

F26.46 Investigating Longitudinal Bi-Directional Effects of Social Attitudes and Behavior

Overview

Contemporary societies across the globe are experiencing increased polarization, resulting in significant human, environmental, and economic costs. For instance, the recent escalation in political polarization in the United States illustrates the urgent need to identify mechanisms that effectively promote cooperation and reduce intergroup hostility.

Unfortunately, common interventions that encourage intergroup prosociality often fail in real-world contexts. They rely heavily on one group's willingness to develop positive attitudes toward disliked groups, yet people tend to resist changing their attitudes about those they dislike. Historically, conflict reduction research has focused primarily on the attitude-to-behavior pathway due to a longstanding assumption that attitudes predominantly drive behaviors. Researchers have rarely considered the possibility that a nuanced understanding of the bidirectional relationships between behavior and attitudes might foster more effective methods for promoting intergroup cooperation. Our research directly addresses these limitations by first addressing the previously overlooked causal sequence problem between social attitudes and behavior. In two secondary data analyses (one using existing experience sampling data, and one reanalyzing experimental data) we have found evidence that social attitudes are affected by prior behavior toward different people - a previously unexamined cognitive mechanism with profound implications for conflict reduction. On this basis, we have designed an experience sampling study that will further examine these relationships in greater detail, incorporating group membership to account for how cooperation and competition unfold over repeated intergroup and intragroup encounters typical of diverse societies.

Second, we address how this mechanism could inform practical conflict reduction strategies. To this end, we've designed an experiment testing whether effects of recent cooperative or competitive behavior during a social dilemma with one person influences subsequent intergroup behaviors (such as nonverbal communication and economic decision-making) toward another person.

Ultimately, we aim to deepen our understanding of the relationships between social attitudes and behavior, and use this knowledge to investigate a possible intervention for promoting intergroup cooperation.

What the student will DO and LEARN

Student Role and Learning Outcomes The undergraduate researcher will play a vital role in this innovative research project, acquiring extensive hands-on training in research methodology, statistical analysis, and scientific communication. They will:

- Gain hands-on experience with cutting-edge psychological research, exploring how behaviors influence social attitudes.
- Engage deeply with secondary data analyses and contribute to the design and implementation of an experience sampling study.
- Acquire essential programming skills for psychological research, including programming online surveys (Qualtrics), mobile experience sampling applications (SEMA3), and developing a student-facing web portal.
- Assist in designing, planning, and conducting rigorous in-person experimental studies, mastering the principles of experimental control, and double-blind methodologies.
- Gain valuable leadership and management skills by overseeing other undergraduate research assistants and confederates involved in data collection.
- Develop expertise in statistical data management, including techniques for screening abnormalities, managing missing data, and verifying statistical assumptions.

- Learn to perform statistical analyses in RStudio, including linear regression and multilevel modeling, essential for modern psychological research.
- Obtain experience in scientific communication through writing methods and results sections, as well as presenting findings effectively in poster format at academic conferences.

Additional benefits

The student will not only have Dr. Rumble as a resource, but will also have regular guidance and mentorship from an international PhD student who will provide dedicated support to ensure their success and help them expand their professional network internationally. Participation in this project will significantly enhance the student's qualifications, positioning them as a competitive candidate for graduate programs or research-oriented career paths. They will develop both practical and analytical skills critical for success in academia or industry.

Additional qualifications

Prefer a psychology major, Strong academic record, interest in social psychology, willingness to learn programming, and good organizational and communication skills are preferred. **Time commitment**
6 hrs/week for 30 weeks