Prejudice as Context-Specific Evaluations: A Matter of Shifting Standards and Evaluative Dimension

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Introduction

Role Congruity Theory (RCT; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Diekman, 2005) posits that prejudice is an attitude-in-context. It is assumed that:

- Prejudice occurs in a context where a group’s stereotype is incongruent to the requirements of a social role (e.g., the female gender stereotype and the requirements for a leader role).
- Prejudice is an attitude that is characterized by a devaluation of a person or a group on characteristics that are seen as suitable for social success in a role (e.g., women are seen as lacking leadership abilities).

The Shifting Standards Model (SSM; Biernat, 2003) puts forward that stereotypes can affect judgments of individuals in two ways:

1. By default individuals are judged in comparison to their in-group’s stereotype (e.g., women are judged in comparison to the typical woman and men in comparison to the typical man).
2. Stereotyping and prejudice are revealed when members of negatively stereotyped groups are judged in comparison to more objective standards (e.g., a woman’s leadership ability in comparison to the typical leader).

For example, a man is less likely to be judged favorably if he is a female midwife: Comparing to the typical male role occupant, the role occupant will be evaluated less positively than individuals whose group’s stereotype is congruent to the social role requirements (Eagly, Koenig, & Diekman, 2008). This devaluation occurs on the dimensions that reflect the role requirements: warmth, nurturing, sincere, kind, likeable.

Extending Role Congruity Theory

Prejudicial judgments should occur:

- a. when a group’s stereotype is incongruent to social role requirements
- b. on characteristics that are relevant to social role requirements
- c. when the comparison standard is a typical role occupant and not the typical member of the target’s in-group

The Current Study

Gender and Sex-Typed Occupations

Characteristics for gender stereotypes and role requirements are aligned along the dimensions of agency, warmth, and competence (Eagly et al., 2002; Fiske et al., 2002; Koenig & Eagly, 2008; Williams & Best, 1991):

- Role requirements:
  - Male-typed occupations: high AGENCY, low WARMTH, high COMPETENCE
  - Female-typed occupations: high WARMTH, low AGENCY, low COMPETENCE

- Gender stereotypes:
  - Male stereotypes: high AGENCY, low WARMTH (competence irrelevant)
  - Female stereotypes: low AGENCY, high WARMTH (competence irrelevant)

Thus, stereotypes can be congruent or incongruent with role requirements. Congruence determines evaluative reactions, with incongruence as opposed to congruence leading to prejudice (i.e., more negative evaluations on dimensions that meet role requirements).

It was hypothesized that:

- In male-typed occupations, women would be devalued in comparison to men.
- In female-typed occupations, men would be devalued in comparison to women.
- When the comparison standard is the typical role occupant but not the typical woman/man

Results

1. Comparison Standard: Occupational Group

Gender Stereotypic Evaluations by Occupation Sex-type, Target Gender, and Evaluative Dimension

Results 2.Comparison Standard: Gender Group

Gender Stereotypic Evaluations by Occupation Sex-type, Target Gender, and Evaluative Dimension

Discussion

On the dimensions that reflect the occupational role requirements and in comparison to the typical role occupant but not in comparison to the typical woman/man:

- a. women in male-typed occupations were devalued when compared to men
- b. men in female-typed occupations were devalued when compared to women

Implications

- Individuals whose group’s stereotype is incongruent with a social role will be evaluated less positively than individuals whose group’s stereotype is congruent to the social role (Eagly, 2002; Diekman & Eagly, 2005).

Additional Aspects

When compared to the typical woman/man, women were judged as more agentic than men in female and male-typed occupations.

- An occupational role is generally associated with the male role (cf. Eagly et al., 2000). Possibly women in any occupation, no matter whether male-typed or female-typed, might have been ascribed more male-typed agentic traits than the typical woman.

References


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