

Outgroup Bias Project

By Andry Arthur Rakotonjanabelo

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As an International student, I was hesitant on which IAT to choose since the test is mainly portraying implicit attitudes in America. I wanted to choose the test that I would be able to understand the most, so I ended up choosing the sexuality IAT. This test consisted of two types of assessment: self-report multiple choice questions on my preferences between straight and gay people and association task which implicated key words with either good or bad connotations and words with either gay or straight connotations. The self-report part was straightforward. The association task first consisted in categorizing sexuality-related words that appeared spontaneously on the screen to either “Straight” or “Gay” by pressing separate keys on the keyboard as fast as possible. The second task was the same but with positive/negative words that had to be categorized as either good or bad. The final part of that section, the appearing words had to be categorized into random combinations of “Straight” vs “Gay” and “Good” vs “Bad”.

I chose this IAT because I come from a very traditional society. Most of the people around me held negative opinions against homosexuality, whether it was between family members, at school or in public. Even though my education promoted inclusion and equality, I suspected that I would have an implicit bias in favor of one group over the other. The results of my test suggested that I have a strong automatic preference for Straight people over Gay people. Through this paper, I aim to get a deeper understanding about implicit biases to better understand

myself and others and hopefully help make the world a more livable place for discriminated groups.

The struggle to get better understanding of the roots of implicit biases has been long and is currently being investigated. One theory that has been explored is the Developmental Sources theory (Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000; Rudman & Goodwin, 2004) which argues that implicit biases mainly stem from developmental events that people go through during childhood, for example prior experiences with maternal caregivers. This view was investigated further by Rudman, Phelan, & Heppen (2007) to explain common dissociations between people's explicit and implicit attitudes.

During this research, Rudman et al. (2007) conducted three experiments which tested smokers' implicit attitudes in relations to their earlier experiences with smoking (study 1), people's implicit sizeism and their earlier experiences with body weight (study 2), and people's attitudes towards their dreams depending on their earlier experiences with dreams (study 3). All three studies comprised different sample groups with certain differences in the testing as the attitudes tested were distinct. The results of all three experiments were in favor of the developmental sources theory. They found a significant correlation between smokers' implicit attitudes and their earlier experiences. Most interestingly, as a result from the second experiment, they concluded that the heavier the people during their childhood, the less their implicit attitudes toward overweight people. The same correlation goes with the last experiment on dreams: the better the participants' early experiences with dreaming were, the higher their implicit attitudes towards dreaming than being awake.

Even though it is intuitive to think of childhood as sources of our psychological reflexes, these findings help trace a more distinct source to where our implicit biases may come from. Our

earlier experiences surely help shape our unconscious preferences and identification towards a certain group and consequently against another. Developmental events that people go through during their childhood might influence implicit biases by shaping their perspectives on their ingroups and outgroups.

A more recent perspective came from Gibson, Rochat, Tone, & Baron (2017), who conducted a cross sectional study aimed to find the relationship between implicit race bias among African-American children and young adults and their schools' racial composition, parents' racial attitudes, and parents' racial socialization messages. The sample group comprised of 86 African American children and 130 young adults. The participants were tested through the IAT, explicit tasks, ethnic identity questionnaires, and Parent's racial socialization questionnaires. The results of the experiments show that the heterogeneity/homogeneity of the children's school made no significant difference in the amount of implicit biases of the child sample. However, an implicit preference for Black over White was seen among young adults who grew in All-black schools and Historically Black colleges. The measure of parents' racial socialization was also predicted their children's implicit biases for the students from all-Black schools.

Gibson et al. (2017) hypothesized that the implicit bias found among the African American students from predominantly Black colleges may form due to their prolonged exposure to more Black people with positions of leadership. The differing implicit bias results from different factors tested in this experiment help point out how key social environmental factors could have underlying effects on implicit preferences on African American people, whom were thought to have no mean level of preference for either Black or White. This finding suggests how

any group can form complex and diverse implicit biases depending on certain environmental factors.

Given those seemingly elusive reasons, implicit biases and their effect on behavior seem to be hard to decrease (Rudman, Ashmore, & Gary, 2001). Due to these previous findings, Rudman et al. (2001) examined the extent of implicit attitudes' malleability and diversity education's ability to affect implicit attitudes. Through 2 similar experiments, Rudman et al. (2001) tested students' racial implicit attitudes and stereotypes as the volunteer students took part in either a prejudice and conflict seminar or a research methods course over a 14-week semester. The results of both experiments showed a decrease in both implicit and explicit attitudes in the experimental groups while there were no significant changes in attitudes in the control groups.

Such encouraging results suggest that implicit biases are not permanent and may be unlearned. These results specifically show that engaging diversity education can make a change at the automatic level. Through such education, people should first be made aware of their unconscious biases and understand that there might be a solution if they are willing to solve such social issues. Through the formation emotional bonds with outgroup professors and classmates and acquiring a better understanding of one's implicit prejudice, students undergoing these educational experiences may "unlearn" implicit biases and help decrease the pervasiveness of implicitly biased behaviors.

Another study conducted by Calanchini, Lai and Klauer (2020) reviewed the extent of implicit bias changes through 17 different implicit-bias reduction interventions which implicated more than 20,000 participants tested on their race-based implicit attitudes. The robust data collected from this study suggested that ingroup favoritism is more malleable than outgroup negativism. Calanchini et al. (2020) advocated that implicit bias reduction interventions aimed to

reduce ingroup favoritism would be more effective than egalitarian-oriented implicit bias reduction interventions.

These conclusions are in tandem with the previous proposed solution. Although results also suggest that implicit bias reduction interventions do not have very long-lasting effects, various studies have revealed that people's ingroup biases emerge by age 6 (Gibson et al., 2017). Taking these findings together, intervention initiatives should focus efforts to help individuals from a young age (before 6 years old) to decrease their ingroup bias and hence decrease implicit biases against their outgroups. Children should be exposed and sensitized to the diverse world of people they are learning to live in. They will feel more comfortable interacting with different groups of people growing up and help promote implicit bias reduction interventions themselves.

In sum, implicit biases have been found to be rooted in people's early developmental phases and can be affected by the varied social environmental factors to which individuals are exposed. Despite their seemingly complex origins, implicit biases are not permanent and can be subject to change. An early and prolonged education about people's implicit biases seems to be key in altering implicitly biased behavior. The promotion of plurality and diversity in our society may also ingroup and outgroup polarity among people while allowing them to be aware of their automatic preferences. Even though more longitudinal research in this area is needed to long-term changes in popular implicit biases and implicitly biased behavior, encouraging findings gives hope that systemic prejudice can be slowly minimized in everyday society.

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