

Accumulation of Advantage and Disadvantage

Or
Nibbled to Death by Ducks

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Accumulation of Advantage and Disadvantage

- Any one slight may seem minor, but since small imbalances and disadvantages accrue, they can have major consequences in
 - Salary
 - Promotion
 - Prestige
 - Advancement to leadership positions.
- “Mountains are molehills piled one on top of the other.” (Valian, 1998, p. 4)

Merton (1948) *Antioch Review*, 8, 193-210 and (1968) *Science*, 159, 56-63.
Valian (1998) *Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women*. Cambridge: MIT Press, p. 280.

If We Do Not Actively Intervene, The Cycle Reproduces Itself

Lowered success rate
▲

Accumulation of disadvantage
▲

Performance is underestimated
▲ ▲

Inertia

Schemas Evaluation bias Solo status/
▲ ▲ ▲
Lack of
critical mass

Abigail J Stewart, WIA III, 2009

How It Works

- Computer model of organization with 8 levels of hierarchy (Martell, Lane, & Emrich 1996).
 - initial staffing at bottom with equal numbers of men and women
 - over time, certain % are promoted to next level
 - put in bias of 1% in favor of promoting men
- After many series of promotions, top level was 65% men
 - → 1% difference translates to 15% difference in result

Valian 1998, p. 3

How It Works

- There is no unimportant small difference because they add to the total
- “success comes from creating and consolidating small gains – successful people seem to know this.”

Valian (1998) *Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women*. Cambridge: MIT Press

Unearned Advantage

- There exists a "line of justice" above which is the world of (unearned) privilege
 - creates subconscious mental attitudes of superiority and rightness
 - Below that line one is not "suffering from"; instead, above that line, one is "free of."
 - One just absorbs the ideas that come with being above/below the line of justice
 - Everyone usually has both types and both can be impediments in the workplace.

Dr. Peggy McIntosh; "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"
www.case.edu/president/aaction/UnpackingTheKnapsack.pdf

Unearned Advantage

- I can, if I wish, arrange to be in the company of people of my own race/gender most of the time.
- I can be pretty sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my race/gender.
- I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race/gender on trial.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group/gender.
- I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to the "person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race/gender.

Dr. Peggy McIntosh; "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"
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How Does it Affect Women?

- Schemas are hypotheses we use to interpret social events
- The highest levels of all prestigious professions are occupied primarily by men
- A professional woman operates within perceived discord between two schemas: female, and professional (male))
 - Can't be too feminine or masculine: increases schema mismatch

Valian (1998) *Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women*. Cambridge: MIT Press

How Does it Affect Women?



- Men are perceived as the norm against which women are measured
 - Behavior different than the norm requires explanation
 - More acceptable for women to take on masculine traits than for men to take on feminine traits
 - Men are compared to men in both male and female tasks: not seen as disadvantaged by sex
 - Women are compared to women for female tasks, but men for male tasks.

Valian (1998) *Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women*. Cambridge: MIT Press

How Does it Affect Women?



- Research shows that women benefit less from their accomplishments
 - Less benefit from the prestige of the institution where they get their training
 - Men get better jobs
 - Men are promoted more quickly
 - Men are tenured more quickly
 - Men make more money
 - Men are overrepresented at senior levels

Valian (1998) *Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women*. Cambridge: MIT Press

How Does it Affect Women?



- Man's success matches the masculine schema: easy to take credit
- Women's success matches masculine schema, so either
 - views herself as having masculine traits or
 - as having succeeded by luck or extraordinary effort
- Women see luck as more important for both success and failure relative to men

Valian (1998) *Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women*. Cambridge: MIT Press

Example: Meetings



- Most women start at a slight disadvantage
 - Less likely to be viewed as a serious professional
 - Ideas are less likely to be paid attention to: lose prestige – less likely to be listened to in the future

→ better to remain silent and accrue disadvantage more slowly
- explains observation that women speak less in public/professional settings than men do (Haslett, Geis, & Carter 1992)

Valian (1998) *Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women*. Cambridge: MIT Press

Why So Few? presents evidence that social and environmental factors contribute to the underrepresentation of women and girls in STEM.

Eight research findings in three areas:

- How social and environmental factors shape girls' achievements and interests in math and science
- The climate of college and university science and engineering departments
- Continuing influence of bias



Breaking through Barriers
for Women and Girls

Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics



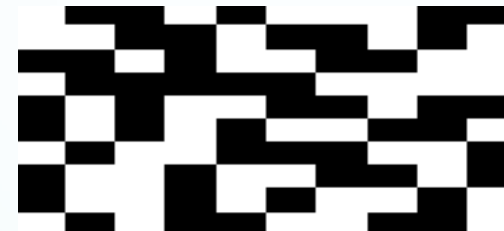
- Girls' achievements and interests in math and science are shaped by the environment around them.
- Webcast from the National Girls Collaborative Project:
<http://ngcproject.org/events/webcastarchive.cfm>
- To download the report: www.aauw.org

Finding



- Girls are "harder on themselves" when assessing their abilities in "male" fields like science and math

Gender differences in self-assessment



Does this rectangle have more black or more white?

Fictitious measure of "contrast-sensitivity ability"

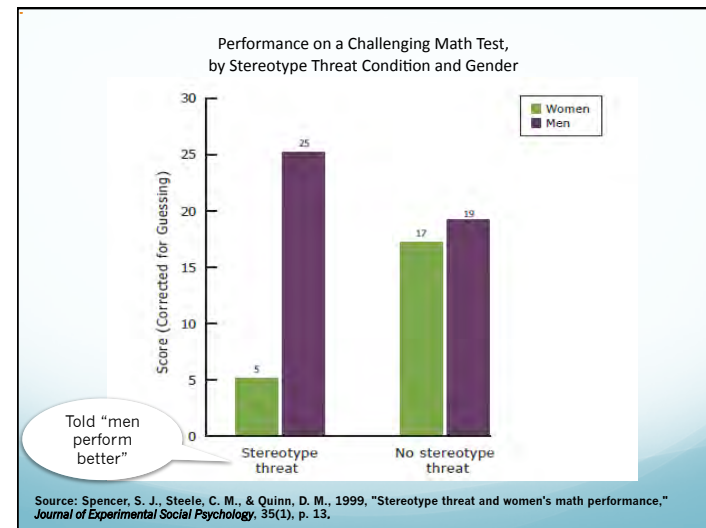


Findings

- Girls are “harder on themselves” when assessing their abilities in “male” fields like science and math
- Remedy:
 - Set clear performance standards
 - Help women recognize their career-relevant skills

Finding

- Negative stereotypes about girls’ and women’s abilities in math and science persist despite girls’ and women’s considerable gains in these areas in the last few decades
- Stereotype threat arises in situations where a person fears that her or his performance will be evaluated based on a negative stereotype.

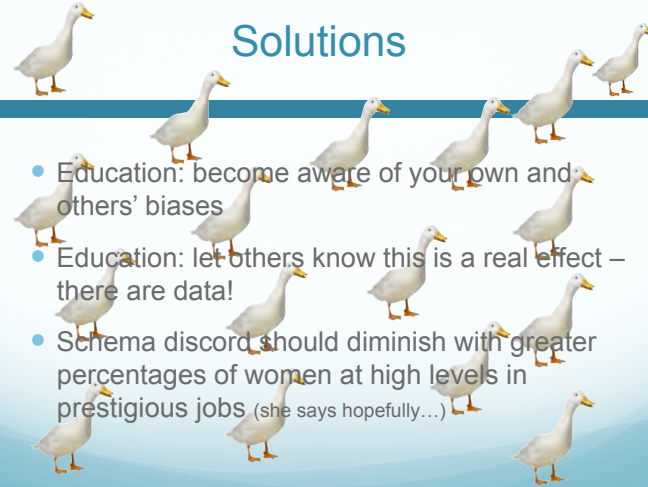


Finding



- Stereotype threat arises in situations where a person fears that her or his performance will be evaluated based on a negative stereotype.
- Remedy:
 - Expose girls to successful female role models in math and science.
 - Teach students about stereotype threat.

Solutions



- Education: become aware of your own and others' biases
- Education: let others know this is a real effect – there are data!
- Schema discord should diminish with greater percentages of women at high levels in prestigious jobs (she says hopefully...)