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Awareness of Experimentally Created Implicit Attitudes: Large-Scale Tests in Three Paradigms

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Abstract

Implicit attitudes are often defined as residing beyond conscious awareness. This definition has been challenged by robust evidence demonstrating highly accurate predictions of implicit attitudes. However, relevant tests have all been conducted using well-known targets (e.g., racial groups), about which participants possess ample relevant knowledge. Therefore, accurate predictions may have emerged from inferential mechanisms rather than privileged first-person awareness. Here we probe participants' ($N = 4,448$) ability to report their own experimentally created implicit attitudes across four studies where implicit attitudes and their explicit counterparts (representing an obvious source of inference) were manipulated to shift in opposite directions. Predicted and actual implicit attitudes were either unrelated to each other, or predictive accuracy was limited to participants whose implicit and explicit attitudes were aligned. Echoing classic and contemporary accounts, these data suggest that implicit attitudes are (largely) unconscious, and successful implicit attitude predictions are likely subserved by inference rather than introspection.