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Chapter · January 2018

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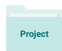
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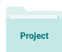
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3.2 Understanding bias in the workplace and strategies to combat it

Enrica N. Ruggs, Nicole T. Harrington, Derek Brown, Lauren S. Park, Christopher K. Marshburn, and Larry R. Martinez

Social groups that are valued in society generally reap benefits such as access to education, housing, and increased employment opportunities. On the other hand, social groups that are devalued experience stigmatization and marginalization, and they must overcome barriers to get access to the same opportunities as other social groups (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Although such barriers are institutional (e.g., built into societal systems) they are also perpetuated interpersonally. This perpetuation of devaluation is often referred to as bias, and it can manifest in several ways at the individual and interpersonal levels (Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002; Ruggs, Martinez, & Hebl, 2011).

Bias underlies discrimination, mistreatment, and incivility or rudeness toward others (Cortina, 2008). Within the workplace, discrimination and other forms of mistreatment can perpetuate systemic barriers by increasing exclusion of marginalized employees from certain positions and inequities between employees based on group membership. At the individual level, discrimination and mistreatment have been shown to be related to negative employee outcomes such as lower job satisfaction, lower organizational commitment, and increased turnover intentions (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013; Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008). Discrimination can lead to increased psychological distress and decreased overall health (Chrobot-Mason, Ragins, & Linnehan, 2013; Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2014; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009).

The expression of bias within organizations can create environments where individuals do not want to work, and it can ultimately hurt employees in organizations. As a result, it is important for organizations to understand why bias is perpetuated and how to effectively respond to bias. In this chapter, we first explore factors that influence bias at the individual level and then explore ways in which individuals and organizations can reduce the occurrence of bias in workplace settings. We begin by providing definitions of bias then move toward exploring why bias occurs.

Defining bias

Overt bias

Overt bias consists of negative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that people explicitly express toward individuals based on their group membership. Behavioral manifestations of overt bias occur in the form of discrimination that is often intentional. Such biases tend to be hostile towards those members of the out-group and lead to observable favoring of in-group members above all others (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004).

In the workplace, overt bias results in explicit discrimination that influences workplace decisions and outcomes. When people rely on overt bias, they allow stereotypes and prejudices to inform their judgments and decisions rather than focusing on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of an individual. This may take the form of differential treatment in hiring, firing, promoting, and/or receiving additional training and resources based on group membership. Both history and research detail how overt bias has led to explicit discrimination for multiple stigmatized populations including those based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and age. For instance, history shows the effects of overt racism leading to the exclusion of Black people from various parts of American society after slavery and prior to the Civil Rights Movement. Additionally, a study conducted by Ortiz and Roscigno (2009) found that women face higher levels of workplace discrimination than do men. Other research has shown that gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender individuals report higher levels of overt discrimination such as denial of employment or promotions and unequal pay and benefits due to their sexual orientations or gender identities (Badgett, Lau, Sears, & Ho, 2007).

During the last six decades in the United States, several federal anti-discrimination laws have passed to combat and regulate cases of overt workplace discrimination. Most notable is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employers from discriminating against employees based on sex, race, color, national origin, or religion and, later amended in 1978 to include pregnancy. Other anti-discrimination laws have since passed to protect additional stigmatized groups from discrimination such as the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1973 and Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. However, there are several stigmatized characteristics that remain unprotected by the federal law – including sexual orientation and weight. In the absence of federal laws aimed at protecting stigmatized groups from discrimination, states, cities, and local municipalities can develop laws to protect these individuals. However, this is not typically the case. For instance, only 24 out of the 50 states have laws protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) individuals from workplace discrimination. This means that it is legal to refuse to hire, promote, and even fire LGBT employees in 52 percent of states solely because of biased thinking.

Anti-discrimination laws have helped reduce the occurrence of illegal forms of overt discrimination in the workplace; however, such discrimination is not eradicated even when laws are in place. Evidence for this is seen in the high rates of discrimination cases filed and fought by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). In 2016 alone, the EEOC resolved over 97,000 discrimination cases and responded to over 700,000 inquiries (EEOC, 2017). In addition to discrimination, overt biases can manifest in other ways such as explicit expression of prejudicial attitudes. Overt biases can influence everyday interpersonal interactions and can take the forms of workplace harassment, bullying, and violence. Furthermore, such interactions can create a hostile work environment and ultimately lead to negative outcomes such as decreased job satisfaction, increased withdrawal behavior, and intent to quit (Cortina et al., 2013).

Subtle bias

Because many forms of overt bias and discrimination are illegal and/or no longer socially acceptable, we often see bias manifest in subtle behaviors. For instance, instead of overtly refusing to hire a woman because of her gender, a manager might instead display bias by consistently assigning women to secretarial tasks or ignoring a female coworker's opinions in meetings. Rather than open displays of prejudice, these biases are less obvious and characterized by behaviors that are often ambiguous and typically fall outside of the extent of law. Subtle bias can manifest in both verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Verbal forms of subtle bias may include using a negative or condescending tone of voice or using derogatory language. Nonverbal behavior may include acts such as lack of eye contact, rigid posture, lack of affirmative gestures, or keeping greater physical distance.

Subtle bias represents forms of discrimination that may be unintentional, difficult to recognize, and committed by those who truly believe themselves to be unbiased (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). As such, understanding and identifying when subtle discrimination occurs can be complicated – sometimes going unnoticed by both the perpetrator and the victim. For example, a male manager may unconsciously give male coworkers better evaluations than their female counterparts when no real differences exist. In many cases, the female coworker will never learn of the differential ratings. Other times, however, the victim may feel as if they are subjected to biased behavior but are unsure of the intent (e.g., it was just a slip of tongue, they're just having a bad day, he deserved the raise more).

In addition to its ambiguous nature, the discriminatory behaviors related to subtle bias can vary in both frequency and severity (Jones, Arena, Nittrouer, Alonso, & Lindsey, 2017). Biased behavior can range from a onetime derogatory remark made in a meeting to daily avoidance or mistreatment based on one's group membership. Throughout the organizational literature, numerous different constructs have been developed or advanced to describe such

subtle biases and discrimination. Some of these constructs include micro-aggressions (Sue et al., 2007), incivility (Cortina, 2008), interpersonal discrimination (Hebl et al., 2002), and aversive racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). Although researchers may use different constructs and terminology to describe variations in subtle bias, they all agree about the negative consequences of such biases. In a meta-analytic review conducted by Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, and Gray (2016), the consequences of subtle forms of discrimination were shown to be just as damaging for stigmatized individuals as were overt forms of discrimination.

Factors influencing bias

People's belief systems, personality traits, cognitive processing, and environment all play a role in the biases they possess and the extent to which those biases are expressed. Individuals who hold overt biases are aware of and can choose when to act on their beliefs. Conversely, subtle manifestations of bias, such as subtle discrimination, may be the result of either conscious or unconscious bias. Subtle biases stemming from unconscious or implicit prejudices can result in negative attitudes and behaviors towards certain groups or individuals. When unchecked, these beliefs can result in unfair employment discrimination towards marginalized group members affecting not only job trajectory but the everyday work environment as well (Fiske & Lee, 2008). Next, we discuss some of the factors that explain why bias persists.

Social dominance orientation

Social dominance theory presents social dominance orientation (SDO) as an individual trait that influences overt, explicit bias (Pratto et al., 1994). Individuals high in this orientation value in-group ties, seeing the out-group as a direct threat to their resources, firmly believing that some social groups, typically their own, are fundamentally superior to others. These individuals see hierarchies that establish superior and inferior groups as necessary to minimizing conflict and maintaining group order.

People high in SDO also tend to be those who belong to the high-status (vs. low-status) group. They are actively prejudiced against the "weaker" (low-status) groups often classified by minority status (e.g., gays and lesbians, racial minorities, non-native citizens) in order to maintain group-based dominance. Those who have a high SDO tend to endorse legitimizing belief systems that systematically disadvantage marginalized groups, whereas those who are lower in SDO often endorse policies and ideals that are related to equality. For example, high levels of SDO have been shown to be related to increased skepticism in women's ability to contribute in the workplace, hostile sexism toward women (Christopher & Wojda, 2008), and engaging in more workplace discrimination (Parkins,

Fishbein, & Ritchey, 2006). Another study found that people high in SDO (versus those low in SDO) were less likely to select a potential team member from a low-status group (Umphress, Simmons, Boswell, & Triana, 2008). Finally, another study found that across 20 countries, lower levels of SDO were related to endorsement of more women in leadership positions (Pratto et al., 2013).

The ideology of SDO allows people to maintain a sense of structure and order within the world around them, even if this structure negatively affects others. Within the labor market, as the presence of women and minorities in the workforce continues to rise, SDO may be one explanation as to why men are still the majority holders of prominent positions.

Right-wing authoritarianism

Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) is another attitudinal construct that predicts overt bias towards subordinate groups. Like SDO, individuals high in RWA have a sense of superior in-group belonging (Altemeyer, 1996). However, whereas individuals high in SDO may feel that their social identity is threatened and are prejudiced towards those in separate social classes or group categorizations, individuals high in authoritarian thinking may also hold contempt towards like-group members if they are perceived as holding controversial beliefs. People high in RWA place high value on conformity and loyalty and hold high respect for authority such as the police and government. Additionally, people high in RWA aim to protect their group's "collective" values. Accordingly, RWA is associated with a high degree of hostility towards non-likeminded, out-group members and it has been found to be related to prejudicial attitudes such as heterosexism and religious ethnocentrism (Gormley & Lopez, 2010).

RWA can lead to bias in the workplace, as people draw on these belief systems to inform attitudes and decision-making processes. People who are high on RWA have been shown to prefer traditional gender roles, and engage in benevolent sexism (Christopher & Wojda, 2008). This relation is problematic because it perpetuates sexist ideals and behaviors that affect gender biases in employment contexts. RWA also has been shown to be associated with prejudice and discrimination towards members of other marginalized groups such as those based on immigrant status, sexual orientation, and weight (Altemeyer, 2004; Kauff & Wagner, 2012; Crandall, 1995). For instance, one study found that those high (versus low) in RWA were less likely to hire obese candidates as well as more likely to rank these candidates less favorably compared to other applicants (O'Brien, Latner, Ebneter, & Hunter, 2013). Further, as with SDO, higher levels of RWA have been shown to be positively related to workplace discrimination (Parkins et al., 2006). This ideology has been shown to underlie prejudice, and therefore can affect how prejudice influences decisions and behavior, primarily toward individuals from marginalized groups ~~within the workplace~~.

Just-world beliefs

Introduced by Lerner in the 1960s, the belief in a just world (BJW) suggests that people get what they deserve in life (Lerner, 1980). Those who hold this belief look for and rely on alternative ways to rationalize injustices or inexplicable problems. When things occur that can be perceived as unjust, something must be done to restore justice. Rather than attributing a failure or even a success as happenstance, those high in BJW look for reasons to explain it away – often attributing it to some characteristic or fault of the person. Individuals high in BJW are more likely to adopt a 'blame the victim' mentality in which the 'victim' has done something to deserve what happened (e.g., she was wearing a provocative outfit and therefore she was asking to be sexually harassed). Similarly, those high in BJW are also more likely to assume that those who are successful are inherently good and have rightfully earned their positions in life (see Furnham, 2003).

Members of low-status groups are viewed as responsible for any social disparities that they may claim. Those who are high in BJW are therefore less likely to accept that workplace inequality and discrimination exist and may be more likely to engage in bias because they believe it is justified. For instance, one study found that BJW may lead to negatively biased hiring decisions against job applicants who have been laid off from a previous job (Monteith, Burns, Rupp, & Mihalec-Adkins, 2016). Another study found that managers who held higher (vs. lower) just-world beliefs were more likely to rate job applicants who had experienced unfairness at a previous company as less desirable than those without unfair treatment experiences (Skarlicki & Turner, 2014).

The ~~BWJ~~ tends to be more common in individuals who hold negative attitudes towards minority groups as well as in those with authoritarian and SDO beliefs. Thus, beliefs about hierarchy, status, and individual responsibility can all work together to influence bias and discrimination in organizations.

Protestant work ethic

The Protestant work ethic (PWE), or the belief that hard work is the predecessor to success, has been demonstrated as a core value in many Western nations (Rosenthal, Levy, & Moyer, 2011). As with the just world belief, those who value PWE hold the belief that one gets what they deserve in life and view failure as the result of some fault of the individual. In other words, success is believed to be under one's personal control. Those who value PWE expect their personal work to pay off and, in fact, tend to work harder for rewards and be more persistent than those who do not hold this belief (Miller & Konopaske, 2014). Further, because success is achieved through hard work, failure is the result of laziness. Historically, PWE has been associated with negative biases towards groups who are stigmatized and thought of as lazy (e.g., African Americans and individuals who are obese).

People who value PWE, however, do discern between different stigmatized groups. For instance, research shows that people who value PWE are less condemning of stigmas that are perceived as uncontrollable (e.g., race or gender) compared to stigmas that are perceived as controllable (e.g., obesity; Rosenthal et al., 2011). Importantly, valuing PWE in and of itself does not lead to negative biases toward stigmatized group members, and the relationship between PWE and negative bias may be culturally bound. In fact, a meta-analysis conducted by Rosenthal and colleagues (2011) found a stronger positive association between PWE and prejudice in countries that value personal responsibility and individualism (e.g., the United States and Canada) compared to non-Western countries with more collectivist values (e.g., India and Singapore). This cultural difference shows that the association between PWE and negative bias can be explained, in part, by people invoking PWE to justify intolerance towards marginalized groups (Levy, West, Ramirez, & Karafantis, 2006).

In the context of organizations, valuing PWE can create hostile work environments for stigmatized group members because it imposes limits on their ability to address or acknowledge unfair and biased treatment. For people who hold beliefs that are in line with PWE, disparate outcomes for stigmatized group members in the workplace could be viewed as reflecting a lack of effort or merit rather than discrimination (Eyer, 2011). When this is the case, people who experience discrimination and label unfair treatment as such are evaluated negatively. For instance, one study showed that when stigmatized group members attribute negative feedback from a biased evaluator to prejudice, they were subsequently derogated by people who valued PWE (see Major & Kaiser, 2005). High levels of PWE can ultimately influence the expression of bias toward employees from stigmatized groups, leading to consequences for employees and the organization.

Social categorization

Both overt and subtle biases are affected by social categorization. Many people show in-group preferences toward individuals who they perceive as similar to themselves (Billig & Tajfel, 1973). This is in line with Tajfel and Turner's (1979) theory of social identity, which posits that people are more likely to identify with certain social groups to which they perceive themselves to belong (in-group) and simultaneously disidentify from others. Discrimination and bias against members of the out-group can occur because people feel that they have more in common with in-group members and because people feel more comfortable working with others whom they perceive as similar to themselves. Labels differentiating in-groups from out-groups cultivate in-group favoritism as well as out-group distancing (Hogg & Terry, 2001).

Social categorization can lead to systematic favoritism towards the dominant social group (e.g., men) and discrimination towards those belonging to the minority or out-group (e.g., women). That is, although people are

programmed to prefer in-group members, people also categorize others into groups based on previously formed stereotypical attitudes and beliefs about groups and status. Axt, Ebersole, and Nosek (2014) demonstrated these effects of such group categorization. Specifically, they found that people evaluated those who were similar to themselves in terms of race, religion, and age more positively than those who were dissimilar. Interestingly though, after considering in-group preference, participants implicitly evaluated a similar out-group hierarchy where Whites were favored over Asians, followed by Blacks, and then Hispanics; Christians were favored over Jews, followed by Hindus or Buddhists, and then Muslims; and lastly, children were favored over young adults, followed by middle aged, and then older adults. These findings suggest that evaluations based on group categorization results from both perceived similarity and stereotypes and corresponding attitudes about groups.

In organizations, social categorization can lead to bias and discrimination as organizational members strive to maintain the status quo by continuing to exclude employees belonging to perceived lower statuses from advancement in the organization. Examples of how this leads to bias can be seen in Heilman's research (e.g., Heilman, 2001) examining gender roles and discrimination. Heilman (2001) proposed the Lack of Fit Theory, which states that women are perceived as less qualified for jobs traditionally perceived as stereotypically male-oriented such as leadership positions because women do not possess the characteristics perceived as necessary for such positions. This theory, which categorizes women and men in traditional gender roles, has been used to explain why women in positions that are perceived as more masculine are evaluated more negatively than women in positions perceived as less masculine (Lyness & Heilman, 2006).

Unconscious/implicit bias

As mentioned, although some people openly hold prejudicial beliefs, subtle acts of discrimination may be unintended and result from automatic responses to people based on group membership. Although deliberate decision making takes effort and time, we often rely on automatic cognitive processes that draw on *unconscious biases* when interacting with others and making judgments. Unfortunately, this can result in actions that go against one's own belief system, leading individuals who truly value equality to behave in ways that result in disparate treatment towards marginalized group members. There is some evidence of the effects of implicit bias on workplace discrimination. Indeed, within a selection context, studies have shown that recruiters and hiring managers with greater negative implicit bias toward obese individuals (Agerström & Rooth, 2011) and Arab-Muslim individuals (Rooth, 2010) were less likely to invite job applicants from these respective groups for an interview. Another study found that when the organizational climate is one in which racial bias is normative (versus not), implicit racist

attitudes lead to racial discrimination in hiring recommendations (Ziegert & Hanges, 2005).

Implicit biases may be particularly damaging for people within organizations because they lie below consciousness. For example, hiring and promotion decisions that are less favorable for marginalized group members may be evidence of discrimination. However, it is more difficult to confidently identify such biased outcomes as discrimination because the source of the discriminatory behavior is the decision, which may not include explicit or intentional bias. These biases are harder to recognize in the moment because individuals are not deliberately attempting to be discriminatory and may not even realize that they are making biased decisions or engaging in behaviors that unfairly disadvantage individuals based on group membership. Thus, it often takes a more comprehensive examination of a series of behaviors or decisions to find patterns that suggest implicit biases are leading to disadvantages. Although this may be time consuming in terms of recognizing some implicit biases, organizations likely have some archival data that may provide evidence of such patterns such as promotion data based on applicant pools.

Strategies for reducing workplace bias

Bias can manifest in multiple ways in organizational contexts and it can lead to negative consequences for those experiencing it. As discussed above, there are several cognitive and motivational factors that influence why people hold biases. Although biases exist and are difficult to completely eradicate, there are things that people and organizations can do to reduce and prevent the expression of bias in organizations. Next, we will discuss several strategies that individuals and organizations can engage in to minimize the presence and effect of bias in organizations.

Individual-level strategies

As we have reviewed, bias in the workplace occurs for a variety of reasons. Although it is difficult to completely eradicate all workplace bias, individuals and organizations can reduce it through active efforts. In this section, we describe several strategies that individual employees can engage in to reduce bias.

Confronting bias

Social psychologists have defined confrontation as "verbally or nonverbally expressing one's dissatisfaction with prejudicial and discriminatory treatment to the person who is responsible for the remark or behavior" (Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Hill, 2006, p. 67). Thus, confrontations are not necessarily hostile or ill-natured, as common nomenclature may suggest. In general, confronting prejudice has been shown to be an effective strategy for reducing

workplace bias (e.g., Ashburn-Nardo, Morris, & Goodwin, 2008; Good, Moss-Racusin, & Sanchez, 2012; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010).

Confrontation is purported to be effective for several reasons. First, confronting prejudice breaks the implied acceptance of bias that can result from not confronting (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Specifically, confronting bias communicates to the perpetrator, the target, and bystanders that bias is not socially acceptable and will not be tolerated. This is important given the power that minority influences can have in group settings (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonsen, 2010) and the importance of social influence in the workplace.

Second, confronting bias can elicit feelings of guilt among perpetrators, which has been shown to inspire less biased subsequent attitudes and behaviors (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). People typically strive to maintain an egalitarian self-concept, and experience dissatisfaction when confronted by information that may expose inconsistencies between their actions and this self-concept (Rokeach, 1973). Whether overt challenges or subtle actions, confronting can make people aware of their biases, which can motivate people to engage in prejudice reduction strategies in order to align their behaviors with their self-concept (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006; Good et al., 2012; Monteith, Ashburn-Nardo, Voils, & Czopp, 2002). Thus, confronting may provide interpersonal (e.g., changing coworker behavior) and cultural benefits (e.g., establishing egalitarian cultural norms) for organizations.

Third, confronting bias allows targets and allies to achieve a sense of control over the self and the situation (Swim & Thomas, 2006), as well as greater self-esteem and empowerment (Gervais, Hillard, & Vescio, 2010). Although the decision to confront bias may be empowering, the reactions of others may not always be positive. For example, individuals may respond to confrontations with anger and contempt, or by rejecting and ostracizing confronters (Czopp et al., 2006; Plant & Devine, 2001). Confronters who are targets of bias themselves may be perceived to be "crying prejudice" (Rasinski & Czopp, 2010), hypersensitive (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Kaiser & Miller, 2001), and less professional (Czopp et al., 2006). Allies, however, typically do not receive the negative backlash that targets do (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Hebl, Ruggs, Martinez, Trump-Steele, & Nittrouer, 2015; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010); thus, they likely have particularly powerful influence in successfully confronting and subsequently reducing bias at work.

Acknowledgment

Acknowledgment involves targets intentionally calling attention to readily apparent stigmatizing characteristics (i.e., body size, skin color, physical disability). Although this may seem counterintuitive, Davis (1961) theorized that explicit statements about one's stigma can help individuals "break through" the tense social interactions that stigmas can elicit, allowing the stigmatized

individual to be viewed without disdain or pity. Hastorf, Wildfogel, and Cassman (1979) provided some of the first empirical evidence of the effectiveness of this strategy when they found that participants preferred working with a disabled man who acknowledged his disability more than a disabled man who did not. More recently, researchers have found supportive evidence of acknowledgement strategies for racial/ethnic minority (Barron, Hebl, & King, 2011), obese (King, Shapiro, Hebl, Singletary, & Turner, 2006) and gay/lesbian employees (King, Reilly, & Hebl, 2008; Singletary & Hebl, 2009).

Disclosure

Targets of bias can also openly disclose stigmas that are not readily apparent to others (e.g., sexual orientation, chronic illness; Cain, 1991; Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005; Lyons et al., 2016; Martinez, White, Shapiro, & Hebl, 2016). Hidden stigmatizing characteristics can force employees to spend emotional and cognitive resources on managing their identities with decisions of whether, when, how, and to whom to disclose (Goffman, 1963; Ragins, 2008; Smart & Wegner, 2003). Although a great deal of research has shown that disclosure is related to positive intrapersonal workplace outcomes (e.g., more positive attitudes and less stress at work; Day & Schoenrade, 1997, 2000; Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins & Cornwell, 2010; Tejeda, 2006), other research indicates that there can be negative interpersonal outcomes (e.g., increased incidence of discrimination and harassment; D'Augelli & Grossman, 2001). Ultimately, the decision to disclose is a cost-benefit analysis of contextual factors that influence potential consequences.

Perspective-taking

Diversity researchers have found that education and awareness of workplace bias alone is insufficient for promoting equitable change (Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2012; Plant & Devine, 2009). In addition to awareness, feelings of empathy for others are also critical in bias reduction. One effective way of increasing empathy for others and reducing subsequent bias is by engaging in mindfulness and perspective-taking exercises in which individuals imagine their lives as someone else (e.g., Lueke & Gibson, 2015; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2003; Singletary & Hebl, 2009). For instance, Lindsey, King, Hebl, and Levine (2015) found that diversity trainings that required individuals to take the perspective of others had a lasting impact on diversity-related issues by enhancing individuals' internal motivations to respond without prejudice. Additionally, practicing mindfulness, the process of learning to cultivate awareness and view thoughts as feelings of transient events that are separated from the self, has been found to effectively reduce automatic bias (Lueke & Gibson, 2015) and reduce discrimination (Lueke & Gibson, 2016).

Social norms

Nonstigmatized employees typically outnumber minority employees. As such, nonstigmatized employees stand to determine the organizational climate and culture, and establish social norms within the organization. Employees can contribute to a discrimination-free, bias-free workplace environment by exhibiting supportive and positive attitudes towards minority employees. Furthermore, allies serving as advocates of disadvantaged employees have the ability to establish a social norm of acceptance and value of diversity among individuals within the organization. Together, these behaviors can equip allies to promote equitable and supportive work environments that condemn mistreatment and eradicate bias by establishing egalitarian social norms (Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994; Zitek & Hebl, 2007). Thus, the establishment of supportive social organizational norms may not only be an effective ally-centered workplace bias reduction tool, but may also effectively mitigate experiences of interpersonal discrimination (Hebl et al., 2015).

Organizational-level strategies

In addition to individual- and interpersonal-level strategies, empirical evidence suggests that structural changes can reduce bias. We discuss several organizational areas where strategies can be employed to reduce workplace bias.

Recruitment

Creating an organizational culture free of bias can start with individuals whose perceptions of organizational culture have not yet been formed: newly hired employees and potential future employees. Thus, it is important to set clear behavioral norms and make company policy widely known in recruitment materials and throughout the application process (Bell, Quick, & Cycyota, 2002). By stating organizational norms and policies in recruitment and application materials, the talent pipeline from which employees are selected is affected in two key ways: individuals who do not value diversity may be discouraged from the organization, and individuals who may have been targets of bias elsewhere will be encouraged to apply (Bell et al., 2002). In addition, active recruitment programs aimed to diversify the talent pipeline with individuals of marginalized identities have been shown to be successful (Dobbin & Kalev, 2013).

Organizational policies

Although zero-tolerance policies are not sufficient on their own for preventing bias, they are a necessary part of a workplace prevention program (Bell et al., 2002). These formal policies do not serve to create a bias-free culture, but set behavioral guidelines which deter potential harassers and encourage reporting of incidents of bias and harassment (Gruber & Smith, 1995). To

be effective, these policies should contain both clear definitions of bias, discrimination, and harassment, as well as their consequences (Dillon, 2012). Research by Hurley, Hutchinson, Bradbury, and Browne (2016) shows that the explanation and enforcement of consequences related to violations of diversity policies is vital to developing organizational trust. In a study of over 3,000 public sector employees, the majority of them felt distrustful of their organization due to a lack of prompt and appropriate enforcement of harassment policies. There was a strong perception that institutions not only tolerated bullying, but also would protect the perpetrator against allegations. Further, O'Leary-Kelly, Paetzold, and Griffin (2000) found that certainty of punishment for harassment and bias provides more effective prevention than simply the existence of a zero-tolerance policy.

Organizational climate

In order to most accurately tailor bias training to the specific needs of an organization, a needs-based assessment is necessary to understand the organization's current climate. These assessments should evaluate the current climate of harassment or bias, and then use these findings to inform training programs (Keyton, 1996). An analysis of both formal and informal practices best captures an organizational climate. First, the assessment should analyze current formal policies and procedures, as well as employee awareness of the policies and procedures regarding bias, harassment, and reporting incidents of either. Next, assessing norms and values of the organization reveals its organizational culture (Dillon, 2012).

In addition to the formal and informal assessments of the organization, exit interviews and third-party analyses are beneficial to capturing an honest source of information about the company's climate. Exit interviews are conducted with departing employees before they leave the organization in order to understand the reasons for the person's leaving. These interviews provide a source of honest, unbiased information about the organizational culture (Dillon, 2012). Additionally, third-party consulting firms are better able to get honest responses from employees, as they provide a confidential space with little possibility of retribution against the employee.

Training

Diversity and bias training should be heavily informed by organizational assessments. Regular training frequently reminds employees of the issue of bias and demonstrates that bias is as important as other issues for which training is often provided, such as health and safety (Bell et al., 2002). Buhler (1999) and Burley and Lessig (1999) outline four distinct areas that bias training should include. Specifically, training should explicitly describe (a) the organization's definitions of harassment and bias, (b) the policies the organization has in place related to harassment and bias, (c), how violations of these policies

should be reported, and (d) any updates on legislation and policy changes surrounding bias and harassment. In addition, Bell et al. (2002) recommends highlighting positive behaviors in the organization in order to reinforce norms regarding acceptable behaviors (such as those outlined in the previous section). It may also be beneficial to hold management-specific training in order to train management to predict, prevent, and react to incidents of harassment and bias within their organization.

Top management commitment

Members of top management such as executives and leaders play an important role in creating organizational cultures that are inclusive and handle bias incidents well. Strandmark and Rahm (2014) argue that management's continuous attention is the most important aspect in creating and maintaining an organization free from bias, as continuous attention provides a platform for discussion and prioritizes the issue. Consistent commitment to ending bias from top management not only reduces bias at the management level, but also models behaviors and attitudes for the entire organizational culture (O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996). The actions of top managers have a strong normative effect on the attitudes and behaviors of everyone else at work; thus, top managers play an integral role in shaping organizational culture (Schein, 1996). Leaders can use this role to promote a bias-free workplace through committing resources necessary for regular assessment and training and formulating and communicating relevant policies (Bell et al., 2002). In addition, management should further set an example by working to ensure that stigmatized individuals within the organization are not systematically relegated to lower status positions. For example, diversity initiatives have been most successful when management is responsible for advancing diversity efforts in recruitment and promoting women and minorities (Dobbin & Kalev, 2013). By engaging in practices that demonstrate commitment to diversity and bias-free organizations, leaders set the tone for how employees should behave and the type of behavior that will be tolerated at the organization. This standard setting is an integral step for developing a positive diversity climate that is not infected by bias.

Conclusion

Bias is pervasive in society and varies in expression from overt, explicit behaviors to subtler behaviors. Biased behavior has roots in value and belief systems, as well as attitudes that people may hold toward groups based on stereotypes. The expression of bias in the workplace can lead to negative consequences for targets of bias, work teams, organizational climate, and organizational diversity and inclusion. Thus, it is important to understand the mechanisms that lead to overt and subtle biased behaviors, and more importantly, strategies that can combat and reduce such behavior from occurring.

We highlight strategies that individuals who are targets of bias can engage in to reduce bias; however, we want to stress that the burden of responsibility for reducing bias should not be on targets alone. We urge other individuals to step up and serve as allies for those experiencing mistreatment in the work-place, as well as organizations to develop policies and practices that reduce bias and help create more inclusive workplaces.

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