

Conclusion

Theories of modern forms of prejudice provide explanations for the incongruities between many individuals' nonprejudiced outward expressions and internalized feelings of bias. The new measurement techniques that tap these internal and often unconscious biases enable researchers to explore the impact of these internalized biases on behavior and the extent to which they are amenable to change. Understanding the psychological underpinnings of modern forms of prejudice, combined with skillful measurement techniques, provides a framework and the tools for developing and evaluating interventions for the reduction of prejudice and discrimination.

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See also Ambivalent Sexism; Aversive Racism; Conservatism; Implicit Association Test (IAT); Implicit Prejudice; Modern Racism; Modern Sexism; Prejudice; Protestant Work Ethic; Racial Ambivalence Theory; Racism; Stereotyping; Symbolic Racism

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MODERN RACISM

Modern racism is a form of prejudice against African Americans that developed in the United States after the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. It is characterized by beliefs that racism is not a continuing problem, that African Americans should put forth their own efforts to overcome their situation in society without special assistance, and that African Americans are too demanding and have gotten more than they deserve. At the roots of modern racism are basic beliefs that Blacks violate cherished U.S. values. The idea that the quality of prejudice toward Blacks can shift over time has spawned important generalizations of the theory to other groups, such as women (see the entry titled "Modern Sexism"), recent immigrant groups (including Asians and Latinos in North America and Turks in Europe), the obese, and gays, among others.

The term *modern racism* was introduced in 1981 by John McConahay in the literature on group processes and intergroup relations, but the theory behind it had emerged in 1971 with the name *symbolic racism*. Because modern racism theory was derivative of symbolic racism theory, the two positions were originally closely aligned conceptually and, in fact, difficult to distinguish substantively. However, in recent years, developments in symbolic racism (e.g., concerning the origins of the attitudes) have distinguished the positions more clearly. This entry examines modern racism and relevant criticisms, describes measurement tools, and contrasts the concept with related theories.

The Nature and Origins of Modern Racism

Modern racism is among the most widespread forms of verbally expressed negative racial attitudes in the United States today. It is thought to have replaced, to a substantial degree, older and more blatant forms of prejudice, characterized by beliefs that Blacks are a biologically inferior race and that institutionalized segregation and formal discrimination against Blacks are appropriate social policies. The civil rights movement made these old-fashioned beliefs largely socially unacceptable, and although old-fashioned racism still

exists in the United States, it largely has been replaced by modern racist beliefs.

Modern racism is also one of the most powerful influencers of racial politics in the United States today. It powerfully predicts voting against political candidates who are Black or sympathetic toward Blacks and voting on policies designed to assist Blacks, such as affirmative action and school integration programs. It also strongly influences policies that do not directly mention Blacks but disproportionately impact the African American community, including those involving welfare, unemployment, crime, and the death penalty. It predicts these political attitudes better than conservatism, education, identification as a Democrat or Republican, and, most important, personal interests in the outcomes of a vote.

One important characteristic of modern racism is the assumption that it is learned during socialization. In other words, people acquire modern racist attitudes through their parents, their peers, and the media. Emerging research suggests that modern racism is acquired as early as adolescence (earlier than other political attitudes, such as conservatism) and that it is stable throughout the life span.

As a theoretical construct, modern racism is not tied to threats to a White person's interests or personal experiences with African Americans. This is a point of some confusion: Some concepts such as *symbolic threat*, which seem to be similar to modern racism, assert that prejudiced beliefs are rooted in threats that Blacks pose to Whites' worldview. To be clear, the theory of modern racism was designed from the beginning to demonstrate the opposite, namely, that powerful negative racial attitudes can be rooted in constructs other than threat, fear, or personal interests.

Theoretical Criticisms

Naturally, a construct as popular as modern racism has received considerable critical attention in the literature. These criticisms have helped shape our understanding of the modern racism construct. One major criticism is that the construct of modern racism really is not racism at all. Conservatives have suggested that modern racism actually captures core nonracial principles behind conservatism (such as opposition to excessive government intervention and that the mention of Blacks is incidental

for the construct, with the conclusion that racism is not an important political force today. Although strong evidence exists for an important link between raw negative racial attitudes and modern racism attitudes, this controversy is yet unresolved.

A second major criticism takes the exact opposite position, suggesting that modern racism really is racism, but not a particularly "modern" form of racism. These critics say that it is the same thing as old-fashioned racism but put in more socially acceptable terms. As they see it, regardless of the language used, modern racism serves the same function of rationalizing continuing discrimination against Blacks. However, although blatant prejudice toward Blacks and modern racism have some connection, they still act independently in predicting political attitudes. A person does not have to hold deep-seated blatantly racist views to react in a punitive manner on perceiving that Blacks (or any group) undermine cherished values. Nevertheless, this controversy, too, is an ongoing one.

The Modern Racism Scale

Modern racism is probably most well known through the *Modern Racism Scale*, which is among the most commonly used methods for identifying modern racism. The original intent of the scale was to create a theoretically driven and more indirect measure of racism relative to old-fashioned, or blatant, forms of racism. The scale is typically administered using paper-and-pencil surveys or through telephone interviewing. The items capture the themes described earlier, such as agreement with the statement "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if Blacks would only try harder, they could be just as well off as Whites." The original scale (developed in 1986) has since been updated with the *Symbolic Racism 2000 Scale*.

Some psychologists have criticized the Modern Racism Scale, suggesting that it does not capture racism but instead individuals' sensitivity to giving politically correct responses about race and their motivations to appear unprejudiced. Although the Modern Racism Scale may not be a true pipeline to people's negative racial attitudes and other measures should be considered, the scale and its variants have proven to be useful theoretical tools for understanding many race-related processes.

Relations to Other Forms of Racism

Modern racism has many similarities to other concepts in use in the social sciences. It is essentially identical to symbolic racism and *racial resentment* and is related to concepts such as *subtle prejudice*, *racial ambivalence*, and *aversive racism*. Although these latter theories have their own unique perspectives, they all share the perceptions that the nature of racist expression has changed over time, that current expressions do not appear as much like racism as older expressions did, and that these newer expressions nevertheless contain a certain quality of racism.

Because modern racism is measured by means of survey methodology and requires deliberate responses, it is considered an explicit assessment of prejudice. It can be contrasted with implicit assessments of prejudice, such as the *Implicit Association Test*, which measures how easily negative versus positive concepts are associated with African American representations (such as names or faces) because negative concepts operate at an unconscious or automatic level. Although there appears to be some relationship between modern racism and implicit measures of negative racial bias, the evidence is mixed. What seems certain is that modern racism is better at predicting voting behavior and policy preferences, whereas implicit measures are better at predicting nonverbal and subtle behaviors in Whites' interactions with Blacks. The exact theoretical relationship between modern racism and implicit associations remains a point of controversy.

Conclusion

Despite the controversies surrounding the theory of modern racism and its relatives (most notably symbolic racism), what is agreed even by the theory's harshest critics is that modern racist beliefs represent some of the most powerful attitudes underlying current U.S. racial politics. The precise nature of modern racism, however, is an important lingering question.

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See also Ambivalent Sexism; Aversive Racism; Conservatism; Implicit Association Test (IAT); Implicit Prejudice; Modern Forms of Prejudice; Modern

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MODERN SEXISM

Sexism consists of attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and practices at the individual, institutional, and societal level that involve negative evaluations of people or promote unequal treatment based on gender. *Modern sexism*, which represents current manifestations of sexism, includes both older, overt forms of sexism and more subtle and less often recognized expressions. By definition, sexism can be directed against both women and men. However, most psychological research focuses on antifemale sexism.