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The dark side of subtle discrimination : how targets respond to different forms of discrimination

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The Dark Side of Subtle Discrimination

How targets respond to different forms of discrimination

This thesis investigates the role of several individual and social factors (i.e., personal self-esteem, social norms and social influence) that directly affect how people deal with uncertainty, in reaction to blatant versus subtle discrimination. While responses to blatant discrimination were not affected by any of these factors, these factors determined to a significant degree responses to subtle discrimination.

The main idea throughout the thesis is that blatant discrimination involves a clear rejection situation. Because of this clarity, the factors that are addressed in this dissertation are not expected to determine responses to this type of unfair group-based treatment. However, when situational cues fail to indicate the cause of the negative outcome such as in case of subtle discrimination, targets are more dependent on their level of self-esteem, the tolerance of social norms, and the opinion of others regarding the discriminatory treatment.

This thesis provides us with insightful information about responses to multi-interpretable rejection situations where people are unsure about whether the negative treatment is due to their individual qualities or due to the prejudice the other holds about their social group. Furthermore, the thesis clarifies why group-based rejection can sometimes have negative and at other times have positive consequences by comparing responses of the targets to blatant and subtle discrimination.



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