

Prejudice and Discrimination

Lecture Eleven

Reducing Prejudice

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- There is less prejudice in modern society
 - Overt prejudice at least
 - Less instances of overt discrimination
 - More legislation
 - Instances we have discussed may have shocked or surprised you
 - Wouldn't have happened 50 years ago
- But covert prejudice still exists
 - Overt for certain cases (homosexuality and religion; mental illness; obesity)

How can we reduce prejudice and discrimination (even further?)

- Contact hypothesis (Williams, 1947)
 - “Increasing exposure to members of various groups can increase positive evaluations of the outgroup and decrease prejudice and stereotyping” (Nelson, 2006, p241)
- ‘Mere contact’
 - Just put people together and they will work it out and get on
 - Doesn’t work. Why?
 - Even before meeting other groups, stereotypes are activated and so will colour the interaction (Allport, 1954)

Mere contact

- 50% more positive about the outgroup, 50% more negative (Allport, 1954; Stephan, 1985)
- Casual contact – 33% more positive about outgroup (Wilner et al., 1955)
- More important interactions/conversations etc., produced 75% positive attitudes towards outgroup (Wilner et al., 1955)
- Possible that enforced interaction may result in a backlash towards outgroup members (Plant & Devine, 2001)

Contact

Contact criteria (Allport, 1954)

1. Contact members should be of equal status
2. There should be a common goal shared by all members of the group
3. There must be a need for group members to cooperate with each other
4. Legitimate authority should be in place to aid and enforce the group

Additional criteria (Amir, 1969)

1. Favourable climate for intergroup contact
2. Contact should be intimate rather than casual

Pettigrew (1998)

1. Situation should have 'friendship potential'

Contact: Empirical evidence

- White and Black working together
 - More positive feelings about the other group (Brophy, 1946)
 - 40% in another experimental group showed positive change in racial attitudes (Cook, 1969)
- Desegregated public housing
 - More favourable attitudes by Whites towards Blacks
 - Black participants more favourable than Black non-participants towards Whites (Deutsch & Collins, 1951)
- But... there are problems with the contact hypothesis
 - Member-to-group generalisation does not seem to occur (Paolini et al., 2004)

Pettigrew's (1998) 'Reformulated Contact Theory'

- Increased/Prolonged contact will lead to 'Decategorisation'
- Outgroup category becomes useless as a heuristic
- 'Us' and 'Them' becomes 'We'
 - Recategorisation
- Most contact situations never achieve this (Hewstone, 2003)
- Crisp & Turner – imagined contact
 - Contact without contact
 - Using implied contact
 - Contentious but promising

Superordinate goals

- E.g., Sherif et al's (1961) "Robber's Cave" study
 - A superordinate goal overcomes competition for resources
- Support:
 - Gaertner and Dovidio (2000)
 - Dovidio et al. (1995) – common ingroup identity model
- But... Wenzel et al. (2003)
 - May lead to *increased* prejudice
 - Group members may see *their* subordinate group identity as prototypical of the superordinate group and so hold negative views of outgroup members who do not display these attitudes/behaviours

Superordinate goals: The Jigsaw Classroom

- Aronson et al. (1978)
 - Students placed in small groups (mixed race/gender/ability) and each student given a skill required to achieve a superordinate goal
 - One of the most successful formats for reducing prejudice
 - Also seems to generalise from individual members to groups

Empathy

- Elliott (1970)
 - Brown-eyes/Blue-eyes study
 - Making children aware of the impact of prejudice (higher empathy for stigmatised individuals)
- Children taught to empathise more can have a moderating effect on their peers (Fenwick, 1999)
- But the effects may only be temporary (Fiske, 1998; Stephan, 1985)

‘Colour-blindness’ versus ‘Multiculturalism’

- Let’s just think about the person, not their age, race, gender, etc.
- Problem – it doesn’t work
- We have already seen that these are fundamental, possibly automatic, categories that we use for categorisation

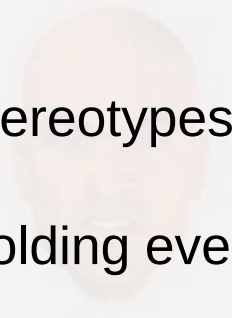
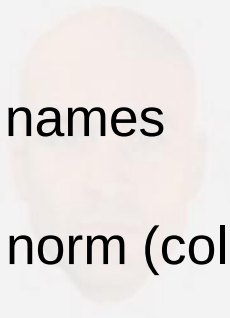


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- Stereotypes are activated just by names
 - Holding everyone to one societal norm (colour-blindness) can result in even more negativity towards an outgroup member (Wolsko et al., 2000)
 - People who use a multicultural perspective recognise the positives and negatives of group membership and show less prejudice (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004)
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- Colour-blindness is popular with the majority group
 - As long as theirs is the prevailing culture into which the outgroup will be assimilated!

More questions than answers

- Functional prejudice
 - If prejudice serves a purpose (e.g., derogating those who do not conform to societal norms) can it be addressed by giving outgroup members the opportunities to meet these norms?
- Normative influence
 - Can we 'legislate out' prejudice? It has worked to a large extent on overt prejudice, but can it be taken further?
- Self-regulation
 - Can making people aware of their prejudices, particularly unconscious prejudices, influence people?

Summary

- A mixture of changing societal norms and legislation has had a large effect on overt prejudice and discrimination
- Harder to see changes in covert prejudice
 - Most change seems to be temporary
- Most promising reductions appear to be with children
 - But other pressures seem to make this temporary as well
- One of the holy grails of psychology