

Selection Procedure and Responses to Affirmative Action

The Case of Favorable Treatment*

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Although it has been recognized that a large number of issues linked to the social policy of affirmative action are of a social psychological nature, research investigating such issues has not considered the social psychological importance of implementation procedures. Social policy analysts have differentiated implementation procedures on the degree to which they include relevant achievement criteria. In the present research this differentiation is couched within the theoretical framework of procedural justice and is utilized to critique the work of Austin et al. (1977). These researchers investigated the responses of individuals favorably treated in an affirmative action like situation and conclude that affirmative action is evaluated as "absolutely" unfair by these individuals. Based on the critique, a 2 (qualifications) × 2 (history of discrimination) × 2 (procedure) role play experiment was conducted. The results of the experiment unambiguously support the hypothesis that implementation procedure will greatly affect a variety of individual responses such as general affect, evaluations of procedural fairness, evaluations of outcome fairness, and evaluations of a relevant subunit of the involved institution.

INTRODUCTION

Affirmative action is an issue which has captured some attention from social psychologists. For the most part social psychologists have focused on reactions to the proposal of affirmative action and thereby attempted to provide some explanation for these reactions. These attempts have varied from mere speculation derived from a particular theoretical framework such as equity (see Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1976), to empirical investigations of attitudes toward affir-

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mative action proposals utilizing opinion surveys (e.g., Rothbart, 1976), as well as experimental research investigating the role of attitudes toward a targeted group (e.g., blacks) in responses to possible variations of the social policy (see Jones & Cook, 1975). Most recently, attention has been directed toward potential social psychological consequences linked to the presence of affirmative action programs (for example, Garcia, Erskine, Hawn, & Casmay, 1981; Solomon, Moehle, & Schopler, Note 1). Research of particular interest has focused on the reactions of individuals affected by affirmative action.

Austin, Friedman, Martz, Hooe, and Ball (1977) investigated the responses of individuals positively affected within an experimentally realized affirmative action like situation. Manipulating individual qualifications and later success on the job, these researchers demonstrate the impact of those variables on measures of mood, ratings of deservingness and fairness of the selection procedure. In two experiments, little absolute change was observed in the ratings of the fairness of the selection procedure. In both cases the grand mean of these ratings did not move above the midpoint of the 100 point scale. Consequently, Austin et al. conclude that “. . . the *procedure* of affirmative sexual discrimination renders situations unfair even when normal standards of distributive justice are satisfied” (p. 292).

Throughout their discussion Austin et al. (1977) suggest that they have demonstrated that the procedure of affirmative action is viewed as unfair by the recipients of the favorable treatment. This argument seems premature given that they make no procedural comparisons. There is reason to believe that manipulations of type of procedure, above and beyond a particular distribution bias is necessary.

In a series of investigations, Thibaut and Walker (1975) and others (Latour et al., 1976; Houlden et al., 1976; Lind et al., 1978) have demonstrated a variety of components which influence the perception of a procedure as fair. Generally, the distribution of control between disputants and a third party decisionmaker seems the prepotent variable. This factor is important in spite of the manner in which outcomes are finally distributed. Of course, conclusions regarding the effect of procedure can only be legitimately offered where comparisons between procedures have been obtained. Still, Austin et al. (1977) make the aforementioned statement, in spite of the lack of any manipulation of levels or types of procedure.

In effect, the conclusion drawn by Austin et al. (1977) assumes that there is only one possible implementation procedure for the institution of a program of affirmative action or at least that only one is used. This assumption however is at variance with the state of argument and controversy surrounding affirmative action which clearly concerns the manner in which it should be implemented and the political and psychological implications of utilizing one or another procedure (Bolner, 1977; Gilbert & Eaton, 1977). Much of the litigation surrounding affirmative action seems not to focus on the rightness or wrongness of the concept of equal opportunity and the making of reparations to historically disadvantaged groups, but seems aimed at questions of procedure. One might reasonably conclude that most of the litigation and controversy has arisen at least in part as a feature of the search for a proper and/or fair procedure.

Indeed, even among those individuals on different sides of the issue this point provides some common ground. For example, Thomas Sowell, an economist who is an opponent of affirmative action notes the following:

Many different policies have gone under the general label of "affirmative action", and many different organizations—courts, executive agencies, and even private organizations—have got involved in formulating or interpreting the meaning of that term. The conflicting tendencies and pressures of these various institutions have shifted the meaning of "affirmative action" and produced inconsistent concepts at the same time. There is no way to determine *the* meaning of "affirmative action". All that can be done is to examine the particulars, the concepts, intentions and actual effects. [1976, p. 49].

Likewise, Seligman (1973), who is ideologically in favor of affirmative action, observes the following:

In most of the controversy over quotas, there is no real disagreement about ultimate objectives. Most educated Americans today would agree that several minorities, and women, suffer from discrimination in employment, that the discrimination is destructive and irrational, and that working to end it is a proper activity for government. Unfortunately, it is not clear what government should do and all too clear that wise policies do not flow naturally from good intentions [p. 161].

The availability of discussions of this type provides a sound basis for arguing that affirmative action is not an all or none issue. Likewise, discussions of various postures of nondiscrimination (for example, Pottinger, 1972; Seligman, 1973) suggest that there are a number of possible implementational variations, and the utilization of a variety of procedures has been documented (see U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1977, and Supreme Court of the United States, *University of California v. Bakke*, 1978). Thus Austin et al. (1977) do not manipulate what is minimally required to enable them to draw conclusions regarding procedure. Moreover, it may be that they have not manipulated what is a crucial determinant of responses to affirmative action.

In a relevant paper, Gilbert and Eaton (1977) discuss favoritism as a strategy for compensating those who are disadvantaged, in some sense, as a result of discrimination. Though they restrict themselves to the area of racial discrimination their observations are also applicable to the area of sexual discrimination.

Gilbert and Eaton (1977) make a distinction between preferential treatment and discrimination-in-reverse as strategies of favoritism. They define preferential treatment as follows:

A social policy in compensation for past services, past or present injustices or handicaps, whereby affiliation with a group of victims is included as one of the relevant criteria given positive weight in determining the allocation of services, opportunities and resources [p. 56].

Discrimination-in-reverse is defined as follows:

A social policy in compensation for past services, past or present injustices, or handicaps, whereby the allocation of services, opportunities, and resources is based primarily upon group affiliation, to the exclusion or subordination of technically relevant criteria for determining such allocations [p. 57].

In their conceptual analysis of these "procedures" Gilbert and Eaton note

that the major difference between them is the role of achievement criteria. Plainly embodied in the notion of preferential treatment is the concept of an achievement criterion. However, this is not the case in the procedure of discrimination-in-reverse. As they view it, "Discrimination-in-reverse subordinates considerations of individual achievement to a desired social policy objective" (p. 59). That is, the procedure of discrimination-in-reverse has as a basic component the notion of absolute advantage to a once oppressed group in competition for "esteemed social roles" or any scarce resource.

Having conceptualized these procedural possibilities, Gilbert and Eaton (1977) go on to raise the question of the implications of their utilization. Lacking any comparative data they make no definitive statements regarding the consequences of the implementation of either procedure but do speculate that discrimination-in-reverse would be generally objectionable to members of society. Casting the procedures in the light of findings in the domain of procedural justice provides at least some conceptual validity to their speculation.

As mentioned, researchers in the area of procedural justice having investigated various factors involved in the perception of a procedure as fair point to the importance of distribution of control (Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Briefly, distribution of control has to do with whether or not the procedure allows disputants or litigants some degree of control over the proceedings. In the legal setting this has to do with disputants' opportunity to choose a representative and through that representative present their side of the case in the most favorable light possible. Speaking in more general terms the procedure perceived as fairer insures that the involved parties will have the opportunity to present particular circumstances, that is, equity considerations surrounding their situation.

Thus legal procedures may be thought of as varying in the degree to which they provide the mechanisms through which any equity inputs of disputants will be considered. This conceptualization can be extended to the two procedures considered by Gilbert and Eaton (1977) for the implementing of reparations to disadvantaged groups. The procedure referred to as preferential treatment clearly takes into account equity inputs, in this instance merit or achievement factors. The procedure referred to as discrimination-in-reverse however does not do so, making a commitment to the idea of *absolute* advantage and eschewing technically relevant criteria. One might consider the distinction between the two as at least analogous to the distinction (made in the procedural justice literature) between an equity and a legalistic procedure. Given this, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that certain procedural variations will have important and different social psychological consequences.

In line with this reasoning, an experiment is conducted which investigates the role of procedure in responses to outcome distributions carried out in a manner consistent with the general thrust of affirmative action. The experiment parallels in many respects the work of Austin et al. (1977), in particular the role play study. Aside from the general theoretical issue of concern, this research is conducted in the belief that Austin et al. have provided a base for investigating a potentially large problem area in settings where affirmative action is accepted policy, that being the personal distress which might be suffered by minority in-

dividuals. It is of course of some importance to investigate whether one affirmative action procedure is more likely than another to lead to distress and self-doubt amongst minority individuals.

Experimental Variables and Predictions

In the investigation three independent variables are manipulated: qualifications, procedure, and past history of discrimination. The manipulation of qualification follows that used by Austin et al. (1977) and is expected independently to influence mood responses, ratings of the fairness of the procedure and feelings of deservingness. Subjects in the superior qualifications condition are expected to show more positive mood, perceived fairness, and rated deservingness than those in the nonsuperior condition. If the predictions hold, the results would replicate the findings obtained by Austin et al. for the qualifications variable.

The procedure manipulation is of course carried out in a manner consistent with the distinction drawn between a preferential treatment procedure and a discrimination-in-reverse procedure. This manipulation is expected to influence ratings of the fairness of the procedure and also the amount of personal distress (or negative mood) displayed by individuals experiencing favorable treatment. Subjects in the preferential treatment condition are expected to evaluate the procedure as fairer as well as showing more positive mood than those in the discrimination-in-reverse condition.

A manipulation of past history of institutional discrimination is introduced because this potential variable was confounded with other variables in the Austin et al. role play study. In the scenario used by these researchers the statement that, "It was apparent to the committee that too much money has been awarded to (male or female) faculty members" (p. 294) was present across conditions. Manipulation of this variable is expected to have impact on ratings of fairness, overall deservingness as well as measures of mood or affect. Subjects made aware of some history of discrimination are expected to respond more positively toward the final decision, show more positive affect, as well as demonstrate stronger feelings of deservingness than those who are not aware.

METHOD

Subjects

Ninety-six female undergraduate introductory psychology students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill participated in the experiment. Participation in experiments was a partial requirement for course credit.

Independent Variables

The experimental factors manipulated were qualifications, procedure and past history of institutional discrimination. Two levels of each variable are manipulated. Thus the experimental design is 2 (qualifications) \times 2 (history) \times 2

(procedure). Subjects were randomly assigned to each condition in equal numbers. Thus the design is completely orthogonal with 12 subjects in each condition.

Procedure

Subjects reported to an experimental room for participation in an experiment entitled "Decision Evaluations." Subjects were greeted by a male experimenter who brought them into the experimental room where they were seated. The experimenter then told the subjects that the general focus of the experiment they would be participating in was decision making. Continuing, the experimenter informed the subjects that he had been doing research on various aspects of decision making and trying to apply that research to some issues that arise in business and industry. The purpose of the particular study the subjects would be participating in was said to be understanding how people evaluate decisions made by committees. To accomplish this subjects would be asked to read a story and try and put themselves in the place of one of the individuals in the story. The experimenter went on to say that putting yourself in the place of one of the persons simply means responding as if what happens to them actually happens to you. Subjects were informed that once they had read the story they would be given a questionnaire which they should complete as if they were the individual in the story. At this point subjects were asked to take a folder which contained further instructions and the scenario. Subjects picked a folder from a set of available folders and were then directed to cubicles where they read a set of instructions and the scenario.

The instructions were as follows:

As the experimenter has already indicated, what you are being asked to do is to place yourself in the position of one of the people in the story you read in order to evaluate a decision affecting the individual. While you are reading the story and afterwards you should try to imagine how you would have felt and how you would have evaluated the decision process. Then fill out the questionnaire that follows.

The story concerns two college professors applying for a research grant. This particular situation is similar to that of applying for a job with a business firm. As you read the story, place yourself in the position of Professor Barbara Macklin. You should assume that Professor Macklin is aware of all the information you read including the manner in which the decision is made.

The scenario itself centered around the offering of a \$10,000.00 research award by the English department at a large university in the United States. It was after "a long and tedious selection process that the field of competitive applications had been narrowed down to two professors," a male professor, James Freeman, and a female professor, Barbara Macklin. At this point in the scenario the qualification manipulation was introduced by the following statement:

The selection committee is in unanimous agreement that (the male or female professor) possesses superior qualifications.

The scenario continued:

However, the committee also had to be sensitive to university administration pressure concerning the proper distribution of research money on the basis of the researchers sex. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare had recently cut funds to those universities who had disproportionately allocated funds.

At this point a statement relevant to a past history of discrimination was either included (clear history of discrimination) or omitted (ambiguous history condition). When included, the statement read as follows:

A university wide evaluation of the distribution of funds on the basis of sex had clearly demonstrated that this committee had in the past awarded far too much money to male applicants.

The remainder of the scenario constituted the manipulation of procedure and in the inequity (or the discrimination-in-reverse) procedure condition read as follows:

The current policy of the university administration states that sex of the applicant is to be considered very important. Because of this consideration the committee decided to award the grant to Professor Macklin. This was ultimately the basis for their final decision.

This is equivalent to the procedure utilized by Austin et al. (1977).

In the equity (or preferential treatment) procedure condition the scenario read as follows:

The current policy of the university administration states that sex of an applicant is only to be considered when it has been determined that the applicants have the necessary level of qualification. Taking both sex and qualifications under consideration the committee decided to award the grant to Professor Macklin. The weighting of both qualifications and sex constituted the basis for their final decision.

After reading the scenario subjects completed a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to check manipulations, measure mood states, perceptions of fairness of the procedure, fairness of the final decision, feelings of control over the decision, perceptions of the competence of the committee, the degree to which they felt the selection procedure favored themselves or the other professor, likelihood that they would have reached the same decision as the committee, feelings of deservingness, and the extent to which subjects had difficulty placing themselves in the position of Professor Macklin. Subjects responded to these items on a 100-millimeter line with appropriate end points.

Upon completion of the questionnaire subjects were asked what they thought of the situation, and how it made them feel personally. Subjects were then debriefed and asked not to discuss the experiment with other introductory psychology students.

RESULTS

The dependent variables were submitted to a three-factor analysis of vari-

ance. Similar items (e.g., the fairness items) were clustered and analyzed multivariately.

Manipulation Checks

All subjects seemed to have been aware of which professor they had been asked to role play. One hundred percent of the subjects responded correctly to such an item. Likewise, the manipulation of qualifications appears to have been successful. When asked which professor was best qualified to receive the grant 95.8% of the subjects (46 of 48) responded correctly when they were said to have superior qualifications and 87.5% (43 of 48) responded correctly when the other professor was said to have superior qualifications.

As a check on the effectiveness of the procedure manipulation, subjects responded to the question, "In the selection procedure used by the committee how much importance do you think was given to each professor's qualifications?", and also to the question "In the selection procedure used by the committee how much importance do you think was given to the sex of each professor?" (see Table 1).

As expected, a multivariate main effect for procedure was obtained [$F(1,88) = 21.113, p < .001$]. The preferential treatment procedure was viewed as giving more weight to qualifications than the discrimination-in-reverse procedure [$F(1,88) = 32.428, p < 0.001$] and the discrimination-in-reverse procedure was viewed as giving more weight to the sex of the applicant than the preferential treatment procedure [$F(1,88) = 20.074, p < 0.001$].

Additionally, a multivariate main effect for qualifications was also obtained for these items [$F(1,88) = 9.311, p < 0.001$]. Subjects role-playing the professor described as having superior qualifications felt the procedure gave more weight to qualifications than subjects role-playing the other professor [$F(1,88) = 17.248, p < 0.001$]. On the other hand, subjects role playing the professor described as having superior qualifications felt that sex was given less weight than subjects role-playing the other professor [$F(1,88) = 4.910, p < 0.029$]. All in all, the manipulations appear to have been successful.

Affective Responses

Subjects responded to a total of nine mood adjective measures. The mood measures were 100-point bipolar items with end points being good/bad, tense/relaxed, pleased/displeased, competent/incompetent, complimented/offended, happy/unhappy, angry/composed, satisfied/dissatisfied, and irritated/untroubled. These items were scored so that higher numbers indicate a more positive (or less distressed) response. Scores on these items were summed and a mean of the summed score was calculated for each subject (see Table 2). This transformation provides what is taken to be a scale of general affect.¹ To ascertain the reliability

¹ A copy of the descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, etc.) for each of the individual affective items is available from the author.

Table 1. Means of Manipulation Check Variables by Experimental Conditions: Procedure \times History \times Qualifications

	Preferential treatment procedure			Discrimination-in-reverse procedure				
	Clear history		Ambiguous history	Clear history		Ambiguous history		
	Superior	Not superior	Superior	Not superior	Superior	Not superior		
Importance given to qualifications	81.7	62.8	82.1	50.8	44.1	22.7	52.9	34.9
Importance given to sex	68.5	94.8	67.7	72.7	89.6	97.3	96.3	93.5

Variables:

of this general affect scale, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated and found to be of an acceptable level (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.93).

Given the evidence that the scale items were measuring the same type of response the general affect measure was used as the dependent variable in lieu of an analysis of individual items. The analysis revealed that subjects role-playing a professor described as having superior qualifications displayed more positive affect than subjects role-playing the other professor [$F(1,88) = 21.612, p < 0.001$]. Also subjects in the preferential treatment condition demonstrated more positive affect than subjects in the discrimination-in-reverse condition [$F(1,88) = 11.475, p < 0.001$].

In addition to main effects for qualifications and procedure, the interaction of history and procedure was obtained [$F(1,88) = 3.284, p < 0.073$]. This interaction seems to be due to the effects of procedure being intensified in the presence of historical information implying past discrimination against females. Indeed, there is little or no difference between responses by procedural condition in the ambiguous history condition (see Table 3). Simple effects tests show no differences on the basis of procedure in the ambiguous history condition [$F(1,88) = 1.241, p < 0.27$] whereas a significant difference by procedure is obtained in the clear history condition [$F(1,88) = 13.519, p < 0.001$].

Fairness and Deservingness

Subjects responded to two fairness items which were clustered for the analysis. One item focused on the fairness of the selection procedure and the other on the fairness of the final decision. The analysis revealed multivariate main effects for qualifications [$F(1,88) = 13.64, p < 0.001$] and procedure [$F(1,88) = 10.538, p < 0.001$]. Subjects role-playing the professor described as having superior qualifications viewed the selection procedure [$F(1,88) = 5.466, p < 0.022$] and the final decision [$F(1,88) = 27.583, p < 0.001$] as fairer than did subjects role-playing the other professor. Similarly, both the selection procedure [$F(1,88) = 11.199, p < 0.001$] and the final decision [$F(1,88) = 19.072, p < 0.001$] were viewed as fairer by subjects in the preferential treatment condition as compared to subjects in the discrimination-in-reverse condition.

Subjects also responded to items regarding deservingness and likelihood of reaching the same decision as did the committee. Analysis of these responses revealed that subjects in the superior qualifications condition felt more deserving of the grant [$F(1,88) = 45.526, p < 0.001$] as well as indicating a higher likelihood of reaching a similar decision [$F(1,88) = 35.444, p < 0.001$] than did subjects in the not superior qualifications condition. Furthermore, subjects in the clear history condition felt more deserving of the grant than subjects in the ambiguous history condition [$F(1,88) = 4.490, p < 0.037$].

Additionally, a significant interaction of qualifications and procedure was obtained for subjects' estimation of the likelihood that they would have reached the same decision as did the committee [$F(1,88) = 5.239, p < 0.024$]. This interaction effect is the result of differential responding to the procedure manipulation in the superior qualifications condition (see Table 4). Simple effects test reveal

Table 2. Means for Major Dependent Variables by Experimental Conditions: Procedure x History x Qualifications

	Preferential treatment procedure				Discrimination-in-reverse procedure			
	Clear history		Ambiguous history		Clear history		Ambiguous history	
	Superior	Not superior	Superior	Not superior	Superior	Not superior	Superior	Not superior
Dependent variables:								
General affect	82.3	65.5	79.8	37.3	64.9	52.3	63.9	54.3
Fairness of the selection procedure	69.3	53.4	64.4	48.8	40.2	31.5	49.9	35.0
Fairness of the final decision	79.7	47.3	69.0	29.0	45.6	21.8	40.1	24.6
Deservingness	93.4	58.1	88.8	55.4	90.7	66.4	81.0	42.7
Likelihood of reaching the same decision	82.1	42.2	78.1	28.2	59.6	44.2	59.5	34.9
Personal control over outcome	22.8	24.9	31.9	21.7	26.5	18.7	16.6	12.7
Average individual's control	18.5	23.3	28.7	08.5	19.1	11.9	12.4	13.1
Committee Control over final decision	74.5	69.9	74.8	55.3	61.8	58.3	77.6	59.4
Procedure favors self	73.3	70.8	82.5	72.6	69.2	68.2	92.5	79.3
Procedure favors other	36.1	38.4	27.1	36.5	29.5	53.1	20.1	24.4
Committee competence	85.3	65.8	78.8	52.4	57.9	40.5	53.5	51.1
Difficulty of role-playing	16.3	33.8	20.9	48.7	25.9	37.1	13.2	40.1

Table 3. Means for the Interaction of Procedure and History on General Affect

Preferential treatment procedure		Discrimination-in-reverse procedure	
Clear history	Ambiguous history	Clear history	Ambiguous history
73.9	66.0	51.1	59.1

that the difference between procedure conditions within the superior qualifications condition is significant [$F(1,88) = 7.112, p < 0.009$] whereas the difference in the not superior condition is not [$F(1,88) = 0.325, ns$].

Other Dependent Variables

Other dependent variable items focused on feelings of control over outcome, the degree of control an average other would have in such a situation, the amount of control the committee had over the final decision and the selection process, the degree to which the selection procedure was viewed as favoring self, the degree to which the selection procedure was viewed as favoring the other professor, perceptions of the competence of the committee and finally, the amount of difficulty they experienced in placing themselves in the position of the appropriate professor. No reliable effects were obtained on the perceived control variables.

Analysis of the items focusing on the degree to which the procedure favored themselves or the other professor revealed a multivariate main effect for history [$F(1,88) = 3.158, p < 0.047$]. Subjects in the clear history condition felt that the procedure was less in their favor [$F(1,88) = 4.235, p < 0.043$] and more in favor of the other professor [$F(1,88) = 4.96, p < 0.028$] than subjects in the ambiguous history condition.

Subjects' evaluation of the committee indicated that subjects thought the committee more competent when they were in the superior qualifications condition as compared to the not superior condition [$F(1,88) = 9.79, p < 0.001$]. Additionally, subjects in the preferential treatment condition evaluated the committee more positively than did subjects in the discrimination-in-reverse condition [$F(1,88) = 13.253, p < 0.001$].

Finally, subjects responded on a 100-point scale to an item which asked, "How difficult was it for you to place yourself in the position of the appropriate professor?" The logic underlying the posing of this question involved the possi-

Table 4. Means for the Interaction of Procedure and Qualifications on Likelihood of Reaching the Same Decision

Preferential treatment procedure		Discrimination-in-reverse procedure	
Superior	Not superior	Superior	Not superior
80.1	35.2	59.6	39.6

bility that subjects who have great difficulty role playing might respond differentially on affective and fairness measures. Likewise, it seemed necessary to check the degree to which the experimental manipulations might affect such difficulty. Analysis of this item demonstrated that subjects had less difficulty role playing when in the superior qualifications condition than when in the not superior qualifications condition [$F(1,88) = 12.009, p < 0.001$].

In order to get some indication of the extent to which difficulty of role playing influences responding on major dependent variables, correlations between certain dependent variable items and difficulty were calculated. Degree of difficulty role playing was correlated with general affect ($r = -0.07$), fairness of the selection procedure ($r = -0.12$), fairness of the final decision ($r = -0.10$), and deserv- ingness ($r = -0.10$). No significant correlations were obtained between difficulty of role playing and these major dependent variables.

DISCUSSION

The working principle which guided the present experiment was that in order to understand responses to affirmative action it would be necessary to conceptualize and manipulate its procedural variates. The results of the experiment provide strong empirical support for this general point. Independent procedural effects were obtained on dependent variables including general affect, fairness of the selection procedure, fairness of the final decision, and evaluation of committee competence. Additionally, a significant interaction between qualifications and procedure was obtained on the dependent variable item likelihood of reaching the same decision as the committee.

Of some interest is the main effect for procedure on the measure of general affect and fairness of the final decision. Although predicted, the full implications of these findings are not necessarily apparent. With regard to affective responding it was initially thought that obtaining a procedure effect would provide some plausible link between procedure and likelihood of successful psychological adjustment to the setting. However, when it became clear that the items were in essence measuring a unidimensional general evaluation response, the variables were analyzed summarily. Thus no direct evidence is available regarding potential adjustment difficulty. The results of the analysis of these responses do however demonstrate an effect on subjects' emotional state as a result of the procedure utilized. This suggests indirectly that to the extent these measures tap some aspect of the affective psychological state, procedure may impact upon adjustment. In addition to this, the procedure effect on affective responses suggest that subjects were psychologically involved in the situation and not just passive observers. This implication can be inferred from work done in the procedural justice tradition (e.g., Walker, Lind, & Thibaut, 1979).

Walker, Lind, and Thibaut (1979) in an attempt to delineate the interrelationship of procedural and distributive justice investigated the role of participation versus nonparticipation in responses to procedural and distributive variables. To

accomplish this subjects were differentially linked to the general situation so that one set of subjects was directly involved in some litigation, another set was involved as the result of having yoked outcomes (e.g., stock holders, or members of a certain class of individuals involved in a class action litigation) and finally general observers. Of particular interest is the finding that with regard to responses to the outcome of the litigation only subjects in a participatory role showed more favorable reactions on the basis of the procedure utilized. Regardless of outcome, only subjects actually involved in the litigation showed more positivity in their feelings (satisfaction) and ratings of the outcome when an adversary (or equity-oriented) procedure was utilized than when a nonadversary (or legalistically oriented) procedure was utilized. The outcome was viewed as more acceptable under the adversary procedure by participating or involved subjects, whereas subjects with yoked outcomes and observer subjects show no effects for procedure on acceptability of outcome.

These findings are pertinent to the present results since procedural affects were obtained both on subjects' affective responses and on the evaluation of the fairness of the outcome. Given that pattern of results it is not unreasonable to infer that subjects in the present experiment were psychologically involved in the situation. Based on the findings of Walker et al. (1979) these effects would be expected only of subjects actively involved in some litigation.

Returning to the issue of the importance of considering procedural variations in the context of affirmative action, recall the conclusion drawn by Austin et al (1977). These researchers have argued that the *procedure* of affirmative action is viewed as "absolutely unfair." However, the results of the present experiment raise doubts regarding their assertion. It is not clear that the procedure of affirmative action is *necessarily* unfair. In the present experiment, subjects were exposed to a situation in which an institutional unit is under some pressure to treat females equitably or lose its funding and further the female always receives the good outcome. If it were the case that affirmative action were perceived as generally unfair then procedure should make no difference. However, a main effect for procedure on the fairness of the selection procedure item was obtained.

Of course, the attainment of differences between two procedures does not directly address the charge of absolute unfairness. It is possible to obtain a statistically significant difference between two procedures that are generally abhorred. The discussion of the absolute fairness rating by Austin et al. suggest that they conclude affirmative action is something generally repulsive. Their discussion of absolute ratings comes from scrutinization of a grand mean. One weakness in their argument on this point is their failure to statistically test the difference of the grand mean from zero (the absolute unfairness point on the 100-point scale). Since in the present experiment two procedures were utilized, it is possible to test the difference of the grand mean from zero for each procedure. Such an analysis would provide a relevant test of the validity of Austin et al.'s arguments.

It turns out that the grand mean of the selection procedure item for both the preferential treatment procedure (grand mean = 59.0) and the grand mean for the discrimination-in-reverse procedure (grand mean = 39.1) are significantly different from zero [$F(1,88) = 197.11, p < 0.001$ and $F(1,88) = 86.618, p < 0.001$,

respectively]. Thus it appears that Austin et al.'s claim of absolute unfairness is inaccurate. This is true even for the discrimination-in-reverse procedure, which is similar to the one used by those researchers. Still, the question of how fair these procedures are perceived to be remains of interest.

It is possible that though these procedures are viewed as encompassing different degrees of fairness, they are both seen as below or at the midpoint of the fairness scale. If this were the case then it would suggest that affirmative action, while not absolutely unfair, is nevertheless viewed as generally unfair. To investigate this, the difference between the midpoint of the scale (50), the hypothetical neutral rating, and each subject's rating of the fairness of the selection procedure was calculated (i.e., the subject's rating of the selection procedure minus 50). The grand mean of these scores for each procedure was calculated; the grand mean for the preferential treatment procedure was +9.1 and for the discrimination-in-reverse procedure was -10.9. Of course a positive grand mean indicates that on the average subjects rate the procedure above the midpoint (i.e., as fair), whereas a negative grand mean indicates that on the average subjects rate the procedure below the midpoint (i.e., as unfair). Again the grand mean test of significance from zero is significant for both the discrimination-in-reverse procedure [$F(1,88) = 6.659, p < 0.001$] and the preferential treatment procedure [$F(1,88) = 4.632, [F(1,88) = 0.034]$]. In this case, however, the significant differences have divergent implications. To the extent that the midpoint is interpretable, the fact that the discrimination-in-reverse procedure scores were significantly below the midpoint implies that it is viewed as unfair. Likewise, the fact that the preferential treatment score is significantly above the midpoint implies that as a procedure, it is viewed as fair, although certainly not absolutely fair.

These findings taken together with that of the general finding of greater perceived fairness being linked to the preferential treatment procedure provides further indication that affirmative action is not necessarily viewed as unfair. Of course, these findings are limited to those favorably treated in an affirmative action context. However, it is believed that because of the nature and potency of the procedural difference a procedural variation would also mediate the response of those whose outcomes are negatively affected. It appears that the inclusion and consideration of achievement criteria (equity concerns), is an exceedingly important linkage in understanding an individual's responses to the resolution of this type of conflict.

Other findings worth noting involve the qualification and history of discrimination variables. Qualifications mediated subjects' affective responses, feelings of deservingness as well as evaluations of the selection procedure and committee competence. Many of these effects replicate those obtained by Austin et al. (1977). More important, these findings point to the necessity of taking into account individual's knowledge or perception of their own qualifications.

The history main effect on deservingness is interesting in its suggestion that subjects viewed their individual endeavor in the context of how their group had been generally treated in the relevant domain. It appears that because females as a group had apparently not been treated fairly, these female subjects generally felt more deserving of the good outcome.

The effects of history of discrimination related to procedural bias are at first

somewhat puzzling. Subjects indicated that they felt the selection procedure favored them less and the other professor more in the clear history condition. Since the scenario subjects read emphasized pressure on the university to allocate funds without bias with regards to sex or lose their funding, evidence implicating the committee in past discrimination would seem to increase the odds that the committee would choose a female. Thus one might have expected a history main effect but in the reverse direction of what was actually obtained.

Although the above reasoning has some intuitive appeal there is another possibility. The underlying assumption of the logic outlined was that the information would be viewed by subjects as a constraint on the behavior of the committee. Although this is plausible it is not necessarily the case for the favoritism items. In terms of which person is favored by the selection procedure it is possible that subjects view the history information as an indication of either a structural bias of the procedure or as an indication of bias operating in the committee itself. When subjects are queried regarding the direction of bias in the procedure utilized they are given no information to suggest that the procedure used in their case is either new or revamped in any way. It is possible then, that this is the procedure which has been used all along. Consequently, when information implying that sexual discrimination has occurred in the past is available, drawing the conclusion that the procedure utilized does in fact favor males is not unreasonable. The history-of-discrimination information may in this case serve as evidence that the procedure utilized is defective or flawed in some way. Overall, it appears that history of discrimination is an important contextual variable to consider within the domain of responses to affirmative action.

IMPLICATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

The results of the experiment clearly demonstrate the important role of procedure in responses to favorable treatment brought about as a function of affirmative action. More specifically, the results demonstrate that different implementation procedures of affirmative action have important social psychological consequences. An obvious research implication of these findings points to the necessity of extending the theoretical reasoning and logic to encompass individuals in different interdependence locations to the conflict, such as those whose outcomes are negatively affected and general observers. In the context of the latter, the issue of the negative consequences of affirmative action linked to attributional discounting processes (Garcia et al., 1981; Solomon et al., Note 1) seems particularly amenable to a procedural analysis.

Moreover, the results of the foregoing experiment suggest some policy implications. The demonstration of an important role of implementation procedure in evaluations of the social policy of affirmative action is particularly significant in light of the tone of the Supreme Court decision in the case of *University of California v. Allan Bakke* (1978). Briefly, the Supreme Court, in addressing the challenge of an affirmative action policy by Allan Bakke, ruled in favor of Bakke

on the basis that the program in question did not provide individualized treatment of applicants. At the same time the court ruled that considerations of race, national origin, sex, etc. were allowable in an attempt to reach certain goals such as remedying the effects of past discrimination and increasing diversity amongst the population of the organization in question. In essence the court ruled that only the procedure used by the University of California was inappropriate. Thus the experiment under discussion, having demonstrated relevant social psychological consequences of two potential procedures, should provide additional impetus for those charged with policy implementation to reevaluate their organization's current affirmative action stance. And, of course, it is imperative to address the practical issues surrounding actual implementation of the procedure suggested as "preferred" by this research.

REFERENCE NOTE

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