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HOW IMPLICIT ATTITUDES PREDICT BEHAVIOR

Gina Vellequette

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Implicit attitudes are positive or negative evaluations that are relatively unconscious and/or uncontrollable. Implicit attitudes are often assessed with a tool known as the Implicit Association Test (IAT). Research has shown that implicit attitudes as measured by the IAT are related to behavior. Little is known about the pathways by which implicit attitudes may cause behavior. The present study aims to explore how implicit attitudes predict behavior by positioning the measurement of implicit attitudes within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The TPB states that (explicit) attitudes, subjective norms, perceptions of behavioral control, and intentions are the factors that predict behavior. Our study intends to explore if and where implicit attitudes fit within this model in the prediction of running behavior. By using running behavior, the study explores an important health promoting behavior. 396 participants from the Project Implicit website took two IATs assessing associations between running/exercising and reading/relaxing and the concepts “Good” and “Bad.” Participants then completed explicit questionnaires on these topics assessing explicit attitudes, perceived norms, perceived behavioral control, and behavioral intentions. We found that the IAT predicted intentions to run, reports of running in the past week, and moderated the relationship between intentions and behavior. These findings help us understand how implicit attitudes fit into the TPB and contribute to predicting behavior.