

Prejudice Attitude Reduction by Completing a Psychology of Prejudice Course

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Introduction

- Prejudice is a serious issue that has perpetually faced humankind. Psychologists have studied the causes and consequences of prejudice and have developed effective prejudice reduction techniques based on education and experience.
- School-based interventions have shown that talking about race and racial attitudes and focusing on internal attributions instead of race can reduce prejudice (Aboud & Fenwick, 1999).
- Multicultural education and diversity appreciation training has been effective in reducing prejudice among counseling trainees (Kiselica, Maben, & Locke, 1999).
- In college, attitudes toward homosexuals improved with the amount of college education (Schellenberg, Hirt, & Sears, 1999) and students who completed a diversity course reported less racism and greater intergroup tolerance than those who did not take the course (Hogan & Mallott, 2005).

Study Predictions

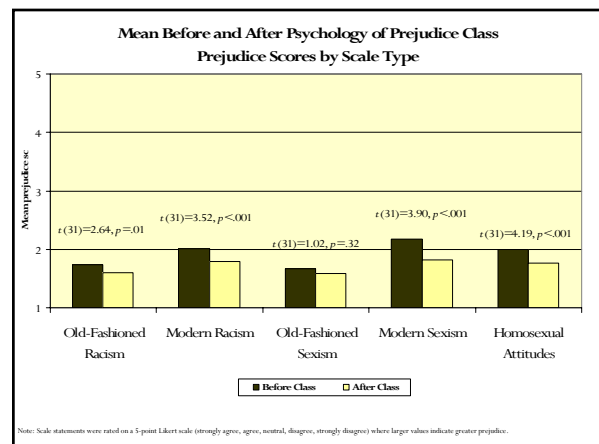
- Completing a Psychology of Prejudice course was predicted to reduce racist, sexist, and homophobic attitudes in college students
 - Students who were more involved in the Psychology of Prejudice class and students who earned better grades in the class were also predicted to show the greatest prejudice reduction
- Completing an Introductory Psychology course was also expected to reduce prejudice attitudes, although the reduction was predicted to be less in comparison to the Psychology of Prejudice class

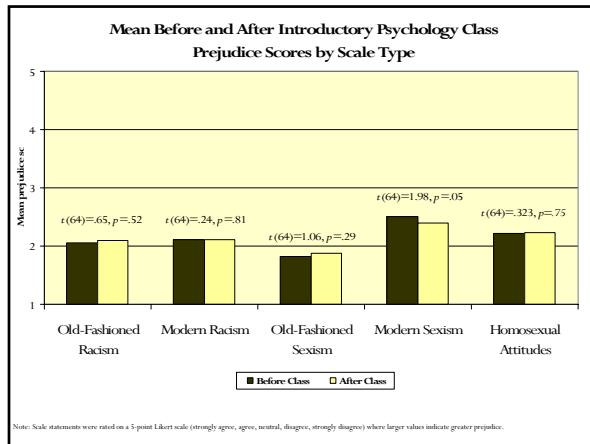
Method

- **Participants**
 - 33 undergraduates enrolled in one section of Psychology of Prejudice
 - 97% White, 3% Black
 - 100% heterosexual
 - Average age = 20.6
 - 66 undergraduates enrolled in two sections of Introduction to Psychology
 - 95.5% White, 4.5% Black
 - 97% heterosexual
 - Average age = 18.9

Method

- **Materials & Procedure**
 - Students completed questionnaires measuring old-fashioned and modern racism (McConahay, 1986), old-fashioned and modern sexism (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 2000), and attitudes toward homosexuals (Kite & Deaux, 1986) the first day of class and placed their responses in an envelope that was sealed and kept in a locked cabinet in the instructor's office. At the end of the term, students completed the same surveys and then had the envelopes with the initial questionnaires returned to them. Then, the intention of the current study was explained and all students agreed to have their responses included in this study.
 - The matched procedure also allowed the researchers to consider actual course grade as a study variable.
 - Participant race, age, sexual orientation, year in school, perceived involvement in class, and reason for taking the class were assessed at the end of the term.





Psychology of Prejudice Course

- The Psychology of Prejudice course examined the development and persistence of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination from a social psychology perspective. It provided an overview of theories of prejudice, exposure to relevant research, and discussion of prejudice reduction. Readings covered historical, cultural, and sociological perspectives of issues related to ethnicity, gender, and social class (see syllabus for details).

Psychology of Prejudice Course Involvement and Prejudice Change Correlations

	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Old-Fashioned Racism Change	-.09	.63
Modern Racism Change	-.02	.90
Old-Fashioned Sexism Change	-.42	.02
Modern Sexism Change	-.03	.86
Homosexual Attitude Change	-.37	.04

N=32. All tests were two-tailed.
Negative correlations indicate reduced prejudice w/involvement.

Psychology of Prejudice Course Grade and Prejudice Change Correlations

	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Old-Fashioned Racism Change	-.05	.79
Modern Racism Change	.01	.99
Old-Fashioned Sexism Change	.03	.86
Modern Sexism Change	.03	.88
Homosexual Attitude Change	-.15	.42

N=32. All tests were two-tailed.

Results Summary

- Students in the Psychology of Prejudice course showed a reduction in old-fashioned racism, modern racism, modern sexism, and a reduction in negative attitudes toward homosexuals between the beginning of the term to the end of the term.
 - Although the prejudice class students showed a reduction in old-fashioned sexism, this difference was not statistically significant.
 - Course grade was not related to prejudice reduction, but self-rated involvement in the course was positively related to greater reduction in negative attitudes toward homosexuals and old-fashioned sexism.
- Students in the Introductory Psychology courses did not show statistically significant reductions in old-fashioned sexism, old-fashioned or modern racism, or negative attitudes toward homosexuals between the beginning of the term to the end of the term.
 - Students did show a marginally significant reduction in modern sexism.

Discussion

- One limitation of the experiment was that the majority of participants were heterosexual, Caucasian, college students, therefore generalization of results may be limited.
- These results show the value of completing and actively participating in a specific Psychology of Prejudice course in reducing racism, sexism, and homophobic attitudes of college students.
- Discussions, activities, journal article reviews, readings, and writing assignments allowed students to better understand themselves and gain insight and appreciation for those who are different.
- More colleges may consider adding prejudice and diversity classes in the future based on these encouraging results.