Affective Reactions to Prejudice-Related Discrepant Responses: The Impact of Standard Salience

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Affective reactions to prejudice-related discrepant responses were examined either before (standard-salient condition) or after (standard-not-salient condition) subjects’ personal standards for responding were made salient. The standard-salience manipulation had little influence on discrepancy-associated discomfort. However, discrepancy-associated guilt was significantly attenuated in the standard-not-salient condition. Correlations within prejudice levels revealed that, even among low-prejudiced subjects, the relation between guilt and discrepancies was quite weak in the standard-not-salient condition. This indicates that self-regulatory processes aimed at reducing prejudice may not be initiated on a regular basis. The results also revealed that the correlation between guilt and discrepancies was significant, although modest, among moderately prejudiced and high-prejudiced subjects in the standard-salient condition. The implications of this finding are discussed.

The notion that people may experience conflict in connection with their prejudiced tendencies has a long history in the prejudice literature. Conflict presumably arises among individuals who profess low-prejudiced attitudes when they engage in prejudiced responses despite their inner conviction that such responses are wrong. For example, Allport’s (1954) writings on prejudice with compunction included provocative anecdotal evidence of people whose inner conflict was rooted in the coexistence of low-prejudiced beliefs and enduring tendencies to engage in prejudiced responses (see also Campbell, 1961; Friedrichs, 1959; Westie, 1965). Individuals who have high-prejudiced attitudes presumably should also be prone to prejudice-related inconsistences having self-relevant implications. This is because high-prejudiced persons’ prejudiced values, attitudes, and behaviors presumably conflict with their moral allegiance to general American ideals. For example, Myrdal’s (1944) writings on the “American dilemma” portrayed many White Americans as experiencing an “ever-raging” (p. xliii) conflict between their egalitarian self-conception and their intolerant attitudes and prejudiced behaviors toward Blacks. Consistent with this portrayal, Rokeach (1973) reported that his subjects perceived themselves as fair, tolerant, unselfish, and democratic, although many of the subjects had prejudiced values and attitudes.

A number of recent investigations have explored people’s proneness to prejudice-related inconsistencies or discrepancies (see Devine & Monteith, 1993; Devine, Monteith, Zuwerink, & Elliot, 1991; Monteith, Devine, & Zuwerink, 1993; Pressly & Devine, 1992; Zuwerink, Monteith, Devine, & Cook, in press). In these studies, subjects at all levels of prejudice (as assessed by standard attitude measures of prejudice) reported that they are prone to responding in ways that are more prejudiced than their personal standards for responding suggest are appropriate. In addition, prejudice-related discrepancies gave rise to certain affective reactions, which differed as a function of subjects’ prejudice level. When low-prejudiced subjects considered their discrepancies, they experienced negative self-directed (Negself) affect (e.g., self-dissatisfaction and guilt) as well as discomfort (e.g., feeling uneasy and threatened). Like low-prejudiced subjects, high-prejudiced subjects experienced discrepancy-associated discomfort. However, high-prejudiced subjects reported less discrepancy-associated discomfort.

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guilt than did low-prejudiced subjects, and in one study (Monteith et al., 1993), high-prejudiced subjects’ discrepancies were uniquely associated with negative other-directed (Negother) affect—particularly, negative affect directed toward members of the stereotyped group.

A final important finding is that the experience of prejudice-related discrepancies and the resulting feelings of guilt appear to facilitate low-prejudiced individuals’ ability to reduce the occurrence of their prejudiced responses. Specifically, Monteith (1993) found that discrepancies and the associated Negself affect experienced by low-prejudiced subjects served to activate several self-regulatory processes (e.g., heightened self-focus and a slowing of responses) aimed at controlling prejudiced responses in the future. Following the activation of this cycle, low-prejudiced subjects were better able to inhibit prejudiced responses and to replace them with low-prejudiced responses. In contrast, Monteith found that among high-prejudiced subjects, the experience of discrepancies and the associated feelings of discomfort and relatively low levels of guilt did not result in attempts to regulate and reduce prejudice. Thus it appears that the self-regulation of prejudiced responses is dependent on the experience of sufficient levels of discrepancy-associated guilt.  

How Spontaneous Are Discrepancy Detection and the Generation of Discrepancy-Associated Affect?

Monteith (1993) suggested that her findings have optimistic implications for eliminating prejudiced responses among low-prejudiced individuals (see also Monteith, Zuwerink, & Devine, 1994). With practice and effort at self-regulation, low-prejudiced individuals should become effective at inhibiting their prejudiced responses and replacing them with low-prejudiced responses. However, the successful self-regulation of prejudiced responses is dependent on bringing one’s standards to mind spontaneously in connection with one’s prejudiced responses and on experiencing discrepancy-associated guilt. In previous research, subjects were either required or strongly encouraged to make the standard-to-response comparison. For example, in several studies, subjects were explicitly instructed to consider their personal standards and to compare them to their actual responses (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1993; Pressly & Devine, 1992; Zuwerink et al., 1994). Although Monteith did not instruct subjects to think about their personal standards, the experimental situations created a rather strong demand to do so. Thus, based on previous research, it is not clear whether the standard-to-response comparison occurs spontaneously and whether discrepancy-associated affect is experienced spontaneously.

The primary goal of the present research is to examine the level of discrepancy-associated affect subjects experience when their standards either are or are not made salient in connection with their prejudiced responses. If low-prejudiced subjects do not bring their standards to mind and experience discrepancy-associated guilt when they are not explicitly prodded to think about their standards, one may infer that the self-regulation of prejudiced responses will not occur on a regular basis. Such a finding would point to the need to increase the accessibility of low-prejudiced standards (either at the individual or societal level), so that low-prejudiced individuals may be more likely to learn to control their prejudiced responses through careful self-regulation.

The present research explores the issue of standard salience, using a variant of the self-report paradigm used in several previous studies. As in earlier research, subjects in a standard-salient condition imagined themselves in various situations involving gay men and then reported how they would (actual responses) and how they should (personal standards) respond in the situations. Subjects then reported how they felt about the match between their should and would ratings. Subjects in a standard-not-salient condition reported their would ratings; then, subjects’ affect in connection with these ratings was assessed. So that these subjects’ discrepancies could be assessed, subjects recorded their should ratings after reporting their affect. Thus the key difference between the conditions was whether subjects’ personal standards were brought to mind in connection with their actual responses before subjects reported their affect. It should be noted that subjects’ self-reported affect, rather than other behavioral consequences of discrepant responses (see Monteith, 1993), was measured, because feelings of guilt presumably instigate the other self-regulatory mechanisms (see discussion above and Note 2).

There are several possible outcomes of this research. First, low-prejudiced subjects may bring their standards to mind in connection with their prejudiced responses even when they are not explicitly instructed to do so, whereas high-prejudiced subjects may not. Consequently, the standard-salience manipulation may influence the discrepancy-associated affect experienced by high- but not low-prejudiced subjects. This outcome would occur if low-prejudiced subjects’ standards are highly accessible, whereas high-prejudiced subjects’ standards are not, so that the standard-to-response comparison is quite spontaneous among low-prejudiced subjects only. In fact, there is reason to believe that standard accessibility may vary as a function of prejudice level (Zuwerink & Devine, 1993). Specifically, relative to subjects higher in prejudice, low-prejudiced subjects’ personal standards are better internalized, meaning they
are perceived as more important, involve greater feelings of commitment, and are more closely linked to the self-concept (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1998; Zuwerink et al., in press). Given Krosnick’s (1989) finding that important attitudes are more accessible than unimportant attitudes, personal standards may be more accessible among low- than high-prejudiced subjects. Consequently, low-prejudiced subjects may experience high levels of guilt and discomfort as a result of their discrepancies regardless of whether their standards are made salient in the context of the experiment. However, high-prejudiced subjects may experience discrepancy-associated affect (i.e., discomfort and, possibly, Negoother affect) only when the procedures make their standards salient.

A second possibility is that discrepant responses will be associated with some general discomfort among low- and high-prejudiced subjects when subjects’ standards are not made salient. However, more specific discrepancy-associated feelings, such as guilt or Negoother affect, may not arise. This outcome would be observed if subjects compared their actual responses to their standards (even when their personal standards were not explicitly brought to mind) and detected an inconsistency, so that general discrepancy-associated discomfort was experienced. However, subjects may prefer to avoid contemplating the nature and causes of their discrepancies (e.g., subjects may wish to avoid the threat to their egalitarian self-images, or they simply may not take the time). Without such contemplation, subjects’ general negative affect may not become differentiated (Berkowitz, 1990; see also Weiner, Graham, & Chandler, 1982). In sum, discrepancy detection may be quite likely, giving rise to general discomfort. But more specific affective reactions (e.g., NegoSelf or Negoother affect) may require contemplation of the relation between one’s standards and responses, which may occur only when subjects’ standards are made salient by the procedures.

Finally, discrepancies may not have any affective consequences among any of the subjects when their standards are not made salient. This possibility follows from Gaertner and Dovidio’s (1986; Dovidio, Gaertner, Anastasio, & Sanitioso, 1992; Frey & Gaertner, 1986; see also McGonahay, 1986) theory of aversive racism. According to this theory, many individuals are motivated to avoid recognizing their prejudiced responses because they threaten people’s egalitarian self-images. Avoidance can be achieved by generating nonprejudiced rationalizations or justifications for a prejudiced response (e.g., “I said I would feel uncomfortable sitting next to a gay man on a bus, but I would feel uncomfortable sitting next to any man on a bus”). Thus, if people are not directly encouraged to think about their standards, they may shrug off the response and fail to recognize that it conflicts with their personal standards. It follows that discrepancies would have no affective consequences in the absence of conditions that made subjects’ standards salient in connection with their prejudiced responses.

Discrepancy-Associated Guilt Among High-Prejudiced Individuals

Although exploring the issue of standard salience will be informative with respect to the prejudice reduction process among low-prejudiced individuals, this issue has less relevance to high-prejudiced persons. This is because, as noted earlier, the discrepancy-associated discomfort and the relatively low levels of discrepancy-associated guilt that high-prejudiced individuals experience under standard-salient conditions do not appear to be sufficient to motivate efforts to reduce prejudice. To encourage prejudice reduction among high-prejudiced individuals through discrepancy-related tactics, the level of self-dissatisfaction experienced in connection with discrepancies must be increased.

Determining how discrepancy-associated guilt can be increased requires consideration of the nature of individuals’ standards. Based on Higgins’ (1987) self-discrepancy theory, guilt and self-criticism result when one’s standards are derived from the own standpoint, so that responding consistently with the standards is viewed as a personally accepted moral responsibility. Monteith et al. (1993; see also Devine et al., 1991) concluded that, rather than having own-based prejudice-related standards, high-prejudiced individuals’ standards are based on the other standpoint (i.e., the belief that one should live up to the duties or obligations that significant others—such as friends, relatives, and societal norms—believe one should attain). This conclusion seemed warranted given the feelings of discomfort and resentment that high-prejudiced subjects experienced in connection with discrepancies, feelings that Higgins maintained should arise when other-based standards are violated. Thus, based on the conclusions of Monteith et al., own-based standards must be instilled among high-prejudiced individuals if discrepancy-associated guilt is to be heightened, and instilling such standards is likely to be an extremely challenging task (see Monteith et al., 1993).

However, previous research has not examined whether the correlation between discrepancies and guilt among high-prejudiced subjects is significant, although modest. Rather, regression analyses have been reported in which prejudice and proneness to discrepancies were treated as continuous variables when examining the effects of these variables on subjects’ affect. Using this approach, previous researchers did not examine the significance of the effect of discrepancies on affect at a specific level of prejudice. Thus it is possible that the
relation between discrepancies and guilt is significant among high-prejudiced subjects, albeit attenuated relative to low-prejudiced subjects. A significant but modest correlation would imply that the standards of high-prejudiced, discrepancy-prone individuals may be based on the own standpoint but that they are not well internalized (i.e., not very important and central to the self-concept). Thus, rather than instilling own-based standards, it is possible that strategies for increasing discrepancy-associated guilt among high-prejudiced individuals should be focused on increasing the degree to which their existing own-based standards are internalized.

Summary of Goals

In sum, the primary goal of the present research is to examine whether the manipulation of standard salience affects the level of discrepancy-associated guilt and discomfort experienced by subjects. Of greatest interest is whether low-prejudiced subjects will compare their prejudiced responses to their personal standards when their personal standards are not explicitly brought to mind and whether, consequently, they will experience guilt. The present research also examines whether the relation between guilt and discrepancies is significant, although modest, among relatively high-prejudiced subjects.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were students from an introductory psychology class who participated in exchange for extra credit. Participation of 236 subjects was solicited using standard experimental sign-up procedures. After responding to the experimental questionnaires, these subjects completed the Heterosexual Attitudes Toward Homosexuals (HATH) Scale (Larsen, Reed, & Hoffman, 1980), which served as the measure of prejudice. To obtain an approximately equal number of subjects at various levels of prejudice, HATH data collected during an earlier pretesting session involving several hundred introductory students were examined, and 85 additional subjects were successfully recruited by phone. The experimenter was kept blind to these subjects’ HATH scores. All subjects indicated their sexual orientation on the HATH Scale, and only data from heterosexual subjects were used.

Materials and Procedure

Subjects who were recruited through the sign-up procedure participated in groups of approximately 40 individuals. Subjects who were recruited by phone participated in groups consisting of up to 7 people. The experimenter encouraged subjects to respond openly and honestly. She informed subjects that their responses would remain anonymous, explaining that the questionnaires included no identifying information and that everyone would place their questionnaires in the same box at the conclusion of the session.

Each subject was randomly assigned to complete one of two questionnaires, which were based on the materials used by Devine et al. (1991, Study 2). Both of the questionnaires included three sections (described in detail below), although the order in which these sections were presented varied depending on the experimental condition. One section measured how subjects believed they actually would respond in various situations that involved interacting with a gay man (would items). A second section measured how subjects believed they should respond in these situations (should items). Discrepancy-associated affect was measured in a final section. It was necessary that all subjects complete both the would and should items so that discrepancy (Total-d) scores could be computed later by examining the extent to which subjects’ actual (would) responses were consistent with their personal (should) standards. However, because completion of the should items served to increase the salience of subjects’ standards, subjects in the standard-not-salient condition completed these items after the would and affect measures. In contrast, subjects in the standard-salient condition completed the would items, followed by the should items, and then the affect measure. Subjects were allowed to leave the room quietly after finishing the questionnaire. They were given a debriefing form and their extra credit as they left.

Would, should, discrepancy, and affect measures. In the would section of the questionnaire, subjects were asked to imagine themselves in four situations in turn, each of which involved an interaction with a gay man. The situations involved feeling bothered that a gay person is seated next to the subject on a bus, feeling uneasy about having dinner with a gay man, feeling upset that a gay couple moved in next door, and feeling uncomfortable upon discovering that the subject’s job interviewer is gay. Subjects rated their reaction to each situation on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). For two of the situations, subjects’ ratings reflected whether they would have the negative response described. For the other two situations, subjects’ ratings reflected whether they would not have the negative response. A Total Would Index was later formed by summing subjects’ ratings (Cronbach’s alpha = .86), after reverse scoring the ratings for items with the “would not” phrasing.

In the should section of the questionnaire, subjects were informed that people often set up guidelines for how they should respond in situations, which may or may not be consistent with how they actually would respond. Then, subjects were again asked to consider each of the
situations they had imagined earlier, this time thinking about how they should respond—based on their own personal standards for responding. For each situation, subjects indicated the extent to which they believed they should (or should not) have the response described, using a rating scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). A Total Should Index was later formed by summing subjects’ ratings (Cronbach’s alpha = .89), after reverse scoring the ratings for items with the “should not” phrasing. Also, Total-d scores were later computed by subtracting subjects’ should rating from their would rating for each situation and summing these values (Cronbach’s alpha = .73).

The initial affect instructions varied as a function of the standard-salience condition. Subjects in the standard-salient condition were asked to consider their feelings about how well their would ratings matched their should ratings. Subjects in the standard-not-salient condition were asked to consider their feelings about their ratings for how they would respond in the situations. Then, all subjects were instructed to rate the degree to which each of 32 affect items described their feelings, using a rating scale ranging from 1 (Does not apply at all) to 7 (Applies very much). The affect items are noted in the Results section. After recording their affect ratings, subjects were reminded that three of the items concerned negative feelings toward others. Those subjects who indicated that they felt at least somewhat negative toward others were asked to record toward whom they felt negative.

RESULTS

Overview of Data Analysis Procedures

Given the additional power afforded by treating Total-d and prejudice as continuous rather than discrete variables, hierarchical regression was used in most of the analyses. In these analyses, gender was coded so that male = -1 and female = 1, and standard salience was coded so that standard salient = -1 and standard not salient = 1. Main effects were assessed simultaneously, and interactions were assessed at the step when the interaction was entered into the regression equation. Possible curvilinear relations between prejudice and the dependent measures were tested using power polynomial analyses (see Cohen & Cohen, 1983), in which the quadratic aspect of prejudice was represented in the regression equation. The results based on these analyses are presented only when an effect involving the quadratic aspect of prejudice was significant. Also, whenever gender was not associated with any significant results, the results of analyses excluding gender are presented.

Testing certain predictions required that analyses be performed within prejudice levels. Therefore, for some of the reported analyses, prejudice was treated as a discrete variable rather than as a continuous variable. To identify different prejudice levels, the sample’s distribution of HATH scores was trichotomized so that there was an approximately equal number of subjects identified as relatively low (range = 1-36; n = 92), moderate (range = 37-61; n = 100), and high (62-100; n = 98) in prejudice. Instances in which prejudice was treated as a discrete variable are explicitly identified as such.

Would, Should, and Discrepancy Scores

Separate hierarchical regression analyses using gender, prejudice, standard salience, and the interactions between these variables were performed to predict subjects’ total would scores, their total should scores, and their Total-d scores. In the analysis of the would scores, a significant main effect was found for prejudice, F(1, 286) = 399.68, p < .001 (B = .242), indicating that subjects’ total would scores increased as their prejudice scores increased. The main effect for gender was also significant, F(1, 286) = 8.40, p < .004 (B = -1.743). Total would scores were more prejudiced among the men than among the women. The same general pattern of findings was obtained in the analysis of subjects’ total should scores. Specifically, the main effect for prejudice was significant, F(1, 286) = 238.02, p < .001 (B = .199), and the quadratic aspect of prejudice produced a significant increment in $R^2$, F(1, 285) = 35.58, p < .001. Subjects’ total should scores became more prejudiced as subjects’ prejudice scores increased, and the should scores increased at a slightly accelerated rate as prejudice increased. The significant main effect for gender indicated that the men’s standards were more prejudiced than the women’s standards, F(1, 285) = 7.12, p < .01 (B = -1.693). It is important that no significant effects were found in connection with standard salience; that is, subjects’ total should scores did not differ depending on whether they completed the should measure before or after the affect measure.

Of the 321 cases, 8% had negative Total-d scores (i.e., their woulds were less prejudiced than their shoulds indicated was appropriate). These data were excluded from all analyses because theoretical interest centered on subjects’ reactions to positive discrepancies. Of the remaining cases, 17% had a Total-d score of 0 (indicating that their actual responses would be consistent with their personal standards). The other 83% of the subjects had positive Total-d scores (indicating that their actual responses would be more prejudiced than their personal standards). Replicating previous findings (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1993), the regression analysis performed on subjects’ Total-d scores revealed a significant main effect for prejudice, F(1, 287) = 11.18, p < .001 (B = .045), and the quadratic aspect of prejudice also added a significant increment to $R^2$, F(1, 286) = 23.08, p < .001.
Total-d scores became larger as prejudice increased but then dropped slightly at very high levels of prejudice. The fact that standard salience was not associated with any significant effects is important, indicating that the magnitude of subjects’ discrepancies did not vary depending on the standard-saliency condition to which they had been assigned.

**Construction of Affect Indexes**

A principal-axis factor analysis performed on the 32 affect items yielded a solution that closely replicated previous findings (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1993). Based on the results, several affect indexes were formed, each consisting of the average of the ratings for the relevant items. The indexes included the Negself Index (angry at oneself, guilty, annoyed with oneself, disgusted with oneself, regretful, low, shameful, disappointed with oneself, and self-critical; Cronbach’s alpha = .91), the Discomfort Index (fearful, uneasy, embarrassed, bothered, anxious, tense, threatened, uncomfortable, and frustrated; Cronbach’s alpha = .90), the Negother Index (angry at others, irritated at others, disgusted with others; Cronbach’s alpha = .90), and the Positive Index (friendly, happy, energetic, optimistic, content, good; Cronbach’s alpha = .87). Three additional items (depressed, sad, and helpless) loaded on a fifth factor, and two other items (consistent and neutral) did not load on any of the factors (using a loading criterion of .45 or higher). Because these five items are of little theoretical interest, they will not be discussed further. In what follows, the effects of prejudice, Total-d, standard salience, and the interactions between these variables are examined with respect to each affect measure.

**NEGSELF**

The regression analysis of subjects’ Negself affect revealed a significant increment in $R^2$ attributable to the quadratic aspect of prejudice, $F(1, 285) = 10.34, p < .001$, and a significant main effect for Total-d, $F(1, 285) = 15.90, p < .001$ ($B = .048$). These effects were qualified by a significant interaction between prejudice and Total-d, $F(1, 284) = 4.12, p < .04$. The interaction between the squared aspect of prejudice and Total-d was also significant, $F(1, 283) = 5.13, p < .02$. The pattern of this interaction replicated the findings obtained in several previous studies (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1993; Pressly & Devine, 1992; Zuwerink et al., in press). As shown in Figure 1, low-prejudiced subjects experienced greater Negself affect as the magnitude of their discrepancy increased. However, discrepancy magnitude had a much smaller effect on subjects’ Negself feelings at higher levels of prejudice.

A central question in the present research was whether the level of Negself affect that subjects experienced in connection with their discrepant responses would be attenuated when subjects’ standards were not made salient. The results indicated that the standard-saliency manipulation did indeed influence the degree of Negself feelings that subjects experienced. Specifically, the main effect for standard salience was significant, $F(1, 285) = 31.86, p < .001$ ($B = -.317$), such that subjects in the standard-salient condition experienced more Negself feelings than did subjects in the standard-not-salient condition. Furthermore, the Total-d x Standard Salience interaction was significant, $F(1, 282) = 10.92, p < .001$. As shown in Figure 2, the effect of Total-d on Negself feelings was highly significant in the standard-salient condition, $F(1, 130) = 15.37, p < .001$, but not significant in the standard-not-salient condition, $F(1, 152) = 1.35, p < .25$. Thus, when subjects’ personal standards were not made salient in connection with their prejudiced responses, the magnitude of guilt experienced in connection with discrepancies was greatly attenuated, relative to when subjects’ standards were made salient.

The Standard Salience x Prejudice x Total-d interaction was not significant, $F(1, 279) = 2.51, p < .11$. However, a closer examination of the Negself affect data was necessary to address two central questions. First, the results from the overall analyses do not indicate whether the relation between discrepancies and Negself feelings was significant for the low-prejudiced subjects in the standard-not-salient condition, albeit attenuated relative to low-prejudiced subjects in the standard-salient condition. Second, more specific analyses were needed to
determine whether the relation between discrepancies and Negself feelings was significant for subjects at higher levels of prejudice in the standard-salient condition, albeit attenuated relative to low-prejudiced subjects in the standard-salient condition.

To address these questions, analyses were performed within prejudice levels (with prejudiced levels defined as explained earlier in the Overview of Data Analysis Procedures section). Specifically, correlations between Total-d and Negself feelings in each standard-salience condition were computed separately for low-prejudiced, moderately prejudiced, and high-prejudiced subjects. The results of the correlational analyses are shown in Table 1. As expected, the relation between Total-d and Negself affect among the low-prejudiced subjects was strong in the standard-salient condition. However, the degree of association was attenuated considerably in the standard-not-salient condition, producing a correlation that was only marginally significant. Tests between these correlations were performed after converting the r to z scores. The difference between the correlation in the standard-salient condition \( (r = .55) \) and standard-not-salient condition \( (r = .22) \) was significant, \( p < .05 \). Thus, the relation between discrepancies and guilt clearly was less strong among the low-prejudiced subjects when the experimental situation did not bring to mind their standards about how they should respond to gay men.

In the standard-salient condition, the correlation between Total-d and Negself affect was significant for the moderately prejudiced subjects. Moreover, the correlation was significant among the high-prejudiced subjects.

### Table 1: Correlation Between Negative Self-Directed (Negself) Affect and Discrepancy (Total-d) as a Function of Prejudice and Standard-Salience Condition

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<tr>
<th>Prejudice</th>
<th>Standard Salient</th>
<th>Standard Not Salient</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>.55***</td>
<td>.22*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( n )</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( n )</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( n )</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\* \( p < .05 \); \** \( p < .01 \); \*** \( p < .001 \).

These findings suggest that even among high-prejudiced subjects, discrepancies made salient by considering one's standards are reliably associated with guilty feelings, although this relation is a modest one. It follows that moderately prejudiced and even high-prejudiced subjects' prejudice-related discrepancies appear to violate, to some extent, standards that are based on the own standpoint. This conclusion also is supported by the finding that the correlation obtained among the low-prejudiced subjects \( (r = .55) \) did not differ significantly from the correlations for either moderately prejudiced \( (r = .30) \) or high-prejudiced \( (r = .35) \) subjects. Looking at the correlations in the standard-not-salient condition, it is clear that the violation of prejudice-related standards had little impact on moderately prejudiced and high-prejudiced subjects' Negself feelings when their standards were not made accessible by the experimental procedure. Tests of differences between correlations obtained in the two standard-salience conditions for moderately prejudiced and high-prejudiced subjects were not significant. This is not surprising, given that the relation between Total-d and Negself feelings in the standard-salient condition was not extremely strong.

**DISCOMFORT**

Replicating previous findings (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1993; Zuwerink et al., in press), the regression analysis of the Discomfort Index revealed that subjects' discomfort varied as a function of their level of prejudice. The linear aspect of prejudice was significant, \( F(1, 286) = 64.05, p < .001 \) (\( B = .026 \)), as was the quadratic aspect of prejudice, \( F(1, 285) = 14.53, p < .001 \). Subjects with higher prejudice scores experienced more discomfort than did those with lower prejudice scores, and discomfort rose at a slightly accelerated rate as prejudice increased. A plausible explanation for high-prejudiced subjects' heightened feelings of discomfort is that they feel uncomfortable when they are required to think about gay men (cf. Monteith et al., 1993).

As in previous research, the regression analysis also revealed a significant main effect for Total-d, \( F(1, 285) = \)
17.12, p < .001 (B = .059). Subjects with larger Total-d scores experienced greater discomfort than did subjects with smaller Total-d scores. A key question in the present research concerned whether the interaction between Total-d and standard salience also would be significant. Neither this nor other possible interactions involving Total-d were significant. This suggests that, contrary to the Nergaard findings, subjects in the two standard-salience conditions experienced equal levels of discrepancy-associated discomfort. As an additional test of the relation between discrepancies and discomfort in the two standard-salience conditions, a set of correlational analyses was performed that paralleled the analyses performed for the Nergaard Index. The correlations are shown in Table 2. Most important, the results clearly indicate that the relation between discrepancies and discomfort was reliable among the low-prejudiced subjects in the standard-not-salient condition (r = .37). Although this correlation is somewhat weaker in magnitude than the correlation for the low-prejudiced subjects in the standard-salient condition (r = .59), the difference between the two correlations was not significant. Thus, in contrast to the findings for Nergaard affect, the standard-salience manipulation did not significantly affect the degree of general discomfort that low-prejudiced subjects experienced in connection with their discrepant responses. Tests between correlations for the two standard-salience conditions at the moderate and high levels of prejudice also were not significant. The relation between discrepancies and discomfort was, however, quite weak among the high-prejudiced subjects in the standard-not-salient condition.

TABLE 2: Correlation Between Discomfort and Discrepancy (Total-d) as a Function of Prejudice and Standard-Salience Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prejudice</th>
<th>Standard Salient</th>
<th>Standard Not Salient</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>.59***</td>
<td>.37**</td>
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<tr>
<td>n</td>
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<td>High</td>
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* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.

NEGOOTHER

The only significant main effect in the regression analysis of subjects’ Negother affect was for prejudice, F(1, 286) = 55.86, p < .001 (B = .035). Replicating previous findings (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1993), subjects at higher levels of prejudice experienced much higher levels of Negother affect than did subjects at lower levels of prejudice. In contrast to the findings of Monteith et al. (1993) but consistent with the results of Devine et al. and Zuwerink et al. (in press), the influence of Negother affect was not dependent on high-prejudiced subjects’ discrepancies. Specifically, the Prejudice x Total-d interaction was not significant in either the overall analysis or an analysis within the standard-salient condition (R < 1).

An unanticipated interaction was found between prejudice and standard salience, F(1, 285) = 7.95, p < .005. At relatively low levels of prejudice, subjects experienced low levels of Negother affect in both the standard-salient (Ŷ = 2.24) and the standard-not-salient (Ŷ = 1.88) condition. At higher levels of prejudice, subjects experienced higher levels of Negother affect and even greater Negother affect in the standard-not-salient (Ŷ = 3.79) than in the standard-salient (Ŷ = 3.06) condition. This interesting finding suggests that requiring relatively high-prejudiced subjects to think about how they should respond to gay men helped to abate the negative affect that they were experiencing toward others.

To determine toward whom subjects’ affect was directed, the explanations provided by subjects who scored greater than 1 on the Negother Index (n = 196) were content analyzed. The percentages of low-prejudiced, moderately prejudiced, and high-prejudiced subjects (using the prejudice cutoffs identified in the Overview of Data Analysis Procedures section) with Negother scores greater than 1 were 43%, 69%, and 89%, respectively. Using the same coding scheme that Monteith et al. (1993) used, each explanation was coded into one of the following categories:

1. Statements indicating that subjects’ negative affect was directed toward people who harbor or perpetuate prejudice toward gays
2. Statements indicating that subjects’ negative affect was directed toward gays
3. Miscellaneous statements (11%)
4. No response, which included subjects who failed to provide an explanation of their negative affect (33%)

Two judges who independently categorized the explanations disagreed on only eight cases; these discrepancies were resolved by a third judge.

Theoretical interest centered on the first two categories, and examination of the data revealed differences between low- and high-prejudiced subjects that replicated the findings of Monteith et al. (1993). A total of 62% of low-prejudiced subjects’ protocols were in Category 1 (feeling negative toward prejudiced people), and only 5% were in Category 2 (feeling negative toward gays). In contrast, the majority of the high-prejudiced subjects experienced anger toward gays. Specifically, 57% of high-prejudiced subjects’ protocols were in Category 2, and only 7% were in Category 1. It is also
interesting to note that high-prejudiced subjects were less likely to feel angry toward gay men when their standards were made salient by the experimental procedures (49%) than when they were not made salient (64%). This pattern is consistent with the finding that encouraging high-prejudiced individuals to consider how they should respond to gays helped to attenuate their negative feelings toward people who are gay. Among the moderately prejudiced subjects, 23% of the protocols were in Category 1, and 16% were in Category 2.

**POSITIVE**

The regression analysis examining subjects' positive affect provided corroborating evidence for the specific types of negative affect that subjects were experiencing, such that subjects who were experiencing the most Negself and Negother feelings were feeling the least positive. Specifically, significant main effects for prejudice, $F(1, 286) = 4.46, p < .04$ ($B = -.009$), and Total-d, $F(1, 286) = 9.69, p < .002$ ($B = -.057$), were qualified by a Prejudice × Total-d interaction, $F(1, 285) = 3.72, p < .055$. Replicating previous findings (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1993), relatively low-prejudiced subjects with large Total-d scores ($\hat{Y} = 2.94$) felt less positive than their counterparts with small Total-d scores ($\hat{Y} = 3.97$). However, there was little difference in the positive feelings of relatively high prejudiced subjects with small ($\hat{Y} = 3.33$) as opposed to large ($\hat{Y} = 3.01$) Total-d scores.

Parallel to the finding that high-prejudiced subjects felt particularly high levels of Negother feelings in the standard-not-salient condition, these subjects also felt relatively low levels of positive affect. A significant main effect for standard salience, $F(1, 286) = 3.79, p < .059$ ($B = -.171$), was qualified by a Prejudice × Standard Salience interaction, $F(1, 283) = 18.24, p < .001$. Relatively low prejudiced subjects' positive affect varied little as a function of standard salience (standard-salient $\hat{Y} = 3.21$; standard-not-salient $\hat{Y} = 3.62$). However, relatively high prejudiced subjects reported feeling less positive in the standard-not-salient condition ($\hat{Y} = 2.65$) than in the standard-salient condition ($\hat{Y} = 3.73$).

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the present study replicate and extend recent investigations of individuals' reactions to prejudice-related discrepancies. By manipulating the salience of subjects' personal standards for responding to gay men, it was possible to examine the extent to which subjects' prejudiced responses were associated with affective reactions (e.g., guilt and discomfort) when subjects were not encouraged to think about their standards for responding. Also, by examining subjects' affective reactions to discrepancies in a more precise manner than in previous research, it was possible to determine whether the association between discrepancies and guilt is significant, although modest, among subjects who are relatively high in prejudice.

The results obtained when subjects' standards were made salient in connection with their prejudiced responses replicated several previous studies that used this procedure (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1993; Pressly & Devine, 1992; Zuwerink et al., in press). Subjects in the standard-salient condition experienced discrepancy-associated discomfort, and in addition, discrepancies aroused more Negself affect among subjects at lower levels of prejudice than among relatively high prejudiced subjects. Contrary to the finding of Monteith et al. (1993), discrepancies were not more related to Negother affect among high- as compared to low-prejudiced subjects. However, replicating several other studies (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1993; Pressly & Devine, 1992; Zuwerink et al., in press), simply thinking about one's reactions to gay men produced more Negother affect among high-prejudiced subjects (regardless of their proneness to discrepancies), and for the majority of these subjects, this anger was directed at gays.

Following previous research, the method for measuring subjects' affective reactions to discrepancies used in the standard-salient condition involved asking subjects to report their feelings about the match between their should and would responses. The fact that the pattern of affect findings differed depending on the type of affect measure and also depending on the joint combination of subjects' discrepancy and prejudice levels (e.g., greater discrepancy-associated guilt was experienced among low- than high-prejudiced subjects) suggests that the results are not merely due to the operation of demand characteristics. However, a serious drawback to using this method is that it forces subjects to consider their prejudice-related transgressions in light of their personal standards for responding.

The unique contribution of the present research is that it allowed a comparison of discrepancy-associated affect when subjects' attention was focused on their prejudiced responses only, relative to when subjects were required to bring their personal standards to mind in connection with their prejudiced responses. This comparison is especially important for low-prejudiced individuals, because the level of discrepancy-associated guilt they experience when they are encouraged to bring their standards to mind apparently is sufficient to facilitate the inhibition of prejudiced responses in the future (Monteith, 1993). If as much guilt arises when the experimental procedures do not directly increase the salience of low-prejudiced individuals' standards, self-regulation of prejudiced responses might be expected to occur on a fairly regular basis. The present findings reveal that the relation between discrepancies and discomfort among
the low-prejudiced subjects was just as strong when subjects’ standards were not brought to mind in connection with their prejudiced responses as in the standard-salient condition. However, discrepancy-associated guilt clearly was attenuated when low-prejudiced subjects’ standards were not made salient. Specifically, low-prejudiced subjects in the standard-not-salient condition experienced significantly less guilt than their counterparts in the standard-salient condition. In fact, the relation between discrepancies and guilt was only marginally significant among low-prejudiced subjects who were not asked to consider their standards in connection with their prejudiced responses. This suggests that self-regulatory mechanisms often will not be spontaneously engaged when low-prejudiced individuals engage in prejudiced responses.

The standard-salience manipulation also produced an interesting and unanticipated finding among high-prejudiced subjects: The level of Negother affect that these subjects experienced was reduced when they thought about how they should respond to gays, relative to when they simply considered how they would respond to gays. Thus making high-prejudiced individuals’ standards salient may help to abate their negative reactions to the target group.

Several frameworks described earlier provided different predictions for the outcomes of this research. The notion that differences in the accessibility of standards as a function of prejudice might cause low- but not high-prejudiced individuals to detect discrepancies and experience discrepancy-associated affect was not supported. For example, low-prejudiced subjects experienced relatively little guilt in the standard-not-salient condition. The aversive racism framework (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986) does not appear to provide a complete explanation for the present findings. Based on this theory, all subjects might be expected to avoid recognition of their discrepant responses when their standards are not explicitly brought to mind, so that little discrepancy-associated affect would be observed. However, low-prejudiced subjects in the standard-not-salient condition did appear to detect their discrepancies, as evidenced by their experience of discrepancy-associated, general discomfort.

The best explanation for the findings appears to be that low-prejudiced subjects in the standard-not-salient condition did bring their standards to mind and detected their discrepancies (resulting in the experience of general discomfort), but subjects did not then contemplate the nature and causes of their discrepancies (so that more specific feelings of guilt were attenuated in the standard-not-salient condition; see Berkowitz, 1990; Weiner et al., 1982). In other words, subjects may have realized that something was wrong with their reactions, but they may not have thought enough about the relation between their responses and their standards to experience high levels of discrepancy-associated guilt. This lack of contemplation may well be due to the operation of motivational factors, rather than to cognitive factors (e.g., insufficiently accessible standards). For example, subjects may have been motivated to avoid processing the inconsistency because it threatened certain aspects of their self-images (e.g., as low prejudiced or as egalitarian). This possibility fits well with Gaertner and Dovidio’s (1986) theory of aversive racism: Even if prejudiced responses are detected, motivation to protect one’s egalitarian self-image may result in tendencies to avoid further processing of the discrepancy.

Although subjects in the present research apparently detected but did not contemplate their discrepancies, alternative explanations could well apply in other situations. For example, the more accessible standards of low- than high-prejudiced subjects (Zuwerink & Devine, 1993) might cause low-prejudiced subjects spontaneously to experience greater levels of discrepancy-associated affect when there are few distractions and adequate time for reflection, when the prejudiced response is severe or salient, or when subjects are self-focused (a situation that encourages standard-to-response comparisons; Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Scheier & Carver, 1988). Under the opposite conditions, subjects may be motivated and able to avoid even the detection of discrepancies, so that their nonprejudiced self-images may be protected (see Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986).

Requiring subjects in the standard-not-salient condition in the present research to think about their actual responses and to report their feelings in connection with these responses may have encouraged discrepancy detection and the experience of discrepancy-associated discomfort. Importantly, even in this situation, subjects apparently did not contemplate their discrepancies and thus experienced little discrepancy-associated guilt. One can assume, therefore, that situations involving more subtly prejudiced responses and many naturalistic settings in which attention is not drawn to one’s prejudiced responses also would not be sufficient for generating levels of discrepancy-associated guilt that would instigate self-regulatory mechanisms. In other words, discrepancy detection and the experience of discrepancy-associated affect are not likely to be spontaneous processes in many situations. Although low-prejudiced individuals may be considered “converted in mind” in the sense that they reject prejudice, strategies are needed to encourage changes in their actual responses. A potentially promising strategy for increasing the likelihood that discrepancy-associated guilt will be experienced and that regulatory mechanisms will be instigated is to increase the accessibility of nonprejudiced standards. The rela-
tion between these standards and specific instances of prejudiced responses also must be emphasized, so that prejudice-unrelated rationalizations or justifications (see Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986) cannot be used to "explain away" the prejudiced responses.

In addition to examining the effects of standard salience on reactions to discrepancies, the present research examined relatively high prejudiced subjects’ discrepancy-associated guilt more precisely than have earlier studies. In previous research, a basic distinction has been made between low- and high-prejudiced individuals: The experience of Negself affect in connection with discrepancies is greater among low- than among high-prejudiced individuals. This basic distinction was supported in the present research. Also, Monteith et al. (1993) argued that relatively high prejudiced persons’ standards are based on the other standpoint (i.e., they involve a sense of duty imposed by important referents or general norms). The present results do not contradict this idea, given that discrepancies involving other-based standards theoretically should give rise to the types of discomfort-related feelings that the relatively high prejudiced individuals tended to experience in the standard-salient condition (cf. Higgins, 1987).

However, standards may be based on more than one standpoint (Higgins, 1987), and the present findings suggest that relatively high prejudiced subjects’ standards may also be based on the own standpoint (i.e., they involve feelings of personal moral obligation). This conclusion follows from the finding that the relation between guilt and discrepancies was significant, although modest, among the moderately prejudiced and high-prejudiced subjects. Reanalyses of previously published data point to the same conclusion. For the Devine et al. (1991, Study 2) data, the correlations between discrepancies and guilt for moderately prejudiced and high-prejudiced subjects were significant, \( r(34) = .47, p < .005, \) and \( r(36) = .47, p < .005, \) respectively. For the Monteith et al. (1993, Study 2) data, the correlation was significant for moderately prejudiced subjects, \( r(27) = .33, p < .04, \) and in the expected direction for high-prejudiced subjects, \( r(28) = .22, p < .12 \) (all one-tailed tests).

Why would the relation between discrepancies be somewhat but not strongly related to guilt for moderately prejudiced and high-prejudiced individuals? Perhaps relatively high prejudiced, discrepancy-prone individuals have derived their own-based standards from their egalitarian self-conceptions (see Myrdal, 1944; Rokeach, 1973), but these standards are not well internalized (e.g., considered important and strongly linked to the self-concept). Consequently, the relation between guilt and discrepancies is not as strong as when low-prejudiced individuals transgress their own-based, well-internalized standards for responding. Based on this reasoning, prejudice reduction might be encouraged among high-prejudiced individuals by increasing the degree to which their standards are internalized.

In ongoing research, we are exploring more directly the origins and nature of relatively high prejudiced persons’ standards so that strategies for reducing prejudice through discrepancy-related tactics can be devised. Controlling and reducing prejudice by emphasizing the conflict between own-based standards and prejudiced responses is favored for two reasons. First, increasing the salience of standards based on the other standpoint (e.g., by emphasizing laws, rules, and norms opposing prejudice) may produce feelings of fear and threat, which may control some prejudiced behaviors; however, the experience of guilt that results when standards based on the own standpoint are violated has long been presumed to be essential for the consistent maintenance of social behavior (e.g., Ausubel, 1955). Second, guilt appears to be a key motivator in the prejudice reduction process (Monteith, 1993; Rokeach, 1973). Thus the present finding that relatively high prejudiced subjects do experience some guilt in connection with their discrepant responses suggests the optimistic possibility that their prejudice might be reduced by devising strategies for heightening the experience of guilt.

CONCLUSIONS

As Allport (1954), Myrdal (1944), and Rokeach (1973) suggested, the experience of prejudice-related inconsistencies appears to be quite common. Many people at various levels of prejudice believe that they should respond in ways that are less prejudiced than their current responses. However, such inconsistencies are not necessarily experienced as involving a fundamental, internal conflict having self-relevant implications. First, among low-prejudiced individuals who are prone to discrepancies, Negself affect will be experienced only to the extent that low-prejudiced individuals think about the relation between their prejudiced responses and their low-prejudiced personal standards. In the present study, such thought was less than spontaneous. Second, among high-prejudiced individuals, prejudice-related discrepancies give rise to some internal conflict when the standard-to-response comparison is required, but the relation between discrepancies and guilt is not a strong one. Thus it appears that the conflict between many people’s more and less prejudiced tendencies is not "ever-raging" (Myrdal, 1944, p. xliii)—at least not in the form of a conflict having self-relevant implications (Allport, 1954; Rokeach, 1973). That conflict is experienced at all, however, provides a potential inroad for change.
NOTES

1. Prejudice is, of course, a continuous variable. However, for ease of presentation, a distinction will often be made in this article between low- and high-prejudiced persons.

2. Consistent with this reasoning, Monteith (1998) reported analyses suggesting that negative affect was a mediator of the impact of discrepancies on the activation of self-regulatory processes among low-prejudiced subjects.

3. Also note that obtaining subjects' would and should ratings was a favored methodology because (a) actual responses and personal standards in a variety of situations can be assessed, yielding a reliable indicator of proneness to discrepancies, (b) the method yields a continuous and thus sensitive measure of discrepancy proneness, and (c) the method parallels that used in several previous studies, so that the generality of previous findings may be addressed.

4. Whenever interactions involving a continuous variable were significant, predicted values were calculated using 1 SD above and 1 SD below the mean of the relevant continuous variable(s) in the regression equation. Predicted values are akin to mean values.

5. The negative discrepancy data were too few in number to be analyzed separately from the positive discrepancy data. Readers interested in subjects' affective reactions to negative discrepancies should see Monteith et al. (1993).

6. An additional five cases were outliers in tests of normality assumptions. These cases were not included in any of the reported analyses.

7. All reported tests of differences between correlations are one-tailed tests.

8. There also was an unexpected interaction between standard salience and prejudice. F(1, 281) = 7.41, p < .007. Subjects at lower levels of prejudice experienced less discomfort than did subjects at higher levels of prejudice in both standard-salience conditions. However, the magnitude of the difference was greater in the standard-not-salient condition (low prejudice Y = 1.96; high prejudice Y = 3.52) than in the standard-salient condition (low prejudice Y = 2.43; high prejudice Y = 3.25). Note that because Total-d does not qualify this interaction, the finding is not relevant to understanding whether subjects' standards are spontaneously accessible. Also, the small differences that are responsible for producing the interaction appear to be much less noteworthy than the consistent effect of prejudice on discomfort. For example, analyses performed within each standard condition revealed that the correlation between discomfort and prejudice was only slightly less in the standard-salient condition, r(152) = .91, p < .001, than in the standard-not-salient condition, r(154) = .93, p < .001.

REFERENCES


