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Examining Political Orientation, Attributional style, and Affirmative Action

Derrick A. Boone

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Examine Political Orientation, Attributional Style, and
Affirmative Action

by

Derrick A. Boone

A Doctoral Project submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology

September 2003
Each person whose signature appears below certifies that this doctoral project in his/her opinion is adequate, in scope and quality, as a doctoral project for the degree of Psychology Doctorate.

Matt L. Riggs, Professor of Psychology

Edward Garner, Practicum Supervisor

Louis Jenkins, Professor of Psychology
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to the individuals who helped me complete this study. I wish to thank the members of my guidance committee, Matt L. Riggs, Ph.D., Edward Garner, Ph.D., and Louis Jenkins, Ph.D. for their advice and comments. I am also grateful to Ann Bradshaw and Shari Lane for their assistance.
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Examining Political Orientation, Attributional Style, and Affirmative Action

by

Derrick A. Boone

Doctor of Psychology, Graduate Program in Psychology
Loma Linda University, September 2003
Matt L. Riggs, Ph.D., Chairperson

The correlations among political orientation, attributional style, emotion, and support for Affirmative Action were investigated. Questionnaire data were collected from a university sample in southern California. The results indicate a positive correlation between political orientation and attributional style. A negative correlation was found between attributional style and anger, and a positive correlation was found between attributional style and sympathy. Additionally, anger correlated negatively with support for Affirmative Action, while sympathy correlated positively with support Affirmative Action. These findings are congruent with previous research (Zucker and Weiner, 1993) indicating correlations among political orientation, attributional style, emotion, and support for Welfare policies.
Statement of the Problem

Previous research has established that individuals make different attributions consistent with their political beliefs system (Feather, 1985; Lewis, 1981). The purpose of this study is to measure the relationship between political orientation and attributions concerning the policy of affirmative action.

It is potentially important to understand the types of attributions people make concerning social policies that affect large numbers of the population. Individuals of various minority groups have been under-represented in work forces, educational institutions, and other organizations for generations. Because of this, some understanding of this inequality is important in order to affect change.

It is also clinically important for psychologists, and other therapists, to be aware of the attributional and emotional variables that may contribute to discriminatory values and victim-blaming beliefs. Though therapists have been found to avoid victim-blaming more than the general population, they are still susceptible to this cognitive style (Adams & Betz, 1993). Thus, this research may be used by clinicians to heighten their awareness of their own potential biases.

For decades, affirmative action has been proposed, and often exercised, throughout the United States. However, a great debate about the usefulness and appropriateness of
this policy continues today. Not surprisingly, this debate has also taken place along political party lines.

As previous research has shown, when considering others' misfortune, political liberals tend to make external attributions. Conversely, political conservatives tend towards internal attributions. This phenomenon has been well illustrated when considering poverty (Zucker & Weiner, 1993).

Attribution theory is well represented in the research literature, with particular emphasis found in the study of internal and external attributions. Furthermore, the various aspects of affirmative action also have been well researched and documented in the literature. However, while some research has focused on the correlations between political orientation and attributional processing, little research has examined attributions with respect to affirmative action.

A correlational approach was used for this study. The study employed survey questionnaires. A convenience sample of students was chosen from a southern California university. Instruments for the research include a self-report political orientation scale and a survey measuring attributions specific to affirmative action.
Review of the Literature

Introduction

The current research involves the study of attribution theory and how it relates to political ideology. Past research by such theorists and Weiner and Heider has built strong empirical support to the notion of internal and external attributional thinking.

This study seems particularly important considering the existence of discrimination and institutional racism. Institutional racism involves all informal barriers existing within organizations that prevent minority members from attaining positions at higher levels in a given system (Bielby, 1987). However, past research does not seem to explain the various ways in which individuals make attributions about inequality and affirmative action.

Researchers have historically been interested in individuals' characteristics of political orientation. A significant amount of research concerning attribution theory and associations with political orientation has been conducted. The bulk of this research has been related to the attributions people make about poverty and those who suffer from it. Because every member of society makes attributions, it seems important to explore the relationship between these attributions and political ideology.

Styles in Political Thinking
The definition of political ideology used for this study needs clear delineation. Plano and Greenberg (1985), in their dictionary of American politics, discussed conservatism in terms of an embattlement against progressive changes in the political, economic, or social institutions which comprise a given society. Furthermore, conservative notions typically include disfavor towards governmental intervention in fiscal affairs, most types of government spending, and civil rights legislation.

Political liberalism though, as discussed by Plano and Greenberg (1985), is a philosophy that encourages and seeks change in political, economic, and social status quos. Additionally, liberals tend to view the government as an effective source of amelioration of wrongs concerning civil rights injustices and battling institutional racism, and that the government is an able institution to expand individuals' personal freedom. In addition to these political discussions, literature supports the idea that liberalism is a philosophy that embraces racial and gender equality, while conservatism has typically not focused on or actively endorsed measures to promote equality (Carmines & Stimson, 1989; Abramowitz, 1994, as cited in Gilens et al., 1998).

Evidence suggesting that political orientation is associated with relatively inflexible cognitive styles has been covered in the literature for decades. In the
exploration of political psychology, Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford (1950) are largely responsible for the development of political studies that attempt to find associations between political and cognitive/personality styles. Their work began the movement that discovered how the authoritarian personality is consistently found among members of right-wing political parties. Adorno’s work was groundbreaking as social scientists began to take seriously the notion that political orientation may be more than a pragmatically chosen ideology. This body of research suggested associations between political ideology and the differences individuals make in their attributions of many social issues.

Like Adorno, Sales (1972) conducted research concerning the authoritarian personality. Sales found that in times of severe threat to either an individual or a group, people tend to congregate within authoritarian churches. During non-threatening times, individuals tend to visit non-authoritarian churches. Sales theorized that authoritarianism is implemented as a type of defense mechanism against a threatening event, group, or person. He continued to theorize that authoritarianism is employed to provide structure to an otherwise unstable time period. However, Sales did not address the question: Do individuals shift towards authoritarianism when threatened by individuals of dissimilar ethnic or gender
Tetlock (1983) explored cognitive styles of United States Senators and discovered support for an authoritarian/right wing connection. Having monitored senatorial voting patterns to determine individuals placement on the liberal-conservative continuum, Tetlock measured the levels of integrative complexity demonstrated by the Senators. His predictions were supported as Senators on the Left and in the middle exhibited higher levels of integrative complexity while Right-Wing individuals leaned more toward the cognitive styles found in authoritarianism.

Other research in this area measured subjects' intolerance of ambiguity. At an Israeli university, Fibert and Ressler (1998) assessed individuals' political orientation and measured their intolerance for ambiguity. The results of this study indicated that identified right-wing subjects consistently scored higher in their intolerance for ambiguity. Therefore, research demonstrates how consistently individuals with similar political ideologies exhibit likeness in their characteristics. Although Fibert and Ressler (1998) uses their research to support the "rigidity of the right" hypothesis, studies have suggested a curvilinear association between extreme political orientation, with both left and right-wingers demonstrating rigid cognitive processes (Kemmelmeier, 1997).
Adding to the discussion of authoritarian personality styles and how they affect individuals' judgements of others is the vast literature on institutional racism. One of the many places this form of racism occurs is in schools across the country. While many minorities are aware of this phenomenon, many educators and administrators are not (Hanssen, 1998).

Similar results to Hanssen's (1998) are found within work-forces. Watson, Haines, and Bretherton (1996) found that African Americans frequently perceive institutional racism whereas their employers and other employees often do not. If this racism is perceived due to discrimination within the institution, than Watson et al. proposed that organizations can alleviate this by enforcing nondiscriminatory standards as well as providing climates which are conducive to the effective functioning of all employees.

Previous research demonstrates that individuals make differing causal attributions about institutional racism. For example, one study demonstrated that African Americans tend to make external causal attributions towards the organization, whereas Caucasians tend to make internal causal attributions towards individuals (Alderfer, Alderfer, Tucker, & Tucker, 1980). Such research clearly suggests that racial inequality is an occurrence often interpreted in different ways by different individuals.
Attributional Processes

Attribution theory includes a throng of other sub-theories too numerous to explore; however, broadly defined, it is the theory of how people explain others’ behavior. For example, one may attribute outcomes to either internal dispositions or external situations (Myers, 1996). Malone (1995) explained attribution theory in terms of an epidermal division of external and internal attributions. Everything outside of an individual constitutes external or environmental factors that press inward on the person, whereas all things inside the individual are internal, trait factors which press outward (as cited in Myers, 1996).

More recent literature has focused on broader categorizations of internal and external attributions. These attributions are now often seen as more heterogenous and comprising a collection of attributions. For instance, Lindstrom (1997) proposed that external attributions may be considered references to first and second hand information, as well as references to neutral and persuasive sources. Internal attributions were considered references to characteristics of personality or cognitive elaborations.

Fritz Heider (1958) delineated the theories that were later used as foundation for current attribution theory. Heider’s work introduced social psychologists to the notion of internal and external attributions. In his
assessment, internal attributions are thoughts and ideas we have about others that we attribute to individuals' internal states or dispositions. Thus, when considering the actions or position of another person, internal attributions would lend one to believe that those actions or positions are caused by an internal state (motivation, ability, etc.). External attributions exist when an individual judges someone else's state based on external or situational events, such as physical or social circumstances.

From Heider's initial work, the field has expanded broadly. One area of expansion is in the examination of cultural differences in the attribution process and the errors that may be made therein. For instance, Western culture seems to foster a phenomenon where people frequently, and with great consistency, attribute the failings and misdeeds of others to dispositional or internal states. On the other hand when considering their own imperfections, individuals are prone to attribute external or situational causes (Watson, 1982). In Western culture, the population tends to perceive that people, rather than situations cause events.

In support, Jellison and Green (1981) reported that southern California students who expressed more internal causal attributions than external causal attributions received greater amounts of social approval from their peers. This same study showed that these students not
only viewed others more favorably for making internal attributions, but also viewed themselves more favorably when making these types of attributions. Again, a consistency in the way in which individuals within our Western society perceive internal causal attributions was demonstrated.

Theorists, such as Bernard Weiner (1985), have offered reasons for the attributions people make about macro events or states such as poverty. Weiner concluded that these types of attributions are made when incorporating emotional expressions into the attribution theory equation (Weiner, 1985).

Illustrations of this came when Weiner proposed an Attribution-Affect-Action Model to explain helping behavior. By setting up experimental situations where one individual was in need of help from other individuals, types of attributions (internal vs. external) were studied in relation to the types of emotions elicited from those judgements or attributions. In the help-giving situation first studied by Piliavin, Rodin, and Piliavin (as cited in Weiner, 1980), a confederate stumbles and falls in a subway under two conditions: the confederate carries a bottle and smells strongly of alcohol; the confederate appears sober and is carrying a cane. Initially, attributions of internal (drunkenness) or external (disability) cause were thought to directly motivate the action of either help or neglect. However,
Weiner proposed that internal attributions lead to feelings of disgust and anger, and thus neglect, while external attributions lead to feelings of sympathy, and therefore evoke help. He concluded that attributions do contribute to our emotions and that these emotions actually dictate the course of action taken (Weiner, 1980).

Similar types of research have reconfirmed that when people attribute others' plight to external situations beyond their control, they are more likely to help. Yet when it is inferred that states are under the person's control help is less likely given (Schmidt & Weiner, 1988). This research demonstrated how perceptions of controllability affect levels of emotions that determine whether help or neglect are rendered. Furthermore, specific emotions were found to elicit the particular reactions of help or neglect. Perceived control led to feelings of anger and thus neglect, whereas perceived uncontrollable situations led to pity and help-giving.

In examining how individuals view social issues such as poverty and welfare, Feagin (1972) was one of the first to clearly delineate how people attribute these issues. In his initial research, he broke ground by attempting to explain how people make internal and external attributions (stereotypical laziness versus situational) regarding causes for poverty. Since Feagin's work, many others have replicated his findings (e.g.,
Lewis (1981) investigated the relationship between these attributional differences and political affiliation. In British samples, Lewis found the majority of individuals attributed the wealth of others to external factors such as luck. However, as predicted by this study, members of the Conservative Party did not subscribe to these notions, but attributed the success of the wealthy to internal causes. Findings were opposite for members of the liberal Labour Party who made even stronger external attributions than did the general population.

Research from an American sample also found attributions to consistently correlate with political orientation. In two experiments, Zucker and Weiner (1993) surveyed individuals who adhered to either political liberalism or conservatism and then measured their attributions about poverty and welfare. The researchers provided subjects several possible reasons for poverty’s existence. The subjects were asked several questions regarding these possible causes. For example, subjects were asked how controllable the situation was, how much pity or anger they experienced, and whether they would be willing to give help for that reason. The Attribution-Affect-Action model was also incorporated into this study. This was done so, in addition to attributions and political orientation, an emotional component could be
measured as it correlates to poverty and welfare. Their findings demonstrated that conservatives consistently believed poverty was due to individualistic causes leading to blame and anger; this as opposed to perceptions of external causes and lack of controllability. Liberals, however, significantly attributed poverty to fatalistic or external causes and thus maintained a high rate of sympathy and belief in helping behavior. Specifically, helping behavior was defined as favoring governmental support such as welfare.

Affirmative Action

Affirmative Action has been defined in a variety of ways by many different people. Battin (1997) asserted that it is often described by proponents as a way of actively seeking talented individuals wherever they may be. However, a more universal definition came from the Association of Governing Boards Universities and Colleges, in 1981: "Steps taken to ensure that there is nondiscrimination and equal opportunity in employment and educational programs; result-oriented steps taken toward the elimination of barriers for protected classes; steps taken by order of a compliance agency or the courts; and steps taken by an institution with no history of overt discrimination".

Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, and Malle (1994) explored the relationship between social dominance orientation and political affiliation. In this study social dominance
orientation was defined as the preference for inequality among social groups. The researchers found that support for women's rights, gay rights, and corrective racial policies were all significantly negatively correlated with social dominance orientation.

This same study also found that, in six samples, a preference for the Republican party significantly positively correlated with social dominance orientation. Other unrelated studies, though, indicate that unobtrusive instruments find that there are equal amounts of disfavor for affirmative action policies among both liberals and conservatives (Gilens, Sniderman & Kuklinski, 1998).

Previous studies have examined political orientation and attitudes toward racial equality and affirmative action specifically. Kinder and Sears (1993) reported that Republicans and conservatives consistently showed much greater opposition to affirmative action than did Democrats and liberals.

Garcia, Erskine, Hawn, and Casmay (1981) found that subjects made internal attributions about the qualifications of applicants to a university based on whether or not they received assistance from affirmative action programs. When subjects were presented with the information that minority students were accepted into a graduate school that had an affirmative action program, s/he was considered less qualified. Minority students
were also considered less qualified when rejected by an institution with affirmative action policies. The same assertions about qualification did not exist for non-minority students who were rejected admission into schools with affirmative action programs.

In a second study, Garcia, Erskine, Hawn, and Casmay (1981) found that subjects rated minority graduate school applicants lower in qualification than non-minority applicants when the school had an affirmative action policy. This rating differential existed even though all applicants' qualifications were the same in condition.

Similarly, Summers (1991) found that both males and females made negative internal attributions about the ability of female employees based upon their entrance into the company with affirmative action. Subjects were provided with information that was equally favorable and unfavorable about the woman's qualifications. Nevertheless, if the woman was promoted in a pro-affirmative action organization, subjects believed the woman was less than 50% qualified.

Summers (1991) also found that when these women were believed to be promoted within anti-affirmative action organizations, they were considered more than 50% qualified. Summers theorized that, in this case the organization's anti-affirmative action policy would act as an inhibitor, and thus the women were deemed more qualified.
With strong empirical support for the variations in individual's attributional processes (Weiner, 1980, 1985) and for the delineation of political ideological correlations to internal and external attributions (Zucker & Weiner, 1993; Lewis, 1981), suppositions about affirmative action may be considered. Furthermore, research indicates (e.g., Summers 1991; Craig, 1997; Garcia, et al., 1981) that attributions are frequently made as to the worthiness of individuals in minority positions.

Summary

Previous literature has demonstrated that, in fact, individuals tend to make attributions, either internal or external, in assessing causation in their environments. Also, people have been found to make attributions consistent with their respective political affiliation. People seem inclined to view recipients of affirmative action with various assessments of necessity for receiving this type of social policy assistance. Affirmative action tends to be either opposed or supported depending on one's political affiliation or orientation. Specifically, liberal individuals support this policy while conservative individuals oppose it. Therefore, the literature seems to lead to a presumptive hypothesis that political orientation will correlate with attributional styles. Because of the relative void in the literature regarding attributions, political orientation,
and affirmative action; the current research proposes the following hypotheses: 1) Conservatism/liberalism will correlate positively with internal/external attributional styles; 2) Internal/external attributional styles will correlate positively with sympathy 3) Internal/external attributional styles will correlate negatively with anger; 4) Anger will correlate negatively with support for affirmative action; 5) Sympathy will correlate positively with support for affirmative action.

The hypotheses of this study are best illustrated by the following model:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Conserv./Lib.} & + \quad \text{Attribution: I/E} & \text{Sympathy} & + \quad \text{Support for} \\
& & \text{Affirmative Action} & \\
& - & \text{Anger} & \\
\end{align*}
\]
Research Methodology

Research Approach and Design

Since the same standardized data was collected from respondents over a short period of time, the design used in this study was a cross sectional correlational approach. A simple survey was used since the current research seeks to find information about the distribution of attributional characteristics among subjects, and the relationships among them (Robson, 1993).

Subjects

In the current research, it was not possible to specify the probability that any subject would be included in the sample. Therefore, non-probability sampling was used; specifically, convenience sampling was used.

Subjects were selected from a university in southern California. 145 subjects were included in the study based on enrollment in given classes where surveys were administered. Only those individuals under the age of 18 or those not willing to participate in this study were excluded. As would be expected in college samples, age, gender, and ethnic diversity varied.

One of the primary limitations of the study is the lack of generalizability of the results to the general population. While many different age groups were represented, typically a university sample is a younger age group than represented by the national average. This held true in the current research.
Consent Procedures

Subjects in this study were given informed consent forms. Subjects were informed that approximately 15-20 minutes would be required to complete the research questionnaires. Any concerns involving the consent procedures may be addressed to the researcher at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

All students participating in courses were potentially included in this study. However, participation was voluntary and subjects were given the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Furthermore, had any discomfort been created by the study, subjects were informed of where their school counseling centers are and how to obtain help.

The data will be anonymous and held by the researcher and those directly involved with the research. Data will be stored with the principle investigator, Matt L. Riggs, Ph.D., with only the student researcher having access. The data will be kept for 5-7 years following the study and will not be released unless required by law. Finally, an abstract of this study is available to all subjects in this study upon request.

Instrumentation

In assessing political orientation, subjects responded to an item asking them to identify themselves on a seven point Likert scale ranging from very conservative to very liberal.
Additionally, subjects were given questions regarding the causes of racial inequality. For each possible cause of inequality, subjects were asked several questions to assess causality, and thus attributional thinking. (See Appendix 2) These possible causes were measured on a seven point Likert scale. This scale was used in a similar fashion to that of Zucker and Weiner's (1993) study comparing political orientation and attributional thinking, in regards to poverty. The statements made, in the current research, about possible causes of inequality are worded as they are in the Zucker and Weiner study, with the word "inequality" substituted for "poverty". The four questions asked about each possible cause of inequality are also directly taken from this study. The only change in these questions is in question four, with "affirmative action" being substituted for "welfare". Thus, acceptable reliability may be assumed based on the similarity to the questionnaire used in Zucker and Weiner (1993), as well as Feagin (1972), Feather (1974) and Furnham (1982).

Research Procedures

The researcher contacted various professors at the participating university requesting to distribute the required consent forms and questionnaires. Research subjects were contacted by the researcher who then obtained their cooperation and issued the consent forms and questionnaires. Upon completion of the surveys, the
researcher collected them for statistical evaluation.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data for this study, Pearson's correlation coefficients were used. In addition to these correlations, practical significance based upon Cohen's definitions of small, medium, and large effect sizes was assessed. Specifically, five sets of correlations were analyzed: 1) Political ideology and attributional style; 2) Attributional style and sympathy; 3) Attributional style and anger; 4) Sympathy and the belief in Affirmative Action; and 5) Anger and the belief in Affirmative Action.
Results

Data Screening

A summary of the demographic information shows a mean age of 24.55, with 18 being the minimum and 52 the maximum, and a standard deviation of 7.80. (See Table 1 and 2 for complete descriptive statistics). Analysis of the scales reveals there are no scores that exceed 3.5 standard deviations from the mean. There are no non-linear trends, and each distribution meets the requirements for homoscedasticity. Further, the distributions for the five scales approximate normality (See Appendix D).

Table 1

*Frequencies for Nominal Variables*

<table>
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Note. n = 145
Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Other Variables

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<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Belief</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attributional Style</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>8.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sympathy</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>6</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Note. n = 145

Scale analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) reliability procedures (SPSS, 1988). The coefficient alpha for each scale is noted in Table 2. Item-total correlations are given in Table 3. Each exceeds a recommended level of .70 (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Spector, 1992).
Table 3

Correlations for Hypotheses

<table>
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<th>Political Belief</th>
<th>Attribution</th>
<th>Sympathy</th>
<th>Anger</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.54*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>-0.32*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppor t</td>
<td>0.24*</td>
<td>0.43*</td>
<td>0.57*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for Affirm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.29*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. n = 145

*p < .01.

During analysis, it was discovered that a group of surveys have a typographical mistake. In order to determine if these provided reliable results, a t-test comparison was conducted between the surveys with and without the mistake. It was found that there was a significant difference ($p = .001$) on two scales (Sympathy, $t = 3.43$, and Support for Affirmative Action, $t = 3.26$) between those without the mistake ($n = 145$; Sympathy $M = 38.90$, $SD = 8.47$; Support for Affirmative Action $M = 38.74$, $SD = 10.16$), and those with the mistake ($n = 75$; Sympathy $M = 35$, $SD = 6.99$; Support for Affirmative Action $M = 34.5$, $SD = 6.79$). Those with the
mistake were thus discarded.

Test of Hypotheses

The results of the analyses are represented in Table 3. In order to provide a meaningful analysis of the variables utilized, items for each variable were totaled and the sum score was used in the analyses. The first hypothesis developed was political ideology will correlate positively with attributional style. A significant medium correlation \( r = .24, p = .004 \) was found between political beliefs and attribution.

The second hypothesis was that attributional style will correlate positively with sympathy. A significant large correlation \( r = .54, p < .001 \) was found between attribution and sympathy.

The third hypothesis was that attributional style will correlate negatively with anger. A significant medium correlation \( r = -.32, p < .001 \) was found between attribution and anger.

The fourth hypothesis was that sympathy will correlate positively with belief in affirmative action. A significant large correlation \( r = .57, p < .001 \) was found between sympathy and support for affirmative action.

The fifth hypothesis was that anger will correlate negatively with belief in affirmative action. A
significant medium correlation ($r = -0.29, p < 0.001$) was
found between anger and support for affirmative action.

Supplemental Analyses

The current research examines cognitive and emotional
styles involved in the process of assessing inequality,
as a means of understanding support for affirmative
action. Because Affirmative Action is the culminating
variable, supplemental analyses were used to examine
group differences in relation to support for affirmative
action.

Further analysis utilizing One-Way ANOVAs showed that
the distribution of scores met the assumption of
homogeneity of variance according to Levene's test. The
results from the supplemental analysis are represented in
Table 4. Supplemental analyses were conducted to further
assess the data and gain a better understanding of group
differences in relation to affirmative action. The first
analysis was used to determine if any differences existed
between those identifying themselves as either Democrat
or Republican on the Support for Affirmative Action
scale. Results from a One-Way ANOVA were gathered to
examine differences between Democrats ($n = 63, M = 42.08,$
$SD = 9.78$) and Republicans ($n = 38, M = 33.42, SD =
10.76$). A significant difference was found between the
groups ($F(1, 99) = 17.21, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = .15$), with
Democrats reporting higher support for Affirmative Action in general.

Table 4

One-way ANOVA Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Eta</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Party</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>1, 99</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1, 143</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>2, 126</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( n = 145 \)

A second analysis was conducted to assess differences between males (\( n = 32, M = 36.47, SD = 10.59 \)) and females (\( n = 113, M = 39.38, SD = 9.99 \)) on the Support for Affirmative Action scale. A nonsignificant difference was found (\( F (1, 143) = 2.06, p = .153, \eta^2 = .014 \)). Results from a third One-way ANOVA were gathered to examine differences among Hispanics (\( M = 40.07, SD = 9.34 \)), African-Americans (\( M = 42.18, SD = 10.43 \)), and Caucasians (\( M = 36.47, SD = 9.66 \)) on the Support for Affirmative Action scale. These three groups were selected due to the significantly higher number of respondents within them. A significant difference (\( p = .022 \)) was found between groups (\( F (2, 126) = 3.92, p = .022, \eta^2 = .06 \)), with African Americans reporting higher support for Affirmative Action in general.
Discussion

Discussion of Results

Consistent with other research, the data from this study support a link between political ideology and attributional style. As also has been previously demonstrated individuals with differing political beliefs tend to hold different central beliefs about the causation of social states. Past research in this area has demonstrated that conservatives tend to make internal attributions, placing more emphasis on individualistic causes. Liberals, however, generally make external attributions with societal causes having more importance (Feather, 1985; Zucker & Weiner, 1993).

The findings of this study, support these notions. Hypothesis one stated that the conservatism/liberalism ideology scale would correlate positively with the internal/external attribution scale. This hypothesis was supported at a significant level, suggesting those self-identifying themselves as more liberal also tend to make external, or societal attributions about the cause of racial inequality.

Research has also suggested that political ideology is correlated with attributional and emotional style simultaneously (e.g., Weiner, 1985). The current research demonstrates the same political-attributional-emotional
pattern. Hypothesis two stated the internal/external attribution scale would correlate positively with the sympathy scale, while hypothesis three stated the internal/external attribution scale would correlate negatively with the anger scale. Both hypothesis two and three were supported, indicating a belief in societal causes of inequality are associated with increased sympathy and decreased anger.

This study also supports previous research correlating emotional states of sympathy and anger with helping behavior (Weiner, 1980). This study demonstrates the relationship between these emotional states and the specific help-giving behavior of support for affirmative action, a previously unmeasured hypothesis. Hypothesis four stated the sympathy scale will correlate positively with support for affirmative action. Hypothesis five stated the anger scale will correlate negatively with the support for affirmative action scale. Both hypotheses were supported suggesting increased sympathy and decreased anger are related to supportive attitudes toward affirmative action.

A macro-evaluation of these results show associations between the following variables: liberalism → external attributional style → increased pity and decreased anger → support for affirmative action. These findings support
Weiner's (1986, as cited in Zucker and Weiner, 1993) proposal that an individual's help-giving intentions will partially result from mediating affective reactions. Past research has clearly demonstrated that affirmative action is more often supported by liberals than by conservatives (Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996). However, the current study provides possible reasons, such as attributional and emotional differences, for this political difference.

Recent studies have also offered White Guilt as a possible explanation for help-giving behavior. Specifically help-giving attitudes directed towards ethnic minority individuals who are perceived as being in a socially unjust position of inequality. Research has indicated that those who are in an advantaged state may experience guilt when systemic inequality disadvantages others. This group-based guilt has been shown to be detrimental to internal attributions for ingroup success (Branscombe, 1998, as cited in Iyer, et. al, 2003).

Because conservatism has been linked to internal attributional thinking and lack of support for affirmative action programs, future research may attempt to explain this within the context of White guilt. Are conservatives less likely to experience White guilt, and therefore maintain their internal attributional style? Would this partially explain conservatives lack of
support for affirmative action? Furthermore, intergroup emotions are often used to interpret their relationships with particular outgroups. These emotions are often predictive of how group members will act towards one another (Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000). As the current research suggests, liberals and conservatives have different emotional reactions to inequality. Does White guilt, or lack thereof, play a role in conservatives emotional experience with outgroups?

Conversely, could White guilt be used to partially explain why liberals are typically supportive of affirmative action programs? Swim and Miller (1999, as cited in Iyer, et al., 2003) have found White guilt to be predictive of support for affirmative action. Furthermore, those who experience guilt are uncomfortable with the idea that their group may be responsible for disadvantaging other groups and will attempt to ameliorate the harm to these victims (Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994).

While White guilt is based upon perceptions of unfair racial inequality it is not necessarily predictive of, or lead to supporting measures to achieve equality. This is likely due to the self-focused nature of White guilt, as opposed to measures of sympathy that have been more directly related to efforts to improve the condition of
the disadvantaged (Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003). Because the current research shows a relationship between liberalism, sympathy and support for affirmative action, White guilt does not appear, superficially, to support the variance in liberals support for these types of programs. However, further research parsing racial differences of subjects, may provide additional information in this area.

Clinical Implications

The current research may have implications for psychologists and other therapists in clinical practice, particularly when Caucasian therapists are working with ethnic minority clients. As may be expected, a therapist's lack of cultural awareness and diversity and his/her failure to recognize the impact of clients' racial backgrounds and experiences may result in decreased therapeutic effectiveness (Constantine, Juby, & Liang, 2001). This seems particularly important considering a California study showing that while 94% of therapists are white, 66% of their clients are ethnic minorities (Green, 1998, as cited in Constantine, et. al, 2001).

Other research has suggested that the therapeutic relationship is influenced not only by the therapist’s race, but also his/her attitudes toward the client and/or
the client's racial group (Franklin, 1985). Thus it is particularly important for clinicians to fully address their racial attitudes and biases that are being brought into treatment, both professionally and personally (Robinson, 1989).

Jeanne Robinson (1989), in her study of therapy with African American clients states: “At issue is whether the clinician's contextual view of problems includes an acceptance of the fact (italics added) of racism as an integral part of current social interaction between black people and white people” (p. 326). As the current research suggests, there is no clear relationship between conservatism and societal attributions of the cause for inequality. It seems likely that conservatives potential failure to recognize the role of racism with inequality may in turn adversely affect the therapeutic relationship with ethnic minority clients.

To counter the potential problem of therapists' biases interfering with the treatment process, Robinson offers questions for therapists to use to help organize their beliefs in the level of importance racism has in clients' presenting problems. First, “does the client make any statements that suggest a belief that race contributes significantly to the presenting problem”? Second, “given the context of the problem, is there evidence or reason
to believe that racism places a constraint on the client’s power to resolve the difficulty” (p. 326)? To accurately gain the client’s perspective with these questions the clinician must be cautious that concrete data or emotionality surrounding the issue does not cloud his/her interpretation. This may seem counterproductive considering the current research.

The current research points out that on the other end of the political spectrum liberals tend to blame society for inequality thus exhibiting sympathy and demonstrating a desire to take action. Too ardent a stance in this regard may also have a negative affect on the treatment process. If the therapist is seen as initiating aggressive action against racist policies or behaviors it may be ineffective and inappropriate (Robinson, 1989). Therefore, it would appear necessary for therapists of any political orientation to ensure that the client’s perception and experience of the presenting problem is understood and implemented into treatment.

**Limitations/Future Directions**

Because this research was conducted with a college age sample, rendering an average age of 19, the results may not generalize to the average population. Furthermore, all subjects were taken from one university in southern California. In order to reproduce these findings in a
more generalizable way, future research should attempt to find a population base more commensurate to the national age and include various regions of the country.

Having established a correlational pattern among liberalism $\rightarrow$ external attributional style $\rightarrow$ increased sympathy and decreased anger $\rightarrow$ support for affirmative action, future research may attempt to find clear correlations with conservatism. Specifically, changing the direction of measurement may find positive correlations among conservatism $\rightarrow$ internal attribution style $\rightarrow$ decreased sympathy and increased anger $\rightarrow$ lack of support for affirmative action. Establishing these additional correlations may allow for a clearer understanding of why conservatives typically do not support affirmative action programs. Furthermore, future research may attempt to find indifference as a third emotional variable contributing to inequality and support for affirmative action.

Specifically, further research could attempt to verify whether conservatives engage in victim blaming, as part of their internal attributional style. Attributing this type of causation is often considered a component of the fundamental attribution error, whereby personal attributes are overemphasized and environmental attributes are discounted. Furthermore, research has
shown that persons who blame victims are more willing to discriminate, as opposed to those who blame society and are less likely to discriminate (Johnson, Mullick, & Mulford, 2002).

Establishing an understanding of this fallacious attributional style may have social and clinical implications. Within society, this may impact social policy making and how the process of working towards social justice is viewed. Clinically, this may guide clinicians in directions of bias and belief searching which may in turn create better therapeutic alliances with minority clients.

Further research in this area may also provide information about non-help-giving behavior, such as hate crimes. While help-giving behavior has many attributional qualities, aggressive behavior is believed to have more attributional qualities due to it's many determinants (B. Weiner, personal communication, May 15, 2003).

Future studies may attempt to find relationships between political orientation, attributional style, emotion, and aggressive behavior. In opposition to the current research which measures support for affirmative action as a help-giving behavior, aggressive behavior could be measured in terms of hate crimes. Again, establishing a link between these variables may have
social and clinical implications. If psychologists are able to understand some of the attributional and emotional variables involved in aggressive behavior towards ethnic minorities, social policy may be affected as well as clinical insight into treating offenders of such crimes.
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Appendix A
Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a study examining attitudes and beliefs about social policy. Before you give your consent, please read the following and ask whatever questions you may have.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to learn more about people’s opinions about inequality and social policy. It is hoped that by understanding more about how different kinds of ideas relate, we will understand more about how a typical person’s opinions are formed and their decisions are made.

Procedure

If you consent to participate, you will complete a survey that will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes. If you participate, you will be asked to fill out the questionnaire, place the completed questionnaire in an envelope, and return the envelope to the researcher. When you return the envelope, put your name on the sign-up sheet so that you may receive credit for participation.

Risks

The risks of participating in this study are no more than those often encountered in everyday life. If anything about the questions causes you discomfort or concern, you may choose to withdraw at any time. To withdraw, just put the materials in the envelope, write Awithdrawn@ on the envelope, and return it to the researcher. You may still put your name on the sign-up sheet and receive credit for participation. Again, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without penalty. Your decision to end participation will not affect your class standing or credit.

Benefits

Other than fulfilling your course requirement of research participation and/or perhaps learning something about how social research is done, we do not expect you to gain any direct benefit from participating in this study. Your participation will, however, help increase our knowledge
about the research topic.

Confidentiality

Do not put your name on the questionnaire. Since names will not be attached and your responses are returned in an unidentifiable envelope, we will have no way of knowing what answers you gave. The information collected is anonymous.

Additional Costs

There is no cost to you for participating in this study.

Reimbursement

Other than the credit you may be receiving for a class, there is no reimbursement or inducements for participating in this study.

Impartial Third Party Contact

If you wish to contact an impartial third party not associated with this study regarding any questions or concerns you may have, you may contact the Office of Patient Relations in the Loma Linda University Medical Center at (909) 558-4647 for information and assistance.

Informed Consent Statement

Once you have read the contents of this consent, your completion of the questionnaire will indicate your voluntary consent to participate in this study. If you any questions, you may contact Dr. Matt L. Riggs at (909) 558B8709.

Consent Copy

You may keep this consent form for your records.

Thank you so much for your participation,

Matt L. Riggs, Ph.D
Professor, Department of Psychology
Loma Linda University

Derrick Boone, Graduate Psychology Student
Loma Linda University, Psychology Department
Appendix B
Demographic Information

Please provide the following information.

Age:_____

Gender:
M    F

Political Party:
Democrat____   Republican____   Reform Party____
Green Party____  American Independent Party____
Other (Please Specify):____________________

Ethnicity:
Native American Indian____   African American____
Anglo-American/Caucasian____   Hispanic/Latino
American____
Asian American____   Other (Please Specify)________________
Appendix C
Questionnaire

Below are nine possible causes for inequality. After reading each cause, please answer the following questions.

1. Lack of effort and laziness by minorities themselves.

A. How controllable is this cause by minority individuals?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely
Uncontrollable

B. How much sympathy do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely
Unsympathetic

C. How much anger do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Complete 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 No Anger
Anger
D. How deserving are they of government interventions, such as affirmative action?

Completely Undeserving Completely Deserving

2. No attempts at self-improvement among minorities.

A. How controllable is this cause by minority individuals?

Completely Uncontrollable Completely Controllable

B. How much sympathy do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Completely Unsympathetic Completely Sympathetic

C. How much anger do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Complete Anger No Anger

D. How deserving are they of government interventions,
such as affirmative action?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely
Undeserving Deserving

3. Failure of society to provide good educational opportunities for many Americans

A. How controllable is this cause by minority individuals?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely
Uncontrollable Controllable

B. How much sympathy do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely
Unsympathetic Sympathetic

C. How much anger do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Complete 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 No Anger
Anger
D. How deserving are they of government interventions, such as affirmative action?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Undeserving

Deserving

4. Failure of society to be open to a diverse work force

A. How controllable is this cause by minority individuals?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Uncontrollable

Controllable

B. How much sympathy do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Unsympathetic

Sympathetic

C. How much anger do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Complete 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 No Anger

Anger
D. How deserving are they of government interventions, such as affirmative action?

| Completely | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Completely |
| Undeserving | | | | | | | | Deserving |

5. Prejudice and discrimination against minorities

A. How controllable is this cause by minority individuals?

| Completely | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Completely |
| Uncontrollable | | | | | | | | Controllable |

B. How much sympathy do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

| Completely | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Completely |
| Unsympathetic | | | | | | | | Sympathetic |

C. How much anger do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

| Complete | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | No Anger |
| Anger | | | | | | | | |
D. How deserving are they of government interventions, such as affirmative action?

Completely Undeserving

6. Being taken advantage of by those in the majority sector

A. How controllable is this cause by minority individuals?

Completely Uncontrollable

B. How much sympathy do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Completely Unsympathetic

C. How much anger do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Complete Anger
D. How deserving are they of government interventions, such as affirmative action?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely
Undeserving Deserving

7. Lower wages in some businesses and industries

A. How controllable is this cause by minority individuals?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely
Uncontrollable Controllable

B. How much sympathy do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely
Unsympathetic Sympathetic

C. How much anger do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Complete 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 No Anger
Anger
D. How deserving are they of government interventions, such as affirmative action?

Completely  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Completely
Undeserving  Deserving

8. Lack of ability and talent among minorities

A. How controllable is this cause by minority individuals?

Completely  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Completely
Uncontrollable  Controllable

B. How much sympathy do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Completely  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  Completely
Unsympathetic  Sympathetic

C. How much anger do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Complete  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  No Anger
Anger
D. How deserving are they of government interventions, such as affirmative action?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely
Undeserving Deserving

9. Just bad luck

A. How controllable is this cause by minority individuals?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely
Uncontrollable Controllable

B. How much sympathy do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely
Unsympathetic Sympathetic

C. How much anger do you feel for people who are in an unequal state for this reason?

Complete 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 No Anger
Anger
D. How deserving are they of government interventions, such as affirmative action?

Completely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely
Undeserving Deserving
Appendix D
Figures

Figure 1
Figure 2

![Histogram of Sympathy scores with mean, standard deviation, and sample size.]
Figure 3

Anger

Std. Dev = 11.27
Mean = 40.0
N = 145.00
Figure 4

Affirmative Action

Std. Dev = 10.16
Mean = 38.7
N = 145.00
Figure 5

Hypothesis 1

Attribution & Political Beliefs

Political Beliefs

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

0 10 20 30 40 50 60

Attribution
Figure 6
Hypothesis 2

Attribution & Sympathy

Sympathy

Attribution
Figure 7
Hypothesis 3

Attribution & Anger

![Scatter plot showing the relationship between Attribution and Anger.](image)
Figure 8
Hypothesis 4

Affirmative Action & Sympathy

Sympathy

Af. Action
Figure 9
Hypothesis 5

Affirmative Action & Anger

Anger

Afr Action
Figure 10
Comparison of Party and Support for Affirmative Action
Figure 11
Comparison of Gender and Support for Affirmative Action
Figure 12
Comparison of Ethnicity and Support for Affirmative Action