

COLLOQUIUM SERIES

What Do Implicit Attitude Measures Tell Us?

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Location: 3M Centre, Room 3250

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ABSTRACT:

Explicit self-report measures are often criticized for their susceptibility to self-presentation and their inability to capture mental contents that are inaccessible to introspection. Over the past decade, attitude researchers have attempted to overcome these problems by means of *implicit measures*, which infer attitudes from participants' performance on experimental paradigms (e.g., implicit association test, sequential priming tasks). In my talk, I will address three widespread assumptions about implicit measures: (1) implicit measures reflect unconscious or introspectively inaccessible attitudes; (2) the primary difference between implicit and explicit measures is that implicit measures are less susceptible to social desirability; (3) implicit measures reflect highly stable, old attitudes that have their roots in long-term socialization experiences. Drawing on evidence from my own lab, I will argue that the validity of all three assumptions is equivocal. As an alternative, I will propose a theoretical model that explains dissociations between implicit and explicit measures in terms of their underlying associative versus propositional processes. The functional value of the model will be illustrated with several studies that have been particularly designed to test novel predictions regarding the endorsement of prejudiced beliefs, cognitive dissonance, evaluative conditioning, and choices of undecided decision-makers.

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