

The discuss book implicit associations

Literature



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The Discuss Book Implicit Associations

No one wants to admit that they're biased against a group of people. It isn't socially acceptable to be prejudiced in today's climate, but all people hold inherit biases towards members of other groups. The Implicit Associations Test measures the unconscious biases of individuals and helps identify prejudices that may affect behavior in social situations. Though not always entirely correct, they are largely reliable as indicators of bias.

The textbook discusses the way that people identify with and accept stereotypes. It defines "stereotyping" as "the process by which people draw inferences about others based on their knowledge of the categories to which others belong." An IAT measures an individual's biases, which are rooted in stereotypes, which in turn are based on their knowledge of the categories into which they classify others. The textbook talks about perceptual confirmation: that people perceive that which confirms their stereotypes and beliefs about a certain person or persons. Studies show that people who believed a certain athlete was black believed that he was more athletically inclined but less intelligent, while those who believed he was white were inclined towards the opposite opinion (Stone, Perry, & Darley, 1997). Though it is possible that none of these subjects believe that they are racist, they still harbor biased beliefs about race that even they might not be aware of. The IAT would help identify these beliefs.

In the case of the murder of Ahmed Amadou Diallo, it is possible that the police officers honestly believed that he was reaching for a gun. Though Diallo was unarmed and showed no indication of being hostile, the officers clearly had a bias against individuals with dark skin. They shot and killed him on the basis of this stereotype, collected from information to which they had

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been exposed over the course of their lives. Were those officers to take an Implicit Associations Test, no doubt there would be indications of this prejudice. Many people working in law enforcement are accused of having biased against non-whites. An IAT would indicate and expose these prejudices which, according to the text, can be reduced through concerted efforts.

When I took two IATs, I was not entirely surprised at my results. I showed inherit bias against homosexuals as well as females. Though I would not consider myself overtly sexist or homophobic, these results did not surprise me. As a heterosexual male, I have been conditioned to believe that those who are similar to me are superiors to those who are different. This xenophobic attitude, though not something that I notice affecting my everyday interactions, no doubt influences the way I interact with females and those who are —or those I perceive— to be homosexual.

It is important to measure implicit attitudes as opposed to explicit attitudes because, as is discussed above, it is not socially acceptable to be overtly prejudiced based on race, gender, sexual orientation or religion. Assuming they do not identify with an obviously biased group such as the KKK or Westboro Baptist Church, it isn't possible to ask the average individual what their opinions on a certain minority group are. Most people are not even aware of the biases that they hold. It is necessary to measure the implicit attitudes through methods such as the IAT because these results will indicate prejudice objectively, without the filter of political correctness. Ultimately, the Implicit Associations test is a useful way to reveal inherent biases, which can then be corrected, allowing for people to react and navigate the world around them in a healthier way.

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