

Automaticity and Attitudes

Automaticity & Behaviour

Automaticity is the automatic triggering of attitudes and other affective reaction by the mere presence of relevant objects and events (paraphrasing Bargh et al.)

Behaviour is Automatic: Langer, Blank et al. (1978) Making Copies People were asked whether they could use the copy machine. People require reasons to justify changing their behaviour (automatically), but rudeness hinders behaviour changes.

Mere Exposure Effect (Zajonc, 1968) This is the tendency for people to have a more positive evaluation of a familiar object, person, group or thing.

Zajonc (1968) Turkish Words studied this by showing participants a series of Turkish words then asked them to rate another group according to how positive they were likely to be connotated. Those previously seen were deemed to be more positive than the novel words.

Implicit Egoism

Nuttin (1985) found that people prefer letters in their names to letters not in their names. This is due to the tendency for people to like things associated with the self more than things associate with others.

Pelham et al. (2002) found that people choose cities with names that resemble their own, jobs that resemble their own, streets that resemble their name and a partner that resembles their own name.

However, there is evidence that this effect is moderated by self-esteem (Smeets, 2006).

Automatic Evaluations and Judgements

These are uncontrollable, without intention, outside awareness and highly efficient.

Bodily Actions Actions associated with positive affect or actions towards things we like influence our judgment and our automatic activation of valence.

Evaluations: Wells & Petty Nodding & Shaking (1980) asked student participants how much they would approve of the tuition fees for universities going up. At the same time, they were asked to evaluate a product that caused them to **nod** or **shake**. Those required to nod were more likely to advocate a tuition fee increase. **This shows that evaluations can be influenced by implicit behavioural associations.**

Judgements: Bargh et al (1982) Participants read a story about 'Donald' getting in to arguments with people and were asked to give impressions of him. Those primed with negative words rated Donald more negatively. **Words associated with hostility caused more negative judgements towards Donald.**

Knowledge: van Knippenberg et al. (1998) asked participants to write about the behaviour, lifestyle, appearance and attributes of typical **football hooligan, secretary and professor** either for 2 mins or 9 mins. Participants primed with hooligan were less likely to know 'who painted La Guernica' if they did the task for 9 mins. Professor primes were more likely if they were primed for 9 mins.

Bargh, Chen & Burrows STUDY 2 (1996) gave participants a word unscrambling task containing words typically associated with old age. Confederate times how long you take to enter and exit the lab and cross the corridor. Elderly prime causes slower walking.

Bargh et al. **Study 3 (1996)** Participants asked to do menial, time consuming, boring task but are **subliminally primed** with black or white faces. After 300th trial, the computer crashes and participants were rated according to the amount of hostility shown. Those primed with black faces showed more hostility.

We've seen that it can influence judgments and attitudes, but what about behaviour?

James "Thinking is for Doing" ? Cesario et al. argued that rather than automaticity being caused by activation of associated behaviours, behaviour is influenced by **motivation** towards the attitude object. Replicating this study but measuring attitudes towards elderly found that those favourable walked slower whereas those that didn't like elderly people walked faster. **Merely thinking about an action does not make it more likely to occur.**

Nosek et al. (2008) were given a description about people from the same group, with typical positive and negative behaviours. They were then introduced to a member of that group. Implicitly, participants generalised the description to the new member but explicitly they didn't. However, days later, explicit attitudes also matched the descriptions, suggesting that explicit attitudes do eventually form out of implicit attitudes.