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Prejudice and Intergroup Interaction

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Intergroup interactions are particularly susceptible to interpersonal misunderstandings. Recognition of different group memberships, even when the basis of this membership is arbitrary and not naturalistically meaningful, is sufficient to initiate a range of biased processes, perspectives, and evaluations (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The present chapter examines how prejudice and bias systematically influence interactions between members of different groups. The misunderstandings that occur in these interpersonal interactions typically both reflect and reinforce the nature of intergroup perceptions and relations. We illustrate these processes with the example of Black–White relations in the United States.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

Intergroup biases, which can produce both blatant and subtle forms of prejudice (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), contribute to disparities in important outcomes, such as wealth and health, between majority and minority groups. In the United States, Whites' prejudice toward Blacks, Latinos, and Asians produces discrimination in employment decisions (Dovidio & Hebl, 2005) and contributes to disparities in medical treatment and ultimately in the physical and psychological well-being of minority group members (Smedley, Stith, & Nelson, 2003).

In this chapter, we propose that prejudice not only systematically influences intergroup outcomes but also intergroup interactions. In particular, intergroup prejudice subtly shapes the nature of these interactions. Because of the different perceptions, prejudices, experiences, and expectations members of majority and minority groups hold, interpersonal interactions between majority and minority group members are ripe for awkward moments, misperceptions, distrust, and confusion (Hebl, Tickle, & Heatherton, 2000).

We begin by exploring how psychological processes and historical events combine to produce misunderstandings in one particular example of intergroup relations, the relationship between Blacks and Whites in the United States. We choose this example because it has received extensive empirical attention in social psychology over the years. Next, we describe a general theoretical framework for communication in intergroup interaction, illustrating with research support the processes that can produce fundamental misunderstandings between members of majority and minority groups. Finally, we conclude by considering ways of reducing the potential influence of bias in intergroup interactions, which may reduce consequent misunderstandings and enhance communication.

HISTORICAL, EMPIRICAL, AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Intergroup bias is a pervasive phenomenon, observable both within and across virtually all cultures (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). One reason for the extensiveness of prejudice is that there are a number of essentially normal processes—processes that allow people to navigate a complex and potentially hostile environment—that can predispose people to develop intergroup prejudices (Allport, 1954; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). The ability to sort people, spontaneously and with minimum effort or awareness, into a smaller number of meaningful categories is a universal facet of human perception essential for efficient functioning (Fiske, Lin, & Neuberg, 1999). Given the centrality of the self in social perception, social categorization further involves a basic distinction between the group containing the self (the ingroup) and other groups (outgroups)—or between the “we’s” and the “they’s” (see Social Identity Theory, Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Self-Categorization Theory, Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). This recognition of different group memberships influences social perception, affect, cognition, and behavior

in ways that systematically produce pervasive intergroup biases (see Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000, for a review). If, when, and how bias is manifested, however, depends upon social norms, individual motivation, the historical relations between groups, contextual information, and immediate circumstances (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). In societies that place central value on egalitarianism, which includes the United States, intergroup biases often take the form of subtle rather than blatant prejudice (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995).

Racial group membership has been a defining dimension of group categorization and identity throughout the history of the United States. The United States was founded on the principles of liberty and equality but it was not until 175 years after these basic human rights were proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence and guaranteed by the Constitution that the initial civil rights legislation was passed and the United States formally recognized that Blacks and Whites were equal under the law. The legacy of the United States' history of discrimination is evident in race relations today. Although overt expressions of racial stereotypes and prejudice have declined substantially since the passing of the civil rights legislation (Bobo, 2001), more subtle forms of prejudice persist (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). This subtle prejudice limits the opportunities of Black Americans in systematic ways (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004), creates a climate of interracial distrust and wariness (Terrell & Terrell, 1981), and interferes with communication between Blacks and Whites (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002). In the remainder of this section, we explore how psychological processes and cultural influences operate in concert to produce intergroup misunderstandings.

Racial categorization plays a fundamental role in the persistence of racial prejudice, in its subtle as well as blatant forms. Race is a characteristic that is generally automatically activated, along with racial attitudes and stereotypes, in the United States. For example, Whites' perceptions of Whites are generally favorable and involve the activation of stereotypic characteristics such as intelligent, successful, and educated; Whites' perceptions of Blacks are less favorable, and include activation of traits such as aggressive, violent, and lazy (Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 1997). The biases rooted in social categorization are exacerbated by both the history of social and political conflict in the United States and the fact that Blacks and Whites still perceive significant racial symbolic and realistic threats (Stephan & Stephan, 2000).

Although racial categorization forms a psychological foundation for racial prejudice, the expression of racial prejudice is critically moderated by cultural forces. As we noted earlier, the United States holds racial equality as a central principle, supported by law. It is a principle generally endorsed by its citizens. Bobo (2001) concluded in his review of trends in racial attitudes, "The single clearest trend in studies of racial attitudes has involved a steady and sweeping movement toward general endorsement of the principles of racial equality and integration" (p. 269). The discrepancy between the ideal of egalitarianism and the social and psychological forces that promote racial bias has been hypothesized as a critical factor leading to the development of subtle forms of racial prejudice among White Americans. Whereas the traditional form of prejudice among Whites represented the overt expression of dislike and hostility, as well as the endorsement of negative cultural

stereotypes, contemporary forms of racism involve more complex dynamics and typically more subtle expressions of bias.

According to the aversive racism framework (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986), most Whites who express egalitarian values and nonprejudiced attitudes also, because of the psychological and social forces promoting bias, harbor unconscious negative feelings and beliefs about Blacks. Although most of the research on aversive racism has focused on race relations in the United States, the processes of aversive racism are not limited by national or geographic boundaries and may reflect reactions toward a number of different groups when overt discrimination is recognized as inappropriate (see Hodson, Hooper, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2005; Kleinpenning & Hagendoorn, 1993; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995).

Supportive of this aversive racism framework, research using a variety of techniques for assessing implicit, automatically activated evaluative associations and stereotypes (e.g., response latency measures, such as the Implicit Associations Test; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) has revealed pervasive racial biases among Whites (e.g., Blair, 2001) that are only weakly associated with their explicit, self-reported, and typically overtly nonprejudiced racial attitudes (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Beach, 2001).

This dissociation between implicit and explicit attitudes that aversive racists experience can have significant, tangible effects on how Whites and Blacks interact in ways that contribute substantially to misunderstandings in intergroup interactions. In particular, implicit and explicit attitudes can influence behavior in different ways and under diverse conditions (Dovidio et al., 1997; Fazio, 1990). Explicit attitudes shape deliberative, well-considered responses for which people have the motivation and opportunity to weigh the costs and benefits of various courses of action. Implicit attitudes influence responses that are more difficult to monitor and control; or responses that people do not view as an indication of their attitude and, thus, do not try to control. For example, whereas self-reported prejudice predicts overt expressions of bias (e.g., differences in how comparable Blacks and Whites are evaluated; Dovidio et al., 1997), measures of implicit attitudes predict Whites' biases in nonverbal behaviors, such as measures of interest (e.g., eye contact) and anxiety (rate of blinking) as well as other cues of friendliness (see Dovidio et al., 1997; Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; McConnell & Liebold, 2001). Thus, the relative impact of implicit and explicit attitudes is a function of the context in which the attitudinal object appears, the motivation and opportunity to engage in deliberative processes, and the nature of the behavioral response.

The subtle, unintentional, and potentially unconscious nature of contemporary racial prejudice in the United States is particularly problematic with respect to producing misunderstanding in interracial interactions. In particular, Whites and Blacks have fundamentally different perspectives on the attitudes implied and the actions demonstrated by Whites during these interactions. Whites have full access to their explicit attitudes and are able to monitor and control their more overt and deliberative behaviors. These types of attitudes and behaviors are generally nonprejudiced and nondiscriminatory. However, Whites do not have such full access to their implicit attitudes or to their less monitorable behaviors.

These less easily controlled behaviors, such as nonverbal behaviors, are likely to reflect their unconscious negative feelings and beliefs. As a consequence, Whites' beliefs about how they are behaving or how Blacks perceive them would be expected to be based primarily on their explicit attitudes and their more overt behaviors, such as the verbal content of their interaction with Blacks, and not on their implicit attitudes or less deliberative (i.e., nonverbal) behaviors. In contrast to the perspective of Whites, the perspective of Black partners in these interracial interactions allows them to attend to both the spontaneous (e.g., nonverbal) and the deliberative (e.g., verbal) behaviors of Whites. To the extent that the Black partners attend to Whites' nonverbal behaviors, which may signal more negativity than their verbal behaviors, Blacks are likely to form more negative impressions of the encounter and be less satisfied with the interaction than are Whites.

In a study that demonstrated direct support for this reasoning, Dovidio, Kawakami, and Gaertner (2002) assessed the explicit and implicit racial attitudes of White participants before they engaged in an interracial interaction and same-race interaction. Whites' explicit racial attitudes primarily predicted bias in their more conscious and controllable interpersonal behavior, their verbal friendliness, during their interactions with Black and White partners. Whites who reported that they were more prejudiced behaved in a less verbally friendly way toward a Black relative to a White partner. However, it was Whites' implicit racial attitudes (assessed with a response-latency procedure), not their self-reported prejudice, that predicted bias in their less controllable and monitorable nonverbal behaviors.

In addition, as expected, White participants' impressions of how friendly they behaved were significantly related to their explicit, self-reported racial attitudes and their verbal behavior. Whites who reported that they were less prejudiced and who consequently behaved more positively in what they said believed that they behaved in a more friendly way in the interracial interactions. Because they were less accessible to them, their implicit attitudes and nonverbal behaviors did not relate to their impressions of how friendly they behaved. In contrast, when asked their impressions of how friendly the White person behaved toward them, Black partners' judgments were predicted by the White person's nonverbal behavior, not their verbal behavior. Thus, particularly for Whites who were low in explicit prejudice and high in implicit prejudice (which characterizes an aversive racist), Blacks and Whites had divergent views of the quality of the interaction. In general, White participants believed that they behaved in a friendly and nonprejudiced way, and that the interaction was positive and productive. However, their Black partners typically perceived that Whites were less friendly than they thought they were, and Blacks were less satisfied with the interaction than were Whites. Moreover, the Black and White interactants were unaware that the other person viewed the experience differently than they did. Thus, these interracial interactions were characterized by fundamental misunderstandings.

The sum of these processes may help explain the vastly different perceptions that Whites and Blacks have about race relations. In general, because Whites believe they are not prejudiced, typically do not discriminate in ways that can readily be attributed to racial bias, and are not aware of the cues of bias that

Blacks are in a position to perceive, they may be much less likely to perceive the existence of prejudice than are Whites. Blacks, who may be sensitive to cues that might indicate bias, which often are accompanied by contradictory overt behaviors, may tend to show a general distrust and suspicion of Whites.

In the next section, we describe a general process model of how prejudice can influence the nature of interpersonal interaction, introduced by Hebl and Dovidio (2005), which considers the reciprocal responses of majority and minority group members and the ways that misunderstandings can occur at various phases of interracial encounters. We consider a number of ways in which misunderstandings may give rise to dysfunctional intergroup interactions. These include interpersonal biases that may emerge at the onset and last throughout the course of the interaction, and they may instigate, sustain, or heighten contentious intergroup relations.

COMMUNICATION IN INTERGROUP INTERACTION: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Hebl and Dovidio's (2005) model of mixed social interactions can be used as a guide to shed light on how misunderstandings can develop in interracial interactions. Based on Patterson's (1982) sequential functional model of nonverbal exchange, Hebl and Dovidio's model captures the unique complexities that characterize interactions between members of stigmatized and nonstigmatized groups. As illustrated in Figure 2.1, Hebl and Dovidio note that there are sequential phases that both majority (nonstigmatized) and minority (stigmatized) group members experience while interacting. Individuals enter the interaction with antecedent conditions, such as personal factors (e.g., personality), experiential factors (e.g., prior experiences in similar situations), and relational/situational factors (e.g., social context). These antecedent conditions shape preinteraction mediators for both individuals in the interaction. In turn, these preinteraction mediators, which include stereotypes and cognitions, affect and arousal, behavioral predispositions, and motivations and goals, influence the extent to which individuals decide to engage in mixed social interactions.

In addition, these preinteraction mediators influence individuals' nonverbal and verbal behaviors during actual interactions. Moreover, coping strategies individuals have developed to deal with the uncertainties of mixed interactions moderate the relationship between the preinteraction mediators and individuals' behaviors. As both an ongoing activity during the interaction and at the conclusion of an interaction, individuals assess their partner's actions, their own behavior, and the costs and benefits of the interaction in determining future interaction with their partner or other members of their partner's group. In the present chapter, we make use of Hebl and Dovidio's model to illustrate how misunderstandings may arise during interracial interactions as a result of the preinteraction mediators, during the interaction phase, and even as a result of participants' differential assessments of the costs and benefits of the interaction.

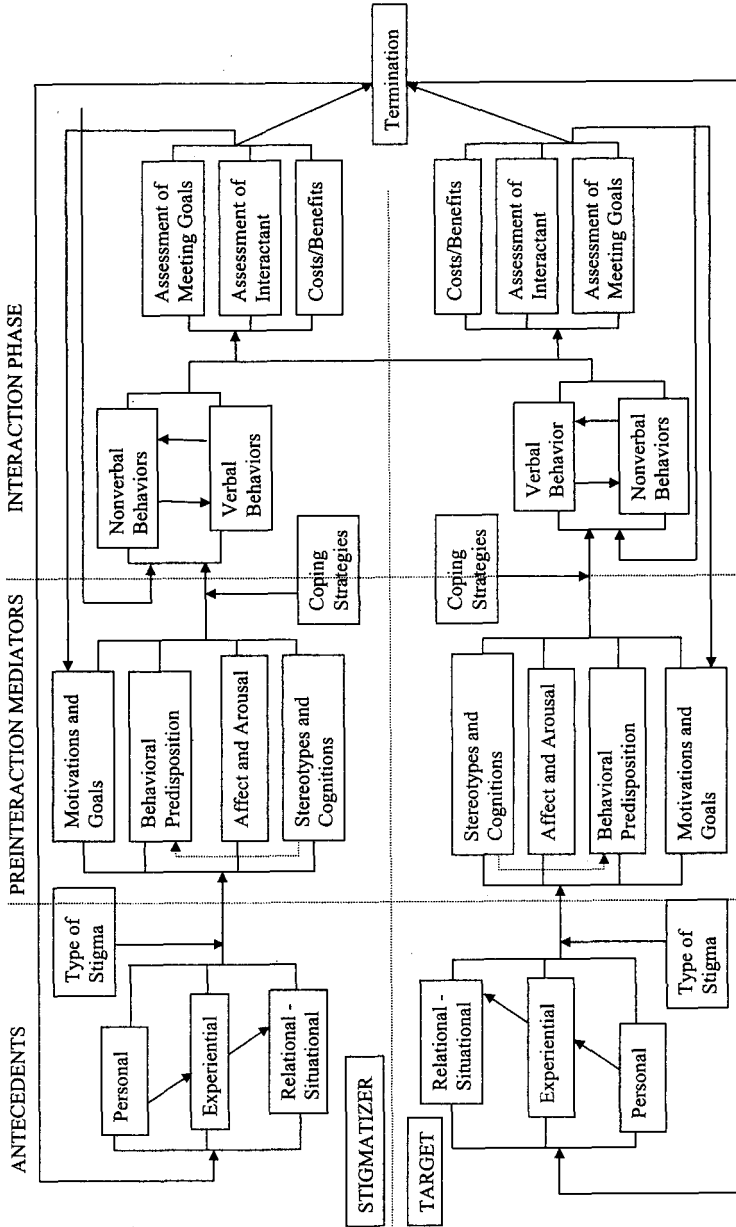


Figure 2.1 Hebl and Dovidio's model of mixed social interactions.

ANTECEDENTS

The Hebl and Dovidio (2005) model identifies four important antecedent factors that influence interactions between members of different groups. The nature of intergroup relations represents the general cultural context that is the backdrop for the interpersonal interaction that will occur. Different intergroup relations are characterized by levels of open hostility, material conflict, and symbolic threat (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), as well as by different levels of inhibition or encouragement by social norms (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). In the United States, Whites have historically held political and economic dominance over Blacks and have enforced segregation first through law and then through practice, while at the same time espousing equality and color-blind ideals (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004).

Personal factors are individual differences in the extent to which people identify with their group or comply with general social norms. Whites who openly express their prejudice toward Blacks are likely to discriminate in blatant ways toward Blacks (Dovidio, Brigham, Johnson, & Gaertner, 1996). Blacks who identify with their racial group often expect to be discriminated against by Whites and interpret ambiguous behaviors as discrimination (Operario & Fiske, 2001). The experiential relates to prior experiences in similar interactions. Whites with greater previous interracial experience have more positive interactions with Blacks than do Whites with less experience (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001). In addition, more favorable interracial interaction, particularly during the elementary school years, is associated with lower levels of implicit interracial bias among Whites (Towles-Schwen & Fazio, 2001). Finally, relational/situational factors involve the nature of the setting, and level of required intimacy that lead individuals to become involved in a social exchange. In general, bias is more likely to be exhibited, either subtly or blatantly, in situations requiring greater intimacy (Herek, 1998) or with greater personal consequences (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998). Relational and situational factors become particularly relevant as people anticipate intergroup interaction by moderating the salience and importance of factors identified in the preinteraction phase.

PREINTERACTION MEDIATORS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS

As outlined in Hebl and Dovidio's (2005) Model of Mixed Interactions (see Fig. 2.1), majority and minority group members enter intergroup interactions with stereotypes and cognitions, behavioral predispositions, motivations and goals, and affective concerns based on cultural expectations or personal experiences. These factors shape the subjective interpretations that majority and minority group members make about interethnic interactions.

As noted earlier, racial stereotypes and evaluative attitudes are spontaneously activated upon recognition of the group membership of an interaction partner (e.g., Wittenbrink et al., 1997). Behavioral predispositions also may be activated

automatically and without awareness in response to racial categorization. Chen and Bargh (1997), for instance, demonstrated that Whites who were subliminally primed with photographs of Blacks, compared to those primed with photographs of Whites and those in a no photograph control condition, exhibited more hostility in a subsequent interaction with another White participant and elicited more hostile behavior from their partners in return. Research on stereotype threat (e.g., Steele, 1997) also demonstrates that making group membership salient can produce stereotype-confirming behaviors among minority group members, even in the absence of a majority group member. However, conscious motivations can also exert an influence not only directly on actions but also indirectly by moderating the impact of the spontaneous activation of stereotypes. For example, with awareness and the time and opportunity to exert control, people who are motivated to respond without prejudice may be able to inhibit the effects of spontaneous stereotype activation on their behavior, at least for those behaviors that are monitorable and controllable (Dovidio et al., 1997).

Perhaps because arousal and emotions are difficult to control consciously, interracial interactions are characterized by high levels of anxiety among both Whites and Blacks. Whereas Whites' anxiety may relate to increased cognitive demand associated with not wanting to appear biased (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Richeson & Shelton, 2003; Richeson & Trawalter, 2005; Shelton, 2003), Blacks' anxiety and arousal may be related to ways of coping with potential prejudice and discrimination, which may involve greater mindfulness (Hyers & Swim, 1998).

These processes can produce consequential misunderstandings even before an intergroup interaction potentially begins. Shelton and Richeson (2005) found that Whites and Blacks report that they are more likely to avoid interracial contact because they are concerned with being rejected by outgroup individuals than because they lack interest in interacting with outgroup individuals. However, individuals fail to recognize that outgroup members' avoidance of interracial contact reflects these same interpersonal concerns. In fact, Whites and Blacks believe that outgroup individuals avoid interracial contact more because they lack interest in having these interactions than because they are concerned about being rejected by members of the other group. Ironically, the inferences individuals make about why they and outgroup members avoid interracial interactions are stronger for individuals most open to interracial interactions. Specifically, low-prejudice Whites are more likely than high-prejudice Whites to make these divergent attributions (Shelton, Richeson, & Bergsieker, *in press*). Thus, majority and minority group members fail to recognize that members of the other group have similar motivations for intergroup contact, and these intergroup misunderstandings lead to a general avoidance of intergroup interaction.

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, expectations are elicited, motivations and coping strategies become activated, and emotional reactions are generated in anticipation of actual intergroup interaction (i.e., in the preinteraction phase). These processes then influence individuals' verbal and nonverbal behaviors during the interaction, assessments of their own behaviors, interpretation of the interactants' actions, and evaluations of the interaction itself.

INTERACTION PHASE AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS

There are numerous ways in which misunderstandings can arise during the course of actual interracial interactions. As we illustrated in an earlier section of this chapter, implicit and explicit prejudice can systematically affect the verbal and nonverbal behaviors of majority group members in interracial interaction. In addition, with respect to assessment during the interaction (see Fig. 2.1), the uncertainty of intergroup interactions, including heightened self-awareness and vigilance, can influence the interpretations of these behaviors by majority and minority group behaviors as well as the more general attributions they make of the interaction.

Verbal and Nonverbal Behavior

When discrimination is discouraged, inhibited, or prohibited by social norms, situational constraints, or personal ideals, members of majority groups may not respond in an overtly prejudicial fashion; instead, they may be very likely to respond in a more subtly biased way. For instance, in a previous section, we reported that Dovidio et al. (2002) found that Whites with lower levels of self-reported (explicit) racial prejudice behaved in a more egalitarian way with Black and White partners in their verbal behaviors, but those participants with implicit biases displayed less positive nonverbal behaviors with Black than with White partners. Furthermore, whereas White participants' impressions of how friendly they behaved were correlated with the favorability of their verbal behaviors but not their nonverbal behaviors, their partners' impressions of the White person's friendliness were correlated with the nonverbal but not the verbal behaviors.

Hebl, Foster, Mannix, and Dovidio (2002) found parallel results, with more evidence of bias for subtle and spontaneous behaviors than for overt and formal actions, for another type of intergroup bias, the prejudice of potential employers toward gay men and lesbians. In this study, employers did not discriminate against confederates portrayed as gay or lesbian on formal employment behaviors, such as permission to complete a job application and callbacks for further consideration. However, bias was expressed more subtly in employers' interaction behaviors. That is, employers spent less time, used fewer words, and smiled less when interacting with the stigmatized applicants than the nonstigmatized applicants.

Moreover, similar to the results of Dovidio et al. (2002), applicants in the Hebl et al. (2002) study based their interpretations of the employers' behavior on the subtle cues. Confederates portrayed as gay perceived that employers were biased against them and anticipated discrimination from them—although no bias in actual employment actions were observed in the study. These findings further illustrate how members of majority groups and potential targets of prejudice can form different impressions of the same interaction, producing intergroup misunderstanding.

Assessment

Communication problems and misunderstandings may occur as a result of people's self-assessments, as well as their interpretations of others' behaviors, in intergroup

interactions. In particular, people experience heightened evaluative concerns during interracial interactions. In this section, we consider three implications of these heightened concerns on interracial misunderstandings. They can produce (a) paradoxical effects among majority group members, (b) misinterpretations by both majority and minority group members about how they appear to others, and (c) different attributions by minority and majority group members about the underlying causes of the other person's behavior during the interaction.

In terms of the potential paradoxical effects, interracial interaction is a highly demanding activity for majority group members, particularly among those who are motivated to behave in an unbiased manner and who genuinely strive to be nonprejudiced (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Shelton & Richeson, 2005). Richeson and colleagues have found across a series of studies that interracial interactions are very cognitively demanding experiences for Whites in general, which depletes their cognitive resources for subsequent intellectual tasks (Richeson et al., 2003; Richeson & Shelton, 2003). These effects are particularly pronounced when evaluative concerns are high, such as among Whites who are high in implicit prejudice (Richeson & Shelton, 2003) or when Whites receive feedback that they are responding in racially biased ways. For example, Richeson and Trawalter (2005) found that Whites who received false feedback that they were prejudiced against Blacks performed significantly worse on a cognitive task after an interracial interaction compared to Whites who had not received this type of feedback. The feedback did not influence Whites' performance on the cognitive task after a same-race interaction.

Additional research shows that Whites' concerns with appearing prejudiced result in negative affective reactions for Whites during interracial encounters (Devine, Evett, & Vasquez-Suson, 1996; Plant & Devine, 2003). Shelton (2003), for example, demonstrated that Whites who were instructed to try to not be prejudiced during an interracial interaction reported experiencing more anxiety compared to those who were not given these instructions.

The enhanced cognitive demand and increased anxiety that accompany the heightened evaluative concerns, particularly among majority group members low in prejudice, can lead these individuals to behave in ways that are the opposite of their desired or dominant response, ultimately creating confusion about who to trust during interracial interactions. Vorauer and Turpie (2004) illustrated this process in interactions between Whites and native North Americans (members of the First Nations) in Canada. Vorauer and Turpie found that among lower-prejudice Whites, those with lower evaluative concerns displayed a similar number of intimacy-building behaviors with First Nations and White interaction partners. Lower-prejudice participants with higher evaluative concerns, however, displayed fewer intimacy-building behaviors toward a First Nations, relative to a White, interaction partner. Among the higher-prejudice Whites, those with lower evaluative concerns displayed fewer intimacy-building behaviors with First Nations, relative to White, interaction partners; whereas higher-prejudice Whites with higher evaluative concerns displayed a similar number of intimacy-building behaviors with First Nations and White interaction partners. Taken together, these findings suggest that evaluative concerns can disrupt individuals' intended behaviors

toward outgroup members, such that lower-prejudiced Whites appear less friendly and higher-prejudiced Whites appear friendlier than one would predict from their racial attitudes alone.

As Vorauer and Turpie noted, these ironic behaviors could make it difficult for ethnic minorities to detect friend from foe. Indeed, Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, and Trawalter (2005) demonstrated that Blacks had a less favorable impression of a White partner with lower levels of implicit racial bias compared to a White partner with higher levels of automatic racial bias during an interracial interaction. In addition, consistent with Vorauer and Turpie's findings, Shelton et al. found that Blacks perceived Whites with higher levels of automatic racial bias as being more engaged during the interaction compared to Whites with lower levels of bias. Moreover, the more Blacks perceived their White partners as being engaged during the interaction, the more positively they evaluated them. More important, Blacks' perceptions of their White partners' engagement during the interaction mediated the relationship between Whites' automatic racial bias and Blacks' favorability ratings. Thus, heightened evaluative concerns can cause individuals to behave in ways counter to their dominant response, resulting in the potential for Whites and Blacks to misjudge one another.

A second consequence of heightened evaluative concerns during intergroup encounters involves misinterpretations by interactants about how they appear to others. That is, not only do members of majority and minority groups focus on different behaviors during interethnic interactions but they also magnify how their behaviors are likely to appear to outgroup individuals, a phenomenon that is referred to as signal amplification bias (Vorauer, 2005; Vorauer, Cameron, Holmes, & Pearce, 2003). In particular, people believe that their social overtures communicate more interest to potential partners than what is actually conveyed to their partners. Signal amplification bias is reported to be stronger in cross-race interactions than in same-race interactions because the former causes people to feel a heightened sense of self-awareness (Vorauer, 2005). That is, cross-race interactions cause people to feel self-conscious, which, in turn, leads people to feel that their internal desires and motives are transparent to others.

Signal amplification bias sets the stage for intergroup misunderstandings because people may anticipate their partners reciprocating overtures that, unfortunately, were never detected by their partner in the first place. If a White individual overestimates the level of interest and enthusiasm he is communicating about interacting with a Black individual, then he will expect his Black partner to reciprocate with an enthusiastic response if he, too, is interested in the interaction. The Black partner indeed may respond with a reciprocal response, but one that is reciprocal to the level of interest actually conveyed by his White interaction partner, not the level that the partner believes that he is conveying. Consequently, the Black individual's response will most likely be less enthusiastic than expected by the White partner. Such a measured response, furthermore, may not only be disappointing and considered a rejection experience, but it also may be taken as evidence of the ethnic minority individual's lack of interest in interracial contact, often producing divergent attributions for the avoidance of interracial contact (Shelton & Richeson, 2005).

A third consequence of heightened concerns during intergroup interaction relates to how these concerns influence the way participants interpret behaviors during the encounter. People who feel that their group is the target of prejudice are sensitive to cues of discrimination. With respect to Black-White relations in the United States, Blacks' daily encounters with potential discrimination may lead individuals to interpretations that confirm and reconfirm that prejudice exists and to label ambiguous behaviors as discriminatory (Operario & Fiske, 2001). Moreover, these tendencies may result in greater accuracy at detecting evidence of prejudice and discrimination, not inaccurate overreactions to suggestions of potential bias (Richeson & Shelton, 2005). For instance, in the Dovidio et al. (2002) study discussed earlier, although White participants were unaware of their level of implicit prejudice, the impressions of their Black partners were correlated with Whites' implicit prejudice. Similarly, using an alternative measure of implicit racial bias (based on attributions for the counter-stereotypical behavior of Black and White individuals), Sekaquaptewa, Espinoza, Thompson, Vargas, and von Hippel (2003) found that White participants' racial bias scores were correlated with Black experimenters' assessments of the positivity of their interactions with them (see also Fazio et al., 1995; McConnell & Leibold, 2001).

Additional research further reveals that Blacks and Whites may use different cues to detect the racial bias of Whites, or at the very least, they may have different thresholds for the presence of bias. Evidence of such racial differences in the perception of bias can be gleaned from studies examining the perceptual accuracy of racial bias detection (Richeson & Shelton, 2005; Rollman, 1978). Richeson and Shelton (2005) showed that Black judges (as a set) were better able to detect both the explicit and implicit racial bias levels of White individuals from 20 seconds of their nonverbal behavior during interracial interactions than were White judges. Specifically, Black judges' ratings of how positively a sample of White targets behaved during an interracial interaction were more highly correlated (albeit negatively) with those targets' automatic racial bias scores than the ratings made by White judges. Furthermore, Black judges' ratings of the White targets' prejudice levels were also more highly correlated with those targets' explicit prejudice scores than were the same ratings made by White judges.

In addition, when Whites and Blacks disagree in interracial interactions they may assess the situation as being less open to a solution than in same-race interactions. As Miller and Prentice (1999) observed, interpersonal interactions between members of different groups occur across a "category divide." For example, in discussing the style and format of a party, one person may have visions of a large, elaborate celebration whereas the other person may have visions of a quaint, intimate gathering. Although this difference may actually reflect individuals' personal styles, it may be mistaken for a broader cultural or ethnic difference. Miller and Prentice (1999) contend that this misunderstanding can be quite costly because once people label the difference as reflecting group differences, they believe it is virtually impossible to resolve the conflict.

The evaluation of the costs and benefits of interracial interaction reflects more than the separate assessments of how interactants perceived themselves and how

they view their partners. It critically involves the extent to which the participants' expectations, motivations, and actions are coordinated and complementary. For instance, minority group members, who have a central goal of being treated fairly, respond very negatively to interactions in which they perceive bias. Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, and Trawalter (2005) demonstrated that Blacks who were primed to expect racial prejudice prior to an interracial interaction liked their partner less, experienced more negative affect, and felt less authentic during the interaction than did Blacks who were not primed to expect prejudice toward them.

The impact of the expectation of prejudice by Blacks, however, has a quite different impact on Whites during the interracial interactions. Shelton (2003) reported that Whites enjoyed the interaction more and experienced less anxiety when their Black partner expected them to be prejudiced compared to when their partner did not have this expectation. Similarly, Shelton, Richeson, and Salvatore (2005) found that Whites who interacted with an ethnic minority individual who was primed to expect racial prejudice liked their partner more, experienced less negative affect, and enjoyed the interaction more than did Whites who interacted with an ethnic minority who was primed to expect prejudice against a different outgroup (i.e., elderly individuals). Thus, Blacks and Whites again demonstrate divergent responses in interracial interactions, which produce different interpretations and assessments of the interaction and reinforce intergroup misunderstandings.

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

As the literature on interracial interaction reveals, understanding others and getting along well in interracial interactions can be challenging. When dealing with outgroup members, people either tend to overgeneralize minor differences or fail to appreciate important differences between the self and outgroup members. In addition, in interracial encounters, people tend not to see similarities between the self and other; instead, they often perceive differences when none exist. Moreover, because of their cultural perspectives and experiences, people of different racial groups often have different perceptions of the same encounter. As a result, the inferences that individuals draw about and during interracial interactions frequently lead to misunderstandings, miscommunications, and conflicts. These misunderstandings produce divergent perceptions of the nature and quality of intergroup relations. For instance, in the United States, whereas the vast majority of Whites (69%) perceive that Blacks are treated "the same as Whites," the majority of Blacks (59%) report that Blacks are treated worse than Whites (Gallup, 2002).

Despite the formidable challenge of these misunderstandings and the processes that underlie them, there are strategies that individuals can adopt to allay such problems. Repeated contact, particularly when it involves common goals, personalized interaction, equal status, and supportive norms, are very effective at enhancing understanding and improving relations between members of different groups such as Blacks and Whites (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). Furthermore, work by Fiske and colleagues (see Fiske et al., 1999) suggests that individuating one's interaction partner, rather than seeing him or her as a member of a particular

outgroup, should lead to reduced stereotyping at the preinteraction stage, and, consequently, more placid interactions. Similarly, research by Gaertner, Dovidio, and colleagues suggests that finding a common group membership among the interactants improves attitudes toward the outgroup, promotes prosocial behavior, improves trust, and reduces emotional reactions in intergroup interactions (see Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). In addition, there are strategies that Whites and Blacks can adopt to help limit intergroup misunderstandings. Specifically, interracial interactions are less cognitively depleting for Whites when they enter the interaction with a promotion-focused goal, such as attempting to have a positive intercultural exchange, rather than a prevention-focused goal, such as attempting to suppress prejudice (Trawalter & Richeson, 2005). This strategy can reduce the strain of interracial interactions for both Whites and Blacks.

In conclusion, interpersonal interactions between members of different groups represent critical encounters that not only reflect contemporary group relations but also produce impressions and outcomes that reinforce these relations. As we have demonstrated, the history of race relations in the United States shapes how Blacks and Whites interact and, in concert with the psychological processes that promote intergroup bias, perpetuate intergroup distrust and misunderstanding. Thus, understanding how and why intergroup misunderstandings develop during interpersonal interactions can complement structural and intergroup approaches aimed at alleviating intergroup conflict and achieving stable harmonious intergroup relations.

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