

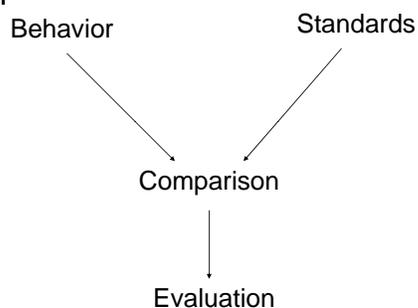
When performance begins to slip: How bias affects termination decisions

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Performance appraisal and judgment

- o "Appraising people is a matter of judging them, not simply measuring them as if they were to be fitted for new clothes" (Folger, Konovsky, & Cropanzano, 1992, p. 171).

Processes involved in evaluation



Shifting standards model of stereotyping

- o Stereotypes activate judgment standards
- o Standard: an internal rule for judging performance
- o Judgments of individual members of stereotyped groups are made relative to within-category judgment standards

Types of standards

- o Minimum standard: *suspicion* that a person has an attribute
- o Confirmatory standard: *certainty* that an individual has an attribute
- o Persons stereotyped as "deficient" in an attribute are held to lower minimum but higher confirmatory standards, relative to persons stereotyped as having an attribute

Setting standards for judging incompetence

- o Persons stereotyped as "deficient" in incompetence will be held to lower minimum but higher confirmatory standards of incompetence, relative to persons stereotyped as incompetent.

Experiment 1

- Participants randomly assigned to indicate either:
 - “the MINIMUM number of behaviors that are necessary to SUSPECT that a person may be incompetent” or
 - “the TOTAL number of behaviors that are necessary to CONFIRM that a person is incompetent”

Workplace behaviors engaged in by male/female employee

- Lost a file on a client.
- Forgot about a previously scheduled appointment with a client.
- Missed an important deadline.
- Asked about getting extra vacation time
- Took home supplies, such as pens and envelopes, from the company.
- Didn't review the training manual as the training supervisor instructed.
- Asked the vice president about getting better parking privileges.
- Took an important message for a coworker and then misplaced it.
- Complained that his/her prior coworkers tended to be lazy.
- Inadvertently gave confidential information to the competition.

Experiment 1 results

Sex	Minimum	Confirmatory
woman	5	4
man	4	7

Employee Sex X Standard, $F(1, 98) = 14.92, p < .001$

Mapping standards onto workplace decisions

- Minimum standard ~ suspicion of incompetence ~ probation (“warning signal”)
- Confirmatory standard ~ certain diagnosis of incompetence ~ termination (“not qualified”)
- For employees stereotyped as “deficient” in incompetence (Whites), less evidence of poor behavior is needed to place on probation, but more evidence of poor behavior is needed to fire

Experiment 2

- Participants
 - read performance summary
 - were randomly assigned to indicate the score that would indicate a poor-performing employee should be placed on probation or fired

Experiment 2 results: Standards

Race	Probation	Fire
Black	43	45
White	50	35

Employee Race X Standard, $F(1, 158) = 6.13, p < .02$

Experiment 2 results: Decisions

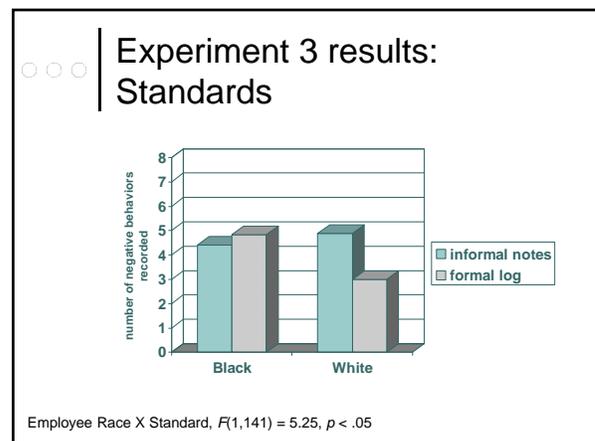
	Probation decision	Fire decision
Black employee		
Probation standard	55%	26%
Firing standard	64%	33%
White employee		
Probation standard	80%	10%
Firing standard	36%	60%

- ### Mapping standards onto performance appraisal narratives
- o Minimum standard ~ suspicion of incompetence ~ informal notes
 - “for your eyes only”
 - o Confirmatory standard ~ certain diagnosis of incompetence ~ formal performance log
 - “formal way of keeping track of progress”

- ### Pretesting of performance appraisal narratives
- o Negative behaviors recorded in the “formal performance log” perceived as
 - Unhelpful to employee
 - Serious in implications
 - Indicating employee is headed toward failure

- ### Experiment 3
- o Hypothesis:
 - For White employee: More negative behaviors recorded in informal notes, but fewer negative behaviors recorded in formal log
 - For Black employee: suspicion = confirmation

- ### Experiment 3
- o Participants
 - read summary of employee's performance
 - were randomly assigned to record information in their informal notes or performance log



Experiment 3 results: Decisions

	Termination Decisions	
	Informal notes	Formal log
Black employee	.45	.54
White employee	.51	.32

Employee Race X Standard, $F(1,142) = 4.32, p < .05$

Conclusion

- Stereotypes affect inferences about workplace incompetence
- Stereotypes are often subtle in their influence on judgment
- Stereotypes affect
 - what we attend to
 - the judgment standards we set
 - evaluations of performance