Prejudice Against Fat People: Ideology and Self-Interest

Christian S. Crandall

Prejudice against fat people was compared with symbolic racism. An anti-fat attitudes questionnaire was developed and used in several studies testing the notion that antipathy toward fat people is part of an "ideology of blame." Three commonalities between anti-fat attitudes and racism were explored: (a) the association between values, beliefs, and the rejection of a stigmatized group, (b) the old-fashioned antipathy toward deviance of many sorts, and (c) the lack of self-interest in out-group antipathy. Parallels were found on all 3 dimensions. No in-group bias was shown by fat people. Fatism appears to behave much like symbolic racism, but with less of the negative social desirability of racism.

One of the most interesting and controversial areas of inquiry in attitudes and intergroup relations over the past 20 years has been the issue of symbolic attitudes and beliefs. This work has followed the functional approach to attitudes sponsored by Katz (1960) and Smith, Bruner, and White (1956), and two general classes of attitude functions have been identified: instrumental and symbolic (Herek, 1986). Instrumental attitudes are based on an evaluation of the attitude object in terms of its utility for the person and are rational, prosaic, and relatively immediate in nature. Attitudes with a symbolic basis are characterized by the expression of beliefs and values relevant to self and identity. Based in early childhood learning, they represent long-standing values about society, are affectively laden, and can be independent of self-interest (Abelson, 1982; Herek, 1987; Pryor, Reeder, & McManus, 1991; Sears, Lau, Tyler, & Allen, 1980).

Symbolic Racism

Most of the research on symbolic attitudes has been on symbolic politics, particularly symbolic racism. For example, Sears, Kinder, and their associates suggested that a substantial amount of racism is based on symbolic beliefs about how Black people fail to live up to classic American Protestant values (Kinder & Sears, 1981; Sears et al., 1980). The symbolic racism perspective argues that prejudice toward Blacks is made up of two components: old-fashioned racial hatred and the belief that Blacks do not emulate traditional American values, such as discipline, self-control, and self-reliance (Kinder, 1986).

This article extends the notion of symbolic racism to anti-fat attitudes (Allison, Basile, & Yuker, 1991). I build the analogy between racial attitudes and anti-fat attitudes, with the intention of revealing the structure of anti-fat attitudes, as well as testing the generality of the symbolic racism idea. Symbolic racism theory is briefly reviewed, along with some criticisms of the idea, and some evidence of prejudice against fat people in the United States is detailed. The studies in this article were designed to show that the conception of symbolic belief applies to the rejection of fat people. In this research, I attempt to avoid the problems in conception, design, and analysis for which the symbolic racism research program has been criticized.

Symbolic racism can be characterized by three hypotheses (Kinder, 1986). The first hypothesis is that anti-Black affect stems from the belief that Blacks do not support the traditional values of hard work, self-contained independence, obedience to authority, and self-discipline. The second is that this value-based rejection occurs in addition to old-fashioned atavistic racial prejudice. The third hypothesis is that self-interest does not form the basis of symbolic racism (Sears, Hensler, & Spear, 1979).

There are several important implications of the symbolic attitude notion. One is that abstract ideologies can play an important role in the prediction of behavior (e.g., voting). Another is that people are motivated more by ideology and beliefs than by self-interest. This suggestion is in contrast to realistic group conflict theory (Sherif & Sherif, 1963), which suggests that competition over resources leads to prejudice toward out-group members.

Criticism of Symbolic Racism

It is not surprising that the symbolic approach to racism has been controversial and criticized on both conceptual and em-
Empirical grounds. For example, Sniderman, Piazza, Tetlock, and Kendrick (1991) have argued that although a variety of data consistent with the symbolic racism hypothesis have been collected, there is no research suggesting that valuing independence, self-reliance, or respect for authority are essential aspects of predicting the rejection of Blacks by Whites.

On similar empirical grounds, several authors have criticized the program for relying on ill-defined or changing measures of symbolic racism (Bobo, 1983; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986). In addition, there is criticism for measuring attitudes, racism, and self-interest on the basis of single survey items (Bobo, 1983; Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986).

Another area of criticism has been the conceptualization of self-interest (see Sears & Funk, 1991). Kinder and Sears (1981) defined self-interest in terms of having children potentially subject to busing; they assumed that it is always against parents' self-interest to have their children bused. Crano (1992) argued that parents need not be ineluctably opposed to busing; rather, they may be in favor of it. Bobo (1983) argued that this definition is overly narrow. He suggested that a threat to the individual's group, or threats to the status quo that favors Whites in general, should be interpreted as within the definition of self-interest. This is an important argument, as it appears that group-level discontent, rather than individual discontent, leads to politicization and social protest (Dubé & Guimond, 1986).

Symbolic Prejudice and Fat People

If antifat attitudes are structured in much the same manner as symbolic racism, then prejudice toward fat people will be associated with (a) beliefs and values that reflect self-determination and the Puritan work ethic and (b) measures of intolerance, such as racism and authoritarianism. In addition, (c) self-interest should be uncorrelated with antifat attitudes in terms of one's own fatness. To test these hypotheses, I developed a psychometrically adequate measure of antifat attitudes and correlated it with values and beliefs relevant to the Protestant ethic and intolerance.

In addition to addressing methodological and conceptual criticisms, expanding symbolic attitudes to other groups has the value of establishing the generality of the idea. Because Black-White relations in the United States have been a major focus of the social sciences, political discourse, literature, education, and popular culture for decades, there remains the possibility that Black-White attitudes have an independent and unique attitude system, with their own structure and set of functions. By applying the theory to other stigmatized groups, one may be able to show that attitudes of Whites toward Blacks function much like other prejudicial attitudes.

There is evidence of strong antifat sentiment in the United States (e.g., Alon, 1982; Yuker & Allison, in press), and there is reason to believe that factors related to symbolic attitudes apply to antifat prejudice (Crandal & Biernat, 1990). Furthermore, the lesser focus on fat people in culture, science, and politics makes it unlikely that an independent attitude system for fat people exists.

An added advantage of studying antifat attitudes is that they are subject to lower levels of social desirability suppression, when compared with racial attitudes. Sears and his colleagues have hypothesized that symbolic racism developed from the changing norms about the desirability of expression of anti-Black prejudice (e.g., Kinder, 1986; McConahay, 1986; Sears, 1988). Symbolic racism arose, they argued, out of the simultaneous change in public mores about racism and the individual's early training in racial antipathy, resulting in a somewhat disguised version of racism (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). Studying attitudes toward fat people, with the apparent lack of normative pressure to suppress expression, allows us to examine the role of social desirability suppression in the structure of prejudicial attitudes.

Evidence of Prejudice Against Fat People

Although some reviewers have suggested that the harmful effects of obesity stigma have not been convincingly demonstrated (Jarvie, Lahey, Graziano, & Fram, 1983), the majority of research has suggested that being fat is associated with a wide variety of negative characteristics. Fat people are seen as unattractive (Harris, Harris, & Bochner, 1982), aesthetically displeasing (Wooley & Wooley, 1979), morally and emotionally impaired (Keys, 1955), alienated from their sexuality (Millman, 1980), and discontent with themselves (Maddox, Bock, & Liederman, 1968; Rodin, Silverstein, & Streigel-Moore, 1984). Their physicians describe them as "weak-willed" (Monello & Mayer, 1963), and their peers rate them as unlikeable (Goodman, Richardson, Dornbusch, & Hastorf, 1963).

Fat people are denigrated by thin people, health care workers, employers, peers, potential romantic partners, their parents, and even by themselves (Allon, 1982; Crandal & Biernat, 1990). Employers are unwilling to hire fat people, even if their fatness would not interfere with performance (Roe & Eickwort, 1976). When employed, fat people report significant discrimination on the job (Rothblum, Brand, Miller, & Oetjen, 1990). Fat executives are less likely to be promoted into higher paying positions (Larkin & Pines, 1979).

Fat people are less likely to attend college (Canning & Mayer, 1966), perhaps because their parents are less willing to pay for their expenses (Crandall, 1991). These difficulties with advancement in the job force and higher education may account for the fact that fat people tend to be downwardly economically mobile from their parents (Goldblatt, Moore, & Stunkard, 1965); in the United States, fatness is associated with lower socioeconomic status (Sobal & Stunkard, 1989).

Is Fatness a Function of Willpower?

It is critical to point out at this juncture that the research does not point to gluttony or sloth as the primary cause of fatness. The majority of research evidence supports the notion that body weight is the result of genetic and metabolic factors and is only modestly related to dietary habits. For instance, in an adoption study, Stunkard and his colleagues (Stunkard et al., 1986) found that the body fat of children was highly correlated with the biological parents' body fat, but uncorrelated with the adoptive parents' body fat. To directly examine the overeating hypothesis, Garrow (1974) reviewed 13 studies of body weight and food intake, and in 12 of these, obese subjects ate the same amount or less than normal weight subjects.
In addition, a number of studies have shown that a variety of physiological factors make dieting both difficult and ineffective. For example, after dieting, energy metabolism becomes increasingly efficient (Brownell, Greenwood, Stellar, & Shragge, 1986) and high-caloric foods become increasingly palatable (Nisbett, 1972). In short, the belief that fat people got that way primarily from overeating and a lack of self-control does not properly represent the scientific data.

Instead, I propose the notion that holding antifat attitudes serves a value-expressive function (Katz, 1960), reinforcing a worldview consistent with the Protestant work ethic, self-determination, a belief in a just world, and the notion that people get what they deserve. If ideology leads a person to chronically attribute controllable causality to others, he or she will tend to blame fat people for their weight and stigmatize them for it.

A similar argument has been made for racism in particular. Many Whites hold Blacks accountable for their relatively poor economic status (Ryan, 1971). The belief that individuals in disadvantaged groups are responsible for any negative aspects of their situation is known as the "ultimate attribution error" (Petitgrew, 1979). Several researchers have shown consistent individual differences in causal attributions (e.g., Anderson, 1983; Peterson & Seligman, 1984). These consistent attributional styles might in turn lead to the derogation of any disadvantaged group.

Outline

This article is in three sections. In the first section (Study 1), an anti-fat attitudes questionnaire is developed. In the second section (Studies 2-4), attitudes and beliefs consistent with the values of self-determination, self-control, and a tendency to reject deviance are correlated with antifat attitudes, and an experiment designed to change beliefs about control is described. In the third section (Studies 5-6), antifat attitudes and racism are explicitly compared in terms of social pressures about the expression of prejudice and the role of self-interest.

Study 1: Development of the Antifat Attitudes Questionnaire

Method

Subjects were 251 undergraduates (135 women, 53.8%) who filled out a questionnaire in a psychology class. The questionnaire included a wide variety of items covering personal relevance, causes of fatness, willingness to interact with fat people, and so forth; 26 questions were answered on a 0-9 Likert scale. Items were selected for inclusion on the basis of loading substantially on any factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0. The text of the 13 items selected on the basis of the analysis described below, are displayed in Table 1.

Results

A principal-components factor analysis of the items, with varimax rotation of factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, indicated that three dimensions meaningfully described the data. The results are displayed in Table 1.

The first factor reflects an evaluative scale and is labeled Dislike \( (\alpha = .84) \). The second factor represents the individual's concerns about weight and fat's self-relevance and is labeled Fear of Fat \( (\alpha = .79) \). The third factor reflects subjects' beliefs about the controllability of weight and fat and is labeled Willpower \( (\alpha = .66) \). (In the studies reported below with adequate sample size, the factor structure was replicated with only minor deviations from Table 1.) The relevant items for each subscale were summed and divided by the number of items to create three scales ranging from 0 to 9. These three scales constitute the Antifat Attitudes (AFA) questionnaire.

A series of \( t \) tests by sex revealed that men scored higher than women on Dislike (Ms = 2.47 and 1.85, respectively), \( t(243) = 3.42, p < .01 \), and slightly higher on Willpower (Ms = 6.12 and 5.65), \( t(248) = 1.79, p < .08 \). Women scored notably higher on Fear of Fat (Ms = 6.78) than men (M = 3.55), \( t(249) = 9.93, p < .001 \).

Dislike and Willpower were correlated \( r = .43, n = 244, p < .001 \); believing weight is due to willpower and denigrating fat people go hand in hand. Fear of Fat was uncorrelated with Dislike \( r = .01, n.s. \). This suggests that self-relevant concerns about fatness are not a major aspect of disliking fat people. Fear of Fat was not correlated with Willpower \( r = .01, n = 250, n.s. \).

Discussion

The three scales each represent a different aspect of antifat attitudes: prejudice toward fat people, belief in the controllability of weight, and the individual's self-relevant concerns about fatness. The negative affect and the attribution of controllability were substantially correlated, and neither of these was associated with self-relevant concerns (Fear of Fat).

The correlation between Willpower and Dislike is consistent with DeJong's (1980) finding that a belief in controllability is an important contributor to antifat attitudes. A similar finding was reported in a recent article that came to our attention while preparing this article. Allison et al. (1991) developed two independent scales, a measure of antifat attitudes (Attitude Toward Obese Persons Scale) and a measure of attribution, fault, or blame (Beliefs About Obese Persons Scale); they found a very similar correlation between attributions of controllability and negative attitudes toward obese people (across three samples, average \( r = .42 \)). In Study 2, an attempt is made to generalize this finding to a broader set of attributional variables, connecting attitudes and beliefs about fat people to a network of related attitudes: an ideological system.

Study 2: Antifat Attitudes in an Ideological System

If one believes that fatness is fat people's fault, then one will denigrate and stigmatize them (DeJong, 1980; Weiner, 1986; Weiner, Perry, & Magnusson, 1988). The argument is attributional: if ideology leads to controllable attributions to targets, one will blame Black people for their economic situation, beautiful people for their good looks (Dion & Dion, 1987), and fat people for their weight.

I suggest that the classic Protestant values that are hypothesized to underlie symbolic racism can be described as a general tendency to make controllable attributions. Attributions and values are conceptually linked, in that both reflect characteristic ways of giving meaning to the social world. To the extent that
one endorses the virtue of hard work and self-determination, one will tend to celebrate the victories of heroes and, conversely, blame victims for their fates. For example, the politically conservative are more likely to make person attributions in explaining poverty, whereas the politically liberal are more likely to make situational attributions (Converse, 1964; Feather, 1985; Zucker & Weiner, 1993). Thus, beliefs, values, and ideologies should be closely linked with individual differences in the tendency to make internal, controllable attributions.

If antifat attitudes serve a value-expressive function, reinforcing a worldview consistent with this ideology, then they should be correlated with a variety of attitudes that serve this same function. For example, antifat attitudes should be correlated with the belief in the just world (Lerner, 1980). The belief that hard work is rewarded is consistent with classic American values, with making internal or controllable attributions, with having a positive attitude toward those who work hard, and with a tendency to reject those who are perceived as lazy or noncontributing.

Antifat attitudes may also reflect a general orientation of intolerance and dislike of social deviance from an ideal norm of any sort. This argument is akin to the symbolic notion that racism is based in part on old-fashioned racial prejudice (Kinder, 1986). Therefore, antifat attitudes should be associated with the classic general individual-differences measure of old-fashioned intolerance—authoritarianism (Altmeier, 1984).

Finally, it is interesting to note that the stereotypes associated with fat people and Blacks are remarkably similar—both groups are regarded as lazy, sinful, and lacking discipline and self-denial (Alon, 1982).² If the endorsement of this traditional, conservative set of beliefs underlies both racist attitudes and antifat attitudes, then racism should be correlated with antifat prejudice.

### Table 1

**Factor Analysis of Antifat Attitude Items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor loadings</th>
<th>Item text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dislike⁰</td>
<td>I really don't like fat people much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.992</td>
<td>I don't have many friends that are fat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.776</td>
<td>I tend to think that people who are overweight are a little untrustworthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.689</td>
<td>Although some fat people are surely smart, in general, I think they tend not to be quite as bright as normal weight people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.678</td>
<td>I have a hard time taking fat people too seriously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.645</td>
<td>Fat people make me feel somewhat uncomfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.630</td>
<td>If I were an employer looking to hire, I might avoid hiring a fat person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of fat</td>
<td>I feel disgusted with myself when I gain weight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.883</td>
<td>One of the worst things that could happen to me would be if I gained 25 pounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.824</td>
<td>I worry about becoming fat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.791</td>
<td>People who weigh too much could lose at least some part of their weight through a little exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.733</td>
<td>Some people are fat because they have no willpower.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.652</td>
<td>Fat people tend to be fat pretty much through their own fault.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* All undisplayed factor loadings < .30.

² Eigenvalue = 3.6  ᵃ Eigenvalue = 2.1  ᵇ Eigenvalue = 1.9.

### Method

#### Subjects

Five separate samples were collected. All of the samples filled out the AFA questionnaire. In a just world sample, participants were 43 men and 70 women from an introductory psychology class. In an authoritarianism sample, participants were 53 men and 52 women enrolled in an introductory psychology course. In a racism sample, participants were 543 students (270 men and 273 women) in several introductory psychology classes who filled out a series of questionnaires for course credit. The scales were embedded into a much longer questionnaire, which was designed for selection of subjects into experiments. In a poverty sample, 74 undergraduates were selected from public places around a university campus. Finally, in a values sample, subjects were 126 female, 153 male, and 10 gender-unspecified undergraduates in a social psychology class who participated for course credit.

#### Measures

Subjects in the just world sample filled out the Just World Scale (JWS; Rubin & Peplau, 1975). The JWS probes the belief that the world is ultimately fair. The authoritarianism sample responded to a Right Wing Authoritarianism scale from Altmeier (1984). Christie (1991) has argued that this scale is "the best current measure" of authoritarianism available. The racism sample answered a seven-item Modern Racism Scale taken from McConahay (1986), a scale that has been used in previous symbolic racism research. The values sample responded to the Protestant Ethnic Values Scale taken from Katz and Hass (1988).

The Modern Racism Scale and the JWS items both ranged from 1 to 2
5, with higher scores indicating greater agreement. Each scales’ items were separately summed and divided by the number of items in the scale, resulting in 1 to 5 scales. The authoritarianism scale was created in the same fashion, but its items ranged from 0 to 9. Political orientation was included in both the just world and the authoritarianism samples and was measured by a two-item political ideology scale taken from the Gallup Poll (Gallup, 1981), ranging from 0–9, with higher numbers indicating greater conservatism.

In the poverty sample, subjects filled out a survey that included the JWS and a single 7-point attribution item for the causes of poverty. This poverty control item read, “To what extent do you believe that poverty is caused by factors that poor people can control or factors outside of poor people’s control?” Higher numbers indicate belief that “poor people can control it.” (Correlations between the AFA scales and the JWS are based on the combined data of the just world and poverty samples.) Finally, the Protestant Ethic Values Scale ranged from 0–5, with higher scores indicating more value endorsement.

**Results**

Subjects averaged 2.56 (SD = 0.59) on the JWS, 2.26 (SD = 0.81) on the Modern Racism Scale, 4.56 (SD = 1.17) on the Authoritarianism Scale, and 5.21 (SD = 2.07) on political conservatism. Subjects scored across the entire range of belief in the controllability of poverty, averaging very close to the middle of the scale (M = 3.80, SD = 1.68). As shown in Table 2, ideological measures were significantly correlated with antifat attitudes. All of the social ideology variables showed the same essential pattern of correlations; they were correlated with Dislike and Willpower and were not correlated with Fear of Fat. Again, Willpower was significantly correlated with Dislike (just world sample, r = .52, n = 113; poverty sample, r = .60, n = 74; values sample, r = .46, n = 289; racism sample, r = .43, n = 540; authoritarianism sample, r = .37, n = 100; all ps < .001).

Men scored slightly higher on the Modern Racism Scale (2.4 vs. 2.1), t(537) = 4.03, p < .001, the Protestant Ethic Values Scale (3.0 vs. 2.78), t(277) = 2.98, p < .01, and the Authoritarianism Scale (4.9 vs. 4.2), t(101) = 3.44, p < .01, than women, and there was no sex difference on the JWS, t(112) = .22, ns. There were no sex differences in the size of correlations between antifat attitudes and any of the ideological variables, and partialing out the effect of gender had no substantive effect on the correlations reported in Table 2. Authoritarianism was negatively correlated with Fear of Fat (r = −.32, n = 104, p < .01). This correlation was based entirely on men (r = −.34, n = 53, p < .02); among women there was no such correlation (r = −.04, n = 51, ns). Authoritarianism appears to lead men away from weight concerns, although the reason why this is unclear.

**Discussion**

The pattern of correlations is consistent with the hypothesis that rejection of fat people is based on the underlying ideological assumption that people get what they deserve, or deserve what they get, and that deviance from these relatively narrowly defined values should result in social rejection. Clearly, antifat attitudes are correlated with attitudes that reflect this ideology. This ideology appears in its essential aspects to be the same kind of values that may underlie symbolic racism. Antifat attitudes may be a logical consequence of an ideological network or attitude system (McGuire, 1985), although the causal direction remains to be determined.

However, to some extent, the power of these data are muted by the fact that undergraduate subjects are used—a sample that is likely to be poorly informed about political ideology and to have limited knowledge about racism, poverty, and whether the world is indeed a just place (Sears, 1986). For this reason, the “known groups” technique was used, and I chose as subjects individuals with well-defined attitudes, a sort of “ideological elite,” who should have a meaningful and coherent attitude system, with more internal logical consistency.

**Study 3: College Democrats and College Republicans**

To further test the degree to which antifat attitudes are associated with a personal worldview or ideology, two student groups with a known political ideology were given the AFA questionnaire: the College Democrats and the College Republicans.

**Hypotheses**

Republicans will be more likely than Democrats to believe that people are fat through their own fault, and as a consequence they will be more willing to denigrate fat people. Because fear of fat is a more private issue, depending less on a world view than on aesthetics, there should be no difference between the two political groups on Fear of Fat.

### Table 2

**Correlation Between Social Ideology and Antifat Attitudes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Conservative politics</th>
<th>Belief in just world</th>
<th>Poverty control</th>
<th>Protestant ethic</th>
<th>Modern racism</th>
<th>Authoritarianism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.47***</td>
<td>.56***</td>
<td>.29***</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td>.29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willpower</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.48***</td>
<td>.67***</td>
<td>.32***</td>
<td>.28***</td>
<td>.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of fat</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>−.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>−.08</td>
<td>−.31**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Protestant ethic = Protestant ethic values endorsement. For poverty control, high scores indicate belief that poverty is internally controllable.

* p < .10. ** p < .01. *** p < .005.
Method

Subjects were 26 members of the University of Florida College Democrats and 30 members of the College Republicans (about 90% of the active membership of each group). The groups were paid $2 per questionnaire. The questionnaires contained the three AFA scales, as well as the political ideology scale used in Study 2.

Results

College Republicans scored higher in political conservatism than did College Democrats (8.7 vs. 2.1), t(54) = 27.71, p < .0001; Table 3 shows the attitudes by group. A 3 × 2 (Scale × Group) mixed model analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that the College Republicans report more antifat attitudes, F(1, 54) = 8.15, p < .01. Subsequent t tests indicated that College Republicans scored higher than College Democrats in both Dislike, t(54) = 2.21, p < .05, and Willpower, t(54) = 1.74, p < .05, one-tailed, but not in the self-relevant Fear of Fat scale, t(54) = 1.33, p > .20. These effects did not change when either gender or body mass index (BMI) was covaried.

As there is variability of political conservatism within group (e.g., conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans), a more accurate method of testing the hypothesis is to correlate the AFA scale scores with the continuous measure of political beliefs. Disregarding group membership, the political conservatism scale was significantly correlated with both Dislike (r = .36, p < .01) and Willpower (r = .28, p < .05) but not Fear of Fat (r = .07, ns).

Discussion

A conservative political ideology is associated with antifat attitudes. This is made more persuasive by the fact that in these groups political attitudes are likely to be genuine attitudes (Converse, 1963) that are centrally held and relatively important to the respondents (Krosnick, 1988).

Because these two groups are defined by political attitudes, it is likely that political attitudes are more central and more fundamental than antifat attitudes in this sample. It is doubtful that respondents joined political organizations for the opportunity to express attitudes toward fat people. Although still correlational, these data suggest that holding a conservative worldview may lead to antifat attitudes, on the basis of the presumption that fat people are responsible for being fat, just as they are responsible for their social position, income, material success, and so forth (Lane, 1962).

Studies 2 and 3 indicate that antifat attitudes exist within an attitude system. They are consistent with studies by Crandall and Biernat (1990) that found antifat attitudes to be associated with a wide variety of conservative social attitudes and with the study by Weigel and Howes (1985) that found that the derogation of out-groups tends to be an individual-differences characteristic.

The dislike of fat people was also correlated with a measure representing a general intolerance of others (authoritarianism). These data explicitly bring antifat attitudes into the mainstream of research on prejudice and intolerance. Authoritarianism has also been shown to be associated with a wide range of intolerance and low acceptance of members of any out-group in the form of antisemitism, racism, and sexism (e.g., L. B. Brown, 1973; R. Brown, 1965). Fat people are no exception.

Not only are antifat attitudes hypothesized to be an expression of a nonspecific rejection of deviance, but also a consequence of a sociopolitical value system. McGuire (1985) argued that the ramifications of beliefs in attitude systems tend to be vertical in nature; for example, in his scheme, belief in the just world would serve as a premise in a formal syllogism, leading one to the logical conclusion that fat people had done something to deserve their fate—presumably indolence and gluttony. A tendency to blame the victim may play a causal role in antifat attitudes.

Study 4: Changing Beliefs About the Causes of Obesity

To gather support for the notion that an underlying set of beliefs and values causally precede antifat attitudes, I designed an experiment to directly manipulate these beliefs. In this study, subjects were persuaded that fatness was not caused by a lack of self-control, but rather was subject to uncontrollable physiological and genetic factors.

In the spirit of McGuire's (1960) work on attitude consistency, I attempted to persuade subjects about the conclusion of a logical syllogism by attacking one of its premises. McGuire (1960) persuaded his subjects that any recreation constituting a serious health menace would be outlawed by the city health authority and then indicated that local beaches were polluted. Although they did not initially believe swimming would be outlawed by the city, and the attitude was not directly attacked, subjects ultimately came to agree that swimming would be outlawed, indicating that they had worked out the implication of the change in the premise for the syllogism's conclusion.

An analogous experiment was designed to persuade subjects that weight and fatness are a function of physiology. To the extent that belief in self-control is essential to antifat attitudes, persuading subjects against this premise should lead to the conclusion that people are not responsible for their fatness. Subjects so persuaded should score lower on the Willpower scale, and thus lower on the Dislike scale, but with no effect on Fear of Fat.

Method

Subjects were 11 men and 31 women enrolled in a psychology course who received course credit for their participation. Subjects came into the lab in groups of two to five and assembled in one room. The experiment was billed as a test of memory for written versus spoken prose. One of the subjects withdrew a slip of paper from a container that read either "Sailing and Weight Control" or "Sailing

Table 3
Antifat Attitudes by Political Group Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antifat attitude</th>
<th>Republicans</th>
<th>Democrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.71*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willpower</td>
<td>5.82*</td>
<td>4.72*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of fat</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Overall test of group difference, F(1, 54) = 8.15, p < .01. * p < .05, between groups.
Antifat Attitudes by Persuasion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antifat Attitude</th>
<th>Persuade</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willpower</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>5.57*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.52*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Fat</td>
<td>6.19</td>
<td>6.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Test of group difference, $F(1, 40) = 4.41, p < .05$. Subsequent $t$ tests revealed that subjects in the persuade condition scored lower in Willpower than the control group, suggesting that the subjects were persuaded by the arguments, $t(40) = 2.06, p < .05$. Consistent with the hypothesis, subjects in the persuade condition also showed less Dislike, $t(40) = 2.14, p < .05$.

No significant difference emerged on the Fear of Fat scale, $t(40) = .46, ns$, indicating that the self-relevant aspect of antifat attitudes is not based on beliefs about self-control and willpower. Furthermore, if these results were due primarily to demand factors, it would also be reasonable to assume that they would operate on Fear of Fat. That the Fear of Fat scale did not show a difference between groups suggests that the differences may have been due to the persuasive effect of the information.

This experiment cannot definitively demonstrate that beliefs about the controllability of weight and obesity are the cause of the correlation between the Willpower and Dislike scales. However, it does show that assumptions about discipline and self-control can play a causal role in antipathy toward fat people. Changing this belief reduces antifat attitudes.

This experiment can be contrasted with one by Wiese, Wilson, Jones, and Neises (1992). Wiese et al. attempted to reduce medical students' endorsement of the obese stereotype. They used a broad-band manipulation based on the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) that increased sympathy for obese patients, which included a videotaped interview with an attractive and articulate obese nurse describing her problems with dieting, two role-playing exercises, and a National Public Radio special on the causes of obesity. Wiese et al. succeeded in reducing endorsement of the stereotype, but they did not succeed in reducing the stigma of obesity. Although they increased empathy with the obese and changed their subjects' stereotypes, they did not change attributions, perhaps because these medical students held largely accurate beliefs about the causes of obesity before the experimental manipulations. I would argue that because attributions did not change, Wiese et al. did not successfully reduce their subjects' social rejection of fat people. This suggests that attributions, rather than stereotypes, lead to the rejection of fat people (see Brigham, 1973; Stangor, Sullivan, & Ford, 1991).

Kinder and Sears (Kinder, 1986; Kinder & Sears, 1981) have argued that an essential component of anti-Black attitudes is the belief that Blacks have earned their fate and that their economic and social position has resulted from controllable factors. This same logic applies to antifat prejudice. When subjects are persuaded that fat people are not responsible for their condition, they become more accepting of fat people.

Study 5: Prejudice, Social Desirability, and the Distribution of Attitudes

I have argued that a useful analogy can be drawn between antifat attitudes and symbolic racism. However, there is one
critical difference between racism and weightism, that is, strong social norms suppress the public expression of racism. It has been found that American Whites’ attitudes toward Blacks have become more favorable over the last four decades (Case & Greeley, 1990; Firebaugh & Davis, 1988). On the other hand, these apparently favorable trends may simply reflect an increase in the normative constraints against the public display of racial prejudice, thus suppressing the accuracy of self-reported racial attitudes (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986).

For the past 20 years or more, modern theories of interracial relations (e.g., ambivalent racism, Katz, Wackenhut, & Hass, 1986; automatic and controlled processes in stereotyping, Devine, 1989; aversive racism, Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; modern racism, McConahay, 1986; symbolic racism, Kinder & Sears, 1981) have in common the notion that people’s underlying “true” racism is suppressed by a second factor, which governs the public expression of the prejudice (Crosby, Bromley, & Saxe, 1980; Sigall & Page, 1971). These two factors amount to a feeling of ambivalence about Blacks, and whether positive or negative behaviors are carried out usually depends on the social norms about the expression of racism (Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughan, in press; Blanchard, Lilly, & Vaughan, 1991).

Why suppress the expression of racist emotions? For two reasons: social norms and egalitarian values (Katz et al., 1986). Americans by and large express strongly egalitarian and pro-Black attitudes (Case & Greeley, 1990). Overtly racist behaviors are suppressed because they are normatively inappropriate and bring about guilt, punishment, and rejection for “incorrect” behavior. These theories all suggest that when using self-report techniques to measure racial attitudes, social norms about public behavior, egalitarian values, and social desirability concerns all contaminate the process. How powerful are these norms with respect to antifat attitudes?

A closer look at the distributions of the Modern Racism Scale and the Dislike scale from Study 2 is instructive. The average Modern Racism Scale score was 2.26 on a scale running from 1 to 5 (SD = 0.81); the distribution was highly positively skewed (γ1 = 1.92), with most subjects self-reporting low levels of racism. On the other hand, on a 0–9 scale, the Dislike scale was symmetrically and normally distributed (M = 2.51, SD = 1.51; γ1 = 0.48). Both distributions were divided into three groups: subjects at least one standard deviation below the mean, subjects within one standard deviation of the mean, and subjects greater than one standard deviation above the mean. Using the normal distribution as the expected value, the Modern Racism Scale significantly deviated from normal, χ²(2, N = 542) = 23.26, p < .001, but the Dislike scale did not, χ²(2, N = 542) = 0.41, ns.

The difference in distributions can be interpreted in two ways. One possibility is that there is very little racism extant among these subjects, causing almost all of the subjects to score at the low end of the Modern Racism Scale. A more likely possibility is that there is a normative pressure (e.g., social desirability), which suppresses agreement with the racism items and leads to the skewing of responses at the lower end of the scale.

To test this, I assembled several samples of undergraduates who had filled out the Modern Racism Scale and the Dislike scale, and I calculated what I call the Political Correctness Index (PC Index). To be counted as politically correct, an undergraduate must have disagreed as strongly as possible with each item of the scale. For the Dislike scale, subjects had to chose a 0 on all seven items; for the Modern Racism Scale, subjects must have chosen a 1 on all seven items. The PC Index represents the percentage of respondents answering all items in a politically correct (antidiscriminatory) fashion.

A total of 1,147 Modern Racism and 1,259 Dislike completed questionnaires were obtained. The results of the analysis are displayed in Table 5. Where the measure of racism elicited nearly 10% politically correct responses, a measure of antifat prejudice elicited less than one third of that proportion, χ²(1, N = 2,406) = 47.21, p < .001. There may be a normative pressure among some of these respondents to disavow all feelings of prejudice toward Blacks, but this pressure seems to be weaker for disavowing prejudice against fat people.

A study by Crandall and Thompson (1993) supports this interpretation. For a study of “group decision making,” Crandall and Thompson had subjects in small groups read the folders of four equally qualified applicants to psychology graduate school, which included photographs that indicated the applicants were a lean White man, a lean White woman, a lean Black man, and a fat White man. Subjects expressed their opinions about the applicants in turn; the last person to discuss the folders was a female confederate who either made a race-prejudiced or fat-prejudiced remark. In the control condition, she agreed with the subjects’ comments. In the race-prejudiced condition, she said “I would definitely not pick the Black guy. I don’t think Black people make good counselors. I know I wouldn’t go to a Black guy. Personally I just don’t like Black people.” In the fat-prejudiced condition, she made exactly the same comment, except the word fat was substituted for Black.

Subsequently, subjects made favorability ratings of the group members on a series of questions on a 1–7 scale. When expressing no prejudice, the confederate was rated positively (M =

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>PC Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modern Racism</td>
<td>1,147</td>
<td>9.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>1,259</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. PC Index represents the percentage of respondents who chose the most politically correct response on every item of the scale, χ²(1) = 47.21, p < .001.

4 I thank Monica Biernat for making some of the modern racism data available. The sample of Dislike questionnaires came from studies described in this article, from the American sample from Crandall and Martinez (1993), and from other unpublished data sets.

5 Because the Dislike scale has 10 response categories, and the Modern Racism Scale has only 5, by chance we might expect as much as twice as many politically correct responses on Modern Racism questionnaires. To account for this, I doubled the PC Index rate for the Dislike questionnaires, which was still highly significantly lower than the rate for Modern Racism, χ²(1, N = 2,406) = 12.21, p < .0005.
5.31); when expressing race prejudice, her ratings dropped substantially ($M = 3.72$); and when she expressed fat prejudice, her ratings were between the control and Black prejudice conditions ($M = 4.44$). All three conditions differed significantly from each other. The expression of prejudice resulted in social rejection, for both anti-Black and antifat prejudice. Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) suggested that the more important a norm is, the greater its effect will be on liking. It appears that the race prejudice norm was significantly more powerful than the fat prejudice norm; the expression of racist remarks resulted in a significantly lower rating than the expression of antifat remarks.

In this article I simultaneously argue two things: that antifat attitudes are similar to symbolic racism and that antifat attitudes are dissimilar to racism. There is support for both of these lines of argument. Both symbolic racism and antifat attitudes take their place in a wide ideological net of conservative attitudes and values, authoritarianism, and rejection of deviance. On the other hand, the social suppression of antifat sentiment is not as strong or well-developed as the pressure to suppress racist attitudes. To the extent that the processes underlying racism are the same as fatism, excepting that antifat attitudes appear in a relatively pristine, unsuppressed form, racism (and the rejection of any deviant group) might be well be understood by comparing it with attitudes toward fat people.

### Study 6: Self-Interest, In-Group Bias, and Antifat Attitudes

The "negative hypothesis" of symbolic racism is especially interesting, that self-interest does not form the basis of symbolic racism. In-group bias is one of the broadest possible measures of self-interest. Because both a sense of self and self-esteem depend to a large extent on group membership (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1985), it is in one's self-interest to evaluate one's own groups positively. The sixth and final study reported in this article is based on the secondary analysis of data from the previous studies, to ascertain whether heavier subjects reported more accepting attitudes toward fat people. If antifat attitudes are based, even in part, on self-interest, then fatter respondents should have more positive attitudes toward fat people and thus should score lower on the Dislike scale.

In all of the samples described above, subjects reported their height and weight. To determine "fatness," the BMI was calculated as (weight[kg]/height$^2$[m]). Kraemer, Berkowitz, and Hammer (1990) argued that BMI is the best noninvasive measure of fatness; it is highly correlated with weight and not correlated with height.

Table 6 shows the correlation between the Dislike scale from the AFA questionnaire and the respondent's own BMI among seven samples. A clear pattern emerges: there is no relation between one's own weight and attitudes about other people's weight. Taking all seven data sets together, the correlation between BMI and the Dislike scale was $-0.01$ ($n = 1,384$, ns), a very modest association.

A potential threat to the straightforward interpretation of Table 6 is the possibility that correlations are low because no "true members" of the in-group are represented in the table. Despite the fact that many college students believe that they are fat, particularly women (Rodin et al., 1984), fat people are underrepresented among college students, perhaps because of prejudice (Crandall, 1991, in press; Yuker & Allison, in press). To ascertain whether the sample included subjects who might be considered fat, I compared the BMIs of my subjects with tabled norms of height, weight, and BMI taken from a large general sample study of weight and health, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Study (NHANES; Cronk & Roche, 1982). Light-to-medium-weight subjects were classified as being in the lower 75% of the tabled norms, and heavy subjects were in the top 25% of the norms.

Similar to previous research (Crandall, 1991), college students were lighter on average than the general population for their age group; 45 of 676 (6.7%) women fell in the top 25% of the tabled norms of BMI for women, and 69 of 649 (10.6%) men were in the top 25% for men. These deviations are highly significant for both women and men, $x^2(1, N = 676$ and 649) $= 121.31$ and 71.46, respectively, both $p < .001$, suggesting that college students, particularly women, $x^2(1, N = 1,325) = 6.65, p < .01$, are on the lighter side for their age group. However, a $t$ test by weight class on Dislike revealed that students in the top 25% of the population in terms of BMI were no less antifat than those in the lower 75% ($M_b = 2.25$ and 2.38, respectively), $t(1323) = 0.83, p > .40$. Allison et al. (1991) found a similar result, using a sample that was composed of both normal weight and obese respondents (see also Harris & Smith, 1982). There is simply no evidence to suggest that fat people display an in-group bias when it comes to expressing prejudice about fat people.

This lack of an in-group bias among fat people is different from what has been found with racism—Blacks and Whites demonstrate in-group bias. For example, in Study 2, White respondents scored a 2.59 on the Modern Racism Scale, and Black respondents scored a 1.93, $t(509) = 6.51, p < .001, \eta = .28$. At the same time, Table 6 is consistent with the negative hypothesis of symbolic racism, that self-interest in relation to the stigmatized out-group is unrelated to the symbolic attitude.

Bobo (1983) has shown that when self-interest is reconstrued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study sample</th>
<th>$n$</th>
<th>$r$</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale development</td>
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<td>.05</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political groups</td>
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<td>-.07</td>
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<td>Just world</td>
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<td>-.01</td>
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<td>.08</td>
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<td>Persuasion experiment</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern racism</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. All $p$s ns.
as the broader group interest, symbolic racists show attitudes and voting patterns consistent with their own group's (White Americans) interests. This is consistent with Dubé and Guimond's (1986) finding that the motivation to engage in social protest is based not on an individual's sense of deprivation, but a feeling that one's group is suffering relative deprivation. By contrast, the data on antifat attitudes pass a fairly stringent test; we find no evidence of self-interested in-group bias. This is not to say that fat people would never express self-interested attitudes; in certain domains they may do so (e.g., in the domains of clothing, airplane seat size, industrial design, etc.). But in domains measured by the AFA Dislike scale, there was no evidence of a bias motivated by self-interest.

The analogy between antifat attitudes and symbolic racism has become more complete. The research using the AFA questionnaire supports (a) the beliefs-and-values hypothesis (classic American values are part of the ideological network that includes antifat attitudes), (b) the old-fashioned antipathy hypothesis (antifat attitudes are correlated with authoritarianism and racism), and (c) the negative hypothesis, that self-interest does not appear to play a primary role in antifat prejudice.

General Discussion

I have attempted to avoid many of the methodological and conceptual criticisms leveled at symbolic racism in the past. A psychometrically sound measure of antifat attitudes was developed and used consistently across studies. The position antifat attitudes have in a network of beliefs and values relevant to the dominant American social ideology have been shown explicitly. Finally, despite being given an opportunity to manifest a correlation between antifat attitudes and self-interest, in no case did evidence of self-interested beliefs appear. These data extend the class of symbolic beliefs to another social group, fat people, suggesting that symbolic attitudes are an important part of prejudice in America.

There is one important area of disagreement between the data on antifat attitudes and symbolic racism theory. Symbolic racism is thought to be a newly emerged form of racism, distinct from old-fashioned racism (Kinder, 1986). On the other hand, there is no reason to suspect that the antifat attitudes described here are new. Antifat prejudice has been demonstrated by social scientists for decades (see Allon, 1982; Bruch, 1941; Cahnman, 1968). Instead, antifat attitudes appear to be currently at the stage that racism was some 50 years ago: overt, expressible, and widely held. Symbolic racism is thought to have developed because of changing norms about the expression of racial hostility. However, because antifat attitudes appear to be constructed much like symbolic racism, the presence of norms suppressing racist belief and speech do not appear to be a necessary component of symbolic attitudes. Anti-Black racism may have long been constructed in the manner of symbolic racism (see Weigel & Howes, 1985), well before the recent movement toward widespread endorsement of egalitarian values (Firebaugh & Davis, 1988).

In fact, evidence that symbolic racism has existed for a very long time in the American consciousness can be found in a speech given by Abraham Lincoln in 1860 to the Cooper Institute (Lincoln, 1991). Lincoln describes the slave states' attitudes toward slavery in largely symbolic terms. He reviews the historical record and concludes that beliefs and attitudes about slavery are largely symbolic, based on values rather than experience, and virtually unrelated to concerns about realistic threat.

Group Identification

Perhaps it is because antifat attitudes are so closely linked to a worldview, rather than self-interest, that fat and lean people are equally likely to be antifat. This suggests that the self-esteem of fat people should be closely linked to their antifat attitudes and attributional habits. For example, Crandall and Biernat (1990) found that heavy but antifat women suffered from low self-esteem.

In an influential essay on how the stigmatized protect their self-esteem, Crocker and Major (1991) described several self-protective strategies that buffer the negative feedback stigmatized people receive, for example, attributing negative feedback to prejudice toward the group and engaging in social comparison only with in-group members. However, the strategies they reviewed are group oriented; for them to work, a sense of identification with the group is essential. Because fat people do not show in-group bias, it may be that there is little group feeling among fat people. If fat people feel individuated, these self-protective strategies would be unavailable to them. Crocker, Cornwell, and Major (1993) found that when fat women attributed a lack of interest as a dating partner to their weight, they suffered from anxiety and depression. Several studies suggest that fat people have difficulties with self-regard (Rodin et al., 1984; Wadden, Foster, Brownell, & Finley, 1984).

Ideological explanations may supersede self-interest, interfering with group identification and politicization, with sometimes harmful consequences. Another reason fat people may not show in-group bias is that identification with other fat people does not improve their self-image. One primary reason for identifying with a group is that association with other members in the group can enhance self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1985, and fat people may see few opportunities for basking in reflected glory. In addition, fat people may see themselves as capable of leaving the group through dieting and exercise, further inhibiting group identification. However, fat people might benefit from self-categorization as members of a group, avoiding the self-rejection that Franz Fanon described for Blacks and citizens of colonized countries in the 1960s (see Fanon, 1965, 1967).

The Culture of Antifat Attitudes

The research reported here has been focused on individual differences in antifat attitudes. However, antifat prejudices are common among Americans and have been demonstrated across a wide variety of settings (Yuwer & Allison, in press). This is in part due to a deep-seated historically conservative thread in American values. One of the most fundamental of American myths is a conservative one—any boy can grow up to be president one day. Another belief is that social and economic positions are fluid, that is, that anyone can pull himself or herself up by his or her own bootstraps. These articles of faith are part of the core of American socialization and are inherently individualistic and conservative.
These beliefs are not uniquely American, but self-determination and internal control are signal North American values (Betancourt, Hardin, & Manzi, 1992). In countries such as Brazil, Chile, or Mexico, where these beliefs are not so strong (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961), antifat attitudes should be uncorrelated with belief in willpower, and ultimately both the Willpower and Dislike scales should not be highly endorsed. Crandall and Martinez (1993) have found antifat attitudes to be lower in Mexico than in the United States, and in Mexico antipathy toward fat people was unrelated to social ideology. Perhaps as a result, obese people in Central America are not economically disadvantaged, as they are in the United States (Sobal & Stunkard, 1989).

This cross-cultural analysis suggests that it is the simultaneous presence of two variables that leads to antifat attitudes. The first is a personal or cultural preference for thinness. The second is the belief that weight is volitionally controlled. To generate dislike of fat people, one must think fat undesirable and simultaneously blame the person for his or her situation. There is no cause for antipathy when a person is not responsible and no denigration when fat is not stigmatized. This argument is true at both the cultural as well as the personal level (see Crandall & Martinez, 1993).

Fat people appear to be just one more on a long list of deviant groups, including the elderly, homosexuals, ethnic minorities, the handicapped, and the poor, who are stigmatized by the intolerant. Because rejection of any one of these groups tends to be substantially correlated with any other (Altmeyer, 1984; Weigel & Howes, 1985), further research is needed on prejudice as an individual-differences variable. Although this approach fell out of esteem in the 1970s (Christie, 1991), several constructs show promise, such as authoritarianism, politics, and ideology. These data suggest that the consistent tendency to make controllable attributions for others' misfortunes is another viable candidate.

Antifat attitudes provide a remarkable opportunity to come to a greater understanding of the general processes of prejudice and discrimination. They are pervasive, have an internal logic, and result in discrimination. In contrast to racism and sexism, the overt expression of antipathy toward fat people is currently affected only modestly by normative pressure and concerns about social desirability. The study of antifat attitudes, while still in a relatively pristine form, provides an appealing counterpoint to the study of race and gender in social psychology.

References


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