

Conducting Social Research Online: An Experiment in Prejudice Reduction

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In the fall of 2002 we designed and carried out an experiment designed to test whether awareness of racial bias affected the amount of prejudice subjects reported. The recent, rapid rise in the number of Mexican American immigrants has altered the racial stratification system in many communities. This research has two goals: to describe levels of racial prejudice and agreement with stereotyped statements about the three largest racial and ethnic groups and to test the hypothesis that awareness of racial bias will increase self report levels of prejudice among experimental subjects. One theory of prejudice reduction contends that prejudice can be reduced if people are aware of their prejudices and are motivated to reduce them. Research has shown that two other American values are related to racial prejudice: egalitarian values and meritocracy. People who hold strong egalitarian values are more likely to successfully reduce prejudice, while people who believe strongly that those who work hard and are talented are the most rewarded are less successful in reducing prejudice. In this experiment self-awareness of racial biases was manipulated by subjecting the experimental group to IAT Timed Response Bias testing. A web site was created so that the experiment could be conducted entirely online.

The Experiment:

An important first step in prejudice reduction is to overcome the denial of prejudices. This experiment was designed to increase the participants' awareness of their own racial prejudices. Subjects were randomly assigned to control and experimental conditions. Subjects in the control condition took a personality test unrelated to racial prejudice. Those in the experimental condition took two timed

response bias tests. The first test asked subjects to pair negative and positive words with pictures of Black and White people. During part of the test subjects paired positive words with pictures of Black people and negative words with pictures of White people. During the next part of the test the associations were reversed. The computer recorded the accuracy of the pairings and the response time for the pairings. If subjects have longer response times and more errors making pairings when good words are paired with pictures of Black people and negative words were paired with pictures of White people that indicated an anti-Black racial bias. In addition to the Black-White bias test, subjects took a skin tone bias test. In this test subjects paired positive and negative words with pictures of light skinned and dark-skinned people.

The Results:

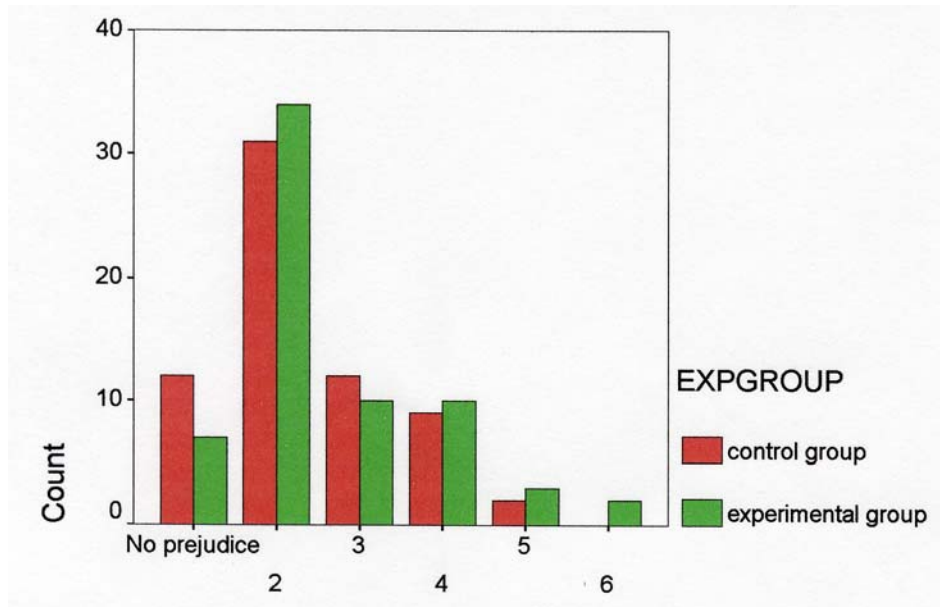
Comparisons of pretest measures of self reported racial prejudice indicated subjects in the control and experimental conditions did not differ significantly on the amount of Anti-Black, Anti-Hispanic, Anti-White or overall assessment of racial prejudices. Post-test comparisons indicated a significant increase in self reported Anti-Black prejudice, Anti-White Prejudice and overall assessment of prejudice. Anti-Hispanic prejudice was the only post-test indicator that did not significantly increase. The Black-White timed response bias test was affective in raising subjects' awareness of their own racial prejudices. The skin tone bias test was not as affective in raising awareness of anti-Hispanic prejudice. This may be because the level of Anti-Hispanic prejudice was significantly higher than Anti-Black prejudice in both the pre-test and post-test measures.



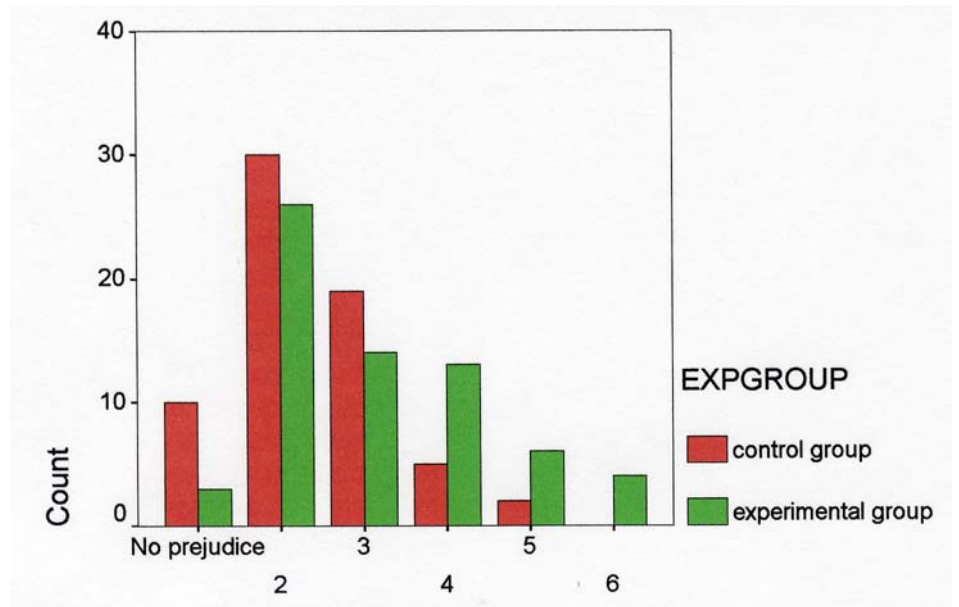
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Comparison of Overall Prejudice

Pre-Test

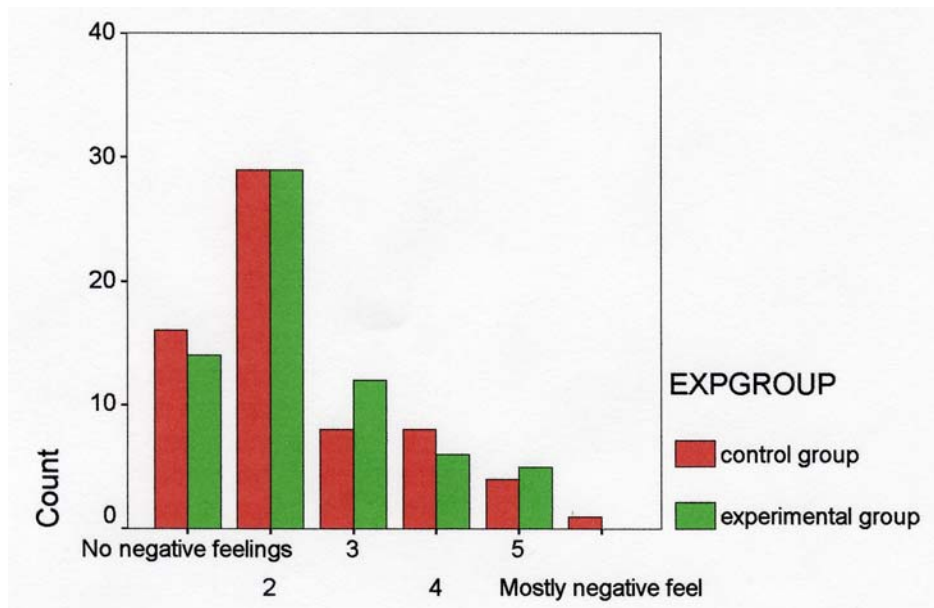


Post-Test

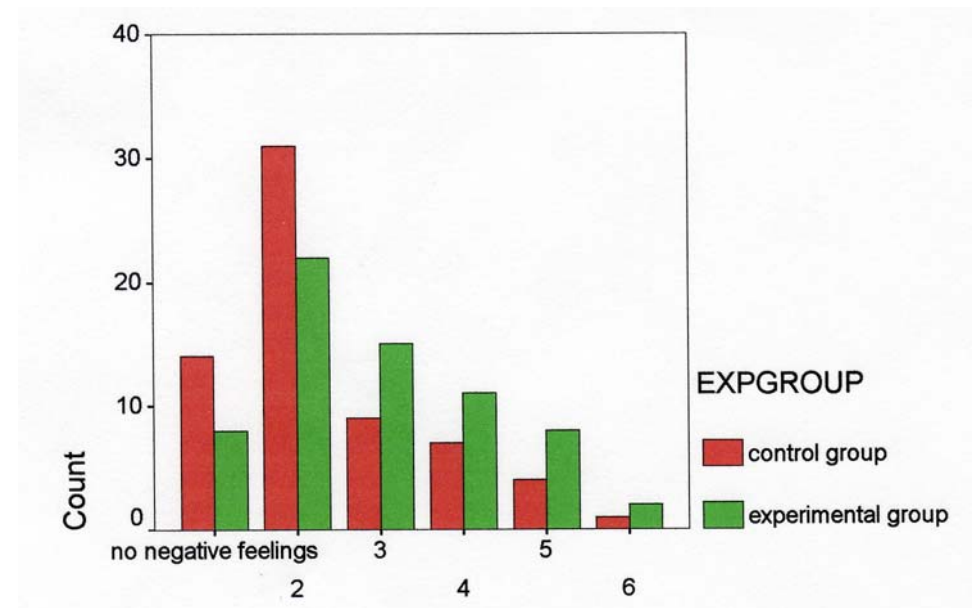


Comparison of Anti-Black Prejudice

Pre-Test

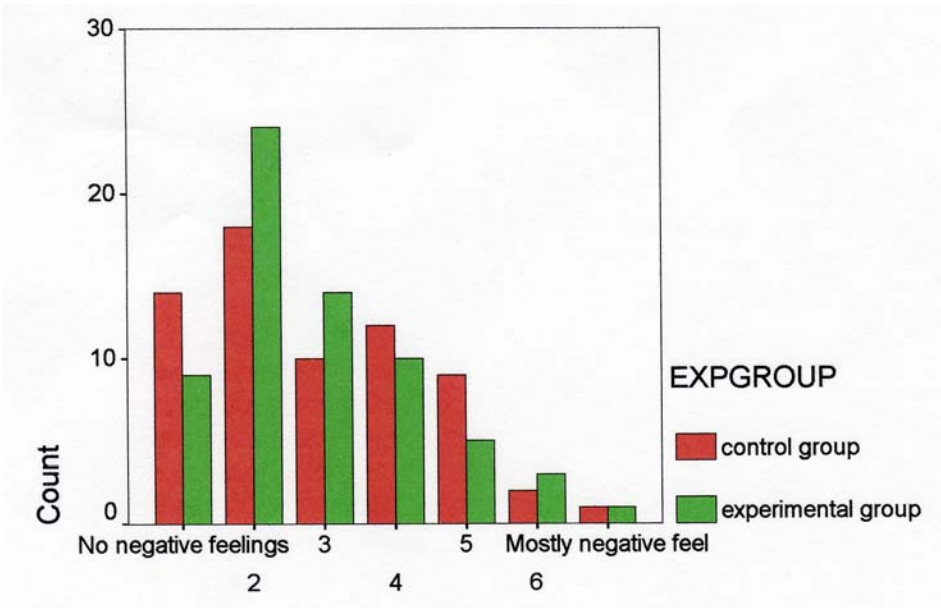


Post-Test

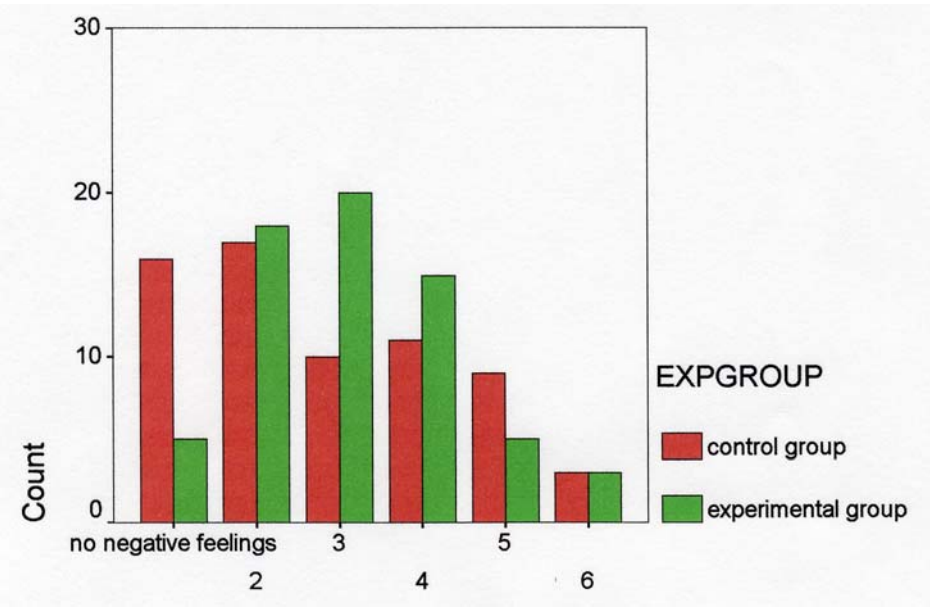


Comparison of Anti-Hispanic Prejudice

Pre-Test

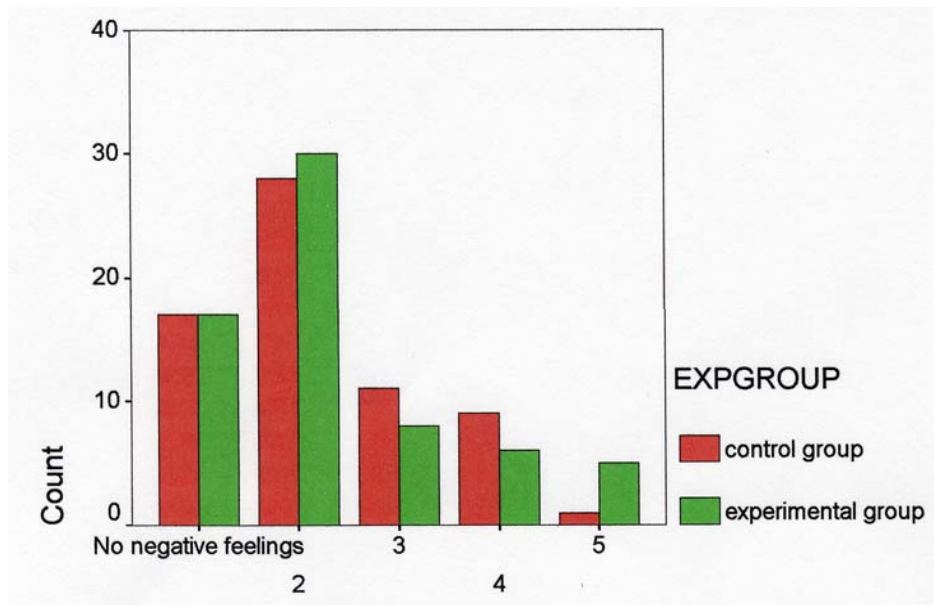


Post-Test



Comparison of Anti-White Prejudice

Pre-Test



Post-Test

