Title: Predicting Attitudes towards People with ID

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Introduction: People with intellectual disability (ID) are often aware that others have explicit attitudes about them (Abbott & McConkey, 2006). Negative attitudes are especially concerning because they may negatively influence the social opportunities and quality of life for individuals with ID. Previous research has examined individual differences in attitudes towards people with ID, primarily focusing on the relationship between explicit attitudes and quantity of contact, quality of contact, and knowledge about intellectual disabilities (McManus, Feyes, & Saucier, 2010). The goal of the current study is to further clarify the relationship of explicit attitudes to personal characteristics and previous experiences with people with ID; as well as relate those attitudes to self-reported measures of discomfort around and avoidance of people with ID.

Method: College student participants (n = 91) completed an implicit-association test, the MRAI-R (Antonak & Harth, 1994) with updated language as a measure of explicit attitudes, Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Marlowe & Crowne, 1960), and the Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue & Kentle, 1991). Participants also answered questions about demographic information, discomfort around, and avoidance of people with ID.

Results: A stepwise multiple regression was conducted in two steps to examine the relationship between explicit attitudes and experiences with people with ID. In the first step, personality traits, social desirability, and gender were entered as possible covariates predicting explicit attitudes. Agreeableness and openness to new experience significantly predicted attitudes, therefore only those variables were retained in the final model. In step two, quantity of contact, quality of contact, and knowledge about ID were entered as possible predictors of explicit attitudes. The results indicated that only quantity of contact significantly predicted attitudes, \( R^2 = .376, F(3,77) = 15.49, p < .01 \). All three variables included in the final model were positively correlated to explicit attitudes, indicating that people scoring higher on agreeableness, higher on openness to new experiences, or that indicated more contact with people with ID had more positive explicit attitudes. Further, a stepwise multiple regression was conducted to examine how explicit attitudes and discomfort around people with ID predict avoidance behavior. The results indicated that both variables significantly predicted avoidance behavior, \( R^2 = .672, F(2,88) = 90.27, p < .01 \). Participants that had more discomfort and less favorable explicit attitudes reported higher levels of avoidance behavior.

Discussion: The current study adds to the literature by including personality traits to previous researched predictors of explicit attitudes towards people with ID. Further, the study related explicit attitudes and self-reported discomfort to self-reported avoidance behavior. The findings are especially important because they relate individual differences in attitudes to behaviors which could have a negative influence on how people treat those with ID. Additionally, the current study contributes considerations for measurement of attitudes towards those with ID, and the results highlight important areas of future research.

References/Citations: