

A Structural Mediation Model Predicting Invisible Disability Prejudice

S.E. Stevens, Chelsea Platt, Vanessa Velasquez, Cristian Cervantes, Gabriel Ortiz, Kaitlyn McCoy, Mariah Patterson, & Lawrence S. Meyers

California State University, Sacramento

Previous research has shown contact with invisible disabilities, such as HIV, can greatly reduce prejudice (Carter et al., 2006; Davis, 2005; Pitkin Derosé et al., 2016). Additional research has shown a relationship between group membership, compassion, and emotional state (Oveis, Horberg, & Keltner, 2010). A structural model was configured with four latent variables. Inner Turmoil was used to directly predict Invisible Disability Prejudice and Callousness and Alienation were proposed as mediators in this relationship.

A total of 170 undergraduate students (70% Female) completed psychological inventories. Although the chi-square test was statistically significant, the structural model yielded a good fit as indexed by the CFI (.951), the IFI (.952), and the RMSEA (.061). Aroian tests demonstrated that the indirect paths from Inner Turmoil through Callousness to Invisible Disability Prejudice ($p = .05$) and from Inner Turmoil through Alienation to Invisible Disability Prejudice ($p = .02$) were statistically significant. The direct path from Inner Turmoil to Invisible Disability Prejudice was not statistically significant ($p = .363$) and the model accounted for 43% of the variance in Invisible Disability Prejudice. In the unmediated model the direct path from Inner Turmoil to Invisible Disability Prejudice was statistically significant in isolation ($p = .005$), and a Freedman-Schatzkin test revealed that ($p < .001$) the full model exhibited complete mediation.

Each simple mediation structure was then examined separately. The direct path was not statistically significant for either the simple mediation model with Alienation ($p = .910$) or the simple mediation model with Callousness ($p = .113$), and Freedman-Schatzkin tests determined that full mediation was observed for both simple mediated structures taken separately ($ps < .001$).

It appears that individuals who experience greater inner turmoil also tend to hold prejudicial beliefs about invisible disabilities. However, those who experience greater inner turmoil are also more likely to feel alienated from others and that results in an increase in existing prejudices. Additionally, those who experience greater inner turmoil are more callous about the experiences of others and that results in an increase in existing prejudices. This suggests that those who experience greater emotional instability are also more isolated from, and indifferent to, the experiences of others, possibly from preoccupation with personal struggles, resulting in fewer opportunities to learn about invisible disabilities. This reflects existing research that has found positive stereotypes and reduced prejudice relate to prosocial group affiliation and emotional regulation (Wagner et al., 2012; Brown & Groscup, 2009).

