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Included but Invisible?

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GENDER & WORK:

CHALLENGING CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

STEREOTYPES

GENDER & WORK

INCLUDED BUT INVISIBLE?

The Benefits and Costs of Inclusion

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Interventions to reduce bias against women and members of underrepresented groups frequently emphasize the importance of inclusiveness and overarching commonalities among groups (Houlette et al., 2004; Stephan & Stephan, 2001). Members of socially dominant groups have traditionally been taught to be “tolerant” of members of other groups, and often to be race- and gender-blind in their treatment of members of stigmatized groups to promote intergroup harmony. Indeed, such efforts seem well justified, not only because of the possibility of improved attitudes among members of the dominant group but also in terms of the benefits for members of disadvantaged groups. One of the most important human needs is to belong. Feeling excluded in the short run creates a form of social pain, which at the level of brain functioning closely resembles the experience of physical pain (Eisenberger, 2012). In the long run, feeling excluded leads to higher rates of depression and psychological alienation, poorer cognitive functioning, impaired motivation, and poorer physical health. The need to belong is thus a powerful human motive (Fiske, 2009). This essay, however, discusses other, less positive consequences of seemingly inclusive policies and perspectives. It considers the evidence of the benefits of inclusive policies for women and minority-group members in terms of reducing explicit stereotyping and prejudice but also the potentially negative effects for group members in terms of structural discrimination and the failure of organizations to profit from diversity.

Belonging to a group, particularly one that is high in status, provides enormous material and psychological benefits. Disparities in economic security, political power, and opportunities for social advancement (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) produce different social realities, which substantially shape the everyday lives of members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups (Demoulin, Leyens, & Dovidio, 2009). Psychologically, groups provide a sense of security and connection, reducing feelings of uncertainty and buffering threats to one’s well-being (Correll & Park, 2005). In addition, individuals’ feelings of personal esteem are largely determined by the prestige and power of the groups to which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

However, belonging to a group also transforms the way people think about themselves and others. When people think of themselves in terms of their group identity, they perceive themselves and other ingroup members in terms of the group prototype – the “cognitive representation of features that describe and prescribe attributes of the group” (Hogg & Terry, 2000, p. 123) – and see themselves as interchangeable representatives of that prototype. Group prototypes, a form of self-stereotyping, emphasize similarities among ingroup members and accentuate differences between the ingroup and specific outgroups. Group needs and goals take precedence over personal needs and goals. Moreover, group prototypes convey strong expectations about how one should behave.

Many of these behavioral prescriptions relate to the differentiation and coordination of different roles within a group, which are critical to effective group functioning. But accompany-

ing these expectations are those associated with social category distinctions that society deems important. Because of socialization in traditional American culture and the circumstances of contemporary life (e.g., residential and occupational segregation), people automatically perceive others in terms of at least three fundamental forms of group membership – gender, race, and age (Brewer, 1988). Social categorization, in turn, activates category-based expectations – stereotypes – that play a critical role in the lives of members of social groups, particularly for members of low-status social groups, women and racial/ethnic minority group members. Because of the automatic activation of these social categories, even when members are seemingly “included” within a larger group or organization, they are vulnerable to subtle, often unconscious bias as a result of their membership in lower-status social groups.

In this essay, we will not try to argue that bias against racial/ethnic minorities and women are the same. There are fundamental differences. First, and most basically, evolutionary psychologists argue that, because of the geographical restrictions of our ancestors, racial bias could not be “hard-wired”; however, a number do argue that gender biases may have an evolutionary basis (but see Wood & Eagly, 2002). Second, manifestations of race and gender biases are different. While maintaining status hierarchy appears to be involved in both (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), racial biases appear in attempts to increase social and physical distance between the groups, but men and women generally seek intimacy with each other. And third, whereas members of dominant racial/ethnic groups tend to see nondominant groups as an unnecessary drain on resources, men and women recognize their interdependence in social life. Despite these important differences, gender and racial/ethnic biases share fundamental psychological dynamics.

In particular, using empirical evidence, we illustrate the dynamics of modern forms of bias. This evidence draws from work on racial/ethnic bias as well as on gender bias to (a) demonstrate the operation of subtle bias and (b) show how perceptions of inclusion can reduce the recognition of the operation of subtle bias and perpetuate structural disparities cloaked by intergroup harmony.

Contemporary Bias May be Unconscious and Subtly Expressed

In general, expressed attitudes toward women and Black Americans have become dramatically more positive over time (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997). Traditional stereotypes of both groups appear to be rapidly fading, at least based on people’s overt beliefs. The vast majority of White Americans perceive that the United States is currently characterized by racial and gender equality, deny any personal bias, and in fact assert their ability to remain color- and gender-blind in their interactions and decisions. Nevertheless, measures of implicit bias – such as the Implicit Association Test (IAT, Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009) – demonstrate that negative racial attitudes and racial and gender stereotypes are automatically activated for a majority of Americans (Blair, 2001), regardless of age, socioeconomic status, and political orientation. Self-report and implicit measures of stereotyping and prejudice are largely uncorrelated, suggesting that, among a large proportion of Americans, implicit biases may operate unconsciously to influence behavior (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002).

The dissociation between explicit attitudes and beliefs, which are inclusive and egalitarian, and pervasive implicit biases and stereotypes leads to contemporary forms of discrimination. Contemporary biases are elusive but powerful phenomena. In situations in which right or wrong is clearly defined or the appropriate course of behavior is obvious, people are unlikely to behave in a sexist or racist manner; to discriminate in these situations would be obvious and would violate personal egalitarian principles. However, in situations in which right and wrong are not clearly defined, appropriate behavior is not obvious, or a negative response could be justified on the basis of some factor other than race or sex, bias will be expressed in a subtle manner that insulates the

perpetrator from being recognized – by others or even oneself – as representing unfair treatment (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004).

For example, Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) examined White college students' support for hiring Black and White applicants for a selective campus position within the same college in the years 1989 and 1999. When the candidates' credentials clearly qualified or disqualified them for the position (very strong and weak qualification conditions), there was no discrimination against the Black candidate (i.e., the highly-qualified Black candidate was just as likely to be hired as the highly-qualified White candidate). However, when candidates' qualifications for the position were less obvious and the appropriate decision was more ambiguous (moderate qualifications), White participants recommended the Black candidate significantly less often than the White candidate with exactly the same credentials. Whereas overt expressions of prejudice (measured by items on a self-report scale for each sample) declined over this 10-year period, the pattern of subtle discrimination in selection decisions remained essentially unchanged. This pattern was conceptually replicated in research with human resource professionals in Puerto Rico (see Dovidio & Gaertner, 2007). Son Hing, Chung-Yan, Hamilton, and Zanna (2008) found a similar pattern of bias against Asian job applicants in Canada, further demonstrating that participants with greater anti-Asian implicit bias (measured using the IAT) were more likely to discriminate against the Asian applicant when credentials were mixed (but not when Asian candidates were impeccably qualified).

Additional research offers further insight into processes that underlie these effects. When ambiguous or mixed credentials are involved, people systematically weigh credentials differently, based on their unconscious biases. For example, when providing input to college admission decisions for candidates with mixed credentials (e.g., strong high school grades but modest standardized scores, or vice-versa), White college students emphasized the credential in which White candidates were stronger relative to Black candidates as being the more valid predictor of success in college. This differential weighting of the credentials, in turn, justified students' stronger recommendations of White over Black candidates for admission (Hodson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2002; see also Brief, Dietz, Cohen, Pugh, and Vaslow, 2000, for employment bias against Blacks; Rooth, 2007, for hiring biases against Muslims).

Additionally, Uhlmann and Cohen (2005) showed how this process operates similarly for bias against women. Also, Uhlmann and Cohen (2007) found that people who felt that they were being more (vs. less) objective in their decision-making showed more subtle bias in their selection of female candidates for a position (see also Monin & Miller, 2001), perhaps because they relaxed their efforts to monitor against bias.

Understanding the operation of subtle gender bias can also help explain, at least in part, the continued underrepresentation of women in some academic disciplines and professions, such as in STEM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). With evidence suggesting that biological sex differences in inherent aptitude for math and science are small or non-existent (Halpern et al., 2007; Hyde & Linn, 2006; Spelke, 2005), many researchers and academic leaders have instead focused on the life choices that appear to compete with women's pursuit of the most demanding positions as a major cause of the science gender disparity. Some researchers have claimed not only that life choices play a role but that they are the primary causes of the gender disparity in science (Ceci & Williams, 2010, 2011; Ceci, Williams, Sumner, & DeFraine, 2011), and that disparity "is not caused by discrimination in these domains" (Ceci & Williams, 2011, p. 3157). This assertion has received substantial attention and generated significant debate among the scientific community, leading some to conclude that gender discrimination indeed does not exist nor does it contribute to the gender disparity within academic science (e.g., Berezow, 2011; Zakaib, 2011).

Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, and Handelsman (2012) directly tested the potential role of bias among science faculty in academia. In focus groups with science faculty, the prevailing opinion voiced was that gender bias is not a problem in science departments. Indeed,

participants echoed the sentiment that the objectivity acquired in their training made such bias particularly unlikely in the sciences (cf. Uhlmann & Cohen, 2007). Nevertheless, Moss-Racusin et al.'s experimental data tell a different story. In a randomized double-blind study, science faculty in biology, chemistry, and physics from research-intensive universities rated the application materials of a student candidate (who was randomly assigned either a male or female name) for a lab manager position. Faculty participants rated the male applicant as significantly more competent and hireable than the (identical) female applicant. They also selected a higher starting salary and offered more career mentoring to the male applicant. The gender of the faculty participants did not affect responses, such that female and male faculty were equally likely to exhibit bias against the female student. Individual differences on a measure of subtle sexism (Swim, Aiken, Hall, & Hunter, 1995) did relate to faculty decisions, in that bias was greater among faculty members higher in subtle sexism.

The existence and potential pervasiveness of subtle bias, even among segments of the population that generally seem liberal and well-intentioned, have broad social implications. One problem is that fairness must be practiced uniformly to produce fair outcomes. If a person or a system is fair 90% of the time but systematically biased 10% of the time, inequitable outcomes result. Even small biases will produce large unfair disparities due to their cumulative effect. Closing the gate to advancement at one point closes the gates at all subsequent points (Martell, Lane, & Emrich, 1996).

Creating a Sense of Psychological Inclusiveness is Good But Not Good Enough

The challenge of combating unconscious biases is that people are often not aware that they possess these biases, and when they consciously monitor their behavior, their actions reinforce their conscious egalitarian self-image. How, then, can the effects of unconscious biases be addressed? To the extent that socially categorizing people into different groups automatically activates stereotypes and biases toward members of those groups and increases affinity with members of one's ingroup (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010), one recent technique has targeted the psychological root of the problem: social categorization. The principle behind the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000, 2012) is that inducing people to recategorize ingroup and outgroup members within a common category boundary (a one-group representation based, for example, on common school, organization, or national identity) redirects those motivational and cognitive processes that produce ingroup-favoring biases to increase positive feelings, beliefs, and behaviors toward others who were previously regarded primarily in terms of their outgroup membership. The Common Ingroup Identity Model for improving intergroup attitudes has received considerable empirical support internationally (see Gaertner & Dovidio, 2012).

However, while emphasizing inclusiveness by creating a common identity can improve intergroup attitudes, it can also impede progress toward structural equality. The reasoning is straightforward. If people focus on their common group identity, the salience of group memberships will be reduced and people will perceive the status quo as more fair. As a consequence, unless discrimination is blatant, members of dominant groups are less likely to recognize negative decisions against individual minority group members as group-based bias (Banfield & Dovidio, 2013). Moreover, members of minority groups are less likely to recognize group-based disparities and when they do, they tend to see them as more fair and legitimate. As a consequence, they are less motivated to engage in collective action to help their group achieve equality (Glasford & Dovidio, 2011).

In general, focusing on commonalities between groups represents a strategic way for members of high power groups to maintain their group's advantage, cemented by intergroup harmony. Social change is fueled by discontent and friction between groups (Wright & Lubensky,

2009; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). To illustrate the central role of power dynamics in this process, Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, and Pratto (2009, Study 1) manipulated power between two randomly assigned groups by giving the advantaged group the position of assigning extra course credits to the two groups (see also Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2008). Before the members of the advantaged group allocated the credits, members of both groups interacted with instructions to focus on either intergroup commonalities or differences. As expected, commonality-focused interaction produced more positive intergroup attitudes for both advantaged- and disadvantaged-group members than did differences-focused contact. In addition, for both groups, attention to inequality between groups was lower in the commonality-focused condition. Moreover, members of the disadvantaged group expected the advantaged group to be fairer in allocating the resources and to distribute the credits in a more equitable fashion following commonality-focused, rather than differences-focused, interaction.

However, when the disadvantaged-group members' expectations were compared to the advantaged group's actual allocation, there was a significant discrepancy. As the members of the disadvantaged groups anticipated, advantaged groups were substantially biased against the disadvantaged groups in the allocation of credits after differences-focused contact but, unexpectedly from the perspective of disadvantaged-group members, advantaged groups were just as biased in allocating the credits after commonality-focused interaction. The more positive intergroup attitudes of advantaged-group members in the commonality-focused, versus differences-focused, condition did not translate into more material support to achieve equality, and the advantaged groups' allocation fell significantly below what disadvantaged groups anticipated. Once harmony is achieved, a primary goal of advantaged-group members is realized (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010), and concerns about achieving true equality in resources are relaxed.

This phenomenon, the "irony of harmony," helps to explain a range of phenomena relating to gender biases (see also Jackman, 1994). Here are three examples. First, women who feel more dependent on prevailing social structures are more likely to perceive what is (the current state of disparities) as what should be. In one study (Kay et al., 2009, Study 3), for instance, female Canadians read a brief description of the responsibilities of Canadian members of Parliament, accompanied by a graph showing that only 20% of the members of Parliament were women. As hypothesized, women who were led to believe that they were more highly dependent on the government were more likely to defend the status quo. These women were less likely than those who believed that they were low in dependency to endorse statements that there should be more women in politics and in Parliament. From their perspective, having women account for only 20% of the members of Parliament was fair and acceptable. Women were highly motivated to preserve the status quo, even at a high cost to themselves and fellow group members (see System Justification Theory; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). In a subsequent study (Kay et al., 2009, Study 4), women who felt more dependent on the current social system, and thus more motivated to justify the current social system, actively derogated a woman whose ambitions in business threatened the status quo of gender relations.

Second, women whose gender identity is less salient are less likely to challenge sexist remarks directed toward them or toward another woman (Wang & Dovidio, 2013). Moreover, women who tend to actively attempt to cope with unpleasant situations through reappraisal are less likely to confront sexism when the salience of their gender identity is low but are more likely to directly address sexist comments when the salience of their gender identity is high. Relatedly, experiencing ambiguous sexism leads women to experience negative self-directed emotions (e.g., depression) when they do not associate their own rejection with gender bias, but they experience more action-oriented, other-directed emotions (e.g., anger) when they are sensitive to gender-based stigmatization (Stroebe, Dovidio, Barreto, Ellemers, & John, 2011; Wang, Stroebe, & Dovidio, 2012).

Third, senior women in industry who began their career with low gender identification experienced greater identification with the masculine organizational culture as they encountered gender discrimination over time, seeing themselves as more masculine and endorsing traditional gender stereotypes more strongly, in ways that disadvantage other women in the organization (the "queen bee effect"; Derks, Ellemers, van Laar, & de Groot, 2011). As Self-Categorization Theory proposes, these women see themselves as prototypic of their masculine work group and thus are motivated to uphold the standards of the organization, which may unfairly disadvantage other women. By contrast, senior women who began their careers with relatively high levels of gender identification did not exhibit this effect. Thus, focusing exclusively on identifying with a superordinate organizational culture can perpetuate barriers to women's advancement in the organization, with senior women potentially playing an active role in limiting the progress of other women.

Implications and Interventions

Although the motivation to be included in (particularly high status) groups is a powerful human motivation and inclusive feelings of superordinate identity promote harmonious relations between members of different groups, inclusiveness itself does not guarantee fair treatment and may, in fact, contribute to the perpetuation of unfair treatment of women and racial/ethnic minorities. To the extent that the superordinate identity is defined by the standards and attributes of the dominant group, which is typically the case (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999), members of nondominant groups included within that identity are vulnerable to being perceived as deviant (Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Boettcher, 2004) or allowing their subgroup identity to become invisible, not only to others but to themselves. Thus, they may experience immediate benefits of being able to "pass," increasing their personal chances of success but sacrificing the psychological effects of subgroup identity (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999), social support, and special support to other members of their subgroup. At the same time, organizations may fail to reap the creative benefits that diversity has to offer (Antonio et al., 2004).

Moreover, people with intersectional minority identities are particularly likely to experience this sense of invisibility (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Black women, for example, are neither prototypically Black (compared to Black men) nor prototypically female (compared to White women). As a consequence, they may at times benefit from their relative invisibility, being less likely the target of conventional forms of race- or gender-based bias directed specifically toward them (Livingston, Rosette, & Washington, 2012). However, they may also be less likely to benefit from programs or policies designed to meet the special needs of Blacks or women, because these programs would be tailored more for Black men and White women.

Thus, while commonality may represent a valuable step toward reducing intergroup tensions and developing trust and intimacy between members of different groups, it is not a panacea. Successfully addressing group-based disparities requires being gender- and race-conscious, as well. Creating a common identity does not require groups to forsake subgroup identities. Both common and subgroup identities can be salient simultaneously (i.e., a dual identity). The acknowledgement of identities permits recognition of group-based disparities and differences, while a common, inclusive identity promotes the positive connection to view differences as complementary resources and unfair disparities as a threat to the integrity of the larger group, motivating both dominant and nondominant group members to restore justice (Tyler, 2005; Tyler & Blader, 2003).

However, good intentions may not be enough (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006). Maintaining constructive tensions between commonality and difference is a challenging balancing act. When the situation becomes uncomfortable, people tend to retreat to common ground to relieve the tension, thus forfeiting the potential creative benefits of diversity. Structural supports are thus also valuable.

For example, a number of years ago the first author of this chapter was invited to present research and otherwise participate in a workshop sponsored by the Department of Defense on minority promotions in the military. At the time, there was a concern that Blacks who were identified as being qualified for advancement were being promoted within the officer ranks at a rate consistently lower than that of Whites (given their representations in the promotion pools) over an extended period of time. The research presentation discussed the existence of modern, subtle biases against women and members of racial and ethnic minorities. This evidence from social psychology was consistent with the information and arguments presented by other participants in the meeting. Within a couple of years, the Army had altered its promotion procedures. Promotion boards were given explicit instructions to be race- and gender-conscious, to emphasize the importance of all groups to the mission of the Army, and to begin with the assumption that Blacks and women under consideration for promotion were expected to be as qualified as White and male candidates. Thus, if Blacks or women were promoted at a lower than proportional rate, an explanation needed to be provided. According to the Army's annual Equal Opportunity Assessment Report, reframing the process to clarify promotion standards (and thus deviations from the standards) was sufficient for eliminating racial and gender disparities as long as these guidelines remained in place.

In conclusion, despite the dramatic decreases in overt sexism and racism over time and the current increasing visibility of women and people of color in national leadership roles, subtle bias continues to exist and dramatically influence the achievements and well-being of members of these traditionally disadvantaged groups. Although it is expressed in indirect ways without antipathy, the consequences of contemporary bias are similar to those of old-fashioned racism and sexism: the restriction of economic, educational, and social opportunities for women and people of color. Understanding the nature of subtle bias and the automatic processes that may underlie it can help illuminate how seemingly well-meaning interventions can obscure its effects, creating a veneer of tolerance while deflecting attention away from unfair treatment (and thus undermining motivation for action toward equality) among members of both dominant and disadvantaged groups. Creating harmony and a sense of well-being can be a step toward achieving equality and justice, but it does not necessarily mean that equality has been achieved and may, in fact, relax motivations to achieve true equality.

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