IMPLICIT ATTITUDES & MASS POLITICAL OPINION

*"The revolution will not be televised."*

-Gill Scott-Heron

In 1995, Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji, two leading social psychologists, sparked a conceptual revolution by calling for greater attention to implicit cognition. "The signature of implicit cognition," they explained, "is that traces of past experience affect some performance, even though the influential earlier experience is not remembered in the usual sense (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995)." These authors warned their colleagues that failure to theorize and measure these "traces of past experience" would be a missed opportunity, for implicit cognition was a major component of human nature: we *all* possess mental freight that is unavailable to introspection. The challenge was to refine our conceptual understanding of these contents and invent a way to appraise them, both of which Greenwald, Banaji, and their collaborators eventually accomplished (Greenwald et al., 1998). In the end, these authors' plea was sufficiently intriguing to persuade other psychologists to join their call to scientific arms, as evidenced by Figure 5.1, which tracks the number of published articles on implicit cognition in major psychological journals from 1995 through 2021.[1]

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[1] Figures 1-3 draw on yearly searches for publications on implicit cognition and attitudes. Searches were conducted in leading psychology journals (*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, *Psychological Science*, *Social Psychology and Personality Science*, and *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*), plus leading political science journals (*American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *Political Behavior*, *Political Psychology*, and *Public Opinion Quarterly*).

Figure 5.1

Yearly Published Articles on Implicit Cognition and Attitudes in Major Psychology Journals, 1995-2021
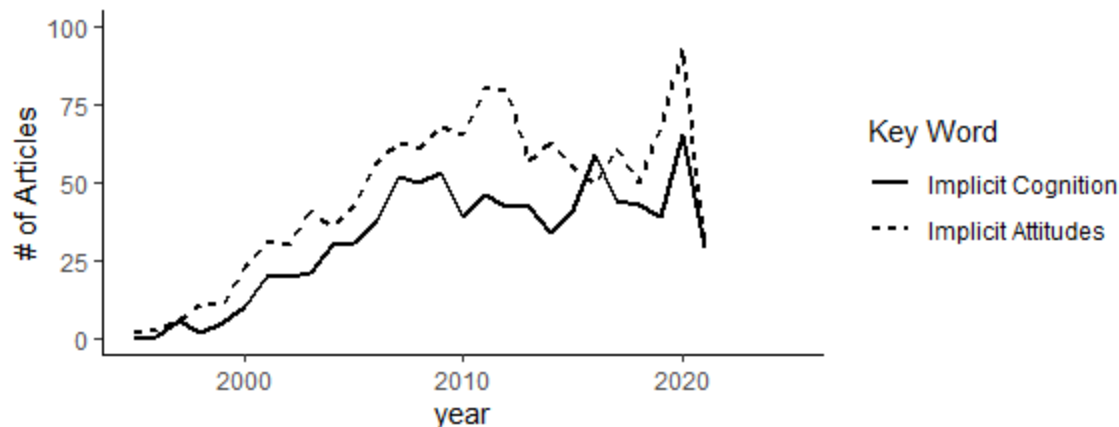
It was a revolutionary wave poised to overtake political science: a field which borrows heavily from social psychologists who study attitudes (McGuire, 1993). But this revolution arrived as a whimper, not a roar. When the insights and tools of implicit cognition reached the shores of political science, most political scientists reacted with indifference—and sometimes outright hostility (Arkes & Tetlock, 2005; Ditonto, Lau, & Sears, 2014; Kinder & Ryan, 2017). Of course, healthy skepticism is essential to science. But when it persists in light of accumulated empirical evidence, it can become obstructionist. This matters because implicit cognition research is not a fad. It is a systematic effort to grasp how humans really think—including about *politics*.

We have two goals here. First, we will speculate about political science's general indifference to implicit attitudes. Based on our collective expertise and experiences as authors, editors, readers, and reviewers of implicit cognition research, we will highlight four major reasons why implicit cognition research has not taken deeper root in political science: 1) uncertainty about what implicit attitudes are; 2) distrust of implicit attitude measures; 3) a

selective understanding of evidence for implicit attitudes; and 4) distaste for the normative implications of implicit attitudes research. We will proceed gingerly, but firmly, clarifying the facts and dispelling misinformation as needed.

We will then specify concrete areas where implicit cognition can spark new questions or invigorate old debates by generating new conceptual and theoretical insights about mass political behavior. We will focus on three essential areas: 1) group identity and collective action; 2) political information-processing; and 3) prejudice and mass politics. With space limited and our sights set ambitiously high, let us get to work.

Why No Implicit *Political* Cognition?

Ask a social psychologist whether implicit *political* cognition exists, and they are likely to give you a resounding "yes" (Nosek, Graham, & Hawkins, 2010). But ask a political scientist whether scholarship on implicit political cognition exists, and you are more likely to receive blank stares. Why this disjuncture?

Part of the answer is that when social psychologists produce scholarship on implicit political cognition, they are generally formulating research that uses politics to understand human psychology, rather than using implicit cognition to understand mass politics in their own right (McGuire, 1993). Moreover, when psychologists study implicit *political* cognition, they primarily center on two areas: implicit partisanship and vote choice (Arcuri et al., 2008; Friese et al., 2016).

Consider Figure 5.2, which tracks published implicit cognition research in top psychology and political science journals since 1995. The pace of political science research on implicit attitudes is unmistakably spotty and anemic when compared to the volume published in

major psychology journals. Below, we investigate three major reasons why more political

scientists have not engaged with work on implicit cognition.

Figure 5.2

Yearly Published Articles on Implicit Cognition and Attitudes in Major Psychology and Political Science Journals, 1995-2021.
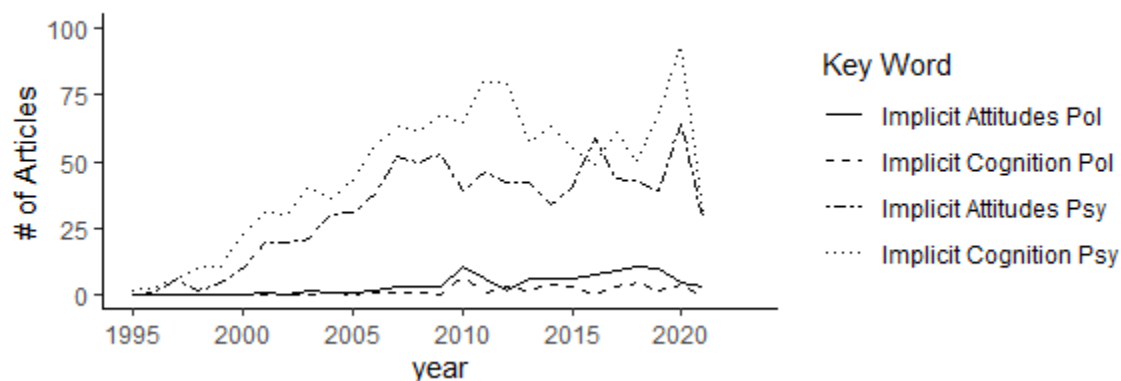
What Are Implicit Attitudes, Anyway?

For most political scientists, the way to measure attitudes and other cognitions is to ask

people about them (Tourangeau et al., 2000). Self-reports are direct and cheap way to gauge

human cognitions. But in political science, as in life, you often get what you pay for. And when

our understanding of citizens' mental contents is involved, we have inherited an incomplete

sense of what political attitudes are and how they operate. We often forget that while self-reports

are observable, the quantities they purport to measure are not. Hence, implicit attitudes are

identical to self-reported ones in a fundamental way: they consist of latent phenomena that are

indirectly observed, which means both require clear and nuanced conceptualizations.

We define explicit attitudes as self-reported evaluations of groups, individuals, or issues

(Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Articulating explicit attitudes requires mental effort and individual

control, as they require active retrieval of contents from memory. And, if one has no explicit

attitude to report, cognitive effort is still needed to cobble one together (Zaller, 1992; Tourangeau et al., 2000; Schwarz, 2007). Explicit attitudes also entail awareness, since voicing them involves some degree of introspection.

In contrast, implicit attitudes are basic affective evaluations of objects as *good/bad*, *favorable/unfavorable*, or *pleasant/ unpleasant* (Smith & Nosek, 2011; Ranganath et al., 2008; Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006; Payne et al., 2005; Spence & Townsend, 2008). While unrefined on the surface, simple valenced judgments like these are crucial to humans making sense of their world and resolving—rapidly and with minimal deliberation—the challenge of evaluating whether an object poses a danger to them (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957; Zajonc, 1980). Think of implicit attitudes as instant and adaptive evaluations.[2]

Most importantly, implicit attitudes are steeped in automatic mental processes (but not exclusively) (Ranganath, Smith, & Nosek, 2008). Bargh (1994) explains that automaticity is attended by four "horsemen" or signature traits. First, an automatic process is *unintentional*: people do not voluntarily engage it. Once initiated, an automatic process is often difficult for people to *control*. This relative uncontrollability can be traced to automaticity's *efficiency*, since it requires minimal cognitive effort. Finally, automatic processes are often accompanied by a lack of individual *awareness*. Automatic mental processes contain one or all of these traits, with implicit attitudes displaying more of these than their explicit counterparts (Ranganath et al., 2008).

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[2] While implicit *attitudes* are evaluative, some forms of implicit cognition are minimally affective (Evans 2008), as in the implicit *associations* people have between categories (e.g., American) and traits (e.g., U.S. flag) (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Moreover, the interface between explicit and implicit cognition is interpreted with various degrees of nuances by psychologists (Evans, 2008; Greenwald & Banaji, 2017; Corneille & Hütter, 2020).

What Do Implicit Measures Capture and How Do They Work?

Another reason why political science has not further incorporated implicit cognition research into its thinking is a weak understanding of how measures of implicit phenomena operate. We deepen this understanding here by following Greenwald and Lai's (2020) recent taxonomy.

If you recall, explicit cognitions assume introspective awareness of an attitude or stereotype. These constructs are associative in nature, with an attitude comprising an association of positive or negative valence with a social, physical, or even abstract concept. Similarly, a stereotype can be thought of as an association of a group or other category and a trait. Since people are presumed to have introspective access to these explicit associations, it implies we can measure them *directly* through self-reports. Thus, we can think of *explicit* cognitions as corresponding to *direct* measures (Corneille & Hütter, 2020; Greenwald & Banaji, 2017).

Similar to explicit phenomena, implicit attitudes and stereotypes also consist of associations. But implicit cognitions do not assume introspective awareness. Hence, asking people to report mental contents they have weak or no introspective access to does not make sense. *Implicit* cognitions are therefore better captured by *indirect* measures, which do not presume introspective access. Let us consider three of these indirect measures.

Implicit Association Test (IAT)

The IAT is the most closely studied indirect measure. Let us assume we wish to tap implicit attitudes toward Blacks. An IAT will have one rapidly classify words randomly appearing on a computer screen by using two classification pairs.[3] The first pair presumes one negatively evaluates Blacks and positively evaluates Whites (Figure 3). If a word is a **Black**

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[3] Note that images can also be used as exemplars of attitude objects.

exemplar (*Tyrone*) or negatively valenced (*horrible*), one will press the **E** computer key. If a word is a **White** exemplar (*Preston*) or positively valenced (*wonderful*), one will press the **I** key. After making 40 classifications, a mean reaction time is computed, with faster times reflecting more negative attitude toward Blacks.

Figure 3

IAT Classification Scheme: Blacks Negatively Evaluated and Whites Positively Evaluated
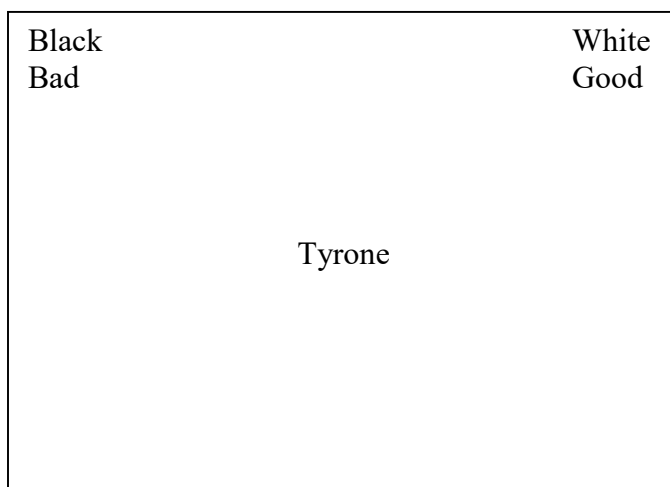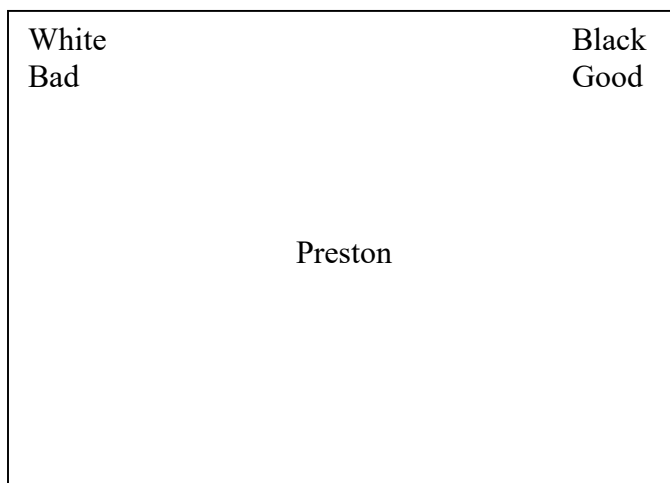
Black Bad	White Good
Tyrone	

Figure 4

IAT Classification Scheme: Whites Negatively Evaluated and Blacks Positively Evaluated

White Bad	Black Good
Preston	

People then sort another 40 words using the same stimuli, but with a *mismatched* classification pair (Figure 4). Here, **White|Bad** and **Black|Good** appear in different corners. Researchers again compute a mean response time, with faster times reflecting more positive attitudes toward Blacks.[4] If one has a negative implicit attitude toward Blacks, one will sort words faster and with less errors when using the matched pair (**Black|Bad – White|Good**) than the mismatched pair (**White|Bad – Black|Good**).

<u>Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP)</u>

The AMP indexes implicit attitudes—not in milliseconds—but by the proportion of stimuli judged as positive or negative (Payne et al., 2005). For example, to tap implicit attitudes toward Blacks, people rate single Chinese pictographs as (un)pleasant. Before each pictograph, a photo of a (Black) White male is flashed as a prime, which one is directed to ignore. If affective reactions to a prime (Black photo) are hard to control, they will seep into ratings of the Chinese characters (Murphy & Zajonc, 1993). Thus, if people have negative implicit attitudes toward Blacks, they will rate Chinese characters unpleasantly in higher proportions when preceded by Black than by White primes. Subtracting pleasantness ratings of Chinese pictographs after Black primes from ratings after White primes yields scores reflecting negative implicit attitudes toward Blacks.

<u>Affective Priming (AP)</u>

This measure gauges the millisecond (ms) speed with which people correctly identify the positive or negative connotation of a word presented after a prime (Fazio et al., 1995; Kam, 2007). For example, to tap racial attitudes, researchers prime subjects with single photos of

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[4] While these two sorting tasks are the crux of the IAT, the full test involves additional exercises that acclimate people to the measure and the classification exercises involved. In total, the IAT consists of seven (7) blocks, or sets of individual exercises (e.g., Nosek et al., 2007). A streamlined version of this test—the Brief IAT —has recently entered the market, though it is not as extensively validated as the traditional IAT (Sriram & Greenwald, 2009).

Black or White individuals. After each photo, subjects identify a target word (e.g., *terrible*) as positive or negative using designated computer keys. Consider Fazio et al. (1995), who primed subjects with single photos of Blacks and Whites. Each photo appeared for 315 ms, followed by 135 ms before presentation of a target word (e.g., *wonderful*), for a total of 450 ms, which ensures that processing of a prime occurs below awareness. The quantity of interest yielded here is a person's facilitation score, which indicates how much faster one responds to negative stimuli following a prime than positive stimuli following that same prime.

Reliability and Predictive Validity of Indirect Measures

Before proceeding, we highlight two key methodological issues around indirect measures: their reliability and predictive validity. Reliability is the proportion of variance attributable to the true score of a variable rather than measurement error. Indirect measures are vulnerable to lower reliability because varied sources of error can affect the speed of response (e.g., an eye blink, sneeze, cough). Although higher reliability is preferred, displaying lower reliability does not invalidate an indirect measure (or any measure). It simply makes it harder to detect an attitude and reproduce its effects (Brown, 2007).[5]

Two ways to assess the reliability of indirect measures are split-half and test-retest correlations. A split-half correlation gauges the ratio of systematic to error variance in a single measurement occasion (i.e., internal consistency). By this metric, the IAT and AMP generally display a solid degree of reliability (IAT and AMP α ~ .80), while AP registers a much lower level (AP α ~ 50) (Greenwald & Lai, 2020; Bar-Anan & Nosek, 2014). In turn, a test-retest correlation reflects the degree of systematic variance preserved across measurement occasions. The IAT and AMP, again, display satisfactory reliability (r~.50), while AP falls in a lower range

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[5] In other words, a measure can capture what it is meant to capture (i.e., validity), but accomplish this with suboptimal precision (i.e., low reliability) (Brown, 2007).

(r~.26). This suggests the IAT and AMP have sufficient reliability to detect the direction of an implicit attitude, but not enough to diagnose differences between individuals (Greenwald & Lai, 2020). However, lest one thinks this undermines indirect measures, consider the many direct measures in political science whose reliability and diagnostic abilities are untested (Montgomery & Rossieter, 2020).

Predictive Validity

Indirect measures also possess robust predictive validity (Greenwald et al., 2009). Mounting evidence suggests the influence of implicit attitudes on relevant outcomes is independent of explicit attitudes (Fazio et al., 1995; Payne et al., 2005; Nosek et al., 2007), including political ones (Pérez, 2010 and 2016; Malhotra et al., 2013; Pasek et al., 2009; Payne et al., 2010). Thus, the quantities that indirect measures capture are often on par with many self-reported political quantities.

Indirect Measures Have Little Political Value

A third source of resistance is some evidence that indirect measures—and the quantities they caputre—don't matter politically (Kinder & Ryan, 2017; Kalmoe & Piston, 2013; Ditonto, Lau, & Sears, 2013). The challenge here is not the presence of null evidence, but rather, its interpretation with respect to the totality of the published record (Franco et al., 2014). There are three reasons to avoid over-interpreting these null findings. First, this evidence comes from one domain: White racial attitudes toward African Americans. This is a crucial realm, but the phenomenon of implicit attitudes is much broader than this, since it plays a role in national and racial identity (Cole, 2016; Devos & Banaji, 2005; Pérez, 2021), political candidate preferences (Payne et al., 2005; Arcuri et al., 2008), consumer products (e.g., soft drinks) (e.g., Maison et al., 2004; Brunel et al., 2004); perspectives about gender (Axt et al., 2021); sexual orientation (e.g.,

Jellison et al., 2004) and other areas, with meta-analytic evidence suggesting that across topics, labs, and, research designs, implicit attitudes are associated with attitudes and behaviors net of explicit attitudes.

Second, the null results in focus are from one common survey, the 2008 ANES. The ANES is, rightfully, a benchmark survey for political scientists. ANES surveys are based on large samples of American adults, often recruited via probabilistic methods, and replete with validated instrumentation to measure political attitudes across sundry domains. These characteristics cut some way against the practice of relying almost exclusively on student samples (Sears, 1986). Yet ANES studies consist of large, *omnibus* surveys where respondents take up to an hour or more to complete self-reported measures on miscellaneous topics that are typically not designed by end-users themselves. Thus, what is gained in terms of generalizability in findings is lost in terms of researcher control over the order, sequencing, and placement of indirect measures. Alas, failure to find (strong) evidence here could simply arise from respondents answering so many questions that the spontaneity behind these implicit attitudes is snuffed out.

Third, the evidence at hand is not that implicit racial attitudes do not matter, but rather, that implicit racial attitudes are *directly* unassociated with focal outcomes in these samples. From this angle, it might be unsurprising that implicit attitudes do not correlate with their explicit variety given that they are at different levels of analysis (automatic vs. deliberative), with little investigation of the moderators and mediators responsible for the interface between the two (some of which may also be implicit and prior to explicit constructs).

The bottom line here is not to ignore discrepant results for implicit attitudes, but to weigh them against evidence that affirms this phenomenon, while taking steps to revisit and extend

these findings through more controlled research designs, including briefer surveys with more proximal outcomes and greater leverage and control over their mechanisms.

Distasteful Implications of Implicit Attitudes

A final reason why implicit attitudes research has not made more headway in political science involves some researchers' distaste for the normative implications of this research. One of the earliest criticisms of indirect measures (i.e., IAT) was its detection of negative implicit attitudes among African Americans, leading a pair of psychologists to wonder out loud, "Would Jesse Jackson 'Fail' the Implicit Association Test?" (Arkes & Tetlock, 2005). For psychologists and political scientists who do not study the psychology of people of color, this rhetorical question implies that the quantities detected by indirect measures should be distrusted. But for psychologists and political scientists steeped in the study of people of color, the rhetorical question is puzzling, to say the least. Of course Jesse Jackson can "fail" the IAT—and his scores would be just as meaningful as if he "passed" it! Indeed, if the reverend harbors negative implicit attitudes toward his group, it would be consistent with a variety of theoretical perspectives, including the view that identification with one's own racial group is an individual difference, with plenty of individuals having a low opinion of their ingroup (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2003; Leach et al., 2008; Garcia Bedolla, 2005; Pérez, 2015), as well as the perspective that some people of color will lash out at their ingroup to affirm a status quo that oppresses them at a group level, but provides predictability, certainty, and control at the individual level (Jost, 2019). The implications of this pattern are normatively unsettling, but they are consistent with solid psychological principles.

Similarly, in another domain, Arcuri et al. (2008) first detected that implicit candidate preferences affected the ultimate vote choices of expressly "undecided voters." Arcuri and

colleagues took a sub-sample from a larger survey and had them complete an IAT contrasting opposing political candidates in a looming electoral contest. This IAT picked up on implicit preferences for one of the candidates. After the actual election, these researchers found that individual differences in implicit candidate preferences were substantively associated with vote choice among these self-professed "undecided" voters. The implication is a depressing one: that what is often taken for granted as an act steeped in deliberative process—i.e., voting—is fundamentally driven by automatic processes. But just as in the previous example, what seems unorthodox is coherently explained by standard psychological principles, including the robust interface between automatic and deliberative cognitive processes (Galdi et al., 2008; Lodge & Taber, 2013; Pérez, 2016).

Where to Integrate Implicit Cognition Insights—and How?

A remaining challenge is to demonstrate how scholars can plug in insights about implicit attitudes to areas of political science. While the possibilities are many, we explain how the insights of implicit cognition can be constructively integrated into three broad areas of political science research: 1) group identity and collective action; 2) information-processing and political choice; and 3) prejudice and mass politics.

Group Identity and Collective Action

The study of collective action has taught political scientists just how difficult it is to galvanize individuals toward political ends, given the high individual costs of participation and the challenges of monitoring others' efforts (Olson, 1965; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968; Fowler & Kam, 2007). One solution for this is to activate a shared identity, which clarifies who the "collective" is; specifies what is expected of a collective's members; and, cements the bonds between them by infusing trust into the shared group (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997; Van

Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004; White & Laird, 2020; Pérez, 2021). Yet sometimes identities fail to spark collective action. This situation presents a fruitful way to incorporate implicit cognition research by asking: Why do some identities not trigger action for the greater whole?

Political scientists generally measure identities via self-reports and treat scores on them as *the* wellspring of group-relevant behaviors. Yet by heeding the insights of implicit cognition research, explicit identity could be re-conceptualized as a byproduct of deeper cognitive and affective processes. In theory, the power of an identity resides in the degree to which individuals profoundly internalize it (Tajfel, 1981). Although there is peer pressure to do this, not every individual classified into a group internalizes its identity to similar degrees (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Thus, it is plausible that the lack of a direct link between explicit group identity and collective action depends on the degree to which an identity is internalized among group members. The more internalized an identity—as indexed by an IAT—the higher the reported levels of explicit identity, which should positively impact collective action. For example, research on the political relevance of a person of color identity (PoC ID) reveals that the influence of this broad attachment across African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans rests, in part, on the fact that members of all three communities automatically associate these groups with the category, *people of color*, as measured by an IAT (Pérez, 2021).

One promising opportunity on this front involves the role of pan-ethnic identity among Asian Americans. In the pantheon of U.S. communities of color, Asian Americans stand out for the allegedly weak influence that being *Asian American* seems to have on their politics. Unlike Black or Latino identity, *Asian American* identity appears to play a role only under limited circumstances (Junn & Masuoka, 2008). This spotty track record is plausibly due to

undertheorizing a variety of moderators, including, we think, the degree of internalization of Asian American identity.

To assess this prospect, researchers could design an identity IAT that tests the implicit associations people have between the category, *Asian American*, and one's ancestral origin (e.g., *Chinese*, *Korean*, *Filipino*). Since one is interested in the degree to which a person views one's nation of origin as a strong reflection of what it means to be Asian American, an IAT can deploy the classification pair **Asian American|Bad – Chinese|Good** versus **Asian American|Good – Chinese|Bad**. Here, greater differences in response times between these blocks would indicate weaker internalization, which would fray the connection between explicit Asian American identity and political attitudes and behavior.[6]

Another example where implicit cognition research can inform current debates about identities involves the nature of partisanship among Latinos, the largest community of color in the U.S. (Hopkins et al., 2019; Hajnal & Lee, 2011; Alvarez and Garcia Bedolla, 2003; Abrajano & Alvarez, 2010). The dominant view of party identification in the U.S. mass public treats it as an *instrumental* attachment: "a running tally of party performance, ideological beliefs, and proximity to the party in terms of one's preferred policies (Huddy et al., 2015: 1; Campbell et al., 1960)." Accordingly, scholars use a 7-point scale that classifies individuals as Democrat, Republican, or Independent, with minimal gradations in identity intensity. This approach performs well among Whites. But among people of color, especially those with fledgling U.S.

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[6] This approach can also be used to study White racial identity (Jardina, 2019). Less than 20 years ago, self-reports of White identity revealed individual differences that did not map onto political decisions (Wong & Cho, 2005). It is possible that as people of color increased in number, what it means to be White has come into sharper focus, generating stronger perceptions of intragroup homogeneity among Whites (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001; Danbold & Huo, 2015; Pérez et al., 2019). Indeed, history suggests that members of European sub-groups that had once viewed themselves as distinct (e.g., Italians, Irish, Jews) eventually saw the boundaries between them crumble (Roediger, 2005). Thus, White identity in contemporary times might matter most among those who spontaneously associate Italians, Jews, Irish, and other European groups with being White, as measured by an IAT.

roots (e.g., Latinos, Asians), this strategy uncovers high rates of party *un-affiliation* (Hajnal & Lee, 2011), indicating that many non-Whites lack the "hard" information to place themselves on this party scale.

Or do they? Plenty of research suggests partisan identity is a core aspect of the self among African Americans (White & Laird, 2020) and some Latino and Asian individuals, especially when its *expressive* components are tapped (Studen, 2019; Hopkins et al., 2019; Kuo et al., 2017; Huddy et al., 2016). An expressive account of partisanship focuses on the various social groups affiliated with a political party, including racial, ethnic, religious, and gender groups (Green, Schickler, & Palmquist, 2002; Huddy et al., 2016). These associations between personally relevant social groups and a party make partisan identities highly affective, stable, and immune to short-term events. One way to tap into these expressive components without concerns about social desirability or difficulty of answering questions—two salient considerations when studying immigrants and their descendants—would be to develop IATs that measure self-party associations—that is, the extent to which "I" associate myself with "Democrats" vs. "Republicans" (Theodoridis, 2017). Beyond the existence and prevalence of implicit partisanship, individual differences in this construct can be used to predict political judgments and behavior among these "unmotivated" and "uninformed" partisans. This would help to redirect current debates about Latino partisanship from "it ain't there" to "perhaps it's more prevalent and influential in a different (implicit) form."

Information-Processing and Political Choice

A second area of research that can benefit from injecting insights about implicit cognition is the mechanics of political information-processing. Take a casual glance of published research on public opinion and political behavior, and you will come away with the impression that

political stimuli—e.g., rhetoric, ads, news, and the like—*directly* impact mass attitudes. Indeed, whether one employs surveys or experiments, the typical theoretical story is one where a variable of interest has an impact on relevant outcomes, unmediated by other mechanisms. But as Charles Taber (2003), his colleagues, and others remind us (Lodge & Taber, 2013; Taber & Young, 2013; Pérez, 2016), the space between political stimuli and outcomes is a huge "black box." Clarifying its contents is part of how implicit cognition research can help.

We see here two possibilities. The first is a deeper dive into the interface between automatic and controlled processes that generate political decisions (Taber & Lodge, 2006; Nosek, Graham, & Hawkins, 2010; Lodge & Taber, 2013; Pérez, 2016). Several scholars have already alerted us to the distinctions and complementarities between automatic and controlled processes in political cognition (Ranganath et al., 2008; Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006). But what remains less certain is when, why, and among whom these two types of processes correspond (or deviate)—and with what political consequences. Some of the most innovative work here, in our opinion, has been produced by Tim Ryan (2017). He demonstrates that while there is a modest correspondence (at best) between implicit and explicit attitudes toward political candidates, individuals with *weak* self-reported attitudes often rely on their more crystallized implicit attitudes to make candidate evaluations. At minimum, this insight corrects the impulse among some political scientists to uncover the "average" effects of implicit attitudes on political outcomes (Ditonto et al., 2014), focusing greater attention, instead, on the types of people who are more likely to rely on these rapid evaluations.

Another way to incorporate insights from implicit cognition research is to use indirect measures to capture automatic processes that feed forward into explicit attitudes and judgments. Recent work finds that use of gender-neutral pronouns can cause individuals to express more

egalitarian gender opinions (Tavits & Pérez, 2019). This could be because gender-neutral pronouns broaden the panorama of what gender means (*he*, *she*, *they*). But it could also be because use of gender-neutral pronouns triggers a strong sense of social desirability pressure (Schwarz, 2007). To distinguish between these alternatives, Tavits & Pérez (2019) randomly assigned individuals to use a gender-less or a gendered pronoun, followed by a task where participants had to complete a sentence with a male, female, or unisex name. Critically, this task was further subdivided into two, where participants completed the sentence-completion at their own pace or were expected to finish it in 10 seconds or less, with the latter speeded condition tapping into automatic processing (Ranganath et al., 2008). If social desirability is absent from pronoun use, then the incidence of non-male names should be statistically and substantively equal across conditions. They were.

Prejudice and Mass Politics

A final area where implicit attitudes can help researchers break new ground is the study of prejudice and politics. The cutting edge in this field has been to horse-race the direct associations between implicit prejudice, explicit prejudice, and policy preferences, independent of theoretically-implied covariates (Kinder & Ryan, 2017; Ditonto et al., 2014; Kalmoe & Piston, 2014; Pérez, 2010; Pasek et al., 2009). Should we be impressed? Maybe. Observational analyses like these are helpful, but we don't think they provide smoking gun evidence in favor or against implicit attitudes, given challenges of omitted variable bias (Gujarati, 1978), the mismatched structure of variables (self-reports vs. indirect measures) (Payne et al., 2008), and the insistence on finding direct, unmediated associations between explicit and implicit

phenomena (Gawronski & Payne, 2010).[7] Indeed, more important than evidence on the unique association between implicit attitudes and relevant outcomes has been the generally modest correspondence between both implicit and explicit attitudes, especially in the realm of race (Greenwald & Lai, 2020; Greenwald et al., 2009; Pérez, 2016).

This loose correspondence between implicit and explicit racial attitudes suggests that people might have different prejudice profiles, where some individuals have high implicit and explicit prejudice, some have low implicit and explicit prejudice, and—potentially most interesting of all—some people score high in implicit prejudice but low in its explicit variety. Alas, it is among these latter type of individuals where we might uncover hidden support for policies, institutions, and other measures that prevent greater progress on racial equality—a preference for the racial *status quo* (Jost, 2019).

Not sold? Think of White police officers who explicitly disavow racism, but who inhabit the same culture that teaches us all in manifold ways that Black is "bad" (e.g., Nosek & Hansen, 2008; Valentino et al., 2002; Gilens, 1999) Think, also, of the many White individuals who expressed sympathy for the plight of Black Americans in light of 2020's many murders of African American individuals at the hands of police (Chudy, 2020), but who, again, also inhabit the same culture that make many of us impulsively feel suspicious of Black people, which can promote feelings of fear, hostility, and/or indifference. Both of these examples demonstrate, we think, that people can be trained or encouraged to take certain actions and express particular viewpoints. But it is harder to root out the snap judgments we make about Black individuals (and

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[7] Sometimes (Pasek et al., 2009) a mediating variable is examined, but our critique here is that the intervening process between implicit attitudes and explicit judgments might be more extensive than this, especially if one pays greater attention to the difference between proximate and distal outcomes of implicit attitudes.

other people of color) that keep some of us from taking more active steps to dismantle the structural inequities that keep people of color "in their place."

Coda

In his 1892 book, the *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle penned a short story titled, "Silver Blaze," where a famous racehorse disappears the night before a major contest, with his trainer murdered. Sherlock Homes solves this mystery by astutely noticing that all witnesses he interviewed never indicated they heard the property's watchdog bark.

We have attempted to diagnose why another canine—implicit cognition—has not barked more loudly in political science research. We have argued that the low output of implicit cognition-inspired analyses of political opinion is party driven by a quartet of reasons, namely, *uncertainty* about the meaning of implicit attitudes, *distrust* of indirect measures, *misunderstanding* of evidence for implicit attitudes; and *distaste* for the normative implications of implicit attitudes. We have tried to dispel, or at least blunt, the force of these criticisms and misgivings. We also discussed how implicit cognition research can improve what we know about group identities and collective action, political information-processing, and prejudice and politics—all research areas that span subfields, populations, and regions. Our hope is that we have written enough here to prod a louder exchange between mass politics and implicit cognition research.

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