Chapter 4

The Social Judgeability Approach to Stereotypes

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ABSTRACT

Existing models of impression formation and stereotyping focus on the fit between data and theory, or between individuating and categorical information. This fit is supposed to be determined by cognitive and motivational factors. It is proposed that current perspectives on social judgment can be enriched by going beyond data and theory and adding a third aspect, the social judgeability of the target. First, this new approach is presented in its broad lines. Second, several ways to manipulate judgeability are suggested. Throughout the chapter, we build upon earlier work and provide new empirical evidence. Also, classic experiments are reinterpreted within this new framework which considers stereotypes as social explanations and not as errors or prejudices.

Social psychology, like many young sciences, has often gone through successive amnesic waves of interest. An earlier and persistent concern for accuracy in person perception came to be replaced by the idea that people are poor judges of other human beings and that they fall prey to any kind

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of bias in their social judgments (e.g. Markus & Zajonc, 1985; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Now the tide has turned, and an increasing number of claims are made that, in fact, we are accurate, logical, and rational perceivers of the human kind (e.g. Funder, 1987; Kruglanski, 1989; Trope & Bassøk, 1982, 1983; Stangor & Ford, Chapter 3, this volume). Obviously, this reversal in perspective has not only been prompted by new research but also by reinterpretations of old data (for reviews, see Higgins & Bargh, 1987; Sherman, Judd & Park, 1989).

The idea to be defended in this chapter is a middle-of-the-road position, or rather, a pragmatic stance (Jussim, 1991; Swann, 1984). Many of the biases that distort our social judgments should be considered not only in terms of rationality or irrationality and accuracy or inaccuracy, but as a function of their social value (Leyens, 1990). Indeed, social judgments are not only the result of logical reasoning; they are formed to give meaning to one's social world and to share this meaning with others. As diplomats and lovers very well know, poor logic may make for excellent communication. People rely upon a "satisficing" criterion, which does not guarantee accuracy. In other words, rationality is taken off its pedestal as the criterion for social judgment (Simon, 1956).

In the present chapter, we will focus on stereotypes, not as errors or prejudices, but as social explanations. Indeed, the pendulum has also swung back and forth in the field of stereotype research. Three functions have traditionally been attributed to categorical judgments such as stereotypes: differentiation, justification, and explanation (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel, 1982). Given that the first two have typically been considered from a negative point of view, a confusion between stereotypes and prejudices has resulted (Aboud, 1988; Stroebe & Insko, 1989). Differentiation was assimilated to discrimination (Billig, 1985) and justification was restricted to antagonistic behaviors (Sherif *et al.*, 1961). Traditionally, the explanatory function of stereotypes encompassed less of a socially negative view (but see Hewstone, 1990). It is at the cognitive level that this function has received its negative coloring. Indeed, stereotypes, as explanations, have often been defined as overgeneralizations (Brigham, 1971) and therefore as mistakes. The goal of the present chapter is to present stereotyping research as contributing to the explanation of social reality. Needless to say, these explanations may be right or wrong, useful or detrimental, but they are not wrong and detrimental by definition (Oakes & Turner, 1990).

Here, it may suffice to say that we consider stereotypes as shared beliefs about the personal attributes, usually the personality traits or behaviors, of a group of people. The fact that these beliefs frequently concern personality traits makes stereotypes a special kind of implicit personality theory (Leyens, 1983). Being theories, albeit naive, they are to be resistant to modification

(Kuhn, 1962; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). However, their use may be altered under some conditions.

THE SOCIAL JUDGEABILITY MODEL

Social psychologists working in person perception have essentially been concerned with three types of information: information coming from the situation, from the individual, and from social categories. The first two kinds of information have been the province of attribution theory (Jones, 1990). The integration of the last two kinds of information, individual vs. categorical, has been dealt with in recent impression formation research. It is this line of investigation that we will consider here.

Several models of impression formation (Brewer, 1988; Burnstein & Schul, 1982; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Fiske & Pavelchak, 1986; Kruglanski, 1990; Kruglanski & Ajzen, 1983) have been proposed to account for the integration of individual and categorical information. Beyond their idiosyncrasies, all these models share many features. They all posit multiple-step sequences in the processing of information. As they go through these different steps, the perceivers try to find the best fit between the data (the individuating information) and the theory or hypothesis at hand (the social category initially activated). This is done to the best of their cognitive resources and motivation.

Imagine that you are informed that Thomas has been depressed for several months. On the basis of this single item of information, you will probably classify him as depressive. If you are further told that Thomas is at times very energetic and quite entertaining with friends, you may revise your initial judgment and now opt for manic depression. This revision will occur only if you are motivated to judge Thomas "correctly" and if you are able to pay attention to the additional information. If you are now told that Thomas recently lost his girl-friend in a tragic car accident, and if you are motivated and attentive, you will probably abandon the psychiatric taxonomy and treat Thomas as a specific person. This example illustrates the impression formation process as assumed in Fiske's model.

As can be seen by this example, researchers in social judgment have adopted a strictly rational approach to the problem. For them, one reaches a social judgment in the same way as one solves an intellectual problem. The solution, of course, may not be optimal but depends on the cognitive resources of the judges and their motivation. Although they may be sometimes lazy and intellectually handicapped, perceivers nevertheless take into account two sources of information, the categories and the individual data, and they try to match them.

In this chapter we propose adding to the process of impression formation a third dimension, which we have called social judgeability (Schadron, 1991; Schadron & Yzerbyt, 1991; Yzerbyt, 1990). Our main assumption is that, in order to give a judgment, people have to feel that they are in a position to judge. This feeling of judgeability goes beyond a mere match between data and theories about data; it includes theories about judgment. Whereas the previous models focus on the relation between the judges and the object to be judged, the social judgeability dimension construes the relation between the judges and their judgment. Still another way of expressing ourselves is that despite the fact that a correct lexicon can be put into an exact syntax (the fit between data and theory), it does not mean that the sentence makes sense or is appropriate (the social judgeability of the fit) in the particular context or for the specific interlocutors.

It is not rare for people to resist giving a judgment because, in their view, the sufficient or necessary conditions for a judgment are not satisfied. Let us give a few examples. First, people may have the impression that they do not possess enough information: there is, for instance, a wide consensus that a decision should not be made about an individual when no personalized information is available (Quattrone & Jones, 1980; Darley & Gross, 1983). Similarly, stereotypes are not considered valid bases to evaluate a specific person (Devine, 1989a). Second, people may consider that the information provided to them is not relevant enough; some psychologists trust the responses to a Rorschach test to diagnose a patient, whereas others do not; for some psychologists but not for others, it is sufficient that someone is labeled a "patient" to be judged ill-adjusted (Langer & Abelson, 1974). Third, people may feel that their tentative judgment is not appropriate because it is not socially desirable, as in the case of stereotyping, or because it does not meet what is expected from the audience (Hilton, 1990).

Not surprisingly, the theories people hold about judgeability are context-bound. Apparently, they were not the same when Katz and Braly (1933) initiated work on stereotyping and when their study was replicated several decades later. Whereas many of Gilbert's (1951) and Karlins, Coffman and Walters' (1969) subjects refused to stereotype ethnic groups, Katz and Braly (1935) obtained stronger public than private stereotypes. Interestingly, the latter difference may explain why, in La Piere's (1934) famous study, American hotel owners said they would refuse Asian customers but actually accepted them.

There are many ways that concur to an increase of the sense of judgeability. Some of them have already been studied in the tradition of the fit between data and theories about the data. They consist in transforming the amount or nature of the information provided by disambiguating it, for instance with the use of the context (Trope, 1986), or by interpreting the available data in terms of the theory (Darley & Gross, 1983; Duncan, 1976; Sagar &

Schofield, 1980). As we will try to show in this chapter, other solutions have more to do with the relation between the information and the judges themselves. People may entertain the illusion that they have received relevant information; they may believe that their status provides them with knowledge; they may also confound structure with content, motivation with ability, etc. From these different examples, it should be clear that, although a feeling of competence on the part of the judge participates to the feeling of judgeability, it does not pre-empt the concept.

The interest of this second approach is to highlight the impact of various aspects which go beyond the mere level of content. For instance, it should be noted that every piece of evidence, whether categorical or individuating, contains both a specific content, the *information* itself, and an additional feature, which we call the *meta-information*. In the case of individuating information, for instance, "Thomas burst into tears," it is clear that some content has been provided about Thomas. At the meta-information level, this one behavior tells us that information has been conveyed and that we are confronted with a real individual. Of course, very little has been said about this target individual who, you will agree, has many other characteristics. Turning to category information, we find the same distinction. When we learn that Thomas is an engineer, something has been asserted at the content level. Simultaneously, the meta-information tells us that Thomas is a member of a category, i.e. that he shares several characteristics with other members of this category.

One very important implication of this distinction is that, while the content of a given assertion may change (Thomas may laugh instead of cry; he may be a lawyer instead of an engineer), the meta-information remains the same. This is an important distinction, since it states that the meta-informational part of a piece of evidence is typically content-free. Simply taking this example, whatever category the member Thomas is said to belong to, one will always infer that Thomas must share some characteristics with the other group members of that category. As we will see later in the chapter, this has some consequences on the interpretation of empirical results.

A second implication of our distinction is that perceivers will partly rely on the constant meta-informational aspects of the available evidence in order to deem the target judgeable. This will be true regardless of the actual fit between the theory and the data, something which concerns only the informational aspects of the judgment situation.

We suggest that the judgeability of the target will manifest itself through increased confidence in the judgments and, to a lesser extent, through the polarization of the judgments. In other words, if people believe that they are in a position to judge the sad Thomas, they will rate him as more depressive, or at least they will be more confident about his level of depression, than if they think they lack information to judge Thomas. There

is abundant literature about the link between extremity of judgments and confidence in them. Very often, these two dimensions are correlated; they nevertheless do not tap the same reality (Clark & Rutter, 1985; Devine, 1989b).

The fact that people are aware that they are or are not in a position to judge does not mean that they are conscious about the determinants of their judgments, or even about the nature of their judgments (e.g. Bargh, 1989; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). This may lead us to the paradoxical situation where people hesitate to make a judgment because they do not want to stereotype someone and then, after obtaining further information thought to be diagnostic, finally perceive the target as judgeable and actually stereotype the person.

In conclusion, we propose that stereotyping is not only a question of fit between individuating and categorical information. Stereotyping also depends upon the theories we entertain at a particular moment about the judgeability of the target. For instance, over and above its content, any information contains a meta-informational component which helps to decide whether the target is judgeable or not. Thus, judgeability will be influenced by the content of the information as well as by the meta-information conveyed. Greater judgeability will be exhibited by increased confidence in the judgments and also, but less importantly, by more extreme ratings.

In the remaining part of this chapter, we will review some of our research which tests the social judgeability model. This will also be an opportunity to reinterpret and incorporate into a single framework some findings which did not fit, or did not fit well, into existing models of impression formation. There are several possible avenues for testing the judgeability dimension. One is to manipulate the judges' impression of amount of individual information they possess. A second possibility is similar to the previous one but focuses on the subject's impression that the categorical information is really informative. A third approach is to manipulate the salience of individual vs. categorical information. A fourth avenue consists of measuring the amount of individual information needed under certain circumstances. Assuredly, there are still other ways of proceeding, but these should suffice for the present chapter.

The Illusion of Receiving Individual Information

Certain authors have come to define stereotypes as base rates, i.e. as general beliefs about the distribution of characteristics in groups of people. This background information should thus be a very useful knowledge device for the judgment of a target person. Nevertheless, research also indicates that perceivers sometimes neglect category information when individuating information becomes available, a phenomenon which has been known as

the dilution effect. For instance, Locksley and her colleagues (Locksley *et al.*, 1980, Experiment 1) had their students read a transcript of a telephone conversation, describing the behavior of a target person named Nancy for one set of subjects and Paul for another group of subjects, in three different problem situations. The behavioral responses of the target person were consistently assertive across the three situations for some subjects and consistently passive for the others. In order to uncover subjects' reliance upon sex stereotypes, they were asked to predict the behavior of the target in four novel situations. Results indicate that the gender of the target had no effect on subjects' inferences about the target's unobserved behavior and personality characteristics. Instead, available information about the target's behavior had a considerable impact on subjects' predictions. In other words, when it is clear that a real person is at stake, stereotypes have a minimal, if any, impact on judgments of that person.

Even more interesting is the fact that stereotypes get diluted even when the individuating information has no relevance for them (Locksley, Hepburn & Ortiz, 1982). For instance, a lawyer or a teacher in mathematics is thought to behave in a more stereotypical way than a lawyer or a teacher who is 42 years old, is married, has one child and likes gardening (Denhaerinck, Leyens & Yzerbyt, 1989). Similarly, Nisbett, Zukier and Lemley (1981) have shown that a person who has a drinking problem, manages a hardware store, and has an IQ of 110, is less likely to be an abuser than a person with a drinking problem. Of course, a neglect of stereotypes in the context of a particular judgment does not mean that the stereotypes have actually been altered, but only that they do not show up in perceivers' responses.

Several explanations have been offered to explain this dilution effect. The vividness of the individuating information (Nisbett & Borgida, 1975; Nisbett & Ross, 1980), its relevance (Ajzen, 1977), and specificity (Bar-Hillel, 1980) with respect to the judgment have been proposed as crucial factors. At a more general level, individuating information is thought to dominate because it is more accessible in memory (Borgida & Brekke, 1981). In line with Kahneman and Tversky's (1973) work on the base rate fallacy, the similarity between the target person and the typical member of the category also seems to play an important role (Nisbett, Zukier & Lemley, 1981; Zukier, 1982; Zukier & Jennings, 1984). More recently, researchers seem to agree that people will also use information to the extent that it appears useful (Ginossar & Trope, 1980, 1987; Krueger & Rothbart, 1988). In all these accounts, the relative strength of the categorical and individuating information is of central concern (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Pavelchak, 1989).

Research showing dilution effects is at odds with the general finding that expectations guide perceptions, thereby leading subjects to confirm their hypotheses (for a review, see Markus & Zajonc, 1985). A study by Darley and Gross (1983) is particularly interesting for our present purpose in that

it is an attempt to reconcile these apparently contradictory findings. Some of their subjects watched a video of a young girl, Hannah, in her neighborhood and school; the setting was contrived so as to clearly indicate whether the girl came from a privileged or poor socioeconomic background. The subjects did not judge the girl's intelligence differently as a function of her background, as might be expected had they taken a stereotypical view. According to the dilution effect, such a result should not be surprising because Hannah had been individuated. Other subjects saw the same video plus the same girl take an unspecified intelligence test. Hannah's performance was clearly ambiguous. This time, not only was there a difference in the judgment of intelligence according to background, but when the girl appeared to be affluent, the test was considered more difficult and her performance superior to that in the other condition. Darley and Gross explain these results by saying that categorical information activates stereotypes, but that these are not considered valid judgments when it is individuals who are being judged. As the readers will notice, this interpretation explains the dilution effect in terms of the relationship between the judges and their judgments, that is, in terms of social judgeability. In our view, many results showing a dilution effect may be due to the fact that providing perceivers with individuating but obviously irrelevant information signals to them that they are not in a position to judge the particular person in question.

When additional individuating information is provided, it enables the judge to confirm the hypothesis activated by the categorical information, because it is processed through the confirmation bias. As a result, stereotypes appear in the judgments. Darley and Gross insist upon the fact that people use or even distort information so as to confirm their hypotheses. We defend the idea that confirmation is not always necessary. The second video shown by Darley and Gross to their subjects may simply have given them the impression that they now had enough information to take a stand about Hannah. A stringent test of our model would then be to lead subjects to believe that they had received some information when in fact they had not. Several of our recent experiments (Yzerbyt, Schadron & Leyens, 1991) have done just that, and have strongly supported our hypothesis: while the simple activation of a stereotype was not able to prompt its use, the belief that additional information was available was sufficient. The trick was that no information at all was provided.

Here is a summary of one study. Subjects were called into our laboratory to perform a series of tasks as part of a research program on the influence of daily activities on social judgment processes and impression formation. First, subjects received minimal category information about some person: they heard the beginning of a taped interview where the only information was limited to the target person's name, address, and profession. Whereas one-half of the subjects received categorical information that was diagnostic

of extraversion (the target was a comedian), the remaining participants learned that the interviewee was an archivist (i.e. information which is diagnostic of introversion). Second, subjects performed a vigilance task which was presented as equivalent in form to the pressure of daily activities. Subjects were asked to "shadow" a text for one minute in the context of a dichotic listening task. For obvious reasons, the material was not related to introversion or extraversion. Upon completion of the vigilance task, half of the participants proceeded immediately to the third part of the experiment. The other persons were informed that, unknown to them previously, they had been given information about the target in the neglected ear during the vigilance task. In some way, this corresponds to providing subjects with real placebo information (Langer, Blank & Chanowitz, 1978). In the final part, all subjects conveyed their impressions of the person by filling out a series of questionnaires.

On one questionnaire, subjects had to guess the answers given by the target to various sentences. Most of the sentences concerned introversion and extraversion. The possible responses were "True," "False," and "I don't know." Let us summarize here only the "don't know" answers which constitute a measure of confidence. If the placebo information gives the impression to the subjects that they are indeed in a position to judge the target, the "don't know" responses should be less frequent than when no such information is provided. This was indeed the case, as can be seen in Figure 4.1. Actually, the "don't know" responses were substituted by answers that were consistent with the category-based information and, depending on the experimental condition, the interviewee was rated as more introverted or extraverted.

Subjects also had to rate the target on another questionnaire consisting among other things of six items related to extraversion and introversion. This constitutes a measure of the polarization of the judgments, and it followed the predictions: the target was rated as more introverted (or extraverted) when the subjects believed they had received the individuating information than when they received only the categorical information. Follow-up studies revealed that expressing stereotypes was not more socially desirable when subjects thought they had been given target information.

The above findings are quite difficult to explain in terms of Darley and Gross's (1983) mechanism of hypothesis confirmation. They make it very clear, however, that judges will express a social judgment to the extent that they believe they have enough information about the target. Increased confidence in a judgment about a given target is usually expressed when subjects are convinced that the individuating information is really informative or diagnostic. Although the data we collected reveal a strong impact of stereotypes, they show that our subjects did not necessarily need to confirm their hypothesis in order to produce a categorical judgment. Finally, the

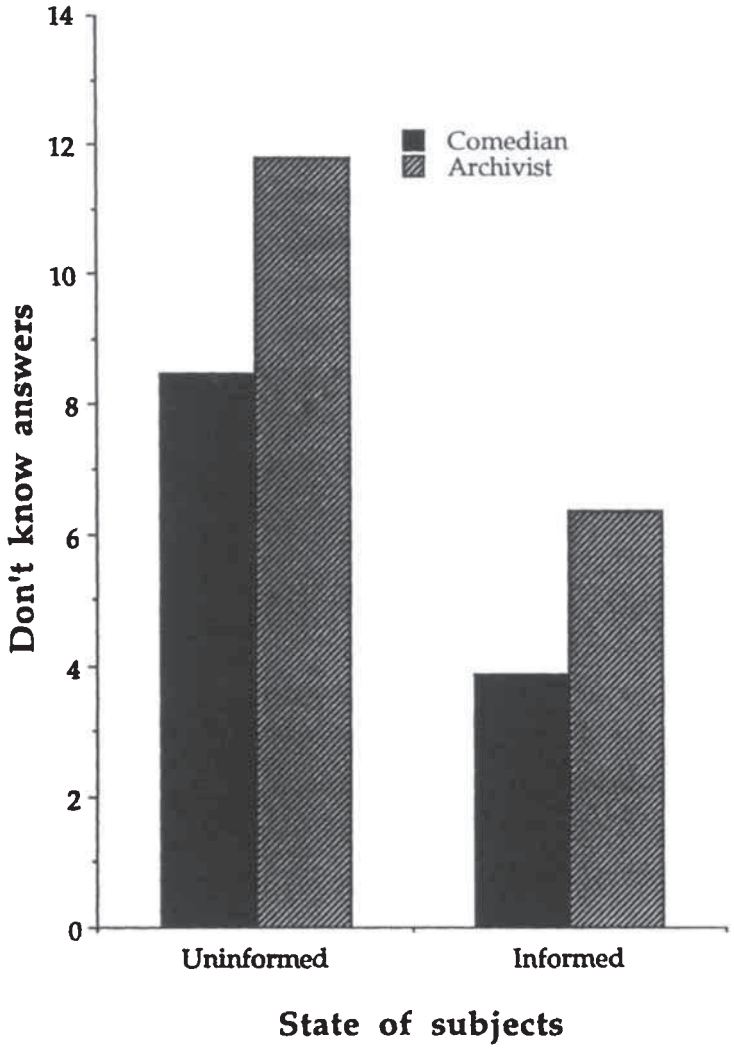

Figure 4.1 Number of "don't know" answers as a function of the categorical information and information state of the subjects

debriefings clearly showed that our subjects were not aware that they had stereotyped the target; they believed they had judged a person *qua* person.

The Impact of Stereotypes Beyond their Content

Both category evidence and individuating evidence have informational and meta-informational aspects. In the studies presented in the previous section,

the category provided content while we manipulated the meta-informational role of the individuating information. The manipulation should also work the other way round. In other words, it should be possible to use the content of the individuating information and manipulate the meta-informational aspect of the category information.

By definition, category information informs us that the target is a member of a group. This idea of "groupness" corresponds to the meta-informational aspect of category information and has very important consequences. Clearly, people belonging to the same group are seen as being more similar to each other than people belonging to different groups (Brown, 1988; Eiser & Stroebe, 1972; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Wilder, 1986). If a person is perceived as a member of a category, it is possible to build upon their behavior and generalize to other members of that category. Reciprocally, category membership provides information well beyond the observed behavior of a particular member. The fact that a person belongs to a category may thus increase people's feeling that information has been provided. To the extent that some content is already available through the individuating information, judgments should be made more confidently when categorical meta-information, i.e. groupness, is provided than when that kind of evidence is not mentioned. However, in order to show the meta-informational impact of group membership *per se*, it is necessary to eliminate the influence of the content-related aspects of the category information. One way to do this is to use weak stereotypes, that is, stereotypes which have nothing to say about particular dimensions at stake in the judgment. According to the social judgeability model, the use of such weak stereotypes would lead subjects to be more certain about any judgment based on the content of the individuating information.

Such a paradigm is reminiscent of experiments in the belief perseverance literature. In one of these studies (Anderson, Lepper & Ross, 1980), subjects learned about a very successful fire-fighter who was either extremely cautious or adventurous. Although it had been verified that the adventurous or cautious trait was not associated with success or failure in fire-fighting, subjects became convinced that such a link existed, even when told that the case study was fictitious. Thus, the category had received definite content. Anderson, Lepper and Ross (1980) wanted to show that a feature can be added to and maintained in a category on the basis of very weak evidence; they were interested in the relationship going from the particular to the general. We focus on a very different aspect: if one agrees that group membership conveys meta-information (Wilder, 1981, 1986), it follows that the judgment of a given target will be affected by the mere fact of belonging to a group, whatever that group may be. Whereas Anderson, Lepper and Ross's fire-fighter will remain adventurous, or cautious, we hypothesize that an adventurous person will be considered more adventurous if he or she

belongs to a group (but less so if that group is, for instance, a group of surgeons). Building upon this previous example, the social judgeability approach predicts that a cautious fire-fighter will be judged more confidently than a cautious person.

In a series of experiments (Schadron, Yzerbyt & Leyens, 1991), we obtained results supporting the above reasoning. In one of those studies, we wanted to pre-empt the content of the category information as much as we could, just as we did for the individuating information in the previous set of studies (Yzerbyt, Schadron & Leyens, 1991). Remember that the meta-information conveyed by the category information is the idea of groupness, that is, that people belonging to the same group are quite similar to each other. All subjects received a picture showing several students around a table. To half of the subjects, they were described as experiment participants who had been individually recruited in the street (something our subjects are accustomed to). The other half was told that the persons in the picture were members of a community house located on campus (another custom our subjects know very well). In other words, the people in the picture were presented either as aggregates or members of a group. The amount of category information provided to the subjects was thus extremely limited, and referred to no content whatsoever. Our subjects were then shown a particular person and told he had been interviewed by a psychologist.

In order to better understand the impact of meta-information on the judgeability of targets, we introduced a second variable by telling subjects that the target interviewed by the psychologist had been found to be either an introvert or an extravert. This manipulation of extraversion/introversion was selected on the basis of Reeder and Brewer's (1979) work on the role of schemata in attribution (for a review, see Reeder, 1985). According to these authors, people account for other people's behavior by first selecting a relevant underlying disposition for the observed behavior, and then locating the target person at a particular level of the selected disposition. This second step is performed with the help of a limited number of attributional schemata. Reeder and his colleagues identified several of these schemata, but the one which is of special interest here is the hierarchically restrictive schema. Indeed, extraversion/introversion is a classic example of such a schema: people consider that the range of behaviors likely to be performed is greater for an extravert than for an introvert. This means that the former is able to play the part of the latter, whereas the reverse is not true. As a consequence, one may more quickly feel in a position to judge an extravert than an introvert (Funder & Dobroth, 1987).[1]

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[1] It should be noted that, in the previous set of studies (Yzerbyt, Schadron & Leyens, 1991), extraversion and introversion did not lead to different predictions as they did in the present

The dependent measure used in this study was a guess of the number of questions the psychologist asked in order to make his diagnosis. This measure constitutes a clear indicator of our subjects' level of confidence. In line with the social judgeability model, the hypothesis was that less questions would be needed for the introvert in the group condition than in the aggregate condition. No such difference was expected for the extravert. As can be seen in Figure 4.2, this is exactly what was found. A planned contrast indicates that the introvert/aggregate condition, expected to produce least social judgeability, is indeed significantly different from the other three.

Viewed as a whole, these studies (Schadron, Yzerbyt & Leyens, 1991) indicate that a weak category label or no label at all makes the perceivers more confident about their judgment of the target. This again shows the importance of the social judgeability dimension, and is hardly interpretable in terms of the contextualization of one kind of information by the other. Results obtained by Oakes, Turner and Haslam (1991, Experiment 1) may be interpreted along the lines developed above. They found that a male target was more "male" when he was considered a member of a group than when he was seen as an individual.

Becoming Aware of the Sources of One's Judgment

When speaking about judgeability, ways of presenting information should be of great importance. The point has already been made by several researchers. For instance, Ginossar and Trope (1987) have shown that making heuristics or probability rules salient will lead to different judgments; according to Zukier and Pepitone (1984), adopting a scientific or clinical orientation will or will not induce a respect for base rates. More recently, Krosnick, Li and Lehman (1990) developed a similar argument on the basis of Grice's (1975) conversational rules. They illustrated that the recency effect for base rates vs. individuating information is the result of subjects' inferences that they are expected to rely most on the piece of information presented last (see also Hilton, 1990; Schwarz *et al.*, 1991).

Given the rhetorical structure of the information, it could then well be that individuating information will dilute or diminish the expression of stereotypes, or, on the contrary, that it will lead to more confident, and even more polarized, judgments. This is what we assume happened in the studies by Hilton and Fein (1989). These authors distinguished between irrelevant information and pseudo-relevant information. The former is rarely of any help in making a decision. Although the latter is often quite useful

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one. Indeed, in the latter series, the subjects' task was not to find out about the target's extraversion or introversion, but to answer as they thought the target had honestly done. In such a task, there should be no differential link between dispositions and behaviors.

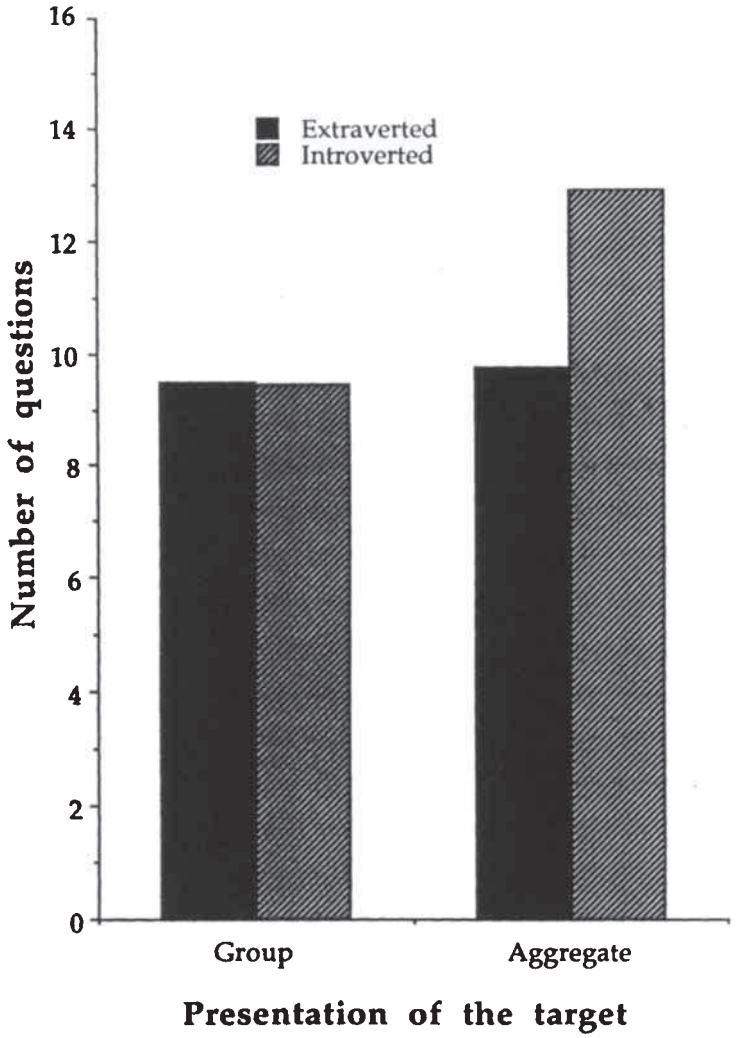

Figure 4.2 Number of questions needed as a function of the ascribed personality trait and presentation of the target

in making a judgment, it happens to be irrelevant for the particular judgment. For instance, when having to judge someone's assertiveness, the following information is irrelevant: "Bob found 20 cents in a pay phone in the student union when he went to make a phone call." A further piece of information can be said to be pseudo-relevant: "Bill and two friends rented two classic Fellini movies to watch on a VCR over the weekend."

In Hilton and Fein's (1989) first experiment, subjects were asked to evaluate the assertiveness of a series of men and women. When they received pseudo-relevant information, subjects polarized their judgments more than when they had been provided with completely irrelevant information. The difference between the male and female targets was also less pronounced with pseudo-relevant information than with completely irrelevant information. This latter result led the authors to conclude a dilution effect. In their second and third experiments, Hilton and Fein used a somewhat different design; subjects first had to rate the competitiveness of a target on the basis of his or her major (pre-med vs. social worker in Experiment 2; religion vs. politics in Experiment 3), and then they received additional irrelevant information or pseudo-relevant information. Provision of pseudo-relevant information decreased the perceived competitiveness of the pre-med and political science students more than provision of the irrelevant information. The authors again conclude a dilution effect and contend that that effect can be explained by the similarity heuristic; indeed, relative to pseudo-relevant information, irrelevant information should not increase the number of non-common features between the target and the prototype.

The social judgeability model suggests another interpretation of Hilton and Fein's data. The studies presented in the preceding sections reveal a very important aspect of human information processing. Judges do not seem to monitor very well the way they process information (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). When they end up with a particular judgment, they consciously or unconsciously use external cues to reconstruct their processing strategies. Taking this dimension into account, the social judgeability model states that perceivers rely upon various meta-informational aspects of the judgment situation in addition to available information, i.e. the mere content of the data and their prior theories.

As presented above, one prediction deriving from this model is that when fictitious individuating information is given along with category information, the perceivers' judgment will be influenced by the latter. Indeed, the perceivers believe they have been informed, but the only real information they actually get derives from the category. This prediction was strongly supported (Yzerbyt, Schadron & Leyens, 1991). The social judgeability model suggests a similar prediction when Hilton and Fein's (1989) subjects simultaneously receive both pseudo-relevant and category information in Experiment 1. In Hilton and Fein's Experiments 2 and 3, however, subjects first receive the category label and are asked to rate a typical member of the category. Not surprisingly, the subjects' responses are heavily influenced by the category membership of the target. When subjects are subsequently provided with pseudo-relevant information, their judgment should not be altered dramatically if they use the content of the evidence. Still, this pseudo-relevant information reminds them that they are

judging an individual and that they indeed have almost no information about that individual. As a consequence, subjects dilute their ratings; stereotyping decreases.

A study was specifically designed in order to test this *post hoc* interpretation. Using competitiveness vs. cooperativeness as the critical dimension for judgment, we combined Hilton and Fein's three studies as well as Darley and Gross's (1983) study. Participants were asked to evaluate several students. One of these students was presented as a business major or as a social work major and corresponded to our experimental target. In the one-judgment condition, subjects had to rate the target only after they were provided with both a label and pseudo-relevant individuating information. In the two-judgment condition, subjects judged a real student the first time after they received the label, and the second time when pseudo-relevant individuating information had been presented. In a control condition, subjects received only the category label and were asked to rate a typical representative of the category.

As shown in Figure 4.3, the results clearly support the social judgeability model. Subjects who received both category and pseudo-relevant individuating information before they rated the target were significantly influenced by the stereotype. This pattern clearly corresponds to the one found by Hilton and Fein in their first study. Subjects who rated the typical student also clearly went along the lines indicated by the category. This corresponds to the first rating of Hilton and Fein's subjects in Experiments 2 and 3. The means for these two conditions are significantly different from the scale midpoint and do not differ from each other. What about the judgments in the two-judgment condition? When they made their first decision, subjects were confronted with a real individual. Remember that Darley and Gross's (1983) subjects appeared to neglect their stereotypes when they saw Hannah in the first video. According to these authors, stereotypes are not valid bases for the judgment of a real individual. A similar pattern was found in the present experiment. Subjects' responses did not deviate significantly from the scale's midpoint. In other words, subjects avoided using stereotypes. When they then received the pseudo-relevant information and judged the target for the second time, judgments remained similarly uninfluenced by stereotypes. The latter result corresponds to the second rating in Hilton and Fein's (1989) Experiments 2 and 3.

In conclusion, the way in which individuating and categorical information is presented is highly important to the judgeability of stereotypes. In fact, sensitivity to rhetorical structure of the information goes beyond stereotyping; it can explain the suppression of primacy effects (Luchins, 1957) as well as the discounting of discrediting information (Leyens & Van Duüren, 1991).

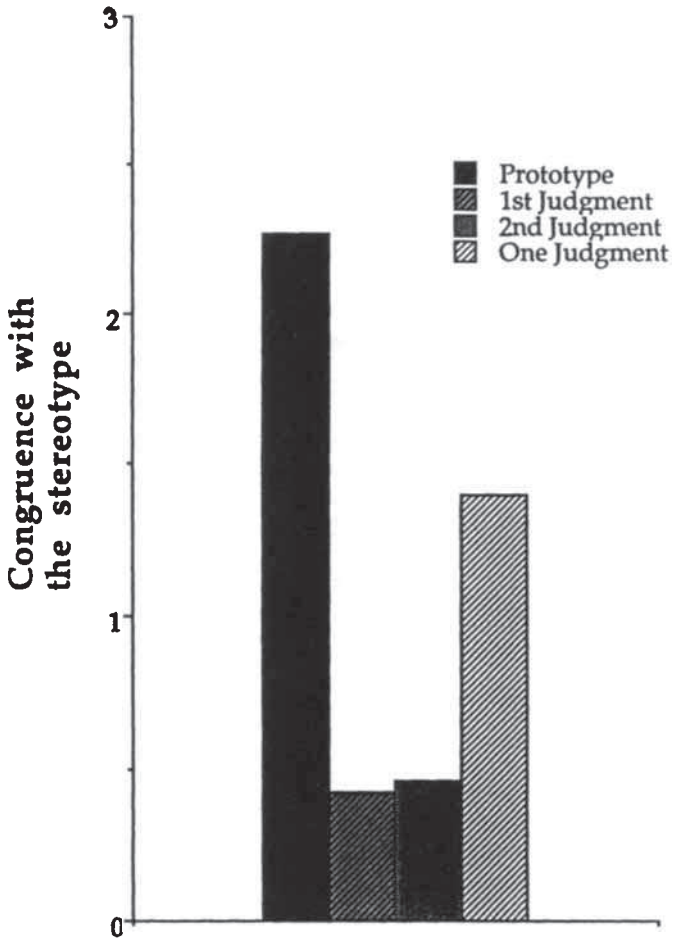

Figure 4.3 Congruence of the ratings with the stereotype as a function of the kind of decision

Requesting Rather than Receiving Information: the Ingroup Overexclusion Effect

Given that research on person perception has centered on dispositional, situational, individuating or categorical information, it is curious that almost no studies (with a few exceptions in the attribution literature: e.g. Major, 1980) have investigated which conditions trigger different strategies to obtain a certain *kind* of information. Another fruitful avenue of research would consider the *amount* of specific information needed to make a confident judgment. It is the latter approach that we have adopted in the research presented below.

Much recent research on stereotypes has borrowed the paradigm of impression formation. Although this classical paradigm assumed that judges are active perceivers of social reality, it always provides subjects with fixed sets of information, usually personality traits and, more recently, behaviors exemplifying given personality traits (Leyens & Fiske, in press). In other words, people do not have to look for information which is already furnished according to specific content criteria.

In the paradigm that we selected, subjects knew what the maximum quantity of information available to them was. One item of information was presented at a time; all the information consisted of personality traits. Subjects had to form an impression about the target but were asked to make their judgment as soon as they felt confident about it, if possible before the last piece of information. Indeed, we were not only interested in the type of judgment made by subjects, but also, and especially, in the amount of information deemed necessary to making that judgment.

Two main variables were manipulated: the evaluative valence of the information and the confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations. Space does not alllow us to justify in detail the hypotheses concerning these two variables (see Yzerbyt & Leyens, 1991, for a detailed analysis). It suffices here to say that negative traits are usually more diagnostic than positive ones and that under a necessity-oriented rule, disconfirmation has more influence than confirmation. A necessity rule applies when subjects are guided by an accuracy goal (Neuberg, 1989) or when the consequences of an error are important (Kruglanski, 1990), and when the target's reactions do not correspond to one's expectations.

Several studies were conducted which supported our hypotheses. Here, we will summarize one of them (Leyens & Yzerbyt, in press). A word of background may be needed to understand its implications. After the Second World War, some American social psychologists asked themselves whether prejudiced subjects were better at recognizing Jewish faces shown on pictures or slides than unprejudiced subjects. In general, anti-semitic subjects were indeed more accurate in detecting Jewish faces than unprejudiced ones (see Leyens & Yzerbyt, 1991, for more details). More importantly for our purpose is the fact that prejudiced subjects almost always put a greater number of faces in the Jewish category than did unprejudiced subjects. The propensity to overload the Jewish category is an instance of what we have called the *ingroup overexclusion effect*. According to our reasoning, and in line with previous research (Yzerbyt & Leyens, 1991), deciding whether someone belongs to one's group requires more information than deciding that person belongs to another, perhaps threatening group. People want to make sure that "someone is really one of us," and in case of doubt, they prefer not to admit the dubious candidate into the closed circle of friends.

In terms of social judgeability, this means that it is particularly difficult to decide about an ingroup member, especially a good one.

To test our hypotheses, we took advantage of the situation in Belgium where there are two linguistic groups separated through a long history of conflict: the French-speaking Walloons and the Dutch-speaking Flemish. Our subjects were French-speaking students from Louvain-la-Neuve who were given diagnostic personality traits, one at a time, either of a French-speaking person or of a Dutch-speaking person. These either negative or positive traits had been collected during a pretest; moreover, for each linguistic group, they were equally negative or positive, with the negative traits being as polarized as the positive ones. The different sets of traits where equally complex in terms of latent dimensions. Using a complete within-subject design, subjects had to decide whether a given target was a member of the ingroup or not. They did this by pressing one of three keys: Y(es), N(o), or M(ore information needed).

The results strongly supported the hypotheses (for more details, see Leyens & Yzerbyt, in press). First, subjects showed an ingroup bias in that they more frequently rejected the "bad" outgroup member, that is, the target with the negative Flemish personality traits, and they more often accepted the "good" ingroup member, the Walloon with positive traits. Second, Figure 4.4 shows that in order to make their decision subjects requested less information about the negative outgrouper. This may appear trivial. What is more interesting, and clearly in line with our judgeability hypothesis, is that subjects needed the most information about a positive member of the ingroup.

We did not measure our subjects' level of prejudice, but some data show that it plays a role. When the number of acceptances in the different conditions were intercorrelated, the only significant correlation occurred between the "bad" Flemish and the "good" Walloon. This correlation was quite high and negative, indicating that those subjects who easily rejected a "bad" Flemish were those who accepted a positive Walloon. It should also be noted that there was no correlation between confidence in the decision and the amount of information requested, or the "accuracy" of the decision. In other words, it is not because subjects asked for more information that they were more accurate in detecting the membership of the target, or that they felt more confident about their decision.

In sum, people need varying amounts of diagnostic trait information to attribute membership of a target to an ethnic group. Also, the valence and the confirmatory status of the diagnostic information influence this amount.

The ingroup overexclusion effect has several implications. For instance, it should be relevant to expert-novice research; indeed, one should be an expert for one's ingroup compared to an outgroup. As just one example, it

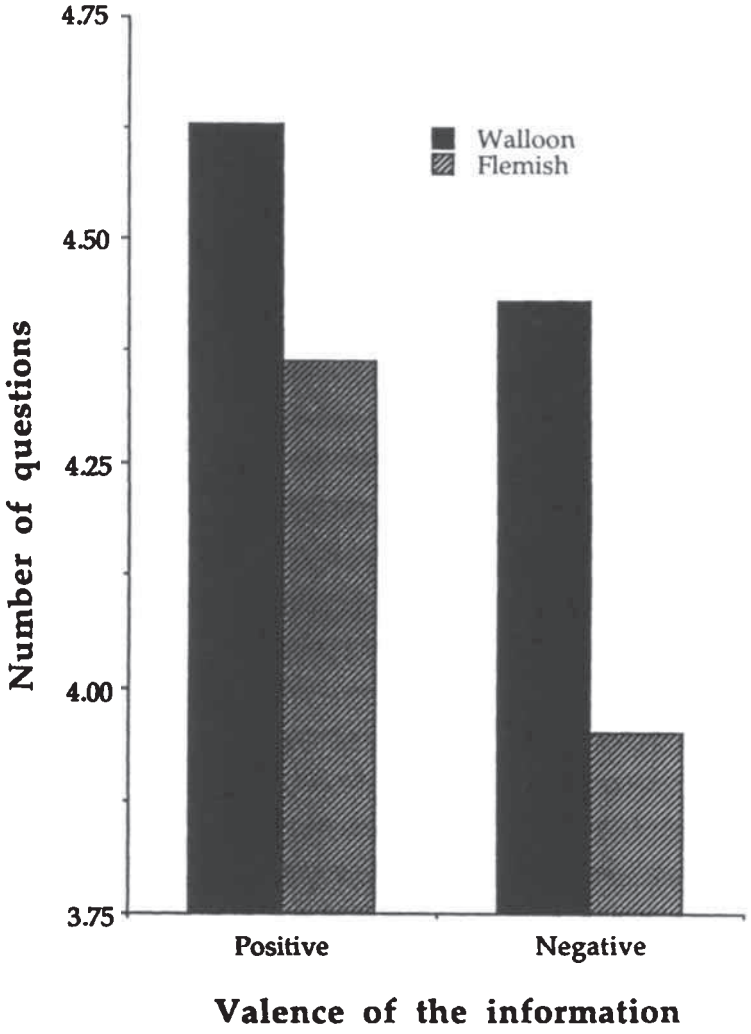

Figure 4.4 Number of pieces of evidence requested as a function of the group membership of the target and valence of the information

has been shown that experts are better able than novices to take into account disconfirmatory information, and that this has an effect upon their judgment (Fiske, Kinder & Larter, 1983). Borgida and DeBono (1989) obtained such results with librarians vs. undergraduates who had to judge the suitability of an applicant for a job as a librarian or as a real estate agent. Half the information described the applicant as an introvert and the other half as an extravert. The authors concluded that such a finding was due to the better

memory of experts for inconsistent information. Another explanation is that the librarians were actually protecting their market; they needed more confirming information about the ingroup member before affirming her suitability for the job.

Research on the overexclusion effect does not only emphasize the active role of the perceiver. It is also in line with the social judgeability approach in that it stresses two particular aspects of it. On one hand, the social judgeability approach proposes that the categorization of a target influences its judgeability. Overexclusion studies show that this is clearly the case. A target is judged more or less quickly depending on the membership of the rater. On the other hand, the overexclusion effect confirms earlier reports that different judgments are more or less difficult to make. Presumably for motivational reasons, such a difference is shown in the present work through positive vs. negative judgments.

CONCLUSIONS

Traditionally, research on social judgment has opposed category information and individuating information. Whereas some research indicates that stereotypes, i.e. shared beliefs about the characteristics of a group of people, are used to interpret individuating evidence, other work reveals that people neglect category information as soon as they possess individuating information. One way or the other, people are thought to fall prey to important biases. In the end, social judgment is approached from the viewpoint of the debate between data and theory.

In the present work, we take a different perspective as we propose that people judge others not only on the basis of the content of the pieces of information they happen to possess. For one thing, people are not necessarily aware of the determinants of their judgment. For another, social judgment is also a means of assigning meaning and communicating with other people. When judging their fellow human beings, perceivers, we propose, act according to a series of cues which go beyond the content level. These cues provide useful feedback about the hypothesized nature of the judgment process. As a consequence, they have a major impact on judgment. Of interest here is that these cues will allow perceivers to deem the target judgeable or not.

An important aspect of the judgment situation is the relationship between the presence or absence of category or individuating information and the specific judgment to be made. Whatever evidence is provided to our subjects, we contend that they are always given both information (content) and meta-information (non-content). Under what we have called the social judgeability approach, we have examined various situations in which a target is or is not judgeable depending on meta-informational aspects.

First, we have shown that it is not necessary for people to distort individuating information to judge others in a stereotyped manner. It suffices to have perceivers believe individuating information has been delivered. To the extent that people use the content of their stereotypes to build up a judgment, they withhold their judgment of a target when they have no additional information; however, the mere availability of individuating information makes the stereotypical answers reappear.

Second, it was possible to reverse the roles given to individuating and category information in our first studies. This time, we provided subjects with some content at the individuating level and tried to show that category information provides specific cues over and above its content. Specifically, because category members are thought to be more similar, they should be more judgeable than isolated individuals. Results indicate that people's confidence in their judgment went up substantially only when they thought the target was a member of a group.

Third, we have shown that people will fall prey to the meta-informational aspect of the individuating evidence, to the extent that they remain unable to trace the elaboration of their judgment. This leads us to expect that any factor that increases the accessibility of the process should reduce the impact of the meta-informational aspect of individuating evidence. We suspected that one such factor may be the request for an intermediate decision. After giving category information to our subjects, we either asked them to rate the target or provided them with additional placebo individuating information. All subjects were requested to make a final judgment. Compared to the subjects who rated the target twice and who appeared to be uninfluenced by the stereotypes, the remaining subjects polarized their judgments.

Finally, we have shown that people have specific thresholds for individuating information, depending on the judgment to be made. Moreover, the characteristics of the information also play a role. One interesting consequence of these findings is that perceivers' category membership influences the amount of information deemed necessary to judge the target.

Of course, we have evoked only a few cases where the social judgeability model applies. A criticism that could be made is that the utility of this model is restricted to the asceptic world of the laboratory, where obedient subjects try to make sense of whatever is presented to them. Such a criticism would be a myopic view of what we have in mind. To be more convincing for the ecologically-oriented critics, another way of testing the model would be to look at situations or roles. Indeed, certain situations or roles give people the impression that they easily have sufficient information with which to make a judgment, while others on the contrary induce the sense of needing a lot of information. Having status may induce people to believe they have the necessary information, just because of their position; many despots think of themselves as enlightened precisely because they are

despots. Results obtained by Beauvois and his colleagues (Beauvois & Dubois, 1988; Beauvois & Le Poultier, 1986) suggest that this is indeed the case. Individuals in a high status position make more internal attributions than subordinates do. Conversely, then, people in a situation of outcome-dependency upon someone should need a greater amount of information about that person than should others who are independent. Fiske and her colleagues (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990) have reliably shown that persons whose fate depends in some way on the target pay particular attention to inconsistent information concerning the target. This greater attention is presumably due to a special motivation to find a fit between the category or schema and the inconsistent information. According to the social judgeability model, outcome-dependency should lead the subjects who are receiving the information to be particularly cautious before making a judgment about the target. Therefore they would not be satisfied with placebo information, as in the studies we have just reported. It is our opinion that a more extensive information search would not be motivated by a fit between data and theory, but rather would be induced by preconceptions about the adequacy of judgment in such a situation.

The latter prediction makes it clear that we do not consider our model to contradict recent epistemic models. There is, however, a difference between these models and ours. The experiments we have presented insist on the fact that stereotyping is partly uncontrolled (Uleman & Bargh, 1989) and may be independent of the content of the information. This is consistent with those models which assume that motivation and ability are necessary in order for the "cognitive misers" to avoid making an immediate and spontaneous category-based judgment. What does not fit with these models is the fact that the provision of a category, containing a minimal amount of individuating information (i.e. the voice and the name of the person) is not sufficient to prompt the expression of a categorical judgment. Actually, the experiments testing Fiske's and Brewer's models at the highest level (initial categorization for Fiske, and identification for Brewer) have always provided subjects with both category-based attributes and person attributes, in such a mixture that it allowed for a categorical judgment. They never asked subjects to judge specific persons only on the basis of categorical information (Brewer, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990).

While the previous models focused mainly on epistemic validity, the dimension that we propose to add to them relates to social validity. Here the focus is no longer the relation between the object to be judged and the judges, but the relation between the judges and their judgment; judges bring into the situation theories about inferences, about judgments, all of which color the fit between the data and the theories about those data. This is why we call our model *social* judgeability. One obvious reference being made in the use of the adjective "social" is that it is social objects that are

being judged. In this sense, we do not consider our model to be content-free, like Kruglanski's (1990). However, the most important reason why the model is social is that it deals with social rules or theories. These social (shared, socially context-bound) rules render it such that stereotypical judgments may function as subjectively valid explanations. These explanations thus have a social value.

What is indeed important to us in the studies we have reported is that they show, sometimes *a contrario*, the role of stereotypes as explanations (Hoffman & Hurst, 1990). Obviously, these explanations are not necessarily rational or irrational, false or true (Oakes & Turner, 1990). It has been largely debated whether stereotypes are used to simplify reality (Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Bodenhausen & Lichtenstein, 1987; Bodenhausen & Wyer, 1985) or to handle ignorance (Medin, 1988). Are they handy devices to say less about much or to profess more about little? Different traditions of research insist on one or the other goal. Actually, stereotypes seem to further both goals, and examples are easily unearthed. What is noteworthy, however, is that when people make stereotypical judgments, they are not usually aware that they use stereotypes: their judgments are explanations, subjectively valid; that is, they correspond to the reality to be explained. To arrive at these explanations, people refer to social rules and go beyond the mere content of the available evidence. These rules build upon the type, quality, quantity, and rhetorical structure of information.

It is a truism in person perception to say that people are not passive social observers. Nevertheless, they are very often so well tamed by the investigators' specially tailored paradigms that they are not able to display the whole array of their strategies (Jaspars, 1983; Leyens, 1990; Sousa & Leyens, 1987). Let us assume for a moment that one is convinced that discovering how person memory works will yield an understanding of how people form impressions. The reasonable thing to do is to provide subjects with controlled amounts of information and observe how people react to, recall, or recognize that information. The collection of data thus obtained is relevant to person memory, but it may not be for impression formation (Leyens & Fiske, in press). Maybe it is because people make judgments on-line, and therefore do not rely much upon their memory (Hastie & Parke, 1986); maybe it is because people do not classify information into congruent, incongruent and irrelevant categories, etc. It may very well be that research on stereotypical judgments has relied too much on a few implicit assumptions: stereotypes as distortions of reality, as base rates or prior probabilities, as hypotheses to be tested, etc. These assumptions have constrained not only the experimental paradigms, but also important parts of our understanding of what active observers are capable of doing and usually do. Since stereotypes are by definition categories, a new and worthwhile look at stereotyping research may be possible by going back to

Bruner's (1957) two main reasons for categorization: to give meaning and to allow communication.

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