How our brains are wired for stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination

IMPLICIT BIAS
THE WORLD OF ISMS

- Racism
- Sexism, Genderism
- Heterosexism
- Monosexism
- Ableism
- Ageism
- Classism
- Individualism
- Ethnocentrism
DEFINITION OF “…ISMS”

“Participation, either active or passive, conscious or unconscious, in the structures which maintain, perpetuate, or do not challenge attitudes, beliefs, emotions, or behaviors that support the domination of one perceived group over another.”
THE TRIFECTA OF “…ISMS”

- Stereotypes
- Prejudice
- Discrimination
STEREOTYPES: COGNITION GONE WRONG

• Stereotype = Categorization by social factors
  • Definition: “A cognitive structure that contains the perceiver’s knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about some human group” (Hamilton & Trolier, 1986)
  • Stereotypes are necessary
CHARACTERISTICS OF STEREOTYPES

- Form classes and categories
- Fit experiences into existing classes
- Quickly identify related objects
- All objects in class = same qualities
- Classes may be more – or less – rational
STEREOTYPES DON’T HURT PEOPLE

THE OUTCOMES OF STEREOTYPES HURT PEOPLE
WHEN STEREOTYPES GO WRONG
PREJUDICE:
AFFECTIVE FACTORS

“Antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group.”

• Allport (2000):
PREJUDICE: AFFECTIVE FACTORS

• Minimal Group Paradigm
  • The basic requirements for prejudice
  • Ingroup vs. outgroup
  • Stereotyped cognitions are not necessary
REALISTIC GROUP CONFLICT

- Origins of contemporary prejudice:
  - Prehistoric competition for limited resources
  - Out-group discrimination → survival
  - “…isms” are a natural extension:
    - Clan, family, tribe, or village members shared phenotypic features
  - Negative & derogatory beliefs/feelings = survival advantage

Sherif, 1961; Schaller, 2003; Bradley, 1991; Ponterotto, 2006
DISCRIMINATION

• Types of Discrimination
  • Antilocution
  • Avoidance
  • Discrimination
  • Physical Attack
  • Extermination
INSTITUTIONALIZED DISCRIMINATION

- Unequal opportunities, zoning
- Stop and frisk policies, mass incarceration
- Biased Immigration Policies and Procedures
- Forced Expulsion of Natives from their Homeland
- Slavery, Jim Crow
- Genocide
“…ISMS” IN HEALTHCARE

• Institute of Medicine Report
  • “Racial and ethnic disparities in health care exist even when insurance status, income, age, and severity of conditions are comparable.”

• Surgeon General’s Report
  • “Mental health services are “plagued by disparities in the availability of and access to its services.”
Overt to the Covert
Conscious to Unconscious
Explicit to Implicit
WHAT IS A TRADITIONAL “ISM”? 

• Old “comfy” -isms:
  • The belief that some identifiable (and perceived) characteristics accounts for differences in human character or ability and that a particular group is superior to others.
TRADITIONAL "-ISMS"
POST-RACIAL AMERICA
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stereotype</th>
<th>Personal Belief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lazy</td>
<td>Sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unreliable</td>
<td>Family Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>Artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhythmic</td>
<td>Honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low IQ/Uneducated</td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal</td>
<td>Sportsmanlike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexually Perverse</td>
<td>Straight-forward</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CONTEMPRARY -ISMS

• Aversive, subtle, symbolic, modern, implicit -isms
  • The well-intentioned liberal
  • The not-well-intentioned Trumper
“…ISMS” ARE AVERSIVE!

• Conflict between the denial of personal prejudice and underlying unconscious negative feelings and beliefs
  • **Emotion** associated with the other is aversive (e.g., anxiety, anger)
  • **Behavior** towards the other is aversive (e.g., avoidant, awkward)
CHARACTERISTICS OF AVERSIVE -ISM S

- Prejudice expressed in indirect ways
  - Bias is justified on factors other than the “...ism”
  - Unintentional
- Negative feelings are more diffuse
  - Feelings not necessarily identified as bias
CHARACTERISTICS OF AVERSIVE -ISMS

- Rooted in normative processes:
  - Cognitive efficiency
  - Socialization
  - Cultural typification in news
  - Social Threat hypothesis
EXAMPLES OF AVERSIVE ISMS
CLEAR EMERGENCY SITUATION

Not helping = clearly prejudicial behavior
UNCLEAR EMERGENCY SITUATION

Believe there are other witness to the Emergency

Whites less likely to help African Americans than other Whites
RACIAL BIAS IN JUDGEMENTS OF PHYSICAL SIZE & FORMIDABILITY

![Graph showing correlation between harm bias and musculature bias]

- $R^2 = 0.2438$
PRIVILEGE AND INEQUALITY

- Opportunity is in your name:
  - Kristen vs. Tamika
  - Brad vs. Tyrone
- Aversive –isms:
  - Privilege and inequality

Racism in a resume

Job applicants with African American–sounding names got fewer callbacks.

![Bar graph showing average callback rates for White and African American names.](source: Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004)
EFFECTS OF AVERSIVE RACISM ON HEALTHCARE
## WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individual Isms</th>
<th>Institutional Isms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overt</strong> (Intentional)</td>
<td>Counselor believes that racial and ethnic minorities are more challenging to work with and, on this basis, refuses to accept them as clients</td>
<td>Counseling agency openly denies services to racial and ethnic minority clientele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Covert</strong> (Intentional)</td>
<td>Counselor assigns a racial or ethnic minority client to a student intern because of social discomfort but claims to have a schedule overload</td>
<td>Counseling agency deliberately sets fees above the affordable range of most lower income and middle income minority families, thus effectively excluding them from counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintentional</td>
<td>Counselor misinterprets a minority client’s lateness or lack of eye contact and a firm handshake as resistance to the counseling process</td>
<td>Counseling agency uses standardized psychological tests without considering the relevance and validity of test scores to culturally diverse clients</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ISMS AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Isms associated with:
  - Physiological stress
  - Poor self-esteem
  - Poor life satisfaction
  - Trauma related symptoms
  - Depression
  - General psychological distress

Constantine, 2006
“…ISM” - RELATED STRESS

- “…Ism” - related life events (time-limited)
  - Police harassment, housing discrimination
- Vicarious “…Ism” experiences
  - Shootings, ICE
- Daily Microaggressions
  - Slights
  - Unconscious behaviors and emotions

Harrell, 2000
MICROAGGRESSIONS

“Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group, and are expressed in three forms: microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations.”
ISM-RELATED STRESS

- Chronic-contextual stress
  - Institutional and systemic “…Isms” (e.g., food deserts)
- Collective experiences (e.g., Media)
- Transgenerational or historical effects of oppression

Harrell, 2000
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AVERSIVE ISMS ARE IDENTIFIED?
ADDRESSING AVERSIVE “...ISMS”
RISK FACTORS FOR “…ISMS”

- Emotional States
  - Anger, disgust, fear
- Ambiguity
- Low effort thinking
- Tired, stressed, or distracted
- No feedback

Casey, Warren, Cheesman, and Elek (2012)
CHANGING RISK FOR AVERSIVE “...ISMS”

- Increase self- and other-awareness
- Increase motivation for egalitarianism
- Reject Color Blindness & Identify and acknowledge real differences
- Check thought processes and decisions for possible bias
- Develop feedback mechanisms

Casey, Warren, Cheesman, and Elek (2012)
CHANGING RISK FOR AVERSIVE “…ISMS”

• Counter-stereotypes and reduce exposure to stereotypes
• Remove or reduce distractions and sources of stress when making decisions
• Decrease ambiguity and establish more concrete standards and processes
• Increase exposure to stigmatized groups

Casey, Warren, Cheesman, and Elek (2012)
Questions?
Concerns?
Comments?
Personal Insults?

j-washburn@northwestern.edu