Introduction

Changing Prejudice: A Migration Underground

MARK JENNINGS:	*I'm gonna tell you something. If this was back in the day . . . take a damn black guy, whoop their ass and throw them in the cell, I'd run for [bleep] sheriff.*
SHERIFF KEVIN CLARDY:	*Well, it's not like that no more.*
MARK JENNINGS:	*I know. Take them down to Mud Creek and hang them up with a damn rope.*
SHERIFF KEVIN CLARDY:	*Yeah.*
MARK JENNINGS:	*But you can't do that anymore.*
SHERIFF KEVIN CLARDY:	*And the thing about it is –*
MARK JENNINGS:	*They got more rights than we got.*

– Conversation between Oklahoma County Commissioner Mark Jennings and Sheriff Kevin Clardy, 2023[1]

In this conversation, two public servants bemoan the changes in norms regarding open bigotry. They lament the cultural and political shifts that say they can no longer openly discriminate against African Americans through beatings, torture, and even murder. Finishing the sheriff's sentence, the county commissioner declares that African Americans now have more rights "than we got."

In the United States, Canada, and many European countries, norms have indeed evolved, and open prejudice and discrimination against minority groups have decreased in the last few decades. There is evidence that attitudes toward and opinions about historically marginalized groups have become more positive. For example, in 2017, 39% of US adults said people of different races marrying each other is good for society, up from 24% in 2010. In 1990, 65% of non-blacks would be opposed to a relative marrying someone who is black but by 2016 that number was only 14%.[2] In 2015, 17% of US newlyweds had a spouse of a different race/ethnicity, compared with only 3% of newlyweds in 1967.[3] Today, 67% of Britons think a sexual relationship between two people of the same sex is "never wrong." In 1983, that number was just 17%.[4] By 2024, there were 36 countries where same-sex marriage is legal.[5] Canada legalized same-sex marriage in 2005, the United States in 2015.

Susan Fiske observes that the more public the arena, and the more abstract the principle, the more marked the change in attitudes toward inclusiveness

and acceptance.[6] For instance, in 2023, 81% of Americans viewed Martin Luther King, Jr., favorably, much higher than the 41% who did in 1963,[7] and more than half of US states recognize Juneteenth as an official public holiday.[8] At the same time, however, only half of adults in the United States, and fewer whites, supported the Black Lives Matter movement – the movement that may actually bring about concrete change toward racial equality.[9] In Britain, belief that a man's job is to earn money and a woman's is to look after the home and family has declined from 48% in 1987 to just 9% in 2022. On the other hand, these more progressive attitudes do not always correspond to behaviors. Some 63% of women report doing more than their fair share of household labor, compared with 22% of men.[10] A total of 90% of US respondents "believe in gender equality," yet fewer than half of respondents believe marital rape should be prosecuted, and only 29% identify as feminists.[11]

Twentieth-century civil rights movements, important legislation such as the Voting Rights Act in the United States, and landmark Supreme Court rulings such as *Brown* v. *Board of Education* and *Obergefell* v. *Hodges* have impacted attitudes and norms about bigotry. The number of individuals *self-reporting* prejudiced attitudes has decreased. There is a consensus among social scientists that overt prejudice has indeed decreased in the last several decades. At the same time, the expression of prejudice has morphed; much of it has moved underground, operating covertly, manifesting in subtle ways. This change of location is apparent in a discrepancy between what people report and how they behave. Angela Davis cautions us to pay attention to the *migration* of racism: "It moves, it travels, it migrates, and it transmutes itself."[12] Davis's analysis of the ability of racism to change its form and location applies to other forms of prejudice as well. It is this changing location of prejudice that is examined in this book. Yes, laws, norms, and attitudes have changed, *and* prejudice lingers under the surface, below consciousness, hidden from clear view.

This book examines mechanisms and manifestations of subtle prejudice. This analysis harnesses the power of social psychological research and theory to explain common, everyday expressions of subtle prejudice and dissects the myths created to maintain inequality. *Benign bigotry* is an umbrella term I use to describe subtle prejudice – prejudices that are automatic, covert, hidden, often unconscious and unintentional, and sometimes undetectable by the target (even as they are harmed by it). The term *benign bigotry* is not intended to suggest that the subtle forms of bigotry described in this book are positive or less harmful than overt and direct types of prejudice. They are not. In fact, benign bigotry is extremely harmful because it is so insidious and pernicious. It is routine. "Benign" is used ironically here to simultaneously identify the veneer of neutrality or benevolence that cloaks modern discrimination and to call attention to the fact that such biases are still manifestations of harmful bigotry. The term *benign bigotry* gathers together behaviors and attitudes that

may appear harmless when they represent only a shift in the visibility, not the strength, of prejudice. In this introduction, I discuss some ways by which social psychologists examine subtle forms of prejudice, lay out the scope of the book, and close with a note on some language choices.

To account for the changes in the location of prejudice, social psychologists distinguish between *explicit* and *implicit* prejudice.[13] Explicit prejudice is a set of feelings about others that are consciously accessible, seemingly controllable, self-reported, and matter-of-fact. Racism based on explicit prejudice is referred to as *old-fashioned* or *overt* racism. Also known as implicit bias, implicit prejudice is subtle, indirect, often unknown to the perpetrator, or if known, made covert so the perpetrator's bias is hidden. Implicit prejudice is believed to be a consequence of years of exposure to associations in the social environment and tends to be impervious to conscious control. Because the expression of prejudice has changed over several decades, researchers who study bias can no longer detect its presence simply by interviewing people and asking whether or not they dislike certain groups. Most people would not admit to being prejudiced today – even when they know they are – and others truly believe they are not prejudiced. So, how do we make subtle prejudice visible, and how do we reveal its effects? Scholars in many academic fields study prejudice and bigotry but social psychologists are particularly well positioned to study these subtle, sneaky forms of prejudice because they, more than those in other disciplines, rely on the experimental method. The experimental method allows the researcher to recreate real-life settings through controlled situations in which measures of prejudice can be taken without the research participant realizing that prejudice is being examined. There are a variety of methods in the social psychologist's toolbox to unearth unconscious or hidden prejudice. One strategy is to present research respondents with scenarios or profiles of individuals or interactions and ask them to evaluate them. For example, a study asked white college students to evaluate the value of a student's research project.[14] Some of the respondents believed the student was black, other respondents believed the student was white, without indication that race was a key component of the study. Those who evaluated the black student's project viewed it as less valuable and less beneficial to science than those who evaluated the white student's identical project.

Subtle prejudice can also be detected with physiological measures – comparing what participants *say* (an explicit measure) with physiological measures (e.g., changes in heart rate, sweating) indicative of how they may *feel* (implicit measures). For example, when an apparatus to measure blood flow was attached to men's penises – measuring arousal – during their viewing of sexually explicit videos, homophobic men, but not other men, were found to be physiologically aroused during a video of two men having sex.[15] The homophobic men reported on a survey that they were not aroused by the video, but their bodies reported something different. Interestingly, researchers

do not even have to use real physiological devices to measure people's attitudes if study respondents *believe* their physical responses are being measured. In what has been termed the *bogus pipeline* method, researchers connect a fake lie detector apparatus to research participants to see if their responses during the "lie detection" differ from what they would say on a paper-and-pencil survey. One study asked German college students about their attitudes toward Jewish people.[16] Those students who believed their "true" attitudes were being measured by the "lie detector" reported higher levels of anti-semitism than those students who reported their attitudes without the "lie detector." People do not want to be caught lying so they pre-emptively report attitudes that are closer to their true attitudes.

The subtle prejudice measure that has received the most attention since the mid-1990s is the Implicit Association Test (IAT). The IAT measures the strength of association between concepts.[17] This computer-based test is essentially a sorting task during which the participant quickly responds to combinations of people, objects, or symbols with evaluative statements. For instance, a typical IAT on race attitudes has the participant sort white faces and black faces and sort "Good" (e.g., paradise) and "Bad" (e.g., abuse) words at a fast pace. The ease (speed) with which one can pair black faces with "Good" or "Bad" words is compared to the ease with which one can sort white faces with "Good" or "Bad" words. This speed reflects the strength of associative links between blacks and goodness/badness and between whites and goodness/badness. White respondents tend to sort faces more quickly when white faces are aligned with "Good" words and black faces aligned with "Bad."[18] This means that white respondents more easily associate positive things with white people and negative things with black people. Studies tend to find a discrepancy between results on the IAT, an implicit measure of attitudes, and responses from self-report surveys that capture explicit measures of attitudes. This discrepancy suggests that the implicit responses from the IAT reveal one's unguarded, actual attitudes whereas responses from explicit measures may reflect one's attitudes filtered through impression management.

Sources of Subtle Prejudice

Subtle prejudice emerges from: (1) people who are very much prejudiced but also realize that the norms regarding prejudice and discrimination have changed and so they must disguise their prejudice; and (2) people who experience an internal conflict between their desire to comply with their non-prejudiced ideals and their visceral, reflexive, automatic responses that are produced from breathing the smog of prejudice over their lifetimes. Beverly Daniel Tatum defines *cultural racism* as the images and messages in a culture that affirm the assumed superiority of white people and the assumed

inferiority of people of color. Tatum uses a metaphor of smog in the air to explain racism. When racism is particularly damaging, we can see the toxic air we breathe. At other times, we may not be able to see the poison we inhale, but it is there nonetheless.[19] Tatum's point is that while many individuals may not feel prejudiced, and believe they do not discriminate, everyone is affected by prejudice. It permeates our institutions in ways that seem invisible, but that doesn't mean it is nonexistent. Even in the splintered and specialized media landscape of the early twenty-first century, we tend to see consistently biased cultural messages about high-status and low-status groups, whether by viewing television, using the internet, or being exposed to discriminatory laws and judicial decisions. Thus, prejudiced values and ideas originate from many sources and influences. Prejudiced attitudes can come from the media, from growing up in a prejudiced familial environment, and from not having much contact with people different from oneself. None of us can disengage from racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism. All of us are part of a system that values certain groups and devalues others. Because of social norms against prejudice along with anti-discrimination policies (in many cases it is illegal to discriminate), many people's prejudices take on hidden and sometimes unconscious forms. Subtle racism, for instance, is different in significant ways from *old-fashioned racism*. Old-fashioned racism might produce beliefs articulated as: *Blacks are lazy*, or *Hispanics are stupid*. Differently phrased, still harmful, and perhaps even more pernicious, subtle racism produces seemingly benign statements that disguise prejudice. *I don't have anything against blacks*, one might say, *but this particular applicant is not a good fit for our company*.

Features of Subtle Prejudice

Falsely claiming racism is worse than racism.

– Greg Poole, Superintendent, Barber Hills, Texas[20]

What are the features of subtle prejudice? First, subtle prejudice tends to be ambivalent. As we will find throughout this book, prejudice isn't merely antipathy toward a given group. People can have positive (e.g., sympathy) feelings toward marginalized groups but also negative (e.g., resentment) feelings toward the same groups. That is, the content of people's stereotypes and attitudes about many groups can be both positive and negative in valence. Unfortunately, "positive" stereotypes about subordinated groups often contain corresponding negative stereotypes that speak to the group's assumed deficits and deficiencies: *Women are nurturing* (but weak); *African Americans are athletic* (but not intellectual); *Asians are smart* (but standoffish). Thus, we will see later that so-called positive stereotypes about a marginalized group do little to protect them from bigotry.

Second, unlike conceptualizations of bigotry in the early twentieth century, and the extreme, obsessive, and overt prejudice of some hate group members, subtle prejudice is not assumed to be the result of individual psychopathology but rather the collision of two processes: normal cognitive processes and a context of inequality. Vanessa Meterko and Glinda Cooper explain, "We cannot process all the stimuli that surround us on a daily basis, so instead we have adapted for efficiency by attuning to patterns and developing mental shortcuts or rules of thumb to help us effectively navigate our complex world."[21] That is, prejudice today is a result of normal cognitive processes, such as shortcuts in thinking and quick and automatic generalizations, in a context of inequality in which people are influenced by sociocultural and historical processes, such as laws and policies, and cultural representations that relegate certain groups to low status.

We all categorize people, objects, and events. We have to. All of us, regardless of where we live or how much money we earn, create *schemas*, mental frameworks of beliefs, feelings, and assumptions about people, groups, and objects. Schemas help us make sense of the world. We incorporate new information into already existing schemas so that we do not have to treat all new information as though it is totally unfamiliar, requiring slow, deliberate, and thorough examination. Schemas, the foundation for assumptions, help us interpret our world and organize new information. When applied to the categorization of people, schemas manifest as stereotypes. Schemas work as filters that help us determine what aspects of a person or object are important to observe carefully and what can be disregarded, thus minimizing the drain on cognitive resources. They affect what we pay attention to and what we will remember later. This is not to imply that prejudice is so normal that those who are prejudiced cannot help themselves and are therefore excused from self-examination. It does mean that categorizing and generalizing are part of our cognitive make-up – we all make generalizations that simplify our social worlds. However, *what* we generalize, *who* we categorize, and the content of our assumptions can be modified and changed, and certainly should be modified in the case of prejudice and discrimination.

Third, most people go out of their way to appear non-prejudiced – to themselves and to others; in many cases, they truly believe they are not prejudiced. People want to believe they are fair, even-handed, and colorblind. Even the most obviously biased individuals tend to huff and puff when they are accused of bias. Donald Trump said about himself, "I am the least racist person there is anywhere in the world."[22] And, as the quotation that begins this section suggests, being *accused* of prejudice is seen as worse by some people than the crime of prejudice itself. The political movement that brought Trump to power and only strengthened during and after his administration represents an increase in open, hostile, old-school prejudice. The prejudice of Trump supporters is based on *entitled resentment* – a belief that status and

position that was assured in previous decades is now under threat by immigrants, uppity women, and minority groups who have gained too much power. I write about this dynamic in my book *Enraged, Rattled, and Wronged: Entitlement's Response to Social Progress*.[23] White supremacist and misogynist groups became more openly hostile and less hidden in the Trump years. The US Department of Homeland Security has named US-based white supremacist groups the greatest terror threat, not foreign terrorists.[24] A 2022 United Nations report notes that terrorist attacks motivated by far-right extremism was on the rise.[25] In the United States in 2019, a majority of Americans said that "race relations" are bad and getting worse and the majority attributed this to Donald Trump.[26] Even as extremist groups flourished under Trump, however, subtle forms of prejudice continue to be the norm – among coworkers, neighbors, relatives, ourselves, and politicians. Subtle prejudice is infused in all aspects of society. The increase in radicalization among the political right does not negate the fact that being viewed as prejudiced and bigoted is an allegation most people deny, even those who are obviously prejudiced and bigoted, such as Mr. Trump.

These three features – ambivalence, a result of normal cognitive processes in a context of inequality, and the pressure to appear non-prejudiced – make subtle prejudice insidious because they cause it to be widespread, normalized, resistant to change, and sometimes difficult to detect. The work on subtle bias suggests that, while we still find evidence of overt prejudice in people, these more contemporary forms of prejudice play a significant role in the persistence of disparities in society, alongside the denial that prejudice even exists.

Unequal Power and Prejudice

Again, everyone creates and relies on cognitive structures to help make sense of the world. Power and privilege drive systemic oppression – the inequality that is built into the architecture of institutions. Power, in addition to privilege, interacts with schemas to produce benign bigotry. Although both powerful and powerless people can be prejudiced, the prejudice of the powerful is more consequential. In terms of an organization, the prejudice of CEOs and managers can affect who gets hired, promoted, and fired. If administrative assistants in that same organization have prejudices, their prejudices will affect fewer people and have less of an impact.[27] On a national scale, the prejudices of presidents, judges, and lawmakers reverberate through a society in a way that the prejudice of a factory worker does not. In addition, individual prejudices that match common cultural stereotypes, or tropes, are reinforced in the media and have more durability. Another hallmark of power and prejudice is the tendency for the powerful to harbor prejudiced attitudes toward the powerless and to see their lack of power as having been caused by some deficiencies in their characters.[28] So something to keep in mind about

prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination is, *who is doing it, and what forms of power do they have?* Throughout this book, in addition to referring to *majority* and *minority* groups, I will also use the terms *high status* and *low status*, and *dominant* and *subordinated* to refer to groups with more or with less access to resources, power, and privilege in a society, regardless of actual group size. For instance, women are the numeric gender *majority*; however, they are a *subordinated* group because they lack power, resources, and status, relative to men. Those in power have more influence over their own lives and the lives of those immediately around them, but they also have more influence over cultural messages about who is valued and who is not, and who is considered normal and who is considered deviant. Racism, as an example, is based on a *system* involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices, not merely the beliefs and actions of biased individuals. Racist ideas are supported by decades, even centuries, of cultural representations, historical trends, laws, and policies that support them.

Structure of this Book

This book addresses seven commonly held cultural myths whose assumptions and consequences seem relatively harmless but actually foster and justify systemic inequality. Each chapter includes a discussion of the function of the myth and corresponding stereotypes associated with it; references to real-world events that illustrate the myth and its real-life consequences; examples in popular culture and politics; a presentation of the facts about the phenomenon using research studies (i.e., how and why the myth is believed); and, finally, recommendations for the reduction of the beliefs that perpetuate the myth. The first chapter, "'It's Just a Few Bad Apples': The Denial of Systemic Inequality," is a new chapter to this revised edition. The 2020 global protests against police violence brought to mainstream consciousness something activists and academics have always known: that racism, like other forms of inequality, is not simply a reflection of some bad people's negative ideas and harmful behavior, but is structural in nature and a feature of institutions including schools, the legal system, health care, housing, marriage, and so on. In order to fully understand the nature of prejudice, one must account for both the individual and the structural components. Chapter 1 describes systems of oppression and leads the reader through six processes that establish and maintain inequality. These processes are: designating superior and inferior groups; establishing dominant group privilege and entitlement; structuring of institutions to maintain inequality; constructing group stereotypes that reflect the established hierarchy; promoting societal "values" that support inequality; and perpetrating backlash when the system of hierarchy is threatened. Like all chapters in this book, Chapter 1 ends with strategies for prejudice reduction for both individual-level prejudice and systemic and structural *-isms*. These

strategies range from responding to book bans to teaching children about inequality.

The second chapter, "'Those People All Look Alike': The Myth of the Other," examines the tendency to erase individual differences in people who are different from one's own group. The chapter begins with examples of news outlets mixing up well-known Asian American celebrities with other Asian Americans in their news reports. For instance, a news segment would include a story on a particular actor with a different actor's photo on display. Social psychologists refer to "they all look alike" thinking as the outgroup homogeneity effect, and the chapter moves this concept from the laboratory to the interpersonal, employment, media, and political settings in which it plays out and is experienced routinely. Also discussed in Chapter 2 is human categorization, and concepts related to the outgroup homogeneity effect including ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation, the ultimate attribution error, the linguistic intergroup bias, dehumanization, and scapegoating. Real-life phenomena such as anti-Asian harassment increasing after Donald Trump's tweets referring to the Covid-19 virus as "the Chinese virus," help illustrate the real-world consequences of the psychological concepts explored in this chapter. Chapter 2 ends with strategies for change that are relevant to the outgroup homogeneity effect. These include intergroup contact, stereotype suppression, values confrontation, and the role of empathy in prejudice reduction.

Chapter 3, "'They Must Be Guilty of Something': The Myth of Criminality," takes aim at how individual thought processes such as mental shortcuts, the formation of stereotypes, and internalized cultural schemas interact to construct an assumption that those who are deemed suspicious must be, in fact, guilty of something. Biased representation in news media helps create and reinforce the cognitive association that pairs blackness/brownness and criminality. This thinking impacts criminal investigations, police interrogations, suspect confessions, jury decision-making, views about the death penalty, and ideas about individuals who have been falsely convicted and later exonerated. Because of stereotypes about African Americans and Latines, this chapter necessarily discusses real-life events and experimental evidence on racial and ethnic bias in the criminal legal system as well as media coverage of crime. The pairing of blackness/brownness with criminality is so casual that some white people have covered up their crimes by blaming a black person for their own criminal act. So-called Stand Your Ground laws epitomize benign bigotry because, on the surface, these laws are racially neutral and apply to everyone. However, in practice, these supposed self-defense laws are successfully utilized by white vigilantes in cases in which they have killed a person of color. The chapter ends with strategies to reduce bias during police investigations, defense strategies to minimize bias against defendants, and suggestions for changes in policy.

Chapter 4, "'Feminists Are Manhaters': Backlash Mythmaking," examines the popular dismissal of feminists as women who dislike men. Relatively few women describe themselves as feminists even when they support feminist principles and policies. This reluctance is due in large part to women's concern that, in doing so, they will be viewed as male-bashers.[29] Feminists are believed by some to be responsible for a variety of social ills such as young men entering college at a lower rate than young women[30] and the supposed decline of "manliness" in American culture.[31] Chapter 4 examines people's beliefs and stereotypes about feminists as well as feminists' actual beliefs and attitudes. What does feminism actually critique and advocate? Do feminists really dislike men more than non-feminists? These questions are examined through a review of the empirical studies that have looked at this issue. Rather than finding that feminists dislike men, evidence suggests that *non-feminists* actually feel more hostility and resentment toward men than do feminists. Why does the myth of the feminist manhater endure? This question is addressed in the chapter, as are the questions of why feminism is vilified and why there is cultural hostility toward non-traditional women. Attempts to trivialize the feminist movement are documented as well. Finally, strategies for change address the possibility of modifying masculine gender roles, the positive impact of gender and women's studies courses, and changes in workplace policies.

"'LGBTQ People Flaunt their Sexuality': The Myth of Hypersexuality," is the popular belief explored in Chapter 5. After marriage equality passed in 2005 in Canada and 2015 in the United States, there has been a tremendous backlash against gay and especially transgender rights with regressive "bathroom bills" preventing transgender people from using the bathroom that corresponds to their gender identity, and allegations of "grooming" by extremist politicians and their supporters, and bans of books with queer characters. The concepts of illusory correlation and vividness are used to help elucidate why people tend to "see" hypersexuality and grooming only in LGBTQ+ individuals, not in heterosexual and cisgender people. Heterosexual privilege is discussed as it helps explain why some groups are seen as normal, with behavior deemed as natural, while other groups are seen as foreign and deviant. In fact, the same behavior that is criticized in queer people is celebrated and expected in heterosexuals. Nonetheless, the belief that LGBTQ+ people flaunt their sexuality impacts how they are treated in their personal and professional lives, according to the law, whether or not they are viewed as adequate parents, and whether or not anti-queer violence is prosecuted. Strategies for change in Chapter 5 include the importance of institutional support for LGBTQ+ rights, the role of increased contact and cooperation between gay and straight people as a strategy to reduce prejudice, and the role that cognitive dissonance can play in reducing homophobia and heterosexism.

Chapter 6, "'I'm Not a Racist, I'm Colorblind': The Myth of Neutrality," addresses the appeal of imagining oneself as racially colorblind in a time of increased attention to systemic racism. Cynical politicians have used the claim of racial colorblindness as a strategy to make invisible racial discrimination. Others genuinely believe that colorblindness is the route to racial equality. In a multiracial society, is it possible, or even desirable, to be colorblind? There have been many legal and policy attempts at, for instance, "colorblind" university admissions policies. With the US Supreme Court's dismantling of affirmative action in college admissions in 2023, the stakes are high. We examine the research on people's ability not to notice others' race and ethnicity. What sort of political attitudes are held by those who espouse colorblindness? Are they racially biased? We also compare multicultural and colorblind approaches to prejudice reduction. The relationship between racial colorblindness and assimilation is also examined. Chapter 6 includes decategorization and recategorization, among other strategies, to reduce prejudice.

Chapter 7, "'Affirmative Action is Reverse-Racism': The Myth of Meritocracy," addresses in more detail the controversial and misunderstood topic of affirmative action in the United States. If you only consider media coverage of affirmative action, you would believe that the typical affirmative action program involves quotas and that unqualified women and ethnic minorities are hired over better-qualified white men. This chapter explains the difference between "equal opportunity" and affirmative action, and addresses the reasons subtle prejudice makes actual equal opportunity impossible and affirmative action necessary. We then look at the stages of employment and university admissions procedures during which subtle prejudice can manifest. We examine the social psychological literature on gender and ethnic patterns in entitlement as well as explanations of success and failure. Finally, strategies for change include suggestions for affirmative action plans, including the differentiation between process-oriented and goal-oriented approaches. Additionally, a discussion of the importance of affirmative action from the leadership in organizations is crucial. Other strategies for reducing bias during interviews, the importance of standardized performance criteria, and the challenges of mentoring and "diversity" training are discussed.

Some Caveats

Having outlined what this book covers, there are some caveats about the topics covered and their treatment. This book is less about what people *are actually like* – whether certain stereotypes are true or false – and more about *perceptions* and *beliefs* about others that are based on social categories. Explanations about social groups are rarely based on people's direct *experiences* with those groups, and instead are more likely to be reflective of beliefs (and mythologies) shared by members of a culture. Much of the research described in this book is

from studies conducted with white respondents in the United States, Canada, and Europe, and a few are from other parts of the world. Also, many studies on ethnic prejudice have focused on white participants, with African Americans as the targets of prejudice. The field of social psychology knows less about white stereotypes regarding other ethnic groups, or the stereotypes of non-whites directed toward whites and other people of color. In addition, I include some anecdotes in this book, to illustrate patterns found in empirical research studies.

Finally, a note on some language choices. I lower case the b in *black* and the w in *white* when describing people of African and European descent, respectively. I understand this practice is not in line with prevailing usage in the cultural moment in which I write this book. There are strong arguments in favor of capitalizing Black or both Black and White. However, like Adam Serwer in the book *The Cruelty Is the Point: Why Trump's America Endures*, "I fear that capitalization reinforces the notion that race is a biological reality rather than a social reality. Racism and bigotry are very real, but race itself is a biological fiction."[32] Given the resurgence of right-wing extremism in the United States, Europe, and in many other countries in the 2020s, I am conscious of the ease with which people and cultures can backslide into essentialist ideas about race and racial difference and the scientific racism that flourished in the early and mid-twentieth century. I want to avoid an encouragement in thinking that might link blackness and whiteness to biology, physiology, genetics, or heredity. Since the first edition of this book that came out in 2009, other uses of language have changed and evolved. I use the term LGBTQ+ to discuss sexual minorities. I understand this acronym, as long as it is, still leaves out many identities, but here I am attempting to balance using a generally well-known term with the fast evolving change in the queer landscape. In addition, I will also refer to the *queer* community and use that term interchangeably with LGBTQ+. In recent years, some academics and activists have used Latinx to describe Latina/o and Hispanic individuals. Latinx is currently popular among academics and many queer and non-binary activists but is controversial outside academia. Here I elect to use the term *Latine*, a term that some prefer to Latinx because it maintains the gender neutrality of Latinx but is more adaptive to the Spanish language.[33] Regarding gendered language, I tend to avoid the use of *female* and *male* and instead use more specific and less clinical and less biologically deterministic terms: *girl*, *boy*, *woman*, *man*. I also frequently use the gender-neutral pronouns they/them when referring to individuals to avoid the relentless reference to gendered pronouns.

The name of this book is *Benign Bigotry*, and this title is ironic. Bigotry is never benign, even when it exists in the form of subtle prejudice or "positive" stereotypes. *Benign Bigotry* is meant to capture the hidden nature of subtle prejudice, the *apparently* innocent assumptions people make based on

prejudice. Of course, technically, the content of prejudices and stereotypes can be positive or negative. I can have a prejudice in favor of a certain type of music, for instance. But stereotypes are always harmful to the targeted group. Even when stereotypes appear to be flattering (e.g., African Americans are good athletes, Asians are the model minority), these generalizations are often double-edged, and they demand that the target either conforms to stereotypes about their group, or risks disappointing the holder of the stereotypes. The people we stereotype are not seen as having their own individual opinions, preferences, and desires, but rather are judged as members of a group. Stereotypes – even positive ones – erase a person's individuality. Stereotypes control and constrain people. Those who hold the stereotypes are also harmed. In his discussion of how racism negatively affects whites, Derald Sue describes racism as a clamp on one's mind, distorting one's perception of reality.[34] He explains that in maintaining one's schemas, one's perceptual accuracy is diminished. Individuals become members of categories rather than unique people. The harm to people of color diminishes white people's humanity because whites lose sensitivity to hurting others. And stereotyping nearly always involves the loss of the ability to empathize. Racism is also bad for whites because they misperceive themselves as superior, thereby engaging in elaborate self-deception. Prejudice in members of dominant groups can result in the guilt of recognizing their own privilege at the expense of others. This recognition can manifest in shame, defensiveness, and even outbursts of anger.

Understanding the nature of subtle prejudice – that prejudice comes in subtle, ostensibly "benign" forms – should not let us off the hook. We cannot allow ourselves to think that only the most extreme white supremacist, homophobic, misogynist, and anti-immigrant individuals are prejudiced. We cannot distance ourselves from bigotry once we understand that bigotry, even in subtle forms, is part of the air we breathe, and has devastating consequences.

Beverly Daniel Tatum illustrates the ongoing cycle of racism by using a metaphor describing a moving walkway that you might see at an airport.[35] The overt or *active* racist, to use Tatum's term, walks fast on the conveyor belt, which is moved along with racist ideology. This might be the person who uses racist epithets or tells racist jokes at work. Subtle racists, what Tatum terms *passive* racists, stand still on the moving walkway, exerting no visible effort, but, nonetheless, the conveyor belt moves them along in the same direction as the active racists. These are the people who do nothing when their coworker tells the racist joke. Some people will feel the movement of the conveyor belt under their feet and choose to walk in the opposite direction, actively working against racism. Unless we turn around and move in the opposite direction, we are carried along with the others in racist traditions and practices. This book is an effort at turning around on that moving walkway.

Notes

1 Goodman, A. (Host). (2023, April 20). Headlines: April 20, 2023. *Democracy Now*! https://www.democracynow.org/2023/4/20/headlines
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