

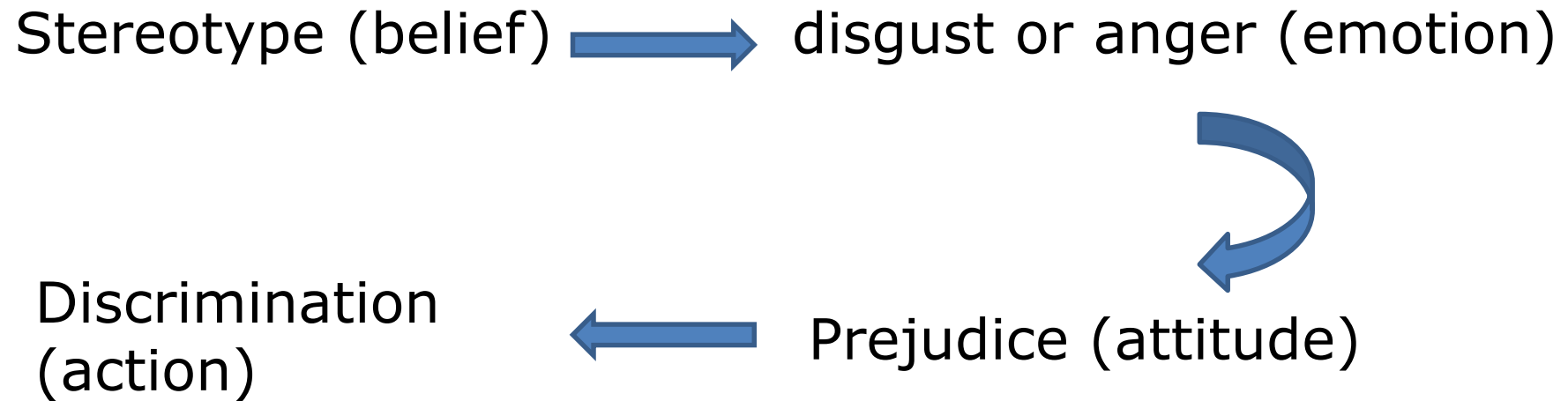
Thinking about Social Phenomena

Constructing Puzzles



Lecture dt. Apr 13, 2020

Last lecture: stereotype



Last lecture: How do stereotypes work

Simplifies social reality → see people who fit the label (confirmation bias) → reinforce stereotype; also, self-stereotyping

- *If you belong to a group facing discrimination, you begin to internalize the stereotypes associated with the group*

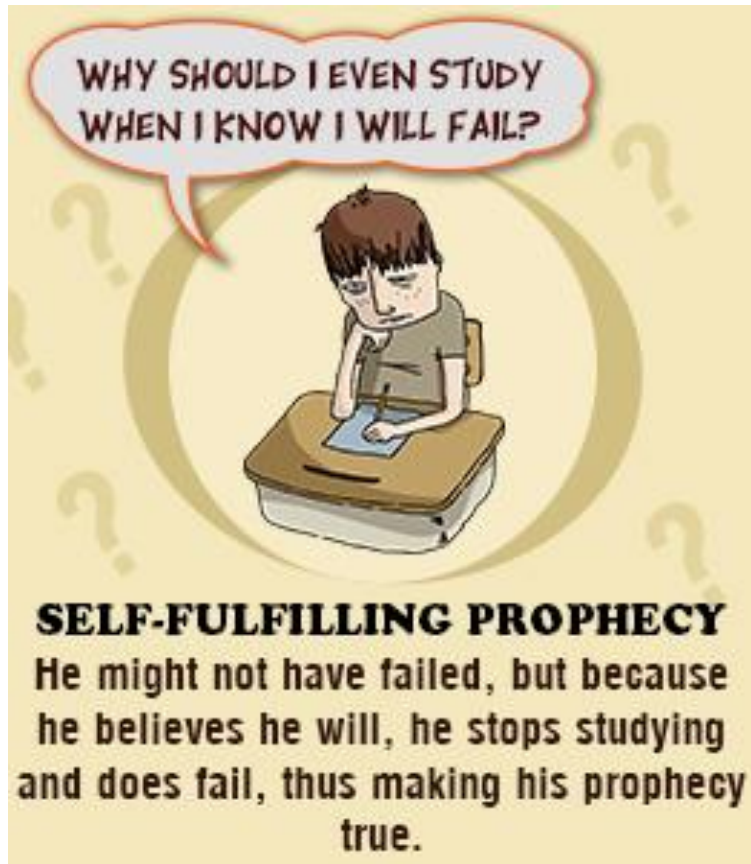
Self-fulfilling prophecy and stereotypes

Self-fulfilling prophecy

'Prophecy': a divine revelation of the future
(literal meaning)

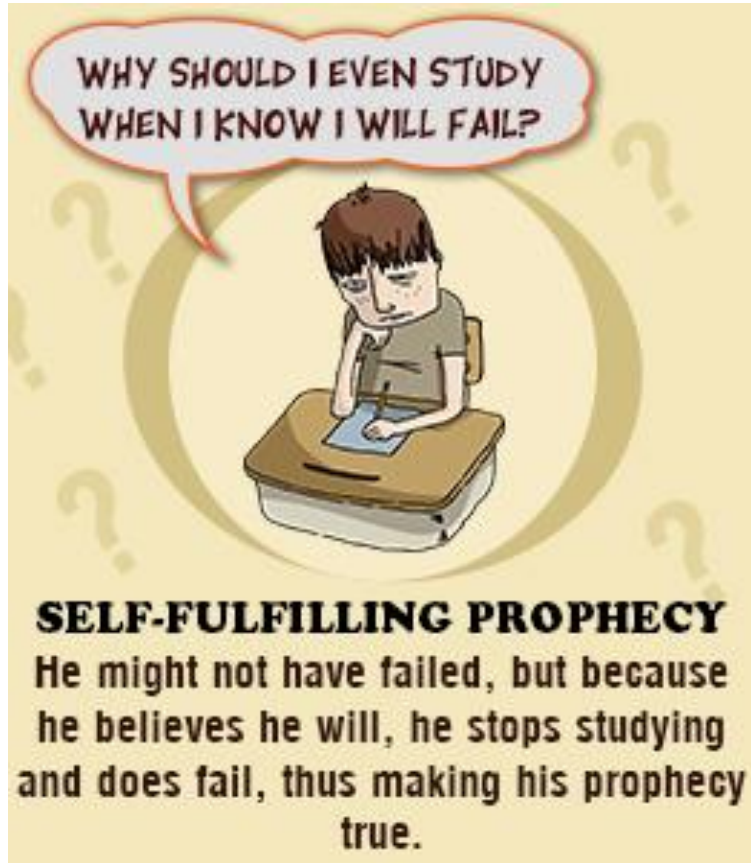
'Self-fulfilling prophecy': when reality conforms to
your own or someone else's original *false* belief

Self-fulfilling prophecy



- I have a false belief about myself; I act in a manner that conforms to that belief
- Individual has false belief about Person A
Person A, therefore, behaves in a way that validates the original (false) belief

Self-fulfilling prophecy



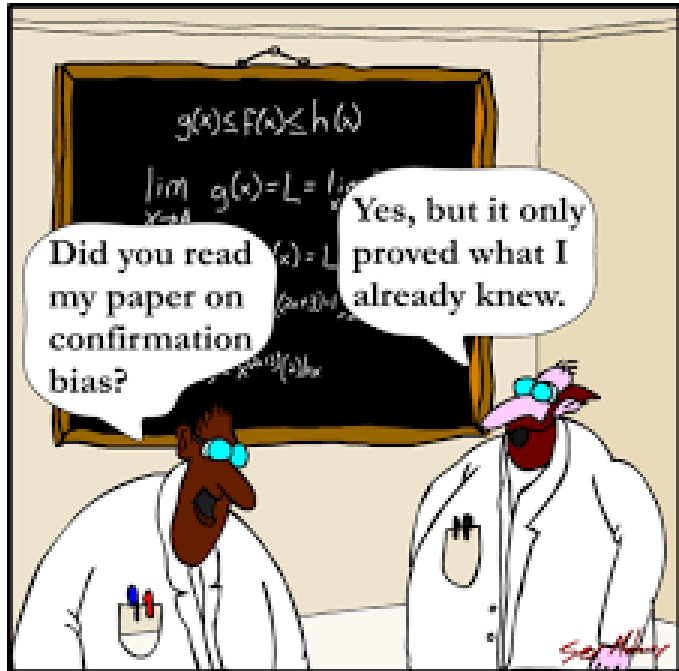
It is not merely that:

- People's perceptions depend on prior beliefs, or
- Beliefs, even false ones, have real consequences

But, it is:

Consequences of a particular kind—ones that make reality conform to the initial belief (Merton 1948; Biggs 2009)

How is SFP different from Confirmation Bias?



Gathering evidence vs. behaviour

CB: go to sources that affirm existing beliefs; information processing effect

SFP: behave to make original (false) beliefs come true; behavioural confirmation effect



The self-fulfilling prophecy is, in the beginning, a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true. The specious validity of the self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates a reign of error. For the prophet will cite the actual course of events as proof that he was right from the very beginning.

(Robert K. Merton)

Bank runs during the Great Depression



Scenes of panic throughout the country, long lines of customers queuing up before dawn in hopes of withdrawing cash before the bank had no more to pay out.

Bank insolvent (false rumour)



Panic: people withdraw large sums of money (behaviour)



Bank actually becomes insolvent (outcome)

Behaviour aligns to fulfil the original belief

Potential bank runs in India during Covid-19

Coronavirus: 'Several Indian banks to close branches amid lockdown,' says report

Reuters Last Updated: March 26, 2020 | 17:03 IST



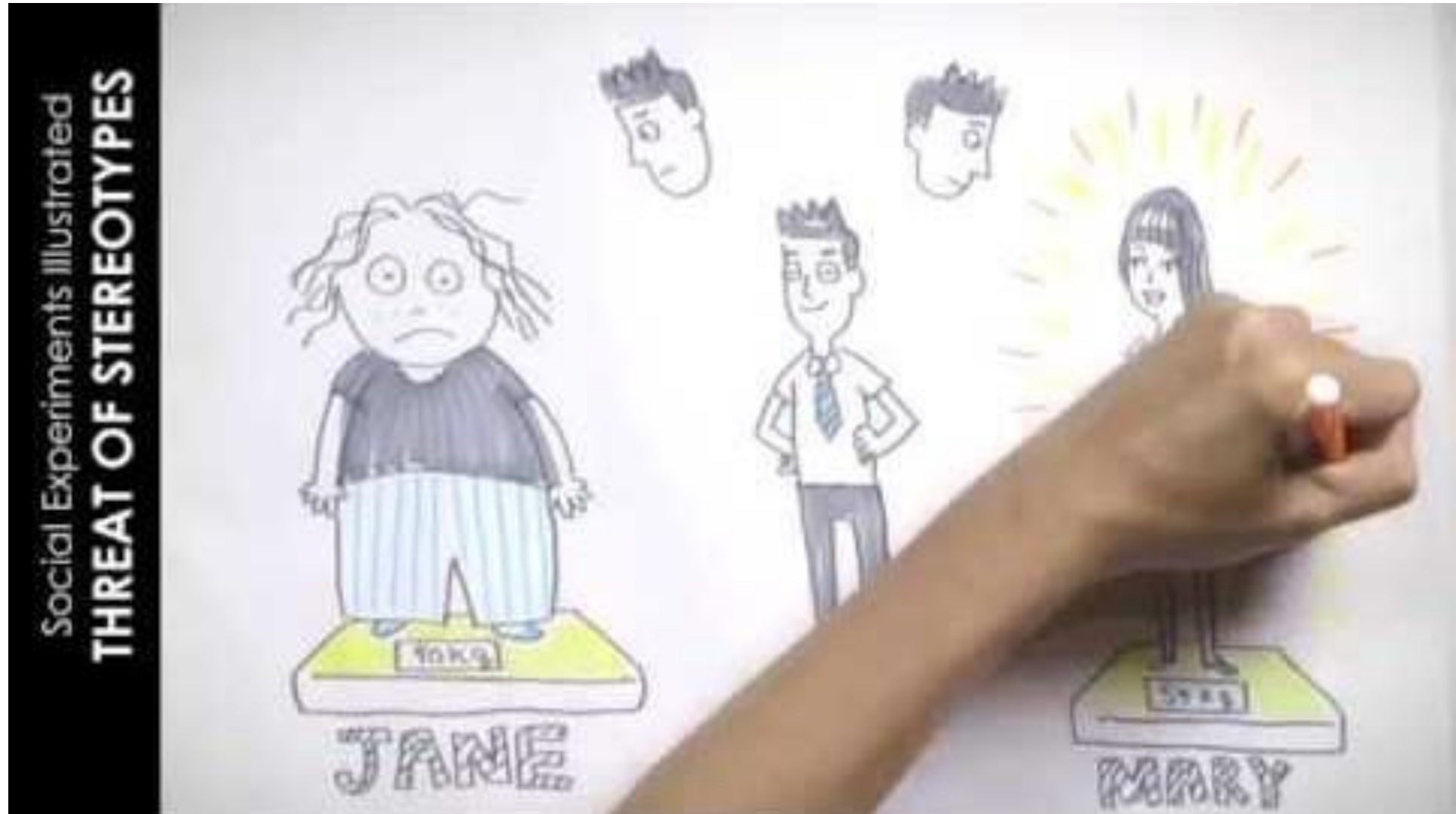
India's central bank and major lenders are working on a plan to close most branches during the country's lockdown, aiming to prevent tens of thousands of employees from becoming infected with the coronavirus, four sources familiar with the matter told [Reuters](#).

The world's second most populous nation with 1.3 billion people is still very much a cash society and banks have been exempted from a 21-day lockdown that began this week as they are considered an essential service.

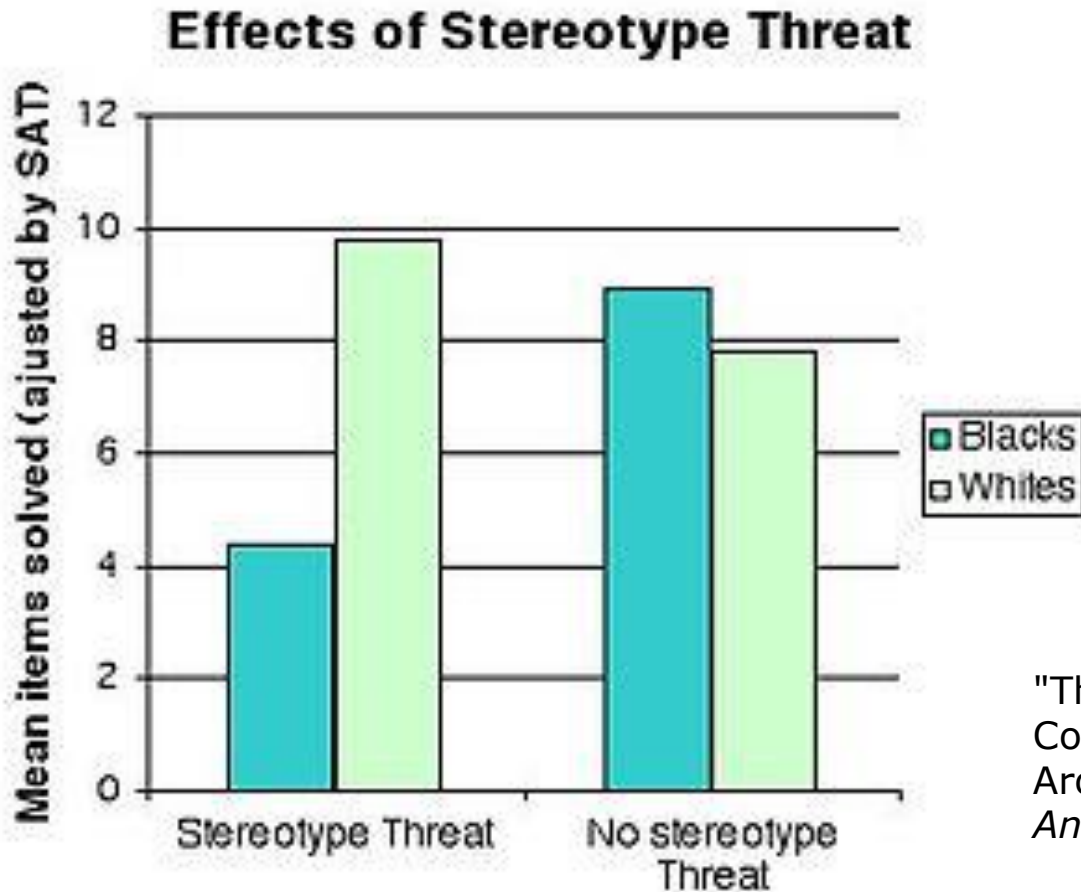
Under the plan, there would likely be only one bank branch open every five km (three miles) in major cities, the sources said, declining to be identified as the discussions about the closures have not been publicly disclosed.

Source: *Business Today*

SFP and stereotypes



SFP and stereotypes

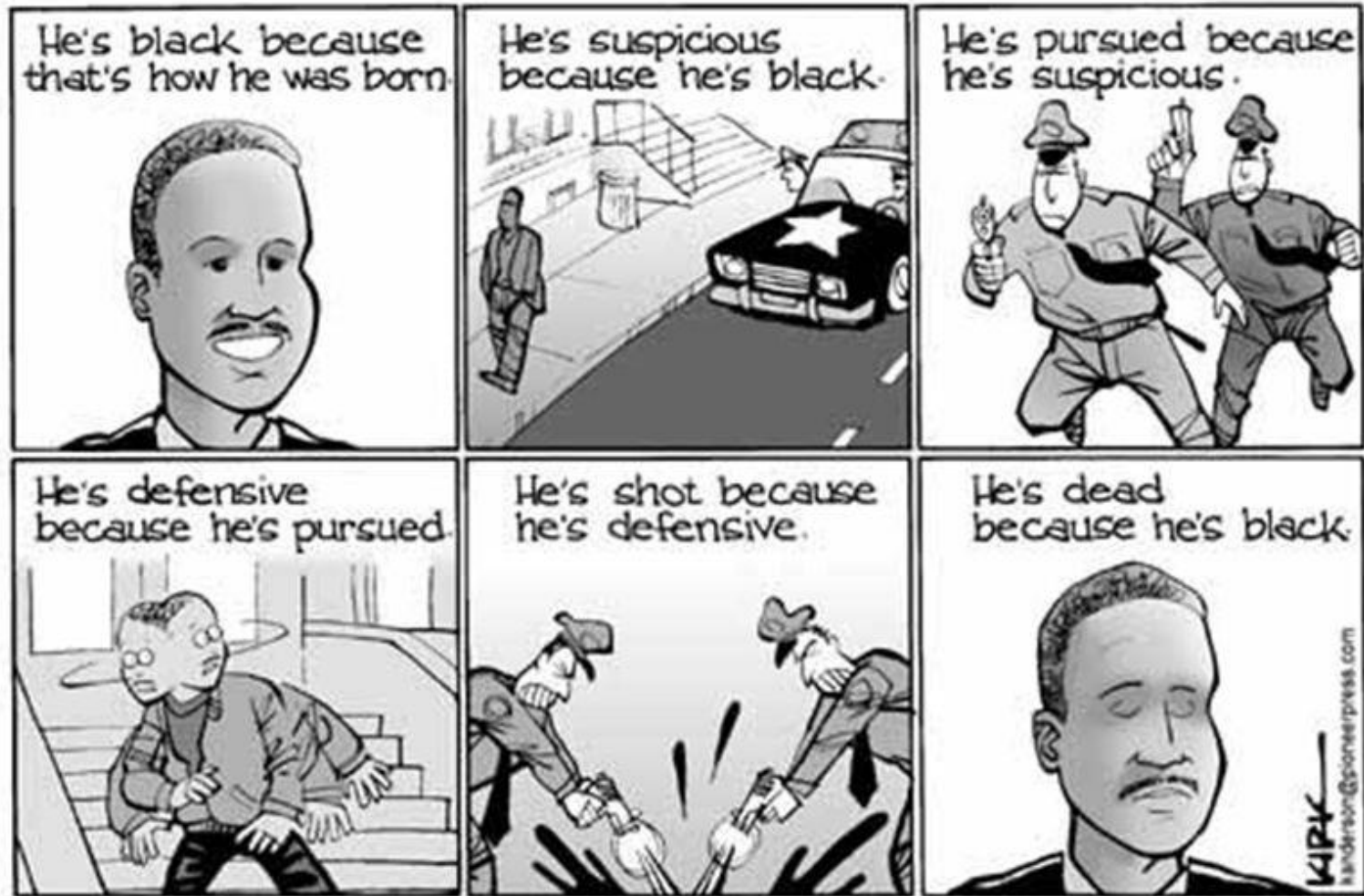


Inaccurate social stereotypes may lead to their own fulfilment: persistence of stereotypes

Members of groups stereotyped as more intelligent can, through SFP, actually become more intelligent than members of groups stereotyped as less intelligent

"The Effects of Stereotype Threat on the Standardized Test Performance of College Students (adjusted for group differences on SAT)". From J. Aronson, C.M. Steele, M.F. Salinas, M.J. Lustina, *Readings About the Social Animal*, 8th edition, ed. E. Aronson (Wikipedia entry)

SFP and racial (or religious/ethnic) stereotypes



SFP and gender stereotypes



Perceived attractiveness of a candidate influencing positive interviewer response

Men were warmer to women whom they falsely believed were attractive (through use of false photos and non face-to-face interviews) (Jussim 2012)

The counterpart of SFP

'Suicidal prophecy' or 'Self-defeating prophecy': Prevents or "kills off" the fulfilment of an outcome that would otherwise have developed.

e.g. the hare and the tortoise. The hare held the false belief that he would defeat the tortoise. Overconfidence. Own defeat.

References and readings

Biggs, M. (2009). Self-fulfilling prophecies. In P. Hedström and P. Bearman (Eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology*, 294-314. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jussim, L. (2012). *Social perception and social reality: Why accuracy dominates bias and self-fulfilling prophecy*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Madon S., Jussim L., Guyll M., Nofziger H., Salib E.R., Willard J., Scherr K.C. (2018). The accumulation of stereotype-based self-fulfilling prophecies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 115(5), 825-844.

Merton, R.K. (1948). Self-fulfilling prophecy. *The Antioch Review*, 8(2), 193-210.

Steele, C.M. and Jeffrey A. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69 (5), 797-811.