Discovering Bias: Challenges & Opportunities for Organizational Diversity

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Overview

• Definitions:
  • Social Psychology / Social Cognition
  • Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

• Who is Biased?
  Explicit & Implicit Associations
  • Demonstration

• How Bias Affects Us
  • Perceiver and Target Perspectives

• Conclusion
Definitions

DEFINING SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Definitions

• Social Psychology
  – The scientific study of how individuals think, feel, and behave in a social context.
    • Real or imagined presence of other people

• Social Cognition
  – The study of how people make sense of themselves and others
    • Focus on process in addition to content
    • Informed from research in cognitive psychology
Pick a number...

• Pick a number between 1 and 9
• Subtract 5
• Multiply by 3
• Square the number
• Add the digits

• If number is less than 5, add 5 to it. If the number is greater than 5, subtract 4
• Take the absolute value
• Multiply by 2
• Subtract 6

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Pick a number...

• Map your number to its corresponding letter in the alphabet (A=1, B=2, C=3…)
• Pick the name of a country that begins with that letter
• Take the second letter of that country and pick a mammal that begins with it.
• Think of a common color of that animal
Grey Elephant from Denmark

Brown Orangutan from the Dominican Republic

Yellow or Orange Jaguar from Djbouti

How Did He Do That?!?

- The Availability Heuristic
  - Making judgments based on the ease with which information comes to mind.

- Countries:
  - Denmark, Dominican Republic, Djbouti

- Mammals:
  - Elephant, Orangutan, Jaguar

- Colors
  - Grey, Brown, Orange
The ABCs of SP&D

• **Stereotypes**
  – Endorsed or unendorsed knowledge about the attributes associated with a group of people.

• **Prejudice**
  – An positive or negative attitude toward others based on group membership.

• **Discrimination**
  – Unjustifiable negative behavior toward others based on group membership.

Who Is Biased?

**EXPLICIT & IMPLICIT ASSOCIATIONS**
Two “Modes” of (Social) Cognition

**AUTOMATIC PROCESSING**
- Fast
- Unconscious
- Mandatory
- Efficient

**CONTROLLED PROCESSING**
- Slow
- Conscious
- Optional
- Effortful

An Example

MEASURING IMPLICIT ASSOCIATIONS
Implicit Associations

• Associations like these are everywhere
  o Age, Race, Gender, Political Affiliation, etc…

• They might be inconsistent with how you think about yourself
  • I’m not biased

• They are pervasive
  o We are usually unaware but they can influence real judgment and behavior
    o Not just knee-slapping

How Bias Affects Us

PERCEIVER & TARGET PERSEPCtIVES
Why are stereotypes and prejudice pervasive?

• Implicit and explicit stereotypes guide:
  
  **What we perceive**
  
  **What we remember**
  
  **How we explain behavior**
  
  **What we believe about ourselves**
  
  **How we act towards others**
  
  …and they are self-reinforcing

Perceiver’s Perspective

• Confirmation Bias
  – We tend to see what we already believe (stereotypes)
    • Particularly when behavior is ambiguous

• Attributional Bias
  – We ignore the role that the situation plays in shaping a person’s behavior, and instead overestimate personality (traits)
Consequences for Targets of SP&D

The Obvious
- Perceived and evaluated inaccurately through the lenses of stereotypes and prejudices.
- Negative implications for societal relationships and achievement.

The Not-So-Obvious
- Creates a context that can shape your actions and reactions.
- Slowly shapes you to fit into the world that surrounds you.

The Target’s Perspective
- Attributional Ambiguity
  - Uncertainty about whether treatment (feedback) is based on group or personal attributes.
  - Implications for self-knowledge
    - Uncertainty about aptitude and abilities.
- Stereotype Threat
  - Debilitating concern over confirming a negative group stereotype through one’s own behavior.
  - Implications for performance
    - Leads to impaired performance on stereotype-relevant tasks.
Conclusions

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

What can you do about it?

• Potential strategies
  – Colorblindness?
    • Not realistic
  – Suppression?
    • Comes back to haunt you
  ✔ Consciousness raising?
What can you do about it?

• Making Implicit Processes Explicit
  – Acknowledge that people are different, but;
  – Recognize that stereotypes can cloud and exaggerate those differences, and;
  – Strategize to minimize their impact on personal and institutional levels.

Strategies:

• Interpersonal
  – Depends on the situation

• Institutional
  – Work to create a diverse, welcoming environment reflecting active participation
    • Composition
    • Inclusion
    • Engagement
    • Achievement

• Assessment
  – Importance of data collection
Thank You!

Questions?