

Prejudice and stereotypes

Week 4

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Definitions

PREJUDICE

A negative or positive evaluation of a social group and its members.

STEREOTYPE

A belief about the personal attributes of a social group and its members.

DISCRIMINATION

A negative or positive behaviour directed towards a social group and its members.

THE TARGETS OF PREJUDICE: SOCIAL GROUPS

Examples: race, religion, gender, age, social status,...

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Basic notions

CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL CATEGORISATION

1) It allows us to easily and rapidly predict someone's potential behaviour, to identify his/her important characteristics and to ignore his/her non-relevant characteristics.
Ex: Librarian, police officer,...

2) It makes all members of a group seem more similar to each other.

3) It exaggerates differences between groups.

-> Outgroup homogeneity

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The content of stereotypes

ARE POSITIVE STEREOTYPES LESS OF A PROBLEM?

- 1) Rigid expectations setting high standards
- 2) Overestimated uniformity / Over-generalization

Examples:

- Women's sensitivity and elegance
- Asians as straight-A students

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The content of stereotypes

THE VALIDITY OF STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes can sometimes be valid but they generally distort reality by:

- 1) Exaggerating differences between groups
- 2) Implying that they correctly describe most members
- 3) Mistaking contextual differences for group differences (e.g. gender socialization vs innate gender differences)

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Stereotype formation

THE INDIVIDUAL AS THE FIRST CONTACT WITH A GROUP

Impression formation and attribution of the salient characteristics to social identity.

INTERACTION WITH A MEMBER OF A KNOWN GROUP

Attribution of the salient characteristics of the interaction to the individual's identity and subsequent activation of the association.

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Stereotype formation

THE EFFECT OF DISTINCTIVENESS

Distinctive/unusual people and characteristics have a disproportionate effect on stereotypes.

ILLUSORY CORRELATIONS

Rare characteristics are salient and their association is even more salient.

Thus, we remember more easily crimes involving minorities and we overestimate their frequency.

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Stereotype formation

SOCIAL ROLES AND CORRESPONDENCE BIAS

Jews as opportunistic money handlers (shylocks)

Black americans as naturally strong, lazy and slow-witted

Native americans as lazy, alcoholic and irresponsible

Gender, task specialization and confusion between type of relation and gender

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Stereotype formation

IGNORANCE OF CULTURAL CODES

Interacting with someone from a novel group produces feelings of uncertainty (anxiety, nervousness, apprehension, dislike, irritation,...)

The repetition of these unpleasant interactions generalizes the emotional reaction (classical conditioning and attribution)

Ex: Heterosexual men in the presence of a homosexual man
Dutch adults in the presence of Turks or Morroccans
Segregation in schools (gender and social classes)
- feelings are kept/avoided and consensus is polarized

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Stereotype formation

STEREOTYPES AND SOCIAL LEARNING

Modelling and social norms

Ex: social labels, normative jokes and rules of segregation

The media

- Entertainment TV (adult vs children's cartoon)
- Advertisement (exaggeration of gender roles and relative prominence of faces)
- News (overrepresentation of white victims and black suspects)

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Justifying inequalities through stereotypes and prejudice

AFFIRMING THE CONSEQUENT

IF A, THEN B

B

THEREFORE A

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Justifying inequalities through stereotypes and prejudice

AFFIRMING THE CONSEQUENT

IF A, THEN B

B

THEREFORE A

If Jack goes to Helen's party, then Jill goes too
Jill goes to Helen's party
Therefore Jack should also be there

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Justifying inequalities through stereotypes and prejudice

AFFIRMING THE CONSEQUENT

IF A, THEN B

B

THEREFORE A

If a man falls on the sidewalk from the 20th floor of a building, he dies

A dead man is on the sidewalk

Therefore, he probably fell from the 20th floor of a building

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Justifying inequalities through stereotypes and prejudice

AFFIRMING THE CONSEQUENT

- If it is in women's nature to take care of children, then we should expect women to take care of children more often than men
- In nearly every country, women take care of children more often than men
- Therefore, it is probably in their nature

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- If a woman is not careful when flirting with strangers, she has more chances of being sexually assaulted
- This woman was sexually assaulted
- Therefore, she was probably not careful enough

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Justifying inequalities through stereotypes and prejudice

AFFIRMING THE CONSEQUENT

- If a woman never says "No" clearly when a man wants to have sex with her, then she has more chances of having sex against her will (i.e. of being sexually assaulted)
- Jane claim she has been sexually assaulted by Bob
- Therefore,...

Can you find an example about people on welfare?

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Justifying inequalities through stereotypes and prejudice

This is what social psychologists call the just-world belief

The status quo (e.g. social inequalities or problems) is thus often justified by:

- an appeal to the natural order of things
- or
- a prejudice

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Consequences of prejudice

STEREOTYPE THREAT

A self-confirming apprehension that one will be evaluated based on a (negative) stereotype.

Do blacks have a lower IQ than whites?

- Yes! But only when we remind them of their ethnic identity.

Women and maths

Athletic performances of blacks and whites

- Sport intelligence vs natural athletic ability

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