The Effect of Social Norm Activation on the Expression of Opinions Concerning Gay Men and Blacks

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The influence of social norm activation on the expression of opinions concerning gay men (Experiment 1) and Blacks (Experiment 2) was explored. In both experiments, participants reported their opinions after hearing a confederate give prejudiced or nonprejudiced opinions (making a prejudiced or nonprejudiced norm salient) or simply in the presence of a confederate. Results showed that participants in both experiments reported less prejudiced opinions after a nonprejudiced norm was made salient, relative to the control condition. Activation of a prejudiced norm did not have a significant effect, relative to the control condition. Furthermore, the powerful effect of activating the nonprejudiced social norm was observed regardless of participants’ prejudice level. Results are consistent with the notion that, in contemporary society, the social norm opposing prejudice is stronger than the norm favoring prejudice.
The central approach to understanding prejudice during the late 1950s and the 1960s involved examining issues related to normative influence and, more specifically, how prejudice-related norms embedded in the social environment caused people to acquire prejudiced attitudes and to engage in prejudiced behaviors (cf. Duckitt, 1992; e.g., DeFriese & Ford, 1969; Ewens & Ehrlic, 1972; Fendrich, 1967; Hamblin, 1962; Pettigrew, 1958, 1959; Proshansky, 1966). At that time, prejudice was still supported by the current mores; in fact, researchers had come to understand prejudice primarily as a norm embedded in the social environment (cf. Duckitt, 1992; e.g., Fendrich, 1967; Hamblin, 1962; Pettigrew, 1958).

To some extent, contemporary norms concerning prejudice have changed. People's self-reported attitudes toward Blacks have become markedly less prejudiced (e.g., Campbell, 1971; Greeley & Sheatsley, 1971; Schuman, Steeh, & Bobo, 1985; Taylor, Sheatsley, & Greeley, 1978). In addition, although researchers continue to find evidence of prejudiced sentiments, the way in which such sentiments are expressed often appears to be dictated by a new norm that calls for nonprejudiced responses. For example, researchers who argue that people have learned to conceal their prejudices (e.g., Carver, Glass, & Katz, 1977; Sigall & Page, 1971) or to express them in more covert, indirect, symbolic, or socially acceptable ways (e.g., Crosby, Bromely, & Saxe, 1980; Frey & Gaertner, 1986; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; McConahay, 1986; McConahay & Hough, 1976; Sears & Kinder, 1985) implicitly assume the existence of such a norm. In short, the rather abstract but nonetheless salient current norm appears to imply that "nice people can't be racists and racists can't be nice people" (McConahay, 1986, p. 123) and many people seemingly desire to maintain a nonprejudiced self-image (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986).

Thus, in contrast to the social and cultural environment of the mid-1900s that rather unabashedly encouraged prejudice, a contemporary social norm concerning prejudice arguably exists stating that "one should not be prejudiced." The presumed existence of this norm has shaped modern conceptualizations of prejudice (e.g., the Modern Racism Theory, McConahay, 1986; the Theory of Aversive Racism, Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). Yet little contemporary research has actually examined the effect of activating the norm against prejudice on people's expressions of prejudice, nor compared this effect to people's expressions of prejudice under normative conditions that favor prejudice. This research examines whether people are more likely to reduce their expressions of prejudiced sentiments after a norm opposing prejudice has been activated than to increase their expressions of prejudiced sentiments following the activation of a norm favoring prejudice. If the norms opposing prejudice are stronger than the norms favoring prejudice in contemporary society, expressions of prejudice should be readily curbed when the social norm prescribes nonprejudiced expressions, and activating a norm favoring prejudice should prove less influential.
Two recent experiments reported by Blanchard, Lilly, and Vaughn (1991) are relevant to examining the relative impact of activating norms favoring or opposing prejudice. In both experiments, White participants walking alone on campus were approached by an experimenter and were asked to complete an opinion poll concerning racism on campus. A confederate, posing as another student, also was “recruited” for participation. The key manipulation concerned whether the participants heard the confederate give prejudiced or nonprejudiced ratings to the opinion poll items before the participants responded to the poll. Whereas hearing prejudiced ratings presumably serves to activate a norm favoring prejudice, hearing nonprejudiced ratings presumably activates a norm against prejudice. Also, the participants provided their opinion ratings either in private (i.e., on a questionnaire) or publicly (aloud)—a manipulation that had no virtually no effect in either of the experiments.

The effect of manipulating the confederate’s ratings were inconsistent in the two experiments. Specifically, hearing the confederate provide nonprejudiced ratings caused participants to provide significantly less prejudiced opinion ratings (relative to a control condition in which participants were not exposed to confederate ratings) in Experiment 1, but not in Experiment 2. In contrast, the prejudiced confederate ratings condition was associated with significantly more prejudiced opinion ratings among participants (relative to the control condition) in Experiment 2, but not in Experiment 1.

In addition to the inconsistent pattern of findings, there were a variety of problems in Blanchard et al.’s (1991) research that make interpretation of the results difficult. For example, a total of four variables (producing 24 experimental conditions) were manipulated in the first experiment, yet only 72 individuals participated. Thus, the results may not be particularly “clean.” Also, the failure to find a strong effect in the favorable confederate rating condition in Experiment 2 may have been due to a ceiling effect (cf Blanchard et al., 1991). Finally, the control condition involved having the confederate give “middle of the road” ratings to the opinion items in Experiment 1; in Experiment 2 there was no confederate present in the control condition so that participants were not exposed to any confederate ratings. However, the more appropriate control condition would be one in which a confederate is present but does not provide opinion ratings in front of the participant. In light of problems such as these, interpretation of the results becomes difficult.

With some modifications, we used Blanchard et al.’s (1991) procedure to examine the effect of activating social norms that either did nor did not favor prejudice on participants’ expressions of prejudiced opinions concerning gay men (Experiment 1) and Blacks (Experiment 2). In addition, we considered the potential influence of participants’ personal standards or norms concerning prejudice. According to Schwartz (1973, 1977; Schwartz & Tessler, 1972), personal norms are self-expectations or standards for conduct that involve feelings of personal moral
obligation and that stem from internalized values. Similarly, Higgins (1987) discussed personal standards for how one ought to respond as involving a sense of duty or obligation. The greater the feelings of moral obligation, the more consistent one's behavior will be with one's personal norms or standards—assuming the norms have been activated in the situation. Others' behavior and the promise of external sanctions are rather irrelevant to the operation of personal norms. Instead, behavior consistent with one's standards is adopted to maintain a positive sense of self.

Recent research has examined prejudice-related personal standards as a function of individuals' level of prejudice (i.e., the degree to which individuals hold negative attitudes about a particular group). This research has revealed that low prejudiced participants' personal standards for responding to target group members (e.g., Blacks) not only call for low prejudiced responses; their standards also are strongly related to feelings of moral obligation (Monteith & Walters, 1995) and are well-internalized (i.e., important and linked to the self-concept; Devine, Monteith, Zuwerink, & Elliot, 1991; Monteith, 1993; Monteith, Devine, & Zuwerink, 1993; Zuwerink, Monteith, Devine, & Cook, 1996). In contrast, this research has indicated that high prejudiced individuals' personal standards call for more prejudiced behavior. More importantly for the present purposes, high prejudiced individuals' standards are less related to feelings of moral obligation and are less well-internalized than the standards of low prejudiced individuals.

Based on these findings, the results of this research may differ as a function of participants' prejudice level. Therefore, we assessed prejudice in our experiments using standard attitudinal measures. Participants higher in prejudice may be especially likely to base their responses to the opinion items on salient social norms, rather than providing opinion ratings that are uniformly prejudiced. That is, their opinion ratings may be strongly influenced by the activation of social norms concerning prejudice and be less reflective of their own prejudiced personal standards or norms. Conversely, low prejudiced participants may bring their well-internalized personal standards to mind and report uniformly low prejudiced opinions, regardless of the social norms that have been activated in the situation.

An alternative possibility is that relatively low and high prejudiced participants alike may alter their expressions of prejudiced sentiments in accordance with the social norms that are salient in the situation. This outcome would be expected if, despite the fact that low prejudiced individuals have well-internalized personal standards, they fail to bring them to mind as a basis for responding to the opinion items. Such a finding would be consistent with recent research (Monteith, 1996) suggesting that the process of bringing one's personal standards to mind in connection with one's prejudice-related responses apparently does not occur spontaneously, even among low prejudiced individuals. If this is the case, even people who apparently are committed to their personal, low prejudiced standards may alter
their expressions of prejudiced sentiments in accordance with the social norms that are salient in the situation.

EXPERIMENT 1

Overview and Predictions

In Experiment 1, a social norm was activated that either favored or opposed the expression of negative opinions about issues affecting gay men. Based on the logic developed earlier, a social norm opposing prejudice should have an especially strong effect on participants' prejudice-related expressions. However, the matter of whether there exists a strong societal norm stating that one should not be prejudiced toward gay men deserves some comment. Prejudice toward gay men clearly is widespread (e.g., Hugick, 1992) and legislative support for their civil rights is lacking (see Herek & Berrill, 1992). Nevertheless, the majority of Americans support general statements concerning equality for gay men and lesbians. For example, in a 1992 Gallup poll, 74% of the respondents felt that “homosexuals should have equal rights in terms of job opportunities” (Hugick, 1992). At least at an abstract level, therefore, a norm seems to exist implying that one should not be prejudiced toward gay men. Thus, we expected that a norm opposing prejudice would attenuate participants' expressions of prejudice more than a norm favoring prejudice would increase expressions of prejudice.

So that the potential influence of personal standards or norms on expressions of prejudice could be examined in addition to the effects of activating social norms, we assessed participants' degree of prejudice toward gay men using a standard attitude measure. If low prejudiced participants—who presumably hold low prejudiced standards that are well-internalized (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1993; Zuwerink et al., 1996)—respond solely on the basis of their personal norms, the social norm manipulation may have little effect on their prejudice-related responses. However, if these participants fail to bring their personal norms to mind as a basis for responding, they may be just as influenced by the social norm manipulation as more prejudiced participants.

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1It was possible that hearing the confederate opinions concerning the campus-related issues would affect the degree of prejudice reflected in participants' reported attitudes. We considered this unlikely, because the attitude measures presumably tap into fairly stable and global attitudes, and the items were not directly related to the campus-related opinion items. However, we manipulated whether the attitude measure was completed before or after the manipulation involving the confederate so that this possibility could be evaluated.
Finally, following Blanchard et al.'s (1991) procedure, participants reported their opinions either publicly or privately. If only conformity pressure due to a desire to be liked by the confederate was operating, then hearing the confederate's opinions should have a stronger effect on participants' reported opinions in the public condition than in the private condition (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Insko, Drenan, Solomon, Smith, & Wade, 1983; Insko, Smith, Alicke, Wade, & Taylor, 1985). However, we expected to observe equal degrees of normative influence at the private and public levels of responding, which would be consistent with the notion that the activation of social norms had influenced participants' expressions of prejudice.

Method

Participants and design. The 168 participants were undergraduate students, with an approximately equal number of men and women. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the conditions in a 2 (response condition: public or private) × 3 (confederate ratings: favorable, unfavorable, or no ratings) between-subjects design. A final factor was participants' prejudice toward gay men and lesbians, which was measured during the course of the experiment.

Materials. Two questionnaires were used. One was a standard measure of prejudice toward gays, the Heterosexual Attitudes Toward Homosexuals scale (HATH; Larsen, Reed, & Hoffman, 1980). The other questionnaire included items adapted from Blanchard et al. (1991) which concerned participants' opinions of gay-related issues on campus. The opinion items were:

1. Administrators and students on this campus should be more aware of the possibility that their behaviors may be insensitive toward gays.
2. No restrictions should be placed on the types of organizations that gays are allowed to join on this campus.
3. Gay men should not be allowed to live in the same dorms as heterosexual men.
4. Efforts to reduce prejudice toward gays on this campus would represent praiseworthy attempts to achieve important goals.
5. There would be a lot fewer problems if gays stayed in the closet and did not let anyone know that they are gay.

These items were similar to those used by Blanchard et al. (1991). The Likert-type scale accompanying the items ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree).
Procedure. Three experimenter-confederate pairs were responsible for data collection. Following Blanchard et al.'s (1991) procedure, each experimenter approached a student who was walking alone on campus and asked whether he or she would participate in an opinion poll for a class. Occasionally students declined to participate, indicating that they did not have time. However, no student declined to participate after learning about the specific issues targeted in the research. The confederate, who had been positioned out of the participant's sight, proceeded to walk by the experimenter and participant. The experimenter stopped the confederate and asked whether he or she would also participate in the opinion poll. The experimenter then administered the questionnaires (i.e., HATH and the opinion questionnaire) to the confederate and participant. The order in which the HATH scale and the opinion questionnaire were completed was counterbalanced across participants.

Participants completed the HATH scale in private. Specifically, they were given the HATH scale and asked to record their rating for each item on it. Anonymity was emphasized by asking participants to fold their HATH scales in half when they were finished and then place them in an envelope that supposedly contained the materials from several previous participants.

Two variables were manipulated in connection with participants' completion of the opinion questionnaire. First, participants completed the opinion questionnaire in private or public. Second, participants heard the confederate give favorable (nonprejudiced), unfavorable (prejudiced), or no ratings to the items on the opinion questionnaire (no ratings condition).

Private Responses: No Ratings, Favorable, and Unfavorable Conditions

In the private, no ratings condition, both the participant and the confederate were given an opinion questionnaire. They were asked to record their ratings privately and then to fold the questionnaire and place it in the envelope to ensure anonymity.

In the private-favorable and private-unfavorable conditions, the experimenter explained that he or she had only one opinion questionnaire left. The confederate was asked to answer the questions verbally so that the experimenter could write the responses on a spare piece of paper. The participant was handed a clipboard on

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2For both experiments reported herein, three men and three women collected data. Each experimenter-confederate pair collected data from an approximately equal number of male and female participants for each experimental condition. Also, within each pair, each individual served as the experimenter and confederate an approximately equal number of times. These counterbalancing strategies make the possibility of systematic experimenter-confederate effects highly unlikely.
which the supposedly last opinion questionnaire was attached. The experimenter explained that, because the participant would be answering the same questions, he or she may as well follow along as the confederate answered all of the questions aloud. The participant was asked to hold the clipboard so that the confederate could see the questionnaire. The experimenter then read each question in turn and, after each question, the confederate provided a rating which the experimenter recorded. Thus, the participant heard all of the confederate's ratings before being asked to answer the opinion items.

In the favorable condition, the confederate's ratings implied that he or she had very nonprejudiced opinions concerning gay-related issues on campus (each rating was either the most or the second most positive rating possible). In the unfavorable condition, the confederate's ratings implied very prejudiced opinions concerning gay-related campus issues (each rating was either the most or the second most prejudiced rating possible).

After the confederate had answered all of the opinion items, the participant was asked to complete the questionnaire. The experimenter instructed the participant to record his or her ratings and then fold the questionnaire and place it in the envelope, so that the responses would remain anonymous.

Public Responses: No Ratings, Favorable, and Unfavorable Conditions.

In the no ratings condition, the experimenter explained that there was only one opinion questionnaire left and asked the participant to answer verbally. (All participants agreed.) The confederate held the clipboard and listened while the participant answered each of the questions that the experimenter read. Then, the confederate was given the supposedly last opinion questionnaire and was told to complete it in private.

In the public, favorable and unfavorable conditions the experimenter explained that he or she had run out of unused opinion questionnaires and asked whether the confederate and participant would be willing to answer the questions verbally. (All participants agreed.) The experimenter handed the participant a clipboard with an opinion questionnaire attached to it. "SAMPLE" was printed boldly across the spaces where ratings presumably would have been recorded. The participant was asked to hold the clipboard so that both the participant and the confederate could see the questionnaire, and the experimenter indicated that the confederate should answer all of the questions first. The experimenter read each question aloud, the confederate gave either favorable or unfavorable ratings for each item (as explained earlier), and the experimenter recorded each rating. The experimenter then repeated each item for the participant and recorded the responses.

Participants were debriefed at the conclusion of the experiment.
Results and Discussion

**Prejudice scores.** Prejudice scores were generated by summing participants' ratings for the HATH items, reverse-scoring when necessary, so that higher scores are indicative of greater levels of prejudice (Cronbach’s α = .75). Because participants were not preselected based on their prejudice level, it was important to examine two issues. First, we determined whether a satisfactory distribution of scores had been obtained. The HATH scores ranged from 20 to 136 (M = 69.20, SD = 30.68; possible range = 20–140), and the distribution was not skewed.

Second, we determined whether the prejudice scores in the various experimental conditions were comparable by performing a 2 (order: HATH completed before vs. after the confederate manipulation was introduced) x 3 (confederate ratings: no ratings, favorable, or unfavorable) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA). The analysis revealed a significant Order x Confederate ratings interaction, F(2, 162) = 3.23, p < .05. Post hoc analyses using Fisher’s Least Significant Difference (LSD) tests revealed that order had no significant effect in either the favorable or unfavorable confederate rating condition. This suggests that overhearing the confederate’s ratings did not influence participants’ HATH ratings. There was, however, a nonsignificant trend for participants’ attitudes in the no rating condition to be more prejudiced when the HATH was completed before rather than after the confederate manipulation portion of the experiment. This appears to be a chance finding, which does not qualify the interpretation of any of the results reported later. Overall, then, the mean HATH scores across conditions were quite comparable. The standard deviations across conditions also were similar, ranging from 27.29 to 35.25.

**Opinion ratings.** Three of the five opinion items were reverse scored, so that higher scores on all of the items reflected more negative (or unfavorable) opinions. The ratings then were summed together to form an opinions index (Cronbach’s α = .84) and analyzed using hierarchical regression. Prejudice was treated as a continuous variable, response condition was represented using contrast coding, and the confederate ratings conditions were represented using orthogonal contrast coding. In all analyses main effects were examined first, and they were assessed

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1The values used for coding response condition were private = −1 and public = 1. The two codes used to represent each confederate rating condition were 1 and −1 for favorable, 0 and 2 for no ratings, and −1 and −1 for unfavorable. Confederate rating effects were examined by entering terms involving the two codes simultaneously and, if this omnibus test was significant, the difference between the favorable and unfavorable conditions was then tested by computing the 𝑡 value associated with the first code. The codes for the conditions then were varied in subsequent analyses so that other specific comparisons could be made (e.g., 1 and −1 for favorable, −1 and 1 for no ratings, and 0 and 2 for unfavorable would enable a test of the difference between the favorable and no ratings conditions).
simultaneously so that the unique portion of variance attributable to each variable could be determined. Lower order interaction effects were entered in turn after the main effects, followed by higher order interactions. All interaction effects were examined at the step in the analysis when the relevant interaction term was entered into the equation.

The gender and order (i.e., whether the HATH scale was completed before or after the opinion items) variables were represented using contrast coding. Initial analyses revealed no reliable effects associated with either of these variables. Thus, neither gender nor order was included in the reported analyses.

The regression analysis using prejudice, confederate ratings, response condition, and all relevant interactions to predict the opinion ratings revealed that response condition neither produced a reliable main effect nor interacted with any of the other variables (all Fs < 1). This replicates Blanchard et al.'s (1991) findings and suggests that any impact the confederate had on participants' opinions was present at both the private and public levels of responding.

Given the nonsignificant effect of response condition, we trimmed the regression equation by excluding the response condition factor and examined the central predictions in a regression analysis using prejudice, confederate ratings, and the interaction between these variables to predict participants' opinion ratings. The results were consistent with the prediction that participants' reported opinions would be influenced more in the favorable confederate rating condition than in the unfavorable condition. Specifically, the main effect for confederate ratings was highly significant, $F(2, 164) = 20.51, p < .001$. As shown in Table 1, participants exposed to favorable confederate ratings provided ratings that were significantly more positive than participants in the no ratings condition. Ratings in the favorable condition were significantly more positive than in the unfavorable condition, but the difference between the unfavorable and no ratings conditions was not significant. Therefore, participants were swayed more when they heard the confederate express nonprejudiced (favorable) opinions than when they overheard the confederate express prejudiced (unfavorable) opinions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favorable</th>
<th>No Ratings</th>
<th>Unfavorable</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.96a</td>
<td>21.87b</td>
<td>24.04b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means that do not share a common subscript differ significantly ($p < .05$ at least). The opinion ratings are adjusted for participants' Heterosexual Attitudes Toward Homosexuals (HATH) scores (Larson et al., 1980).
Not surprisingly, the regression analysis also revealed that as participants' prejudice scores increased, their opinion ratings became more negative, $F(1, 164)$ = 209.29, $p < .001$ (B = .257). Thus, the location of participants' opinion ratings was determined not only by the confederate's ratings, but also by participants' more general attitudes toward gay men. More surprisingly, the impact of hearing the confederate's ratings on participants' own opinions was not moderated by participants' prejudice level. That is, the interaction between prejudice and confederate ratings was not significant, $F(1, 162) = 1.23, p < .30$. A power polynomial analysis also was performed to determine whether the confederate ratings might interact with the curvilinear aspect of prejudice (e.g., perhaps only participants who were very low in prejudice were unaffected by the confederate ratings, whereas the confederate ratings may have had a stronger effect at higher levels of prejudice). This analysis revealed that the squared aspect of prejudice did not interact with confederate ratings ($F < 1$). In another analysis, the cubic aspect of prejudice failed to interact with confederate ratings ($F < 1$).

These findings indicate that low prejudiced participants were just as likely to be swayed by hearing the confederate ratings as participants at higher levels of prejudice, even though previous research has indicated that low prejudiced individuals' personal standards are better internalized than those of high prejudiced individuals (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1993; Zuwerink et al., 1996). It follows that making social norms opposing prejudice salient will likely have a pervasive effect, curbing expressions of prejudice among people who hold less as well as more prejudiced attitudes.

**EXPERIMENT 2**

We conducted a second experiment to examine the generality of the findings from Experiment 1, this time concerning students' campus-related opinions relevant to Blacks. We expected that the effect of norm activation observed in Experiment 1 would be replicated. In fact, given the frequent emphasis on the existence of a social norm opposing prejudice toward Blacks found in many contemporary theories of racism (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; McConahay, 1986), activation of such a norm may have an even more powerful effect with Blacks as the target group.

In addition, we decided to conduct this experiment because a racially insensitive incident had recently occurred on campus, similar to the types of incidents that have occurred on many other U.S. campuses (see Farrell & Jones, 1988). Two organizations associated with Texas Tech University had held a mixer with a theme of "Party in the Projects," and attendants dressed and acted in ways which were stereotypical of Black youth gangs and Blacks in general. A 5-month period of controversy ensued concerning minority rights, students' rights of self-expression, and university rights to regulate student behavior. Overall, the scandal and the
aftermath created an atmosphere of tension and recrimination. Student reactions were varied and highly visible. During the 5-month period, 74 letters or editorials and 28 news stories appeared in the *University Daily* (a campus newspaper). A meeting sponsored by the Dean of Students immediately following exposure of the party drew over 1000 attendants and was described as "tempestuous" (Guajardo, 1992). Shortly thereafter, the University Discipline Committee announced sanctions against the groups sponsoring the party. These sanctions were appealed and this was followed by minority student rallies. Eventually, after the University sought legal opinion, the sanctions were dropped. Protests and rallies (mostly initiated by Black students) followed, and many White students expressed irritation with minority student leaders who were characterized as "want-to-be civil rights leaders seeking fame" by some White students ("The Other Side of the Coin," 1993). Racial tensions reached a new high when a Confederate battle flag was raised in the university's memorial circle and a white bag, in imitation of a Ku Klux Klan hood, was placed over the head of a statue. The organizations involved in the "Party in the Projects" and campus minority organizations eventually came to a mutual resolution concerning how the organization that hosted the party could make amends.

This experiment was conducted immediately after this resolution was reached, when the controversial campus events remained quite salient. Thus, we could examine whether the findings observed in Experiment 1 would generalize to a different target group (i.e., Blacks) and to a more volatile social context.

Method

**Participants and design.** The participants were 155 White undergraduate students, with an approximately equal number of men and women. The same design as in Experiment 1 was used, and participants were randomly assigned to conditions. Prejudice toward Blacks was measured during the course of the participants' participation.

**Materials.** The measure of prejudice was the Modern Racism Scale (MRS; McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981). The items used to assess participants' opinions concerning race-related issues on campus were similar to those used by Blanchard et al. (1991), with the exception that one item concerned the recent controversial racial incident. The items used were:

1. Administrators and students on this campus should be more aware of the possibility that their behaviors may be racially insensitive.
2. Black students' rallies and protests on campus are praiseworthy efforts to achieve important goals.
3. Many people are making too big of an issue about the "Party in the Projects," thereby causing people on campus to be divided.
4. We need to have more affirmative action policies that recruit qualified Blacks instituted at this university.
5. Racial problems would not be a problem on this campus if Blacks would not make such a big issue of things.

As in Experiment 1, each item was answered using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree).

**Procedure.** The procedure was identical to the procedure used in Experiment 1. It should be noted that all experimenters and confederates were White.

**Results and Discussion**

*Prejudice scores.* Participants' ratings for the MRS items were summed, reverse scoring when necessary, so that higher scores reflected greater prejudice (Cronbach's α = .87). As in Experiment 1, we first performed analyses to ensure an adequate distribution of prejudice scores in the sample and comparability of scores across conditions. The MRS scores ranged from 0 to 48 (M = 20.55, SD = 12.17; possible range = 0–56), and the distribution was not skewed. As in Experiment 1, we performed a 2 (order: MRS completed before vs. after the confederate manipulation was introduced) × 3 (confederate ratings) between-subjects ANOVA. No significant effects were obtained, indicating that participants' MRS scores were comparable across conditions. The cell standard deviations also were comparable, ranging from 10.85 to 13.24.

*Opinion ratings.* The opinion items were reverse scored when necessary so that higher numbers always indicated a more unfavorable attitude. As in Experiment 1, an opinions index was formed for each participant by summing across the items (Cronbach's α = .86). Participants' scores on the opinions index then were analyzed using the same strategy as was used in Experiment 1.4

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4Initial analyses revealed that the only significant effect associated with order when predicting participants' opinion ratings was an inexplicable Order × Confederate Ratings interaction, F(2, 141) = 4.07, p < .02. There was a trend for participants' opinions to be more negative when the MRS was completed second rather than first in the favorable and no rating conditions. However, in the unfavorable condition, participants' opinions were slightly more negative when the MRS was completed first rather than second. The only gender effect that approached significance was that men's opinion ratings were slightly more negative than the women's ratings, F(1, 149) = 3.45, p < .07. The analyses reported in the text did not include the order or gender variables.
The hierarchical regression analysis using prejudice, confederate ratings, response condition, and all possible interactions among these variables to predict the opinion ratings revealed that response condition had virtually no impact on participants' ratings—either alone or in interaction with other factors (all Fs < 1). This finding replicates the results of Experiment 1. It seems quite clear that whether participants recorded their opinions in private or in public had little impact on their reported opinions.

The analysis of greatest interest was one in which participants' opinion ratings were predicted using prejudice, confederate ratings, and the interaction between these variables. As in Experiment 1, the main effect for confederate ratings was significant, \( F(2, 151) = 10.42, p < .001 \). Overall, participants in the favorable confederate ratings condition provided significantly more positive ratings (\( M = 20.08 \)) than participants in either the no ratings condition (\( M = 26.72 \)) or the unfavorable confederate ratings condition (\( M = 24.99 \)). The comparison between these latter two conditions was not significant. The regression analysis also revealed a significant main effect for prejudice, \( F(1, 151) = 108.56, p < .001 \) (\( B = .531 \)), such that participants reported more negative opinions as their prejudice scores increased.

These main effects were qualified by an interaction involving confederate ratings and prejudice. In contrast to the results of Experiment 1, the Prejudice \( \times \) Confederate Ratings interaction was marginally significant, \( F(2, 149) = 2.53, p < .08 \). We subsequently performed a power polynomial analysis to investigate possible curvilinear relations between prejudice and the confederate ratings factor. In this analysis, the interaction between the squared aspect of prejudice and confederate ratings was significant, \( F(2, 146) = 4.30, p < .02 \).

The nature of this interaction was subsequently examined using ANOVA, after trichotomizing participants' prejudice scores so that there were an approximately equal number of low (MRS range = 1–13), moderate (MRS range = 14–24), and high (MRS range = 25–48) prejudiced participants in each condition. A 3 (prejudice level: low, moderate, or high) \( \times \) 3 (confederate ratings: favorable, no ratings, or unfavorable) between-subjects ANOVA on the opinion data revealed that the interaction between prejudice and confederate ratings remained significant using this data analytic approach, \( F(2, 146) = 2.45, p < .05 \). Cell means and results of the post hoc comparisons are shown in Table 2.\(^5\) Also note that when we used Aiken and West's (1991, pp. 132–133) regression methods for probing interactions that

\(^5\)The MRS ranges used to define low, moderate, and high prejudiced groups of participants are consistent with normative data. Specifically, we examined MRS scores obtained during mass screening sessions at the beginning of three consecutive semesters (\( Ns = 355, 515, \) and 690). In each data set, dividing the sample so that there were an approximately equal number of low, moderate, and high prejudiced participants yielded MRS ranges that differed from ours by no more than two MRS units (e.g., the range for defining low prejudiced participants was 1–15 in one sample).
TABLE 2
Experiment 2: Mean Opinion Ratings as a Function of Prejudice Level and Confederate Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prejudice Level</th>
<th>Favorable</th>
<th>No Ratings</th>
<th>Unfavorable</th>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>11.47a</td>
<td>23.93c</td>
<td>15.31ab</td>
</tr>
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<td>Moderate</td>
<td>18.89b</td>
<td>24.83c</td>
<td>26.63c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>27.44c</td>
<td>32.07d</td>
<td>33.73d</td>
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Note. Means that do not share a common subscript differ significantly \((p < .05\) at least by Fisher's Least Significant Test).

Consistent with the findings obtained in Experiment 1, participants at each level of prejudice reported more positive opinions when they heard the confederate give favorable ratings, relative to when no confederate ratings were heard. Also consistent with Experiment 1, the moderately and highly prejudiced participants' ratings were more negative when the confederate gave unfavorable ratings, relative to when no confederate ratings were given, but these differences were not significant. However, a different pattern emerged among the low prejudiced participants, whose ratings were significantly more positive in the unfavorable ratings condition than in the no ratings condition.

A close examination of Table 2 suggests that the Prejudice \(\times\) Confederate Ratings interaction emerged primarily because the low prejudiced participants in the no rating condition reported surprisingly negative ratings. With the possible range of opinion scores being 5 to 45, the mean of the low prejudiced participants in the no ratings condition fell slightly above the scale midpoint, and the mean was equivalent to that of participants who were classified as moderately prejudiced. However, when either the norm favoring or opposing prejudice was activated, low prejudiced participants reported relatively less prejudiced ratings. Why did low prejudiced participants in the no ratings condition report relatively prejudiced opinions? One possible explanation is that these participants had, by chance, relatively high MRS scores. However, the mean MRS scores for the low prejudiced participants across the various confederate conditions were comparable, \(F(2, 47) = 1.64, p = .205\), and the low prejudiced participants in the no ratings condition scored much lower on the MRS than the moderately prejudiced participants in the no ratings condition, \(t(31) = 8.19, p < .001\).

Another possible explanation for the relatively negative opinion ratings of the low prejudiced participants in the no ratings condition is that the MRS is not useful for distinguishing between low and moderately prejudiced participants' opinions.
on the campus-related issues targeted in this research. We believe there are two reasons to reject this explanation. First, low and moderately prejudiced participants' opinion scores were significantly different in the favorable and unfavorable confederate rating conditions, so the MRS does appear to be a significant predictor of these participants' opinions. Second, data that were collected approximately 4 months after this experiment was conducted, at the beginning of a new academic year, suggested that the MRS should have been useful for distinguishing between low and moderately prejudiced participants' opinions in the no ratings condition. That is, when the controversial campus events were no longer salient, participants who scored low in prejudice reported opinions that were significantly less negative than participants who scored moderate in prejudice.

The best explanation for the relatively prejudiced opinions reported by the low prejudiced participants in the no ratings condition appears to be related to the highly tumultuous social environment at the time. In the absence of hearing the confederate's ratings, these low prejudiced participants seemed unwilling to take a stance on the race-related campus issues, instead providing "middle of the road" opinion ratings. It seems quite likely that this equivocality emerged among only the low prejudiced participants in the no confederate ratings condition because these individuals felt more conflicted over the recent events than participants who were higher in prejudice. In contrast, in the favorable confederate rating condition, low prejudiced participants' ratings were more in line with what would be expected based on the joint influence of their prejudice-related attitudes (i.e., their ratings were less prejudiced than their higher prejudiced counterparts) and normative influence (i.e., their ratings tended to be less prejudiced in the favorable than in the unfavorable condition, \( p < .06 \)). Future research that experimentally manipulates the salience of contentious events that involve minority groups is needed to examine when and why certain persons will or will not become equivocal in the face of controversy.

In sum, aside from the unanticipated, relatively prejudiced ratings among the low prejudiced participants in the no ratings condition, the findings from Experi-

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\( ^{6} \)In this study, 124 students from an Introductory Psychology class completed the MRS and the opinion items used in Experiment 2, except the item concerning the racially insensitive campus incident was omitted because many of the new students were not likely to be knowledgeable of the incident. Participants were classified as low, moderate, or high in prejudice using the same MRS cutoffs as were used in Experiment 2, and the sum of their four opinion ratings was analyzed as a function of their prejudice level in a between-subjects ANOVA. A significant main effect for prejudice was found, \( F(2, 121) = 21.74, p < .001 \). Mean comparisons using Fisher's LSD revealed that the opinions of participants classified as high in prejudice were significantly more negative (\( M = 23.94 \)) than moderately prejudiced participants' opinions (\( M = 20.00 \)), which were in turn significantly more negative than low prejudiced participants' opinions (\( M = 15.80, p < .05 \) at least). Also note that the low prejudiced participants' ratings were less negative in this study than in Experiment 2, in which the comparable mean for the four-item index among low prejudiced participants was 20.73.
ment 2 are consistent with those obtained in Experiment 1. Regardless of prejudice level, participants tempered their expressions of prejudice as a consequence of hearing another individuals' nonprejudiced opinions.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this research was to examine the influence of various norms related to prejudice on participants' reported opinions concerning gay men (Experiment 1) and Blacks (Experiment 2). The results were consistent with the prediction that overhearing a confederate's nonprejudiced ratings on an opinion poll about campus-related issues that affect the target group (i.e., gay men or Blacks) would have an especially strong impact on the opinions that participants reported. That is, in both experiments, participants reported markedly less prejudiced opinions in the favorable confederate condition, relative to the control condition in which participants were not exposed to confederate ratings. These findings are consistent with the notion that hearing nonprejudiced expressions served to activate a powerful social norm suggesting that one should not be prejudiced. In contrast, participants generally were less affected by hearing prejudiced confederate ratings; although participants tended to report more prejudiced ratings in the unfavorable confederate rating condition (with the exception of the low prejudiced participants in Experiment 2), this trend was significant in comparison to the favorable confederate condition but was not significant in comparison to the control condition. The limited effect of hearing prejudiced expressions is consistent with the notion that the social norm favoring prejudice is not, at present, as strong as the norm opposing prejudice.

These findings provide empirical support for the theoretical assumption in many contemporary perspectives on prejudice suggesting that the current social norms opposing prejudice are stronger than those favoring prejudice. This assumption is made in McConahay's (1986) theory of modern racism and in Gaertner and Dovidio's (1986) theory of aversive racism (see also Crosby et al., 1980). Both of these theories maintain that people have learned to express their prejudiced beliefs and feelings in more covert and subtle ways because prejudice no longer is seen as socially acceptable. Importantly, then, to say that the social norm favoring prejudice is not as strong as the norm opposing prejudice in contemporary society is not to deny the existence or prevalence of prejudice. The powerful social norm opposing prejudice does, however, provide a potential inroad for curbing expressions of prejudice.

In addition to the impact of hearing the confederate's ratings, participants' level of prejudice (measured by their attitude scores on standard measures of prejudice) was an important determinant of the degree of prejudice reflected in their opinion ratings. Thus, salient social norms are not likely to override completely the influence of people's own attitudes on their expressions of prejudice. The normative structure
may, however, play a role in altering prejudiced attitudes eventually. For example, the continued moderation of prejudiced responses due to the operation of social norms opposing prejudice may cause participants who are higher in prejudice to change their attitudes through self-perception processes (see Chaiken & Baldwin, 1981).

This research also revealed that participants whose attitudes were low in prejudice clearly were not immune to the influence of the social norms that presumably were activated by hearing the confederate's ratings. In Experiment 1, low prejudiced participants reported significantly less prejudiced opinions in the favorable confederate condition than in the control condition. The difference between these conditions was even more pronounced in Experiment 2. These findings seem inconsistent with recent portrayals of low prejudiced individuals as being very committed to their personal standards that they should have nonprejudiced responses (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith et al., 1993; Zuwerink et al., 1996).

Why, then, did low prejudiced individuals fail to provide uniformly nonprejudiced opinion ratings? Apparently, their personal standards were not entirely salient in the experimental situation. As Schwartz (1973, 1977) argued, personal norms must be activated in the situation before they will influence people's responses. Although our procedure no doubt caused participants to consider their personal standards for how they believed they should respond to some degree, it also no doubt introduced a number of potential distractions (e.g., the presence of the experimenter and confederate, as well as other people walking by). Indeed, Monteith (1996) found that, even in a quiet laboratory setting, low prejudiced participants failed to consider fully the fact that their actual prejudice-related responses were in violation of their personal standards for how they should respond. Participants in Monteith's study appeared to consider their personal standards fully only when they were explicitly asked to do so. These previous findings, along with those of this research, underscore the need for low prejudiced individuals to increase the accessibility of their personal standards so that they can consistently guide their behavior. Moreover, it appears that increasing the salience of social norms opposing prejudice in various settings (e.g., on campuses, in the workplace, etc.) will curb expressions of prejudice among less as well as more prejudiced individuals.

One issue traditionally raised in connection with social norms research has been whether norms are well-suited to empirical study (e.g., see Darley & Latane, 1970; Krebs & Miller, 1985). In a related vein, one might question whether the manipulation of the confederate's ratings actually served to activate social norms. There are several reasons to believe that social norms were operating in this research. First, social norms also have been manipulated in previous research by having participants observe a confederate engaging in norm-relevant behavior (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990; Reno, Cialdini, & Kallgren, 1993). Second, the fact that the response condition (i.e., whether participants responded publicly or privately) had virtually no effect in either experiment suggests that participants were not
merely conforming to the confederate's ratings out of a desire to be liked (see Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Insko et al., 1983, 1985). Finally, the "mere conformity" explanation is further challenged by the fact that overhearing the favorable confederate ratings had a stronger impact than overhearing the unfavorable confederate ratings. If social norms were not operating, one would expect equal degrees of influence in the two confederate rating conditions.

Future research might explore the specific types of social norms that are activated upon hearing others espouse prejudiced or nonprejudiced positions. Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren (1990; Reno et al., 1993) have made a distinction between descriptive and injunctive social norms. Descriptive norms "specify what most people do in a particular situation, and they motivate action by informing people of what is generally seen as effective or adaptive behavior there" (Reno et al., 1993, p. 104). In contrast, injunctive norms "specify what people approve and disapprove within the culture and motivate action by promising social sanctions for normative or counternormative conduct" (Reno et al., 1993, p. 104). Thus, descriptive norms concern what people actually do, whereas injunctive norms concern what people ought to do in the sense of what is considered morally acceptable.

In this research, it is possible that the responses of both the favorable and unfavorable confederate activated descriptive norms concerning what people actually do: some people endorse prejudiced opinions, whereas others do not. However, overhearing favorable responses may have also activated the injunctive norm that people should not be prejudiced. Thus, the stronger effect of the favorable than the unfavorable confederate may have resulted due to the joint operation of both descriptive and injunctive norms. Future laboratory research that affords the collection of manipulation checks and mediating cognitive processes would help to establish the specific types of normative influence underlying the findings obtained in this research.

Additional research also is needed to address two other issues. First, does overhearing the prejudiced or nonprejudiced opinions of others affect people's personal opinions, or only what they are willing to publicly express? Although we assured participants' anonymity in the private response condition and did not detect suspiciousness about anonymity during debriefing, even participants in the private condition may have felt publicly self-conscious during their participation. Specifically, because the data were collected in a public setting, even participants in the private condition may have been thinking about how others would evaluate their responses. They therefore may have altered their opinions in accordance with salient social norms more than they would in a more private setting. A second issue for future research concerns how generalizable these findings are beyond a university campus setting. Although researchers argue that norms have changed such that prejudice no longer is acceptable in society in general (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; McConahay, 1986), there certainly is likely to be variability in the degree to which this is the case in different pockets of society.
To the extent that the norm against prejudice extends throughout society, our finding that hearing another person express nonprejudiced opinions caused participants to reduce their own expressions of prejudice has wide-ranging applied implications. The current cultural climate implies that prejudice is unacceptable (cf. Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; McConahay, 1986) and appears to tip the balance of influencing power in favor of those who seek to reduce prejudice. The relatively powerful effect of activating the social norm opposing prejudice not only was obtained in connection with two target groups (i.e., gay men in Experiment 1 and Blacks in Experiment 2), but also in a racially volatile social environment (Experiment 2). Thus, reinforcing societal norms against prejudice may be one way of curbing recent escalations of intolerant speech and acts on, for example, college campuses (Farrell & Jones, 1988; Milloy, 1990; Russakoff & Jordan, 1993).

A caveat concerning the possible effects of activating the social norm opposing prejudice is in order. The procedure designed to activate this norm in these experiments merely entailed overhearing another person's nonprejudiced opinions. More direct and forceful reminders that one should not be prejudiced (e.g., speech codes on college campuses) may well produce psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966; Brehm & Brehm, 1981) and escalate prejudiced responses, particularly among individuals with prejudiced attitudes (see Monteith et al., 1993). Good intentions to control prejudice by heightening the salience of norms opposing prejudice may foster hateful speech and actions when certain norm focusing tactics are used. Nonetheless, this research suggests that certain strategies for making the social norm opposing prejudice salient will prove successful in abating expressions of prejudice.

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