SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON INDIVIDUALS IN ORGANIZATIONS
(Chia-Jung Tsay)

Additional Readings for Week 8 (November 6)

Note: Please try to read all three starred readings. The unstarred readings are valuable but optional.

Mere exposure and effects on attitude


Social facilitation and physiological responses to challenge versus threat states


The affective revolution: Affect in groups


Group identity salience and shifts in performance


Discussion Questions

1. Hackman discusses two types of stimuli (ambient and discretionary) and three types of group effects (informational states or beliefs/knowledge, affective states/attitudes, and behaviors). In considering the findings on the effects of discretionary stimuli on informational and affective states, and in light of the balance towards research on discretionary over ambient stimuli, the conclusion was that groups have stronger influences on beliefs over attitudes.
   a. Given some of the more recent trends in this literature, how might you design studies on the effects of ambient stimuli in each of the three proposed mechanisms:
      - changing behavior, then affect/attitudes
      - changing beliefs, then affect/attitudes
      - changing affect/attitudes directly
   b. The Bornstein and D’Agostino work suggests that stimuli perceived without awareness produce significantly larger exposure effects. How does this inform the previous research on the ways in which group-based stimuli may affect individuals?

2. The Shih, Pittinsky, and Ambady work found that the activation of stereotyped identities can influence performance. More recent work by Mendes suggests that individuals who show different levels of racial bias may experience social facilitation or more detrimental effects. How do we distinguish between the effects due to awareness of stereotypes associated with sociocultural categories (that even those outside of categories would possess), and those due to the level of identification with certain categories?

3. Some have argued that indirect measures have thus far revealed few outcomes for which there is strong predictive validity. How have the increased interest and development of indirect measures such as the Implicit Association Test (IAT) and physiological measures advanced our understanding of the role of ambient stimuli in influencing individuals? How might researchers begin to tease apart the effects of ambient stimuli from those of discretionary stimuli?

4. Barsade’s work on group emotional contagion calls attention to the influence on individual-level attitudes and group processes.
   a. What would you hypothesize may be some issues in generalizing from the findings in studies with experimental mood induction methodologies to organizations where moods and emotions co-exist? How might you distinguish between the effects of emotions versus moods in considering the two types of stimuli discussed earlier?
   b. What might the work by Mendes suggest for the role of differential physiological feedback in intergroup contexts, in moderating the efficacy of emotional contagion? Based on the readings in this section, in what contexts may emotional contagion be facilitated, and in which would it be constrained?

5. Note that many of the readings assigned on the previous page are experimental studies of the kind more commonly found in the social psychology literature than in organizational behavior journals. What do you see as the main differences in assumptions, methodologies, and findings across these two scholarly traditions? What are the special strengths and vulnerabilities of each approach? To what extent is “crossover” between them (a) possible, and (b) likely to be useful?