

The Aversive Racism Paradigm and Responses Favoring African Americans: Meta-Analytic Evidence of Two Types of Favoritism¹

Christopher L. Aberson^{2,4} and Tara E. Ettl³

This research examined conditions promoting favoritism for White targets and conditions promoting favoritism for African American (AA) targets. We extended research on the aversive racism paradigm through examination of reactions to AAs and Whites when normative behaviors or expressions of attitude clearly favored egalitarian responses and when evaluative criteria were ambiguous. We conducted a meta-analysis of 31 studies including more than 5000 participants. When norms were ambiguous, AA targets received worse treatment than Whites, supporting the presence of aversive racism. AA targets were treated even more positively than Whites when norms clearly favored positive reactions to all targets. We discuss results in terms of the aversive bias perspective, motivations to appear nonprejudiced, the flexible correction model, self-categorization theory, and shifting standards.

KEY WORDS: meta-analysis; prejudice; African American-favoring responses; aversive racism.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we examine when reactions to Whites are more favorable than reactions to African Americans (AAs) and, conversely, when reactions to AAs are more favorable than reactions to Whites. Following theory and research on aversive racism (Gaertner and Dovidio, 1986), we compare situations in which evaluative and behavioral criteria are either relatively clear or ambiguous. The

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²Department of Psychology, Humboldt State University, Arcata, California.

³Department of Psychology, Western Washington University.

⁴All correspondence should be addressed to Christopher L. Aberson, Department of Psychology, Humboldt State University, Arcata, California 95521; e-mail: CLA18@humboldt.edu.

primary predictions of this research are that (a) when evaluative criteria are ambiguous Whites will receive more favorable reactions than will AAs, and (b) when criteria clearly favor egalitarian responses, reactions to AAs will be more positive than reactions to Whites.

Aversive Racism

One theoretical perspective relevant to reactions to AAs and normative influences on these responses is the aversive racism paradigm. The aversive racism paradigm posits that normative factors guide reactions to African Americans (Dovidio and Gaertner, 1991; Gaertner and Dovidio, 1981, 1986). According to this perspective, individuals in the United States are influenced by both egalitarian norms and deeply ingrained biases against African Americans. Egalitarian norms promote equal evaluation and treatment but deeply seeded biases often lead to negative evaluation and treatment. The aversive racism paradigm predicts that Whites treat African American targets poorly only when it is unclear what type of evaluation or behavior is normative.

The aversive racism perspective distinguishes between clearly egalitarian and ambiguous contexts, a classification used throughout this paper. A clearly egalitarian context is one wherein norms promote egalitarian action or evaluation. For example, when evaluating a highly qualified African American job candidate, egalitarian evaluation is normative. Egalitarian norms suggest that African American candidates should receive evaluations identical to White applicants with the same qualifications. If a candidate were both highly qualified and AA, rating the candidate poorly suggests that race negatively affected evaluation since qualifications do not justify poor evaluation. The evaluator, by countering normative expectations, might be viewed as biased against African Americans.

Ambiguous situations are those in which it is unclear what sort of behavior or evaluation is normative. Reactions under conditions of ambiguity are more likely than clear contexts to produce prejudiced reactions (Dovidio and Gaertner, 1991; Gaertner and Dovidio, 1981, 1986). For example, when evaluating applicants for employment, if it were unclear whether an applicant was qualified or not (i.e., ambiguous qualifications), rating an African American target poorly is attributable to nonracial factors (e.g., "s/he is not qualified"). Aversive racists endorse egalitarian values and deny that they possess negative attitudes toward African Americans. As such, they will not discriminate openly (i.e., when norms clearly prescribe against bias). However, due to persistent negative feelings they may discriminate, albeit unintentionally, when discrimination is justifiable based on factors other than race (Dovidio *et al.*, 2002).

Evidence for aversive racism comes from studies examining helping behaviors (Gaertner, 1975; Gaertner and Dovidio, 1977; Frey and Gaertner, 1986), evaluations of job applicants (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000), reactions to affirmative

action (Murrell *et al.*, 1994), health care allocations (Murphy-Berman *et al.*, 1998), and child-welfare decisions (Castrignano Galante, 1999). These studies indicate that when evaluative contexts promote positive assessment or action, biases against African American targets are less likely to occur than when expectations regarding evaluations or actions are ambiguous.

African American-Favoring Responses

When norms are clear, the aversive racism paradigm suggests that Whites may respond more favorably to African American targets than to White targets. According to Gaertner and Dovidio “[i]n situations containing normative directives . . . , aversive racists would not intentionally behave inappropriately with regard to minorities. In fact, in these situations they may bend over backwards, responding even more favorably to Blacks than to whites, given the additional threat to their egalitarianism” (1981, p. 209). Although it has been proposed in theory, African American-favoring responses have not been directly addressed in much of the empirical work on aversive racism, because most of this work has focused on the expression of bias in ambiguous situations.

One study examined AA-favoring biases by asking White participants to evaluate poorly constructed essays ostensibly written by an African American or White fellow student. Feedback on essays was less critical (i.e., more positive) when evaluating African American student’s essays (Harber, 1998). This result suggests that there are situations where African American targets may receive more positive evaluations than Whites. However, these findings reflect evaluation under conditions wherein negative evaluation is normative, and our interest is in situations in which positive evaluations are the norm.

Several studies examined African American-favoring effects under conditions in which egalitarian evaluation is normative, albeit not as a primary focus of the research. Studies from the aversive bias paradigm generally include evaluations of African American and White targets in situations that clearly prescribe favorable and egalitarian evaluations to allow for comparisons with conditions under which evaluation criteria are ambiguous. Results from two studies described below demonstrate that African American targets received worse evaluations than Whites when evaluative criteria were ambiguous, but that African American targets received evaluations that were more positive when egalitarian evaluations were expected.

A study examining health-care allocation decisions asked participants to rate White and African-American patients on a series of measures regarding allocations and resentment (Murphy-Berman *et al.*, 1998). The study portrayed patients applying for medical assistance as either employed or unemployed. For employed targets, evaluative criteria were clear in that there was no negative information to justify poor ratings. Here, it would be normative to evaluate White and African

American patients equally. For unemployed targets, participants have a justification for negative reactions. The authors interpreted unemployment as an ambiguous condition as allocations under the medical assistance plan were expected to go to more needy applicants and being unemployed is an indication of need. However, unemployment is a negative characteristic. Unemployed White patients received more favorable ratings than unemployed African American patients, a result the authors interpreted as evidence of aversive racism. In the employed condition, however, African American patients received more favorable ratings than White patients. In this condition, egalitarian evaluations are normative but African American patients received ratings that were more positive.

Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) found that White job applicants received better ratings than African American applicants did when job qualifications were ambiguous (i.e., not clear if the applicant was qualified or not). However, when candidates were clearly qualified for the position, African American candidates received slightly, albeit not significantly, higher ratings than Whites. Of course, a nonsignificant trend does not provide evidence for a clear effect of favoritism. However, consistent trends over a series of studies can provide evidence for the presence of effects when examined through meta-analysis.

Other studies examining evaluations under clearly positive conditions, however, demonstrated non-significant White-favoring responses (e.g., Gaertner and Dovidio, 1977) or equal treatment of both groups (e.g., Gaertner, 1975). The inconsistent nature of these effects makes narrative evaluation difficult. It is difficult to determine whether AA-favoring responses exist simply based on a cursory review of the literature. This difficulty is often addressed through meta-analysis, our methodological strategy for this paper.

Theoretical Perspectives Suggesting African American-Favoring Responses

Whereas the aversive racism perspective primarily focuses on reactions under ambiguous situations that lead to discrimination against African Americans, research from this perspective gives less attention to AA-favoring responses. However, the propositions contained in the aversive racism paradigm regarding AA-favoring responses are consistent with several other theoretical perspectives. In this section, we discuss perspectives on inhibiting prejudice, flexible corrections, self-categorization, and shifting standards and discuss how each predicts AA-favoring responses.

Inhibiting Prejudice

The aversive racism perspective assumes that egalitarian pressures reduce the expression of prejudice. Another line of research gauges perceptions of these

pressures through examination of motivations for responding without prejudice. Dunton and Fazio (1997) developed a measure of motivations to inhibit prejudicial responses. The scale measures desires to constrain prejudice and appear unbiased. Similarly, Plant and Devine (1998) developed scales to measure internal and external motivations to respond without prejudice. Internal items include "Being nonprejudiced toward Black people is important to my self-concept." External items include "I try to hide negative thoughts about Black people in order to avoid negative reactions from others."

One study examined the role of these motivations in predicting hiring decisions (Plant and Devine, 2001). In this study, participants responded to a hiring scenario wherein a supervisor encouraged them to hire an African American applicant, a process similar to the egalitarian evaluative conditions discussed in this paper. Participants with stronger external motivations to control prejudice indicated a greater, albeit not significantly greater, likelihood to hire the AA applicant. Similarly, participants with stronger motivations to control prejudice evaluated AA targets more favorably than White targets, but only if the participant possessed negative automatic attitudes (Olson and Fazio, in press).

This research dovetails with work conducted within the aversive bias paradigm. The responses of individuals higher in external motivations to control prejudice potentially explain the presence of African American-favoring responses. It may be the case that when normative guidelines are clear, external motivations to control prejudice and/or desires to appear nonbiased produce favorable reactions to African American targets. We suggest that when norms are clear and favor positive responses, these motivations not only inhibit prejudice but also result in evaluations or actions that are more generous.

Flexible Corrections

The flexible correction model states that perceivers are often aware of the potential to make biased responses and attempt to correct responses to remove or even out these biases (Wegener and Petty, 1995). This perspective may explain why attempts to produce egalitarian evaluations result in minority-favoring responses through a process termed *overcorrection*. Overcorrection occurs when one's naïve theory of bias is larger in magnitude than the bias actually present (Wegener and Petty, 1997). This model also states that individuals recognize the potential for biased responses and adjust their reactions to account for these biases. From this perspective, minority-favoring responses result from adjusting responses too strongly. Evaluators recognize that there exists a tendency to evaluate African American targets unfairly. More favorable evaluations result from attempts to correct bias that overestimate the amount of bias correction needed.

Shifting Standards

The shifting standards perspective suggests individuals use different standards to evaluate members of different groups (Biernat *et al.*, 1991). Observers judging African Americans on stereotyped dimensions use within category standards, comparing the target to a stereotype of African Americans rather than an objective standard. For example, when rating the verbal ability of Black and White targets, stereotypes that AAs possess poor verbal ability impact evaluation. When rating AA targets, subjective evaluations (e.g., rating verbal ability on a 5-point scale ranging from low to high) were substantially higher than objective evaluations (e.g., assigning a letter grade to the essay; Biernat and Mannis, 1994). The authors suggest that these findings reflect that participants used different criteria when providing subjective ratings. The authors go on to argue that subjective items possess no anchor. Without an anchor, ratings of “excellent” are influenced by stereotyped perceptions. In the case of verbal ability, participants likely expected AA targets to perform poorly. In this case, demonstrations of moderate ability attributed to an AA resulted in better ratings, as performances were “good for an African American.” This indicates that if a White target and an AA target both wrote essays objectively assigned B grades, subjective evaluations might rate the AA essay more positively than the White’s essay because of differing standards.

Applying the shifting standards concept to our study, shifting standards of evaluation may produce positive evaluations of clearly positive African American targets. Common stereotypes portray AAs as lazy and not ambitious (e.g., Stephan *et al.*, 2002). Evaluating a positively portrayed AA may not only counter expectations but also can produce positive evaluations because of lowered performance expectations. For example, Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) presented highly qualified job candidates and portrayed them as either White or AA. These candidates received more positive evaluations than did White applicants as participants likely compared their achievements against a lower standard.

Self-Categorization Theory

Self-categorization theory (SCT) begins with the proposition that individuals function at one of three major levels of categorical abstraction (1) as human beings, (2) as social group members, or (3) as individuals (Turner, 1985; Turner *et al.*, 1987). Most relevant to the current study is the impact of social group identity. Specifically, we discuss the role that salient group identities play in adherence to group norms. We suggest that two different group identities are present, a general identification as an ethnic group member and a more specific identification as an egalitarian member of that ethnic group. We argue that clear egalitarian evaluative conditions and ambiguous evaluative conditions promote salience of different group identities.

Context plays an important role in determining what aspects of group identity guide behavior (e.g. Abrams, 1999). Different contexts produce reliance on different group-based comparisons. A feature determining which category memberships are salient at any specific time is the meta-contrast. The meta-contrast principle states that comparisons that allow group identifications that are maximally distinct from the comparison outgroup and minimally distinct from the ingroup determine category salience (Turner *et al.*, 1987). That is, the salient group identity is the one that allows for individuals to be most similar to the ingroup and most different from the outgroup.

When Whites evaluate African Americans under ambiguous evaluative conditions, White identity will be salient as the White–African American distinction is the characteristic that distinguishes the target and rater. A product of the salience of the White group identity is ingroup bias, presumably as a strategy to maintain a positive identity through association with positively valued group at the expense of the outgroup (e.g., Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). In this comparative context, Whites are more likely to favor White targets over AA targets.

In contexts wherein Whites evaluate positively valued AAs (e.g., a highly qualified AA job applicant), a more relevant category comparison may be between prejudiced and non-prejudiced (egalitarian) Whites. In this case, the White–African American distinction does not maximally distinguish the rater from the target. Both groups share similar (positive) characteristics, making comparisons between Whites and AAs less relevant. Here egalitarianism becomes a characteristic that can maximally distinguish groups. When rating positively valued AA targets, two group identities are possible. The first identity is that of non-prejudiced Whites. Members of this group rate AA targets fairly. This group is contrasted with prejudiced Whites. Members of this group rate AA targets unfairly, despite their positive traits. We expect that most individuals identify themselves as non-prejudiced in this context.

When identification as a non-prejudiced White is salient, evaluations move toward a norm of egalitarianism. However, group identity salience not only increases adherence to group norms but it also results in perceptions of more extreme norms. According to SCT theorists, extreme responses result because individuals adjust their opinions to that of the group norm and more extreme responses tend to define the group norm (Wetherell, 1987). This process produces extreme responses that overshoot the egalitarian norm, resulting in AA-favoring biases. SCT theorists explain this as a product of comparative strategies that make adherence to norms more polarized and extreme in order to promote a distinct group identity (see Turner, 1987 for a detailed discussion of this effect).

Empirical results demonstrate the polarization-extremity effect. For example, individuals placed in groups and told that their group was composed of “risky” individuals tended to reach riskier decisions, but only when group identity was salient (Wetherell, 1987). Similarly, under conditions of intergroup competition

that ostensibly enhanced group identity salience, participants adopted more extreme positions consistent with their group norms than under conditions of individual identity salience (Mackie, 1986). These results suggest that when group identity is salient, individuals respond in manners that are not only consistent with perceptions of group norms but often result in adherence to more extreme positions.

Caveat

Above, we detailed the roles that several theories may play in promoting two forms of favoritism. However, the analyses that follow test only for the presence of such biases, we do not provided tests of these mechanisms. Rather, we present theories that support the presence of these biases as support for the hypotheses discussed below.

Hypotheses

The goals of the present paper are to examine the presence of AA-favoring responses and responses favoring Whites with a particular focus on conditions wherein each type of favoritism occurs. We predict the following:

Hypothesis 1: Under conditions in which evaluation or action is ambiguous, White targets will be favored over African Americans.

Hypothesis 2: Under conditions in which clear norms for egalitarian forms of evaluation or action exist, African American targets will be favored over Whites.

METHODS

Literature Search

We conducted several literature searches. The first used the *PsychInfo* database, employing the search terms—aversive racism, aversive prejudice, or aversive bias. The second search was more general and used the term *evaluat** (the * provides all words beginning with *evaluat-* such as *evaluative* and *evaluation*) and major descriptive terms of racism, prejudice, racial and ethnic relations, race and ethnic discrimination, or racial and ethnic attitudes. To reduce these searches to a more manageable set, and in line with the exclusion criteria cited below, we applied limits that excluded articles that did not include the terms African American, Black, Negro, Afro American in titles, keywords, descriptors, or abstracts and eliminated studies for which no abstract existed (e.g., all pre-1980 dissertations).

Next, we searched *Dissertation Abstracts International* using the search strategies above and limiting results to documents with psychology headings (i.e., the limits applied on the searches above). We examined reference sections of relevant articles and conducted PsychInfo searches for articles written by the lead authors of studies meeting the criteria below. Finally, we posted a message to the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Listserv soliciting manuscripts.

These searches identified 404 studies for possible inclusion. At this point, specific inclusion/exclusion criteria determined study eligibility. Specific criteria follow:

1. Studies must include primary empirical results. Sixty-eight studies were eliminated.
2. Studies must include a comparison of a White and African American targets involving at least one dependent variable with ratings of both groups. We focused on AA targets and excluded other minority groups, as aversive racism is not well established as a predictor of reactions to groups other than AAs. Two hundred thirteen studies were eliminated.
3. Comparisons must include situations wherein evaluation or behavioral criteria are clear (e.g., highly qualified) or settings where criteria are ambiguous (e.g., not clearly qualified). Studies need not include both. Eighty-nine studies were eliminated.

We defined egalitarian contexts as those where norms promote egalitarian action or evaluation and ambiguous situations as those in which it is unclear what sort of behavior or evaluation is normative. Conditions classified as those where egalitarian evaluation or action are normative included evaluations of highly qualified job candidates (e.g., Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000), employed patients (e.g., Murphy-Berman *et al.*, 1998), helping when others were present (e.g., Gaertner and Dovidio, 1977), evaluations of defendants when racial identity was salient (Sommers and Ellsworth, 2000), and ratings of strong arguments (e.g., White and Harkins, 1994). Ambiguous conditions included evaluations of moderately qualified candidates (e.g., Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000), helping when alone with victim (e.g., Gaertner and Dovidio, 1977), evaluations of defendants when racial identity was not salient (e.g., Sommers and Ellsworth, 2000, 2001), and ratings of weaker arguments (e.g., White and Harkins, 1994).

4. As a de facto criterion, studies must have included sufficient data to code effect size estimates. For those studies without sufficient information, we contacted authors via email requesting specific statistical information (or a data set). In three cases, we did not obtain sufficient information to code study characteristics.

Application of these criteria identified 31 studies for inclusion. Amongst these, we coded all comparisons involving ratings of White and African American

targets. We included all ratings or targets of target products but did not include measures of racism or bias, mood ratings, thought positivity, or attributions. This distinction allowed for the inclusion of specific target ratings and the exclusion of ratings that were more general.

Effect Size Derivation

The primary goal of the meta-analysis was to compare reactions to White and African American targets. The general strategy for effect size coding was to derive effect size estimates for comparisons of White and African American targets for all samples represented in each study. Given this strategy, some articles contributed multiple effect size estimates. For example, a study including two independent samples or experiments would contribute two effect size estimates to the analysis. When multiple dependent measures existed, we derived an effect size for each then collapsed into a single estimate. We used D-STAT (Johnson, 1989) and MS Excel macros (see Lipsey and Wilson, 2001) for effect size calculation.

When possible, we calculated effect sizes directly from means, standard deviations, and sample size or proportions. Effect sizes based on ANOVA results collapsed nonrelevant effects into the mean square error and then used this recomputed error term in computations of the effect size (Glass *et al.*, 1981; Johnson, 1989).

Addition Coding Issues

Some studies presented incomplete statistical values, necessitating use of estimation procedures. Nearly all cases requiring estimation involved extracting MS error terms from ANOVA results. For these studies, authors most commonly reported means, sample size for each cell, and F -statistics but did not provide the MS error or standard deviations for each cell. As the MS error or standard deviations are essential values for calculating the effect size, these studies required estimation. Typically, estimation involved deriving sums of squares from means and sample sizes, converting the sums of squares to a mean square, then dividing the mean square value by the reported F -statistic to yield a mean square error. Many studies did not report F -statistics for non-significant effects. For these effects, we assumed an F -statistic of 1.0. This strategy does not impact the collapsing of relevant effects into the mean square error. We choose a value of $F = 1.0$ as this is the expected value of F given no statistical effect. Some studies only reported statistical results for variables attaining statistical significance. For these studies, we coded all variables with complete information. To address the impact of estimation, we examined differences between studies with effect sizes calculated with and without estimation. We chose to contact authors when we lacked adequate information to carry out estimation but not for studies where we could apply estimation strategies to derive effect sizes.

Most studies used exclusively White participants, but some included racially diverse samples. We recorded the proportion of White participants for each study and used participant ethnicity to clarify hypothesis tests. In several cases, articles failed to present adequate information concerning participant ethnicity. We attempted to derive this information from email inquiries addressed to the lead authors of the articles. If authors did not respond, we used information regarding the ethnic composition of the student population for the university where the research was conducted to provide an informed guess as to whether Whites comprised a majority of the sample, but did not use this information to estimate an exact proportion.

RESULTS

Table I presents sample composition, effect sizes, sample size, and 95% confidence intervals for 73 effects based on 31 studies. Positive effect sizes indicate evaluation or behaviors favored Whites, negative effect sizes indicated African American-favoring responses. Effect sizes were weighted by the inverse of the variance (i.e., sample size). Weighting effect sizes in this manner places greater emphasis on studies using larger sample sizes as studies with larger sample sizes more likely reflect population effect sizes (Shadish and Haddock, 1994).

We conducted several analyses. First is an analysis of all the studies. Next, we compared studies with a majority of White participants to those where fewer than 51% of participants were White (i.e., not a White majority sample). A third analysis examined heterogeneity of effect sizes. A fourth analysis removed outliers. The final two analyses addressed the impact of estimation of effects and file drawer issues.

Analysis 1: The Full Data Set

We classified 26 effects as ambiguous conditions and 47 as clearly positive/egalitarian using the criteria presented for inclusion/exclusion Item 3. The first analysis examined all effects included in Table I. The overall effect size indicated slightly greater favoritism toward African American targets, $d = -0.15$, 95% CI for $d = -0.05$ to -0.25 , $z = 2.9$, $p < 0.01$. Supporting Hypothesis 1, when norms were ambiguous, responses favored Whites over African Americans, $d = 0.21$, 95% CI for $d = 0.05$ to 0.38 , $z = 2.5$, $p < 0.05$. When conditions were clear and promoted egalitarian evaluation or behavior, there was a tendency to favor African American targets over Whites, $d = -0.34$, 95% CI for $d = -0.22$ to -0.47 , $z = 5.5$, $p < 0.001$.

Analysis 2: Comparing Samples With and Without White Majorities

The next analyses compared results for White majority and non-White majority samples. Several samples included either exclusively African Americans

Table I. Effect Size and Confidence Limits by Study

Study	White (%)	Normative context							
		Clear/positive				Ambiguous			
		<i>d</i>	LL	UL	<i>n</i>	<i>d</i>	LL	UL	<i>n</i>
Beers (1998)	100	-0.01	-0.19	0.18	220	0.01	-0.18	0.20	220
Bettencourt <i>et al.</i> (1997) Exp 1	100	-0.23	-0.63	0.17	49				
Bettencourt <i>et al.</i> (1997) Exp 2	100	-0.11	-0.51	0.29	48	-0.01	-0.41	0.39	48
Biernat <i>et al.</i> (1999)	100	0.22	-0.24	0.67	38				
Billings <i>et al.</i> (2000)	0	-0.10	-0.54	0.34	40				
Carver <i>et al.</i> (1977) Exp 1	100	-0.01	-0.39	0.37	53				
Carver <i>et al.</i> (1977) Exp 3	100	-0.42	-0.80	-0.04	54				
Castrianno Galante (1999)	87	-0.24	-0.57	0.08	73	0.10	-0.23	0.43	71
Chase (1986)	92	-0.27	-0.71	0.17	40				
Dienstbier (1970)	98	-0.31	-0.75	0.14	39				
Dovidio and Gaertner. (2000) 1989 Sample	100	-0.30	-0.76	0.17	36	0.58	0.10	1.05	36
Dovidio and Gaertner. (2000) 1999 Sample	100	-0.31	-0.84	0.22	28	0.76	0.21	1.29	28
Fajardo (1985)	100	-0.28	-0.44	-0.13	160	-0.47	-0.62	-0.31	160
Frey and Gaertner (1986)	100	-0.39	-0.79	0.02	48	0.08	-0.32	0.48	48
Gaertner (1975)	100	0.00	-0.62	0.62	20	1.55	0.81	2.22	20
Gaertner and Dovidio (1977) Exp 1	100	-0.39	-0.88	0.11	32	0.82	0.30	1.32	32
Gaertner and Dovidio (1977) Exp 2	100	0.23	-0.08	0.54	80	0.37	0.06	0.68	80
Gaertner <i>et al.</i> (1982)	100	0.09	-0.51	0.70	21	1.21	0.53	1.84	21
Hansen and Harber (2003)	100	-0.32	0.34	-0.97	18				
Hass <i>et al.</i> (1991) Study 1	100	-0.44	-0.88	0.01	40				
Hodson <i>et al.</i> (2002)	100	-0.23	-0.85	0.41	19	0.39	-0.25	1.02	20
Jackson <i>et al.</i> (1993) Exp 1	100	-0.34	-0.73	0.06	50				
Jackson <i>et al.</i> (1993) Exp 2	100	-0.29	-0.66	0.09	56				
Johnson <i>et al.</i> (1995)	Majority	-0.17	-0.46	0.13	88	0.56	0.26	0.86	88
Kernahan <i>et al.</i> (2000) White Samp	100	-0.59	-0.85	-0.32	114				
Kernahan <i>et al.</i> (2000) AA Samp.	0	-0.10	-0.66	0.47	24				
Knight <i>et al.</i> (2001)	100	-0.35	-0.83	0.13	34	0.34	-0.14	0.81	34
Linville and Jones (1980) Exp 1	100	-0.78	-1.09	-0.45	80				
Linville and Jones (1980) Exp 2	100	-0.06	-0.57	0.44	30				
Murphy-Berman <i>et al.</i> (1998)	Majority	-0.33	-0.58	-0.07	118	-0.29	-0.03	-0.55	118
Norton <i>et al.</i> (2003) Exp 3	63	-1.27	-1.48	-1.05	112				
Norton <i>et al.</i> (2003) Exp 4	Majority	-1.11	-1.33	-0.89	105				
Norton <i>et al.</i> (2003) Exp 5	62	-1.49	-1.68	-1.28	154				
Norton <i>et al.</i> (2003) Exp 6	75	-1.38	-1.59	-1.16	127				
Petty <i>et al.</i> (1999)	100	-0.16	-0.40	0.09	128	-0.07	-0.32	0.18	124
Rieger (1996)	100	-0.52	-0.81	-0.23	95	-0.27	0.54	0.00	106
Skolnick and Shaw (1997)	0	-0.57	-0.85	-0.29	100	-0.90	-1.19	-0.61	100
Skolnick and Shaw (1997)	50	-0.35	-0.63	-0.07	100	-0.04	-0.32	0.24	100
Sommers and Elsworth (2000)	100	-0.09	-0.40	0.23	78	0.53	0.21	0.85	78
Sommers and Elsworth (2001)	0	-0.43	-1.02	0.18	22	-0.93	-1.53	-0.29	22
Sommers and Elsworth (2001)	100	-0.08	-0.36	0.20	96	0.51	0.22	0.80	96

Table I. (Continued)

Study	White (%)	Normative context							
		Clear/positive				Ambiguous			
		<i>d</i>	LL	UL	<i>n</i>	<i>d</i>	LL	UL	<i>n</i>
Vescio and Biernat (1999)	100	-0.17	-0.46	0.12	92				
White and Harkins (1994) Exp 2	100	0.13	-0.19	0.43	80	0.52	0.20	0.83	80
White and Harkins (1994) Exp 3	100	-0.50	-0.86	-0.13	60	0.34	-0.02	0.70	60
White and Harkins (1994) Exp 4	100	-0.25	-0.75	0.26	30	-0.41	-0.92	0.11	30
White and Harkins (1994) Exp 5	100	-0.21	-0.57	0.15	60	0.52	0.16	0.88	60
Total (all cases)		-0.34	-0.22	-0.47	3225	0.21	0.05	0.38	1880
Total (White majority)		-0.35	-0.33	-0.44	2939	0.31	0.14	0.49	1658

Note. *d* = Cohen’s *d* reflecting standardized difference between ratings of African American and White targets; positive values indicate Whites favored, negative values indicate African Americans favored. LL = lower limit of 95% CI, UL = upper limit of 95% CI.

(*k* = 6) or 50% African Americans (*k* = 2). Given the presence of these samples, and the focus on the paper on the reactions of White participants, it is important to ask whether the African American’s reactions differed from Whites.

For assmbiguous conditions, we compared White majority (*k* = 23) and non-White majority samples (*k* = 3). The non-White majority sample demonstrated favoritism toward African American targets, *d* = -0.58, 95% CI for *d* = -0.11 to -1.06, *z* = 2.4, *p* < 0.05. The majority White sample favored White targets, *d* = 0.31, 95% CI for *d* = 0.14 to 0.49, *z* = 3.6, *p* < 0.001. For both samples, significant ingroup-favoring responses emerged when evaluative conditions were ambiguous.

For clear egalitarian conditions, we conducted analyses mirroring those above, again comparing White majority (*k* = 42) and non-White majority samples (*k* = 5). The non-White majority samples evaluated African American targets more favorably, but this effect attained only marginal significance, probably because of the small sample size, *d* = -0.33, 95% CI for *d* = 0.03 to -0.68, *z* = 1.8, *p* = 0.07. The majority White samples favored African American targets, *d* = -0.38, 95% CI for *d* = -0.33 to -0.44, *z* = 5.7, *p* < 0.001.

Analysis 3: Examining Heterogeneity of Effect Sizes

Next, we examined heterogeneity of effect sizes. We focus the remaining analyses on the set of studies for White majority samples produced in Analysis 2. For bias under ambiguous conditions, *Q*(22) = 24.8, *p* = 0.31, and clear conditions,

$Q(41) = 41.5$, $p = 0.45$, there was no evidence of heterogeneity. Q -statistics used a random effects estimate.

Analysis 4: Examining Outliers

The analyses above produced significant effects for White-favoring responses under ambiguous conditions and African American-favoring responses under clearly positive conditions. However, there is the possibility that a few extreme results impacted effect sizes. To address these issues, we removed extreme effects from both conditions. For ambiguous conditions, two studies produced effect sizes greater than $d = 1.0$. For clear conditions, four experiments from the same study produced effects exceeding $d = -1.0$. Removing these effects produced smaller effect sizes for ambiguous conditions, $d = 0.23$, 95% CI for $d = 0.11$ to 0.35 , $z = 3.8$, $p < 0.001$, and clear positive conditions $d = -0.23$, 95% CI for $d = -0.14$ to -0.32 , $z = 4.9$, $p < 0.001$. However, the effect sizes remain non-zero, suggesting that these outliers did not produce the observed effects.

Analysis 5: Statistical Artifacts of Estimation

Potentially influencing our findings is the role of estimation in the calculation of effect sizes. Some studies did not report statistics allowing for direct computation of effect sizes, necessitating estimation and possibly inflating effect sizes.

Derivation of effect size estimates for 38 (58%) of the 65 comparisons required estimation of statistical criteria. We defined estimation as cases wherein studies did not provide complete descriptive statistics for direct calculation of effect sizes and did not report a mean square error term. Studies requiring estimation included those presenting only means and F -statistics without mean square error values and reports with full statistics reported only for specific variables. As estimation potentially influenced results, we examined data separately for effects calculated with estimation and those calculated without estimation.

For ambiguous conditions, effect sizes did not significantly differ between those studies requiring estimation, $d = 0.25$, $k = 15$, CI for $d = 0.05$ to 0.46 , $z = 2.4$, $p < 0.05$, and those not requiring estimation, $d = 0.43$, $k = 8$, CI for $d = 0.14$ to 0.73 , $z = 2.9$, $p < 0.01$, $Q(1) = 1.0$, $p = 0.33$. Estimation impacted clear conditions such that estimated effects were smaller, $d = -0.24$, $k = 23$, CI for $d = -0.08$ to -0.40 , $z = 2.9$, $p < 0.01$, than effects calculated without estimation, $d = -0.48$, $k = 19$, CI for $d = -0.31$ to -0.66 , $z = 5.4$, $p < 0.001$, $Q(1) = 4.1$, $p = 0.04$. For clear/unambiguous conditions, the African American-favoring effects were smaller when using estimation. This finding indicates that the estimation procedures did not produce the AA-favoring responses observed in this meta-analysis. Even when removing those studies for which we estimated

effect sizes from incomplete statistical information, the effect for AA-favoring responses remained significant.

Analysis 6: Publication Biases

Since our study primarily included published research, it is possible that biases favoring publication of statistically significant results inflated our effect size estimates. Publication biases refer to the tendency for journals to favor studies presenting statistically significant results (Begg, 1994). The majority of the studies (84%) included in this analysis were either published or accepted for publication in peer-reviewed outlets. As is often the case, there is the possibility that the inclusion of unpublished research (i.e., studies with null effects) would have changed the results substantially.

To examine the potential for publication bias, we computed file-drawer statistics. The file drawer statistic provides an estimate of the number of studies with effect sizes of 0.0 needed to offset the statistical significance of effects in a meta-analysis (Rosenthal, 1979). This statistic does not indicate whether publication biases exist, rather it suggests whether publication bias is a plausible alternative explanation for findings. For White-favoring responses under ambiguous conditions, 288 null effects would reverse significance results. For African American-favoring responses under clearly egalitarian conditions, the presence of 1824 studies with null effects would reverse the statistical significance of this finding. Based on these values, it is unlikely that publication biases influenced conclusions.

DISCUSSION

This meta-analysis revealed consistent patterns of both African American-favoring evaluations and White-favoring evaluations. When evaluation criteria were clearly egalitarian, individuals treated African American targets more favorably. When evaluation criteria were ambiguous, more negative ratings or behaviors existed toward African Americans. In our introduction, we presented several theoretical perspectives that potentially explain our findings. Our analyses did not directly test predictions afforded by these theories, as there were no consistent data relevant to these predictions. However, below we speculate as to what each perspective suggests about biases under clearly egalitarian versus ambiguous conditions.

The aversive racism paradigm provided the primary predictions involved in this study. Consistent with this paradigm, White favoritism occurred under ambiguous normative conditions and AA favoritism (i.e., bending over backwards) occurred under clearly egalitarian normative conditions. Though results supported the aversive racism propositions, this perspective only speculates as to

the motivations for African American-favoring biases. As the presence of White-favoring responses under ambiguous evaluative or behavioral conditions is the subject of several reviews (e.g., Dovidio and Gaertner, 1991; Gaertner and Dovidio, 1981, 1986), we focus our discussion on potential explanations for AA-favoring biases, the demonstration of which is relatively new to the literature. Specifically, we discuss the potential roles of motivations to inhibit prejudice, flexible corrections, shifting standards, and self-categorization theory in producing AA-favoring biases.

Theoretical Perspectives and Future Research Directions

Inhibiting Prejudice

Interpreting results in terms of inhibition of bias perspectives suggests that AA-favoring responses result from the desire to appear unbiased. Relevant to this point is a recent examination of the impact of motivations to control prejudice and automatic (i.e., implicit) attitudes toward African Americans on explicit evaluations of AA targets (Olson and Fazio, in press). Those individuals with negative automatic attitudes and strong motivations to control prejudice (i.e., motivations to control their automatically activated negative attitudes) evaluated AA targets more favorably than White targets. The authors suggested that this effect results from a desire to avoid disputes that might occur from appearing prejudiced. This desire to avoid disputes resulted in the tendency to bend over backwards to prevent appearing prejudiced. Interestingly, participants who held positive automatic attitudes toward AAs (i.e., were non-prejudiced) but also strong motivations to control prejudice tended to evaluate AA targets more negatively than White targets. This result suggests that these participants recognized their own tendencies to evaluate AA targets favorably and corrected for this potential bias. If it is the case that participants recognized the potential to engage in these biases then this suggests AA-favoring biases results, at least partially, from conscious processes.

Whereas aversive racism is commonly portrayed as a subtle bias that affects even the well intentioned, AA-favoring responses under clearly egalitarian conditions appear to be conscious. The presence of conscious biases suggests several encouraging research directions. Future studies should clarify the role of implicit biases and motivations to inhibit prejudice (or internal/external motivations) for both egalitarian evaluative conditions and ambiguous conditions.

Flexible Corrections

Our findings suggest that under clearly positive conditions, individuals correct for their own naïve theories of bias (e.g., Wegener and Petty, 1995) such that they

inflate their ratings of African American targets. Central to this perspective is recognition of bias. The flexible correction model suggests that individuals correct for the potential to produce biased responses. If this is the case, then it is important to investigate naïve theories of bias associated with evaluations of African Americans. Equally important is an understanding of conditions that activate corrections based on naïve theories. For example, in order for the flexible correction model to apply, individuals must believe that biases against African Americans exist and that these biases are larger than they actually are. When biases are perceived as larger than they are, corrections aimed at providing egalitarian responses, overshoot the mark, resulting in AA-favoring responses.

Shifting Standards

Responses that favor African Americans under clearly egalitarian conditions suggest that participants use different standards when evaluating AA targets. Interestingly, the largest effect sizes observed in the meta-analysis existed for evaluations of highly qualified applicants to Princeton (Norton *et al.*, 2003). In this study, African American applicants received extremely positive evaluations compared to White applicants. A study discussed earlier (Harber, 1998) also demonstrated similarly strong AA-favoring biases for evaluations of essays ostensibly written by college students. These results suggest the use of shifting standards may have affected these evaluations. Stereotypes regarding the academic performance of African Americans are predominantly negative (cf., Steele, 1997). Evaluations that are more positive potentially reflect lowered standards for minority performance on these tasks.

The shifting standards model suggests that the observed biases occur only when measured on subjective scales (e.g., rating from 1 = *poor* to 5 = *excellent*). All of the studies included in the meta-analysis used subjective scales. Research using both objective and subjective measures under clear positive and ambiguous conditions would clarify the role played by shifting standards in producing AA-favoring evaluations. This is a particularly interesting area of investigation as predictions derived from aversive racism theory suggests that bias against AAs would be most pronounced when evaluative criteria are subjective. Given these conflicting predictions, investigation of these issues might provide considerable theoretical clarification.

Self-Categorization Theory

Finally, tests of self-categorization theory predictions are relevant. Based on SCT, we posit different reactions when based on the salience of different group identities. We propose that when White participants evaluated AA targets, an egalitarian group identity was activated. In this context, AA-favoring responses

in clearly egalitarian evaluation conditions result from polarized adherence to egalitarian norms (e.g. Wetherell, 1987). We also suggest that evaluations of AA targets in ambiguous conditions reflects adherence to ingroup-favoring norms. Direct manipulations of aspects of group identity and measurement of identification with multiple possible ingroup identities (e.g., as a White, as an egalitarian White) could clarify these relationships. Further, as we suggest that AA-favoring responses result from polarization toward group norms. Assessment of perceptions of group norms would further clarify this argument.

Concluding Remarks

Our analyses supported the presence of both White-favoring biases and African American-favoring biases. Few studies included in this synthesis examined African American-favoring responses as primary hypotheses. Most studies examined in the meta-analysis used the clearly positive evaluative conditions as a control group for comparisons to bias under ambiguous or clearly negative conditions. That is, the clearly egalitarian conditions served to establish the presence of biases against African Americans in the other conditions (i.e., served as a control group). Few of the studies included in the meta-analysis commented on or examined AA-favoring responses. Thus, examination of AA-favoring responses suggests a promising direction for future research.

Our findings are consistent with a justification–suppression model of prejudice expression (e.g., Crandall and Eshleman, 2003). This model proposes that individuals express prejudice when justifications allow for expression and suppress prejudice when justifications are absent. From this perspective, clearly positive conditions are those wherein suppression occurs. Ambiguous conditions are those where justification of biases exist, leading to expression of prejudice. Consistent with this model, aversive racism theorists propose that social norms prohibit the expression of prejudice when norms are clear but allow for expression when these biases can be justified on non-racial grounds (Gaertner and Dovidio, 1981).

We have demonstrated the existence of circumstances in which African Americans receive evaluations that are more favorable as well as circumstances in which White targets receive evaluations that are more favorable. We suggest that two key questions remain. First, what produces each form of favoritism? Second, who is more likely to favor African Americans (or Whites)? Although our results suggest the presence of motivations to inhibit prejudice, shifting standards, flexible corrections, and categorization effects, it is important to acknowledge that we did not test these propositions directly. Our contribution to understanding the role of each of these variables in producing favoritism is speculative. However, the results of this meta-analysis do establish the presence of both AA-favoring and White-favoring biases and provides an empirical basis for future investigations of AA-favoring bias.

Although African American-favoring responses receive much less empirical attention than do biases favoring Whites, this should not be taken to mean that such biases are unimportant. Our findings suggest that being an African American is advantageous when evaluation criteria are clear and norms prescribe egalitarian evaluation and action. Evaluations that favor AAs may seem analogous to affirmative action. Under some applications of affirmative action, African Americans receive special consideration for hiring, promotions, or university admissions (e.g., ethnicity used to break ties between equally qualified applicants). At first blush, it might seem that inflated evaluations of African Americans are a positive or even welcome outcome that achieves goals similar to affirmative action. However, inflated evaluations of AAs differ from affirmative action in several important ways. Whereas affirmative action focuses primarily on hiring, promotion, and/or educational admission decisions, AA-favoring responses may occur in any situation. Thus, AA-favoring biases extend beyond the goals of affirmative action and potentially impact all aspects of evaluation.

Inflated evaluations may hurt African Americans in the long run. Whereas affirmative action increases opportunities, the tendency to exaggerate positive evaluations may ultimately deprive African Americans of opportunities. For example, in an educational setting, African Americans may receive excessive praise for good work. Though their performances were good, inflated evaluations of this sort may rob AAs of the criticism necessary to improve performance (e.g., Steele, 1997). Given the prevalence of AA-favoring responses supported by this meta-analysis and the potentially damaging impact of such biases, we encourage programs of research that address these biases.

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