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)


If We Do Not Actively Intervene, The Cycle Reproduces Itself

Lowered success rate

Accumulation of disadvantage

Performed are underestimated

Schemas
Evaluation bias
Solo status/ Lack of critical mass

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.”


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.

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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

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.


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


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


Example: Meetings

- Most women start at a slight disadvantage
  - Less likely to 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)

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

Finding

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

Gender differences in self-assessment

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

Does this rectangle have more black or more white?

Fictitious measure of “contrast-sensitivity ability”
How high would you have to score to be convinced that you have high ability in this task?*

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…)