Lecture 4: Stereotyping, Prejudice and Discrimination in the Media

For consideration…

- You may have heard of various homophobic hate groups that have a strong presence on the internet. Which social- psychological processes may be contributing to the behaviour of these groups?

- Mark, a manager for a large bank, genuinely feels very warm towards women. He thinks that men should cherish, protect, and revere women. Do Mark's attitudes mean that he is less likely than other male managers to discriminate against women, for example to oversee unequal pay?

- In 1977 the US Commission on Civil Rights published the first report examining the representations of minorities on US entertainment and news media.
- They also explored the diversity of workers within the industry.
- In addition, they paid attention to the portrayal of women in the media and the roles they were given both on and off screen.
- Nancy Signorielli and Lionel Barrow were tasked with the job and subsequently reported significant differences between those in the minority and the way in which they were represented.
- Some 40 years later, are we still seeing similar results?
- These are important questions to ask, bearing in mind that media plays an influential role in socialising individuals and normalising race, ethnic and gender related attitudes, beliefs and values.

Lecture content:

Bases of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination in the media

Stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination in different contexts: e.g. race, ethnicity and gender

Vicious cycles in media

The dangers of being categorised within the media

Attitudes and Stereotypes

- What is an attitude?
- *A personal view or belief regarding an attitude object that is comprised of cognitive, affective and behavioural components (The ABC of attitudes).*

- What are stereotypes?
- *A set of generalisations/beliefs that people make on the basis of little factual information.*

Some definitions…

Stereotypes

Simplified but widely shared beliefs about the characteristics of groups and their members

Prejudice

Negative affective reaction to a group and its` individual members

Discrimination

Others treat you less well simply because of your group membership

Bases of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination

- Do these phenomena stem from the limitations of human beings as information processors? We have limited cognitive resources…
- People are seen as cognitive misers because:
- There is not enough space in working memory to process everyone as an individual, therefore, we rely on short-cuts or heuristics (Fiske & Taylor, 1991)
- We do not take into consideration all of the idiosyncratic, ambiguous or contradictory information available, rather, we take short cuts.

And in the media…

- What is the evidence?
- People draw on stereotypes to gain knowledge about people they barely know (Dijker & Koomen, 1996)
- However, people sometimes use stereotypes and sometimes they do not:
- When accuracy is important, we tend to use more of our limited resources and rely less on our stereotypes or short cuts – the problem arises when we turn to media to supplement our limited knowledge or resources…

Why do we stereotype?

Flaws in human thought- illusory correlation bias

- Stereotypes assume a correlation between group membership and an individuals' characteristics
- We are sensitive to distinctive events, so when two distinctive events occur together, it is especially noticeable
- Typically we have less contact with minorities and outgroups and therefore commit a crucial cognitive error…
- Think of the reports of a football match between your hometown and an away team. Because you are familiar with the behaviour of your own team, and less so for the visiting team, you would be far more likely to see hooliganism of the visiting team as more common/representative behaviour of them, than of the team you are familiar with… (Fiedler, 2004).

Illusory correlation bias

- Can explain why some behaviours are unfairly perceived as more characteristic of minority groups

- Even if there is a “kernel of truth” (McGarty et al., 1993)

- How can we explain this?
- Memory is faulty so people do not accurately encode the ratios of positive versus negative behaviours, and estimates become biased (Fiedler, 1991)
- Mainly in favour of majority because memory for the minority is weaker to begin with, moving towards a 50:50 ratio… underestimating good behaviours and over estimating the bad

And…

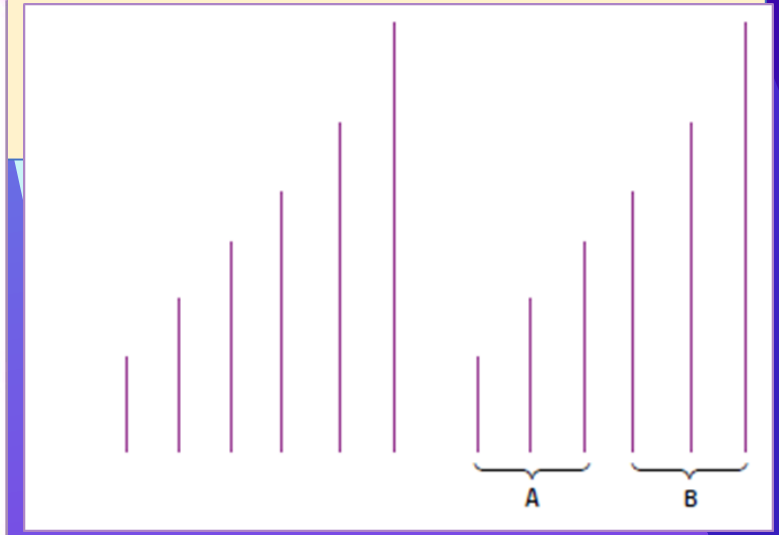
- People are more accurate at accessing common events in the media given the opportunity for greater exposure
- And, Eder et al. (2011) found that the illusory correlation was even higher among pp`s who had a lower working memory capacity
- Rothbart, (1981) emphasised the accessibility of information at the time of retrieval. People process positive information most frequently, hence they are the most available and usually representative of the majority group
- People process unfamiliar information more elaborately (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976), therefore, a little knowledge about a group can be a dangerous thing…

Category accentuation

- The mere act of categorisation can distort perceptions of groups- it is an even more basic cognitive error than an illusory correlation.

- Differences between categories are maximised and differences within categories are minimised (Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963)

FIGURE 11.3 Illustration of Tajfel and Wilkes's (1963) study The labels caused participants to perceive the lines in group A as similar to each other, the lines in group B as similar to each other, and to perceive large differences between the line groups.



Outgroup homogeneity effect:

- Tendency to see people within a same group as being more “similar” than they really are
- Because we like people who share characteristics with ourselves, the net result of the outgroup homogeneity effect can be in-group bias

Motivations: how people want to think

- Stereotypes and prejudice are not limited to how people are able to think, but also by how they want to think!
- Epistemic (knowledge) needs have been linked to intergroup perceptions – we have an aversion to ambiguity and a need for understanding our environment
- This can lead to simple, hasty judgments. Much of the research has looked at individual differences in these processes.
- Dogmatism- the tendency to tolerate mutually inconsistent beliefs by isolating them in memory (Rokeach, 1960)
- This is a rigid cognitive structure, resistant to change and related to prejudice

Motivations…

- The Need for cognitive closure (NFCC: Kruglanski, 2006)
- a general desire to seek `an answer on a given topic, any answer… compared to confusion and ambiguity` (Kruglanski, 1990, p377)
- Associated with prejudice and stereotyping (Dijksterhuis et al., 1996)
- Pp`s scoring highly on a measure of NFCC recalled more stereotype consistent information compared to those scoring relatively highly on stereotype inconsistent information

Vicious cycles in stereotyping:

- Stereotypes often “hijack” the way people process social information
- Information from the environment seems to confirm them, even when it does not.
- One manifestation of this is `Spontaneous trait inference`, when people take longer to correctly identify that they have not seen a trait before (in a sentence for example).
- The tendency to think that a person who acts in a certain way must possess the associated trait, we associate stereotype consistent traits far more readily than we do stereotype inconsistent traits.
- Hence, stereotypes shape how we perceive the world (Dunning & Sherman, 1997)

Measuring our stereotypical attitudes

- The Implicit Association Test (IAT)

- Participants sit behind a computer and press different keys to match concepts
- In this case “good” and “bad”, “me” and “them”

- Where an attitude exists, reaction time is much faster when the concepts share a response key than when they do not
- On which trial was everyone the slowest?
- Why do you think this happens?

The IAT:

- Measures the strength of associations between groups and concepts
- But sadly, groups that experience prejudice and discrimination become associated with those concepts
- African Americans are mentally associated (by a sample of White Americans) with oppression
- The more strongly participants had these associations, the more prejudice they showed (Uhlmann et al., 2006)
- Mud sticks…

Vicious cycles in emotions:

- Just as people experience emotions to other people, groups experience emotions towards other groups (Smith, 1993, 1999)
- Intergroup emotions theory (Mackie & Smith, 2002) states that the nature of those emotions depends on the relative power and status of the groups. E.g.
- Power - anger - aggression
- Powerless - fear - avoidance (Mackie et al., 2000)
- Intergroup emotions (e.g., guilt) can reduce conflict (Maitner et al., 2007)

Vicious cycles…

- And, anxiety perpetuates unhealthy, conflictual relationships as indicated by the Intergroup anxiety model (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). According to the model-
- People expect to feel embarrassed and uncomfortable
- People expect to be exploited
- People expect to be negatively evaluated by the outgroup and in-group
- These negative threats elicit anxiety and anxiety can become exaggerated when strong stereotypes exist, or when little is known regarding the other group
- However, not all anxiety is bad. It may motivate people to attend more closely, or to act in a more positive way (Harber, 1998).

Stereotype threat:

- Stereotypes can and sometimes do contain a kernel of truth. It is important to acknowledge that stereotypes have the potential to change people`s behaviours in ways that seem to verify those stereotypes.
- This is referred to as Stereotype threat (Steele, 1997)
- Ironically, when people are tested and belong to a group that is not stereotypically expected to do well, they become anxious and confirm the stereotype, because anxiety interferes with performance and they do less well
- Girls do less well in maths after they are made aware that boys typically do better than them (Keller, 2002).

Stereotype lift:

- However…
- Stereotype lift (Walton & Cohen, 2003) refers to when individuals are made aware of a negatively stereotyped outgroup, their own performance is enhanced.
- These concepts can be seen in the example:
- Women acting assertively and fearlessly (bucking the typically stereotype) may experience a backlash from other individuals, thus giving the appearance that they confirm to the `feminist stereotype` rather than being viewed as successful. Alternatively, they may adopt the stereotypical behaviour because they want to evaluated positively.

Explanations for Prejudice

- Authoritarianism - Those people exhibiting prejudice seem to share “authoritarian” tendencies
- High measures show a range of prejudices, although some suggest that this is more related to attitudes and values rather than personality (Saucier, 2000)

- Social dominance orientation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999)
- 1. People high in SDO favour status hierarchies
- 2. People high in SDO have a desire for one`s own group to dominate or be superior to another
- Racism, sexism and other non-egalitarian attitudes – endorsing beliefs that legitimise unequal status of different groups

Processes at the group level:

- **Struggle for superiority**
- People want their own group to be superior to others
- There is collaboration within groups and competition between groups

- **Realistic group conflict theory (Sherif, 1966)**
- Struggle for material welfare

- **Social identity theory (Tajfel et al., 1971)**
- Seeing one's own group in positive terms relative to others

- The Robber`s Cave study (Sherif, 1954).

Minimal Group Paradigm

- Does simply putting people into social categories elicit ethnocentrism?

- School boys were given the task of evaluating unfamiliar paintings (Tajfel et al., 1970)
- They were told that they had a preference for paintings by either Klee or Kandinsky, where in actual fact, their assignment to conditions was random
- Tajfel created `minimal` groups, based upon bogus and minimal differences between them
- Each boy was asked to assign points to two other boys (points =money at the end)
- Boys assigned more points to their in-group
- However, they also favoured the in-group in relative terms, even if it meant losing money
- People strive to maintain the superiority of their own group (even if they have to cut off the group`s nose in doing so!)

Sex and Gender: Some definitions

- Sex - the fundamental distinction, found in most species of animals and plants, based on the type of gametes produced by the individual; also the category to which the individual fits on the basis of that criterion.

- Sexism -prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex.
- "sexism in language is an offensive reminder of the way the culture sees women"

- Gender - either of the two sexes (male and female), especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. The term is also used more broadly to denote a range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female.

Intergroup bias: Gender

- Women have been generally at the wrong end of the “battle of the sexes”
- But, they are liked more and are seen as nicer (Fiske et al., 2002)

- “Women are wonderful” stereotype (Eagly and Mladinic, 1994)
- Thus…
- Prejudice and discrimination do not always go hand in hand. Less prejudice, but more discrimination?

Sexism: a specific type of ideology

- The beliefs about how there are differences but also the appropriateness of the differences and how women/men ought to behave
- Hostile sexism
- Women pose a threat to men's position
- Benevolent sexism
- Women are wonderful and necessary for men's happiness
- Attitudes toward women are therefore ambivalent (Glick & Fiske, 1996) - they have both positive and negative elements

- According to Glick et al., (2000) Men tend to endorse hostile sexism more than women and across countries hostile sexism predicted negative stereotypes of women
- In those countries where gender inequalities are strong, women endorse benevolent sexism more than men (Glick et al., 2000), compared to those countries where inequalities are less pronounced, and both men and women endorsed benevolent sexism equally.
- This is in line with Social Identity Theory; where status between genders is marked and stable, members of low status groups will establish social creativity- preserving a positive self image.
- What is the problem?
- Benevolent attitudes justify women's consignment to a subordinate role
- Suited to caring roles
- Not suited to status-driven roles

Sexism:

- Suggests why the genders ought to differ – benevolent sexism justifies the status quo, and women likely to endorse this ideology are less likely to want to change it
- Rudman & Glick (2001) found that female job candidates presenting themselves as ambitious and agentic, would suffer a backlash ; seen as lacking in warmth, less likely to work well in a team etc.
- Apparent in the literature on objectification
- When women are viewed as if their bodies represent who they are…

Sexism: Objectification

- Objectification changes the way women are treated by others, but also how they themselves think, feel and act (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997)
- Frequent objectification leads to self-objectification (Calogero, 2004)
- Linked to the severity of striving for thinness (Calogero et al., 2005)
- When university students were primed with benevolent sexism, they became more accepting of the status quo between men and women and in turn the objectification of themselves (Calogero and Jost, 2011)

Gender stereotyping:

- Whilst there are strong, non-traditional female characters on television (Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008), the overwhelming pattern is one of underrepresentation and traditional female images.
- Females are outnumbered by males by about 2 to 1 on prime-time TV (Aubrey & Harrison, 2004; Children Now, 2004).
- This is somewhat dependent on programme genre, with women being least represented in action programs and reality TV, and somewhat more equitably present in situation comedies and dramas (Signorielli, 2012).

Gender stereotyping:

- On children's TV, there are even fewer female characters; males outnumber females 4 to 1 (Aubrey & Harrison, 2004; Signorielli, 2012).
- News programs also underrepresent women. Yi and Dearfield (2012) show that only 21.7% of the guests on Sunday morning news programmes were women
- The Global Media Monitoring Project in 2010 reported that about 24% of the sources in the news worldwide are women (Macharia, O'Connor, & Ndganam, 2010).

Gender stereotyping:

- When fictional women characters appear, they are usually younger than males (Signorielli, 2012; Yi & Dearfield, 2012) and are more often shown in home, family, and romantic contexts (Lauzen et al., 2008) than at work.
- Family and career do not mix on TV; married female characters are much less likely to be employed than single or divorced women (Signorielli, 2012).
- When fictional women characters do have careers and family, the programmes still usually focus on the interpersonal aspects of their lives (Lauzen et al., 2008).

- Commercials also reinforce these patterns. Although women are not underrepresented, they are typically subservient to men (Neuhaus, 2011).
- A study of national TV prime-time ad`s confirms Neuhaus' argument - two-thirds of those seen doing chores were women, most of them mothers. And, when men were shown doing housework, it was most often in a humorous light, illustrating their incompetence (Scharrer, Kim, Lin, & Liu, 2006).
- Commercials in children's cartoons also reveal gender stereotyping. Boys in commercials are seen more often, they have more dominant roles and are more active. Girls, on the other hand, are shyer, "giggly," and less central to the ads (Browne, 1998).

Race and Ethnicity: Definitions

- Both are socially constructed groups which reflect values and beliefs which hold meaning and power.
- Race is a distinct group perceived via physical characteristics which are inherent
- Ethnicity, whilst similar to race, is also a social category and is related to (more often than not) an `in group` where members share commonalities such as ancestry and culture, language and religion.

Race and Ethnicity:

- Different races and ethnicities are in less contact than gender groups, so relations are different.
- Not only this, but historically contact has been less frequent. Moreover, some of the initial contact was for competition of resources (Think Sherif!)

- Dehumanisation – has arisen from ethnocentrism, in that those who look act and dress very differently will seem less than human (Summer, 1966)
- Unfortunately, dehumanisation of racial groups tends to legitimate even the worst actions against them (Haslam, 2006)

- Racism also fosters a predominant belief that perceived differences (e.g., intelligence) are genetically-based
- Gould (1996) Cranial capacity and brain folds…

- Eugenics movement and Nazi Germany

- Apartheid, US States:
- Forced segregation, exclusion from public places, the vote etc….

- Interesting findings from discourse analysis demonstrate that conflicting statements, (both egalitarian and racist) from a single person can reveal how they express racist views whilst defusing the charge that they are racist.

More subtle forms:

- Credentialling (Monin & Miller, 2001) People show more prejudice after having the opportunity to demonstrate that they are not prejudiced
- Monin & Miller (2001) gave undergraduates opportunity to select candidate for hypothetical firm. When standout` was black or female, they had the chance to prove their lack of prejudice. Later, when compared to controls on a second selection task, those who had already `proved` themselves to be non- prejudiced, were less likely to select a minority candidate again.
- Modern racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998)
- Old-fashioned racism has been driven away and is replaced by more subtle, qualified racism
- May lead to aversive racism – avoiding ethnic minorities

Clark (1969): Four stages of ethnic/racial portrayal in the media

- Non-recognition – an absence or limited incorporation of minority groups
- Ridicule – satirized and caricaturised characters to bolster the majority group
- Regulation – characters appear as the protectors of social order, positive characters
- Respect – minority characters do not differ in terms of roles from the majority

General Findings for race and ethnicity:

- Ethnic and racial minorities are underrepresented in the media (Signorielli, 2009)
- Not only are the stereotypes generally negative, but also involve `cultural erasure`:
- This refers to when cultures are represented, they are typically portrayed as that of the white mainstream population; embodied white culture.
- Classic example of this: The Cosby Show…
- The family is portrayed as an affluent black family with little mention of their cultural history or heritage.

Othering:

- The notion of `othering` refers to the generalization of mainstream portrayals of what is accepted.
- Othering emphasizes the assimilation model.
- Those who disassociate with the `othered` feel better about themselves and identify with the consensus, whereas those who refuse to conform (integrate) are perceived as odd or different.

Content Analysis:

- Content Analysis (CA) involves the quantitative analysis of the content of communicative media, and the resultant media meanings.
- This is set in the context of how they appear.

- They key here is how we represent the genders, races and ethnic minorities…

How are the minority groups represented?

Blacks

- These appear the most of all minority groups, they are not disproportionate, but have negative portrayals
- The `Black Mammy` (Hudson 1998)
- The `Jezebel`
- The `Sapphire` e.g. The conservative portrayal of Michelle Obama, (Kaplan, 2008).

Latino`s

- Whilst they are the fastest growing group of individual sin the US, they are underrepresented and portrayed as unfavourable as either a `Latin lover` or a `Harlot`
- In addition, they are often included as criminals in movies and TV.
- Even more recently, the immigration issues…
- Although some would argue that `Ugly Betty` and `George Lopez` send a different message…

The representation of Asians

- Whilst the Asian population is constantly growing, they are represented only at 1-3% in TV characters.
- What is quite astounding, is that white actors are consistently cast to play Asian characters; e.g. The Last Airbender (2010) and The Weapon (2012).
- In general, they have been portrayed as villains, or experts in martial arts, asexual, undesirable and commercial (Park et al., 2006).
- For Asian women, the `Dragon Lady` is a familiar character…
- In TV adverts, they are portrayed as passive, technologically savvy, academic, social, commercial and successful; is this accurate? (NAAPIMHA, 2010).

The representation of Native Americans and Middle Easterners

Native Americans

- Because we generally know so little, we are even more impacted by media representation
- Historically portrayed as blood thirsty savages…
- This is with the exception of the shapeshifters in the recent `Twilight Series…

Middle Easterners

- These are suspected as the most mistreated group because for most of us, the media is the only information we receive.
- Think IRAQ, Afghanistan, UAE, Islamic terrorists, 9/11 and much more…

So… what are the dangers of stereotyping within the media?