

Implicit political attitudes can predict future voting behavior

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In many political elections, undecided voters come to a decision about who they will vote for only a few days before the vote, if not the very same day of the election. A new study in the journal *Political Psychology* reveals that people's future voting decisions are to a significant degree determined by their current automatic mental associations, even when individuals consciously believe that they are still undecided.

Researchers led by Luciano Arcuri of the University of Padua in Padua, Italy surveyed 74 participants about their voting choices one month before an election time. They then administered the Implicit Association Test as an instrument for the detection of automatic, unconscious attitudes and for the forecast of voting behaviors.

A clear relation emerged between the implicit attitudes of undecided voters and their subsequent voting behavior. Voters, who on conscious level hadn't made up their minds, did have evaluations towards candidates they were not aware of but that will predict their vote.

Researchers contacted several hundred people in order to identify undecided voters, and administered an implicit attitude measure about the candidates. Participants were asked to send back a questionnaire after the election reporting their voting choice.

Results confirmed the high predictive value of the automatic unconscious reactions of undecided voters. The automatic preferences provided one month before election the questionnaires matched the

political choices expressed during the vote, approximately four weeks later.

"Evaluative processes can take place unconsciously that people aren't even aware of," the authors conclude. "These automatic, unconscious attitudes to a large extent do affect people's behavior, even affecting the behaviors of voters, as our study has shown."

Source: Wiley-Blackwell

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