

Ordinary Forms of Prejudice

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“Why do human beings slip so easily into ethnic prejudice? They do so because the two essential ingredients...—erroneous generalization and hostility—are natural and common capacities of the human mind.” (Allport, 1954, p. 17)

One of Allport's (1954) lasting contributions to our understanding of human nature is the recognition that prejudiced attitudes are not necessarily the result of a hateful ideology, or that of a limited intellect, or a disordered personality. Prejudice, instead, may reflect ordinary principles of social psychology: It is the byproduct of basic psychological processes by which the average person understands and relates to the social environment. This interpretation has guided much of the social psychological work on prejudice and intergroup relations ever since Allport's classic text first appeared (e.g., Brewer, 2001; Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989; Hamilton & Rose, 1980; Park, Judd, & Ryan, 1991; Pettigrew, 1979; Tajfel, 1981). It is also the underlying premise for recent work showing that group attitudes affect people's social perceptions and behaviors implicitly, without a person being aware of such influences, or having control over them (e.g., Devine, 1989; Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; Perdue & Gurtman, 1990; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 1997). According to this work, group attitudes and stereotypes stored in long-term memory operate just like ordinary memory contents. To the extent that they are over-learned and frequently accessed in response to a particular stimulus, they are activated automatically whenever the stimulus is present. Several techniques have been proposed that assess a person's propensity to activate group attitudes automatically—among them priming measures (Fazio et al., 1995; Wittenbrink et al., 1997) and the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). These measures have received considerable attention from social psychologists as well as from researchers in related fields like political science. In their lead article, Arkes and Tetlock (this issue) resolutely reject these measures. Their rejection is based on a number of reasons that are “part psychological, part philosophical, and certainly part political.” Although I do not feel qualified to speak to the philosophical and political aspects of Arkes and Tetlock's criticism, I would like to comment on some of the psychological issues involved. I will focus primarily on what I believe to be the most critical argument raised by Arkes and Tetlock, their assertion that implicit mea-

asures actually do not capture people's attitudes at all. As this argument is not just limited to the specific issue of prejudice but is germane to attitudes in general, my comments address the use of implicit measures for the assessment of attitudes in general.

The Case Against Implicit Attitude Measures

The argument that implicit measures do not assess attitudes is based on a distinction between two types of associations that a person might have in response to an attitude object: (a) things that a person truly feels and believes and (b) associations that, on further scrutiny, one rejects as being invalid or inappropriate, but that exist merely because of pervasive environmental influences. For example, most people in the United States are familiar with the negative cultural stereotype for African Americans and, thus, have associations stored in memory that link African Americans to stereotypic attributes like *dangerous* and *hostile*. As Arkes and Tetlock (this issue) point out, knowledge of the stereotype, however, doesn't necessarily imply its acceptance. Thus Arkes and Tetlock argue that for associations to be diagnostic of a person's attitude, they have to be *accepted* associations—they have to be “functionally intertwined” with a person's other beliefs and feelings in regard to the attitude object. In contrast, merely *known* associations are extraneous to a person's attitude (for a similar position, see Karpinski & Hilton, 2001).

Implicit measures, by design, assess the associative strength between an attitude object and other evaluatively laden constructs. And although one can frame the assessment context in ways that will make accepted associations more relevant to the response task (see Olson & Fazio, 2004), the measures are in principle sensitive to both accepted and merely known associations. In fact, given that automatic activation is thought to develop from frequent, repetitive experiences with a stimulus (Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977) and given the ubiquitous perpetuation of negative stereotypes about African Americans in the media (e.g., Weigel, Loomis, & Soja, 1980), it is quite possible that culturally shared associations, as opposed to personally accepted associations, play a prominent role in spontaneous evaluations. In contrast, they may be much less relevant for people's attitudes once given an opportunity to reflect on them—which is why Arkes and Tetlock (this issue) conclude that implicit measures are ineffective in assessing prejudice.

From Associations to Attitudes

Why would we consider implicit measures as evidence for people's attitudes, if they are influenced by factors that people will reject, when given a chance to do so? Before I address this question, let me point out that such discrepancies between different measures of an attitude are not rare and are certainly not limited to comparisons between implicit and explicit attitudes. In fact, the attitude literature is replete with examples in which people's evaluations are influenced by factors that, under different circumstances, they will reject. For instance, one of the classic illustrations of this issue comes from the literature on sexual behavior and related attitudes toward contraceptive use. When people are asked about their attitudes toward condom use, their responses tend to be influenced by cognitive factors, like beliefs about health risks, rather than by affective components, like their desire for instant gratification or feelings of embarrassment. Nevertheless, people's actual behaviors are shaped to a greater extent by affective influences than they anticipate (e.g., Kothandapani, 1971; Marsh, Johnson, & Scott-Sheldon, 2001).

If we applied Arkes and Tetlock's (this issue) argument to this case, we should conclude that affective sources of input are undiagnostic of people's attitudes toward condom use. Because, when given an opportunity, people will reject these influences as inappropriate and as not reflecting their true concerns regarding the potential health risks associated with unprotected intercourse. Of course, such a conclusion is absurd because in the present example these affective sources of input are, if anything, *more* relevant for the evaluations that actually determine people's behaviors than are any of the sources of input that people claim to find acceptable and relevant. Likewise, although people may reject stereotypic associations as invalid and inconsistent with their other beliefs, those rejected associations may nevertheless impact people's evaluations of the group or of individual group members.

The broader point illustrated by this example is that attitudes are based on multiple, and not always evaluatively homogeneous, influences. That is, attitudes are commonly defined as an evaluative tendency, or predisposition, to respond to an attitude object with some degree of favor or disfavor (e.g., Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). In rare cases, such evaluative tendencies are grounded in a single source, like, for instance, a single evaluative association with the attitude object. More commonly, attitudes have multiple sources of input that may not always be consistent in terms of their evaluative implications. With regard to group attitudes, for example, a person is likely to hold many stored associations, of which cultural stereotypes, known members of the group, or personal experiences with members of the group may be some.

The position advocated by Arkes and Tetlock (this issue) ultimately contends that, of all the sources of in-

put that exist, only those will impact a person's evaluative response that are deemed valid and relevant to the attitude object. Therefore, only those explicitly endorsed sources qualify as proper indicators of people's attitudes.

The first problem with this argument is that acceptance of any given influence varies significantly across situations, as the prior example shows and an extensive literature on context effects has shown (for a review, see Sudman, Bradburn, & Schwarz, 1996). Acceptance per se is therefore a poor and ambiguous criterion for determining what kinds of influences a proper attitude measure should actually assess.

The second problem is that in many situations evaluations take place without any consideration about whether they are based on valid and relevant input. In fact, some 20 years of research into the processes that underlie attitudinal responses have firmly established that an evaluation can occur spontaneously, without intent, and without control over or even awareness of its occurrence. Following early demonstrations (Fazio, Sanbonmatsu, Powell, & Kardes, 1986; Kunst-Wilson & Zajonc, 1980), many studies now report such spontaneous evaluations, often thought to result from the automatic activation of associated memory contents (e.g., Bargh, Chaiken, Gøvender, & Pratto, 1992; Giner-Sorolla, Garcia, & Bargh, 1999; Greenwald, Klinger, & Liu, 1989; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 2001). Spontaneous evaluations occur fast, within a few hundred milliseconds after encountering the attitude object (Fazio et al., 1986). And, as already stated, these early evaluations do not emanate from an intentional, active search for relevant inputs. Instead, they are the result of a passive process that runs its course automatically following exposure to the attitude object (Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977). Because of the passive nature of this process, a person does not even have to be aware of the attitude object or of the evaluation (e.g., Devine, 1989; Greenwald et al., 1989; Wittenbrink et al., 1997). More important, because it is a passive process, the person does not have control over the evaluation, its input or its outcome. In other words, considerations about whether a particular input is actually valid or whether it is relevant to the attitude object are of limited consequence for spontaneous evaluations.¹ Instead, such considerations are part of more deliberate forms of evaluation that can take place following the initial spontaneous evaluation. Whether such deliberate considerations actually take place depends on a variety of factors, like a person's

¹One way by which such considerations could ultimately impact spontaneous evaluations is if accepted associations become more accessible than other, merely known associations. This may be the case for individuals high in motivation to control prejudice, who may learn to inhibit stereotype activation in response to situational cues that in the past have been associated with prejudiced responses and aversive consequences of those responses (Monteith, Ashburn-Nardo, Voils, & Czopp, 2002).