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Value Conflicts in Intergroup Perception: A Social Cognitive Perspective

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## Value Conflicts in Interracial Relations: A Social Cognitive Perspective

*“Nature smiles at the union of freedom and equality in our utopias. For freedom and equality are sworn and everlasting enemies, and when one prevails the other dies.”*

- Will Durant, philosopher

All men may be created equal, but as a culture we often behave according to the principle of ‘survival of the fittest.’ Philosophers have viewed the ideals of egalitarianism and individualism, equality and equity, as pitted against each other since Aristotle first described two distinct systems of social justice. The first of these systems was based on the notion that humanity alone was enough to warrant an equal share in life. The second maintained that individual contributions and merits were important in distributing proportional outcomes to members of society.

Equality and equity form the basis of two fundamental value systems in Western societies. So ingrained are these values in our culture that most Americans express support for both ideals, despite their apparent inconsistencies (Lipset, 1963; Lipset & Schneider, 1978). Indeed, the national mood has historically swung between these two core value orientations. One need only reflect on our most recent past to notice a marked change from a period of passionate concern for equality in the 1960’s and early 1970’s to one marked by greater concern for individual achievement and upward mobility in the 1980’s.

Yet, whether the country as a whole leans toward either the individualistic or the egalitarian ideal, both values are endorsed simultaneously by many Americans (Katz, Wackenhut, & Hass, 1986). Which value carries greater weight in guiding interpersonal and intergroup behavior may vary across people as well as within an individual, over time and across situations as the two values compete for influence.

Needless to say, predicting if and when human behavior will be governed by either of these two conflicting values is no simple matter. In this chapter, I will consider the cognitive structures and processes that underlie this problem, and provide some initial evidence for a social cognitive model of the role these conflicting values play in intergroup perception.

### The role of values in intergroup perception

Since Allport's (1954) and Rokeach's (1960, 1968a) treatments of the subject, we have known that values play a key role in how people evaluate others. Rokeach's belief congruence model made explicit the idea that we react positively or negatively to others based on whether they conform to or violate values that are important to us. This tendency to evaluate others based on their adherence to cherished values extends to groups as well. For instance, Biernat, Vescio, and Theno (1996) found that the perception that out-group members violate cherished in-group values led to more negative evaluations of the out-group (see also Insko, Nacoste, & Moe, 1983).

Indeed, many contemporary theories of racial prejudice are based in part on Rokeach's (1968a) belief congruence hypothesis. Though these theories vary somewhat in their depiction of how egalitarian and individualistic values relate to racial attitudes, the picture that emerges from the collection of theoretical perspectives is fairly consistent (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Katz et al, 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981; McConahay & Hough, 1976). Specifically, endorsing egalitarian values gives rise to relatively positive or sympathetic attitudes towards disadvantaged minority groups. In contrast, the endorsement of individualistic attitudes results in more negative or disrespectful feelings towards the same groups.

Moskowitz and his colleagues (Moskowitz, Gollwitzer, Wasel, & Schaal, 1999; see also Moskowitz, 2001; Moskowitz, Salomon, & Taylor, 2000) have suggested that values influence not only intergroup attitudes but also stereotypes. In their work on chronic

egalitarianism, Moskowitz et al. have been able to identify individuals who have chronically accessible egalitarian goals, and have demonstrated that gender stereotypes are not automatically activated for those individuals. This finding suggests that stereotype activation is prevented by the presence of chronically accessible goals that are inconsistent with the stereotype.

Thus, the existing body of work on values and intergroup relations suggests that values play an important role in how minority groups are perceived. However, the cognitive structures and processes underlying the influence of various values, some of which are in direct conflict with each other, have been largely ignored (with the notable exception of the aforementioned work by Moskowitz et al, 1999, 2000; Moskowitz, 2001).

#### Conflicting cognitions: A brief social psychological history

The problem of conflicting beliefs is, of course, not unique to the study of values. It is almost a truism in social psychology that people strive to maintain consistency among their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Though the role of consistency motives can be found at least as far back as psychodynamic theory, it was not until the 1950's that cognitive consistency became a central theme in social psychological research. For example, Heider's (1946) balance theory emphasized the importance of having consistent relations among one's beliefs, with the consequence that inconsistencies should result in an unpleasant state of imbalance that the individual should be motivated to resolve – primarily through changing one or more of the inconsistent beliefs.

The original balance theory has been extended in several different directions – perhaps most famously towards the development of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) and self-perception (Bem, 1972) theories. Consistency theories were extended in a second, quite distinct direction by McGuire (1960a, 1960b) and later Wyer (1973, 1974; Wyer & Goldberg, 1970; Wyer & Hartwick, 1980, 1984)) in their work on logical reasoning.

McGuire detailed a model of how beliefs are constructed as a function of logical, syllogistic, reasoning. That is, McGuire (1960a, 1960b) described a person's belief in a given proposition A as based on his or her belief in one or more supporting propositions (e.g., B). For example, if one is asked to judge the validity of the following proposition "if America continues to rely on foreign oil, the US military presence in the Middle East will increase," one may consider the validity of supporting propositions (e.g., "If America continues to rely on foreign oil, it will become increasingly involved in resolving disputes between oil-rich countries," and "When America becomes involved in resolving international disputes, it increases its military presence in affected nations.") Thus according to McGuire's model, people use a process of logical inference to construct their beliefs.

Wyer (1973, 1974; Wyer & Goldberg, 1970) elaborated on the McGuire (19??) model by incorporating conditional probabilities. Wyer (1973) developed a weighted averaging model to describe how beliefs are constructed, which improved the predictive validity and generality of McGuire's original model. Wyer and his colleagues went several steps further, however, in developing the now-familiar 'bin model' (Wyer & Hartwick, 1980) which provided an account for how inconsistent beliefs could be represented simultaneously in memory.

With the bin model, Wyer and his colleagues (Wyer & Hartwick, 1980, 1984; for a review see Wyer & Srull, 1989) demonstrated the crucial role of belief accessibility in determining whether relationships among beliefs were logically consistent, thus conforming to the probabilistic model. For example, Henninger and Wyer (1976) reported the important finding that the consistency among different beliefs depends on their relationship being accessible at the time they are reported. If the relationship between two beliefs is not salient at the time of judgment, people are likely to base their judgments on disparate sources of information, resulting in apparent inconsistencies.

Wyer's insight regarding the role of belief accessibility in determining the logical relations among beliefs extended the applicability of the original probabilistic model enormously. Accordingly, the utility of the model for understanding how people maintain consistency among their beliefs was greatly increased. The notion that discrepancies among *accessible* beliefs elicit motivation to resolve inconsistencies has received a great deal of attention over the past 30 years.

#### Beyond logic: Values in conflict

In the years that followed Wyer's original work on belief consistency, attention shifted away from beliefs about hypothetical propositions to beliefs about other people. Indeed, the study of inconsistency resolution in the impression formation process became something of a cottage industry throughout the 1970's and 80's. And although different models were developed to describe how inconsistency resolution takes place (Wyer & Srull, 1989; Hamilton, Driscoll, & Worth, 1989; Klein & Loftus, 1990) the picture that emerged was quite consistent with early cognitive consistency theories. Specifically, person perceivers seem to have little tolerance for inconsistency in their beliefs about other people. As a consequence, perceivers employ various strategies to resolve inconsistencies when they arise.

Given human beings' motive to maintain coherent, consistent impressions of their own and others' personalities, it stands to reason that people should strive for consistency in other, more abstract, social beliefs as well. Individuals do not define themselves and others merely by the collection of personality traits that they possess, but by their values, attitudes, and goals. Given the complex nature of these beliefs, it is hardly surprising that people experience conflicts among competing values and goals. In recent years, a number of researchers have delved into these and related questions.

The value pluralism model, developed by Tetlock and colleagues (Tetlock, 1986, 1989; Tetlock, Peterson, & Lerner, 1990) is, to date, the most comprehensive theoretical

perspective on value inconsistency. According to the value pluralism model, the perception of inconsistencies among one's 'core values' produces psychological discomfort. In order to reduce that discomfort, individuals resort to a number of strategies to resolve the conflict between different values. Whenever possible, a simple 'bolstering and denial' strategy will be used whereby the stronger value is favored over the weaker value. When such simple strategies are insufficient, individuals may resort to more complex methods for conflict-resolution, culminating in explicit 'trade-off reasoning' in which they consciously decide to sacrifice one value in favor of another, and call upon features of the broader social context to justify those trade-offs.

Tetlock's (1986) model has been well-supported by research on various socio-political issues, and certainly presents a reasonable framework for viewing value conflict. However, the scope of the value pluralism model is limited to conflict resolution of a conscious, deliberative variety. Whilst values (and the conflicts among them) certainly influence people at this conscious level, they also likely do in a less deliberate, less controlled way. That is, values likely guide perceptions, judgments, and behavior through a more subtle, subconscious route. For example, Katz and Hass (1988) have suggested that activating egalitarian or individualistic leads to a spread of activation to associated (e.g., racial) attitudes.

#### Information-processing perspectives on conflict resolution

Although the Katz and Hass (1988) model of value accessibility has not yet been adequately tested, there are parallels in Shah and Kruglanski's (2000; Shah, Kruglanski, & Friedman, in press) goal systems theory that are worth noting here. According to goal systems theory, a person's goals and the means available to achieve them are associated within a complex network in memory. In this network, various goals and means are interconnected with both excitatory and inhibitory links. To the extent that one means-goal



link is activated (e.g., that means A will achieve goal X), other related links will be inhibited (e.g., that means B would also achieve goal X or that means A could also lead me to goal Y). For example, if I view running as the best way to keep fit, I will be less likely to consider that swimming could also allow me to stay in shape, or that taking a jog could be a form of entertainment.

Though Shah et al (in press) do not explicitly consider the implications of their theory for value-attitude relations, the goals-means memory structure that they describe provides an interesting framework for considering the interrelations among values and attitudes. Consider, for example, the case of values and racial attitudes. Both egalitarian and individualistic values have implications for a perceiver's attitudes towards economically disadvantaged minority groups. However, within a goal systems theory-type of framework, to the extent that one value is associated with attitudes towards the group, the implications of the second value should be inhibited.

This type of model (see Figure 1) provides a more concrete specification of how egalitarian and individualistic values might influence the expression of related racial attitudes than the less defined model proposed by Katz and Hass (1988). It also allows for a less controlled, deliberative influence of values than is encompassed within Tetlock's (1986) value pluralism model. Moreover, the model presented in Figure 1 not only makes predictions about excitatory influences of activated values, but inhibitory effects as well.

#### A social cognitive perspective on value conflict and intergroup perception

The model presented in Figure 1 describes the relationship between endorsement of two core values – egalitarianism and individualism – and intergroup attitudes and stereotypes. Individualistic values are positively associated (i.e., are connected via an excitatory link) with negative out-group attitudes and stereotypes, whereas egalitarian values are positively associated with positive attitudes. Because the two values have opposing implications for

out-group attitudes, they will be negatively associated with each other (connected via an inhibitory link). In addition, because egalitarian values are negatively associated with individualistic values, they will also be negatively associated with out-group stereotypes.

There are several implications of the model. First, it predicts that activating one of the two values will have direct consequences for both the accessibility of the other value as well as the accessibility of attitudes and stereotypes. For example, activating egalitarian values should lead to inhibition of individualistic values as well as structures associated with those values (negative attitudes and stereotypes) while simultaneously resulting in activation of positive attitudes. Thus the accessibility of egalitarian versus individualistic values should have a direct effect on the accessibility of out-group attitudes and stereotypes.

#### The effect of value accessibility on intergroup perception

People have multiple attitudes and values stored in memory. Several lines of research suggest that it is even possible to have multiple (different) attitudes about the same attitude object stored in memory (Devine, 1989; Fazio, 1986; Smith & DeCoster, 2000; Wilson, Lindsey, & Schooler, 2000). Thus it is likely that people may have multiple values stored in memory that have conflicting implications. As suggested earlier, the relative strength and/or accessibility of these value representations may be the critical factor in predicting how intergroup perceptions and evaluations will be affected.

A crucial assumption is that values vary in their level of accessibility, and that these variations can influence judgments. We know from the past 25 years of research in social cognition that people are influenced by the mental representations that are accessible to them. This influence occurs in a number of domains. For example, accessible personality traits influence the way we interpret ambiguous behavior (Bargh & Pietramonaco, 1982; Higgins, Rholes, & Jones, 1977; Srull & Wyer, 1979). Accessible attitudes make us more likely to behave in ways consistent with those attitudes (Fazio, Powell, & Williams, 1989). Finally,

accessible stereotypes make us more likely to judge others in stereotypic ways (Devine, 1989). It is likely, then, that accessible values also influence us in a number of ways.

Research in social cognition has revealed that higher levels of accessibility can result from at least two sources. First, values (or any other construct) can become more accessible as the result of frequent activation. The more frequently a person thinks about a particular value, the more accessible that value will become. For example, someone who often thinks about the importance of equality and uses those beliefs on a regular basis will have more accessible egalitarian values than someone who rarely thinks about equality. Ultimately, a person's most important, or most frequently activated, values will become chronically accessible (see Bargh, 1997, for a review) so that they enjoy a more or less constant state of heightened accessibility.

Values can also become temporarily more accessible. When a value has been recently activated, it will be more accessible for some period of time following the activation (Bargh, 1997). For example, reading a news story about racial discrimination might activate egalitarian values. Those values would then remain accessible for a short period of time after reading the story.

Regardless of the source of accessibility, once an egalitarian or individualistic value has been activated, it should have direct consequences for related constructs. Following the model shown in Figure 1, a number of specific predictions can be made about the effects of value activation on the accessibility of out-group attitudes and out-group stereotypes. First, however, a couple of preliminary steps must be taken to establish the plausibility of the model.

### Values as Representations

Implicit in the model shown in Figure 1 is the assumption that values are represented as cognitive structures that can vary in their mental accessibility. If we are to make this

assumption, we must first consider what that representation might look like. While research that directly addresses the question of how values are represented in memory has been scarce, we can start to think about the problem by considering how other, related constructs are represented in memory. Fortunately, when it comes to one closely related construct – the attitude – there has been ample attention paid to the question of representation.

Though there are varying accounts of attitude representation (e.g., Pratkanis and Greenwald, 1989; Zanna & Rempel, 1986), the most prominent among these has been one proposed by Fazio and his colleagues (Fazio, 1986, 1989, 1995; Fazio, Chen, McDonel, & Sherman, 1982; Fazio, Powell, & Herr, 1983; Fazio, Sanbonmatsu, Powell, & Kardes, 1986; Fazio & Williams, 1986; Powell & Fazio, 1984). Fazio has suggested that attitudes are represented as links, or associations, between an attitude object and the perceiver's evaluation of that object. The strength of an attitude is determined by the frequency with which the object-evaluation link becomes activated. Given sufficient frequency, an attitude may become automatically activated whenever the attitude object is encountered (Fazio et al., 1986; see also Bargh, Chaiken, Gollwitzer, & Pratto, 1992).

Fazio's (1986) model is useful when thinking about how values might be represented in memory. Attitudes and values are commonly thought of as two types of beliefs that differ in terms of their level of abstractness and their centrality in the individual's belief system (Rokeach, 1968a, 1968b). If attitudes are represented in memory as associations between objects (e.g., flowers) and evaluations (e.g., good), then values may be represented in a similar manner.

Like attitudes, values are typically thought of as beliefs. However, distinct from attitudes, values are more abstract, and are more closely tied to the self-concept (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, 1990). These differences should be reflected in the nature of the value representation. For example, like attitudes, values may be represented as associations

between an object and an evaluation. However, since values are more abstract than attitudes, the ‘object’ should also be more abstract (e.g., freedom or equality). And since values are more central to the self-concept, the ‘evaluation’ may not be simply positive or negative, but may involve a moral connotation. This would allow values to function as guidelines or goals that would have direct implications for the self. In other words, rather than being represented as object-evaluation links (as Fazio, 1986, argues that attitudes are represented), values may be represented as abstract concept-obligation links (see Figure 2).

For example, values may be represented as associations between the content of values (e.g., ‘world peace’ or ‘kindness’) and thoughts such as ‘ought’ or ‘should.’ That is, beyond favorably evaluating ‘world peace’ or ‘kindness’ (in which case one would simply have positive attitudes toward those objects), one might attach to such abstract concepts certain ideas that connote a sense of obligation to think or behave consistently with those concepts.

As with attitudes, values may become stronger through frequent activation of the concept-obligation link. As the number of times that an individual makes the judgment that he or she should act or think in ways consistent with an abstract concept (world peace, kindness), the stronger the association between the concept and the obligation will become. The stronger the association becomes, the greater the accessibility of the value. Furthermore, when the association has been recently activated, the value may become temporarily more accessible (Bargh, 1989, 1997; Bargh & Chartrand, 2000; Fazio, 1986, 1989, 1995; Fazio et al., 1982, 1983, 1986; Fazio & Williams, 1986; Powell & Fazio, 1984).

#### Chronic differences in value accessibility

I have just suggested that value representations are structurally similar to attitude representations. That is, values may also be represented as associations involving particular value concepts and an evaluation of that concept. Unlike attitudes, the evaluative side of the association may be more than a simple valence judgment (i.e., ‘good’ or ‘bad’). Indeed,

endorsement of a value does not simply reflect the perceived desirability of the value's content; it also reflects a sense of moral obligation.

In an initial study designed to test this model of value representation, I compared two types of measures of egalitarian and individualistic values. The first involved traditional questionnaire measures of the extent to which people endorse egalitarian and individualistic values were used. The second measure was a reaction time task based on Fazio et al.'s (1986) paradigm. This measure was developed to assess the strength of association between the content of the two values and conceptions of 'ought' and 'should,' which may reflect the extent to which people mentally represent those values.

Individuals who hold egalitarian values may store certain words (e.g., fairness, help, equality) in memory as goals for behavior or outcomes - in other words, behaviors in which egalitarian individuals think they ought to engage or outcomes that they think they should obtain. On the other hand, individuals who hold individualistic values may associate ideas about 'ought' and 'should' with words consistent with that value (e.g., deserve, earn, hardworking). Individuals who endorse both egalitarian and individualistic value orientations would then be likely to associate 'ought' and 'should' with both types of ideas.

In a preliminary session of the study, participants completed a number of questionnaire measures, including the humanitarian-egalitarian (HE) scale and the protestant ethic (PE) scale. These two scales, developed by Katz and Hass (1988), measure explicit endorsement of egalitarian and individualistic values respectively.

In a subsequent session, a subliminal priming paradigm was employed to determine whether individuals who overtly endorse egalitarian and/or individualistic values also have mental associations between words that are representative of those values and words like 'ought' and 'should.' When participants are subliminally (i.e., subconsciously) primed with a word that is related to a given construct, that construct should become activated. Because of

associations in memory, words or ideas that are consistent with that construct should also become somewhat activated. Therefore, participants should be faster to make judgments about those related words than they would be had they not been primed.

Participants engaged in a lexical decision task in which they made judgments about a series of words. That is, participants viewed (on a computer) a series of letter strings (which included both actual words and non-words) and they were asked to decide whether each of the letter strings was or was not a word. Six types of target letter strings were presented: 1) individualism-related words such as ‘deserve’ and ‘hardworking,’ 2) egalitarian-related words such as ‘equality’ and ‘help,’ 3) positive words such as ‘happy’ and ‘puppy,’ 4) negative words such as ‘death’ and ‘torture,’ 5) neutral words such as ‘kitchen’ and ‘bread,’ and 6) non-words such as ‘grollip’ and ‘hastorp.’ The amount of time required to respond to each target was measured and recorded by the computer.

Before each target was presented, participants were subliminally presented with one of four types of primes. Participants were primed with value-suggestive words such as ‘ought’ and ‘should,’ which should activate constructs that are consistent with those words (i.e., participants’ values). A number of different control primes were also used. First, in order to rule out the possibility that the value primes were actually activating some other construct (e.g., attitudes) rather than values, non-value-suggestive words such as ‘good’ and ‘want’ were also used as primes. In addition, neutral words such as ‘house’ and ‘food’ as well as non-word letter strings such as ‘xxxxx’ and ‘bbbbb’ were used to provide baseline estimates of how long it took participants to respond to each target word in the absence of a related or semantic prime.

By examining the amount of time required to respond to individualistic and egalitarian targets following a value-related prime compared with other types of primes, it will be possible to estimate the relative strength of association between the prime and the

target. The strength of association can be considered a measure of how strongly the value is represented in memory. Individuals with strong individualistic values should show facilitation in their latencies to respond to individualistic words following ‘should’ and ‘ought’ primes. Likewise, individuals who hold strong egalitarian values should show facilitation for egalitarian words following those primes.

This experiment yielded two important findings. The first finding generated by this experiment was that explicit measures of egalitarian and individualistic values were also significantly correlated ( $p$ 's < .01) with responses on the implicit measure of values used in this experiment (see Tables 1 and 2). This finding begins to establish the validity of this response time paradigm for determining what values are represented in memory.

Furthermore, these results support the hypothesis that values are represented as mental associations between the abstract content of values (e.g., equality or independence) and ideas of moral obligation.

**Table 1:** Mean facilitation scores (in ms) for egalitarian and individualistic target words as a function of level of egalitarianism.

Level of egalitarianism	Facilitation of egalitarian targets	Facilitation of individualistic targets
Low	-12.86	31.07
Moderate	9.20	7.92
High	53.69	6.19

**Table 2:** Mean facilitation scores (in ms) for egalitarian and individualistic target words as a function of level of individualism.

Level of individualism	Facilitation of egalitarian targets	Facilitation of individualistic targets
Low	2.35	-34.02
Moderate	28.12	23.92
High	18.27	43.98

Second, the extent to which positive primes facilitated or inhibited egalitarian or individualistic targets was not predicted by participants' explicit endorsement of egalitarian or individualistic values. This finding is consistent with the proposition that the mental



representation of values is distinct from that of attitudes. If values were merely generalized attitudes (e.g., Eagly and Chaiken, 1993), one would expect that positive (e.g., ‘good’) primes would facilitate value judgments as much or more than moral obligation (e.g., ‘should’) primes for people who endorse the value. This was not the case – indeed, the extent to which positive primes facilitated responses to egalitarian and individualistic targets was unrelated to participants’ endorsement of those values. Thus, consistent with the proposed model, values apparently involve notions of morality rather than simple evaluation.

There was one aspect of the relationship between the implicit and explicit measures that was unexpected (though not necessarily inconsistent with the hypotheses). That is, the results of the analysis in which participants were divided into groups based on their responses to the questionnaire measures of egalitarianism and individualism reflected a pattern of slight inhibition to respond to targets that reflected values that were not endorsed. That is, participants who were classified as low in egalitarianism responded more slowly to egalitarian words following value primes than following control primes. The parallel pattern was observed among participants who were identified as low in individualism.

Although inhibition was not specifically predicted (and the magnitude of these inhibition effects was not significantly different from 0), these findings are actually consistent with other research that has demonstrated that activating a mental representation may lead to inhibited responses to information that is inconsistent with the content of that representation. For example, Dijksterhuis and van Knippenberg (1996) reported that stereotype activation led not only to a facilitation of responses to stereotype-consistent information but also to an inhibition of responses to stereotype-inconsistent information. Furthermore, many cognitive psychologists have argued, and found evidence to support, the possibility that activating a particular idea may lead to an automatic inhibition of competing ideas (e.g., Logan, 1980; Milner, 1957; Neely, 1977; Posner, 1978; Shallice, 1972).

Similar findings have also been reported in the social psychological literature (e.g., Macrae, Bodenhausen, & Milne, 1995; Sedikides, 1990). For example, Macrae et al. (1995) presented participants with a target person who could be categorized as either a female or as Asian. By depicting the target person in different contexts (e.g., putting on make-up versus eating rice), they were able to activate different categorizations. For example, when shown the Asian woman eating rice, participants' 'Asian' category was activated. Interestingly, not only was the 'female' category not activated for participants in this condition, it was actually inhibited. Thus, it appears that when two categories were in competition, the activation of one was accompanied by inhibition of the other.

In the current research, inhibition may be understood by considering that participants' value systems were activated by the presentation of the value-related primes. Thus, their responses to any information consistent with that value system should have been facilitated. In contrast, information that was value-relevant, yet inconsistent with their personal value systems, would likely have been inhibited. Participants in this experiment who disagreed with the content of a particular value were therefore inhibited in their responses to that value when primed with value-related words.

Thus, the inhibition effects that were found in this experiment may have been due to an incompatibility between the information that had been activated (i.e., the participants' value systems) and the information to which participants were required to respond (i.e., the egalitarian or individualistic target word). If so, then inducing participants to disagree with a value may lead to similar levels of inhibition when they are asked to respond to information related to that value. This possibility was further investigated in a second study.

### Priming values

The results of the initial study provided evidence that egalitarian and individualistic values are represented in memory as associations between the content of those values and

ideas of moral obligation (i.e., what one should or ought to do). In that experiment, individual differences in participants' endorsement of egalitarian and individualistic values predicted the strength of those associations.

Given the premise that both values are represented in memory for many people, it should be possible to manipulate the relative accessibility of those representations. This hypothesis was first tested in an experiment by Katz and Hass (1988). In that experiment, participants first completed either a scale measure of egalitarianism or a scale measure of individualism and then completed measures of their racial attitudes. Katz and Hass argued that the initial scale that participants completed served to prime, or activate, the corresponding value. That is, if participants had completed a scale of egalitarianism, then egalitarian values should have been activated. Likewise, if they had completed a scale of individualism, then individualistic values should have been activated. In fact, Katz and Hass found support for their prediction that priming participants with egalitarianism led them to express more positive attitudes towards African Americans whereas priming them with individualism resulted in their expressing more negative racial attitudes.

However, there are a number of aspects of Katz and Hass' (1988) experiment that cast doubt on the conclusion that differences in expressed racial attitudes were actually caused by the activation of participants' mental representations of egalitarian and individualistic values. As is the case with many explicit measures, the racial attitude scales used by Katz and Hass were vulnerable to demand characteristics. Specifically, having just completed a questionnaire that contained such items as "One should be kind to all people" and "There should be equality for everyone - because we are all human beings," participants may have felt compelled to espouse favorable attitudes toward Black Americans, not because their egalitarian values had been activated but rather because they wanted to respond in a manner consistent with their responses on the first questionnaire. Consequently, it is unclear whether

the observed differences in racial attitudes were actually due to an increase in the cognitive accessibility of egalitarian or individualistic values. Indeed, Katz and Hass (1988) did not obtain any independent evidence that representations of egalitarian and individualistic values had been activated as the result of participants' completing the corresponding scales.

The above discussion does not rule out the possibility that values can be activated via priming manipulations. However, as of yet, there have not been any experiments that have directly tested that possibility. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the notion that racial attitudes are associated with values such as egalitarianism and individualism is central to many theories of prejudice (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Katz et al., 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981; Rokeach, 1960). One implication of such an idea is that the activation of one's values may result in changes in their attitudes. Thus, it becomes important to demonstrate, first, that value representations can become more or less accessible (or activated) due to changes in the environment (e.g., priming).

Therefore, in a second experiment, I tested the hypothesis that value representations can be activated in memory. Participants in this experiment engaged in two tasks. First, they were exposed to a priming manipulation. Specifically, participants were presented with a statement that reflected either egalitarian ("All people are created equal; therefore, they should be treated equally") or individualistic ("People should get what they deserve; therefore, people who work hard should be rewarded") values. They were instructed to spend 10 minutes writing an essay that either supported the statement or opposed it. Following the priming task, they completed the lexical decision task that was used in the first study.

Based on the reasoning outlined above, a number of predictions were made regarding facilitation/inhibition during the lexical decision task. In particular, a similar pattern of facilitation and inhibition was expected to occur in this experiment as occurred in the first study. However, in this experiment, these differences are expected to occur as a function of

the priming manipulation rather than as a function of individual differences in value endorsement. Thus, participants in the pro-egalitarian prime condition were expected to experience facilitation for egalitarian target words following value primes. In contrast, participants in the anti-egalitarian prime condition should show inhibition in their responses to those targets. Likewise, participants in the pro-individualism prime condition should show facilitation in their responses to individualistic target words following value primes whereas those in the anti-individualism prime condition were expected to show inhibition on those trials.

A further prediction, derived from the model shown in Figure 1, is that activating one value should actually inhibit the other. Egalitarian and individualistic values are depicted as negatively associated within the value system. Thus, participants primed with pro-egalitarian values should show inhibition in responding to individualistic targets. Likewise, participants primed with pro-individualistic values should show inhibition in their responses to egalitarian targets.

The results of this experiment supported the hypothesis that values can, in fact, be automatically activated. Participants in this experiment who were primed with pro- and anti-egalitarianism demonstrated similar patterns of facilitation and inhibition to respond to egalitarian words as did participants in the first experiment who did and did not endorse egalitarian values. Likewise, participants in this study, who were primed with pro- and anti-individualism, showed similar patterns of facilitation and inhibition to respond to individualistic words as did participants in the first experiment who did and did not endorse individualistic values (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Mean facilitation scores (in ms) for egalitarian and individualistic target words following egalitarian primes as a function of level of primed position.

Prime	Facilitation of egalitarian targets	Facilitation of individualistic targets
Pro-egalitarian	36.04	-17.78

Anti-egalitarian	19.44	56.39
Pro-individualism	-19.52	39.79
Anti-individualism	36.69	-48.33

These findings indicate that individual differences in the extent to which people endorse egalitarian and individualistic values may be roughly simulated by experimentally manipulating the accessibility of those values. This suggests that the accessibility of egalitarian versus individualistic values is likely to vary across time, given different situational cues that make either of the values more salient than the other.

The value-priming manipulation resulted in the target value becoming more accessible, but also to the other value becoming inhibited. This finding, while diverging from the results of the first experiment, is consistent with the model presented in Figure 1, which was inspired in part by Shah et al.'s (in press) goal systems theory. Why did cross-value inhibition occur in this study but not in the first experiment? Let us return for a moment to the original goal systems theory. According to that theory, the stronger the association between one set of 'means' and a particular goal, the greater the likelihood that other potential means will be inhibited. Extending this reasoning to the present study, one possibility is that the priming manipulation made salient a particular solution to the problem of distributing economic resources. If egalitarian 'means' are made salient as a way of achieving the goal of 'fairness,' other alternative means (e.g., individualism) should be inhibited. In the first experiment, chronic levels of value accessibility were measured outside of a particular context (e.g., the distribution of resources), thus, no inhibition should have occurred.

#### Testing for the effects of value accessibility on intergroup perception

Given that value accessibility can be effectively manipulated, it is now possible to investigate the effects of activating values on attitudes and stereotypes about different groups. Because many theories (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1981; Katz et al., 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1983)

posit an association between values and racial attitudes, one clear prediction is that activating one's values ought to have a direct effect on the accessibility of one's racial attitudes. Thus, for a person who stores representations of both egalitarian and individualistic values (and therefore both positive and negative racial attitudes), activating one of these values but not the other may have a direct influence on such attitudes.

Based on the model presented in Figure 1, activating individualistic values should have two distinct effects. First, priming individualism should lead to negative racial attitudes becoming more accessible. Second, priming individualism should result in activation of racial stereotypes. Likewise, activating egalitarian values should also have two specific effects. First, priming egalitarianism should lead to positive racial attitudes becoming more accessible. Second, priming egalitarianism should result in inhibition of racial stereotypes (see also Moskowitz et al., 1999).

I conducted a third experiment to directly test the effects of value activation on the accessibility of racial attitudes and stereotypes. In this experiment, participants were first primed with egalitarian or individualistic values, and then presented with implicit (response time) measures of their attitudes and stereotypes, which should eliminate the possibility of demand characteristics.

Thus, participants in this experiment engaged in two tasks. The first task involved a priming manipulation, in which participants wrote essays in support of egalitarianism or individualism. They then went on to complete a response time measure that was designed to assess attitude and stereotype accessibility.

The response time measure was conceptually similar to measures used in previous research to assess racial attitudes and stereotypes (e.g., Dovidio, Evans & Tyler, 1986). Specifically, participants were subliminally primed with racial category words (e.g., Blacks, African), positive words (e.g., good, like), negative words (e.g., hate, bad), and non-words.

Following each prime, participants were required to make an evaluative (i.e., positive or negative) judgment about a target word. The target words varied in both their valence (positive or negative) and their stereotypicality (stereotypic or neutral).

By comparing the amount of time required by participants to respond to each of these types of targets following racial category primes and following non-word control primes, it is possible to obtain a measure of attitude accessibility. That is, if positive racial attitudes have been activated, then participants should experience facilitation for responses to positive target words following racial category primes. Likewise, if negative racial attitudes have been activated, participants should experience facilitation for negative target words following racial category primes.

Similarly, stereotype accessibility can be measured by comparing participants' response latencies for stereotypic target words following racial category primes to those following non-word primes. That is, if participants' stereotypes are accessible, then they should be faster to respond to stereotypic target words when they have been subliminally primed with a racial category label than when they have been primed with a control stimulus.

Following from the model in Figure 1, a number of predictions were generated regarding participants' patterns of facilitation and inhibition on the reaction time measure. First, effects of the priming manipulation on racial attitude accessibility were expected. Specifically, participants who were primed with egalitarian values should be facilitated in their responses to positive targets (and inhibited in their responses to negative targets) following racial category primes. In contrast, participants who were primed with individualistic values should be facilitated in their responses to negative targets (and inhibited in their responses to positive targets) following racial primes.

A second prediction was that the priming manipulation would impact the accessibility of traditional racial stereotypes. In particular, based on Figure 1 (as well as work by



Moskowitz et al, 1999), participants who were primed with individualistic values were expected to experience facilitation in their responses to stereotypic target words following racial category primes. In contrast, participants who were primed with egalitarian values should show inhibition in their responses to those same stereotypic targets.

The results provided partial support for these predictions. As seen in Table 4, participants in the individualistic prime condition showed facilitation for both stereotypic and non-stereotypic negative targets, suggesting that general negative attitudes were activated for these participants. However, they also showed facilitation for the positive stereotypic targets, suggesting activation of general stereotypes. Only the positive non-stereotypic targets were inhibited for participants in the individualistic prime condition, suggesting that as positive racial attitudes were somewhat inhibited (as long as they didn't coincide with the stereotype).

Participants who were primed with egalitarianism showed a quite different pattern of responses. Although responses to non-stereotypic and positive targets were wholly unaffected, these participants showed significant inhibition to respond to negative stereotypic targets. This pattern suggests that priming egalitarianism led to inhibition of the negative aspects (but not the positive aspects) of racial stereotypes (see Table 4).

**Table 4.** Mean facilitation/inhibition scores (in ms) following racial category primes as a function of primed value and target word valence X stereotypicality

Prime	Stereotypic		Non-stereotypic	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Egalitarian	-17.1	-57.5	-6.3	14.7
Individualistic	68.8	85.5	-34.0	34.7

Thus, while many theories of values and racial prejudice imply that activating egalitarian versus individualistic values ought to impact the accessibility of positive versus negative attitudes towards African-Americans, the results of this experiment paint a more limited picture. Though priming individualistic values did appear to activate negative racial

attitudes, the egalitarian value prime had no consistent effect on either positive or negative racial attitudes.

However, evidence was found to support the hypothesis that values and racial stereotypes are associated in memory. Participants who were primed with individualistic values experienced facilitation in responding to words that were associated with the African-American stereotype after they had been presented with a subliminal racial prime. In contrast, participants who were primed with egalitarian values experienced inhibition in responding to negative stereotype trials.

The use of an evaluation task rather than a lexical decision task (as used in the first two experiments) is a shift in methodology that warrants some discussion, particularly in light of recent work by Wittenbrink, Judd and Park (2001). Wittenbrink et al have demonstrated that the nature of the judgment (e.g., conceptual or evaluative) made in a response time (lexical decision or evaluation) task creates a particular context in which stimuli are processed. Specifically, Wittenbrink et al found that an evaluative judgment context produces a pattern of ‘generalized prejudice’ where out-group primes facilitate negative judgments and in-group primes facilitate positive judgments. In contrast, a conceptual judgment context produces a more specific ‘stereotypic prejudice’ pattern where the in-group/positive and out-group/negative trials are facilitated only when the targets are stereotype-relevant. In light of Wittenbrink et al’s (2001) results, it may seem surprising that target stereotypicality had an effect on speed of evaluative judgments in the present study. The apparent inconsistency between the present results and the findings reported by Wittenbrink et al will need further investigation in order to resolve. One possibility is that the initial priming task encouraged participants to view the second, evaluation task in more conceptual terms. That is, perhaps focusing on an important value led participants to process

the words in the evaluation task for meaning as well as for valence, hence the combination of valence and stereotypicality effects for individualism-primed participants.

### Egalitarianism and Racial Attitudes

One of the unexpected findings from third experiment was that activating egalitarian values did not influence the accessibility of positive racial attitudes. This finding is in contrast to prior research (e.g., Katz & Hass, 1988) which suggested that egalitarianism is related to positive attitudes towards African Americans. However, whereas the prior findings rest on correlational evidence, this study constitutes the first experimental work to investigate the impact of priming egalitarianism on implicit measures of attitude accessibility.

The possibility that egalitarianism is not directly associated with positive racial attitudes raises a number of interesting questions. First and foremost, it would seem to necessitate the development of a new explanation for the correlations between the two that have been repeatedly found. One possibility, of course, is that egalitarianism is correlated with positive racial attitudes because of their joint relationship with some third variable (e.g., liberalism, the rejection of racial stereotypes, etc.).

However, it may also be useful to reconsider what egalitarian values ought to dictate when it comes to racial attitudes. Egalitarianism is defined by its emphasis on equality – egalitarian beliefs should dictate equal treatment of all groups. Thus, the finding that priming egalitarianism does not increase the accessibility of positive attitudes towards one particular group should perhaps not come as a surprise. Possessing positive attitudes towards any specific group would indicate the same lack of equality as possessing negative attitudes. As the results of the third study suggest, egalitarianism may play a different role in determining racial attitudes than has previously been suggested. For example, egalitarianism may be more closely related to a tendency to avoid using superficial characteristics (such as race) in forming evaluations than to a tendency to form globally positive evaluations.

### Reflections on the Basis of Value-Attitude and Value-Stereotype Associations

One question worth raising is where value-attitude and value-stereotype associations come from. Two possibilities seem plausible, both of which can be considered in the context of past research on cognitive consistency (Heider, 1946; McGuire, 1960a, 1960b; Wyer, 1973, 1974). The first explanation is that attitudes and stereotypes may develop as a function of people's values. That is, people evaluate others based on whether or not they conform to or violate important values (e.g., Rokeach, 1961). This hypothesis can be extended to apply to stereotypes – that is, that people develop social stereotypes based on attributes that indicate conformity or violation of important values. By developing value-congruent attitudes and stereotype-relevant beliefs, perceivers maintain consistency among their beliefs.

However, there is a second possibility that is worth considering. Perhaps values are not the basis for developing racial attitudes and stereotypes. Rather, perhaps they are the basis for justifying those attitudes and stereotypes. Given that most individuals prefer to view themselves as righteous and fair, acknowledging that they have negative attitudes and stereotypes about out-groups may create an unpleasant state of inconsistency. In order to restore consistency, people may call upon higher-order beliefs (e.g., values) in order to reinforce their view that their out-group attitudes and stereotypes are justified (for similar arguments, see Rokeach, 1973; Kristiansen & Zanna, 1988). This sort of rationalization or justification process might result in associations between individualistic values and negative racial attitudes. The fact that people may be less likely to feel compelled to justify positive racial attitudes is also consistent with the finding that egalitarianism and positive racial attitudes are not associated in memory.

A justification process can also account for the relationship between values and racial stereotypes. That is, values may also be used to justify or discredit racial stereotypes. For example, drawing on individualistic values may help to justify stereotypic notions that

African Americans are lazy while considering egalitarian values may reinforce the belief that differences among races are due to situational factors. Furthermore, theories such as social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and, more recently, system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Stangor, 1997; Yzerbyt, Rocher, & Schadron, 1997) can be extended to generate the hypothesis that negative stereotypes become associated with values through a justification or rationalization process. That is, people are motivated to perceive out-groups in a negative light. As a result, they will tend to impute negative qualities onto the out-group, including characteristics that imply violations of important values (e.g., individualism). Likewise, rationalization or justification processes may lead unprejudiced individuals to associate their rejection of racial stereotypes with egalitarian values. That is, people may use egalitarian values to bolster, or reinforce, their non-stereotypic beliefs (Abelson, 1959, 1968).

The results of the three experiments reported here do not speak to how associations between values, attitudes, and stereotypes are formed, but both possibilities offered here fit well within existing theories of cognitive consistency.

### Conclusion

The drive to maintain consistency in our beliefs is a powerful one. Though social cognitive approaches have addressed inconsistency resolution in the domains of person impressions and attitudes, it has thus far neglected the issue of inconsistencies among personal values. The research here represents only an initial step towards a better understanding of how values are represented in memory and how they exert influence on out-group attitudes and stereotypes.

Though only preliminary evidence, the data discussed here suggest that motives for cognitive consistency do extend to the realm of values. Further, models of how inconsistencies among other types of beliefs can be represented in memory seem to be well-

suited to describing the nature of value representations. Early work growing out of Wyer's (Wyer & Hartwick, 1980, 1984) "bin model" and later work on goal inconsistencies (Shah et al, in press) point to the important role that accessibility plays in resolving conflicts among different beliefs. Thus, it may well turn out that the conflict between our convictions that 'all men are created equal' and that "only the fittest shall survive" will continue to influence our perceptions in apparently inconsistent ways, depending on the belief that we're reminded of at a particular moment in time.

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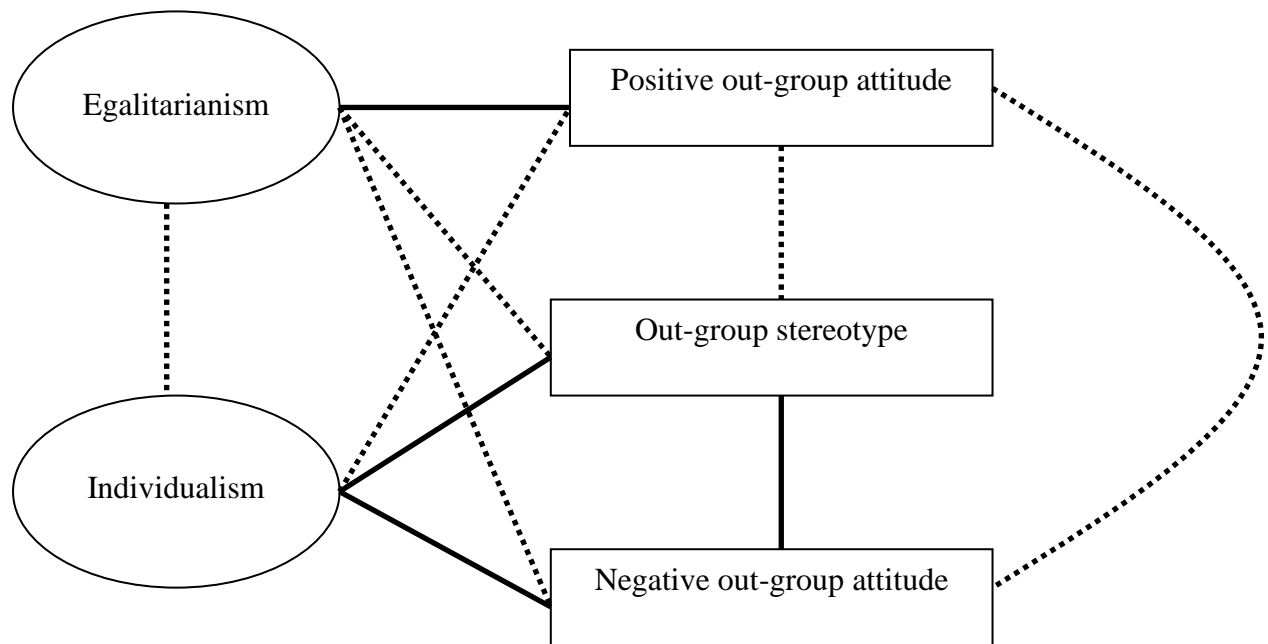
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**Figure 1.** System of values, out-group attitudes, and out-group stereotypes. Solid lines represent positive/excitatory associations. Broken lines represent negative/inhibitory associations.



**Figure 2.** Structure of value and attitude representations

