaints, one can see the effects of managerial overload. Not only were these men part of the traditionally dominant group but they were also given specific institutional power; that is, control over many people's outcomes in the workplace. As managers, by definition each was attending to many underlings. Under such conditions of attentional overload, it was easier to form a superficial, stereotyped-based judgment and dismiss the complaint of one underling, especially an outsider.

Another source of stereotyping at JSI was the small number of men who not only harassed the women but also were openly hostile. In effect, some men were really "bad apples," such as the one who claimed that women were unfit company at work. Not knowing anything more about these particular men, one can only speculate, but an individual problem seems likely. I speculate that one possible problem was an overriding personal dominance orientation.

The second case was set against the boardrooms of a Big Eight accounting firm, Price Waterhouse (PW). One of the top managers brought in millions of dollars in accounts, worked more billable hours than anyone in that cohort, was well liked by clients, and was described as aggressive, hard-driving, and ambitious. But this exemplary manager was denied partnership because she was not feminine enough. Ann Hopkins was not accepted as a partner because of "interpersonal skills problems" that would be corrected, a supporter informed her, by walking, talking, and dressing more femininely.

Although the setting was not exactly Jacksonville Shipyards, it did encourage stereotyping of women in several comparable ways (see Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux, & Heilman, 1991). First, Hopkins was in a firm that had approximately 1% female partners (7 of 662), and she was the only woman out of 88 individuals proposed for partner that year; the few women managers stood out. Second, being a manager in a Big Eight firm is a stereotypically masculine job, calling for tough, aggressive behavior; consequently people think there is a lack of fit between being a woman and being a manager (Glick, Zion, & Nelson, 1988; Heilman, 1983). Third, stereotypes operate more freely on ambiguous criteria, such as judgments of interpersonal skills, than on unambiguous counting criteria, such as number of billable hours. PW failed to guard against bias in these subjective judgments, and there were considerable differences of opinion about how to interpret Hopkins's hard-driving managerial behavior. Fourth, the partnership evaluations were based on ambiguous and scant information in many cases; hearsay and casual opinions were given substantial weight. Finally, the firm had no explicit policy against gender discrimination, although it did prohibit discrimination on the basis of age or health in partnership decisions. Ann Hopkins also filed a lawsuit alleging sex discrimination, which she won, even though PW appealed it up to the Supreme Court. The American Psychological Association filed an amicus brief that apparently was
helpful to the Supreme Court in deciding this case (Fiske et al., 1991; but see Barrett & Morris, 1993a, 1993b; Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux, & Heilman, 1993a, 1993b; Goodman, 1993; Saks, 1993).

How does an analysis in terms of control fit here? Just as in the shipyard, the men were in power at PW, and the women were outnumbered, out of place, and on trial. The men controlled an atmosphere that might best be characterized as an exclusive gentlemen’s club, in which women were guests who were expected to defer to the men’s customs. The men as a group did not particularly need the few women in order to obtain workplace rewards, so again, there was a fundamental issue of resource control. In addition, these busy partners were evaluating up to 88 partner candidates, added to a grueling workload in one of the world’s premier accounting firms, and perhaps overloaded conditions contributed to their lack of attention to their own decision processes. In addition to these features of social structure, there were a few bad apples who seemed to have personal problems, such as the partner who each year complained that women should not even be senior managers, let alone partners. Again, we see power asymmetries in the social structure, attentional overload, and a few individuals with special problems.

At this point, it is important to note that this analysis is not engaging in what our graduate students call “male bashing.” I am not saying that men in general are the specific culprits in stereotyping. In fact, the whole burden of this article is that it is a matter of social structure and a matter of individual personality dynamics that are likely to encourage stereotyping. Any group in the kind of social structure described here would be likely to stereotype other people. Any individual with the kind of personality dynamics described here would be likely to stereotype other people. So, I argue for a more general theoretical basis underlying these two specific examples, even though both of them happen to include gender.

**Stereotyping and Control**

Stereotyping operates in the service of control. Stereotyping is a category-based cognitive response to another person. Apart from prejudice (affect) and discrimination (behavior), stereotyping describes people’s beliefs (cognitions) about an individual based on group membership. Category-based or stereotypic responses contrast with fully individuated, attribute-by-attribute consideration of another person (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990).

It is useful to discuss two aspects of stereotyping in the context of stereotyping and control: descriptive and prescriptive beliefs (e.g., Terborg, 1977). If the stereotype is descriptive, it tells how most people in the group supposedly behave, what they allegedly prefer, and where their competence supposedly lies. People may believe that women in general are good secretaries and teachers, but poor welders, managers, or scientists (e.g., Heilman, 1983; Ruble & Ruble, 1982). Descriptive stereotypes also claim that African Americans are good athletes but poor scholars, that Asian Americans and Jews are good scholars but poor athletes, and so on (Miller, 1982). In these assumptions, there lurks an implicit pressure to fit a certain image; other people’s expectations create the starting point for one’s commerce with them. The easiest course for a stereotyped person is to stay within the bounds of those expectations. But the person who is stereotyped may try to contradict the expectations. In either case, the descriptive stereotype constrains a person because it anchors the interaction, weighing it down and holding it back. Either way, the stereotype must be dealt with. A friend in college once said that she was tired of being everybody’s “Black experience.” Not that she wanted to change who she was, but she was tired of having that limited dimension dominate her interactions, for better or worse. In short, a descriptive stereotype is controlling simply because it exists as an anchor or starting point in the mind of one person dealing with another. Anyone in the culture, whether actively biased or not, potentially knows the contents of the stereotype (Steele, 1992), so it becomes an implicit anchor for everyone.

Another form of stereotype, the prescriptive aspect, is even more explicitly controlling. It purportedly tells how certain groups should think, feel, and behave. So, for example, women should be nice, African Americans should be spontaneous, Asian Americans should be good at math, and Jews should be good at money. In one sense, these are flattering stereotypes, but they also demand that the individual either conform or disappoint the holder of the stereotype. The penalties can be swift and severe if one disappoints someone else’s prescriptive stereotype (e.g., Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Think of the male adolescent in an all-male group who fails to conform to stereotypically masculine prescriptions. Prescriptive stereotypes are limiting and constitute a form of social control.

The descriptive aspect of stereotypes acts as an anchor, and the prescriptive aspect of stereotypes acts as a fence. In short, stereotypes control people, which is one reason they are so aversive. No one wants to be stereotyped. Stereotypes reinforce one group’s or individual’s power over another by limiting the options of the stereotyped group, so in this way stereotypes maintain power. People with power do not have to put up with them, but people without power are victims. Power is control, and stereotypes are one way to exert control, both social and personal. One might argue that subordinates also stereotype those in power, which the next section will counterargue. But even if underlings do stereotype, their beliefs simply exert less control than do those of people in power. Copeland (1992), for example, found that powerful people were more able to create self-fulfilling prophecies than were powerless people.

The controlling impact of stereotypes also explains why power maintains stereotypes. Elsewhere, Eric Dépret and I (Dépret & Fiske, in press) have defined power as asymmetrical control over another person’s outcomes (for another review of definitions, see Ng, 1980). Power has traditionally been defined as the ability to influence at will (e.g., Dahl, 1957; Huston, 1983; Pruitt, 1976). How-
ever, one may have power without influence if the subordinates refuse to be influenced, despite the control of the powerful over their outcomes. Power has also been defined as status (e.g., Hogg & Abrams, 1988). However, one may have power with or without status, as when low-status groups control resources important to high-status groups. Dépret and Fiske's (in press) definition of power in terms of the intrinsic characteristics of human interdependence, that is, as asymmetrical outcome control, follows some theoretical perspectives of Thibaut and Kelley (1959).

Because power is essentially control, people pay attention to those who have power. It is a simple principle: People pay attention to those who control their outcomes. In an effort to predict and possibly influence what is going to happen to them, people gather information about those with power. Consider the direction of attention in a large organization. Attention follows power. Attention is directed up the hierarchy. Secretaries know more about their bosses than vice versa; graduate students know more about their advisors than vice versa. Similar dynamics operate at convention social hours, as people cluster around those perceived to be powerful. Thus, the powerless are attentive to the powerful. By the same token, the powerful need not attend very much to those with less power, because less is at stake for the powerful with regard to their subordinates.

Besides outcome control and its attendant motivations, the powerful have more demands on their attention than do the powerless. By nature of the hierarchy, the powerful have more people competing for their attention than do the powerless. If stereotypes are shortcuts, overburdened people are more likely to use them. The literature indeed indicates that stereotyping is more likely when people are distracted, when their cognitive capacity is limited (for a review, see Fiske, 1993). For example, when people are busy, they do not modify initial categories, all else being equal (Gilbert, 1989). External factors decrease people's mental capacity for thinking carefully about others, and the attentional overload of power predictably decreases people's capacity.

Finally, particular individuals, objectively powerful or not, seek power and dominance over other people, which should influence how they perceive those others (e.g., Battistich, Assor, Messé, & Aronoff, 1985). Individuals who seek to control the fates of other people may or may not more frequently end up in positions of power. Regardless, their motivation to control other people may result in the use of stereotyping as one form of control. Elsewhere, Emery and I (Fiske & Emery, 1993) have argued that such attempts at social control may come from a precarious sense of mental control. Whatever the mechanism, there may be personality analogs of the hypothesized social power processes, with lack of individualized attention as the cause.

Attention may be determined by asymmetrical outcome control, capacity overload, and personal motivation, all in ways linked to one person's actual or desired power over another. Attention then determines who has detailed knowledge of whom and who stereotypes whom. The powerless are stereotyped because no one needs to, can, or wants to be detailed and accurate about them. The powerful are not so likely to be stereotyped because subordinates need to, can, and want to form detailed impressions of them. The powerless need to try to predict and possibly alter their own fates. They may have fewer competing demands on their attentional capacity. And to the extent that a low personal need for power happens to coincide with a low-power position, they may be less motivated to stereotype. The next section presents data bearing on each of these points.

Before turning to the data, one still might argue that the powerful are victims of stereotypes too. But, first, as noted, if the powerless stereotype the powerful, it simply does not matter as much; it demonstrably does not limit their behavior as much (Copeland, 1992) nor, by definition, control their outcomes as much. It is more an irritation than a fundamental threat, except when subordinates are given the power to evaluate, vote on, or otherwise judge those in power. Then the powerless have been given some outcome control, and they are by definition slightly more powerful. The other instance of the powerful being stereotyped might be argued to operate when the powerful stereotype themselves or each other. One might argue that the JSI workers stereotyped each other as all liking pornography or that the PW partners stereotyped themselves as necessarily male, but it is arguable whether more harm was done to themselves or to the women they excluded on that basis. Finally, stereotypes of one's ingroup are more flexible and variable than stereotypes of the outgroup (for a review, see Fiske & Taylor, 1991, chap. 4); hence they are less controlling.

**Data on Power and Stereotyping From the Bottom Up**

A body of previous work from my laboratory supports half of the power--attention equation. When people were interdependent, when they needed each other to achieve their goals, they paid attention. In this work, my colleagues and I have typically manipulated expectancies, which are positive or negative. Sometimes the expectancies were simple expectancies about competence, and sometimes they were stereotypes, such as ethnic stereotypes. We also then manipulated the degree of interdependence (the degree to which the two people depended on each other for some valued outcome), and the interdependence was either high or low. Then we presented subjects with mixed information about the target person on whom their outcomes depended. Some of the information fitted the stereotype or expectancy, and some of the information did not fit it and disputed it. This simulated real life, where one gets mixed information about another person.

We have shown in a variety of contexts three consistent and replicable results: First, people pay attention to others who control their outcomes (Erber & Fiske, 1984; Neuberg & Fiske, 1987; Ruscher & Fiske, 1990; Ruscher, Fiske, Miki, & Van Manen, 1991). Interde-
pendence increases attention in particular to stereotype-inconsistent information. This is the information that potentially undermines the stereotype; it is the most useful and informative. This means that outcome-dependent people attend to the most informative clues they can find, as if they are trying to be as accurate as possible, given the high stakes. Second, we find that people then draw inferences from the information they gather. They make dispositional comments about the inconsistency. They in effect construct personality profiles of the person on whom they depend, perhaps in an attempt to see the other person (and therefore their own fate) as predictable. If they know the other person’s individual personality, they think they know what the other person will do and can infer how it will affect themselves. Finally, interdependence increases the variability of impressions across people, so they end up with more idiosyncratic impressions, often less reflective of stereotypes and expectations. This pattern occurs regardless of whether the interdependence is positive, as in cooperating pairs, or negative, as in competing pairs of people. So we have some evidence that attention follows power, at least when people are equally dependent on each other.

Recently, we extended these findings to situations of asymmetrical power (Dépret & Fiske, 1993). In these studies, undergraduates expected to complete a task under the control of others who could judge, reward, punish, or interfere with their performance. That is, the other people had power over the subjects. When those others were individuals from various outgroups (in this case, from college majors far outside of psychology), the subjects paid more attention to them as their power increased. In particular, the increase was in attention to the inconsistent information, which is the most informative because it potentially challenges the stereotype. Again, as the stakes increased, people were more careful. As in our previous work, we also found that dispositional inferences increased with the target’s power, as if people were trying to make the other person as predictable as possible. The powerful people became intriguing individuals.2

Another lesson we are learning from our research is that the power dynamics have to be experimentally real and significant to the perceiver. We have found that when power captures attention, the power is not just a matter of expecting to meet the other person, not just expecting to be evaluated by the other, and not just expecting to discuss a joint project (Stevens & Fiske, 1993). People have to expect actually to work together on some project. Demonstrable outcomes have to be present; something like effort or money has to depend on the interaction. In this case, the powerless attend to the powerful person, inconsistency and all, and they discount the inconsistencies less than do people not dependent. When no concrete outcomes depend on the other person, but the person is instead simply to evaluate the subject, then subjects concentrate on the downside, focusing on negative information and trying to discount it. In summary, then, we have evidence that powerful people, defined as those who control concrete outcomes, capture attention and that subordinates form more detailed and idiosyncratic impressions of them. In that sense, then, the powerful are not stereotyped.

**Data on Power and Stereotyping From the Top Down**

But what of the other half of the equation? Do the powerful not pay attention to the powerless? Our theory argues that the powerful do not need to pay attention because nothing is riding on the other person; their fates do not depend on the other, so their attention should be more superficial. Moreover, according to one of the other mechanisms, the powerful oversee many subordinates, and this too should interfere with careful attention. Goodwin and Fiske (1993) have recently found that power does indeed decrease attention to others, in a setting designed to mimic personnel decision making; that is, undergraduates were given the power to evaluate high school students’ summer job applications. As the percentage of their power in the decision increased, their attention to the applicants actually decreased in a baseline condition. I will come back to this study shortly, but the point is that it provides initial evidence that the powerful may not pay enough attention to the powerless. This then mimics what went on at Price Waterhouse and Jacksonville Shipyards; the powerful managers simply had no need to attend to the relatively powerless women as unique individual subordinates.

At this point, one might well object that this analysis simply does not apply to the male workers at Jacksonville Shipyards. After all, the women there were receiving quite a lot of attention, although of a certain kind. And one might even argue that the men had very specific needs that depended on the women. So, one might argue, the women were indeed powerful because the men were sexually interested in them. This argument is as old as Aristophanes and *Lysistrata*, but examine the situation a bit more carefully. The men were powerful in several respects related both to the work and social environment. The women had only a modicum of social power, to the extent they were in a position to resist or to cooperate enthusiastically with the men’s sexual advances. Moreover, the attention they received was of a stereotypical sort. Thus, the motivations behind the attention deter-

---

2 This process is entirely altered when the interaction is intergroup rather than interpersonal. When the powerful others are perceived to be a homogeneous outgroup, power creates a sense of threat—in effect, an outgroup conspiracy. The powerful outgroup is instead viewed more stereotypically, as people expect the ingroup to be treated in an unfair and discriminatory fashion. Similarly, Ruscher, Fiske, Miki, and Van Manen (1991) found that intergroup competition increased stereotyping processes relative to interpersonal competition. Some of these group level phenomena explain the threatened reactions of some of the JSI workers and PW partners, to the extent that they viewed the women as a group threatening the men as a group.
mine the kind of attention, and only certain kinds of increased attention will undercut stereotypes.

In a series of studies, we have examined what happens when a powerful person has social or sexual goals that depend on the subordinate. For example, what happens if a male manager wants to date a woman employee? What happens if a female boss wants to be close friends with her female assistant? If the subordinate’s goals are work-related, namely recognition for work well done, then the supervisor’s social interest is often experienced as interfering and irrelevant. Rather than focusing on the quality of one’s work, the supervisor is focusing on whether one is appealing and available. It follows from the specifically social goals that the supervisor will not be attending as carefully to the subordinate’s task performance. In effect, the supervisor is paying attention but not the right kind of attention. In our laboratory, we have investigated whether such social goals help or hinder the subordinate’s work-related goals.

Fiske, Goodwin, Rosen, and Rosenthal (1993) recruited undergraduate men for a dating study that consisted of two parts: a task-oriented interaction and the actual series of dates. In the task-oriented part, the men were in a position to supervise and evaluate their female subordinate. For half the men, the subordinate was the same woman they expected to date, and half the men expected to date somebody else. Hence, for half the men, their romantic dates depended on this woman, and for the other half they did not. The woman was a confederate whose videotaped task performance was either competent or incompetent, according to pretesting. Consistent with this, the men who expected only a task-oriented interaction were able to distinguish competent from incompetent performance. But the men who expected to date her did not. This kind of bias is not limited to men in power; we have recently replicated this finding with women supervising men they expected to date. In both cases, a romantic goal clouds one’s judgment, presumably because people are not paying the right kind of attention.

So far, I have focused on social structure as a cause and cure for stereotyping. But individuals are also directly involved here. Both in Jacksonville Shipyard and at Price Waterhouse, some people were worse than others; some people made particularly egregious comments. What about these bad apples? Maybe the bad apples stereotype other people because of personal problems that parallel the social structural ones. Goodwin and Fiske (1993) hypothesized that a personal need for power and dominance would have similar stereotype-confirming effects on attention. And indeed, people with highly dominant personalities pay less attention to the very information that could undermine their stereotypes. Like people who are powerful because of the social structure, people with dominant personalities ignore stereotype-discrepant information, preferring the information that confirms their stereotypes. Dominant people attend to consistent, stereotype-confirming information and attend very little to the information that could undermine their stereotypes. Nondominant people attend equally to both kinds of information. Perhaps, then, there are some similarities between those with power thrust upon them and those who take it for themselves. Control again is central here, in that dominance-oriented people are distinguished by their chronic attempts to control other people for their own ends.

**How Intentional and Responsible Are People?**

So far, the portrait of the powerful seems discouraging. These are, after all, the people who control what happens to the rest of us. It would appear that the powerful do not pay a lot of appropriate attention as they manipulate our fates. And yet, they can be held responsible for their inattention. Each of us, when we have power over someone else, can be held responsible for our attention or inattention to the other person. What kind of evidence would be relevant here? Responsibility, according to a legal analysis, depends on intent. People are responsible if the act is intentional. So, for example, discrimination is not illegal if it can be proved to be totally unintentional. Penalties for killing another person vary with the degree of intent involved, and so on. Responsibility depends on state of mind and intent in particular.

As psychologists, we know something about intent. As far back as William James, intent was defined by two factors: choice and attention (Fiske, 1989). If people have alternatives, if there is more than one way to behave, according to a reasonable person, then one condition is met for recognizing intent. For example, in many circumstances, doing something at gunpoint does not count as intentional. Doing the only thing one knows how to do is not strictly intentional. The second feature of intent that emerges, over the decades, among psychologists and lay people, is attention. If people keep the chosen alternative in mind, they can be said to intend the one they follow. So, for example, if one is dieting and thinks about the box of Belgian chocolates on the table, one finds them harder to resist than if one’s thoughts are focused elsewhere.

This analysis of intent applies to stereotyping: People’s tendency to stereotype is intentional in that, first, they demonstrably have alternative ways of thinking about people, as members of a category or as unique individuals; everyone can do this (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). Second, people can implement their alternative ways of thinking about other people according to how much attention they pay to those other people. Hence, we find again that attention is central in whether or not people stereotype. In particular, this suggests that people with power can overcome the tendency to stereotype the powerless by the very processes of attention that have been discussed so far.

**What Can Be Done?**

The powerful can be influenced to be more careful by strategies consistent with the theory proposed here. The powerful are by definition not motivated by outcomes that depend directly on their subordinates. Hence, the
powerful are more likely to be influenced by their own higher-ups, by their own peers, or by their self-concept. In that sense, the motivations of the powerful are independent of their relationship with the person being judged; the motivations of the powerful are more autonomous in that sense. In this view, then, the powerful are motivated by what they perceive to be acceptable, according to the norms, and by their own self-concepts. There is some evidence for this.

In the Goodwin–Fiske (1993) study in which undergraduates made job decisions about high school students, power decreased decision makers' attention to the applicants, as hypothesized, in a baseline condition. But we also predicted that shared norms concerning humanitarian and egalitarian values might remind people of their better selves, in effect. That is, if we could make accessible the decision makers' sense of responsibility, we might be able to get them to pay attention. So, some people completed a scale of shared humanitarian-egalitarian values; when we primed a sense of responsibility, their attention increased dramatically. Notice that we were not telling them what to do but only reminding them of their own values.

The powerful can also be motivated by their own self-concepts as fair-minded and careful people. Fiske and Von Hady (1992) predicted and found that people had the capacity to think about other people in either categorical or individuating ways and that they could use either strategy depending on which aspect of their self-concept was salient to them at the time. In effect, we were bringing out different sides of people by the feedback we gave them. We found that people could be influenced by bogus feedback about their supposed special abilities to treat other people categorically or individually, if they were the kind of people who strictly followed their own proclivities. Similarly, people can be influenced by bogus information about the appropriate norms in the situation, if they are the kind of people who strictly use other people's standards as a guide.

This last set of studies focuses on values, self-concepts, and norms as motivators for powerful people. People, including those with power, can also be influenced by their own conceptions (Devine, Monteith, Zwerink, & Elliot, 1991), public accountability (e.g., Tetlock, Skitka, & Boettger, 1989), fear of invalidity (e.g., Kruglanski, 1990), instructions to be accurate (Neuberg, 1989), and the like (see Fiske, 1993, for a review). In my opinion, they relate to the shipyard and the accounting firm in that an organization can make certain values salient, can encourage the constructive sides of people's self-concepts, can promote norms of fairness, and so on. Conversely, an organization can ignore these issues and let the powerful take the easy way out, not bothering to pay much attention to the powerless.

Our main program of research, then, has been showing that social structure affects attention, and if people pay more attention, at least some of them are less likely to stereotype. Moreover, organizations can encourage individuating attention by the structures they create.

Conclusion

The type of illustrative data presented here deserves some comment. These are laboratory experiments, and one might wonder about the laboratory as a way to study power, stereotyping, sexual harassment, and so forth. Does the laboratory trivialize such real world issues? These laboratory studies were designed as simulations, as microcosms. Our strategy is to create a miniature world in which we can analyze and isolate the features of the social setting that we think are important. We transport these isolated features to the lab, and we show that these are sufficient conditions to produce a phenomenon in which we are interested. It allows us to see the fine-grained mechanisms that link power, control, and stereotyping. And it allows us to demonstrate the sufficient conditions for stereotypic processes (such as lack of attention to stereotype-disconfirming information). Obviously, we depend heavily on feedback from field studies as well, and we also draw a lot of our ideas from the world outside the lab.

Similarly, one might wonder about our focus on cognitive mechanisms and attention in particular. First, attention here specifically means time looking at written materials. Attention also is an indicator of weight in a judgment (Fiske, 1980). Second, we do have other dependent variables, but attention has been the focus in this article for simplicity’s sake. But also it is a strategic choice in our research to focus so much on attention as a main dependent variable, because it is the beginning of the process, without which nothing else can occur. It has a central role in whether people stereotype or not, although there are no guarantees that getting somebody to pay attention to somebody else will undercut stereotypes. But at any rate, it is a first step, and with some people it is effective some of the time. If we can begin to find ways to capture people's attention, perhaps we can undermine the control of stereotypes.

Jacksonville Shipyards, Price Waterhouse, and our laboratory data have all linked power to stereotyping as mediated through the amount and nature of attention. People in power stereotype subordinates because they do not need to pay attention to them and because it may not be easy to do so. Moreover, sometimes their own personal dispositions may be oriented toward power, and this may compound the lack of individuating attention. Power affects stereotyping through attention (or a lack of the right kind of attention), and stereotyping controls those who are stereotyped. Our organizational structures and incentives can ameliorate this problem or make it worse.

REFERENCES


