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MIND SCIENCES KEY CONCEPTS

Implicit bias: the brain's automatic, instant association of stereotypes or attitudes toward particular groups, without our conscious awareness.

- The split-second decisions our brains make (e.g. reactions to or assumptions about someone) without our realizing it.

Racial anxiety: the brain's stress response before or during inter-racial interactions.

- For people of color, racial anxiety happens when they fear they will experience bias from someone else, through discrimination, hostile treatment, or invalidation.
- For white people, racial anxiety happens when they fear their actions will be perceived as racist, or that they will be met with distrust or hostility.

Stereotype threat: the brain's impaired cognitive functioning when a negative stereotype is activated.

- We are worried about confirming a negative stereotype about ourselves. This gets in the way of our ability to perform on a task.

INTERVENTIONS

Implicit Bias Interventions

“De-Biasing” – Efforts to Reduce Implicit Bias (i.e. “break the prejudice habit”)

Stereotype Behavior Replacement: Recognize when a response is based on a stereotype, label the response as stereotypical, reflect on why the response occurred, and consider how this biased response could be avoided in future. Replace the biased response with one that is consistent with egalitarian values.

Counter-stereotypic imaging: Imagine, in detail, counter-stereotypic others. These individuals can be real, fictional, or imagined. The strategy makes these images more readily available and useful for countering stereotypes.

Individuation: Gather specific information about individuals, in order to prevent making stereotypic inferences. This strategy helps people evaluate others based on personal, rather than group-based, attributes.

Perspective Taking: Imagine oneself to be a member of a stereotyped group. This increases empathy toward the group and reduces automatic group-based evaluations.

Increase Opportunities for Contact: Seek opportunities to encounter and engage in positive interactions with others. Contact decreases bias by altering mental representations of the group and improving evaluations of the group.

Break the Link Between Bias and Behavior

Doubt Objectivity: Presuming oneself to be objective actually increases the role of implicit bias. Acknowledge the presence of bias in order to counter its impact.

Increase Motivation to be Fair: Being internally motivated to be fair, rather than fear of external judgments, tends to decrease biased actions.

Improve Conditions of Decision-making: Think slow. Engage in mindful, deliberate processing to prevent implicit biases from kicking in and determining behaviors.

Count: Use data to detect biased behavior. Data can reveal racially disparate outcomes and help to identify patterns of behavior that may contribute to disparities.

Racial Anxiety Interventions

Scripts: Generate consistent language, especially for initial interactions. This helps ease anxiety and allows individuals to focus on making genuine connections.

Increase Intergroup Contact: Direct interaction between members of different racial groups can alleviate inter-group anxiety, reduce bias, and promote more positive inter-group attitudes and expectations for future contact.

Stereotype Threat Interventions

Social Belonging: Increase the sense of belonging for individuals in stereotyped groups. This makes social identity less salient as a marker of difference.

Wise Criticism: Give feedback that communicates both high expectations and a confidence that the individual can meet those expectations. If feedback is purely critical, it may be interpreted as the product of bias; if feedback is purely positive, it may be interpreted as racial condescension. Wise criticism reduces uncertainty about the reason for feedback.

Growth Mindset: Abilities can be conceptualized as either fixed (“you have it or you don’t”) or able to be developed (“you can learn it”). When thought of as fixed, poor performance is equated with inadequacy, but with growth mindset, there is just more work to do.