

Implicit and Explicit Measures of Age Prejudice: **Predictions for Behavior**

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Abstract

This study examined relationships between explicit and implicit prejudice by administering implicit and explicit measures of ageism to college students. We hypothesized that participants would express low levels of explicit prejudice but higher levels of implicit prejudice and that these two types of prejudice would be unrelated. Additionally, we expected that both explicit and implicit attitudes would predict behavior but under different circumstances. Weeks after responding to the attitude measures, participants were contacted by a confederate on an ostensibly unrelated matter and asked to volunteer with the elderly. To examine the possibility that explicit and implicit attitudes affect behavior under different conditions, half of the participants received this request with cognitive reasons why they should volunteer while half received this request accompanied by affective reasons. We expected the cognitive prime to activate the explicit less prejudiced attitude, facilitating volunteering, while the affective prime would activate the prejudiced implicit attitude, lowering volunteering. As expected, explicit and implicit measures were unrelated. Only one attitude measure predicted volunteering; individuals with warmer explicit feelings towards the elderly were more likely to volunteer. While the cognitive and affective primes had no effect on volunteering, it is unclear if this was due to the failure of the model or to overall low levels of volunteering. Our results suggest that implicit and explicit prejudice are best conceptualized separately. While only our explicit ageism measure predicted volunteering, we suggest that implicit ageism may predict other types of behavior and propose further research on conceptualizing attitude-behavior processes and ageism.

Introduction

Historically, the most common method for detecting prejudiced attitudes has been the use of explicit questionnaires, yet there is evidence to suggest that implicit, reaction time measures tests may be superior. Some researchers suggest that implicit measures are better at predicting prejudiced behavior (e.g., McConnell & Leibold, 2001) but others demonstrate that explicit measures are more predictive (e.g., Karpinski & Hilton, 2001). These findings have led many to hypothesize that there are two forms of prejudice, implicit and explicit, that will be activated under different circumstances.

To examine this hypothesis, we examined the relationship between explicit and implicit forms of prejudice by administering one implicit and two explicit measures of ageism to college students. We hypothesized that participants would express low levels of explicit prejudice but higher levels of implicit prejudice. We expected that these two types of prejudice would be unrelated. We also hypothesized that both explicit and

implicit attitudes could be activated and thus, predictive of behavior, under different circumstances. To examine the possibility that explicit and implicit attitudes affect behavior under different circumstances, half of the participants received the request along with cognitive reasons why they should volunteer while half received a similar request accompanied by affective reasons why they should volunteer. We hypothesized that the cognitive prime would activate the explicit, less prejudiced, attitude, thereby facilitating volunteering; and that the affective prime would activate the more prejudiced implicit attitude, lowering the level of volunteering.

Methods

Participants completed an 8-page questionnaire containing two Feeling Thermometers, the Fraboni Ageism Scale (Fraboni, Saltstone, & Hughes, 1990), and a demographic questionnaire followed by the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). One to two weeks after completion of the laboratory session, a confederate called each participant and identified herself as a student working for an assisted living home for the elderly seeking other students to volunteer a small amount of time. Participants heard either an “affective” solicitation or a “cognitive” solicitation. Participants in the “affective” condition were addressed by their first name and given information about the emotional state of the residents of the assisted living facility. They were also given information regarding the emotional benefits of volunteering. Participants in the “cognitive” condition were addressed by their last name and given information and incentives designed to be informative and appealing, but not emotional. Participants were asked if they had any interest in volunteering and if so, if they were willing to commit to between 1 and 12 hours over the course of one semester.

Results

On the Fraboni Ageism Scale, participants expressed very mild prejudice against the elderly on questions about discrimination, antipathy, and avoidance (see Table 1). Scores on the Implicit Association Test revealed that participants took a longer amount of time to pair old faces with positive words than young faces with the same words. There was no relationship observed between the FAS and the IAT. As seen in Table 2, there was a significant relationship between the FAS and the Elderly Feeling Thermometer such that higher scores on the Elderly Feeling Thermometer were associated with lower scores on the FAS.

As seen in Table 3, very few participants indicated that they would commit time to volunteer. Participants who indicated warm feelings towards the elderly on the Feeling Thermometer were more likely to respond affirmatively that they would be willing to volunteer with the elderly than participants with colder feelings towards the elderly. Neither the FAS nor the IAT predicted volunteering behavior. The cognitive and affective primes had no effect on participant’s willingness to volunteer time with the elderly, their attempts to justify their unwillingness to volunteer, or their requests for more information about possible volunteer options. In addition to failing to be predictive of behavior, the IAT and the FAS showed no relationship with the prime.

Discussion

Our research supports the conceptualization of implicit and explicit prejudice as separate mechanisms. Explicit measures like the Feeling Thermometer may be useful in predicting prejudiced behavior in situations where the IAT fails to do so, although the precise identification of these “explicit” or “implicit” situations will require much more research. There was no evidence to support the hypothesis that both implicit and explicit attitudes can be activated using cognitive and affective primes. While the Elderly Feeling Thermometer was predictive of behavior, the activation of this explicit attitude was not the result of the cognitive or affective prime. Further tests of our cognitive/affective priming hypothesis should use a stronger behavioral measure with a range of responses (rather than “yes” or “no”) and stronger cognitive and affective primes. Follow-up researchers might consider using an elderly confederate and a panel of blind judges to make the simulation more realistic and salient but it should be noted that such a measure might lack the disassociation from the initial laboratory session that makes the phone call format so ideal.

References

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- Greenwald, A. G., McGhee, D. E., & Schwartz, J. L. K. (1998). Measuring individual differences in implicit cognition: The implicit association test. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 74(6), 1464-1480.
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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Explicit and Implicit Measures of Prejudice

Prejudice Measure	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
<i>D</i> – IAT Effect Score	.46	.36
Elderly Feeling Thermometer	70.91	17.26
Young Feeling Thermometer	70.13	19.19
Thermometer Difference Score	.78	21.43
FAS overall score	2.33	.35
FAS Factor 1 (antipathy)	2.47	.41
FAS Factor 2 (avoidance)	2.12	.37
FAS Factor 3 (discrimination)	2.41	.50

Table 2: Correlation Matrix for all Prejudice Measures



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 - Elderly Feeling Thermometer	-						
2 - Young Feeling Thermometer	.31 *	-					
3 - Thermometer Difference Score	.53 **	-.64 **	-				
4 – FAS Factor 1 (antipathy)	-.30 *	-.07	-.18	-			
5 – FAS Factor 2 (avoidance)	-.38 **	-.43 **	.08	.52 **	-		
6 - FAS Factor 3 (discrimination)	-.47 **	-.02	-.36 *	.38 **	.56 **	-	
7 – FAS Total Score	-.50 **	-.19	-.22	.76 **	.83 **	.83 **	-
8 - D – IAT Effect Score	-.14	-.03	-.09	.05	-.01	-.04	-.00

* - Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

** - Correlation is significant at the .001 level (2-tailed).

Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages for all Behavioral Measures

Behavioral Measure	“Yes” Percentage	“Yes” Frequency	“No” Percentage	“No” Frequency
Willing to Volunteer	13.1%	8	86.9%	53
Justification of “No” Response	59.0%	36	26.2%	16
Requests for Volunteering Info	47.5%	29	52.5%	32