

The Influence of Mindfulness and Attributional Complexity on Implicit Attitudes

Research Project for Psychology Program Distinction

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By

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Abstract

Two research studies investigated the relationship between mindfulness, attributional complexity and implicit attitudes, which are unconscious associations and preferences. Mindfulness is an awareness of and attentiveness to one's experience of the present and attributional complexity is the degree to which one considers a variety of factors when looking to explain the behavior of others. In Study 1, 66 undergraduate students were randomly assigned to either an experimental condition to take part in a 10-minute mindfulness induction or a control condition to listen to a 10-minute control audio recording. After the manipulation, participants completed the black/white Implicit Association Test (IAT) and the Attributional Complexity Scale (ACS). Results revealed a non-significant difference in IAT performance between conditions, as well as a non-significant interaction between condition and attributional complexity. In Study 2, 202 participants recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk completed the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), the ACS, the Marlowe Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MC-SDS), the Racial Argument Scale (RAS) and the Symbo

attitudes. Specifically, if being in a mindful state leads to reductions in the strength of implicit preferences, this reduction should be greater for individuals low in attributional complexity and not as substantial for individuals high in attributional complexity.

The effects of state mindfulness on implicit prejudice have been discussed thus far, but the relationship between dispositional mindfulness and implicit prejudice has yet to be examined. In the studies conducted by Lueke and Gibson (2015; 2016) trait mindfulness was used as a covariate when examining the effects of a mindfulness induction on both IAT performance and discriminatory behavior, but its direct relation to these constructs was not examined. In addition to investigating the effects of a mindfulness induction on IAT scores for individuals with different levels of attributional complexity, this research examined how trait mindfulness and attributional complexity relate to both directly- and indirectly-measured levels of prejudice toward African Americans. To account for potential response bias on the indirect and direct measures of prejudice, social desirability was used as a covariate (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960).

In the present research, two studies were conducted to investigate the relationship between mindfulness, attributional complexity and implicit attitudes. The first study utilized an experimental design with a mindfulness condition and a control condition in order to evaluate the effects of taking part in a brief mindfulness induction on implicit preferences. The role of attributional complexity as a moderator was examined. The second study involved a series of self-report measures assessing mindfulness, attributional complexity, and prejudice (both direct and indirect).

Study 1 examined the following hypothesis:

1. Participants who take part in a mindfulness induction will demonstrate lower scores on an IAT compared to participants in a control group.

- a. Attributional complexity will moderate the effect of state mindfulness on IAT scores. The difference in IAT scores between conditions will be greater for participants low in attributional complexity than it will for participants high in attributional complexity.

Study 2 addressed the following hypothesis:

1. Dispositional mindfulness and at

1 (1.5%) identified as other (See Table 1). The procedure was approved by the Stockton University IRB before testing began.

Measures.

IAT. The IAT is a 7-block computerized task where participants sort words and images to either the right or left portions of the screen. The race-IAT consists of images of African American and European American faces as well as words describing either good (i.e., beautiful, joyous) or bad (i.e., gross, horrible) attributes (Nosek et al., 2007). During each block, each set of words is paired with a set of images to form either a congruent pair (good attributes with European American faces and bad attributes with African American faces) or an incongruent pair (good attributes with African American faces and bad attributes with European American faces), and participants sort the stimuli from these pairs to the same side of the screen. Implicit preferences are represented by a d-score, which is calculated by subtracting the mean reaction time for congruent trials from the mean reaction time for incongruent trials divided by the standard deviation of reaction times for these trials. Faster reaction times for sorting the stimuli within the congruent trials relative to the incongruent trials are indicative of automatic preference for white over black and are represented by a positive d-score. Faster reaction times for sorting the stimuli within the incongruent trials relative to the congruent trials indicate implicit preference for black over white and are represented by a negative d-score.

Previous correlational research investigating the relationship between the race-IAT and explicit prejudice measures (i.e., self-report questionnaires) has demonstrated that the IAT is distinct in its measure of implicit attitudes ($r = .14$). Additionally, the race-IAT has been shown

measuring state mindfulness (Lau et al., 2006). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the TMS was .86.

~~PA~~ ~~KA~~ Participants were asked to provide demographic information including age, gender (male, female or other), race/ethnicity

implemented by Lueke and Gibson (2015). Immediately after listening, all participants completed the TMS as a manipulation check. Participants then completed the race-IAT as a measure of implicit preference followed by the ACS. To conclude the session, participants provided demographic information and answered the additional information questions. Before leaving, all participants were given a debriefing form and were given an opportunity to ask questions about the study. The experimenter also verbally explained the nature of the research.

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Data. Scores on the IAT, TMS and ACS were screened for outliers and violations of normality. As indicated by stem-and-leaf plots, no cases were more than three standard deviations from the mean for any of these 3 measures. The skewness levels were within the acceptable range of -0.5 to 0.5 for all, indicating univariate normality for each distribution of scores.

Manipulation Check. Before testing for the effect of the mindfulness induction on IAT scores, an independent samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the manipulation on state mindfulness. Scores on the TMS were compared between the control and experimental conditions. Results failed to indicate a significant difference in scores on the TMS between participants in the control condition (

= .73. A second independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the absolute value of d-scores between the experimental and control conditions. When taking the absolute value of d-scores, higher values indicate more implicit bias in either direction, and lower values indicate less implicit bias. Results failed to reveal a significant difference in the absolute values of d-scores between participants in the experimental condition ($M = .61$, $SD = .47$) and control condition ($M = .63$, $SD = .45$), $t(64) = .181$, $p = .86$. Performance on the IAT did not differ significantly between participants in the experimental and control conditions.

Because there was no main effect on IAT performance, the mean d-score of the sample was examined across conditions. A single-sample t-test was conducted comparing the mean d-score of the sample to zero, which indicates no implicit preference in either direction. Results indicated a significant difference between the sample mean ($M = .46$, $SD = .62$) and zero, $t(65) = 6.02$, $p < .001$. Participants in the sample demonstrated significant implicit preference for white over black.

Interaction with Attributional Complexity. Although the main effect of the manipulation on IAT performance was not significant, a f

absolute values of d-scores as the dependent variable also failed to indicate a significant interaction between condition and attributional complexity, $F(1, 62) = .22, p = .64$.

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The results of the comparisons of IAT scores indicated that the difference in IAT performance between conditions was not significant. This result is inconsistent with the hypothesis, which stated that participants in the experimental condition would demonstrate less implicit bias than those in the control condition. If state mindfulness does influence the strength of implicit preferences, a more effective mindfulness induction would be needed to demonstrate this effect. Because the manipulation was ineffective, the question of whether state mindfulness influences the strength of implicit preferences remains unanswered.

The role of attributional complexity as a moderator between mindfulness and implicit attitudes was examined by dividing participants into high and low ACS groups. The interaction between condition and attributional complexity level on IAT performance was not significant. The manipulation did not have a stronger effect for individuals lower in attributional complexity, as originally hypothesized. Regardless of whether participants were high or low in attributional complexity and regardless of the condition they were assigned to, performance on the IAT did not differ significantly between groups. Additionally, IAT performance was in-line with previous research being that the participants in this sample, as a whole, demonstrated implicit preference for white over black.

SUM

UP

This study explored the strength and direction of associations between attributional complexity, dispositional mindfulness and prejudice toward African Americans. In addition,

attributional complexity and mindfulness were examined as predictors of prejudice toward African Americans.

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Participants. Participants were 202 participants (females = 86) from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) who were selected on a first-come first-serve basis. All participants were between the ages of 20 and 65 years ($M = 33.91$, $SD = 10.02$). Of the total number of participants, 22 (10.9%) were Black or African American, 144 (71.3%) were white, non-Hispanic, 20 (9.9%) were Hispanic or Latino/a, 10 (5%) were Asian or Asian American, 2 (1%) were Native American and 4 (2%) were multiracial (See Table 2). Participants were compensated \$2.00 each for their time. The procedure was approved by the Stockton University IRB before testing began.

Measures. Attributional complexity was measured using the same scale described for Study 1 (Fletcher et al., 1986). Cronbach's alpha for the ACS in Study 2 was .95.

MAAS Attributional complexity was measured using the same scale described for Study 1 (Fletcher et al., 1986). Cronbach's alpha for the ACS in Study 2 was .95.

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The MAAS is a 15-item scale which assesses trait mindfulness, specifically the tendency to consistently be aware of and pay attention to one's experience of the present. Items include "I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present" and "It seems I am 'running on automatic' without much awareness of what I'm doing." Participants rated how frequently they experience each item (1 = almost always, 2 = very frequently, 3 = somewhat frequently, 4 = somewhat infrequently, 5 = very infrequently, and 6 = almost never). The scale was reverse scored so higher scores indicate higher levels of trait mindfulness. This measure has been demonstrated to have high internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$ among student sample; $\alpha = .87$ among

consistency ($\alpha = .79$) for this measure (Henry & Sears, 2000). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .90 for the SR2K.

MC-SDS The MC-SDS is a 33-item scale evaluating the need for social approval. Items include "I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable," and "I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake." Participants made a selection (true or false) to indicate whether or not each statement described their attitudes and behavior. One point is given for each statement where the participant's response is consistent with the socially desirable response. Scores can range from zero to 33 with higher scores indicating higher levels of social desirability. The scale has good internal consistency ($\alpha = .88$) and high test-retest reliability ($r = .89$) (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). In this study, Cronbach's alpha was .89 for the MC-SDS.

Demographics Participants in Study 2 were asked to provide the same demographic information as those in Study 1, with the addition of indicating how many years of education they completed. Participants were also asked to indicate whether they practice yoga or meditation, the type of yoga or meditation they practice, and the frequency with which they practice.

Procedure. The research was advertised as a study investigating "the relationship between personal characteristics and personal views." All measures were administered online through Stockton's Qualtrics system via MTurk. Participants began by providing their informed consent and verifying that they were at least 18 years old. From there, participants completed the MAAS, which was used as a measure of trait mindfulness, the ACS, which was used as a measure of attributional style, the MC-SDS which was used as a measure of social desirability, the RAS which was used as an indirect measure of prejudice, and the SR2K which was used as a

direct measure of explicit prejudice. These 5 scales were presented randomly for each participant to control for possible order effects. Once all measures were completed, all participants provided demographic information and answered the additional information questions regarding yoga and meditation. To conclude the study, all participants were debriefed and provided with information

demonstrating that higher levels of attributional complexity were associated with lower levels of indirectly- and directly-measured prejudice toward African Americans.

Multiple Regression. Two multiple regression analyses were conducted to investigate attributional complexity and trait mindfulness as predictors of both indirectly- and directly-measured levels of prejudice toward African Americans while controlling for social desirability. First, a multiple regression was conducted with

This result was consistent with the hypothesis and provides evidence for the relationship between the way in which one explains the behavior of others and how much prejudice they hold.

Individuals who are motivated to understand behavior and take a variety of factors into consideration when explaining the behavior of others are more likely to demonstrate lower levels of prejudice toward African Americans than are those who are more attributionally simple when it comes to thinking about the behavior of others. When considering the results of this research, no causality can be inferred regarding the effects of attribution style on prejudice or vice versa because the analyses conducted were correlational in nature.

The results also indicated an association between trait mindfulness and indirectly-measured levels of prejudice toward African Americans, which was consistent with the hypothesis. Those who reported higher levels of mindfulness were more likely to demonstrate lower levels of indirectly-measured racism. There is evidence for the role mindfulness might have as a preventative factor against implicit prejudice; however, no causality can be inferred because of the correlational nature of the analysis being discussed. The correlation between trait mindfulness and directly-measured prejudice toward African Americans was not significant, which was inconsistent with the hypothesized relationship between these constructs.

Regarding the results of the regression analyses, attributional complexity was a significant predictor of both indirectly- and directly-measured prejudice toward African Americans, but trait mindfulness was not. This result is partially consistent with the hypothesis, which stated that both attributional complexity and trait mindfulness would be significant predictors of indirectly and directly measured racism. Both regression models were significant, although ACS score was the only significant predictor in each. It may be the case that there is an overlap in the proportion of the variance in RAS and SR2K scores accounted for by scores on the

audio recording and each of the aforementioned measures in sequence to control for the interruptions which took place in the present method.

The results of the second study provide evidence for the association of both attributional complexity and trait mindfulness with indirectly-measured prejudice toward African Americans. The RAS was used to measure implicit racism by having participants rate the extent to which conclusions support either positive or negative arguments regarding African Americans in the United States. Because participants rate the accuracy of each conclusion and not the extent to which they personally agree with each argument, the scale acts as an indirect measure of

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Table 1

Study 1 Demographic Information

Factor	Values	N (%)	Mean	SD
Gender				
	Male	14 (21.2%)		
	Female	52(78.8)		
Age			20.38	3.70
Race				
	Black/African American	7 (10.6%)		
	White, non-Hispanic	44 (66.7%)		
	Hispanic or Latino/a	4 (6.1%)		
	Asian or Asian American	7 (10.6%)		
	Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islander	1 (1.5%)		
	Multiracial	2 (3%)		
	Other	1 (1.5%)		
SES				
	Working class	14 (21.2%)		
	Lower middle class	9 (13.6%)		
	Middle Class	32 (48.5%)		
	Upper middle class	11 (16.7%)		
	Upper class	0 (0%)		

Note. Demographic information including gender of participants (N), mean and standard deviation (SD), collected from participants in Study 1 is displayed in this table.

Table 2

Study 2 Demographic Information

Factor	Values	N (%)	Mean	SD
Gender				
	Male	115 (56.9%)		
	Female	86 (42.6%)		
	Other	1 (0.5%)		
Age			33.91	10.02
Race				
	Black/African American	22 (10.9%)		
	White, non-Hispanic	144 (71.3%)		
	Hispanic or Latino/a	20 (9.9%)		
	Asian or Asian American	10 (5%)		
	Native American	2 (1%)		
	Multiracial	4 (2%)		
Years of Education			14.55	3.47
SES				
	Working class	48 (23.8%)		
	Lower middle class	47 (23.3%)		
	Middle Class	85 (42.1%)		
	Upper middle class	19 (9.4%)		
	Upper class	1 (0.5%)		
	Other	2 (1%)		

Note. Demographic information including gender of participants (N), mean and standard deviation (SD), collected from participants in study 2 is displayed in this table.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Study 2 Measures

Measure	N	Mean	SD
ACS	202	4.65	0.99
MAAS	202	4.28	0.93
RAS	202	2.65	0.74
SR2K	202	0.41	0.24
MC-SDS	202	15.49	7.26

Note. This table displays the number of participants (N), the mean and the standard deviation (SD) for each of the 5 self-report measures used in Study 2.

Table 4

Correlation Matrix for Study 2 Measures

	ACS	MAAS	RAS	SR2K
ACS	1	.256***	-.421***	-.386***
MAAS		1	-.155*	-.069

TjD-.2 re8 self-report m5 0 TD-.3K

Table 5

Predictors of RAS Scores

Variable	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	4.10	0.30	13.50	.000
ACS	-0.28	0.05	-5.13	.000
MAAS	-0.06	0.06	-1.06	0.29
MC-SDS	0.01	0.01	0.90	0.37

Note. The predictors of RAS scores are displayed along with their unstandardized beta-coefficients (B), standard error, t and significance levels (sig).

Table 6

Predictors of SR2K Scores

Variable	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	3.19	0.30	10.69	.000
ACS	-0.25	0.05	-4.60	.000
MAAS	-0.01	0.06	-0.12	0.91
MC-SDS	0.01	0.01	1.38	0.17

Note. The predictors of SR2K scores are displayed along with their unstandardized beta-coefficients (B), standard error, t and significance levels (sig).

swells into a considerable river, navigable all the way; from whence it passes to Guilford, and so into the Thames at Weybridge, and thence into the German Ocean.

Our wells, at an average, run to sixty-three feet, and whosoever that depth seldom fail; but produce a fine limpid water, to the taste, much commended by those who drink the pure element, but which does not lather well with soap.

To the north-west, north and east of the village, is fair enclosures, consisting of what is called white malm, a sort of rotten or crumbly soil, when turned up to the frost and rain, moulders to pieces, and becomes manure to itself.

Still on to the north-east, and a step lower, is a kind of white land, neither chalk nor clay, neither fit for pasture nor for the plough, yet kindly, which root deep in the freestone, and have their poles and wood for charring just at hand. The soil produces the brightest hops. As the parish still inclines towards Wolmer Forest, the juncture of the clays and sand the soil becomes a wet, sandy loam, able for timber, and infamous for roads. The oaks of Temple and Blackmoor stand high in the estimation of purveyors, and have furnished naval timber; while the trees on the freestone are what workmen call shaky, and so brittle as often to fall to pieces. Beyond the sandy loam the soil becomes a hungry lean sand, till it mingles with the forest; and Avill produces without the assistance of lime and turnips.

In the court of Norton farm-house, or farm to the north of the village, on the white malm, stood within these twenty years a large wych hazel, *ilnius folio latissinio scabro* of Ray, which, though it had lost a considerable bough in the great storm in the year 1703, equal to a moderate tree, yet, it contained eight loads of timber; and, being too bulky for a carriage, was sawn off at above the butt, where it measured near eight feet in the diameter. This elm I mention to show a bulk planted elms may attain; as this tree must certainly have been such from its situation.

In the centre of the village, and near the church, is a square piece of ground surrounded by houses, and vulgarly called "The Plestor." In the middle of this spot stood, in old times, a vast oak, with a short squat body, and huge horizontal spreading arms, almost to the vicinity of the area. This venerable tree, surrounded with stone steps, was the delight of old and young, and a place of much resort in summer evenings; where the former sat in grave debate, while the latter frolic

■

INTRODUCTION

This questionnaire has been designed to investigate the different ways that people think about themselves and other people. The questionnaire is anonymous, so there is no need to put your name on it. There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your own perceptions. Please answer each question as honestly and accurately as you can, but don't spend too much time thinking about each answer.

In front of each of the items below, please write a whole number ranging from -3 to +3 to indicate how much you agree with the item, according to the following scale:

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree nor Disagree			Strongly Agree

1. ___ I don't usually bother to analyze and explain people's behavior.
2. ___ Once I have figured out a single cause for a person's behavior I don't usually go any further.
3. ___ I believe it is important to analyze and understand our own thinking processes.
4. ___ I think a lot about the influence that I have on people's behavior.
5. ___ I have found that relationships between a person's attitudes, beliefs, and character traits are usually simple and straightforward.
6. ___ If I see people behaving in a really strange or unusual manner, I usually put it down to the fact that they are strange or unusual people and don't bother to explain it any further.

7. ___ I have thought a lot about the family background and personal history of people who are close to me in order to understand why they are the sort of people they are.
8. ___ I don't enjoy getting into discussions where the causes for people's behavior are being talked about.
9. ___ I have found that the causes for people's behavior are usually complex rather than simple.
10. ___ I am very interested in understanding how my own thinking works when I make judgments about people or attach causes to their behavior.
11. ___ I think very little about the different ways that people influence each other.
12. ___ To understand a person's personality/behavior I have found it is important to know how that person's attitudes, beliefs, and character traits fit together.
13. ___ When I try to explain other people's behavior I concentrate on the other person and don't worry too much about all the existing external factors that might be affecting them.
14. ___ I have often found that the basic cause for a person's behavior is located far back in time.
15. ___ I really enjoy analyzing the reasons or causes for people's behavior.
16. ___ I usually find that complicated explanations for people's behavior are confusing rather than helpful.
17. ___ I give little thought to how my thinking works in the process of understanding or explaining people's behavior.
18. ___ I think very little about the influence that other people have on my behavior.
19. ___ I have thought a lot about the way that different parts of my personality influence other parts (e.g., beliefs affecting attitudes or attitudes affecting character traits).
20. ___ I think a lot about the influence that society has on other people.
21. ___ When I analyze a person's behavior I often find the causes form a chain that goes back in time, sometimes for years.
22. ___ I am not really curious about human behavior.
23. ___ I prefer simple rather than complex explanations for people's behavior.

6. ___ I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.
7. ___ It seems I am "running on automatic," without much awareness of what I'm doing.
8. ___ I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.
9. ___ I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right now to get there.

10. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.
11. I like to gossip at times.
12. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.
13. No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.
14. I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something.
15. There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.
16. I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.
17. I always try to practice what I preach.
18. I don't find it particularly difficult to get along with loud mouthed, obnoxious people.
19. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.
20. When I don't know something I don't at all mind admitting it.
21. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.
22. At times I have really insisted on having things my own way.
23. There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things.
24. I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrongdoings.
25. I never resent being asked to return a favor.
26. I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.

32. I sometimes think when people have a misfortune they only got what they deserved.
33. I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.



Please indicate the extent to which each argument supports the conclusion that follows it by selecting a number from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).

1. Because the world is a diverse place with many different cultures and people, requiring college students to take courses such as African American studies is a benefit to them. These courses provide students with better understandings of other ethnic groups, cultures, and value systems. This educational experience can enrich students' lives through cultural awareness.



4. Sickle cell anemia is a disease that is inherited by many African American children. The disease is potentially fatal, but research to combat the disease has not been as well-funded as research concerning ailments that influence Whites as well. The differences in funding

4. How much of the racial tension that exists in the United States today do you think blacks are responsible for creating?
 - (1) All of it
 - (2) Most
 - (3) Some
 - (4) Not much at all

5. How much discrimination against blacks do you feel there is in the United States today, limiting their chances to get ahead?
 - (1) A lot
 - (2) Some
 - (3) Just a little
 - (4) None at all

6. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.
 - (1) Strongly agree
 - (2) Somewhat agree
 - (3) Somewhat disagree
 - (4) Strongly disagree

7. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.
 - (1) Strongly agree
 - (2) Somewhat agree
 - (3) Somewhat disagree
 - (4) Strongly disagree

8. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve.
 - (1) Strongly agree
 - (2) Somewhat agree
 - (3) Somewhat disagree
 - (4) Strongly disagree