Ethnocentrism

- Inevitable tendency to view the world through one's own cultural rules of behavior (filters).
  - Flexible Ethnocentrism: The ability to gain new knowledge in order to interpret the behavior of others from different perspectives.
    - Multi-culturalism vs. cultural relativism.
  - Inflexible Ethnocentrism: The inability to go beyond one's own cultural filters in interpreting the behavior of others. Why?
    - The Naturalistic Fallacy: Equating what is with what ought to be & defining what is good based on whether it fits our existing values or not
    - Extent of contact with outgroups

Stereotypes

- Generalized mental categories that we inevitably form in order to organize our knowledge about the world.
  - Cognitively based and influenced by ethnocentrism.
    - Sociotypes: stereotypes supported by facts
    - False stereotypes: Why?
      - Representativeness bias: assuming one person represents a group
      - Availability bias: drawing on instances that are vivid in memory in estimating the likelihood of an event.
      - The Fundamental Attribution Error: Underestimating the impact of external (as opposed to internal) influences.
How are Stereotypes Developed and Maintained?

- Tendency towards concept formation & Categorization: requires exaggerating differences between groups and minimizing difference within groups.
- Selective attention & recall: biased towards stereotype-consistent info
- Assimilation Bias: We seek to assimilate experiences into our schemas & are reluctant to accommodate our way of thinking.
- Reconstructive nature of memory
- Biased attributions: locus, stability, & controllability dimensions of causal attributions tend to reinforce stereotypes.
- The self-fulfilling prophecy: Expectations can create reality.
- Stereotype threat’s impact on performance.

The concept of Stereotype Threat

- Definition: A concern, when facing a negative stereotype, that one will verify the stereotype, which itself is self-threatening enough to have disruptive effects on performance.
- Effects could be long term (ex. internalization of inferiority images) or immediate (ex. performance on an IQ test).
- Possible mechanisms of ST:
  - Threat causes emotional arousal that reduces accuracy
  - Low performance expectation may cause withdrawal of effort
  - Threat diverts attention onto task-irrelevant worries (ex. Thoughts about test bias) and interfering self-consciousness.

Some Research on ST

- AA performed better on an IQ subtest when it was presented as a test of eye-hand coordination than when it was said to be a test of intelligence (Katz, Roberts, & Robinson, 1965).
- AA students performed better on an IQ test when they believed their performance would be compared to other AAs as opposed to EAs (Katz, Epps, & Axelson, 1964).
- AA and EA Stanford U. students performed similarly on GRE-verbal test under non-diagnostic condition (NDC), but not when test was described as a measure of ability (diagnostic condition (DC)) (Steele & Aronson, 1995)
  - AAs in the DC completed fewer items (slower reaction time) and performed less accurately (made more guesses) and engaged in more self-handicapping behavior (slept less before the test, paid less attention during the test, were more stressed during the test, and judged the test as less fair) than AAs in NDC.
  - Test description had no effect on self-handicapping behavior or test perform. of EAs.
  - Among AAs in the DC, only 25% would indicate their race on the test, whereas 100% of those in NDC did. Merely recording their race was enough to impair AAs performance even in NDC.
Prejudice

- Prejudging others on the basis of their group membership. Has cognitive (sterotypes) & affective (feelings) bases.
  - Individual prejudice
  - The “isms”: prejudice harbored by a group of people
    ex. Racism, sexism

- Note that while stereotypes are inevitably formed & activated, the tendency to apply them indiscriminately (prejudice) is not inevitable.

Psychological Explanations of Prejudice

- John Duckitt’s (1992) historical overview of the theoretical orientations used by psychologists to explain prejudice is useful for putting the perspectives addressed in the textbook p. 83 and in Exploration Activity 8.7 in context.
  - In the 1940s, psychologists looked to psychodynamic theory for explanations of prejudice. The emphasis was on the universal processes of unconscious defense mechanisms as a means to explain the pervasiveness and irrationality of prejudice. Prejudice was seen as the result of projecting unacceptable aspects of oneself and of displacing hostility onto a less threatening target.

Explanations of Prejudice Cont’d

- In the 1950s, psychologists found themselves needing to find explanations for the Nazi atrocities of WWII. Unable to explain these events in terms of universal psychological processes, psychologists shifted their focus to individual personality structures. The dominant approach at this time was the authoritarian personality theory.
- In the 1960s, the civil rights movement in the United States brought attention to high levels of prejudice in the American South that could not be easily explained by universal processes or personality structures. Psychologists began to explain prejudice in terms of the social transmission theory, which stresses socialization of prejudice and enculturation, and conformity to social norms.
Explanations of Prejudice Cont’d

– In the 1970s urban uprisings across the United States underscored the fact that prejudice was not just a problem of the southern United States. Researchers turned to inter-group dynamics as the antecedent of prejudice.
  • One important theory to emerge during this time period was the group conflict theory, which focuses on the role of competition for resources in creating negative inter-group attitudes (Jackson, 1993).
  • A second highly influential approach was social identity theory, which focuses on the tendency of individuals to view the outgroup as homogeneous (and thus threatening).

Explanations of Prejudice Cont’d

– Several important empirical findings, for example studies in which research participants divided into groups on a completely arbitrary basis developed in-group favoritism and bias toward the out-group, resulted in a shift toward cognitive theories for prejudice in the 1980’s and beyond. Prejudice was attributed to cognitive processes, such as selective attention, concept formation, and categorization.
  • Current research using a cognitive approach has focused on such issues as stereotype measurement, determinants of the bases of stereotypes, and affective and motivational aspects of stereotyping, and factors causing stereotype change.

Explanations of Prejudice Cont’d

• Note that the history of research on prejudice is not a matter of new approaches replacing discarded ones, but rather a shift in emphasis, with an acknowledgement of the usefulness of other perspectives.
Discrimination

- Unfair treatment of others on the basis of group membership. Involves actions.
  - Individual discrimination
  - Institutional discrimination: occurs on the group or organizational level
- Not necessarily linked to prejudice, although it often is.

Reducing inaccurate Stereotypes, Prejudice & Discrimination

- Be aware of ethnocentrism & stereotyping
- Differentiate dichotomous and continuous variables
- Look for similarities as well as differences
- Differentiate between Barnum-Statements and specific descriptions of personality
- Be aware of the Assimilation Bias and intentionally try to accommodate when appropriate

Reducing Stereotypes, Prejudice & Discrimination Cont’d

- Be aware of the tendency to use the representativeness heuristic. Consider data
- Do not underestimate the power of situational determinants of behavior
- Avoid the Availability Bias. Refer to statistical data
- Remember that expectations can create reality.
- Regulate emotions so that higher-order thoughts are possible
Reducing Stereotypes, Prejudice & Discrimination Cont’d

• Provide opportunities for intergroup cooperation
• Provide opportunities for exposure to, and interactions with, members of other groups
• Given the bi-directional relationship between attitudes and language, consider the terminology used to label groups.
• Induce cognitive dissonance by requiring prejudiced people to change their discriminatory behavior by law.

The Availability Heuristic

• Which racial group comprises the largest proportion of Americans living in poverty: Af. Am., Hispanics, or Whites?
• Which age group is at the highest risk for committing suicide: Teens, middle age, or elderly?
• Which country has a higher rate of suicide: Sri Lanka or U.S.?

Identifying Continuous vs. Dichotomous Variables

• Individualism-Collectivism
• Male-Female
• Normal-Abnormal
• Introverted-Extroverted
• Materialistic-Spiritualistic
• Democracy-Dictatorship
• Liberal-Conservative
• Married-Single
• Young-Old
Exploring Similarities & Differences

- Racism and Sexism
- Islam & Christianity
- Affirmative Action and Discrimination
- Israeli Music and Arabic Music
- Homosexuality and Heterosexuality
- Chinese-Americans and African-Americans

De-Barnumizing Barnum Statements

- Immigrants have self-esteem issues
- Chinese people are sensitive to criticism
- Women do not want to be rejected
- Hindus search for meaning of life
- Italians enjoy food
- Republicans care about family values
- Caucasians have ingroup bias
- Muslims tend to reject materialism
- Native Americans appreciate nature

Reciprocal Influence of Attitudes and Language

Pro-abortion
Black
Indian
Reverse discrimination
Cultural impurity
Abnormal
Handicapped
Terrorist
Primitive