

Prejudice and Discrimination

Lecture Seven

Sexism

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Sexism

- Negative attitudes and behaviour towards someone based on their gender (Nelson, 2006)
 - Mostly towards women, but not exclusively; can be discrimination towards males as well
- Very few cultures do not show prejudice and discrimination towards women
 - Suggests partly an evolutionary effect
 - Strength
 - Child-bearing

Stereotypes

• Women

- Gentle/passive
- Polite
- Emotional
- Nurturing
- Compassionate
- Indecisive
- Quiet
- Concerned with appearance

• Men

- Aggressive
- Independent
- Nonemotional
- Confident
- Rough
- Decisive
- Loud
- Sloppy

Broverman et al. (1972)

Cross-cultural Studies

- **Women**

- Foster relationships
- Nurturing
- Show deference

- **Men**

- Stronger
- Assertive
- Dominant
- Active
- Aggressive

Williams and Best (1982): Meta-analysis of data from 30 nations

Temporal Differences

- 1972 findings compared to 1988 findings and contemporary findings
 - No differences found in stereotypes of males and females (Bergen & Williams, 1991)
- Suggests these are central traits that will be difficult to alter

‘The Opposite Sex’?

- Term used in everyday life
 - Suggests conflicting roles
 - Can be one but not the other
- ‘Bipolar assumption’ (Ruble & Ruble, 1982)
 - A person can have characteristics associated with males or females, but not both
 - A result of biases in questionnaires?
 - Even when given free-response choices, people still tend to categorise using bipolar ratings for males and females (Basow, 1992)

‘The Opposite Sex’?

- Agentic traits
 - Traits associated with task orientation, assertiveness, and achievement
- Communal traits
 - Traits associated with expressiveness; desire to foster relationships, sensitivity, ability to get along with others
- Agentic traits more associated with males
- Communal traits more associated with females
- But traits can be seen across genders (Spence & Helmreich, 1978)

Why Do We Gender Stereotype?

- Religion
- Most religious texts state the inferiority of women to men (Bem & Bem, 1970)
 - E.g., The Bible – woman created from man, so woman is inferior; from a more literary sense, if the words of the book are taken as literal, then the social roles and prejudices of the time will also be taken as literal
 - People who are more religious are more likely to hold stereotypic gender attitudes (Morgan, 1987)

Why Do We Gender Stereotype?

- Social learning
- Children learn through reinforcement and modelling
(Bandura & Walters, 1963)
 - Rewarding of gender-appropriate behaviours; punishment of gender-inappropriate behaviours
 - From an early age parents teach children differences with regards to clothes, toys, hobbies, personalities, etc. (Serbin et al., 1993; but see Harris, 1998 for alternative interpretations)

Why Do We Gender Stereotype?

- Societal information
- Media; schools and clubs; peers
- Advertising
 - A persuasive message is best communicated by a source similar to the target audience (Hovland et al., 1953)
 - Women do more housework than men, even when both work full-time (Bird, 1999; Crosby, 1991)
 - So it makes sense for advertisers to use a female source to advertise cleaning products etc. to the target audience – females
 - But it reinforces the stereotype of the female as the person who does the cleaning etc.
 - A vicious circle

- Content analysis of TV commercials (Downs & Harrison, 1985; Goffman, 1979)
 - Males used for voice-overs, even when females seen on the screen (females as attractive things to look at, males as the 'voice of authority')
 - Males often agentic (doing something), females often peripheral (increasing the attractiveness rating of the product)
 - Males appear higher in an advertisement than women
 - Males often holding women, not the other way round – suggests dominance
- Men shown stereotypical adverts later report women in more sexualised roles, even if they are low on sexism scales (Rudman & Borgida, 1995)

- Men and women shown either gender-stereotypical adverts or non-gender-stereotypical adverts
 - Asked to think of 'where they would be in their lives 10 years from now'
 - No effects on men
 - Women who had viewed stereotypic adverts less likely to report high achievement and more likely to view themselves as homemakers (Geis et al., 1984)

- 'Face-ism'

- Adverts, even art over several hundred years, shows this effect
- Men more likely to have only face/neck up shot
- Women more likely to have whole-body shot
- Head is seen as the centre of our cognitive ability, so from these pictures men are seen as more powerful, more intelligent, etc. (Archer et al., 1983)

The 'Evolutionary' Argument

- Social-roles theory (Eagly, 1987)
 1. Through a combination of biological and social factors, a division of labour between the sexes has emerged over time (some enforced e.g., childbirth, others through 'choice')
 2. Since people behave in ways that fit the roles they play, men are more likely to have physical, social, and economic power
 3. Behavioural differences result in social perception of men as dominant 'by nature' and women as domestic 'by nature'
- So if a woman was raised using stereotypes of a man, she would show male traits
 - Would this negate issues such as a tendency to want to bear children?

The Use Of Stereotypes

- Stereotypes used as a form of control by males (Fiske, 1993)
 - Powerful group members (males) don't need to think about outgroup members carefully (females)
 - So can use stereotypes
- Descriptive aspects
 - Set out how group members behave
- Prescriptive aspects
 - Set out how group members *should* behave
- So gender stereotypes control how women should behave by setting out what is deviant and non-conforming

Accuracy Of Stereotypes

- Are women more emotional than men?
 - Women express their emotions more than men (LaFrance & Banaji, 1992)
 - But no difference in terms of felt physiological emotion
- Supports Allport's (1954) notion of stereotypes containing a 'kernel of truth'

Language

- Many people support or hate 'PC' changes to language
- Does language influence perception of gender differences?
 - E.g., 'Mankind'
 - Use of certain words in studies made participants more likely to evoke the image of a man (MacKay, 1980)
 - Female performers often described by other adjectives rather than by what they do (e.g., male singers described as 'singers', female singers described as 'the beautiful...'; Basow, 1992)
 - Descriptions such as 'female pilots' suggest that 'pilot' is a male domain and that it is odd that a female should be doing the job

- Sexist humour – how harmless is it?
 - Participants who rated sexist jokes funniest also scored higher on acceptance of violence towards women and acceptance of rape myths (Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998)

Old-fashioned Versus Modern Sexism

- As with racism, things have changed over the last 100 years
 - 1976 poll – 57% supported the Equal Rights Amendment act in the USA
 - 1988 poll – 73% supported it (Oskamp, 1991)
 - What do the other 27% think?
 - 15 US states have not ratified the act
- Old-fashioned sexism:
 - Endorsement of traditional gender roles; stereotypes about lesser female competence (Swim et al., 1995)
- Modern sexism
 - Denial of discrimination against women; nonsupport of legislation designed to help women (Swim et al., 1995)

- Similarities to modern racism
 - High correlation between modern sexism and promotion of the Protestant work ethic (Sears, 1988)
- Benevolent sexism
 - Positive but traditional views of women (Glick & Fiske, 1996)
- Hostile sexism
 - Negative attitudes towards women, incorporating beliefs about inferiority of women (Glick & Fiske, 1996)

- Men have a positive view of the general category 'women'
 - But attitudes towards subgroups vary
 - Men high on RWA more positive towards 'housewife', more negative towards 'feminist' (Haddock & Zanna, 1994)
- Women show favourability towards nonsexist men, slight favourability towards benevolent sexist men, negativity towards hostile sexist men (Kilianski & Rudman, 1998)
 - But this still shows women condoning benevolent sexism

Gender Discrimination In The Workplace

- Tendency for women to be seen as more caring
 - So more likely to be socialised into roles that fit this (teacher; nurse, etc.)
 - But these are lower prestige and lower paid jobs than many male jobs
- Women applying for higher prestige jobs are seen as less competent than male counterparts (Heilman et al., 1988)
 - But this can be overridden by information about the individual (Locksley et al., 1980)

- When working women become mothers
 - Perceived as losing competence but increasing in warmth
 - Males who become fathers also perceived as increasing in warmth, but do not lose perceived competence (Cuddy et al., 2004)
- Possible reasons for women being seen as less competent
 - Agency is important in many jobs
 - Women perceived as less agentic
 - Violation of stereotypes when encroaching into 'male environment' jobs (Basow, 1992)

- Male care workers viewed with suspicion, particularly by parents (Murray, 1999)
 - Overt hostility; seen as more effeminate or perverted
- Women tend to compare pay with other women rather than with men as well
 - Lower starting salaries
 - Poorer results from negotiating pay rises (Lips, 2003)

The 'Glass Ceiling'

- “Those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organisational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing... into upper management positions” (U.S. Department of Labor)
 - Women do not have as many opportunities as men to gain skills for upper-management promotions (Ohlott et al., 1994)
 - Women given less responsibility (Lyness & Thompson, 1997)
 - Expectations of leaders to display traits more stereotypical of males
 - Even though this has not been shown to be the case (Eagly & Johnson, 1990)

Summary Of Sexism

- People tend to use different/opposite traits to describe masculine and feminine
- Often reinforced by religion, socialisation, media, and use of language
- Old-fashioned versus modern sexism shows similarities with the racism issues
- Issues highlighted above can often lead to women being treated differently to men, particularly in regards to job and promotion prospects