
THE AVERSIVE FORM OF RACISM*

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INTRODUCTION

The results of several recent surveys indicate that white America's racial attitudes have become substantially more tolerant and liberal over the past few decades (Campbell, 1971; Greeley & Sheatsley, 1971; *Newsweek*, 1979, Taylor, Sheatsley, & Greeley, 1978). Other evidence, however, suggests that although the old-fashioned, "red-necked" form of bigotry is less prevalent, prejudice continues to exist in more subtle, more indirect, and less overtly negative forms (Crosby, Bromley, & Saxe, 1980; Gaertner, 1976; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1981; Katz, 1981; McConahay & Hough, 1976; Sears & Allen, 1984). The present chapter, like that of Katz, Wackenhut, and Hass (see Chapter 2), proposes that the fundamental nature of white America's current attitudes toward blacks is complex and conflicted. Consistent with this assumption, Katz and his colleagues have accumulated evidence supporting Myrdal's (1944) conclusions that the attitudes of many whites toward blacks and other minorities are neither uniformly negative nor totally favorable, but rather are ambivalent.

The aversive racism perspective assumes that given the historically racist American culture and human cognitive mechanisms for processing categorical information, racist feelings and beliefs among white Americans are generally the rule rather than the exception. We use the term *aversive racism* (also see Kovel, 1970) to describe the type of racial attitude that we believe characterizes many white Americans who possess strong egalitarian values. In contrast to aversive racism is

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the more traditional, dominative form of racism (Kovel, 1970). The *dominative racist*, who exhibits the more “red-necked” form of discrimination, is the “type who acts out bigoted beliefs—he represents the open flame of racial hatred” (Kovel, 1970, p. 54). Aversive racists, in comparison, sympathize with the victims of past injustice; support public policies that, in principle, promote racial equality and ameliorate the consequences of racism; identify more generally with a liberal political agenda; regard themselves as nonprejudiced and nondiscriminatory; but, almost unavoidably, possess negative feelings and beliefs about blacks. Because of the importance of the egalitarian value system to aversive racists’ self-concept, these negative feelings and associated beliefs are typically excluded from awareness. When a situation or event threatens to make the negative portion of their attitude salient, aversive racists are motivated to repudiate or dissociate these feelings from their self-image, and they vigorously try to avoid acting wrongly on the basis of these feelings. In these situations, aversive racists may overreact and amplify their positive behavior in ways that would reaffirm their egalitarian convictions and their apparently nonracist attitudes. In other situations, however, the underlying negative portions of their attitudes are expressed, but in subtle, rationalizable ways.

In our view, aversive racism represents a particular type of ambivalence in which the conflict is between feelings and beliefs associated with a sincerely egalitarian value system and unacknowledged negative feelings and beliefs about blacks. Although our position is very much aligned with that of Katz and his colleagues (Chapter 2), we do not assume the widespread existence of genuinely problack, favorable components of whites’ racial attitudes that are independent of egalitarian values. Sympathy without additional feelings of friendship or respect does not in our view represent a truly positive racial attitude. Nevertheless, aversive racists’ inability to acknowledge their negative racial feelings and their apparent rejection of negative racial stereotypes, together with their sympathetic feelings toward victims of injustice, convince them that their racial attitudes are largely positive, and certainly not prejudiced.

In terms of etiology, aversive racism is conceived to be an adaptation resulting from an assimilation of an egalitarian value system with (1) feelings and beliefs derived from historical and contemporary culturally racist contexts, and (2) impressions derived from human cognitive mechanisms that contribute to the development of stereotypes and prejudice (see Hamilton, 1981, and Chapter 5 of this volume). The aversive racism perspective assumes that cognitive biases in informa-

tion processing and the historically racist culture of the United States lead most white Americans to develop beliefs and feelings that result in antipathy toward blacks and other minorities. Because of traditional cultural values, however, most whites also have convictions concerning fairness, justice, and racial equality. The existence both of almost unavoidable racial biases and the desire to be egalitarian forms the basis of the ambivalence that aversive racists experience. While we believe that the prevalence of the old-fashioned red-neck form of racism may have declined since the 1930s, we also believe that it would be a mistake to assume that this old-fashioned form is no longer a significant social force in the United States. Indeed, not all racists are ambivalent.

The negative affect that aversive racists have for blacks is not hostility or hate. Instead, this negativity involves discomfort, uneasiness, disgust, and sometimes fear, which tend to motivate avoidance rather than intentionally destructive behaviors. There are a variety of different sources that we believe contribute to the negative content of the aversive racist's attitude. This negativity may be partially due to the affective connotations of blackness and whiteness per se. *White* is considered good and active, whereas *black* is considered bad and passive (Williams, 1964; Williams, Tucker, & Dunham, 1971). Differences in the physical appearance of blacks and whites may also provide bases for differential responses. From an anthropological perspective, Margaret Mead proposes that although people must "be taught to hate, the appreciation and fear of difference is everywhere," (Mead & Baldwin, 1971, p. 28). From a psychological perspective, biasing effects of mere categorization into an ingroup and an outgroup have been empirically demonstrated and are thoroughly reviewed by Brewer (1979) and more recently by Stephan (1985). People behave more positively toward ingroup than toward outgroup members (e.g., Billig & Tajfel, 1973); they also evaluate ingroup members more favorably and associate more desirable personal and physical characteristics to ingroup than to outgroup members (e.g., Doise, Csepe, Dann, Gouge, Larsen, & Ostell, 1972). Furthermore, greater belief similarity is attributed to members of the ingroup than to members of the outgroup (Stein, Hardyck, & Smith, 1965). Assumptions of belief similarity or dissimilarity can, in turn, mediate interracial attraction (Rokeach & Mezei, 1966). Also, because our society provides greater opportunity for intraracial than interracial contact, the "mere exposure effect" (Zajonc, 1968)—that familiarity promotes liking—could contribute to whites' more positive attitudes toward whites than toward blacks.

In addition, motivational factors can operate on these and other bases to promote and maintain racial biases. At the individual level, needs for self-esteem and superior status are frequently hypothesized to be among the major causes and perpetrators of prejudice and racial discrimination (Allport, 1954; Ashmore & Del Boca, 1976; Harding, Proshansky, Kutner, & Chein, 1969; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). At the societal level, economic competition that threatens to alter the traditionally subordinate status of blacks relative to whites fosters discrimination of whites against blacks (Wilson, 1980). The theory of internal colonization (Hechter, 1975), for example, proposes that the powerful majority group is motivated to ensure its advantages by initiating policies that perpetuate the existing stratification system. Given that traditional social structures have given privileges to whites, practices that threaten deprivation of that advantaged status, particularly when they involve the preferential treatment of blacks, may create negative affect even among people who in principle support ameliorative programs such as affirmative action.

The attempt to maintain a nonprejudiced self-image can, in itself, also increase disaffection for blacks because interracial interactions become characterized by anxiety or uneasiness. Rather than being relaxed and spontaneous, aversive racists may have to guard vigilantly against even an unwitting transgression that could be attributed by themselves or by others to racial antipathy. Thus interracial interactions may arouse negative affect that can become associated directly with blacks.

Social and cultural factors also contribute to aversive racists' negative feelings toward blacks. Black culture in the United States emphasizes values that are not always consistent with the tenets of white culture's Protestant ethic (see Jones & Block, 1984). Thus, belief or value dissimilarity also fosters disaffection. Furthermore, the context of socialization directly influences feelings and beliefs about racial differences. In the United States, traditional cultural stereotypes characterize blacks as lazy, ignorant, and superstitious; they portray whites, in contrast, as ambitious, intelligent, and industrious (Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969). In our culture, blacks are frequently associated with poverty, crime, illegitimacy, and welfare. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s blacks on television "had minor roles and were rarely portrayed as powerful or prestigious" (Liebert, Sprafkin, & Davidson, 1982, p. 161). Even in the 1970s, when blacks were no longer generally characterized less favorably in the media than were whites, blacks were more likely to appear on television as poor, employed in service occupations, and involved in murders and other

criminal activities (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977, 1979). These portrayals of blacks in the media and the culture more generally which associate blacks with roles and values that have negative connotations for whites may contribute to the development of negative affect toward blacks.

From a sociological perspective, the structure of society tends to perpetuate prejudice and discrimination. Specifically, the institutional racism framework proposes that, through the process of internal colonization, beliefs about relative status and power become embedded in social roles and norms (see Feagin & Feagin, 1978). These beliefs, in turn, help to maintain the social, educational, political, and economic advantages that whites have over blacks. Whites currently have advantages relative to blacks in most important aspects of American life: infant mortality, standard of living, educational achievement, socioeconomic status, and life expectancy (see Chapters 1 and 10). Thus, even if people genuinely attempt to reject the socially less desirable stereotypes and characterizations of blacks, it may be difficult for even the most well-intentioned white persons to escape the development of negative beliefs concerning blacks and to avoid feelings of superiority and relative good fortune over the fact that they are white rather than black and are culturally advantaged rather than disadvantaged (also see Ryan, 1971). These impressions, however, are not rooted in the traditional, old-fashioned bigoted belief that white superiority results from innate racial differences. Instead, these impressions of superiority, and accompanying feelings of sympathy, reflect historical and contemporary realities, which aversive racists believe result from racist traditions and practices. Nevertheless, the issue of white superiority characterizes whites' perceptions of the relationship between blacks and whites and may continue to play a role in the forces of oppression.

While we have identified many cognitive, motivational, and socio-cultural factors that can contribute to the formation and maintenance of prejudice, the list is by no means exhaustive. Many other processes (e.g., illusory correlation, polarization and schema complexity) are discussed in other chapters in the present volume and are well documented in the literature. Nevertheless, in a nation founded on the principle that "all men [sic] are created equal," there are strong forces that promote racial equality. Norms of fairness and equality have had great social, political, and moral impact on the history of the United States. The prevalence of these egalitarian norms has been clearly documented in experimental (e.g., Sigall & Page, 1971) and survey (e.g., Schuman & Harding, 1964) research. And, of course, because of

the civil rights legislation of the 1960s, it is no longer merely immoral to discriminate against blacks; it is also illegal. Thus, due to contradictory influences that operate on the levels of both the individual and the culture, most whites in the United States experience an "American dilemma" (Myrdal, 1944). This chapter, then, is about people who have developed a value system that maintains it is wrong to discriminate against a person because of his or her race, who reject the content of racial stereotypes, who attempt to dissociate negative feelings and beliefs about blacks from their self-concepts, but who nonetheless cannot entirely escape cultural and cognitive forces.

AVERSIVE RACISM: DERIVATION OF HYPOTHESES AND EMPIRICAL TESTS

Our formulation of aversive racism enables the derivation of predictions concerning when egalitarian values and negative racial attitudes will each be observable. Because aversive racists are very concerned about their egalitarian self-images, they are strongly motivated in interracial contexts to avoid acting in recognizably unfavorable or normatively inappropriate ways. Indeed, if the fear of acting inappropriately in interracial contexts is a salient concern of many whites, then racial discrimination would be most likely to occur when normative structure within the situation is weak, ambiguous, or conflicting. Under these conditions, the concepts of right and wrong are less applicable, and the more negative components of aversive racists' attitudes may be more clearly observable. Here, blacks may be treated unfavorably or in a manner that disadvantages them, yet whites can be spared the recognition that they behaved inappropriately. When the normative structure of a situation is salient, however, racial discrimination would not then be expected. That is, in situations in which norms prescribing appropriate behavior are clear and unambiguous, blacks would not be treated less favorably than would whites because wrongdoing would be obvious and would more clearly challenge the nonprejudiced self-image. Nevertheless, even when normative guidelines are clear, aversive racists may unwittingly search for ostensibly nonracial factors that could justify a negative response to blacks. These nonracial factors, and not race, are then used to rationalize unfavorable actions. Negative racial attitudes can therefore be expressed indirectly, while whites perceive themselves as nondiscriminating and nonprejudiced.

INTERRACIAL BEHAVIOR: THE INFLUENCE OF NORMATIVE STRUCTURE

Because of the conflict and ambivalence that aversive racists experience, we hypothesize that negative racial affect is expressed subtly and indirectly in interactions involving blacks. Thus racial discrimination among aversive racists may typically go unrecognized because it usually occurs in situations in which there is a lack of normative structure defining appropriate action or under circumstances that allow an unfavorable response to be rationalized by attributing its cause to some factor other than race. When norms indicating appropriate behavior are clear, and rationalization is not possible, deviations from these guidelines during interactions with blacks could readily be attributed to racial bias; here, we hypothesize that aversive racists would be unlikely to discriminate against blacks. Given the high salience of race and racially symbolic issues on questionnaires designed to measure racial prejudice, as well as aversive racists' vigilance and sensitivity to these issues, effective questionnaire measures of aversive racism, in our opinion, would be difficult if not impossible to develop. (See, however, McConahay's work on the Modern Racism Scale in Chapter 4.) Instead, our strategy for assessing the usefulness of including aversive racism within a typology of racial attitudes relies heavily on the degree of discriminatory behavior observed in specially constructed situations of varying normative structure. In some of this research, we preselected subjects from among the highest and lowest prejudice-scoring undergraduates, based on an 11-item scale, which was composed of traditional and modern racism items and correlated highly with portions of Woodmansee and Cook's (1967) inventory.¹ Because even the highest prejudice-scoring students on a uni-

¹ Respondents to the 11-item prejudice questionnaire were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement (on 5-point scales) to the following statements: (1) Busing elementary school children to schools in other parts of the city actually helps their education; (2) Negroes shouldn't push themselves where they are not wanted; (3) Most blacks on welfare could get along without it if they really tried; (4) These days it seems as though government officials pay more attention to requests from black citizens than from white citizens; (5) Manual labor and menial jobs seem to fit the Negro mentality and ability more than skilled or responsible work; (6) Generally, blacks are not overbearing and disagreeable when they are in positions of responsibility and power; (7) Innately, blacks are as intelligent as whites; (8) I consider the present social system to be fundamentally unjust to the black person; (9) A hotel owner ought to have the right to decide for himself whether he is going to rent rooms to Negro guests; (10) Even though we will all adopt racial integration sooner or later, the people of each community should be allowed to decide when they are ready for it; (11) I would probably feel somewhat self-conscious dancing with a black person in a public place. This scale correlates highly ($r = .83$) with three subscales of the Woodmansee and Cook (1967) Inventory of Verbal Racial Attitudes: (a) Ease of Interracial Contacts, (b) Derogatory Beliefs, and (c) Private Rights.

versity campus are usually not dominative racists, we did not expect to obtain main effects or interactions involving prejudice scores.

The evidence that we have accumulated in support of the aversive racism framework draws heavily from experiments addressing the willingness of whites to act prosocially toward black and white people in need of assistance. We have used prosocial behavior as a dependent measure in our work for both practical and theoretical reasons. Pragmatically, helping behavior provides an index that is sensitive to both race (e.g., Crosby et al., 1980) and attraction (see Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981). Theoretically, the Kerner Commission's investigation of the causes of civil disorders suggests that white America's responsibility for racial unrest may reside largely in its inability to recognize and understand institutional racism and in its lack of positive response to the needs of minorities. Thus, the culpability of whites may currently lie primarily in their reluctance to help those who are oppressed by institutional racism. Resistance to affirmative action, for example, may partially be attributable to an unwillingness to personally bear the costs associated with helping blacks and other historically disadvantaged minorities.

The first study, which initiated our interest in aversive racism, was a field experiment that examined the likelihood of black and white persons eliciting prosocial behavior from Liberal and Conservative Party members residing in Brooklyn, New York (Gaertner, 1973). Using a method devised earlier by Gaertner and Bickman (1971), Liberal and Conservative households received apparent wrong-number telephone calls that quickly developed into requests for assistance. The callers, who were clearly identifiable from their dialects as being black or white, explained that their car was disabled and that they were attempting to reach a service garage from a public phone along the parkway. The callers further claimed that they had no more change to make another call and asked the subject to help by calling the garage. If the subject refused to help or hung up after the caller explained that he or she had no more change, a "not helping" response was recorded. If the subject hung up prior to learning that the motorist had no more change, the response was considered to be a "premature hang-up." Based on previous findings relating political ideology to authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, and racial prejudice, the major prediction was easily and directly derived: The extent to which black callers would be helped less frequently than white callers would be greater among Conservative than among Liberal Party members.

The results, excluding consideration of premature hang-up re-

sponses, indicated that Conservatives were significantly less helpful to blacks than to whites (65% vs. 92%), whereas Liberals helped blacks and whites about equally (75% vs. 85%). In terms of helping, therefore, Liberals seemed relatively well-intentioned. Surprisingly, though, Liberals hung up prematurely more frequently on blacks than on whites (19% vs. 3%), whereas Conservatives did not discriminate in this way (8% vs. 5%). Liberals discriminated against the black male in particular in this regard. That is, Liberals hung up prematurely on black and white male callers 28% and 10% of the time, respectively.

While this study was in progress, other Liberal and Conservative Party members were interviewed about what they believed that they would do if they received a wrong-number call from a black or a white motorist. In virtually every case, participants indicated that they would help and that they would do so without regard to the person's race. These people genuinely seemed to believe that race would not influence their behavior under such circumstances. Nevertheless, the finding that Liberals did not discriminate against blacks once they recognized that help was needed but hung up prematurely more frequently on blacks than on whites suggested the importance of normative structure on the interracial behavior of liberal, well-intentioned people.

Specifically, when social responsibility norms, norms that people should help others who are in need (Berkowitz & Daniels, 1963), were made salient by the plight of the victim or by a full description of the motorist's need, Liberals did not discriminate against blacks. Failure to offer assistance to a black person once the necessity for help has been recognized would violate prescriptions for appropriate behavior and could be attributed to racial antipathy. Discrimination did occur, though, before the motorist's need became clear and when it was not inappropriate to terminate the conversation with a wrong-number caller. That is, at the point where the caller simply explained that he or she reached the wrong number, there were no guidelines for appropriate action; after explaining that the caller reached the wrong number, the question of hanging up or continuing the conversation has no prescribed answer. Because we did not have control over whether or not subjects heard the entire plea for help from the motorist or hung up prematurely, it is of course possible that there were other reasons besides normative structure that could explain the pattern of results. In subsequent research, therefore, we systematically manipulated the salience of normative guidelines.

As a further test of the role of normative structure on the interracial behavior of whites, another experiment (Frey & Gaertner, 1986) var-

ied the clarity of normative structure regarding the appropriateness of delivering assistance to black and white partners on an experimental anagram task. As suggested by the results of the Liberal–Conservative study, we expected that whites would be less helpful to blacks than to whites only in situations in which the failure to help would not violate normative guidelines. When normative guidelines indicate that the failure to help would be clearly inappropriate, it was predicted that discrimination against blacks would be unlikely to occur because not helping a black person would be less rationalizable and would more likely be attributed to bigoted intent.

Normative appropriateness for helping was varied by manipulating the causal locus (internal vs. external) of the recipient's need and the source of the request for help (recipient vs. observer). With respect to the locus of need, Schopler and Matthews (1965) suggest that someone who is dependent because of moral weakness or personal choice does not raise the salience of social responsibility norms relative to victims of unavoidable circumstances. Considering the source of the request for aid, Enzle and Harvey (1977) concluded that, because a request for help from a third party influences a potential benefactor's normative beliefs about the appropriateness of helping, more help is given when a request for assistance is issued by a disinterested third party than by the potential recipient.

In our experiment, the need of the potential recipient, who was a black or a white fellow student working on an experimental task, was either self-induced by a failure to work hard (internal cause) or due to the unusual difficulty of the assignment (external cause). Female subjects subsequently received a request for aid that originated either from the potential recipient or from a third-party observer. They then had an opportunity to help by providing the other student with Scrabble letters to complete a task and bonus points to earn a prize. The dependent measures were whether or not the subject helped, the number of letters given, the utility value of these letters, and the number of bonus points awarded. Because either the external locus of need or the third-party request for assistance could increase the salience of social responsibility norms, the aversive racism framework expected that black recipients would be helped less than whites only in the condition in which the recipient did not work hard and personally made the request for assistance.

The results supported our prediction (see Table 1). They indicated that subjects helped blacks significantly less than they helped whites only in the internal need–recipient request condition. When the locus of need was external (i.e., due to task difficulty), or the request origi-

TABLE 1 Helping Behavior toward Blacks and Whites as a Function of Locus of Need and Source of Request

	Internal locus						External locus					
	Recipient asks		Third-party asks		Third-party asks		Recipient asks		White recipient		Black recipient	
	Black recipient	White recipient	Black recipient	White recipient	Black recipient	White recipient	Black recipient	White recipient	Black recipient	White recipient	Black recipient	White recipient
Help	33%	73.3%	73.3%	60%	93.3%	100%	93%	100%	93%	66.7%	66.7%	66.7%
Number of letters	1.47	4.67	4.60	4.20	9.87	7.67	10.60	7.67	10.60	7.20	7.20	7.20
Mean utility value	1.25	3.81	3.10	3.27	9.24	7.35	9.21	7.35	9.21	6.06	6.06	6.06
Bonus credit	27.80	37.13	30.07	30.60	43.27	43.40	40.80	43.40	40.80	38.47	38.47	38.47
Appropriateness of helping	3.60	4.73	4.80	4.27	6.22	6.40	6.33	6.40	6.33	5.87	5.87	5.87

Note. From Frey & Gaertner, 1986. Copyright 1986 by the American Psychological Association. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

nated from a third party, or both, there was no significant effect of race on helping. Thus when social responsibility norms were salient, racial bias in helping did not exist. Only when the deservingness of the victim was questionable, rendering the failure to help more justifiable and rationalizable, were blacks disadvantaged relative to whites. Consistent with our framework, the normative structure of the situation played a critical role in determining the prosocial behavior of whites toward blacks.

In another experiment, we examined interracial help-seeking rather than help-giving (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1983a). Help-seeking is of particular interest because obtaining help involves acknowledging the relative superiority of the potential donor (Wills, 1983). Given the traditional role relationship in which blacks have been subordinate to and dependent on whites, it was assumed that whites would experience discomfort at the possibility of being subordinated to a black person (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1981) and, therefore, they would be motivated to avoid reversals of the traditional status relationship. If, however, the avoidance of subordinate status and dependency involves violating normative guidelines, we hypothesized that whites would be forced to accept such a reversal so as to avoid acting inappropriately.

In this study, high- or low-prejudice-scoring white males were presented with one of two situations in which they could continue to work alone on a task described as involving abstract cognitive ability or they could obtain aid from a black or white partner whom they knew was available to help. In one condition, the partner volunteered assistance and the subject had to choose whether to *accept* or *refuse* the unsolicited offer. Our assumption that refusing assistance that is spontaneously offered would be regarded as normatively inappropriate was supported in two separate pilot surveys of student opinion. Therefore, in this condition we expected generally that subjects would accept spontaneously offered assistance at least as frequently from a black partner as from a white partner. In the other situation, subjects were aware that the partner was available to help, but they had to decide whether or not to *ask* for assistance. Our surveys indicated that the appropriateness of soliciting aid in this situation is unclear. Thus, here we predicted that subjects would *solicit* help less frequently from a black partner than from a white partner, given that the reversal of the traditional role relationship with blacks could be avoided without clearly violating normative guidelines.

The obtained interaction between race of the partner and the type of offer supported our hypotheses. Regardless of the prejudice score of

the subject, white college students who received the spontaneous offer of assistance accepted help more often from a black partner than from a white partner (80% vs. 55%). In the conditions in which assistance had to be actively solicited, however, subjects asked for help less frequently from black than from white partners (40% vs. 60%)—even though they reported that blacks were equally capable and equally willing to help as were whites. Thus, whites avoided subordinate status and dependency with blacks, but only when they could avoid the relationship without violating normative guidelines.

In summary, the results of these experiments involving diverse experimental manipulations provide consistent support for a basic proposition of the aversive racism framework. When norms for appropriate behavior are well-defined, white subjects do not discriminate against blacks; when norms are ambiguous or conflicting, rendering the concepts of right and wrong less applicable, both low- and high-prejudice-scoring subjects exhibit racial bias. It is possible, however, that even when normative guidelines are clear, other nonracial factors lead even well-intentioned people to discriminate against blacks. In the following section, we consider this implication of the aversive racism perspective.

INTERRACIAL BEHAVIOR: THE SALIENCE OF NONRACIAL FACTORS

Another proposition of the aversive racist perspective is that even when normative guidelines are relatively clear, aversive racists are sensitive to nonracial factors that can justify, rationalize, or legitimize behavior that more generally disadvantages blacks relative to whites. In particular, we propose an indirect attitudinal process that operates differentially as a function of another person's race to enhance the salience and potency of *non-race-related* elements in a situation that would justify or rationalize a negative response even if a white person were involved (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1977).

Because of the increased salience of these nonracial factors in interracial situations, whites may discriminate against blacks and still perceive themselves as being nonprejudiced and egalitarian: They can attribute the reasons for their behavior to factors other than race. For example, children have been bused for a variety of reasons to public and private schools for many years without substantial vocal opposition from parents. When busing became a tool to implement desegregation, however, there was strong opposition. This protest often was not about desegregation per se but about the nonracial element—

busing. Thus, people may discriminate against blacks while maintaining a nondiscriminating self-concept.

To examine the proposed indirect attitudinal process, we conducted a study (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1981) that examined factors that potentially contribute to resistance to affirmative action. Even though whites may try to avoid circumstances in which they are subordinate to or dependent on minorities (as in our previously described study), affirmative action increases the likelihood that whites will be involved in situations in which they are subordinate to black supervisors or in which whites may perceive that they are disadvantaged relative to black candidates for hiring, advanced training, or promotion. Although recent protests by whites regarding affirmative action seem to express mainly the concern that *qualified* whites will be disadvantaged relative to *less qualified* blacks (Regents of the University of California *v.* Bakke, 1978), it is possible that the reversal of the traditional role relationship, in which whites occupied positions of superior status, represents the primary threat to whites. Here, beliefs about the superior status of whites may continue to play a role in the forces of oppression. The purpose of this study was to investigate the possibility that the generally articulated issue of relative competence is a rationalization in which a nonracial factor, competence, is used by whites to object to affirmative action programs that increase the likelihood that they will be subordinated to blacks. Specifically, the experiment investigated the manner in which racial attitudes affect the prosocial orientation of whites as they enter supervisory and subordinate role relationships with blacks and whites of high and low ability.

High- and low-prejudice-scoring male college students were introduced to a black or white male confederate who was presented as either the subject's supervisor or subordinate. In addition, the confederate was described as being either higher or lower than the subject in an intellectual ability that was relevant to their dyad's task. After these manipulations of status and ability, but before the experimental task began, the confederate accidentally knocked a container of pencils to the floor. This situation provided the subject with an opportunity to offer assistance which was not absolutely necessary but which could connote affiliative and friendly feelings. If it is relative ability and not a reversal of the traditional status relationship that underlies resistance to affirmative action, then subjects would be expected to be more helpful to higher- than to lower-ability black supervisors. If, however, subordinate status is the major factor, then whites would be expected to respond in a less helpful manner toward black supervisors than toward black subordinates, regardless of ability.

The results indicate that relative status, rather than relative ability, was the primary determinant of both high- and low-prejudice-scoring subjects' helping behavior toward blacks. A Race \times Role interaction was obtained: Black supervisors were helped less than black subordinates (58% vs. 83%), whereas white supervisors were helped somewhat more than white subordinates (54% vs. 41%). Relative ability, in contrast, did not affect prosocial behavior toward blacks. Regardless of status, high- and low-ability blacks were helped equally often (70% each); whereas high-ability white partners were helped more frequently than were low-ability white partners (67% vs. 29%). Thus, ability, not status, was instrumental in determining helping toward whites, but status, not ability, was the major factor influencing prosocial behavior toward blacks. Given that there were no significant effects involving subjects' degree of prejudice, it seems that even well-intentioned whites will respond relatively negatively to a black supervisor compared to a black subordinate, *regardless* of apparent qualifications.

How could people in this experiment rationalize responding negatively to a competent black supervisor? Subjects' postexperimental evaluations of their partners revealed that their behaviors may have been mediated by perceptions of *relative* intelligence (competence). Specifically, although subjects' ratings indicated that they accepted high-ability white partners as being somewhat more intelligent than themselves, the ratings revealed that they described even high-ability black partners as significantly less intelligent than themselves. It therefore appears that although whites may accept that a black person is intelligent on an absolute dimension, they are reluctant or unable to recognize that a black person is higher or equal in intelligence compared to themselves. If subjects believed that black partners were relatively less intelligent than themselves, irrespective of their introduced ability, it is not surprising that their prosocial behavior was not affected by the competence of black partners. Furthermore, if whites misperceive the competence of blacks relative to their own ability, then resistance to being subordinated to blacks may appear quite legitimate to the protestors. Insufficient competence, not race, becomes the apparent rationale for resisting the reversal of the traditional role relationship. Similarly, deficiencies in prerequisite qualifications (relative to one's own), not racial antipathy, become the dominant articulated theme for protesting special admissions policies for minorities. Thus, although racist traditions may have initially produced social inequities, many whites, truly believing that they are nonprejudiced and nondiscriminating, may presently be participating in the contin-

ued restriction of opportunities for blacks and other minorities by opposing programs that threaten their own advantaged status and by misperceiving the relative competence of those who have traditionally occupied lower-status positions. Although not the specific focus of this chapter, this last experiment was replicated (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1983b) using gender rather than race as a social category with traditionally demarcated role relationships. An identical pattern of results was obtained in response to women as was obtained in response to blacks.

In another experiment, we investigated the influence of the hypothesized indirect attitudinal process in a situation in which an individual's decision to help or not to help could have significant, immediate consequences for a person in need of emergency assistance. In this experiment (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1977), high- and low-prejudice-scoring college women heard an unambiguous emergency involving a black or a white female victim. Subjects were led to believe that they were participating in an extrasensory perception (ESP) experiment in which they would try to receive telepathic messages from a sender who was located in a cubicle across the hallway and whom they could hear through an intercom system. Ostensibly to determine the relationship between physiological reactions and ESP receptivity, subjects were wired with biotelemetry equipment that monitored their heart rates. The race of the sender, who would later become the victim of the emergency, was manipulated by her dialect and also by the picture on her ID card, which was exchanged with the subject at the beginning of the study. Half of the participants in the experiment were informed that they would be the only receiver, whereas the others were told that there were two other receivers, each located in a separate cubicle across the hallway from the sender. Additional ID cards indicated that the other receivers (who were not actually present) were white and female. After several trials of the ESP task passed uneventfully, the sender interrupted the procedure and explained that a stack of chairs piled up to the ceiling of her cubicle looked as if they were about to fall. In a few moments the emergency occurred. The sound of chairs crashing to the floor was accompanied by the victim's screams: "They're falling on me!"

The presence of other bystanders was introduced in this study to provide a non-race-related factor that could allow a bystander to justify or rationalize a failure to intervene. In Darley and Latané's (1968) classic experiment, it was discovered that the mere belief that other bystanders are capable of helping affects the likelihood that a bystander will intervene. When a person is alone, all of the responsibil-

ity for helping is focused on this one bystander. Under these conditions, the probability of this bystander intervening is quite high. As the number of bystanders is increased, though, each bystander becomes more likely to believe that one of the other bystanders will intervene or already has intervened, and each bystander's share of the responsibility for helping is decreased. Consequently, the likelihood that each person will intervene is reduced.

We predicted that the belief that other bystanders are present would have a greater inhibiting effect on the subject's response when the emergency involved a black victim than when it involved a white victim. Failure to help a black person in this situation could be justified or rationalized by the belief that the victim is being helped by someone else. Bystanders believing themselves to be the sole witness, however, were not expected to discriminate against black victims relative to white victims because any search for non-race-related factors to rationalize a failure to intervene would not be as successful as when subjects believed that other people were available to help. When alone, the failure to help a black victim could be more readily attributed to bigoted intent. Even relatively high-prejudice-scoring college students were expected to help without regard for the victim's race when they were the sole bystander. Although many of these relatively high-prejudice-scoring people (compared to other college students) may have awareness of their negative racial feelings, we believe that they would not regard themselves as particularly bigoted, and certainly not bigoted enough to be unresponsive to an emergency solely because of the victim's race.

As predicted, the results revealed a significant interaction involving the victim's race and whether or not bystanders thought that other people were available to intervene. Bystanders who thought that they were the only witness helped black victims somewhat more often than they helped white victims (94% vs. 81%). Subjects aware of the presence of other bystanders, however, helped black victims much less frequently than they helped white victims (38% vs. 75%). No main effects or interactions involving subjects' prejudice scores were obtained. Thus, the opportunity to diffuse responsibility for intervening, an apparently nonracial factor, had greater salience and potency among both low- and high-prejudice-scoring subjects when the victim was black than when she was white.

An added feature of this experiment was the monitoring of subjects' heart rates (using biotelemetry equipment) before and just after the emergency occurred. Paralleling the helping behavior findings, subjects who believed that they were the only witness to the emergency

showed slightly more heartrate escalation when the accident occurred to a black victim than when it occurred to a white victim (Means = +14.52 vs. +11.39 beats per minute). Bystanders who believed that they were alone appeared equally concerned, both behaviorally and psychophysiologicaly, about the black and white victims. Subjects who thought that other bystanders were capable of intervening, however, showed lower levels of arousal with black than with white victims (Means = +2.40 vs. +10.84 beats per minute). These subjects thus showed much less evidence of personal concern, in terms of both physiological response and helping behavior, for black victims than for white victims.

As predicted, the results of this experiment indicated that the presence of other bystanders—a nonracial element in an emergency involving a black or white victim—differentially influenced the reactions of both low- and high-prejudice-scoring subjects. This pattern of results supports the hypothesis that when a racially biased response can be rationalized or attributed to factors other than race even well-intentioned people will discriminate, probably unintentionally, against blacks in a situation of deep consequence to the victim. Yet, the subtlety by which motivational factors alter the cognitive and emotional experience of the situation permits the continued maintenance of a nondiscriminating image among these people.

In other research on emergency helping behavior, we found that the face-to-face presence of other bystanders (actually confederates) who uniformly remained inactive and did not intervene had a greater inhibiting effect on white bystanders when the victim was black than when the victim was white (Gaertner, 1975; Gaertner, Dovidio, & Johnson, 1982). Bystanders who believed that they were the only witness, however, again helped black victims somewhat more frequently than white victims. We hypothesize that subjects who were with the inactive bystanders were concerned about deviate status in the group. This normative pressure not to intervene had greater salience and potency when the victim was black than when the victim was white.

It is possible that bystanders' differential responsiveness to the race of the victim represents a prowhite rather than an antiblack bias. That is, favorable feelings toward a person of one's own race may motivate a person to resist forces to diffuse responsibility or to conform to the uniform behavior of a group. On the basis of a review of research in the minimal intergroup situation, Brewer (1979) concludes that intergroup bias, which may provide a general foundation for interracial bias to develop, often reflects a pro-ingroup rather than an anti-out-

group orientation. Some additional research addressed this issue of separate ingroup and outgroup biases.

An experiment by Faranda and Gaertner (1979) investigated the extent to which high- and low-authoritarian-scoring white college students playing the role of jurors would follow a judge's instruction to ignore inadmissible prosecution testimony that was damaging to a black or white defendant. Participants in this study were presented with a court transcript of a fictitious criminal case in which the defendant was accused of murdering a storekeeper and the storekeeper's grandchild while committing a robbery. Subjects receiving a description of the trial in one condition were presented with the prosecution's evidence, which pilot research had indicated was weak. Subjects in a second condition were presented with the same weak prosecution case plus an extremely damaging statement introduced by the prosecution that indicated that the defendant confessed about the crimes to a third party. The defense attorney objected to this statement as hearsay because the prosecution was not able to produce the third party in court. Sustaining the motion by the defense, the judge instructed the jurors to ignore this inadmissible evidence.

Both high- and low-authoritarian subjects discriminated against black defendants relative to white defendants in their handling of the inadmissible testimony, but they did so in different ways. In their ratings of certainty of guilt (see Figure 1), high authoritarian subjects did not ignore the inadmissible testimony when the victim was black. As indicated in Figure 1, they were more certain of the black defendant's guilt when they were exposed to the inadmissible evidence than when they were not presented with this testimony. For the white defendant, however, high authoritarian subjects followed the judge's instructions perfectly: Ratings of the certainty of the white defendant's guilt were equal across the two conditions. High authoritarian subjects thus showed an anti-outgroup bias. Low authoritarian subjects, in contrast, followed the judge's instructions about ignoring the inadmissible testimony when the victim was black. They were equally uncertain of his guilt in both conditions. Low authoritarians, however, were biased *in favor* of white defendants when inadmissible evidence was presented. That is, low authoritarian subjects were less certain of the white defendant's guilt when the inadmissible evidence was presented than when it was omitted. These subjects later reported that they were angry with the prosecution for trying unfairly to introduce this hearsay testimony. They did not express this anger, however, when the defendant was black. Thus, low authoritarian subjects demonstrated a pro-ingroup bias. It is important to note that both

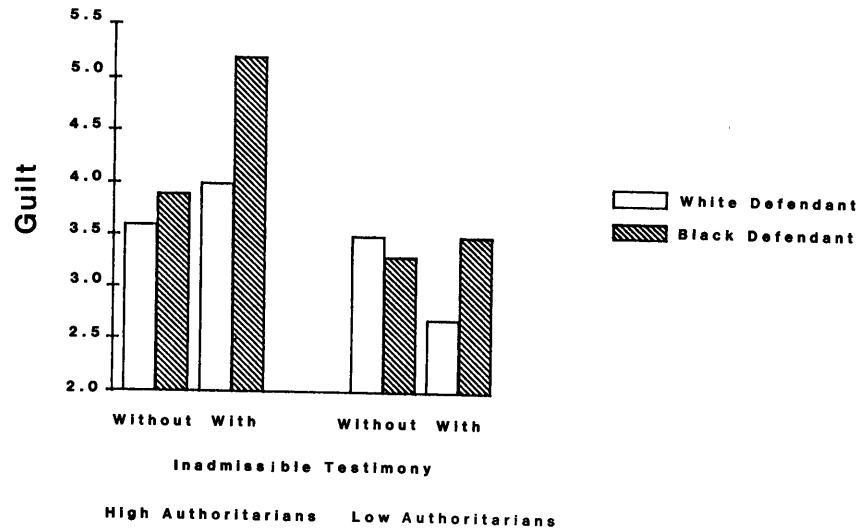


FIGURE 1. The effects of incriminating inadmissible evidence on high- and low-authoritarian subjects' ratings of the guilt of black and white defendants.

the anti-outgroup bias of high authoritarian subjects and the pro-in-group orientation of low authoritarians disadvantage blacks relative to whites. The question we examine in the next section is how the relative bias is reflected in expressions of racial attitudes.

BELIEF SYSTEMS WITHIN CONTEMPORARY RACIAL ATTITUDES: ATTRIBUTIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

The implication of aversive racism for contemporary racial attitudes is rather straightforward. We hypothesize that because most whites want to see themselves as fair, just, and egalitarian, they will not directly express their prejudice against blacks. Expressing negative attitudes or endorsing overtly prejudiced statements would obviously challenge a person's egalitarian self-image. Thus, we propose that prejudice and stereotyped belief systems, like discrimination, still exist but that the contemporary forms are more subtle and less overtly negative than their more traditional ancestors.

On the basis of our assumptions about the type of ambivalence that aversive racists experience, we have conducted several experiments to determine the content of contemporary stereotypes among college students. In contrast to previous research (e.g., Woodmansee & Cook,

1967) that directly assessed attitudes toward blacks and assumed a favorable–unfavorable continuum of feelings, we have attempted to measure independently both negative *and* positive beliefs and feelings about blacks *relative* to whites.

With the assumption that a stereotype is a collection of associations that link a target group to a set of descriptive characteristics, Gaertner and McLaughlin (1983, Studies 1 and 2) engaged high- and low-prejudice-scoring white subjects in a task patterned after Meyer and Schvaneveldt's (1971, 1976) lexical decision procedure. This procedure yields a measure of associative strength between two words, based on the time that it takes subjects to decide if two strings of letters are both words. Meyer and Schvaneveldt (1971, 1976) report that highly associated word pairs (e.g., Doctor–Nurse) produce faster reaction times than do unassociated word pairs (e.g., Doctor–Butter).

In our research, the words “blacks” and “whites” were paired with negative (lazy, stupid, welfare) and positive (ambitious, smart, clean) words. It was hypothesized that if white people's characterizations of whites are more positive than are their characterizations of blacks, then subjects would be expected to make more rapid decisions about positive characteristics when they are paired with *whites* than when they are paired with *blacks*. Furthermore, if contemporary stereotypes are actually antiblack, then *blacks* paired with negative attributes would yield faster reaction times than would *whites* paired with these same words. This lexical decision task offers a less reactive approach than do adjective checklists to the study of stereotyping. Subjects are not directly asked to endorse the appropriateness of a specific word-pair combination, but only to indicate whether or not members of the pair are both words.

The results, which are shown in Figure 2, demonstrate the predicted interaction between the evaluative nature of the stereotype-related word and the racial category word. White subjects responded reliably faster when positive traits were paired with *whites* than when they were paired with *blacks*. Both high- and low-prejudice-scoring subjects, however, responded as quickly to *whites* paired with negative attributes as to *blacks* paired with negative attributes. A second experiment that substituted the word *negroes* for *blacks* replicated this pattern of results. These findings, then, are quite consistent with the results of our rating scale studies (discussed later). Specifically, the data indicate that white college students, irrespective of prejudice score, differentially associate positive, but not negative, stereotypic characteristics to whites and blacks.

Another reaction time experiment (Dovidio, Evans, & Tyler, 1984)

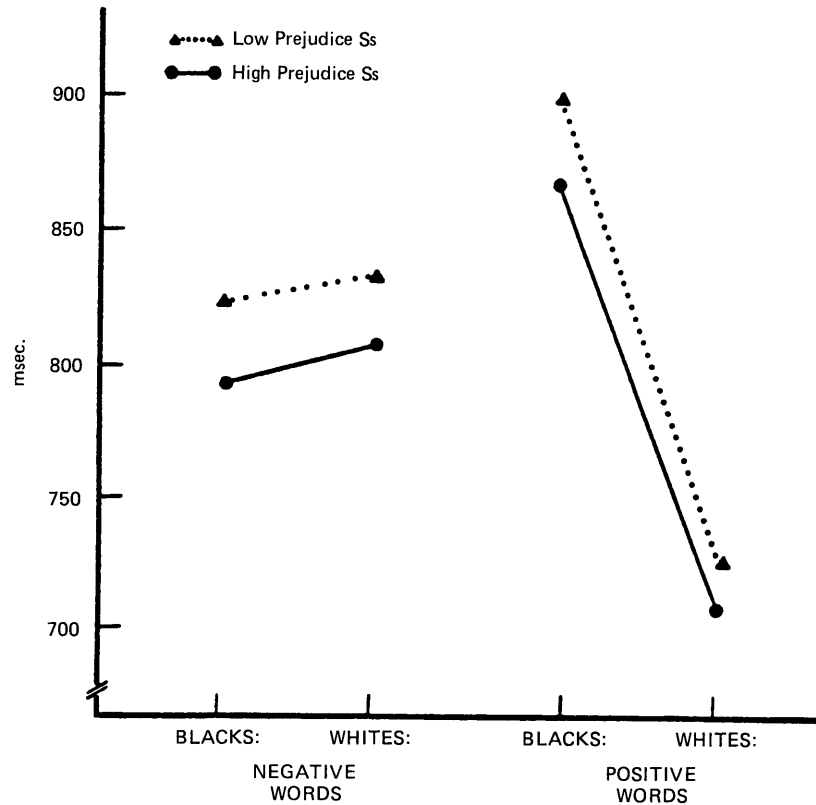


FIGURE 2. Reaction times to positive and negative words paired with "blacks" and "whites." (From Gaertner & McLaughlin, 1983.)

was conducted to broaden our sample of evaluative words and subject populations and to provide a conceptual replication of our previous work. Specifically, we used words that have been demonstrated to be evaluatively positive or negative (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1981, 1983a), but which are not part of traditional racial stereotypes. In this study, we used a modification of Rosch's (1975a, b) priming technique. In Rosch's method, a cue, or "prime" (e.g., fruit), is presented and provides some information about an upcoming test stimulus (e.g., orange, apricot). Rosch's (1975a, b) results indicate that reaction times to typical instances (e.g., orange, apricot) are significantly facilitated after the category name prime, whereas decisions about atypical instances (e.g., date, prune) are facilitated much less.

In this study, the racial categories black and white were presented

as primes, and positive and negative evaluative words were presented as test stimuli. The positive traits were good, responsible, trustworthy, kind, and important; the negative traits were bad, irresponsible, untrustworthy, cruel, and unimportant. Subjects were asked to indicate (by pressing a response key) whether the test word characteristic could “ever be true” of the prime category or was “always false.” Despite the differences in stimuli and procedure from those used in our previous reaction time experiment, the results were remarkably similar. In particular, a Prime Type \times Trait Type interaction was obtained: Subjects responded more quickly to positive evaluative traits following a prime of *white* than following a prime of *black* ($M_s = 767$ vs. 908 msec), but for negative traits there was no significant difference ($M_s = 891$ vs. 885 msec). Thus, racial category labels influence information processing in systematic ways.

Our reaction-time experiments provide consistent evidence across two different experimental procedures, subject populations, and sets of characteristics that contemporary stereotypes involve differential association of positively valued characteristics to whites but not negatively valued traits to blacks. How does this pattern translate into expressed racial attitudes? We performed additional self-report studies that addressed this question.

One of our rating scale experiments (Gaertner & McLaughlin, 1983, Study 3) provided separate groups of white subjects with six-point semantic differential-type rating scales in which either two positive (e.g., Smart–Not Stupid) or two negative (e.g., Unambitious–Lazy) traditionally stereotypic items were presented as anchors. Each of the negative scales represented a negative-to-less-negative dimension, and each of the positive scales reflected a positive-to-less-positive dimension. Using either the positive or the negative rating scales, subjects were asked to complete the phrase, “Blacks relative to whites are _____.” Then subjects, using the same scales, were asked to complete the phrase, “Whites relative to blacks are _____.” It was expected that if negative attributes are not differentially ascribed to blacks and whites, then ratings on the scales with negative traits as anchors would be quite similar when subjects responded to “blacks relative to whites” as when they responded to “whites relative to blacks.” Furthermore, if positive traits are differentially ascribed to the racial groups, then the ratings of “whites relative to blacks” should be closer to the more positive end of the scale than with the ratings of “blacks relative to whites.” This pattern is precisely what occurred. Blacks were not evaluated as more lazy, stupid, or dirty than were whites on the negative trait scales. Whites, how-

ever, were regarded as more ambitious, smart, and clean relative to blacks on the positive trait scales.

In a subsequent study (Dovidio, 1984), we broadened our sample of evaluative words. We used the words from our priming experiment that were evaluatively positive or negative, but which were not associated with traditional cultural stereotypes. Subjects were asked to indicate on seven-point scales how well each characteristic describes the typical black (or white) person. Consistent with our previous research, there was no significant difference as a function of race for the mean negative ratings, but there was a significant effect for the mean positive responses. Although the typical black person was not rated more negatively than the typical white person ($M_s = 3.30$ vs. 3.28), the typical white person was rated more positively than the typical black person ($M_s = 4.48$ vs. 4.23).

The results of our two rating-scale studies and our two reaction-time experiments converge on similar conclusions. White college students, at least those from primarily northern populations, do not readily express antiblack sentiments and do not appear to have strong antiblack associations. They do, however, exhibit a racially based ingroup bias. Our subjects consistently rated whites more favorably than blacks, and they had stronger positive associations with whites than with blacks. Thus, even though our subject samples appear to be quite liberal and egalitarian on traditional prejudice scales (Dovidio, Tannenbaum, & Ellyson, 1984), racial bias is still evident in their responses. Consistent with our assumptions about racism among well-intentioned people, prejudice is expressed indirectly and in a way that is not recognizably antiblack.

DISCUSSION

In general, the results of several different types of experiments conducted since 1970 have produced consistent support for our aversive racism framework. Specifically, the behavioral findings (presented in the first two subsections) and the findings concerning subjects' associations and beliefs (presented in the third subsection) yield similar conclusions: Prejudiced thinking and discrimination still exist, but the contemporary forms are more subtle, more indirect, and less overtly negative than are more traditional forms. Furthermore, the contemporary form of prejudice is expressed in ways that protect and perpetuate a nonprejudiced, nondiscriminating self-image.

In terms of interracial behavior, the presence or absence of norms

governing appropriate behavior is a critical factor mediating the expression of prejudice. When norms are clear, bias is unlikely to occur; when norms are ambiguous or conflicting, discrimination is often exhibited. Regarding the expression of racial attitudes and stereotypes, people do not appear to associate negative traits more strongly with blacks than with whites, an act that would likely appear bigoted. Whites do, however, consistently ascribe more positive characteristics to whites than to blacks. In addition, even when norms are clear, whites continue to be more sensitive to ostensibly nonracial factors that could permit them to rationalize a negative response toward blacks. Specifically, we propose that in situations involving blacks, an indirect attitudinal process operates to increase the salience and potency of factors that can substitute for the issue of race in justifying negative behavior. These nonracial factors may be related to characteristics of the situation (e.g., the presence of other bystanders who could share responsibility for helping) or may refer to personal or cultural values (e.g., perceptions of equity or justice). We do not mean, however, that contemporary white Americans are hypocritical; rather, they are victims of cultural forces and cognitive processes that continue to promote prejudice and racism.

We believe that aversive racism, although it represents a subtle form of racism, is a particularly insidious type. One reason that old-fashioned racism has shown a significant decline in recent years may be that, because it is direct and obvious, it may be susceptible to conventional techniques of attitude change and to social and legal pressures. It is unlikely, however, that aversive racism can be alleviated by such direct methods. Attempts to educate people to accept egalitarian ideals would have little impact on aversive racists; aversive racists already believe that they are egalitarian, nonprejudiced, and nondiscriminating. In fact, whenever aversive racists consciously monitor their behavior in interracial situations, they react in ways that consistently reinforce their egalitarian self-images. Techniques directed at revealing the negative components of aversive racists' attitudes would probably only produce reverse discrimination (Dutton & Lake, 1973) or a token reaction (Dutton & Lennox, 1974) that would permit aversive racists to deny their antiblack feelings. Introducing clear, salient norms into interracial situations would be an effective way of controlling discrimination, but it would probably not have long-term, generalizable consequences. Because of the salient external justification for their actions, aversive racists would not necessarily internalize the principles involved in their interracial behavior. Thus, like a virus that mutates into new forms, old-fashioned preju-

dice seems to have evolved into a new type that is, at least temporarily, resistant to traditional attitude-change remedies that emphasize the evils of prejudice as a means of eliminating racism.

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