



## Modern prejudice: Subtle, but unconscious? The role of Bias Awareness in Whites' perceptions of personal and others' biases



Sylvia P. Perry<sup>a,\*</sup>, Mary C. Murphy<sup>b</sup>, John F. Dovidio<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Psychological Science, University of Vermont, 2 Colchester Ave., Burlington, VT 05401, USA

<sup>b</sup> Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, Indiana University, 1101 E. 10th St., Bloomington, IN 47405, USA

<sup>c</sup> Department of Psychology, Yale University, 2 Hillhouse Ave., New Haven, CT 06520, USA

### HIGHLIGHTS

- We introduce a new individual difference measure of racial bias awareness.
- Whites endorse items indicating they are bias-aware.
- Bias awareness predicts Whites' responses to bias feedback.
- Bias-aware individuals are more attuned to others' biases.
- These findings have important implications for anti-bias training.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 13 October 2013

Revised 20 April 2015

Accepted 29 June 2015

Available online 2 July 2015

#### Keywords:

Bias awareness

Interracial contact

Intergroup relations

### ABSTRACT

Three studies introduced the construct of bias awareness and examined its effect on Whites' responses to evidence of personal and others' racial biases. Contemporary theories of prejudice suggest that awareness of personal bias is a critical step in reducing one's prejudice and discrimination. When bias is cloaked in a way that people do not recognize, they are likely to continue to perpetuate their biased behaviors and unlikely to reduce their negative attitudes. However, when people become aware of their biases, they often adjust their attitudes and behavior to be more egalitarian. The present research investigated (a) individual differences in Whites' awareness of their propensity to express subtly biased behavior against Blacks in interracial contexts (Study 1), (b) the convergent and discriminant validity of a new individual difference measure of bias awareness (Studies 1, 2, and 3), (c) whether this measure uniquely predicts Whites' responses to a difficult race-related context—receiving feedback that they are high in implicit bias from an Implicit Association Test (R-IAT; Study 2), and (d) whether this measure uniquely predicts Whites' perceptions of others' racial bias, particularly subtle expressions (Study 3). Results revealed that the Bias Awareness Scale measures a distinct construct that uniquely predicts Whites' emotional and behavioral responses to information about their own bias, and their ability to detect bias in others.

© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Awareness of personally-held biases are widely considered a critical step in reducing an individual's prejudice and discrimination. Rokeach and Cochane (1972), in classic research using their value confrontation procedure, demonstrated that making people aware of inconsistencies between their core value of equality and racially biased attitudes produced less prejudice and lower levels of discrimination immediately and for several weeks after the intervention (Grube, Mayton, & Ball-Rokeach, 1994; Penner, 1971). More recent work has revealed that when Whites become aware of their biases (Monteith, 1993; Monteith, Arthur, & Flynn, 2010a; Monteith, Mark, & Ashburn-Nardo, 2010b) or when their goals to be non-prejudiced are made salient

(Moskowitz & Li, 2011), they often adjust their attitudes and behavior to be more egalitarian, and they work harder to compensate for prejudiced behavior. Alternatively, when bias is cloaked in ways that people do not recognize, they are likely to continue to perpetuate their biased behaviors and unlikely to change their negative attitudes. Thus, understanding whether there are individual differences in people's sensitivity to and concerns about their expressions of subtle bias (i.e., their bias awareness) is timely and important.

The extant literature has provided a plethora of evidence that there are individual differences in Whites' (a) motivations to be non-biased (Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones, & Vance, 2002; Plant & Devine, 1998) and egalitarian (Moskowitz, Gollwitzer, Wasel, & Schaal, 1999), (b) acknowledgement of discrepancies between how they should versus would act in interracial contexts (Monteith & Voils, 1998), (c) defensiveness when confronted with evidence of their bias, and

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [sylvia.perry@uvm.edu](mailto:sylvia.perry@uvm.edu) (S.P. Perry), [mcpsych@indiana.edu](mailto:mcpsych@indiana.edu) (M.C. Murphy), [john.dovidio@yale.edu](mailto:john.dovidio@yale.edu) (J.F. Dovidio).

(d) ability to compensate when they recognize their bias (Moskowitz, Li, Igarri, & Stone, 2011). Although these lines of work all implicate the fundamental importance of being aware of and concerned about bias, no previously published work directly illuminates individual differences in the extent to which people are aware of and concerned about their own or others' subtle bias. We term this phenomenon *bias awareness*.

Models of controlling prejudice and attaining egalitarian goals argue that a concerned awareness of bias is a critical factor for prejudice reduction (Grube et al., 1994; Monteith, 1993; Monteith et al., 2010a, 2010b; Moskowitz et al., 2011; Penner, 1971; Rokeach & Cochran, 1972)—this makes one's ability to become aware of bias, especially subtle bias, extremely important. For example, Monteith and colleague's self-regulation of prejudice model posits that when a low-prejudiced person has a negative implicit evaluation of an outgroup member (of which he or she may or may not be aware), this evaluation leads to the recognition of a discrepancy between his or her egalitarian goals and his or her negative behavior toward the outgroup (Monteith, 1993; Monteith, Ashburn-Nardo, Voils, & Czopp, 2002; and Monteith & Mark, 2009). As a result of this discrepancy, low-prejudiced people will (a) respond by interrupting their prejudiced behavior (and/or they will display a compensatory response), (b) experience feelings of guilt, and (c) reflect on their prejudiced behavior. By contrast, high-prejudiced individuals will experience more other-directed negative affect (e.g., anger) rather than self-directed negative emotion (e.g., guilt) when their biased behavior is made salient, and consequently will not exhibit compensatory responses.

This line of research on the responses people make when bias-related discrepancies are salient underscores the critical role of a concerned awareness of bias – that is, not simply being aware but also being concerned about such bias is central – in self-regulation processes to reduce personal bias. While previous work has theorized that bias awareness is powerful because it allows one to access processes of control—discrepancy, motivation, compensation, satiation—that work has experimentally induced, but not measured concerned awareness as an individual difference variable. Therefore, we believe a measure that assesses individual differences in concerned awareness of bias provides a novel and significant contribution.

The current work extends and complements Monteith and colleague's self-regulation of prejudice model (Monteith, 1993; Monteith et al., 2002; Monteith & Mark, 2009) by illuminating whether there are systematic individual differences in concerned awareness of bias in the self and in others, and whether this awareness will affect the previously theorized self-regulatory processes associated with Whites' egalitarian goals. In the present research we develop and test a measure of the concerned awareness, the Bias Awareness Scale, and investigate how it predicts Whites' responses in race-relevant contexts in ways that go beyond existing measures. We hypothesize that the initiation of the process that triggers the previously described motives and compensatory responses will systematically differ as a function of individual differences in Whites' Bias Awareness. We propose that, because people who score relatively high on the Bias Awareness Scale are attuned to the possibility that they may exhibit subtle biases, individual differences in Bias Awareness will relate to one's ability to detect the discrepancy between one's egalitarian beliefs and prejudiced behavior. This process will subsequently influence one's ability to correct for his or her behavior.

As suggested by the literature cited above, an early recognition of one's biases may also be affected by other individual-level factors and differences, such as people's motivations to respond without prejudice or their actual levels of (implicit or explicit) prejudice (Perry, Dovidio, Murphy, & van Ryn, 2015). We propose, however, that individual differences as assessed by the Bias Awareness Scale can influence race-relevant behaviors independent of people's levels of prejudice or motivation to be non-biased. Although personal levels of prejudice (Monteith, 1993) and individual differences in internal or external

motivations to be nonprejudiced (Plant & Devine, 1998) also systematically relate to the extent and ways people regulate race-related behavior, because it is hypothesized to represent a discrete element in the self-regulation process, individual differences in Bias Awareness should affect responses in unique ways that go beyond the effects of existing scales. For instance, individuals who score relatively high on the Bias Awareness Scale may be more open to accepting and responding constructively to evidence suggesting that they have demonstrated subtle bias. This is because in general, people find feedback that is consistent (versus inconsistent) with their self-concept to be more credible (Swann, Chang-Schneider, & McClarty, 2007). Moreover, when the feedback is disconfirming of, and threatening to, their self-concepts, people often respond defensively (Ditto & Boardman, 1995; Ditto, Scepansky, Munro, Apanovitch, & Lockhart, 1998; Sherman & Cohen, 2002). Greater personal awareness of bias may also have effects beyond self-regulatory behavior. Because people are better able to process information about others when it is consistent with how they process information about themselves (Gillihan & Farah, 2005; Rogers, Kuiper, & Kirker, 1977), people who score higher on the Bias Awareness Scale may be more attuned to the existence of cues or information signaling subtle bias in their environment and thus more likely to see actions by others subtly biased.

The present research develops and tests the Bias Awareness Scale and investigates the systematic effects of bias awareness of Whites in the US on a range of race-related behaviors and perceptions, independent of level of prejudice, motivation to be nonprejudiced (Devine et al., 2002; Plant & Devine, 1998), strength of egalitarian goals (Moskowitz et al., 1999), and recognition of discrepancies between what one would do and should do in interracial contexts (Monteith et al., 2010a, 2010b; Monteith & Mark, 2009). Individual differences based on the Bias Awareness Scale are hypothesized to operate as an antecedent to intergroup responses and behavior. A concerned awareness of bias, represented by scores on the Bias Awareness Scale, for example, may critically relate to how Whites respond to potential evidence of racial bias in themselves and others. Specifically, we investigated whether Whites show individual differences on the Bias Awareness Scale, and whether bias awareness has implications for how Whites view their own and others' racial bias against Blacks. Understanding whether there are individual differences on the Bias Awareness Scale can illuminate how and why interventions may have different effects across individuals (drawing on a person  $\times$  situation perspective; Snyder & Ickes, 1985) and offer insights into cross-situational patterns of responses across individuals.

In the present work, we propose and examine the hypothesis that people who score higher on the Bias Awareness Scale will be more likely to recognize and accept information that their behavior in a given race-relevant context reflects bias. In particular people scoring high on the Bias Awareness Scale are hypothesized to be more likely to acknowledge that an action is racially biased, and consequently experience more negative emotion and/or a goal to be egalitarian (Moskowitz et al., 2011). The goal, once triggered, leads to compensatory responses aimed at reducing the tension and addressing the discrepancy.

Three studies examine how individual differences on the Bias Awareness Scale relate to Whites' reactions to evidence of personal bias and their perceptions of others' bias. Specifically, we investigate the extent to which bias awareness predicts (a) Whites' acceptance of information suggesting that they may hold negative implicit attitudes against Blacks, (b) whether people are motivated (or not) to respond in non-prejudiced and/or compensatory ways, and, (c) people's detection of others' subtle racial bias.

## 1. The present research

The first goal of the present research was to create and validate a measure of concerned awareness of subtle bias. We developed the scale in the context of Whites' orientations toward Blacks. We focused

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7324450>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7324450>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)