

Racism, Complexity, and Affirmative Action

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Social scientists have now established a strong connection between racist attitudes and opposition to affirmative action (Crosby, Iyer, & Sincharoen, 2006). Study after study has found that opposition to affirmative action policies and practices is greatest among those who are the most racist (Arriola & Cole, 2001; Bobo, 1998; Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stnaley, & Zanna, 1998; Carmines & Layman, 1998; Hayes-James, Brief, Dietz, & Cohen, 2001; Hurwitz & Pefflley, 1998; Katz & Haas, 1988; Lehman & Crano, 2002; Little, Murry, & Wimbush, 1998; Mack, Johnson, Green, Parisi, & Thomas, 2002; Nosworthy, Lea, & Lindsay, 1995; Reyna, Henry, Korfmacher, & Tucker, 2005; Sawires & Peacock, 2000; Sears, van Laar, Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993; Stoker, 1998; Strolovitch, 1998; Tuch & Hughes, 1996). At least one major survey has found that modern or covert racism is an even stronger predictor of opposition to affirmative action than is old-fashioned racism (Williams, Jackson, Brown, Torres, Forman, & Brown, 1999). Similar associations have also been found for sexism and opposition to affirmative action, corroborating the predictive importance of prejudice (Tougas, Brown, Beaton, & Joly, 1995; Tougas, Crosby, Joly, & Pelchat, 1995; Tougas & Veilleux, 1990). Prejudice is not the only reason why Americans fail to support affirmative action (Crosby, Iyer, Clayton, & Downing, 2003, Crosby, 2004; Crosby et al., 2006), but it is a major reason (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Dalit, in press).

Several scholars have interpreted the association between racial attitudes and attitudes toward affirmative action in light of important social psychological theories like symbolic politics (Hughes, 1997; Kinder, 1998; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Sears & Valentino, 1997), social dominance theory (Federico & Sidanius, 2000a, 2000b; Sidanius, Devereux, & Pratto, 1992;

Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996) and group conflict theory (Bobo, 1998; Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Bobo, Kluegel, & Smith, 1997; Bobo & Smith, 1994; Tolbert & Grummel, 2003). Some researchers have examined associations among different ideological and practical factors to claim victory for one theoretical camp over other camps (Jacobson, 1985; Aberson, 2003; Glaser, 1994; Lehman & Crano, 2002; Strolovich, 1998). Others have cautioned that many different factors, variously interpreted, contribute to our understanding of why some privileged people support affirmative action, while others oppose it (Crosby, 2004; Crosby & Dovidio, in press; Dawson, 2000; Hughes, 1997; Sidanius, Singh, Hetts, & Federico, 2000).

In this present chapter, we seek to enlarge the discussion about the connection between racism and opposition to affirmative action by proposing that a major reason for the negative correlation between support for affirmative action and racist attitudes is that affirmative action challenges the underlying world-view of racists. At the heart of our argument are two interconnected observations. First, as we show in the initial section of our chapter, the greater the racial prejudice among white people, the greater is the tendency to explain the disadvantages of black people in simplistic, dispositional terms and the less is the tendency to understand disadvantages in complex structural or situational terms. Second, as is clear from our descriptions of affirmative action, the policy calls for complex reasoning. Our description shows that affirmative action is a fair policy (perhaps, indeed, a fairer policy than equal opportunity). To see the fairness of the policy, however, requires cognitive work and requires a willingness to look at complicated causal factors. The world-view that includes simple explanations and valorizes personal or dispositional causality is consistent with the underlying premises of equal opportunity, but it is thus inconsistent with the underlying premises of affirmative action. The final section of our chapter touches briefly on some of the implications of our work.

### The World-view of the Modern Racist

Stereotypes are cognitive representations of social groups that describe how members of a given group are similar to one another and different from members of other groups. Stereotypes represent people's beliefs about a group's average standing. For instance, black Americans are stereotypically perceived as being poor, uneducated, unintelligent and unmotivated (among other things, see Devine, 1989; Lepore & Brown, 1997). Stereotypes also contain causal information that explains how the components are interrelated and linked to the social world (Wittenbrink, Gist, & Hilton, 1997). For instance, stereotypes describe the lower relative social status of black Americans (e.g., lower income, education) and explain the causes for those disadvantages.

There are two opposing kinds of causal beliefs that consistently have been linked to prejudice and brought to bear on theory and research on intergroup relations – dispositional causal beliefs and situational causal beliefs (see Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Hewstone, 1990; Katz & Hass, 1988; Pettigrew, 1979; Vescio & Biernat, 1999; Wittenbrink et al., 1997). Considering the relative lower social status of black Americans than white Americans, high prejudice thought is characterized by dispositional causal explanations. Black individuals are perceived as lacking the dispositional material to succeed, such that the cause of blacks' lower social status (e.g., lower mean income and educational attainment) can be completely attributed to black individuals. By contrast, low prejudice whites tend to think in terms of situational causal explanations. Black individuals are perceived as being the targets of past injustices, situational barriers and ongoing discrimination, which cause the lower social status of Blacks (e.g., Wittenbrink et al., 1997).

Beyond being related to the causal focus of stereotypes (dispositional, situational), prejudice may be related the complexity of stereotypic causal explanations. Perceptions of causation involve ideas about how energy is transmitted from an ultimate cause (or causes) to an

event – "Events need to be linked via a causal chain so that the force can be transmitted from one link to the next" (Einhorn & Hogarth, 1986, p. 10). Therefore, when an observer initiates a causal search in the process of reaching an attribution, prior knowledge (e.g., stereotypic beliefs about the causes of group differences) and imagination are used to create a scenario or chain to link cause to effect. If X and Y can be directly connected then there is one causal link involved. For example, a flaw in the Pentium chip causes Intel stock prices to drop. However, the larger the gap between initial cause and the final effect, the more links that will be required to bridge the gap. To use Einhorn and Hogarth's (1986) example, consider the possibility that sunspots affect stock prices. One possible explanation for such an event might be the following: Sunspots lead to good weather, which in turn leads to increased crop production. Increased crop production affects the economy, which alters profits, and results in final price changes. There are six variables in this explanation – the ultimate cause (sunspots), the effect (price changes), and four intermediate variables (weather, agriculture, economy, and profits). The number of causal links in an explanation equals the number of intermediate variables plus one (five in this case).

If causal complexity is conceptualized in terms of the number of causal links that are needed to transmit energy from distal (and multiple) causes to the effect, then there may be differences in the causal complexity of the explanations that high and low prejudice whites generate for outcomes involving black Americans. The attributions that high, compared to low, prejudice whites make for the ambiguous and/or stereotype consistent behaviors of black americans may be more simplistic and direct. For example, consider a black adolescent who behaves in a stereotypically aggressive manner. The attributional components of stereotypes (i.e., "the aggressiveness of blacks leads to increased contact with the criminal justice system") may direct attention toward the actor and his/her behavior. To use Heider's (1958) terms, "behavior

engulfs the field" and dispositional factors provide the most ready and complete explanations for behavior – an aggressive disposition is a sufficient explanation for an aggressive act.

The attributional components of low prejudice people's stereotypes, however, focus on situational factors beyond the control of the actor (e.g., low SES, discriminatory practices of police) and require the inclusion of multiple causal factors and/or more distant ultimate causes. Whereas aggressiveness may lead directly to aggressive acts (i.e., high prejudice belief), being a member of a low-income family has effects on other variables that, in turn, produce aggressive behavior (i.e., low prejudice belief). For instance, low-income families reside in neighborhoods with few community programs for youth, which causes involvement with unsupervised groups of children, which may facilitate delinquent behavior that ultimately escalates into violent acts. In sum, the causal beliefs of low prejudice whites guide attention to belief consistent (and situational) aspects of the environment and result in more complex explanations.

### *Overview of Studies*

Below we present three studies that test the suggestion that the stereotypic beliefs of high and low prejudice whites differ both in the content and complexity of the attributions. Study 1 examines the relation between prejudice and attributions for two outcomes – blacks lower relative status and the ambiguous failures of a black individual. Study 2 replicated and extended the findings of Study 1 by using multiple measures of prejudice and by examining both the content and complexity of whites' stereotypic attributions. Study 3 was designed to test the predictions that, in situations involving group members who behave in a stereotype consistent manner (a) personal beliefs about the kinds of causes that lead to particular group differences will guide information seeking behavior and (b) the situational attributions of low prejudice people are more complex than the dispositional attributions of high prejudice persons.

### *Study 1 Methods*

*Participants.* Participants were 249 white male and 304 white female students, who were enrolled in an introductory psychology course at a large mid-western University. Students completed the materials outside of class as part of a mass pre-screening session.

*Materials.* The materials consisted of three parts. First, participants were presented with information about the differences in the average earnings of black and white Americans and asked to explain the differences (see [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)). After reading the group difference, participants were presented with the following instructions:

A number of factors may play a role in determining particular outcomes or group differences. Some of these factors might be called *dispositional*: they refer to characteristics of individual group members. Other factors might be called *situational*: these would refer to influences of the setting or the environment in which people live.

Participants were asked to rate the importance of the dispositional characteristics of black Americans, dispositional characteristics of white Americans, and characteristics of the situation or environment in producing each of the different mean incomes. The three ratings were made on 7-point scales (endpoints "extremely unimportant" and "extremely important"). Like others (e.g., Regan & Totten, 1975), we created a *situational attribution* index, which equaled the importance ascribed to situational contributors minus the importance assigned to the dispositions of blacks.

Second, participants were asked to imagine "Marcus," a black male. They were asked to think about Marcus being unsuccessful in a job search and to think about Marcus being unable to accomplish the work that others expected of him. Considering each scenario, and using 7-point scales, respondents rated causes along four dimensions that are important aspects of both interpersonal and intergroup attributions (Peterson, Semmel, von Baeyer, Abramson, Metalsky,

& Seligman, 1982; see also Hewstone, 1990; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Pettigrew, 1979; Weiner, 1979, 1986). First, to assess dispositional/situational causality, participants rated the degree that the outcome is due to something about Marcus or something about other people or circumstances (endpoints "Totally due to other people or circumstances" and "Totally due to Marcus" – reverse scored). Second, to assess causal stability, participants rated the degree that the cause would be present in similar settings in the future (endpoints "Absolutely present" and "Absolutely not present"). Third, to assess the specificity of the cause, participants reported whether the causes were specific to the task or more general influences in other areas of Marcus' life (endpoints "Just task relevant" and "Influences everything"). Finally, to assess controllability, participants reported the degree that outcomes were controllable (endpoints "Totally controllable" and "Totally uncontrollable"). We created *dispositional/situational*, *stable/unstable*, *global/specific*, and *controllability* variables by averaging across parallel ratings of the two scenarios.

Finally, respondents completed the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981). The Modern Racism Scale (MRS) is a seven-item non-reactive measure of racism. Sample items are “discrimination against African Americans is no longer a problem in the United States” and “African Americans are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.” Scores on the MRS were summed for each participant, to create a *prejudice variable*. Scores could, and did, range from 7 (low prejudice) to 35 (highest possible prejudiced).

### *Study 1 Results and Discussion*

White respondents' explanations for blacks' relatively low mean income differed according to their level of prejudice as indexed by the MRS. There was a strong negative correlation between prejudice and the situational attribution index ( $r = -.31, p < .0001$ ). Lower prejudice levels were associated with more situationally focused causal explanations.

Decomposing the situational attribution index, prejudice was negatively associated with situational attributions ( $r = -.23, p < .001$ ) and positively associated with dispositional characteristics of blacks ( $r = .18, p < .001$ ). In sum, consistent with predictions, lower levels of prejudice were associated with more situationally focused and less dispositionally focused explanations. Prejudice was also unrelated to attributions to Whites' dispositions ( $r = .05, ns$ ).

In addition, as indicated in Table 1, there was an inverse relationship between respondents' prejudice level and situational attributions for negative outcomes involving "Marcus," an individual member of a stereotyped group ( $r = -.19, p < .0001$ ). The lower prejudice, the more likely respondents were to make situational attributions for the negative outcomes that Marcus faced. Interestingly, prejudice was not correlated with the stable/unstable ( $r = .01$ ), global/specific ( $r = .08$ ), or controllability ( $r = -.04$ ) dimensions. Finally, the correlation between prejudice and the situational attribution did not change when the effects of the stable/unstable, global/specific, and controllable dimensions were partialled out ( $r = -.19, p < .001$ ).

Given the similarity in results for explanations of group disadvantage and a negative personal outcome, it is not surprising that there was a strong relationship between attributions for *group* differences that reflect negatively on blacks (i.e., lower relative in mean income) and negative outcomes involving a black *individual* (i.e., Marcus performing poorly),  $r = .51, p < .0001$ . As would be expected, those who saw aggregate group level differences in income as due to something internal to blacks also saw Marcus' failures as due to something internal to Marcus.

The findings of Study 1 demonstrate the prejudice is associated with the content of one's explanations. High prejudice thought is characterized by dispositional explanations for the relative lower mean income of blacks compared to whites and for negative outcomes involving a black individual. By contrast, low prejudice thought is characterized by situational explanations

for the lower yearly income of blacks than whites and for the negative outcomes of a black individual. The results of Study 1 also demonstrated that it was the situational/dispositional (or internal/external) dimension that was critical. Study 1 did, however, leave us wondering whether the relation between prejudice and attributions would hold for other group differences and different measures of prejudice. Study 1 also left the question of causal complexity unaddressed.

### *Study 2 Methods*

*Participants.* Questionnaires were distributed to a convenience sample of 65 individuals in pre-stamped envelopes addressed to the first author. Nineteen white male and twenty white female respondents returned completed questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 60%. The participants ranged from 19 to 58 years old, and the mean age of the sample was 36. The level of education ranged from high school to four years post bachelor's degree, with a mode of 2 years of college or technical training. All respondents lived in the Minneapolis, Minnesota area.

*Questionnaire.* Respondents were asked to consider statistical differences between black Americans and white Americans regarding (1) mean yearly income, (2) level of educational attainment, and (3) single mother pregnancy and head of household rates. As in Study 1, the statistics presented were taken from the Census Bureau. After reading each group difference, participants described the factors that caused the group difference (open ended response format). Participants were then asked to think about what they had written and to draw a causal diagram summarizing their paragraph. To create a causal diagram, participants arranged causes to display the relation among distal and proximal causes to the group difference. This task was modeled on Einhorn and Hogarth's (1986) discussion of causal chains and Antaki's (1988) causal diagramming task and required that respondents diagram the transmission of energy from the ultimate cause(s) to the effect. We created a *causal complexity score* by counting the number of

arrows respondents used in their diagrams. A raw count was used because it included the distance of the ultimate cause from the outcome, multiple causes, and interactions between situational and dispositional variables (e.g., situational barriers cause learned helplessness and laziness, which produce differences in mean income).

After completing the diagrams, participants were presented with the description of dispositional and situational factors (see Study 1). Considering each group difference, participants then rated the causal importance of the dispositional characteristics of black Americans, dispositional characteristics of white Americans, and characteristics of the situation or environment (using scales where 1="extremely unimportant" and 7="extremely important").

At the end of the questionnaire, participants provided demographic information and completed two measures of prejudice toward blacks: (1) the Modern Racism Scale, used in Study 1, and (2) a modified version of Bogardus' (1925) social distance scale (SDS, Crandall, 1991), which assesses participants' preferred degree of distance from Blacks during interactions.<sup>1</sup>

### *Study 2 Results and Discussion*

The right most column of Table 2 presents the correlations between prejudice (as measured by the MRS in the top panel and SDS in the lower panel) and situational attributions for each of the three group difference items, as well as the situational attribution index (situational factors minus disposition of blacks). For each group difference, lower MRS scores were related to a greater tendency to make situational attributions. Similarly, participants' preferred distance blacks (or SDS scores) was negatively related to the tendency to make situational attributions. The less distance white participants preferred between themselves and black Americans the more likely they were to attribute black's relative disadvantage to situational factors. The one exception to this general pattern was that social distance was not

related to situational explanations for the higher pregnancy rate of single black, as compared to single white, women. Finally, Table 1 indicates that – as in Study 1 - prejudice (MRS and SDS scores) was unrelated to explanations involving the dispositional attributes of whites.

We also computed correlations between prejudice and causal complexity (or the number of causal links participants used to explain group differences). Both measures of prejudice were negatively correlated with causal complexity – (1) MRS-causal complexity  $r = -.38, p < .05$ , and (2) SD-causal complexity,  $r = -.22, p < .05$ . In other words, the less prejudice a person, the more likely he or she was to exhibit complex thinking about black's relative disadvantage.

The results of Study 2 were entirely as predicted. However, the first two studies leave one of the most provocative implications of our suggestion unaddressed. We have suggested that stereotypes contain causal components that, as a function of prejudice, vary in content and complexity. Low prejudice people have stereotypic beliefs that articulate situational forces as the primary determinants of stereotyped group members' behavior, whereas high prejudice people have stereotypic beliefs that focus on dispositional causes. If this suggestion is correct, as the above findings suggest, then the attributional components of stereotypes should guide inferences and information seeking behaviors (or attention) in settings involving individual members of stereotyped groups. This is consistent with other findings in the stereotyping literature that demonstrate that perceivers display stereotype matching biases in information seeking strategies (Johnston & Macrae, 1994) and demonstrate general confirmatory hypothesis testing strategies (e.g., Evett, Devine, Hirt, & Price, 1994; Snyder, Campbell, & Preston, 1982; Snyder & Swann, 1978; for reviews see Klayman & Ha, 1987; Snyder & Gangestad, 1981).

To examine this possibility, in our final study, we presented white participants with information about a black or white teenager who had engaged in aggressive delinquent behavior.

The study participants had been pre-tested and selected on the basis of being either quite prejudiced or quite unprejudiced. We wanted to see whether prejudiced participants would provide simplistic explanations for the aggressive behavior of a black delinquent but not of a white delinquent. We also wanted to see if prejudiced participants would gravitate toward dispositional rather than situational explanations.

### *Study 3 Method*

*Participants.* The experimental participants were 50 White University of Kansas undergraduates who were chosen from a larger sample of 630 introductory psychology students based on their responses to the Modern Racism Scale. Among the pre-testing sample, scores on the Modern Racism Scale (MRS) could, and did, range from 7 to 35, with a mean of 14 and a standard deviation of 5.39. Participants for this study were chosen from the upper and lower quartiles of the MRS distribution. We classified 14 males and 10 females as high prejudice. All of our prejudiced participants had MRS scores greater than 19. We classified 10 males and 18 females, who all with MRS scores less than 11, as low prejudice.

*Procedure.* Upon arrival, the participant was greeted by a white experimenter who was unaware of the participant's prejudice level. After signing an informed consent statement, participants were told that they would be taking part in a law and psychology study and were given information about one of several possible cases that had been heard by a St. Louis, Missouri juvenile court. All participants were presented with the same information with the exception – we manipulated the race of the juvenile.

Following the introduction, participants were given time alone to look over a one page description of a vandalism case. The race of the target was manipulated by the presence of an identification photo, which was attached to the upper left hand corner of the case description.

Pre-testing indicated that the black and white targets were equivalent in terms of attractiveness and that the photos accurately conveyed the race and age of the target. To assure that target race was successfully manipulated, however, participants completed a brief offender identification form under the guise helping us keep track of which case they had read about. One of the questions on the information sheet asked the race of the juvenile, which all correctly answered.

Participants were then presented with four files containing reports about various aspects of the adolescent's environment and disposition, contained in different color binders and labeled as follows: (1) School Environment, (2) Home Environment, (3) Academic Ability and Achievement, and (4) Personality and Psychological Evaluation. The files were constructed such that the school and home environment files contained situational causal information (e.g., information about neighborhood SES, busing status, family composition) and the academic ability and personality files contained dispositional causal information (e.g., I.Q., scores on standardized achievement test, personality profiles). The content of the four folders was balanced for the amount and valence of information provided, as well as controlling for presentational style. All reports contained a cover page and five pages of information with equal numbers of words and were described as psychological reports (or prepared by psychologists) to control for potential differences in perceived status of the source of the information. Finally, each report was typed in a different font and format to enhance believability in the authenticity of the reports.

Clearly labeled folders were placed on a table in a random order. Participants were left alone to take as much time as they liked to look through the information in the folders.

Participants opened the door of the experimental room when they were finished looking at the materials. This portion of the experiment was surreptitiously videotaped.

The participants were then presented with questions about the target and the offense with

which he was involved. First, participants were asked to consider the adolescent's delinquent behavior and report the importance of the adolescent's dispositional characteristics and situational factors in determining the behavior. Second, participants wrote a free-form description of the primary causes of the adolescent's delinquent behavior and were asked to diagram how those primary causes led to the delinquent behavior of the adolescent.

*Dependent Measures.* Based on the videotapes of the experimental sessions, participants' viewing preferences were measured in two ways. First, we examined *initial preference*, by recording which folder each participant chose to look at initially. Each participant was given a value of 0 if their first choice was a folder containing dispositional information or a value of 1 if their first choice was a folder containing situational information. Second, we assessed *viewing time*. A research assistant and the first author independently recorded the amount of time participants spent viewing each folder. If there was a discrepancy of less than three seconds between the values presented by the two timers, the research assistant's recordings were used. However, if there was a discrepancy of greater than three seconds between the two raters (occurred in five instances) a third rater retimed the session and resolved the discrepancy. We then created a single *situational viewing time* variable, by subtracting time spent viewing dispositional files from time spent viewing situational files. All viewing measures were based on the data of 41 of the 50 participants. Data were lost from eight participants due to equipment failure, and from one who declined to sign the release permitting the use of her videotaped data.

Causal complexity scores were summed in the manner used in Study 2. We summed the number of arrows present in the diagrams drawn by respondents.

### *Study 3 Results and Discussion*

Each dependent variable (initial preference, viewing time, and causal complexity) was

submitted to a participant prejudice (high or low) X target race (white or black) between participants Analysis of Variance. Below we present the findings.

*Initial preference.* As noted, participants' initial file selection was coded as 1 if they chose a situational file and 0 if they chose a dispositional file.<sup>2</sup> A single significant effect emerged from analysis of the initial preference – the predicted participant prejudice X target race interaction,  $F(1,40)=8.02, p<.008$ . As shown in the top panel of Table 3, when the target was black, low prejudice participants were more likely than high prejudice participants to choose situational files as their first source of information. Predictions were also supported within level of prejudice. Low prejudiced participants were more likely to initially choose situational information when the target was black than white. Conversely, high prejudice participants were less likely to choose situational information as their initial source of information when the target was black rather than white. In addition, high, as compared to low, prejudice participants displayed an increased tendency to seek situational information when the target was white.

*Situational viewing time.* Analysis of the situational viewing time (minutes viewing situational files minus minutes viewing dispositional files) revealed patterns of attention that paralleled the findings on initial preferences. As shown in the middle panel of Table 3, when the youth was black, low prejudice participants spent more time looking at situational information than did high prejudice participants. Comparisons were also made within prejudice level. These comparisons revealed that low prejudice participants spent more time viewing situational information when the target was black than white. The reverse was true for high prejudice participants – more time was spent reading situational information when the target was white than black. Paralleling the patterns on initial preference, high (compared to low) prejudice participants spent more time reading situational information when the target was white.

To further examine the nature of the relationship between prejudice level, target race, and preference for situational information over dispositional information, the two components of the situational index were analyzed separately.<sup>3</sup> In other words, dispositional viewing time and situational viewing time were treated as within-participants variables, and participant prejudice level and target race were between-participants factors in a mixed factor ANOVA. The results revealed a main effect of type of information; situational information ( $M=13.86$ ) was viewed longer than dispositional information ( $M=9.80$ ). In addition, there was a three-way interaction between type of information, target race, and participant prejudice,  $F(1,37)=5.03, p<.04$ .

As Table 4 indicates, high and low prejudice participants appear to be differentially attending to the two kinds of information, based on the race of the target. Considering situational viewing times (left half of Table 4), low prejudice participants in the black target condition spent more time looking at situational information than did participants in the other three experimental conditions. By contrast, considering dispositional viewing times (right half of Table 4), high prejudice participants in the white target condition spent *less* time looking at dispositional information when the target was white than did participants in the other conditions (3 versus 1 cell contrasts within type of information, both  $ts>2.0, p<.05$ ).

*Causal Complexity.* Two effects emerged from analysis of complexity. First, there was a significant main effect of participant prejudice level,  $F(1,43)=4.57, p<.04$ . Low prejudiced participants ( $M=5.62$ ) offered more complex causal explanations than did high prejudice participants ( $M=4.43$ ). Second, there was a marginally significant interaction between participants' prejudice level and target race,  $F(1,43)=3.67, p<.09$ . As can be seen in the bottom panel of Table 3, low prejudice participants offered non-significantly more complex explanations when the target was black rather than white. High prejudice participants did the opposite; high

prejudice participants offered more complex explanations when the target was white than black. Interestingly, the interaction was driven by the less complex explanations that high prejudice participants offered for the behavior of a black target.

In addition, participants' overall ratings of the importance of situational determinants of the delinquent act were related to causal complexity ( $r=.32, p<.03$ ). Stated differently, an emphasis on situational causes was associated with complex attributions. Conversely, an emphasis on dispositional causes was associated with simplistic thinking.

In sum, we predicted that high and low prejudice whites would differ in their responding to an individual Black target who engaged in a negative behavior. When the target was black, low prejudice (as compared to high prejudice) participants were expected to bias preferences preference for situational information and make more complex attributions. Consistent with predictions, when presented with the ambiguously aggressive behavior by a black teen, low prejudice whites were more likely than high prejudice whites to (a) view information about situational potential causes first, (b) spend more time viewing situational than dispositional information, and (c) construct more complex causal explanations.

#### *Overall Summary of the Three Studies*

The findings of the three studies reported here highlight important relations between whites' prejudice and their stereotypic causal beliefs. Prejudice is related to both the content and the complexity of white's explanations for the disadvantaged status of blacks in society (e.g., lower income and education) and negative outcomes involving black individuals. High prejudice beliefs are associated with simple, dispositional explanations for negative outcomes involving blacks. By contrast, low prejudiced beliefs are associated with complex, situational explanations. These differences are argued to be a result of the different world views, or stereotypes, of high

versus low prejudiced whites. Importantly, differences in both the content and complexity of high and low prejudice beliefs have implications for reactions to affirmative action.

### Affirmative Action

Affirmative action is not America's favorite policy (Crosby et al., 2006). Although attitudes tend to be more positive than negative, endorsement of the policy is both variable and easily influenced by the wording of questions (Crosby, 2004). Affirmative action seems to mean different things to different people, and it is certainly true that people's understanding of the policy influences their support for it (Golden, Hinkle, & Crosby, 2001).

In this section of the chapter, we describe affirmative action, explaining the philosophy behind the policy and how the policy operates. We then consider the effectiveness of the policy for improving the situation of people of color and of women. Next we draw out the distinctions between affirmative action and equal opportunity and note the implications of the distinctions.

#### *Description of the Policy*

Whenever an organization undertakes efforts that are designed to equalize opportunities afforded people of color and white people or afforded women and men, the organization engages in affirmative action (Crosby & Cordova, 1996). Affirmative action is deliberate. Affirmative action expends resources, both in terms of time and in terms of money.

In addition to the general definition of affirmative action, there are specific definitions, often of a rather technical nature. The principles underlying affirmative action in employment are the same as those underlying affirmative action in education (Crosby, 2000). Yet, the specific mechanisms of affirmative action in employment differ from the specific mechanisms of affirmative action in education, as described below.

*Affirmative action in employment.* In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed an

Executive Order (EO) intended to help promote his vision of “the great society.” EO 11246 required that the federal government itself and any federal contractor above a certain small size doing more than a minimal amount of business with the federal government to be “an affirmative action employer.” Employers with less than 50 employees were exempt from the requirement, as were organizations with contracts under \$50,000. Any organization with 50 or more employees that did not wish to become an affirmative action employer was not required to do so, but such a decision would disqualify the organization from doing business with the federal government.

What does it mean to be an affirmative action employer? Certain procedures need to be followed, which generally involve a two-step process. In the first step, the organization keeps track of the proportion of employees who are members of targeted gender groups (i.e., women) and ethnic groups (i.e., African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans). One might note that white males comprise the only non-targeted group, that is, the only group for which the organization need gather no statistics.

Once an organization knows what proportion of its work force that belong to targeted groups, it must compare those figures with the proportion of workers in different job categories who might potentially come from the targeted groups. Figures for actual workers are called “utilization figures” or “incumbency figures.” Figures for the potential workers are called “availability figures.” The core process in the first step of affirmative action in employment, as dictated by EO 11246, is to look at the match between utilization and availability.

Determining availability is a more arduous task than determining utilization, and it involves more subjectivity. Yet, certain practices have evolved to ease the burden of compliance. To determine availability for each job category, the organization must decide if candidates for that job are sought locally, regionally, or nationally. In a university, for example,

professorial and other professional jobs are usually filled from a national pool; while jobs like administrative assistant are filled from a local pool. The organization then uses published information to calculate availability. At a university, availability figures for professorial positions might be calculated by the affirmative action office by using national statistics on the numbers of Ph.D.s who are African American, Latino, Asian-American, or Native American in the humanities, the sciences, the social sciences, engineering, and so on. Availability figures for administrative assistants may be calculated by computing the number of African Americans, Latinos, Asian-American, and Native Americans who live within 35 miles of the university.

If an organization discovers that its utilization of ethnic minority talent or of female talent falls short of availability, then the organization must initiate the second step of the process. Importantly, initiating the second step requires no inference of prejudice or discrimination. No one need admit to or be found guilty of intentional discriminate. No aggrieved victim need step forward on her or his own behalf, and no one need certify that there is a class of wronged persons

The second step of the affirmative action process centers on correction of the documented problem(s). Following established practices, organizations devise a plan or set of plans to remedy an imbalance discovered in the first step of the process.

An example may illustrate. Imagine that University X discovers that it underutilizes women in the professoriate of the social sciences. It must then devise a plan to correct the underutilization. The plan should be sensible and cannot trammel the rights of men. Thus University X might project the retirements of faculty over the next decade and also specify any plans for expansion. The University might set goals for replacing retiring male faculty with new female faculty members. The University might, further, analyze the factors in its past and current hiring and promotion practices that might have contributed to the gender imbalance. Perhaps the

hiring committees were all male. Perhaps feminist journals were not counted as “scholarly” when assessing productivity of faculty at the point of tenure. Perhaps the university lacked family-friendly policies and were, therefore, unattractive to women with alternate offers.

What happens if an organization fails to realize the improvements specified in its affirmative action plan? As long as the organization can document that it is making good-faith efforts to meet its goals and to correct the problems, no sanctions can be applied. But if the organization flouts the corrective plans and flagrantly persists in its discriminatory ways, the federal government can take punitive action (e.g., impose fines, bar receipt of federal contracts).

The institution charged with monitoring federal contractors as they monitor themselves is the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP). During the presidency of George W. Bush, the OFCCP has become reduced in size. Currently there are about 700 employees nation-wide working for the OFCCP. Together the various district and regional offices oversee affirmative action programs in over 200,000 organizations. Approximately one quarter of the American labor force is covered by affirmative action, by virtue of working for the federal government, a federal contractor, or a large and covered sub-contractor.

Affirmative action in employment has sometimes taken the form of preferential treatment in procurement, as opposed to monitoring and correction in hiring and promotions. At various points in the past, a program administered by the Small Business Administration gave preference to minority-owned businesses and to women-owned businesses. Such procurement programs were generally credited with helping to increase the numbers of successful minority-owned businesses (Bendick & Egan 1999). Nonetheless, several legal challenges led to an overhaul of the set-aside programs. In the case of *Adarand v Pena Construction Company*, the Supreme Court declared that it was unconstitutional to grant preferences of the sort in *Adarand*.

*Affirmative action in education.*

The logic of the affirmative action programs in higher education follows the logic of affirmative action in employment. Educators make estimates about the number of women and ethnic minority students who would be admitted to and graduate from college or university programs. When the actual numbers of women and ethnic minority students who attend and graduate from institutions of higher education falls short of what one would expect, given the talent pool, then the institutions develop programs designed to correct the imbalances.

Looking at the state of California provides a window into the issues of affirmative action in higher education. Access to higher education has long been an issue of import to Californians. Since the promulgation of the Master Plan for Higher Education in California in the 1960s the state has sought to provide access to higher education to all youth. Any graduate of a California high school has the right to attend a community college. The top 33% of the graduating high school students are entitled to attend one of the 23 California State Colleges, provided that they have fulfilled certain requirements (e.g., taken a certified course in California history). Although they are not guaranteed admission to the campus of their choice, the top 12.5% of high school graduates are entitled to take a seat at one of the 10 campuses of the University of California.

A desire to fulfill their historic mission in the face of mounting costs and demographic pressures have made administrators at the University of California particularly sensitive to questions of access. Studies undertaken at the Office of the President of the University of California showed that Latino students constituted a higher proportion of the “top” students graduating from California high schools than of students matriculated at the University. Questions arose about why Latinos were not selecting to attend a UC, and it was discovered that Latinos were not being guided into the proper sequence of courses in high school. Even though

their grades and scores on standardized tests placed them in the top 1/8<sup>th</sup> of graduating high school students, a disproportionate number of Latinos had not taken the complete set of required courses and had thus not fulfilled the eligibility requirement (Crosby, 2004).

Having begun to monitor its behavior and performance with respect to access to education, the University of California continued its self-scrutiny in some very interesting ways. A study by Geiser and Studley (2001), two statisticians working at the Office of the President, revealed that scores on the SAT I provided very inadequate predictions of college performance, as indexed by freshman year grade-point average. The report also demonstrated that the SAT II, while much better than the SAT I, had quite limited predictive power concerning performance in college. "Each 100-point increase in SAT II," said the report, "adds about .18 of a grade point to predicted GPA, whereas a 100-point increase in SAT I scores adds only .05 of a grade point," (Geiser & Studley, 2001, p. 9). On average, the group scoring the worse (African Americans, with an average of 1041) averaged about 200 points less on the two-test SAT II than did the group scoring the best (Whites, with an average of 1213).

The implications of the Geiser and Studley analysis were clear. The 200-point difference in SAT scores serves to eliminate most blacks from the pool of those admitted to the University of California. As a result, the SATs end up eliminating people who might obtain a B-minus GPA rather than a solid B GPA. Given the importance of having visible paths to achievement open to students from all backgrounds, it seemed advisable to some, including the then-president, of the University of California, Richard Atkinson, to jettison the uninformative tests and use alternative means of selecting applicants. Indeed, taking action to affirm equality of opportunity, Atkinson publicly promised to help eliminate the reliance on SAT scores for admissions unless the tests were changed. Perhaps coincidentally, the Educational Testing Service soon ramped up its

efforts to make significant changes in the SAT.

Another public university that has paid great attention to issues of accessibility and affirmative action is the University of Michigan. In June, 2003, the Supreme Court rendered decisions on two cases involving the University of Michigan: *Gratz v Bollinger* and *Grutter v Bollinger*. In *Gratz*, two white applicants (Jennifer Gratz and Patrick Hamacher) who had been denied admission to the University of Michigan sued the university when they discovered that black applicants with lower grades and test scores had been admitted. A similar scenario occurred in *Grutter* when a white woman (Barbara Grutter) was rejected from the law school.

Although the claims of the plaintiffs were quite similar in *Gratz* and in *Grutter*, the decisions of the Supreme Court differed. In *Gratz*, Chief Justice Rhenquist wrote the majority opinion, and the Court found that the University had violated the rights of the applicants. Meanwhile, Sandra Day O'Connor wrote the majority opinion in *Grutter*, deciding that the university's law school had not erred in its admissions policies.

What accounts for the differences? The central difference concerned the nature of the admissions processes: in the law school, applicants received individualized scrutiny, but the undergraduate college had relied on a more mechanistic system of points. Importantly, even though the Court found against the university in the case of *Gratz*, Rhenquist's majority opinion made a point of stating explicitly that the state has a compelling interest in creating a diverse study body. Race-conscious policies were declared to be in accord with both the constitution and the statutes in both the *Gratz* and the *Grutter* cases; but the specific race-conscious methods deployed by the University of Michigan struck the Court as being sufficiently narrowly tailored in the law school and not narrowly tailored enough in the case of the undergraduate college.

*Effectiveness of affirmative action.*

Scholars have used three research strategies , outlined below, for gauging the effectiveness of affirmative action as established by EO 11246. All three strategies indicate that affirmative action in employment has been effective. The evidence concerning the policy's effectiveness in higher education has been hotly contested; but, on balance, it too shows that affirmative action has produced documented positive results.

*Effects of EO 11246.* The first strategy used by some social scientists to gauge the effects of EO 11246 is to compare the federal government with other employers. Such comparisons show that slow but steady progress has been made by African Americans, Latinos, and women (of all ethnic groups) since 1965 when affirmative action was created (Reskin, 1998). One study showed, for example that the number of African American managers and professionals in the employ of the federal government rose 200 percent from 1970 to 1980 while the number of White managers and professionals rose only 29% (Konrad & Linnehan, 1995a,b). Another study showed that years after the inauguration of affirmative action in the federal government, college educated African American men had ten times more chance of working as a manager in a public sector job than in a job in the for-profit sector (Smith, 1976).

A second research strategy for gauging the success of EO 11246 is to compare hiring and employment patterns of federal contractors, on the one hand, and non-federal contractors on the other. Adjusting for market sector (e.g., manufacturing or retail), the statistics show that federal contractors have hired, retained, and promoted more women and people of color than comparable companies that are not federal contractors. (See Crosby, 2004, for a review.) One study looked at over 40,000 firms in 1966 and 1970, and found that federal contractors had a much greater chance than other firms of moving from an all-White work force to an integrated work force (Ashenfelter & Heckman, 1976).

The final strategy for gauging the effectiveness of EO 11246 is to conduct surveys where the self-report of employees are used to identify affirmative action employers (Holzer & Neumark, 1999). Despite the problems with self-reported data, such a method improves over the other two methods because many organizations establish voluntary affirmative action plans.

Organizations with voluntary plans would be classified as “non-contractors” in the second method, and could thus make the non-contractors appear to be more vigorous in the hiring of people of color and of women than they actually are. One such study involving comparisons based on survey data found that 33% of the employees who worked for a firm that was not an affirmative action employer declared that no African Americans worked at their companies while only 7% of those working for affirmative action employers said the same (Herring & Collins, 1995). The same investigators also found that people of color earned more at affirmative action companies than at other companies.

*Education.* The weight of the evidence indicates that in higher education, vigorous affirmative action programs have helped augment the numbers of students of color at colleges and universities (Bowen & Bok, 1998). Some analyses question whether the augmentation has occurred equally at all levels of the educational hierarchy and whether the apparent increase has been artificially inflated by a failure to distinguish between, say, community colleges and elite universities and between the matriculation figures and the graduation figures (Renner & Moore, 2004). But other scholars show that even when one takes into account such factors, there are measurable positive effects of affirmative action in education.

Given the importance of the *Grutter v Bollinger* case, and given the strong influence of lawyers on legal and social realities, much attention has been focused on the effects of race-sensitive admissions programs for law schools. A detailed study of the law school at the

University of Michigan documented the increase in ethnic minority matriculants and graduates as a result of race-sensitive admissions policies (Lempert, Chambers, & Adams, 2000a, 2000b).

Recently, study of 27,000 law students who matriculated in accredited law schools in 1991, challenged the effective conclusion that race-sensitive admissions policies benefit blacks. Indeed, law professor Richard Sander (2004) claims that race-sensitive admissions plans have outlived their effectiveness for law school and now contribute to a shortage of African Americans who graduate from law school and also pass the bar. Sander's study, published in the prestigious *Stanford Law Review*, generated a firestorm of interest. A number of prominent researchers have published rebuttals to the Sander's article (Ayres & Brooks, in press; Chambers, Clydesdale, Kidder, & Lempert, in press; Wilkins, in press) questioning Sander's assumptions, methods, and conclusions.

To date, no one has conducted the statistical analysis by which one could determine the validity of Sander's claim that black law students are harmed by being given a boost in the quality of the law schools they attend. The data are clear that many black applicants are given a boost in their applicants and are admitted to law schools of a higher tier than would be true were they white. Yet, the proof that such a boost proves detrimental resides in a comparison of the outcomes (graduation rates, rates of passing the bar) of those who were given a boost and those who were given no boost. Such an analysis nowhere appears in Sander's article.

*Reasons.* Some of the reasons for the effectiveness of affirmative action are clear. Racism, both of the old fashioned variety and of the more covert contemporary variety, persists in the United States (cite). So-called "equal opportunity" does not, therefore, operate in the way it would operate absent prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior. Given the hurdles that people of color face in the United States, it is only logical that positive consequences derive from

the taking of actions to make sure that the racial biases of those who hire or promote employees and those who devise and implement admissions policies.

Another reason for the effectiveness of affirmative action is that affirmative action, unlike “equal opportunity,” helps diminish what the sociologist Christopher Jencks calls “selective system bias.” According to Jencks, “selective system bias [arises] whenever the standardized racial gap in job performance is smaller than the standardized racial gap in test performance.” (Jencks, 1998, p. 77). Oftentimes people of color do much less well than white people on the entrance exam, or have credentials that appear to be much less impressive than those of whites, and yet do only a little less well or no different than white people on the job or at the school. Jencks notes that, for example, a reliance on the SAT tests, when such tests predict only a tiny amount of the variance in college performance, is unfair because such a reliance “forces blacks to pay for the fact that social scientists have unusually good measures of a trait on which blacks are unusually disadvantaged” (Jencks, 1998, pp. 14-15).

Not only is selective system bias unfair; it is also impractical: by using gating mechanisms that exclude one group without providing highly accurate information about future performance, selective system bias deprives schools of a source of potentially successful students and provides businesses of sources of potentially successful workers. When the bias is eliminated, not only do those who were previously excluded benefit; so do the organizations that admit or select them (Holzer & Neumark, 1999).

The final reason that affirmative action has proven so effective is that it is the only mechanism for reducing or eliminating sex discrimination that does not require aggrieved parties to come forward. People are not allowed to bring law-suits on behalf of others, unless they themselves have “standing” in the case. Thus, social activists can use the courts to redress racial

discrimination, but only if there is at least one aggrieved party who is willing to serve as plaintiff. Very few people are willing to submit to the cost, time, trouble, and the social ostracism of publicly complaining about situations in which they feel that they have been the victims of discrimination (Rhode & Williams, in press). In fact, most people do not even wish to acknowledge that they have been placed at a disadvantage because of their sex or ethnic background. Instead, there is strong evidence indicating the “denial of disadvantage” (Crosby, 1984), which is the tendency to minimize the extent to which one is personally harmed by the prejudice and discrimination that affects one’s membership group.

Research has also shown that when a victim who has been in denial has an epiphany about the extent to which they are disadvantaged, the results can be quite explosive (Crosby & Ropp, 2002). With the policy of affirmative action, an affirmative action officer scrutinizes data looking for patterns of discrimination (without considering intent) so that corrective actions can be taken without arousing feelings of disgruntlement among people in organizations.

### *Equal opportunity*

The end goal of affirmative action is to enhance true equality in the United States. The general definition of affirmative action makes clear that the philosophical basis of affirmative action is wholly consistent with seeing affirmative action as a non-passive way to assure that people from all ethnic backgrounds are fairly treated. In some senses, affirmative action is simply one form, and a very vigorous one, of the time-honored American policy of equal opportunity. On the issue of equality, opponents of affirmative action have made a simple distinction. They contrast equality of opportunity and equality of outcome (Sowell, 2004). Affirmative action, they say, tries to guarantee equality of outcome, something that seems vaguely un-American (Connerly, 1995). At first glance, it is very hard to see any fault in the

reasoning of the opponents of affirmative action.

A moment of reflection, however, allows us to differentiate between things that are mechanistically identical and things that are substantively similar. Imagine that John and Susan are going to run a foot race. Should not they have the same shoes? Would not it be unfair to require Susan to wear high-heeled shoes while John wears sturdy wing-tips. But, even as we decide that John and Susan should wear the same shoes, we decide what we mean by “the same.” In a purely mechanistic view, the shoes should be the same in every way: if John gets canvas running shoes, so much Susan; and if Susan is given a size 5 shoe, then so must John be given a size 5 shoe. How much more sensible is it to strive for substantive similarity, by which both John and Susan will be issued shoes that fit their feet (large for John and small for Susan).

An additional athletic metaphor is useful for those who wish to compare the fairness of affirmative action and of “equal opportunity.” Imagine that you wish to select members of the track team without regard to sex or ethnic origin, but only on the basis of how quickly people run. Someone who runs a mile in five minutes should be admitted to the team ahead of someone who runs a mile in six minutes. If there are a limited number of spaces on the team, the six-minute runner should be eliminated. That is how “equal opportunity” works. But what if you learn that the slower runner was running a mile up a mountain while the faster runner was running a mile downhill? Is it still sensible and fair to bring the five-minute runner on the team ahead of the six-minute runner? Like the coach who looks not only at performance (e.g., the time to run a mile) but also at the circumstances (e.g., the terrain), those who implement affirmative action are forced to look beyond the simple appearances and must instead engage in more thoughtful and difficult determinations.

If “equal opportunity” is unreflective about issues of similarity, it also makes naïve

assumptions about power. Specifically, policies of equal opportunity assume that it is equally easy for people to voice complaints as it is to voice compliments. Equal opportunity policies also implicitly assume that all individuals have equal access to hiring and promotion agents and have equal credibility. Opportunities, in other words, are assumed to be equal unless one can identify someone who has intentionally made them unequal.

Affirmative action also differs from “equal opportunity” in the degree to which the former emphasizes structures and the latter emphasizes individuals (Crosby, 1994). According to “equal opportunity,” people create and maintain fair systems simply by their intention to do so. Affirmative action, in contrast, acknowledges that many times unfairness can occur even though no one in the current situation is prejudiced.

An example of a highly effective affirmative action program involved an intervention made on behalf of women who had a desire to be fighter pilots. The army had forbidden women from flying expensive planes because they genuinely believed the evidence that women regain consciousness after a plunge through space less quickly than men do. The evidence had been produced by the apparently objective means of spinning individual women and men, wearing anti-gravity suits, in a simulation machine and measuring the time (in milliseconds) that they required to regain consciousness after a simulated loss of altitude. Although no one had intended to discriminate against the female flyers, a discriminatory practice had occurred as a result of cost-consciousness and thoughtlessness about gender issues. Specifically, the anti-gravity suits worn by the women had been made for men, not women. Thus, for instance, a 5’10” woman who was tested wore an anti-gravitational suit made for a 5’10” man. Anti-gravitational suits help people regain consciousness through the use of pressure on the leg. As the average woman has longer legs than the average man of the same height, the anti-gravitational suits literally fit the

women less well than they fit the men. The apparently slower recovery time of women turned out to be the fault of the ill-fitting suits, but until someone affirmatively acted on behalf of the women, the fault appeared to lie in the physiology of the female body (Crosby, 1996).

An extension of the debate over equality is the debate over race consciousness and race blindness. Race blindness is an approach that is theoretically possible for those who endorse equal opportunity. In theory, with equal opportunity, one can simply let everyone apply for the job or seek admission, and the decisions about hiring or admitting candidates can be made without knowing whether the candidates are male or female, black, brown, or white. Race blindness is not possible, even in theory, with the policy of affirmative action. One cannot monitor to see that people from targeted ethnic groups are represented in proper proportion unless one takes cognizance of people's ethnic groups.

Proponents of affirmative action often acknowledge the awkwardness of endorsing race-consciousness, given the end goal of establishing equality among all ethnic groups. Proponents also note the salutary effects of marking everyone's ethnicity. No longer should Americans differentiate between "people" and "ethnic minority people," with the unstated implication that real "people" are all white. By marking some people as "ethnic minority" and others as "ethnic majority," we begin to make it possible to acknowledge white privilege. Recognition of the advantages that are automatically granted to whites in America – a recognition that is fostered by the policy of affirmative action and often impeded by policy of equal opportunity -- is essential if we are to devise methods of measuring and rewarding merit.

In short, affirmative action, as contrasted with simple equal opportunity policies, is effortful not only in a practical sense but also in terms of cognition. Affirmative action is more effective than equal opportunity, but it takes some reflection to see why. To appreciate the

policy of affirmative action, one has to devote some thought to issues of equality, differentiating between mechanistic formations and substantive ones. The appreciation of affirmative action, furthermore, rests on a sophisticated understanding of the role of race in America and on attention to structural and situational factors that affect performance and that influence how much one can use present performance as a prediction for further performance.

### Making the Connection

Given the contrast between affirmative action and “equal opportunity,” is it not at all surprising that affirmative action should be unpopular among those who think about the disadvantages and problems of ethnic minority people in simplistic terms. Nor is it surprising that affirmative action sits poorly with those who explain the disadvantages and problems of ethnic minority individuals in dispositional, rather than situational, terms. As simplistic and dispositional explanations of black disadvantage and of black misbehavior increase among whites as racial prejudice increases, the link between racial prejudice and opposition to affirmative action seems almost inevitable.

Several authors have wondered what might be done to increase the endorsement of affirmative action among Americans. Pratkanis and Turner (1996, 1999), for example, have identified a set of practices that might increase the popularity of affirmative action plans among employees of companies. Among other things, Pratkanis and Turner urge employers to let it be known when a person of color or a white woman is promoted to high position that standards were not lowered by advertising the accomplishments of the person who was promoted.

One clear implication of our work is that strong acceptance of affirmative action will be limited as long as people harbor prejudices and as long as they gravitate toward simplistic outlooks and dispositional explanations. Thoughtful and clever strategies such as the ones

proposed by Pratkanis and Turner are likely to have little impact on employees who long for simple slogans, who shy away from situational explanations, and who harbor racial prejudices.

Our work also suggests an interesting possibility. Perhaps it is possible to train people to think more complexly. Perhaps, people can learn to eschew simplistic explanations and trained to think in structural or situational terms. Some would say that such training should be at the core of a college education. But, whether training in cognitive complexity is or is not an essential feature of the college curriculum, it may hold the key to some related processes, helping both to increase the endorsement of affirmative action policies and to decrease the persistence of racism.

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*Table 1.* Correlations between participants' prejudice level and attributions to dispositional/situational, stable/unstable, global/specific, and controllable/uncontrollable dimensions, Study 2.

Scenario	Attributional Dimension			
	Dispositional/ External	Stable/ Unstable	Global/ Specific	Controllable/ Uncontrollable
Unemployed	-.18**	.04	.04	-.06
Bad Talk	-.04	.01	-.04	.02
Bad Talk	-.16**	-.03	-.09	-.08
Total	-.19**	.02	.08	-.04

*Note:* \*\* $p < .001$

Table 2. Correlations between participants' prejudice level and ratings of dispositional and situational causal factors, Study 1.

Group Differences	Causal Factors			
	Disposition of Whites	Disposition of Blacks	Situational Factors	Situation Index (situation–disposition)
<b>Modern Racism Scale</b>				
Mean Income	-.02 (37)	.54** (37)	-.27* (37)	-.51** (37)
Education Level	-.01 (38)	.24* (38)	-.46** (38)	-.41* (38)
Single Parent	.22 (39)	.33* (39)	.18 (39)	-.32** (39)
Total	.12	.39*	-.29*	-.43**
<b>Social Distance Scale</b>				
Mean Income	.04 (36)	.33** (36)	-.33* (36)	-.40** (36)
Education Level	-.02 (36)	.22* (36)	-.47** (36)	-.42 (36)
Single Parent	.09 (37)	.02 (37)	-.07 (37)	-.05 (37)
Total	.05	.21	-.33*	-.32**

Note: Higher Modern Racism and Social Distance scores reflect greater prejudice toward and distance from Black Americans. The situational index is the importance of situational factors minus the importance of dispositional characteristics of Black Americans. Values in parentheses show the number of participants used to calculate the correlation. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$

*Table 3.* The percentage of participants who initially chose to view situational information as a function of the race of the target and the participants' prejudice level, Study 3.

	Target Race	
	Black	White
<b>Initial Viewing Preference (Proportion who selected situational file first)</b>		
High Prejudice Participants	.40 <sup>a</sup>	.75 <sup>b</sup>
Low Prejudice Participants	.85 <sup>b</sup>	.38 <sup>c</sup>
<b>Situational Viewing Time</b>		
High Prejudice Participants	4.25 <sup>a</sup>	7.72 <sup>b</sup>
Low Prejudice Participants	5.00 <sup>b</sup>	1.15 <sup>c</sup>
<b>Causal Complexity</b>		
High Prejudice Participants	3.82 <sup>a</sup>	5.10 <sup>b</sup>
Low Prejudice Participants	5.77 <sup>b</sup>	5.46 <sup>b</sup>

*Note:* For each dependent variable, within row and column, values with different subscript significantly differ,  $p < .05$ .

*Table 4.* Situational and dispositional viewing time based on the race of the target and participant prejudice level, Study 3.

Participant Prejudice Level	Situational Viewing Time		Dispositional Viewing Time	
	Black Target	White Target	Black Target	White Target
High	13.83	14.24	9.59	6.52
Low	16.10	11.77	11.11	10.63

## Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Scores on the Modern Racism Scale could potentially range from 7 to 35 with higher numbers indicating greater prejudice. In this sample scores ranged from 7 to 26 with a mean of 14.68 and a standard deviation of 5.67. Items on the social distance scale were appropriately reversed so that higher numbers indicate greater distance or negativity toward Blacks, as in the case of the Modern Racism Scale. Scores could potentially range from 7 to 49; the actual range was from 7 to 38, with a mean of 18.30 and a standard deviation of 7.07. There was a significant correlation between Modern Racism and social distance scores ( $r=.51, p<.002$ ).

<sup>2</sup> If a DV has only two categories and the responses are relatively evenly split between the two categories (no more extreme than 25/75%), either multiple regression/ANOVA or logit analysis is an appropriate analysis and the results of the logit analysis are similar to those of the multiple regression/ANOVA (Goodman, 1978). In the current sample, initial viewing preferences were relatively evenly split between dispositional (40.9%) and situational (59.1%) information. However, logit analysis was also performed yielding the same results.

<sup>3</sup> See Cronback and Furby (1970) for a discussion of the problems with analyzing difference scores by means of ANOVA and multiple regression procedures.