

YOU'RE MORE JUDGEMENTAL THAN YOU THINK

Association Between Socioeconomic Status and Personality Traits

Samantha Murdoch-Rock and Ana Badal
GL/PSYC 2520 - Introduction to Experimental Psychology*

Abstract

Positive and negative personality traits appear to be attributed to individuals from wealthy and poor backgrounds, respectively (e.g. Spencer & Castano, 2007). Using the Implicit Association Test, 29 undergraduate students (Glendon College) classified positive and negative traits with synonyms for rich and poor as fast as possible. It was predicted that associating the congruent condition (rich-positive traits; poor-negative traits) would take less time than associating the incongruent condition (rich-negative traits; poor-positive traits). Results showed that participants had a significantly lower association time when performing in the congruent condition rather than the incongruent condition. It supports the research endeavor of the importance of studying stereotypes implicitly.

Background

Today, highly educated individuals are careful not to explicitly report statements that discriminate specific individuals. Indeed, as pointed out by Banaji and her colleagues (e.g. 1993), it is now preferable to evaluate whether stereotypes influence behaviors using implicit methods. In this study, the implicit association between good and bad personality traits with rich and poor socio-economical status (SES), respectively, was studied.

Prediction

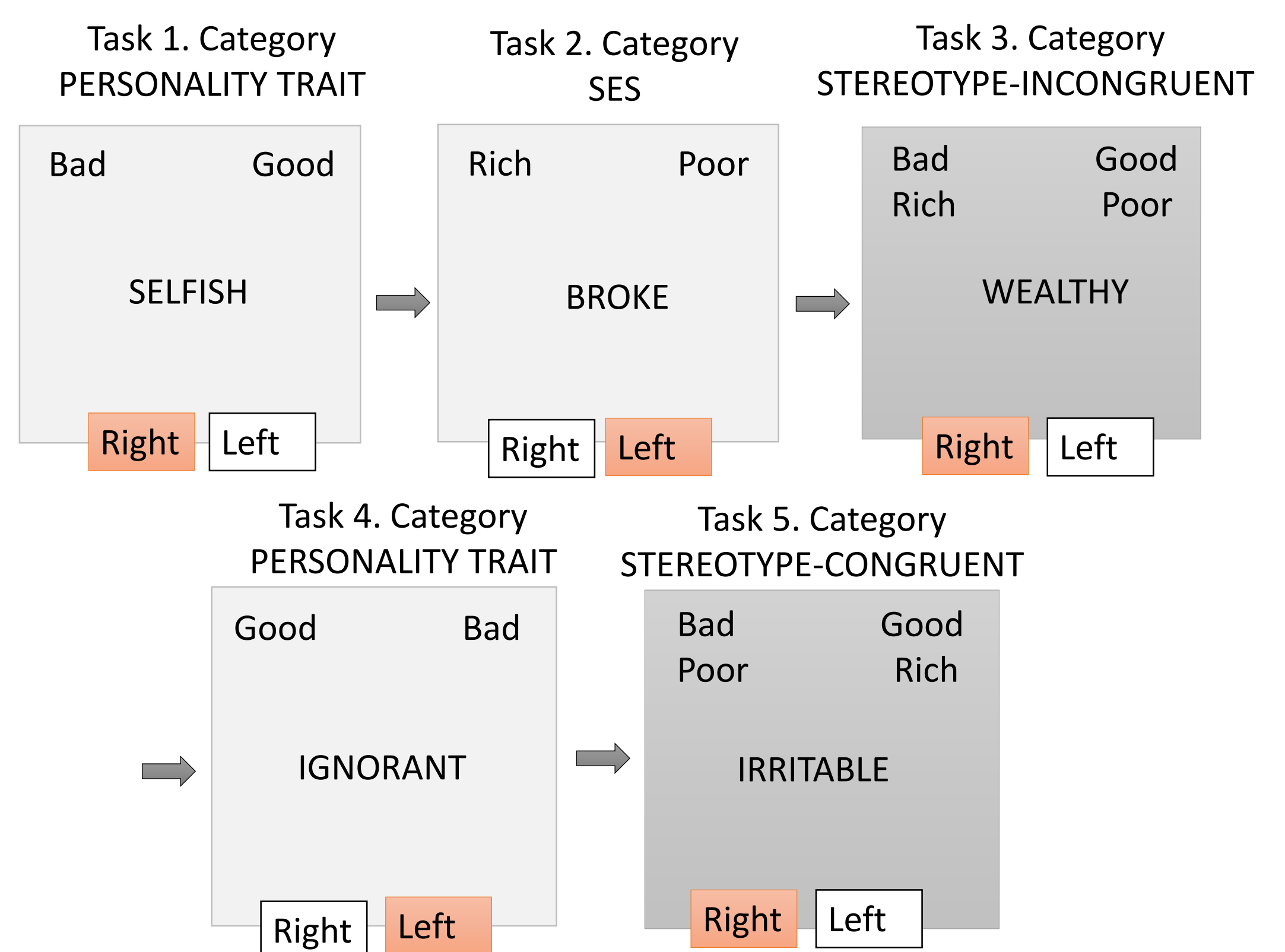
Association with stereotype-congruent pairs (good-rich; bad-poor) will be faster than with non-stereotyped ones (bad-rich; good-poor).

Methods

- Participants: 29 Glendon College undergraduate students (18 females; 10 males; 1 unspecified; ages 17 to 23 years old).

TASK: Does the word presented in the middle belongs to the left or right category? Press the **left** or **right** key as soon as possible to give your answer.

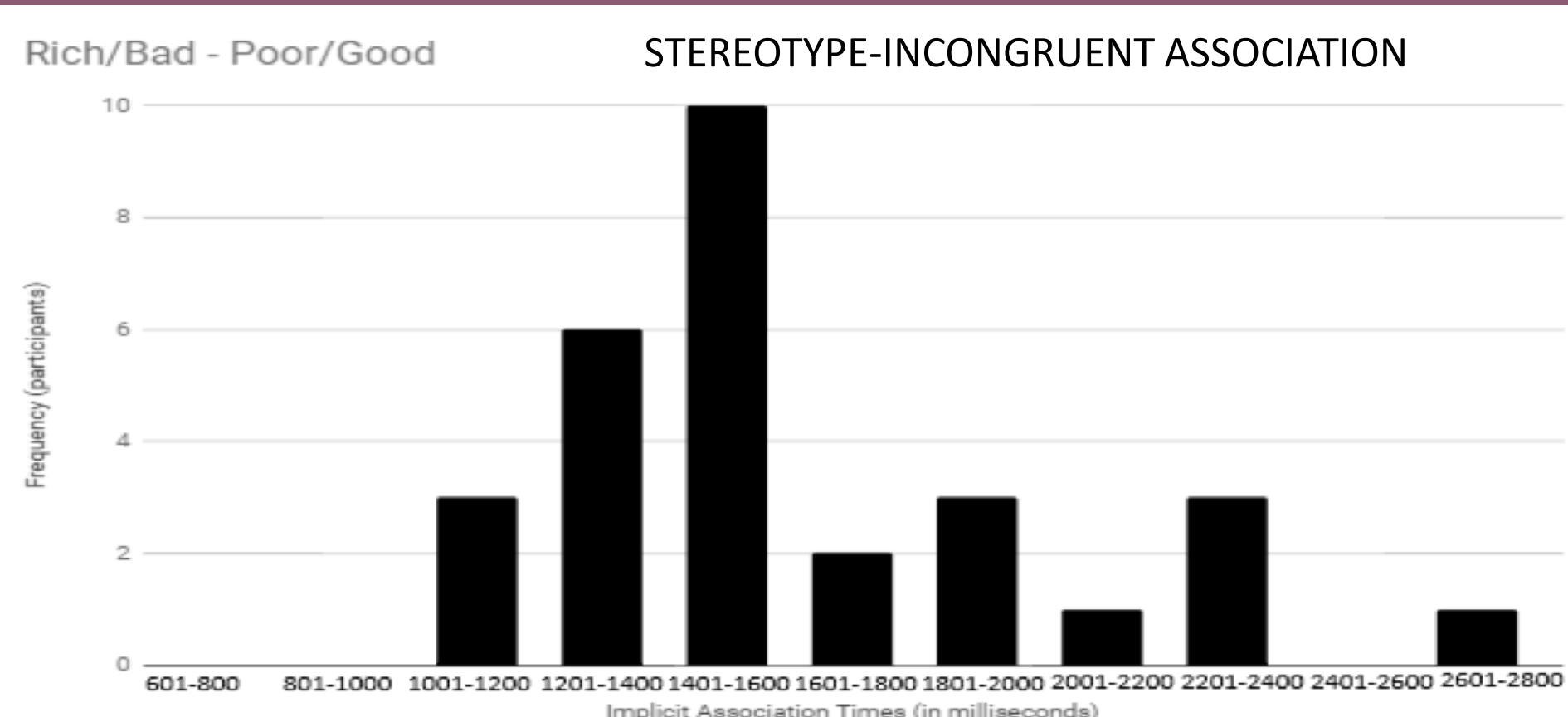
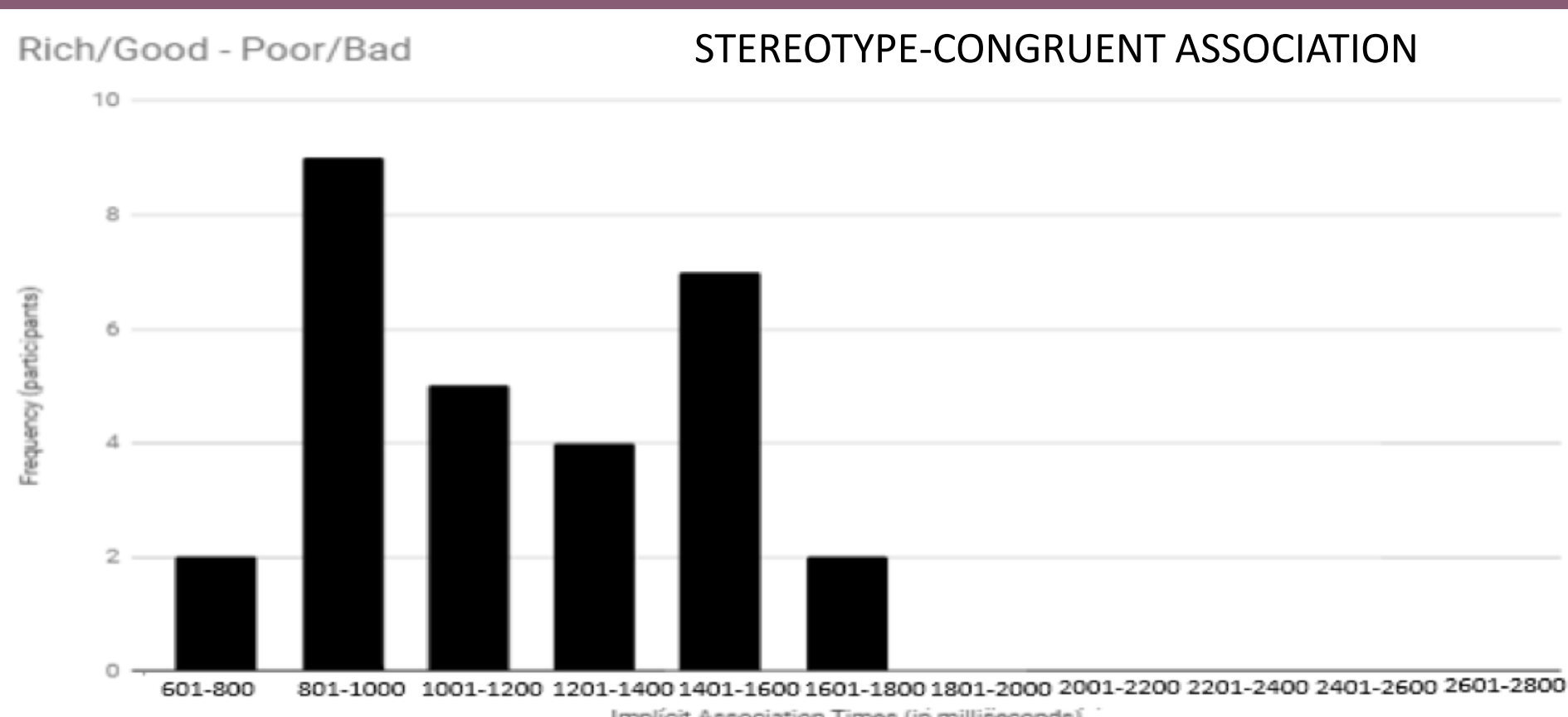
MEASURE: Reaction time (RT msec) to press correct key.



Results

The average msec for the stereotype-congruent association (M=1190.37 msec, SD=293.57) is significantly lower than the average for the incongruent association (M=1619.35 msec, SD=405.81). [$t(28) = 5.38, p < 0.001, d = 1.211$].

These results show that there is a very small chance (<0.1%) that the conclusions asserted are false.



Conclusion & Discussion

- The results show that we quickly associate high SES to good personality traits and low SES to bad personality traits.
- Using questionnaires, Spencer and Castano (2007) found such a stereotyped association. The present results show that it still exists today even among highly educated students.
- These results are important as most undergraduate students would be reluctant to explicitly report such associations. Nevertheless, when assessed implicitly, these associations influence behaviors. This illustrates the importance of studying prejudice and stereotypes implicitly such as emphasized by Banaji and colleagues (e.g. ...).
- Whether associations between race and SES still influence how students are treated in post-secondary institutions will next be studied.

(* Supervised by Prof. Josée Rivest)