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# Increasing the Number of Psychologists of Color

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## *Public Policy Issues for Affirmative Diversity*

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*This article identifies the key issues involved in the debate about affirmative action. The June 2003 Supreme Court decisions allowing consideration of race to ensure that there is a “critical mass” of African American, Latino/Latina, and Native American applicants to higher education are addressed. Social psychologists have identified key myths and provided clarifications about the need for and consequences of strategies used to promote equal opportunity for persons of color and women. A brief history of affirmative action and of the problems it was designed to solve is provided. The accomplishments, benefits, and compelling interest of diversity and affirmative action are described, as well as the concerns and counterpoints. The lack of a substantial applicant pool in psychology hinders progress toward diversity. Alternative strategies for remedying this lack beyond affirmative admissions policies in psychology are briefly discussed.*

**Keywords:** affirmative action, equal opportunity, ethnic minority pipeline in psychology, compelling interest of diversity

**O**n June 23, 2003, a U.S. Supreme Court decision affirmed the use of race and diversity as a factor in evaluating applicants for admissions to publicly funded institutions. The justices considered whether states have a “compelling interest” in promoting a diverse student body or whether the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment forbids giving one group advantages over another. The cases were *Grutter v. Bollinger et al.* (2003), involving the University of Michigan’s law school, and *Gratz et al. v. Bollinger et al.* (2003), involving its undergraduate program. The point system used in the undergraduate case, which tried to ensure a “critical mass” of African American, Latino/Latina, and Native American enrollments by giving such applicants an automatic 20-point bonus on the school’s 150-point “selection index,” was disallowed. What is apparently now allowed is what the University of Michigan’s law school admissions program used, a loosely defined special consideration process to ensure that there is a critical mass of African American, Latino/Latina, and Native American applicants in each new law school class (Jayson & Rodriguez, 2003; Lemann, 2003).

Affirmative action is a public policy about which psychologists have much to say and contribute. For several

years now, psychologists have provided information on the affirmative action debate, and they are often involved in examining how such public policy can affect and influence societal structures and behaviors. Social psychologists, in particular, have provided an empirical perspective on affirmative action; this contribution is critical given the emotional tone of the policy debate (Skedsvold & Mann, 1996). During the past decade, the movement to scale back affirmative action strategies through voter input, legislative mandates such as California’s Proposition 209 in 1996 and Washington’s Initiative 200 in 1998 (Crosby, Iyer, Clayton, & Downing, 2003), as well as court decisions, has challenged us all to more fully understand and perhaps rethink strategies and methods to achieve diversity. The legality of affirmative action plans has been directly affected at various universities, including at the University of Washington, the University of Texas, the University of Maryland, the University of Georgia, and the University of Michigan (Crosby et al., 2003). Despite the relief that has prevailed on most college campuses following the June 2003 Supreme Court decisions, concern about a backlash keeps psychologists vigilant to the importance of promoting understanding of these complex issues. This article discusses the history of and issues involved in affirmative action.

In addition, we examine the issues beyond affirmative action. That is, what are the other variables beyond admission that are involved in increasing the number of racial and ethnic minority students in the psychology pipeline? A vast array of programs and theories are currently being examined and evaluated (Lott, 2005; Rogers & Molina, 2006, this issue). Many of those are briefly described and reviewed here.

### **What Is Affirmative Action?**

The United States Commission on Civil Rights defined affirmative action as “any measure, beyond simple termination of a discriminatory practice, adopted to correct or compensate for past or present discrimination or to prevent

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discrimination from recurring in the future” (Bruno, 1995, p. 1). The American Psychological Association (1996) defined affirmative action as attempts to affirm commitment to equal opportunity: “Affirmative action occurs whenever an organization expends energy to make sure there is no discrimination in employment or education, and instead, equal opportunity exists” (p. 5).

Crosby and Clayton (2001) and Plous (1996) pointed out that Americans are not educated about the philosophy of affirmative action as policy or about how affirmative action programs actually operate. Many prevailing myths influence endorsement or opposition to policies. People’s reactions to affirmative action depend largely on what they understand or perceive affirmative action policy to be, and often, those beliefs and perceptions may be erroneous and based on myth. Thus, part of the responsibility of our profession is to clarify, as much as possible, what affirmative action is and is not.

Affirmative action is a significant result of the civil rights legislation enacted in the 1960s, but the term *affirmative action* has been traced to Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s presidency. Policymakers at the time acknowledged that steps needed to be taken to diminish racist business practices (Bruno, 1995). The official implementation of affirmative action occurred after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with Executive Order 11246, signed by President Lyndon Baines Johnson in 1965 (Crosby & Cordova, 1996). Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbade discrimination on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, or national origin and established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to enforce the act. Executive Order 11246 required the federal government and its contractors to take affirmative action to ensure fairness in selection decisions.

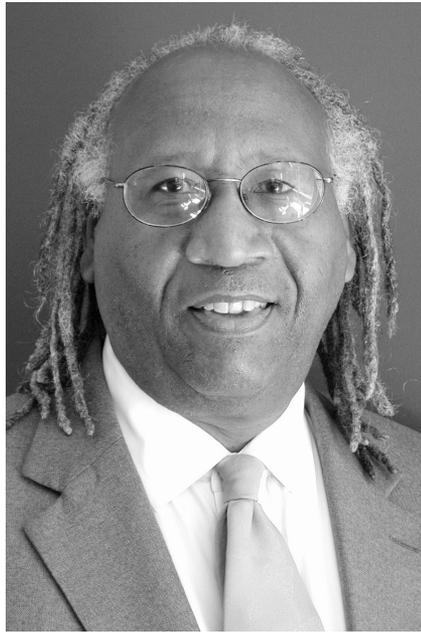
It is interesting that affirmative action programs were supported by both Republican and Democratic presidents and have spanned eight different presidential administrations. In fact, the policy was significantly expanded in 1969 by President Nixon, and the elder President Bush also enthusiastically signed the Civil Rights Act of 1991, which included formal endorsement of the principle of affirmative action (Plous, 1996). Americans have long valued the principles of equality and fairness, but at the current time, a portion of the population does not believe that affirmative action strategies represent principles of equality and fairness.

## **What Problems Was Affirmative Action Designed to Solve?**

Crosby and Clayton (2001) described how affirmative action was designed to be one remedy for past discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, and gender. Affirmative action assumes that organizational structures and practices are biased in favor of White men, who hold the most powerful jobs (Crosby & Clayton, 2001). Although there may be no discriminatory intent or awareness on the part of current employers and administrators, discriminatory organizational structures and practices are insidious, and victims of discrimination may not be able to identify a particular person as the perpetrator of the problem. Therefore, opportunities are designed to give more equal access to ethnic minorities and women. Affirmative action is thus partly designed to counteract current discriminatory practices, which often have a historical basis in past discrimination. Murrell and Jones (1996) suggested that affirmative action is also designed to prevent future discrimination.

For example, corrective action in the form of organizational goals, timelines, and legal and appropriate methods for meeting goals must be taken by a particular organization when a smaller proportion of qualified White women or people of color exists in that work setting than is suggested by their availability in the labor pool. The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs helps organizations calculate availability statistics on the basis of a variety of factors including U.S. Census data, promotion and hiring patterns in an organization, and representation in educational or work experience relevant to the hiring objective (Crosby & Clayton, 2001). Only a good faith effort to include targeted recruitment (recruitment targeted to candidates who are women or persons of color) or to hire a person from a beneficiary group (even if that person’s qualifications appear less strong than those of a candidate for the same job who is a majority-group member, so long as the targeted person is qualified) is required.

In higher education, affirmative action policies were designed to encourage minorities of color to enroll in order to minimize the discrepancy between their enrollment and their representation in the population. Maton, Kohout, Wicherski, Leary, and Vinokurov (2006, this issue), identified both encouraging and disquieting trends in the representation of persons of color in higher education and in psychology. There was a substantial increase in the per-



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centage of bachelor's degrees obtained by minority students from 1989 (13.6%) to 2002 (24.5%), and the overall increase in degree receipt was distributed relatively evenly across ethnic groups. However, since 2000, the growth in receipt of bachelor's degrees by minorities has halted. Growth for all four ethnic groups has not continued and remains, overall, at slightly more than three quarters (.77) of their U.S. representation.

Racial/ethnic minority students are underrepresented at all levels of psychology, but most particularly at the doctoral level, the primary entry point to becoming a psychologist. Maton et al. (2006) reported that in 2003, the pipeline representation for minority students in PsyD departments and schools was slightly below two thirds (.63) of their population representation, about the same as in 1989. Also in 2003, the pipeline representation for minority students in PhD departments was a little more than two thirds (.69) of their population representation. The actual attainment of the PhD among minority students increased from 1989 (8%) to 2000 (15.7%), but it has not increased since then; this representation is less than half (.46) of the population representation.

Maton et al. (2006), suggested that the encouraging trends outweighed the disquieting ones at the lower levels of the pipeline but that the disquieting trends outweighed the encouraging trends at the higher levels, including at faculty representation levels. Of particular concern is the lack of growth in the rate of entrance to PhD-degree-granting departments from 1997 onward for African American and Hispanic/Latino/Latina students.

Do psychologists agree that increased racial and ethnic diversity at all levels of higher education and in the professions, including that of psychology, is important?

## The Compelling Interest of Diversity

The Nobel laureate E. O. Wilson (1992) argued that diversity is a core principle of successful human evolution. If college education is a pathway to full societal participation, then it is vital for our society and its future to ensure that a diverse representation of our citizenry is able to fully participate.

The U.S. Supreme Court understood the need for diversity even while acknowledging the conflicting aspects of attempts to attain it. Justice Blackmun noted, "In order to get beyond racism we must first take account of race. There is no other way. . . . In order to treat persons equally, we must treat them differently" (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 1978).

When the Advisory Board of President Clinton's Race Initiative met at the University of Maryland to discuss aspects of diversity, opponents of affirmative action were not invited. Their upset was countered by Board Chair John Hope Franklin, who noted that their opposition to affirmative action meant that they had nothing to offer a dialogue on diversity. We often come into conflict when affirmative action as a public policy is demagogued as representing simple racial preferences or reverse discrimination.

Research in social psychology has addressed the psychological aspects of affirmative action directly (what are its strengths and weaknesses?) as well as some of the assumptions of supporters and opponents of affirmative action less directly. In general, affirmative action has been viewed historically as a mechanism by which past discrimination can be rectified (Jones, 1997). Crosby (2004) argued, however, that affirmative action is a remedy not for *past* discrimination but for *present* discrimination.

Critics of affirmative action cite two ways in which it is fundamentally flawed as social policy: First, it violates the fairness doctrine established by a belief in equity; and second, it stigmatizes so-called beneficiaries and damages their sense of accomplishment and worth. Proponents of affirmative action argue that it levels the playing field, gives opportunity where it has been systematically denied, and when properly crafted and executed, does not damage but actually elevates a sense of accomplishment and worth among its beneficiaries (cf. Crosby, 2004).

With respect to diversity, research by Patricia Gurin and colleagues (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004) has shown how valuable diversity experiences on college campuses can be for promoting openness to and interest in other racial and ethnic groups as well as a heightened interest in civic participation. Their research demonstrates that when colleges and universities create opportunities for students from different backgrounds to take part in conversations and to share experiences in settings both formal and informal that promote thinking in pluralistic and complex ways, students become committed to a lifetime of learning about diversity and incorporating it in their lives. In other words, a well-tailored and properly implemented program to promote diversity seems to produce better citizens.

Moreover, Antonio et al. (2004) obtained a similar result using experimental methods. They had participants

engage in discussions in small groups that were or were not racially mixed and express opinions that were congruent or incongruent with those of a target group member. When the groups were racially mixed and the opinions expressed diverged, members (a) perceived the discussions as more novel and (b) increased their level of integrative complexity (a cognitive style that involves differentiation and integration of multiple perspectives and dimensions). Moreover, the results indicated that the diversity of a student's close friends and classmates was strongly associated with the student's level of integrative complexity, further supporting the value of diversity in the lives of college students.

The argument that affirmative action violates basic ideas of fairness rests on adopting the equity principle for fairness. Because equity is a ratio analysis of the proportionality of meritorious inputs against commensurate outcomes, the calculation of equity presupposes agreement on the assessment of "inputs" (test scores, effort, legacy status, skin color, socioeconomic status, etc.). The merit of inputs as relevant to the calculation will depend on one's point of view more than on an absolute objective criterion. Absent such an absolute, the selection of input criteria manifests the power differentials that affirmative action is meant to reduce and utilizes the very biases that reinforce it (Jones, 1997). It is, therefore, difficult to separate the equity argument in support of fairness and the affirmative action rationale for reducing unfairness.

The other main argument is that affirmative action harms the beneficiary. One reason it is thought to harm the beneficiary is that in the case of affirmative action for women, it provokes those (men) presumed to be disadvantaged by its implementation (Heilman, Block, & Lucas, 1992). It is no surprise that members of groups not identified as recipients of the affirmative action strategy, as well as others, tend to stigmatize those who are thought to have benefited whether they have benefited or not. But rather than depressing the beneficiaries' self-worth, research suggests that beneficiaries tend to discount the stigmatizing by others as biased, to embrace the idea that they are capable if given a chance, and to welcome the opportunities they have been given (Truax, Cordova, Wood, Wright, & Crosby, 1998).

It is often argued that people easily draw associations between salient social categories (race, gender, age) and certain attributes, usually construed in evaluative terms (i.e., good-bad). As a result, the simple representation of diversity across many different dimensions, of which race is but one, makes it harder to form simple race-based dichotomies of evaluative content. That is, at the individual level, there are many convergent categories for judgment that go beyond race. If we go beyond the individual level of analysis, there is an aggregate consequence that is perceptually and administratively rearranging the diversity of the workplace or educational setting into homogeneous human categories dominated by racial classifications. This leads to rampant stereotyping, which undermines objectivity, promotes bias, and hinders the successful pursuit of diversity.

The research of social psychology shows clearly that people suffer when they are estranged from large segments of their society or when large segments of society are prohibited from fully participating in a broad array of opportunities. Greenwald and Banaji (1995) argue that social structure influences cognitive judgment, leading to implicit attitudes and unconscious effects. Affirmative action alters our social structure, and this has a compounding effect on our cognitive structure, and ultimately on our social attitudes and our beliefs about people. Successful broad-based affirmative action programs ultimately change the societal representations and later the "social data" that contribute to the construction of cognitive representations of the social order.

On top of that, research shows that the mental capacities of people may be compromised by subtle evaluative and judgmental biases associated with race. Research has shown (Richeson et al., 2003) that a person's cognitive performance is impaired when he or she holds implicit biased racial attitudes and is made to interact with a person who is Black. If a person is underperforming simply because of being exposed to a Black person, that is not a healthy person. If he or she has the power to create a largely non-Black environment to protect himself or herself from this performance deficit, then we all are losers.

For these and other reasons, we believe that diversity should be a compelling interest for anyone who would be a leader in any major institution of our society. Affirmative action is one key means of increasing the aggregate diversity of participants in our major institutions. Psychologists thus have strong reasons to sustain affirmative action while fine-tuning it to make it work more effectively and efficiently.

Indeed, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor articulated her belief that diversity is a compelling interest. Her words confirmed this interest: "In order to cultivate a set of leaders with legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry, it is necessary that the path to leadership be visibly open to talented and qualified individuals of every race and ethnicity" (Jayson & Rodriguez, 2003, p. A-1; Lemann, 2003). With those words, Justice O'Connor accepted the diversity argument that had been used by the late Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr. in his decision in the *Bakke* case, which permitted the racial preferences that affirmative action entails. But O'Connor added more force and feeling than Powell had and added an important new justification that many feel more accurately communicates the appeal of affirmative action. That is, she pointed out that universities are partly in the business of training a leadership corps for society and that a society with racial and ethnic tensions can benefit tremendously from having an integrated leadership (Lemann, 2003, p. 4-14). This perspective affirms with judicial authority the existing national consensus that the presence of diversity is compelling. This perspective was articulated by policy briefs submitted to the Supreme Court by hundreds of universities, the military, Fortune 500 companies, and various professional organizations, including the American Psychological Association. The court received a record number of supporting briefs, totaling in the hundreds.

## The Compelling Interest of Diversity in Psychology

Maton et al. (2006) and D. W. Sue, Bingham, Porche-Burke, & Vasquez (1999) are among many in the field of psychology who have provided multiple reasons for the critical importance of increasing the numbers of psychologists of color. Such representation would potentially increase the quality and sensitivity of services to, research on, and education of ethnic minority clients, research participants, and students, respectively. Tommy Thompson, as Secretary of Health and Human Services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001), presented a plan for eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in mental health. That plan called for better understanding of the roles of culture, race, and ethnicity in helping people to seek and receive effective treatment. Indeed, ethnic minority psychologists are more likely to offer diverse perspectives that can help generate the development of alternative theory in psychology, theory that is most relevant for ethnic minority clientele. Increased diversity in the field is also congruent with psychology's commitment to social justice (Commission on Ethnic Minority Recruitment, Retention, and Training in Psychology, 1997; Lott, 2005).

## What Has Affirmative Action Accomplished?

### *Benefits for Minorities of Color and Women*

Several studies have documented important and successful gains in racial and gender equality as a direct result of affirmative action. Many (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1996; Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; Murrell & Jones, 1996) have continued to document how unintentional bias can produce barriers to the university admissions, employment, and advancement of well-qualified members of historically disadvantaged groups, thus illustrating the continued need for affirmative action strategies.

Bowen and Bok (1998) passionately defended the legitimacy of their recommendation that the administrators of educational institutions be granted sufficient autonomy in their affairs to pursue the educational objective of ensuring diversity at their universities. They examined records from more than 80,000 students who had completed degrees at 28 elite colleges and universities in 1951, 1976, and 1989, and they demonstrated the success achieved by affirmative action in preparing large numbers of talented minority students for positions of responsibility in various sectors of American life, including the professions, the business world, academia, and government. Bowen and Bok followed up with ethnic-minority students who were "special admits" and contrasted their fates with those of other students. The "special admits" graduated from college and attended and graduated from professional and graduate schools at the same rate as White students, and they held professional jobs at the same rate. One interesting difference is that the "special admits" were much more likely than the White students to be active civic

leaders. Similar results were obtained in a follow-up study of medical students from the University of California, Davis during and after the time Allan Bakke was enrolled as a medical student.

### *Societal Benefits*

Demographic changes occurring now will profoundly affect the country. Many have articulated how the country's economy increasingly will be dependent on the contributions of African American, Latino/Latina, and Asian American consumers, entrepreneurs, and workers. Women have entered the educational and work arenas in increased numbers in the last few decades. It makes sense, therefore, to ensure that our country has a highly educated and highly skilled population, including women and people of color. Affirmative action policies, strategies, and programs are proactive ways to increase the ethnic and gender diversity in schools and in the workplace.

In addition, it is widely believed within academic and business circles that diversity is valuable in promoting and opening up new ways of thinking, teaching, learning, conducting research, and approaching problem solving (Wiley, 2001). Gender, ethnic/racial, and cultural differences play a vital role in the intellectual life of a university. Many of the women and ethnic minority faculty at universities are at the forefront of newly emerging fields or are leaders in new areas in traditional departments and colleges, such as law, anthropology, sociology, education, psychology, literature, and music (Wiley, 2001). This rationale is often the "plank" on which the legal teams for various universities, including the University of Michigan, have defended their schools' affirmative action admission systems. Diversity in education, it is argued, benefits all members of society, not just ethnic minorities (Crosby & Clayton, 2001; Crosby et al., 2003). In *Gratz et al. v. Bollinger et al.* (2001), Gurin reported that contact within the classroom and on the campus with ethnic-minority students of color had immediate positive benefits for White students and significantly affected listening ability, critical thinking, writing skills, and foreign language skills (Crosby & Clayton, 2001; Gratz et al. v. Bollinger et al., 2001; Gurin, 1999).

The central message of *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions* (Bowen & Bok, 1998) is that the net social benefits from the use of race in the admissions process are impressive; what is more, these benefits are long term. Bowen and Bok found that more diverse student bodies enriched the educational experience for all students. White students at the most selective institutions reported that they had the opportunity to learn how to live and work more effectively with members of other races. Bowen and Bok's surveys of the alumni in their study showed that almost 80% believed that current race-sensitive admissions policies should be retained or strengthened further. For example, large majorities of students at Harvard University, the University of Michigan, and other prominent law schools reported that their understanding of subjects such as civil rights law, poverty law, and criminal justice had

benefited from the existence of a racially diverse student body (Bowen & Bok, 1998).

## **What Are the Concerns About Affirmative Action?**

Affirmative action policies, strategies, and programs were developed to increase justice and fairness in society by ensuring access to education and employment for women and ethnic-minority populations. Some, however, believe that affirmative action is unfair because of the perception that it benefits minority applicants at the expense of more deserving Whites. Indeed, there is always an opportunity cost associated with the decision to admit a student. In selective schools, someone else is denied admission who may have benefited substantially from going to the school in question (Bowen & Bok, 1998).

Justice is a moral principle that, in its broadest sense, means “fairness”—dealing with others as one would like to be dealt with oneself, behaving toward others in an impartial manner, and treating others equally. Issues of justice arise because in society there are conflicts of interest over limited goods and services and because human benevolence is limited. Elite higher education is a special, almost sacred, civic activity that is also deeply political, according to Loury (1998). He argued that higher education is a venue in which access to influence and power is rationed. There are limited seats in those venues. The selection rituals are thus political acts with moral overtones.

Our society struggles with whether admissions should be based on some color-blind criteria, often referred to as criteria of “merit,” or whether it should pursue equality among groups. These two ideals are indeed in tension with each other. Proponents of affirmative action suggest that racial/ethnic justice can be pursued by violating color blindness and viewing affirmative action strategies as leveling the playing field. Opponents see affirmative action as “bureaucratized inequality” (Ibarra, 2001, p. 3).

Opponents of affirmative action tend to frame the discussion in terms of individuals’ rights and, in the court system, tend to emphasize procedural matters. The individual rights argument is often pitted against the 14th Amendment, which guarantees equal protection of the laws and which is often the basis for various civil rights initiatives (Vasquez & de las Fuentes, 2000). Others believe that the pursuit of racial/ethnic justice is a more fundamental moral concern than that of individual rights.

## **Counterpoints**

### **Factors in Admission**

Several have challenged the rationale for the dismantling of affirmative action by the courts (Liu, 2002; Nacoste, 1996; Plous, 1996; Skedsvold & Mann, 1996; Wittig, 1996). Liu (2002) suggested that the perception that affirmative action benefits minority applicants at the expense of more deserving Whites tends to inflate the cost beyond its real proportions. Affirmative action does indeed give minority applicants a significant boost in selective admissions. However, Liu (2002) and Bowen and Bok (1998) pointed out that

racial and ethnic preferences are not the only preferences that cause different groups or individuals to be admitted over others at different rates. Academically selective schools have never equated merit simply with test scores and high school grades. Geographic, athletic, and alumni preferences also weigh heavily, to the detriment of many other applicants. Bowen and Bok (1998) stress that thoughtful admissions policies take account of many factors in assessing student potential, including test scores, grades, recommendations, personal qualities, athletic skill, special talents, socioeconomic status, geographic origin, leadership potential, and the projected composition of the class as a whole. Yet these preferences have never galvanized the kind of outrage that is directed at affirmative action. So it is the perception that other unequal treatments are not a problem but that unequal treatment based on race and gender (to enhance gender, racial, and ethnic equity) should be singled out for special condemnation that is at issue.

### **Confusion About Affirmative Action**

Surveys indicate that Americans tend to support affirmative action in principle but that they protest some of the procedures perceived to be used to carry it out (Skedsvold & Mann, 1996). Confusion about affirmative action exists when opponents portray programs as a form of reverse discrimination; assert that affirmative action programs harm race relations; insist that merit should be the basis of admissions, employment, and promotion; maintain that programs have had a negative impact on recipients’ self-esteem; and state that programs lead to further stigmatization of targeted groups (Skedsvold & Mann, 1996). Plous (1996), however, argued that reverse discrimination is a misconception and a myth. Job discrimination is grounded in prejudice and exclusion, whereas affirmative action is an effort to overcome prejudicial treatment through inclusion. Plous suggested that the most effective way to cure society of exclusionary practices is to make special efforts at inclusion.

### **Does Affirmative Action Harm Race Relations?**

Have affirmative action programs harmed race relations? Although it is difficult to attribute cause and effect, White Americans’ views of racial minorities have become more positive, and in general, Whites are more willing than ever to support social integration (Skedsvold & Mann, 1996). Although some opposition to affirmative action is likely rooted in racism, some opponents of affirmative action see individual rights as central and affirmative action as a violation of this fundamental principle. Proponents of affirmative action argue (a) that individual rights cannot be the basis for achieving fairness because societal-level injustices exist and (b) that affirmative action does not violate individual rights but merely adds another criterion for selection.

## **The Myth of Meritocracy**

The notion that individuals are more meritorious and deserving if they have the highest test scores on entrance exams or employment screening tests is an argument put forth by opponents of affirmative action. The issue is partly one of predictive validity. Wittig (1996) pointed out that the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1991 require that tests must show predictive validity. The issues of the extent to which employment screening tests predict on-the-job performance and of the extent to which particular scores on undergraduate and graduate entrance exams predict both school and postdegree performance have been lost in the political debate. Wittig pointed out, for example, that for the most widely used employment screening test (General Aptitude Test Battery composite scores), such validity is not only low overall but somewhat lower for African Americans. In addition, supervisors' ratings of on-the-job performance—the criterion that such tests are attempting to predict—show racial bias. For overall college entrance requirements, beyond particular scores and grade point averages, virtually all students will perform competently in an academic setting, and the test scores of women and ethnic minorities do not consistently predict such competence as well as do the test scores of White males. Proponents of affirmative action argue that proponents of meritocracy ignore predictors of performance other than test scores. Factors such as persistence, past performance, likelihood of ability to work with diverse groups, and other criteria may be relevant to a particular school program or employment setting.

## **What Do Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Scores Predict?**

Sternberg and Williams (1997) conducted a study that examined the relationship between GRE scores and numerous academic outcome measures including grades, professors' ratings of student dissertations, and professors' ratings of students' analytical, creative, practical, research, and teaching abilities. The researchers found that the GREs only modestly predicted first-year grades but were unrelated to professors' ratings of students or the quality of the dissertations they produced. A Stanford University study showed that patterns of correlation between SATs and college grades differ among ethnic groups: For example, the regression line for Asian American students differs from the regression line for White students (S. Sue, 1999). This means that the tests predict differently for these groups of students and should therefore be used differently as predictive criteria. Standardized tests are thus not sufficiently predictive of future academic performance. Individuals are not necessarily more meritorious if they obtain the highest scores on standardized tests, thus rendering invalid the argument that students with the highest scores should have priority in admissions. Sternberg and Williams (1997) recommended the development of better theory-based tests that distinguish among various aspects of human abilities,

including academic analytical abilities, creative abilities, and practical abilities.

## **Does Affirmative Action Harm Self-Esteem?**

Do affirmative action programs harm the self-esteem of recipients? Plous (1996) suggested that although affirmative action may have this effect in some cases, a Gallup poll indicated that almost 90% of employed Blacks and White women indicated that they had never felt others questioned their abilities because of affirmative action (Roper Center for Public Opinion, 1995, cited in Plous, 1996). Plous further pointed out that affirmative action may actually raise the self-esteem of women and minorities by providing them with employment and opportunities for advancement. After reviewing the results of Bowen and Bok's (1998) major study challenging much of the conservative thinking about affirmative action, Secretary of State Colin Powell dismissed concerns about the alleged stigma that opponents say affirmative action imposes. Powell is reported to have said that he would tell Black youngsters to graduate from the prestigious schools magna cum laude and get one of those well-paying jobs to pay for all the therapy they'll need to remove that stigma (Bronner, 1998).

## **Factors That Influence Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action**

Public support for affirmative action programs seems strongest when those programs are perceived to promote selection among equally qualified candidates or comparable candidates; support is less strong when the perception is that affirmative action means selection among unequal candidates or among qualified and unqualified candidates (Plous, 1996). Strategies for the implementation of the goals of affirmative action should be made in consideration of those factors.

An empirical perspective on affirmative action is especially critical given the emotional tone of the policy debate, which is not likely to end despite the Supreme Court decision. Psychologists must continue to inform the public about what affirmative action is and what it accomplishes. Affirmative strategies are necessary, not only to right the wrongs of the past and to prevent current and future discrimination but also to promote the diversity of skills and perspectives useful for an institution of higher learning, as well as for employment settings, organizations, and society.

## **Beyond Affirmative Action**

Now that affirmative action policies have been upheld at the Supreme Court level, the debate will move to all the other strategies that are important in eliminating the disparities in educational achievement and opportunities for college applicants that persist across racial and ethnic lines (Holmes & Winter, 2003). Lisa Navarette, vice president of the National Council of La Raza, a major Latino/Latina advocacy group, said, "If all we do over the next 25 years is affirmative action, then we will still need affirmative action" (Holmes & Winter, 2003, p. 4-14). It is not, after

all, only the admissions process that accounts for the dearth of minority students in graduate school. There is a pipeline problem owing to a lack of a substantial applicant pool.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote, in the 5 to 4 opinion, that "We expect that 25 years from now the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary to further the interest approved today" (Holmes & Winter, 2003, p. 4-1). We wonder whether her mention of this time period was merely idle musing or whether the time period will become an iron-clad legal principle. Bridging all of the existing gaps in education in the next 25 years is certainly a complex challenge, including in psychology.

The current debates will accelerate around strategies to close the gap between White and minority students' achievement of all kinds, at all levels. Increased ethnic minority representation is needed in regard to high school graduation rates, at the college undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as among faculty. Some believe that one factor in achieving this representation lies in equalizing the amount of money spent on educating Whites and minorities. The school districts that many Blacks and Hispanics attend spent \$902 less per student than most White school districts spent, according to the Education Trust, a group focused on closing the achievement gap (Holmes & Winter, 2003). This is certainly a factor, but it is not the only solution. Although the gap exists across all ethnic socioeconomic groups, the fact is that the majority of ethnic minority students who benefit from affirmative action at selective universities come from middle-income families, according to Educational Testing Service vice president Anthony Carnevale (Holmes & Winter, 2003). In other words, educational parity may be linked to bigger, more complex economic factors. We all know that increased education is the best way to increase socioeconomic status among ethnic groups. So what are the strategies to compensate for the disadvantages incurred as a result of those complex economic factors? These are issues about which psychologists have much to say and contribute. Yet, psychology does not do much better than other professional fields in its recruitment and retention of ethnic minority students into the profession.<sup>1</sup>

## Closing the Gap in Psychology

Racial/ethnic minority students are underrepresented at all levels of psychology, but most particularly at the doctoral level, the primary entry point to becoming a psychologist, and among the faculty of psychology training programs. Maton et al. (2006) suggested that the encouraging trends outweigh the disquieting ones at the lower levels of the pipeline but that the disquieting trends outweigh the encouraging ones at the higher levels, including faculty representation levels. Of high concern is the lack of growth in entrance to PhD-degree granting departments from 1997 onward for African American and Hispanic/Latino/Latina students. Work toward increasing the numbers of racial and ethnic minorities in the pipeline in psychology must be conducted at all levels of psychology.

Business, law, and medicine have historically been somewhat more successful in recruiting minority students

(Cherwitz, 2003; Cherwitz & Alvarado Boyd, 2003). Significantly fewer numbers of racial/ethnic minority students make up the applicant pool for programs in the arts, the sciences, the humanities, and the social sciences.

Vasquez and Lott (2006, this issue) presented the experiences of faculty and students of color in regard to the barriers they encountered and continue to encounter in their graduate training and places of employment. Their experiences are not uncommon and are cited in the literature as well. These faculty and students also discussed strategies they found to be effective, enhancing, and positive and how issues of social class, disability, and sexual orientation interact with color as part of their experiences.

Campus-wide and departmental strategies for enhancing the pipeline for students of color in psychology graduate programs have been recommended by Lott (2005). Rogers and Molina (2006) addressed not only issues of recruitment but also issues of retention. Lott (2005) identified three major strategies for recruiting students of color: (a) the use of admissions criteria that are flexible and sensitive to life experiences; (b) the use of a variety of creative recruitment strategies, including having faculty and ethnic minority students visit historically Black colleges, involving currently enrolled minority students in the recruitment of others, offering minority student locator services, using follow-up phone calls, offering visits to schools with a high percentage of minority students, recruiting from the home university's pool of undergraduates, and providing summer research programs and personal networking opportunities for undergraduates; and (c) offers of financial assistance. Lott's (2005) suggestions for retention and achievement included (a) ensuring the presence of a good percentage of minority faculty of color; (b) providing positive interactions with faculty on and off the campus; (c) providing mentors, integration into networks, and encouragement of participation in teaching and research; and (d) providing an ethnically inclusive curriculum.

Rogers and Molina (2006) identified some of the best practices used by psychology departments and graduate programs in psychology that are making exemplary efforts to recruit and retain minority students of color. These exemplary departments and programs used five strategies to create a welcoming and supportive environment that encouraged retention of minority students through graduation. They (a) contained a critical mass of students of color, (b) provided students with opportunities to collaborate with faculty on diversity issues and research, (c) offered at least one diversity issues course, (d) had faculty who were involved in a wide array of campus-based diversity initiatives, and (e) had faculty who perceived that their commitment to recruiting and retaining minority students of color

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<sup>1</sup> We should note that the University of Michigan has altered its admissions process and done away with the point system, replacing it with a series of very specific evaluative processes, including a more extensive interview process. The system is designed to comply with the endorsement of the methods used by the University of Michigan Law School in its successful defense of its admissions practices.

was supported within the broader institutional environment at the campus level and/or the department level.

At the university-wide level, strategies that make a difference include having a clear commitment to diversity in the form of policy statements, support services, centers for social/educational exchange, and ethnic studies programs; promoting faculty development; rewarding diversity efforts; providing financial assistance; and having a good percentage of minority faculty and administrators and students of color. Maton et al. (2006) found, not surprisingly, that those programs with ethnic minority faculty also had the highest percentages of ethnic minority students.

At the departmental or graduate program level, the pedagogical processes of teaching multiculturalism, not only in the area of psychological intervention but throughout the curriculum, are critical. Vázquez (1997) has offered recommendations for various approaches to multicultural pedagogy and the application of multicultural constructs across various disciplines within psychology.

Ibarra (2001), in his book *Beyond Affirmative Action*, described the importance of reframing the cultural context of the academy, including the recommendation of a new infrastructure for teaching, learning, and institutional change. He suggested that although the Western analytical science model is legitimate, an imbalance exists in higher education because of the exclusion of other legitimate learning modes and styles. He reviewed several paradigms and proposed a “Learning-and-Effectiveness” paradigm, which is now in use at a handful of organizations. It is directed toward opening up new sources of knowledge—finding other ways of thinking and learning—that are derived from diverse cultural and gender perspectives. The paradigm is characterized as “connecting diversity to work” and taps fresh perspectives.

Cherwitz (2003) observed that Latino/Latina and African American undergraduates misperceive graduate education in traditional academic fields (other than law, medicine or business) as esoteric and irrelevant to their communities. So he established a new vision of graduate education and developed a program called Intellectual Entrepreneurship (Cherwitz, 2003). The program is designed to help students rigorously explore how to succeed. It helps first-generation students learn the unspoken rules of the game and makes graduate education transparent, relevant, and capable of fulfilling students’ passions and goals.

Policy recommendations to increase the number of psychologists of color are necessary in order for ethnic minorities to benefit from the American values of equality and fairness as well as for society to reap the full benefits of participation by all its citizens. Crosby et al. (2003) suggested that public advocacy is important for psychology. The worry over taking positions on controversial policies such as affirmative action is unfounded given that science can never be fully free of values and that as long as scientists’ values are transparent, and data are reliably reported, political psychology is not simply “politicized psychology” (p. 93).

We recommend the continued pursuit of policies for increasing the number of students of color throughout the

pipeline of education in psychology, including in university psychology departments and in organized psychology (the American Psychological Association [APA] and state psychological associations). The APA Commission on Ethnic Minority Recruitment, Retention and Training in Psychology (CEMRRAT) was established in 1994 by the APA Board of Directors in response to an Association resolution that identified the recruitment and retention and training of ethnic minorities in psychology as one of the Association’s highest priorities. Various projects have evolved as a result of the Commission’s report (Commission on Ethnic Minority Recruitment, Retention, and Training in Psychology, 1997) and are continuing through the work of APA task forces and the Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs in APA’s Public Interest Directorate.

The Suinn Minority Achievement Awards, for example, are presented to graduate programs in psychology that reflect (a) an overall commitment to cultural diversity in all phases of departmental activity—that is, funding, integration of ethnic minority issues into the curriculum, student and faculty collaboration related to ethnic minority concerns, recruitment and retention programs and strategies, and mentoring and modeling—as well as (b) a large number of ethnic minority students either enrolled or earning doctorates in the preceding five years (Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs, 2002). The staff of exemplary programs that have won awards were interviewed, and their strategies reported, by Rogers and Molina (2006).

Various other efforts are necessary to improve the visibility and access of psychologists of color in the profession. The APA’s Council of Representatives endorsed a Resolution on Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity in February 1999. That policy, supported by empirical evidence, provided the APA the opportunity to send an amicus brief in the University of Michigan case before the Supreme Court. APA continues to promote strategies to increase ethnic minority and women’s representation at various levels and aspects of the profession. For example, in order to increase the number of ethnic-minority psychologists in the peer review publication system, APA launched a database of scholarly publications written by members known to belong to an ethnic minority group so that APA journal editors could more easily search for prospective ethnic-minority reviewers (Carpenter, 2001).

The APA Minority Fellowship Program (MFP), initially funded in 1974 by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) has enjoyed uninterrupted funding, now totaling \$2.5 million annually. The MFP was designed to stimulate research interest and culturally competent practices in ethnic minority mental health and to provide financial support and mentoring to individuals pursuing doctoral degrees. Initial funding was for 30 Fellows, supported for three years over a five-year period. By 2004, the MFP had supported over 1,200 Fellows, in both ethnic minority and basic neuroscience research and culturally relevant mental health services. Funding has grown from support for the Minority Mental Health Research Centers of NIMH to include NIMH funding for neuroscience and behavioral science research in psychology, HIV/AIDS research, and

research on aging from the National Institute on Aging. Additional funding comes from the National Institute on Drug Abuse as well as from the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration. Over 700 of the Fellows supported to date have earned their doctoral degrees, and less than 10% have withdrawn from training without receiving their degrees. Graduates are active in academic settings (about 60% teach and conduct research, counsel, or have administration positions in university settings; e.g., Beverly Daniel Tatum, an MFP Fellow during her doctoral years at the University of Michigan in the late 1970s and early 1980s, is President of Spelman College). MFP Fellows are active in the APA governance, have served as presidents of APA divisions, have worked in APA's Central Office, and have generally maintained a highly visible and effective presence in organized psychology. The MFP continues as one of the most successful doctoral national training programs for ethnic and racial minorities in the country. It has brought great visibility and regard to APA and to psychology.

The APA Council of Representatives, the policymaking body for the association, decided, at the 2001 August meeting, to endorse the provision of financial incentives to divisions and states that elect Council of Representatives members of color. In a historic event, the APA unanimously endorsed the Guidelines for Multicultural Education and Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change at the August 2002 convention (American Psychological Association, 2003). These Multicultural Guidelines evolved over a 20-year period and are evidence of the commitment of the profession to provide information designed to promote the competent delivery of services to ethnic minority populations. They are a powerful example of how affirmative action has enabled what psychology can offer to society. The progress would not have been made without the presence and significant scholarly work of key psychologists of color over the last three decades, as well as their allies.

## We Cannot Rest

Psychologists with appropriate expertise should continue to provide expert knowledge to influence the legislative, administrative policy, and court processes relevant to the goals of affirmative action. We cannot rest in regard to the continued backlash that the recent Supreme Court decision will evoke. Writing in the *New York Times*, Bob Herbert (2003) stated,

A closer look at these challenges [to affirmative action] . . . would show that they are largely being driven by a huge, complex and extraordinarily well-financed web of conservative and right-wing organizations that in many cases are hostile not just to affirmative action but to the very idea of a multiracial, pluralistic America.

A new book published by the Institute for Democracy Studies in New York, *The Assault on Diversity: An Organized Challenge to Racial and Gender Justice*, by Lee Cokorinos, documents in exceptional detail this nationwide effort to roll back a proud half-century of progress toward social justice and a more inclusive society.

The driving force behind the Michigan University cases, for example, is the Center for Individual Rights, a right-wing outfit that in its early years, as Mr. Cokorinos noted, received financial support from the Pioneer Fund, an organization that spent decades pushing the notion that whites are genetically superior to blacks.

The United States is a better place after a half-century of racial progress and improved educational opportunities for racial and ethnic minorities, and women. We have all benefited, and voluntary efforts to continue that progress, including the policies at Michigan, are in the interest of us all. (p. A17)

Indeed, Justice Lewis Powell Jr., who wrote the controlling opinion in the *Bakke* case in 1978, eloquently addressed the matter of campus diversity when he said that "a robust exchange of ideas" is of "transcendent value to us all" (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 1978). An unchallenged right-wing war against the very idea of diversity will turn us back in the direction of the noxious beliefs of 50 years ago. We worry about backlash to the affirmative action decision. We hope that most psychologists agree that increased racial and ethnic diversity at all levels of psychology is important and that we can prevent a backlash in all aspects of psychology as well.

In psychology, representation of diversity is important because we know that our worldviews frame the research questions, shape the content and nature of our training curricula, and influence the services we provide. Diversity in our profession enhances and broadens our effectiveness. Furthermore, strategies to increase diversity are not reverse discrimination but can be considered as reversing discrimination. Attempts to level the playing field for minority applicants who may not have had the educational opportunities that White applicants had and to ensure that White and non-White applicants alike benefit from a diverse environment are important goals for psychology and society. Diversity is a compelling interest in psychology.

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