

is probably also linked with her desire to advert to aspects of her lesbianism, but without openly avowing it. While Gertrude Stein will probably never become a popular writer, she was a pivotal figure in the development of literary **modernism**, and as such has exercised considerable indirect influence. Her first-hand responses to the work of modern artists, and the little museum of major works that so many saw in her Paris apartment, earned her a secondary role as a tastemaker in the field of modern painting.

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STEREOTYPE

The term stereotype had its origin in the printing trade, where it meant a solid metal plate, a printing surface that could be used for thousands of identical impressions without need of replacement. The American journalist Walter Lippmann introduced the concept to the social sciences in his book *Public Opinion* (1922), in which he argued that in a modern democracy political leaders and ordinary voters are required to make decisions about a variety of complex matters which they do not understand, but judge on the basis of stereotypes acquired from some source other than direct experience. The inflow of new empirical data fails to correct the situation because the individual who has embraced a stereotype sees mainly what he expects to see rather than what is really present.

The esteem in which Lippmann was held by Americans in public life furthered the adoption of the term essentially in the meaning he gave it. When a concept is designated a stereotype, it is implied that (1) it is simple rather than nuanced or differentiated, (2) it is erroneous rather

than accurate, (3) it has been acquired through secondhand rather than direct experience, and (4) it resists modification by later experience. Very little systematic investigation of the dimensions of stereotyping has been done, apart from the dimension of resistance to change. In empirical research the term has usually been restricted to a pejorative designation for commonly held beliefs about ethnic groups. This "group concept" usage was established in a classic study by Katz and Braly of 1933. The questionnaire asked the subject to select from a list of 84 traits the ones he considered characteristic of each of ten ethnic groups, then to choose the five "most typical" traits for each group. This procedure has been repeated many times, for many ethnic groups, and in many different countries. While most of the studies have dealt with beliefs about ethnic groups, a considerable number have probed attitudes toward occupational groups, social classes, the differences between the sexes, and like topics.

One conclusion that may be drawn from this research is that most individuals are willing to make at least a guess about the traits of almost any defined social group on the basis of information that a social scientist would consider inadequate. Opinions are derived first of all from the mass media, which today by electronic means reach even the uneducated and barely literate masses in backward countries, as well as educated publics in advanced ones. Other individuals and fortuitous personal contact supply further bases for opinion-forming. The circumstances under which stereotypes are likely to be accurate or inaccurate are the object of many hypotheses. A widely held belief which Lippmann himself propagated is that the stereotypes of the educated are in general more accurate than those of the uneducated, and that concepts formed by social scientists are the most accurate of all. This view, however plausible, has never been demonstrated. A secondary problem is a group's self-image,

which may be as stereotypical as any other. If the self-image of a collective and a second group's image of it largely coincide, this fact is usually taken as evidence for a "kernel of truth" in both sets of stereotypes.

Stereotypes of Homosexuality.

Research on attitudes toward homosexuality is relatively recent, and the dimensions of the stereotyping of homosexuals are not fully defined. Several general observations may, however, be made on the basis of the extant findings and of more theoretical presuppositions. The first is that there are diachronic layers of stereotypes. In the West, the oldest layer, inherited from antiquity and the early Middle Ages, is that homosexuals behave like members of the opposite sex, or conversely that they violate the appropriate norms of behavior for their genital sex. Thus terms like "effeminate" and "swish" are applied to male homosexuals by some if not always many of the subjects questioned. Conversely, lesbians are perceived as mannish, crude, and aggressive. Another archaic layer, attested in the Greek comedies of Aristophanes, is that male homosexuals and bisexuals are constantly thinking about sex, and even (in many cases) almost indiscriminate in their choice of sex objects. The third layer derives from the central and late Middle Ages, when the church systematically defamed homosexual activity and those who engaged in it, with the outcome that terms such as "immoral," "repulsive," "dangerous," and "sinful" are stereotypical responses to questionnaire studies. The fourth layer is the one propagated by psychiatry and psychoanalysis from the late nineteenth century onward, to the effect that the homosexual is "sexually abnormal," "perverted," "mentally ill," "maladjusted," "insecure," and "lacking self-control." The most recent layer, and the one characteristic of individuals who have overcome the traditional social distance from homosexuals, holds them to be "sensitive," "individualistic," "intelligent," "imagina-

tive," "sophisticated," and "artistic." Undoubtedly the standard movement propaganda about the homosexuality of great men and women, and also the image of the creative writer or artist as homosexual, have contributed mightily to the diffusion of the last layer. Although it would appear to be a rare example of positive stereotyping (and to a considerable extent it is), the notion of creativity has been traditionally associated—at least in American culture—with lack of manliness.

Such stereotypes are harbored and propagated not only by members of the host culture (the "heterosexual majority"), but also—to a degree that may seem surprising in the era of homosexual liberation—by many homosexuals themselves. As part of the coming-out process, the tyro homosexual or lesbian may display "obvious" mannerisms and dress, even in an exaggerated form, to gain adhesion to the group. Later these flaunting signals are likely to be toned down, as the need for them decreases. In a more subtle way, traits redolent of stereotypes may be selectively unfurled in order to signal one's orientation nonverbally to other gay people. Such communication serves a specific function, but it also lends a specious validity to the more baneful stereotypes. Dilemmas of this kind are probably inseparable from the experience of a stigmatized minority as such.

Class Differences. There is a class aspect to stereotyping: the lower social classes, being less educated and more given to concrete than abstract thinking, incline more to stereotypic responses because their thinking is in imagery rather than in logical concepts, and their mental life more affective than intellectual. Moreover, the uneducated may cherish a random set of stereotypes that contradict one another, as when the male homosexual is thought inordinately aggressive and "a danger to every boy on the streets," but also timid and wanting in masculinity. Also, in the lower classes far more importance is attached to sex roles that are

rigidly and unequivocally defined. A man must be masculine, a woman feminine, and there is a relatively low level of toleration for deviant behavior. In this situation, if a man is homosexual and therefore behaves sexually "like a woman," his whole personality is expected to conform to this model. Hence the stereotype—or more precisely the most archaic layer of stereotypes—is reinforced by the majority of lower-class homosexuals who opt for a female identity and then project that identity through overtly effeminate behavior. Conversely the upper-class individual exposed to homophile propaganda may form his stereotypical notion from the biography of a famous novelist or painter, or from literature that stresses the "positive achievements" of homosexuals in history. In general, the more educated part of the population in a society that prides itself on its individualism can tolerate—if not accept—a deviation in sexual character so long as it is not patently disharmonious or incongruent with other societal norms.

Correlations of Stereotypes. A further question is the correlation of negative stereotypes of the homosexual with attitudes toward other outsider, minority groups. In the wake of the findings of Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno and his associates in *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), investigators have sought a common denominator in a personality type that relies on authority, is unable to tolerate ambiguity, and is deeply immersed in the specific value system of the ethnic group and social class in which it has been reared. A heterosexual having such traits is likely to be even more intolerant of the homosexual than of other deviant groups, and to perceive homoerotic behavior as threatening to his own sexual identity and potentially harmful to society. That is why the effeminate homosexual may be disliked because he violates the norm of masculinity, but conversely the masculine homosexual may provoke even more anxiety because of the ambiguity which

his even subtler departure from maleness entails. It is also a fact that homosexual behavior is often believed to have originated with, or to be characteristic of, another ethnic group, as when Frenchmen call homosexuality "le vice allemand" (the German vice). The very terms *sodomite* and *bugger* are in English the legacy of such labeling of a people or dissident sect as guilty of "unnatural vice." This general tendency to ascribe undesirable characteristics to disliked groups is termed **ethnophobia**.

The centuries-long stigmatization of the sodomite as a criminal and an outcast in Western civilization has left behind a negative residue of stereotypes that only an equally lengthy process of education and positive-image building can efface. A conference of gay movement leaders held in 1988 placed the creation of a positive image of the homosexual at the head of its agenda for future activity.

See also **Authoritarian Personality; Discrimination; Homophobia; Myths and Fabrications.**

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