Social Perception and Diversity

Social Perception

Much like personality traits, our perceptions can also create individual differences that impact our behavior in various situations

Social perception is the process of interpreting information about another person; perception adds meaning to information gathered by the senses

Social Perception

Three things influence our perceptions:

- ✓ *Perceiver (our) characteristics:* Familiarity, attitudes, moods, self-concept, cognitive structure

- ✓ *Target (their) characteristics:* Appearance, verbal communication, nonverbal cues, intentions

- ✓ *Situational characteristics:* Context, situation strength

Stereotypes and Exemplars

Researchers mailed 5000 résumés to potential employers, using "white-sounding" and "black-sounding" names
(Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004)

Callback rates on identical résumés were substantially higher for white-sounding names than for black-sounding names

Stereotypes and Exemplars

Racial stereotyping is still prevalent in the workforce. A study of 340 jobs found that:
(Pager, Bonikowski, & Western, 2009)

White applicants (to low-wage NYC jobs) were twice as likely to receive a job offer or callback than equally-qualified black counterparts

White individuals just released from prison (on cocaine charges) were just as likely to receive a job offer as blacks or Latinos with no criminal background

Stereotypes and Exemplars

Physical appearance is linked with favorable hiring, ranking, promotion, and performance evaluations. We hold (unwarranted) higher expectations for people who look attractive

The effect is stronger for evaluations of social competence, than for adjustment or intellectual ability (near zero for integrity or other-concern)

Stereotypes and Exemplars
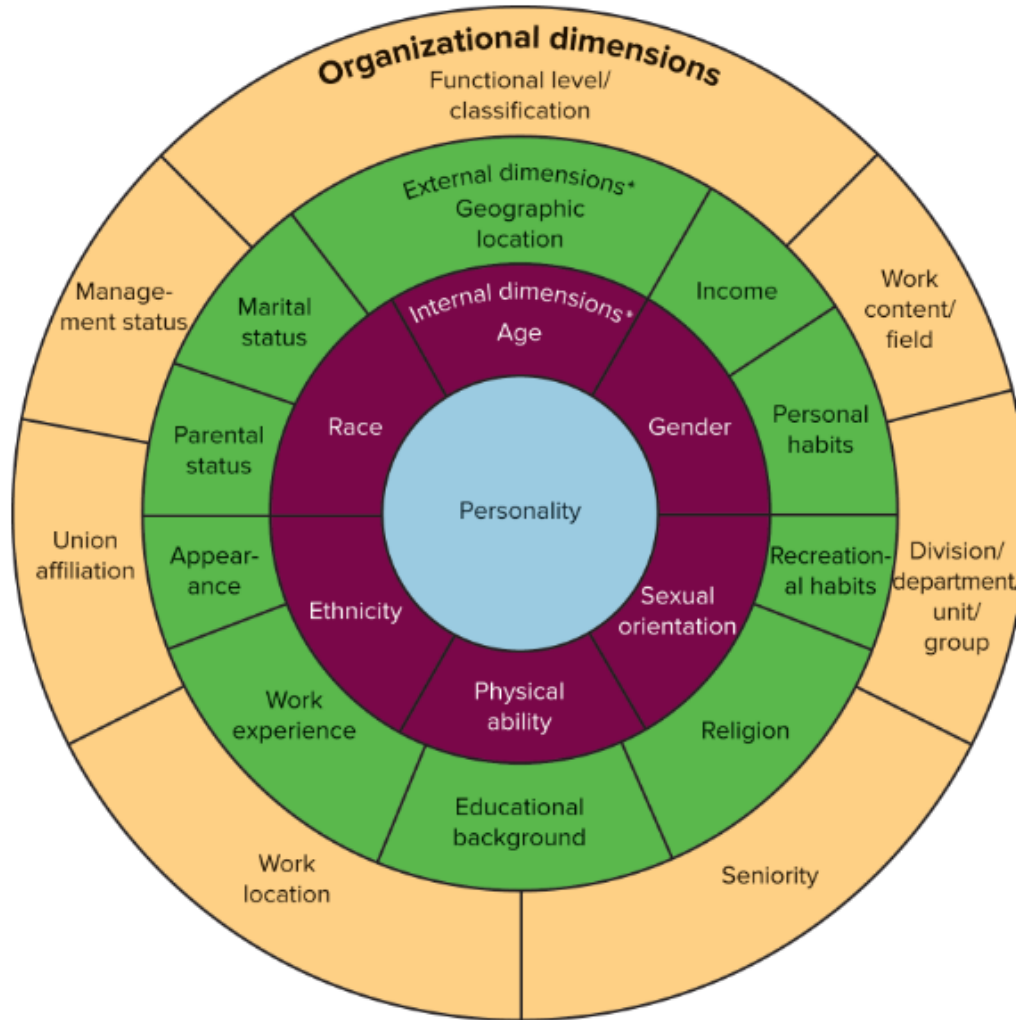
Social Discrimination

Categorizing people by different characteristics isn't inherently bad, it's an important way to understand the complexities of life

Social perceptions turn toxic when we ***assign negative value*** to people who fit stereotypes or exemplars *(rather than forming more accurate perceptions based on their actual behavioral patterns),* and treat them differently because of these emotional assessments; this is discrimination

Social Discrimination

Both *sexual harassment* and *perceiving oneself to be racially discriminated against* are linked with decreased satisfaction and commitment, as well as physical & mental health issues; racial discrimination is linked with lower OCB

(Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007: Meta-analysis of 70,000 total subjects; Triana, Jayasinghe, & Pieper, 2015: meta-analysis with nearly 100,000 total subjects for some conditions)

Harassment in general is also linked with decreased job performance and increased negative behavior by victims

(Bowling & Beehr, 2006: Meta-analysis of 20,000 total subjects)

Older workers equally qualified as younger workers receive lower ratings in interviews and on performance appraisals

(Posthuma & Campion, 2009: Large review of literature)

Social Discrimination

Social Perception: Barriers

Major barriers to perceptual accuracy, which can often time cause use to be discriminatory:

- ✓ **Selective perception:** Ignore information that doesn't support one's desired viewpoint

- ✓ **Chronic stereotyping:** Never refining one's perception of others beyond initial stereotypes

- ✓ **First-impression error:** Infer multiple characteristics about a person from only a brief encounter

Social Perception: Barriers

Impression management is behaving in ways to generate a positive image in the eyes of others, there are two general types:

- ✓ **Other-enhancing:** Ingratiation (flattery, favor doing, compliments, conformity)
- ✓ **Self-enhancing:** Exemplify desired values/ideals, Self-promote accomplishment/qualities

Not only is it difficult to discern people's internal characteristics, but they may be actively masking them, further skewing social perception

Attribution

When observing ours or others behavior, we "attribute" certain causes to that behavior; these attributions help us discern the drivers of their actions and deduce underlying characteristics

We attribute behavior to either:

➤ Internal causes within a person's control (e.g., personality, ability, values, effort, etc.)

➤ External causes outside of a person's control (e.g., task difficulty, luck, situation, etc.)

Attribution

Attribution: Biases

Fundamental attribution error (a.k.a., the correspondence bias): Tendency to make internal attributions when observing others' behavior; this is one of the most robust and consistent effects in social psychology

Self-serving bias: Tendency to make internal attributions for our successes, yet external attributions for our failures

Attribution: Biases

People tend to make a correspondence bias even in the presence of strong situations because:

- ✓ They unintentionally ignore situational information
- ✓ They intentionally ignore situational information because the internal attribution is valuable
- ✓ They use situational information to enhance the internal attribution

Personality can also affect one's attributional tendencies for others (i.e., locus of control)

What does this all mean?

People are complex but imperfect evaluators of others' characteristics, and often rely on inaccurate information to understand them; we perceive other people without realizing it

Managers and organizations can enact policies, procedures, and practices that reduce inaccuracies in social perception; although such *Diversity Management* can be challenging

Diversity Management

Diversity Management involves changing the culture, assumptions, and structure of an organization to thrive in the presence of diversity

Affirmative Action is any policy designed to right the wrongs of the past, it is inherently past-oriented, not future-oriented; it is often rejected by those who need it the most (i.e., people with racist attitudes), and can cause diverse individuals to feel stigmatized

Diversity Management

A study of 1,731 public employees (50% police, 15% firefighters, 35% office workers) found that people who perceived their workplace to support *equal treatment* and *equal access* for employees regardless of their diverse characteristics, were less likely to turnover
(Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013)

They were less likely to turnover because they identified with their organization more, felt a sense of empowerment, and felt free to define themselves in whatever manner they chose

Diversity Management

A study of 26 different locations of a restaurant chain found that intention to quit is greater when there is greater gender diversity, however, this effect is *neutralized* when the organizational climate supports diversity

(Gonzalez & Denisi, 2009)

Racial diversity also *positively* affected restaurant productivity and return on income in a supportive diversity climate, but gender diversity had a U-shaped relationship with firm performance

Diversity Management

A recent study of 132 successful companies revealed that those with active *Diversity/Equality Management Practices* had lower turnover, and labor productivity (revenue per employee) and innovation (revenue from new products)

(Armstrong, Flood, Guthrie, Liu, MacCurtain, & Mkamwa, 2010)

These benefits occurred **above and beyond** the benefits of standard *High Performance Work Practices* (e.g., selection testing, formalized appraisals, routine attitude surveys, etc.)

Diversity Management

Read the whole ***Organizational Practices used to Effectively Manage Diversity*** section of the textbook, not just the highlights