

# The Source of Stereotypes

May 01, 2014



It's human nature to categorize people. When we meet someone for the first time, we make instant judgments about their social status and their personality. Susan Fiske has devoted her career to examining the role of these kinds of judgments in stereotypes and bias. Her research shows that we favor people whom we see as warm and competent, and snub those we view as cold and inept. These perceptions are heavily influenced by race, age, gender, and disability, which can lead to stereotyping and discrimination. With the help of brain imaging, Fiske has found that our social perceptions and prejudices have neural components. But while prejudice may be an inevitable part of the human condition, Fiske's research shows that it also is surmountable.