

How Disadvantaged Group Members Explain Their Failure: Impact of the Salience of In-Group Category.

Nobuko ASAI & Minoru KARASAWA

Kobe University, JAPAN

INTRODUCTION

Members of socially disadvantaged groups often receive derogation and discrimination. Even if members of such a group received negative treatment individually, it is difficult to deny the possibility that discrimination against their in-group caused the unwanted outcome (Crocker & Major 1989). This tendency would be stronger when in-group category is salient.

In this study, we tested the hypothesis that the salience of in-group category would facilitate attribution to discrimination.

Hypotheses

When in-group category is salient,

disadvantaged group members are **willing to attribute their failure to discrimination** treatment to discrimination (as far as moderate level of discrimination is expected).

When in-group category is not salient,

disadvantaged group members are **reluctant to attribute their failure to discrimination**. They will attribute their failure to discrimination *only when discrimination is unambiguously present*.

METHOD

Participants: 80 **female** undergraduate students (18-22 years of age).

Independent Variables:

1. **Salience of Gender Category**: HIGH Salience vs. LOW Salience
2. **Discrimination**: Unambiguously present (PRESENT) vs. Ambiguously present (AMBIGUOUS) vs. Absent (ABSENT)

Between-participant variables

Procedure:

1. Participants read a scenario in which **she failed a group interview for a job.**
 - a. We manipulated the salience of the gender categorization by changing the gender of another interviewee appearing in the scenario.
In a **High salience scenario**, the participant was interviewed along with a **male interviewee.**
In a **Low salience scenario**, she was interviewed with a **female interviewee.**
 - b. To manipulate the likelihood of discrimination, the proportion of male interviewers who discriminate against women was **varied.** (The scenario also described that there were five male interviewers, and each participant was interviewed by one of these interviewers.)
The proportion of male interviewers who discriminated against women were either...
5/5 All interviewers (PRESENT condition) or **3/5 interviewers** (AMBIGUOUS condition)
or **0/5 interviewer** (ABSENT condition).

Sexist
interviewer

Examples of descriptions about interviewers:

~ Reputation of interviewers in the company ~

Mr. A: He did not hide his prejudice view. Female subordinates have to work in a hostile environment.

Mr. B: He does not want women working on his project. He thinks women should stay at home.

....

Mr. E: He bought a really powerful computer. He taught himself how to build a Website.

Non-sexist
interviewer

2. Participants completed a questionnaire for the measures of dependent variable. All measures were 7-point scale.
 - a. Attribution of the failure: Attribution to discrimination vs. Personal factors (ability, personality, effort etc.)
 - b. State Self-Esteem Scale : Social and Performance dimensions (Heatherton & Polivy, 1995)
 - c. Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES): Private and Public subscale of CSES (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992)
+ 5 items from Japanese CSES (Watanabe, 1994)

RESULTS

ATTRIBUTION: We analyzed attribution of failure with a 2 (Gender Salience) x 3 (Discrimination) x 2 (Target of Attribution: Discrimination / Personal Factor) ANOVA. The target of attribution was the repeated measure.

...Gender Salience x Likelihood of Discrimination x Target of Attribution interaction: $F(1, 74) = 5.15, p < .05$

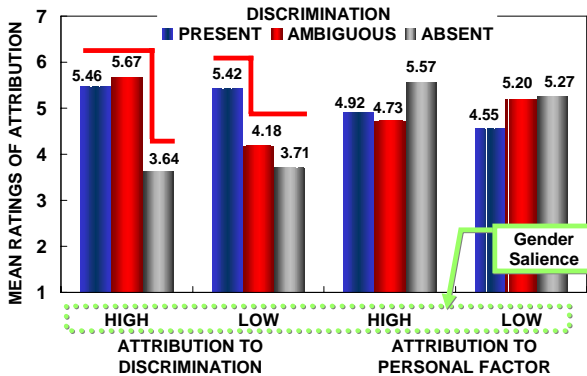


Figure 1. Mean attribution ratings as a function of the gender salience, discrimination, and the target of attribution.

ATTRIBUTIONS TO DISCRIMINATION

HIGH SALIENCE Condition:
PRESENT = AMBIGUOUS > ABSENT
LOW SALIENCE Condition:
PRESENT > AMBIGUOUS = ABSENT

ATTRIBUTIONS TO PERSONAL FACTOR

NO EFFECTS OF GENDER SALIENCE

The simple main effect of "Likelihood of discrimination" was significant.

PRESENT = AMBIGUOUS
AMBIGUOUS = ABSENT
PRESENT < ABSENT

Participants were more willing to attribute their failure to discrimination in the high salience condition than in the low salience condition. Hypothesis was supported.

CORRELATIONS: We examined the relationship between attributions and ratings on the self-esteem scales.

↑ $r = -.32, p < .01$ ↓	Discrimination Attribution	CSES	$r = -.25, p < .05$
		Social SSES	No correlation
		Performance SSES	No correlation
↑ $r = -.32, p < .01$ ↓	Personal Factor Attribution	CSES	No correlation
		Social SSES	$r = -.32, p < .01$
		Performance SSES	$r = -.23, p < .05$

Discrimination attribution was negatively correlated with the self-report of collective self-esteem.

These results suggest a possibility that attribution to discrimination involved psychological costs.

However, we could not find correlations between the attribution to discrimination and the state self-esteem.

Discrimination attribution was negatively correlated with personal factor attribution.

These results suggest that attribution to discrimination discounts the participant's perception of personal responsibility for her failure.

DISCUSSION

High salience condition = High identification situation?

Members of stigmatized group were **willing to attribute the negative treatment to discrimination.**

...When in-group category is salient, stigmatized group members are likely to perceive that negative treatments are linked to group membership.

...They are likely to blame a negative treatment on discrimination as a group member (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002).

Low salience condition = Low identification situation?

Members of stigmatized group were **reluctant to attribute the negative treatment to discrimination.**

...When the in-group category is not salient, they are less likely to perceive that negative treatments are linked to group membership.

...They try to distance themselves from the low-status group.

The salience of underprivileged in-group category may mediate the willingness for discrimination attribution.

Future directions: These findings will need to be replicated with...
 { Other stigmatized groups
 { Laboratory condition (in progress: mirroring the imagined scenarios)

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