

I'll See It When I Believe It ©

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 **Our Purpose**

- To look at some of the limitations which systematically make it difficult to engage in reasonable behavior.
- If you believe it is reasonable to act in a way that increases equality of employment opportunity,
- Then these limitations make the achievement of truly equal employment opportunity all the more difficult.

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 **The Pivotal Problem**

- Those persons in an organization whom we would most need to persuade
- To invest time and effort toward achieving EEO
- Are most committed to the idea that we already have EEO or, at most, we are nearly there.

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The Pivotal Problem

- So, advocates of EEO by definition are advocating change, that is,
- Things we need to do differently.
- As we shall see, change is not easy.
- Let's start with how we tend to react to "non-preferred" information.

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Asymmetric Skepticism



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Good vs. Bad News

- Participants in a study were told about a medical condition called "TAA Deficiency."
- It was said to be related to various pancreatic disorders.
- Supposedly, about 6 months earlier, a type of paper was developed that was sensitive to the presence of TAA (thioamine acetylase) in saliva.

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Good vs. Bad News

- They were told, if the paper detected no TAA, it remained yellow. If TAA were present, the paper turned green.
- Subjects were then told how to self-administer the test.
- After placing a small amount of saliva in a cup, they were to rub a strip of test paper over the saliva.
- Each "test" session was videotaped.

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7



Good vs. Bad News

- 4 of 22 persons (**18%**) who received good news, carried out a retest.
- 13 of 25 persons (**52%**) who received bad news retested themselves.
- 3 of the 13 used a second piece of paper; 4 used a second sample of saliva.
- Other actions included placing the paper on one's tongue, multiple redipping of the strip (up to 12 times), shaking, wiping, blowing on the test paper.

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8



Good vs. Bad News

- Those with the fictitious TAA deficiency, tended to rate the test itself as less accurate than those without the deficiency.
- They tended to downplay the seriousness of the medical condition itself.
- Peter H. Ditto and David F. Lopez, (1992) "Motivated Skepticism: Use of Differential Decision Criteria for Preferred and Nonpreferred Conclusions", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (Vol. 63, 568-584)

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9

 **Asymmetric Skepticism: First Limit to Reason**

- *We tend to hold information inconsistent with what we expect to a much higher evidentiary standard than information which accords with what we expect.*
- *We tend to minimize the accuracy and/or significance of information we do not prefer.*

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 **Implications for Achieving EEO**

- Those who are comfortable with the status quo are biased toward maintaining it,
- And will actively seek out reasons for questioning the asserted need for EEO, its value to the organization and so forth.
- Evidence that suggests change or effort is needed will be held to an **exacting** standard of proof.

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 **The Daily "ME"**



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Feeling Validated vs. Being Correct

- ❖ "Understanding how people strive to *feel* validated versus to *be* correct is critical to explicating how they select information about an issue when several alternatives are present." (p.555)
- ❖ "People are almost two times more likely to select information congenial rather than uncongenial to their pre-existing beliefs." (p.579)
- ❖ "Defense motivation enhances the congeniality bias." (p. 581)



Feeling Validated vs. Being Correct

- A stronger confirmation bias was found for sensitive political and social issues.
- Info from a high-quality source was more threatening. (p.576)
- William Hart *et al.*, (2009) "Feeling Validated Versus Being Correct: A Meta-Analysis of Selective Exposure to Information," *Psychological Bulletin* (Vol. 135, 555-588)



The Need to Feel Validated: 2nd Limit to Reason

- People tend to actively seek out confirming/congenial information and avoid disconfirming data. In this case, the notion that changes in attitude and behavior are needed.
- The harder it is to blow off the source of the dissonant information, the harder we try to avoid it.



The Implications for Achieving EEO

- We must not underestimate how disturbing change is for many persons.
- A desire to be accurate, to “get it right”, to base decisions on the best information must become an essential cultural goal if change is to occur.
- It’s wise to “sell” EEO.
- “Selling” EEO requires making its benefits to the person you want to persuade clear and compelling.

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16



Feelings



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17



The “Affect” Heuristic or Shortcut

- Affect is defined as a background feeling that something is good or bad.
- “All of the images in people’s minds are tagged or marked to varying degrees with affect....”
- “Using an overall, readily available affective impression can be easier... than weighing the pros and cons of various reasons” when making a judgment.
- Paul Slovic *et al.*, (2002) “Risk as Analysis and Risk as Feelings,” Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the Society For Risk Analysis

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18



Asymmetric Reasoning

- fMRI studies of brain use while viewing information showed that committed Republicans and Democrats focused on information favorable to their candidate or unfavorable to his opponent in 2004.
- But ignored information unfavorable to their candidate or favorable to his opponent lighting up areas of the brain associated with fear.
- Both "consistently denied obvious contradictions for their own candidate but detected contradictions in the opposing candidate's statements."

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Asymmetric Reasoning

- "The result is that partisan beliefs are calcified, and the person can learn very little from new data."
- "Everyone from executives and judges to scientists and politicians may reason to emotionally biased judgments when they have a vested interest in how to interpret 'the facts'."
- Drew Westen *et al.*, (2006) "Neural Bases of Motivated Reasoning: An fMRI Study of Emotional Constraints on Partisan Political Judgment in the 2004 Presidential Election," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* (Vol. 18, 1947-1958)

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Feelings Trump Reasons



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Feelings Trump Reasons

- Gloria Rosel, a housekeeper, left a residence in Harrison, NY by driving her 2005 Prius down a driveway toward the street.
- She reported sudden acceleration despite her best efforts to stomp on the brake pedal and the car crashed into a wall.
- The police investigated.

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22



Feelings Trump Reasons

- The car's 'black box' proved that she had never engaged the brake but, instead, had floored the accelerator.
- Ms. Rosel remains convinced she had not depressed the accelerator.
- Police Chief Anthony Marraccini commented, "We do see these accidents on occasion. When a driver believes they are on the brake pedal, they believe it."
- CNN.com, March 23, 2010. See Robert A. Burton, *On Being Certain: Believing You Are Right Even When You're Not* (2008) (St. Martin's Press: New York)

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23



Background Feelings As Filter: 3rd Limit to Reason

- Every sensation is evaluated before it is perceived.
- The evaluation process is unconscious.
- Change often feels risky/bad/something suspect and to be avoided.
- Highly motivated people can move beyond "gut feel" to analysis but how do we motivate them to do so?

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24



Implications for Achieving EEO

- It is wise to implicitly address the affect heuristic by visualizing what true EEO would feel like.
- In other words, it is emotional benefits we are addressing here.
- What would true EEO feel like?
- How do we know when we have achieved true EEO?

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25



Other Defense Mechanisms



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26



Attacking the Source of the Information



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27



Reactive Devaluation

- Israeli Jews evaluated a peace proposal [which was actually put forward by its own government] less favorably when it was attributed to the Palestinians than when it was said to be an Israeli proposal.
- Labeling an expensive wine as though it were a cheap wine changes its taste.
- Generic placebo aspirin relieves pain less well than a brand name placebo aspirin though neither contains any analgesia.
- Ifat Maoz *et al.* (2002) "Reactive Devaluation of an 'Israeli' vs. 'Palestinian' Peace Proposal," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Vol. 46, 515-546)



Avoiding Analysis by Devaluing the Source: 4th Limit to Reason

- Humans have difficulty considering the merits of a position apart from the "side" offering the position.
- We have a tendency to address the validity of content by devaluing its source if the content makes us uncomfortable.



Implications For Achieving EEO

- Choose your messengers carefully.
- Make it as difficult as possible to discount the message by discounting the messenger.
- This is why former smokers espouse the virtues of quitting, people wearing white coats recommend a cold remedy, a former Presidential candidate endorses Viagra.

 **Selective Mining and Use of Data**



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 **Selective Use of Information: Affirmative Action**

- White students at U.Cal. Berkeley were asked to comment on A/A.
- Typically, they highlighted the unfairness to minority students who are put in a demanding university with limited ability/preparation.
- The social and educational value of a diverse student body was downplayed by them.

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 **Selective Use of Information: Affirmative Action**

- The same students were asked to comment on the relative success of Asian and Asian-American students.
- They highlighted the Asian and Asian-American students' extreme studiousness as well as their failure to take part in social interactions which were now characterized as vital to the academic experience.

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Selective Use of Information: Affirmative Action

- “They study so much, they don’t really have a life.”
- “If you come to Berkeley solely for the education you get in the classroom, then you’re missing the big part.” (235)
- David Wellman, *Portraits of White Racism* (1993) (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, New York & Melbourne)

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Data Mining: 5th Limit to Reason

- Humans are quite good at the inconsistent use of the same information as part of defending their position.
- The methods, facts, anecdotes used to produce the nonpreferred information are attacked as less valid than an alternative approach (without any necessary evidence that the alternative would produce different results).

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Implications for Achieving EEO

- It is very difficult to persuade another person to agree with non-preferred information based on **what** we say.
- **How** we say it is more important because it opens the door to listening.
- One effective selling technique is to build up the other’s ego before introducing the message.
- Joshua Correll *et al.*, (2004) “An Affirmed Self and an Open Mind: Self-Affirmation and Sensitivity to Argument Strength,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 40, 350-356)

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 **Inequality Is Natural**



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 **System Justification**

- The way things are is the way they should be.
- I reached my position through hard work and individual merit.
- We live in a meritocracy.
- How do those who believe this arrive at these conclusions?

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 **Unlikely Self-Assessment: The Better than Average Bias**

- In 1976, the ETS surveyed over one million High School seniors.
- 70% thought they were above average in leadership ability. Only 2% thought they were below average.
- **Every senior** thought (s)he was above average in ability to get along well with others.

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Unlikely Self-Assessment: The Better than Average Bias

- 60% thought they were in the top 10%.
- 25% thought they were in the top 1%.
- Research consistently finds that people view themselves as better than average drivers, more fair-minded, less prejudiced, less susceptible to deceptive ads, etc.
- Thomas Gilovich, (1991) *How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reason In Everyday Life*, (The Free Press: New York, NY)

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40



Unlikely Self-Assessment: The Better than Average Bias

- "In general, people's self-views hold only a tenuous to modest relationship with their actual behavior and performance...."
- In the workplace, flawed self-assessments arise all the way up the corporate ladder. Employees tend to overestimate their skill, making it difficult to give meaningful feedback....
- The act of self-assessment is an intrinsically difficult task." (p.69)

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41



Self-Assessment: I Earned What I Have

- "People also define competence in a way that places their own performance in the best possible light. For tasks with multiple components, people neglect what they do poorly, focusing instead on what they do adequately or well."
- David Dunning *et al.*, (2004) "Flawed Self-Assessment: Implications For Health, Education, and the Workplace," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, Vol.5, No.3, 69-106.

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42



Value Asymmetry: The Endowment Effect

- People routinely demand more money to give up something they have than they would be willing to pay to acquire the same item.
- Whatever we possess rises in value because we have it. (See, e.g., the lottery ticket studies.)
- Ultimately, this tendency supports the “status quo bias.” Daniel Kahneman *et al.*, (1991) “Anomalies: The Endowment Effect, Loss Aversion and Status Quo Bias,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol.5, No.1, 193-206.

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43



System Justification: 6th Limit to Reason

- The defense of the status quo is often based upon a skewed notion that we “played by the rules” and “lifted ourselves up”.
- Our ability to see our performance and qualifications as others see them is quite limited.
- And EEO is seen as undermining a system based on merit.

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44



Implications for Achieving EEO

- It is unwise to attack the status quo.
- Instead, teach EEO through vignettes of realistically portrayed people of obvious skill and job-related attitudes who “made it” as a result of some aspect of the effort to create EEO.
- E.G., transparent promotion requirements that a person could prepare for or early mentoring and networking or increased child-care options, flexible work schedules etc.

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45



**The message: True EEO
Made the Difference for
these actual people!**

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System Justification II: Internalization

- In *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*, Barbara Ehrenreich worked a series of low wage jobs.
- In one, she worked 50 hours a week (for 40 hours pay) cleaning houses of well-off persons . On her last day, she asks her fellow crew members a question.

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System Justification II: Internalization

- "How do they feel... about the owners, who have so much while others, like themselves, are just getting by? This is the answer from Lori, who at 24 has a serious disk problem and an \$8,000 credit card debt: 'All I can think of is like, wow, I'd like to have this stuff someday. It motivates me and I don't feel the slightest resentment because, you know, it's my goal to get to where they are.'" (p.118)

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System Justification II: Internalization

- "Jost and colleagues have found that lower status groups have a remarkable capacity to rationalize what goes against their self-interests, internalize limiting stereotypes, and find legitimacy in the very inequalities that hold them back."
- John T. Jost *et al.*, (2004) "A Decade of System Justification Theory: Accumulated Evidence of Conscious and Unconscious Bolstering of the Status Quo," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 25, No.6, 881-919.



Internalization of "The Way Things Are": 7th Limit to Reason

- The very persons who we strive to attract to the employment opportunities EEO opens up for them are susceptible to a passive acceptance of their lot.
- Not having imagined themselves in your workforce, especially at a given level, they fail to prepare for or apply to get access to these opportunities.



Implications For Achieving EEO

- Affirmatively extending the scope of recruitment efforts may need to also include extending the depth of the recruitment effort.
- Intervention at the early high-school (or even Middle School) level may well be needed to convince potential applicants to "see" the opportunities you have to offer and to believe in the value of preparing for them.



False Consensus Effect I: Naive Realism



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Naive Realism: Asymmetric Introspection

- The defining feature of naive realism is the conviction that one sees and responds to the world objectively or "as it is," and others see it and respond to it differently only to the extent that they have a mistaken perspective or some form of bias.
- **My** life experiences enrich my understanding of a situation. They improve my objectivity.
- **Your** experiences produce self-interest and bias you toward support for your own agenda.

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Naive Realism

- Differences of opinion are attributed to the other's persistent irrationality.
- Conflicts are frequent and made more severe.
- Settlements offered by me should be accepted because all right-thinking people see the world my way.
- Emily Pronin *et al.*, (2004) "Objectivity in the Eye of the Beholder: Divergent Perceptions of Bias in Self Versus Others," *Psychological Review*, Vol. 111, No. 3, 781-799.

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False Consensus Effect II: Self-Induced Silence

- On July 13, 1942, the 500 men of the 101st German Reserve Police Battalion were told they were to massacre over a thousand Jews in a nearby village. All were children, women or older persons.
- Their Major, with tears in his eyes, offered them the chance to refuse; no questions asked.
- 12 did so. The rest obeyed.
- Christopher Browning, (1998) *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and The Final Solution in Poland*, 2nd ed. (Harper Collins: New York, NY)

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55



False Consensus Effect II: Self-Induced Silence

- The men who obeyed were in their 40's and 50's, raised in a pre-Nazi era.
- They were from Hamburg, one of the least nazified cities in Germany.
- They had no military career to worry about.
- Browning's conclusion? Simply put, **they did not want to stand apart.**

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56



False Consensus Effects: 8th Limit to Reason

- Belonging, the importance of identifying and conforming to a group of like-minded associates, is a factor which underlies conformity to group norms.
- It supports imitation, a powerful source of learning.
- **So few** in the group **advocate for change** that I come to believe everyone in the group agrees.
- Or I simply assume everyone thinks as I do.

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57



Implications For Achieving EEO

- For a particular change to occur, it has to be socially validated.
- That is, a critical number of people or the kind of people whose opinions you trust or respect have to openly advocate for the change.
- E.g., when a racist joke is cracked, even in an all-white group, someone has to speak out.

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False Polarization: A Consequence of Naïve Realism

- People tend to exaggerate how dissimilar they are from persons with a different perspective.
- E.g., regarding affirmative action, opponents greatly overestimate the liberalness or conservatism of their "opponents."
- They overestimate their own flexibility and the consistency of the other's views on other issues.

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False Polarization: A Consequence of Naïve Realism

- When exposed to the actual views and assumptions of their opponents as well as a fuller array of their opinions, both sides become much more optimistic about resolving differences.
- David K. Sherman *et al.*, (2003) "Naïve Realism and Affirmative Action: Adversaries Are More Similar Than They Think," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* (Vol. 25, No. 4) 275-289.

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Implications For Achieving EEO

- It is vital to create settings or events where it is safe to talk about staff concerns broadly related to EEO issues.
- Contacts between groups that are equal in the context of the event, are sanctioned by authority and non-trivial are effective.
- Pettigrew, T.F. & Tropp, L.R. (2006) "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychiatry* (Vol. 90) 751-783.

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61



Loss Aversion

Change as something I will lose.



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62



Loss Aversion: 9th Limit to Reason

- Many different studies show that people are generally more aware of the possibility of loss in a situation.
- In other words, the changes needed to achieve EEO (whatever they may be) are framed as potentially damaging to me.
- However remote and unlikely this is, I am concerned. Think of the recent demonstrations regarding health care reform.

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63



Implications For Achieving EEO

- It is important to **frame** the changes related to achieving EEO as a series of benefits and gains in which we will all likely share.
- E.g., more transparent promotional qualifications, better designed individual development plans, more effective complaint procedures, removal of arbitrary barriers to job satisfaction.

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Ambiguity and Stereotypical Thinking



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Motivated Perception: Seeing What We Want to See

- The more ambiguous the stimulus, the more we are likely to interpret it in a way that is consistent with our expectations (i.e., biases).
- Ambiguous terms can be defined in a variety of ways. We will choose a definition that makes us look good, doesn't upset us or otherwise conforms to our preferred view.
- Balcitis, E. & Dunning, D. (2006). "See What You Want to See: Motivational Influences on Visual Perception," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, (Vol. 91) 612-625.

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 OJ or Veggie Shake? Letter or Number?



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 OJ or Veggie Shake? Land or Sea Animal?



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 Biased Inference Aided By Ambiguity:
10th Limit to reason

- *EEO is an inherently ambiguous idea.*
- *We take from it what we wish.*
- If we are to change attitudes toward the investments of time and effort needed to achieve EEO, we need to be particularly clear about what we mean by the notion of EEO whenever we use the term.

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Implications for Achieving EEO

- When EEO is presented as an organizational value, a factor in a decision process or a strategic necessity, it has to be anchored in clear and concrete terms to a particular situation or context.
- People seeing EEO operationalized in a particular context are much better able to find grounds on which to accept its validity in that context.
- Do not seek acceptance of generalized EEO.

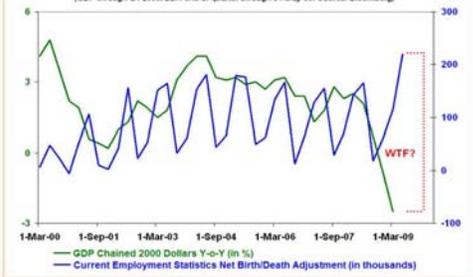
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70



A Failure to Connect With Numbers

U.S. Employment Net Birth/Death Adjustment vs. Gross Domestic Product
(GDP through Q1 2009, BDA end-of-quarter through 31-May-09; Source: Bloomberg)



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71



Innumeracy

- Most human beings don't "get" statistical arguments such as those describing underutilization.
- They are generally uncomfortable with arrays of numbers.
- Gerd Gigerenzer *et al.* (2007) "Helping Doctors and Patients Make Sense of Health Statistics," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* (Vol. 8, No.2) 53-96.

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72



Innumeracy

- People tend to view numerical goals as quotas.
- "Although it is urged that... 'goals' should be treated differently than obligatory set-asides... we do not think it matters whether a government hiring program imposes hard quotas, soft quotas or goals. Any one of these techniques induces an employer to hire with one eye toward meeting the numerical target. As such, they can and surely will result in individuals being granted a privilege because of their race." Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod v. FCC (141 F3d 344) D.C. Cir., 1998)

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73



Innumeracy

- Numbers are unpersuasive.
- So, studies demonstrating bias through unequal numerical outcomes don't alter behavior by themselves.
- Charts, graphs, annual data are understood but not remembered as well as narratives.

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74



Implications For Achieving EEO

- While quantitative analysis and the measurement of outcomes are necessary to barrier identification, monitoring progress toward achieving EEO, recalibrating recruitment efforts, and measuring the impact of selection procedures, they will not aid you and may even hurt you in your attempt to persuade individual employees that investing in EEO is good for everyone, including them.

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75



Abstract Thinking: The 12th Limit to Reason



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The Nature of Stereotypes

- Stereotypes are mental models built on categorical thinking.
- They are designed to be relatively abstract, to strip away individuating information about you
- And treat you as a **type or kind** of person.
- Their function is to resolve ambiguity and store information in manageable bundles, called "schemas."

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Individuating Information

- However, the more I see you as an individual, the less your group characteristics distort my thinking.
- "We have characterized the (average person) as being **highly responsive to concrete, vivid and anecdotal information**... (This) has clear implications for educational strategy in general and for educating people about inferential... shortcomings in particular." (Page 281-2)
- Richard Nisbet & Lee Ross (1980) *Human Inference: Strategies and Shortcomings of Social Judgment* (Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ)

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Implications For Achieving EEO

- At the level where you seek to persuade staff of the values of true EEO, you want to be concrete, anecdotal and anchored in vivid, human detail.
- We are truly “all in it together.” But human beings need to feel the connection not simply know it.

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Implications for Achieving EEO

- **To persuade, to alter attitudes and behavior, the first-level supervisor is the key person you must train effectively.**



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Applying These Insights to EEO Issues

- Harassment
- Selection
- Performance Evaluation
- Voicing Complaints of all Kinds
- Retaliation
- Conflict Resolution
- Innovation, Problem Solving

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Thank You



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82
