

# 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

### 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

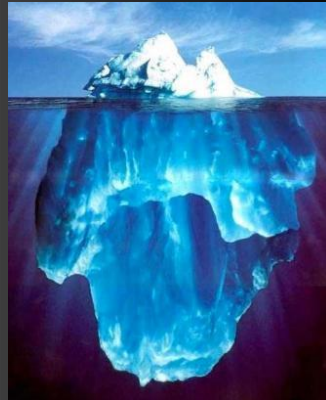
### How Did He Do That?!?

- 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
  - Age, Race, Gender, Political Affiliation, etc...
- They might be inconsistent with how you think about yourself
  - I'm not biased
- They are pervasive
  - We are usually unaware but they can influence real judgment and behavior
    - Not just knee-slapping

How Bias Affects Us

**PERCEIVER & TARGET  
PERSEPECTIVES**

## 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?