

STRENGTHENING EXPECTATIONS FOR
PERFORMANCE BY MEANS OF
SOCIAL POLICY: THE CASE
OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

By

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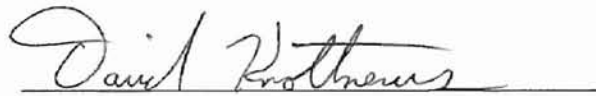
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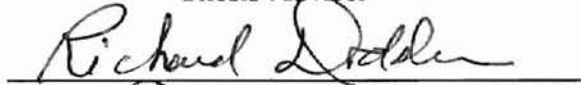
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
III. THEORETICAL NEXUS	11
IV. RESEARCH METHODS	18
V. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.	30
The Outsider	33
The Innocent Bystander.	39
The Bystander	43
The Old Timer	46
The Policy Conscious	55
The New Breed	60
VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	62
REFERENCES	70
APPENDIXES	74
APPENDIX A--LETTER SOLICITING ASSISTANCE FROM CONTACTS	75
APPENDIX B--CONTACT/CONSENT LETTER FOR PROSPECTIVE RESPONDENTS	76
APPENDIX C--TELEPHONE CALL SCRIPT	77
APPENDIX D--LETTER OF CONSENT	78
APPENDIX E--INTERVIEW SCRIPT	79
APPENDIX F--IRB APPROVAL FORM.	82

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS	30

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The policy of affirmative action has been the subject of extensive debate ever since its inception. Much of the energy devoted to the issue has focused on what the intent of the policy truly is and whether this has a legal basis in accordance with the United States Constitution (Boxill 1984; Combs and Gruhl 1986; Goldman 1979; Greenawalt 1983; Gross 1978; Lynch 1989; Pole 1978). Depending on the position that one takes, affirmative action can represent either a remedy for past discrimination or a new form of it:

By affirmative action, we refer to a set of specific and result oriented procedures that are utilized to insure that non-whites and women are not disadvantaged in efforts to secure employment (e.g. recruitment, selection and promotion) (Combs and Gruhl 1986, p. 1).

I shall use the terms affirmative action and reverse discrimination somewhat interchangeably throughout this study. By affirmative action, I shall be referring primarily to those policies that allegedly attempt to remedy past discrimination against minorities and women through the use of numerical quotas and preferential group treatment (i.e., "goals and timetables") (Lynch 1989, p. 56).

The first definition is usually adopted by those who see the ultimate goal of affirmative action as guaranteeing equal opportunities for all individuals. In fact, Heilman, Simon, and Pepper (1987) discount the view of the policy as a quota system, stating instead that its true promise is to "expand the applicant pool so that members of minority groups are given an equal opportunity for selection and placement" (p. 62). Still, the link between affirmative action and quotas is pervasive. This has led some supporters and opponents alike to base their positions on the admission that some preference might be afforded to

minorities. Thus, Lynch (1989), Boxill (1984), Gross (1978), and Carter (1991) debate the merit of affirmative action while accepting the proposition that it is preferential treatment. Boxill identifies the policy's contribution to a reduction in overall social inequality as the most important issue, thus suggesting that in some cases preferential treatment is justified.

...but suppose that less qualified blacks are admitted to medical school in preference to more qualified whites, and suppose that the resulting black doctors practice in poor black neighborhoods treating serious illnesses, while if the whites they were preferred to had been admitted, they would have practiced in affluent white neighborhoods, treating minor illnesses. In that sort of case, it is not at all necessarily true that preferential treatment causes a loss in utility (1984, p.168).

Some have been wary of accepting Boxill's type of thinking. Prager (1986) questions the assumption that individuals hired through affirmative action can truly be considered less qualified or inferior, given the fact that the standards by which these people are judged are always subjectively determined. He states that "qualified" has historically been too narrowly defined by organizations in an attempt to exclude minorities whose social environment precluded them from acquiring the needed attributes. Therefore, according to Prager, those organizations that progressively implement affirmative action do so by broadening their definition of qualifications, rather than, as critics of the policy suggest, lowering their level of standards. This is most evident in the university setting, where those responsible for recruitment now work under the idea that "an institution is obligated to admit only those students who are likely to succeed, not necessarily those that are 'best' qualified" (p. 34).

Others, including Carter (1991), oppose Prager for trivializing the abilities that minorities do possess and ignoring the potential of minorities to measure up to any

standard. Carter approaches the issue from the vantage point of a minority and one who freely admits that he may have benefited from the policy of affirmative action. In essence, he considers the public perception of affirmative action as a stigma that defines minorities as people who lack potential and therefore need special assistance. The solution to this problem, Carter suggests, is for blacks to allow themselves to be scrutinized to the same extent as whites. Then, the abilities and contributions of the two groups could be seen as comparable. For Carter, and others, minorities benefiting from affirmative action have the responsibility of defending themselves against whatever standard is presented to them (p. 216). This strategy would help confront directly the notion that categories of people are incapable of meeting established standards of excellence (p. 27).

The efforts of Prager, Carter, and others to reinvent the image of affirmative action for the American public has met with great resistance. As noted earlier, many of affirmative action's more ardent supporters have conceded to the notion that the program results in the hiring of inferior people. The persistent criticisms of the policy and the inability to combat them are due largely to the close association between the policy and the idea of "quotas". Opponents of the policy view these quotas as a form of reverse discrimination that simply result in a new group of victims (Lynch 1989; Tomasson 1996; McWhirter 1996). It is McWhirter who directly confronts the attempt by the policy's supporters to redefine it:

When we hear people say that affirmative action is not about quotas and lower standards, we have to wonder if they are misinformed or intentionally trying to mislead. When we hear others contend that there are no victims of affirmative action, we have to wonder where they have been living and who they have been listening to. (1996, p. 51)

Although it has been shown that these quotas, when they are in place, are not

necessarily met at the expense of the organization's standards, the feeling persists that minorities who are hired are done so only because of the pressure to meet the policy's demands, rather than any qualifications they might have. It is this consequence of the policy, the influence it has in shaping attitudes regarding intelligence, ability, and other characteristics, that will be the subject of this research. This project will explore the possibility that the presence of an affirmative action policy, along with a shared understanding of it by group members, serves to structure expectations concerning each person's performance potential.

The theoretical framework for this project is expectation states and status characteristics theory (Berger, Cohen, and Zelditch 1966; Berger, Conner, and Fisek 1974; Berger, Fisek, and Norman 1989), which postulates in part that in the absence of task-relevant information about each other, other characteristics of group members are used in an attempt to bring structure to the interaction and foster a clearer understanding of what will likely transpire. In the case of affirmative action, it becomes an important variable because people in educational or work settings desire some means by which to interpret other's qualifications in comparison to their own. When information such as the perceived presence of an affirmative action policy is available, two possibilities exist. First, those of non-minority status might attempt to link a minority's selection to the existence of an affirmative action policy and their understanding of it. If this understanding is negative, i.e., that the policy is nothing more than a quota system, then the non-minority will likely judge the potential of the minority to be less than his/her own potential. Furthermore, in evaluating actual performance, the influence of the policy will be used by the non-minority to judge his/her own contribution more favorably than that

made by the minority. Second, minorities in these situations could also be aware of the possible influence of the policy. Provided that they share the same understanding of what the policy entails, these individuals might experience doubts about their own qualifications and ability to compete without the help of the policy. This thesis seeks to investigate these two issues.

This project is not an empirical test of expectation states theory. Instead, it takes from the theory some of its terminology and principles in an effort to more completely describe a social process. Berger et al (1966) stipulate that expectation states are theoretical constructs that can only be identified through behavioral manifestations in experimental conditions. This project, then, will incorporate the term “performance expectation” rather than “expectation state” to avoid making a claim regarding the existence of the latter.

to a minority, then the more favorable the evaluation of the woman's abilities by the other group members. Conversely, in those groups where the subordinates were informed that a woman was being appointed to head the group simply because there was a need to have a female leader, then the evaluations proved to be more harsh. Based on their findings, Jacobson and Koch suggest that organizations take on the responsibility of educating their employees on the fact that the rationale behind affirmative action is the restoration of equity (p. 155). While this would necessitate de-emphasizing the policy's reputation as a quota system, the researchers see it as a means to ensuring that others more readily validate the contributions made by those who benefit from affirmative action.

Summers (1991) found that an individual's understanding of the organizational climate plays a large part in his/her interpretation of a minority's abilities. Opinions about a minority's qualifications are more likely to be positive, Summers contends, if the existing organizational climate is thought to be "anti-affirmative action". In contrast, when workers such as those in Summers' study feel that the organization actively recruits in conjunction with the policy, then evaluations of minorities become much more negative. Summers also found that other members of the minority group in the organization, in this case women, are more likely to incorporate the presence of the policy into their evaluations of the individuals. Indicating the power of traditional gender stereotypes, Summers points out that males were more likely to discount a woman's qualifications, regardless of the presence of an affirmative action program. Other females, however, made use of the information about the influence of such a policy, judging more favorably those females who they felt received their promotions without the aid of the policy. If, however, the promotion of a female was seen by other women as being due to a pro-

affirmative action organizational climate, the subsequent work done by the individual was met with much more severe criticism by her peers (p. 1274). Summers' research helps to show that the public definition of a policy like affirmative action is a powerful piece of information in the development of performance expectations, for minorities as well as white males.

Not only can information such as the influence of an affirmative action policy shape others' attitudes about an individual, but it can also affect how that individual views his/her own performance potential. Negative self-evaluations, for example, surfaced among a group of female subjects who were informed that their selection into a task group was based at least in part on the simple fact that they were women (Heilman et al. 1987). These women went on to distort their perceptions of their actual performances, often underestimating their positive contribution to the completion of the task. For many of the subjects, the feelings of self-doubt resulted in a lack of motivation to continue as a leader for the group, a significant finding when considering possible implications of affirmative action.

Questionnaire research conducted by Chacko (1982) on women managers participating in a development program provides more evidence of the possible negative impact of affirmative action. Measures of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and role conflict suggest that these variables correlate strongly with the perceived importance by the female respondent of sex as a determining factor in her being awarded her position. The strongest relationship, however, appears to be between perceived importance of sex as a selection factor and level of role ambiguity ($r = .46$ at .05 level). Heightened role ambiguity for the respondents means that they will question their place in the organization

and their performance for that organization. In this environment, the likely result is an overly negative self-evaluation, similar to what is documented by Heilman et al. (1987). The practice of preferential treatment in accordance with affirmative action, Chacko concludes, reduces a minority's sense of importance to the organization. This, in turn, translates into less commitment on the part of the individual to the organization (1982, p. 122). Although Chacko does not identify any particle remedies to the situation, he might concur with a solution put forth by Heilman et al.:

This suggests not only that competence considerations should be a dominant factor in selection decision making, but also that selectees should be made aware of the important role competence played in their selection. For the message in the data seem clear indeed: If affirmative action is associated with an absence of quality standards, its intended beneficiaries may in fact become its victims (1987, p. 68).

Past research endeavors such as those described here have addressed, in some fashion, the hypotheses outlined for this thesis. However, the work to be undertaken in this project will differ in a couple of key areas. First, the methodology chosen for this project will not be the controlled experiment. In past research, task groups have been established under laboratory conditions. Then, the subsequent interaction was manipulated by introducing information to the subjects on the reasons for each person's selection, whether it was for ability or another characteristic, such as sex. This has been necessary in order to infer a clear causal link between the presence of some form of preferential treatment and emerging attitudes. However, in a natural setting, information on other's qualifications is not usually so readably available. Instead, in these situations it is possible that some individuals cope with the ambiguity by attributing their own or another person's position to certain factors, including the perceived presence of affirmative action. Whether or not

this attribution is objectively valid, it plays an important role in the evaluation of individual performance. In order to more fully explore all of the dynamics that occur in interactions in which these type of judgments are made, a more open methodology will be chosen for this project, the in-depth interview.

Another criticism that could be levied against many of the experiments cited is that the work has dealt predominantly with sex-based preferential treatment. Relatively little has been done in analyzing what happens when race becomes the issue, possibly because the number of potential female subjects is far greater than the pool of respondents from different races. Nonetheless, any discussion of affirmative action should include its effects on racial minorities. Therefore, this project has sought women, as well as individuals representing various races, to be included in the sample of graduate students to be interviewed. This, along with the aim to move beyond what the researcher feels are certain problems related to artificiality in experiments, should make this a valuable supplement to the existing body of knowledge.

With the connection between this thesis and past research stated, it is now appropriate to discuss the theoretical orientation of this particular project. Chapter three will introduce the important concepts that comprise expectation states theory and will describe how each will be dealt with in the study.

Chapter Three

THEORETICAL NEXUS

Expectation states theory, the foundation for this research, focuses primarily on the establishment and maintenance of power and prestige structures within task-oriented groups (Berger et al. 1974; Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch 1980). It is based principally on the ideas contained within social exchange (Homans 1961; Blau 1964) and cognitive consistency models of social interaction (Heider 1958). The influence of these earlier theories is seen in the following two propositions put forth by the expectation states perspective:

- 1) In task groups there is a basic need to identify those individuals who are likely to contribute more to the achievement of the group's goals. These individuals will subsequently receive more opportunities to contribute, but they are considered to be of such caliber that they will contribute regardless of whether or not a specific opportunity is afforded them.
- 2) The group process will operate at its optimal level if contradictions between the actual performance of each individual and the members' expectations for the individual are avoided. Therefore, a balancing process takes place, in which evaluations of performance are made to appear consistent with preexisting expectations. In other words, even for the apparently same quality of the contribution to the task, those considered more competent are viewed positively, while those considered incompetent are believed to contribute little to the group.

These assumptions help make up what is known as expectation states theory (Meeker 1984, p. 294). The result of these exchange and balancing processes at work in task groups is a status structure in which rewards are distributed unequally, with esteem, reverence, and other social resources being awarded to those individuals who initially received higher expectations for their contribution to the completion of the task. The

nature of future interactions among the group members then become contingent on these established **expectation states**, a term that refers to the defined expectations for performance for two (or more) persons relative to each other (p. 297).

In homogenous groups, where the individuals are not easily distinguishable with regard to external characteristics, expectation states are formed on the basis of specific attributes believed to be held in varying degrees by the group members. These attributes are known as **specific status characteristics**, meaning that they are single abilities or behaviors and are variables by which group members can be categorized and evaluated (p. 306). The significance of status characteristics is seen in those instances when group members have no prior knowledge of others with regard to possession of the obvious attribute(s) needed to complete the task. In these cases, other status characteristics are used in the establishment of expectation states. These characteristics may not be the primary prerequisite for success at the present task, but they are still helpful in reducing ambiguity and bringing about some type of structure. If an individual with high ability in mathematical problem solving is known or thought to be present in a group working on a crossword puzzle, and the others are known or thought to be low in mathematical ability, an expectation might surface, especially if information on crossword solving ability is unavailable. Even though mathematical ability is not directly linked to ability to solve crossword puzzles, it can be a valuable piece of information used by group members to decide how to distribute the positive and negative performance evaluations.

When the group members are distinguishable at the outset, either by ascribed status (race, sex, or ethnicity) or achieved status (education, occupation), it becomes possible to make use of more general information known about the individuals in the construction of

expectation states. In contrast to specific status characteristics, these attributes do not refer to one distinct ability or behavior and usually carry significant weight, regardless of the particular task. Furthermore, within each of these characteristics there exists a large set of pre-established expectations. For example, a traditional stereotype is that whites are smarter, harder working, and more trustworthy than people of other racial categories. Because the introduction of these status characteristics and their corresponding expectation states is not dependent on a particular situation, they are said to be **diffuse status characteristics** (Berger et. al. 1966, p.33)

This thesis seeks to introduce the attribute of “affirmative action assistance” into the category of the diffuse status characteristic. To do this, it is necessary to show that “affirmative action assistance” meets the criteria outlined for a diffuse status characteristic. First, there must be within this characteristic two or more states that are differentially valued. Second, distinct sets of specific expectations must exist for each state. Third, a general expectation state must also be in place that differentiates individuals at each state according to overall competence and worth. (Berger, Wagner, and Zelditch 1992, p.110)

Within “affirmative action assistance” one can identify two categories, those who have supposedly benefited from the policy and those who supposedly have not. The proposition that these two states of the characteristic receive different value is easily supported.. Furthermore, there are numerous stereotypes that dictate what is to be expected of individuals at each state on a variety of specific skills. Among these are the ideas that those who benefit from the policy have less verbal and written communication skills, are less knowledgeable in their jobs, and are less willing to work hard. Finally, the classification of “affirmative action assistance” as a diffuse status characteristic rests on

the existence of global evaluations attached to actors at each state of the characteristic. Independent of the task situation, individuals with the highly valued state of the characteristic are seen as generally superior to those at the other state(s) of the characteristic. The question relevant for this study is whether those who have not received any assistance from the policy of affirmative action enjoy a more favorable overall evaluation of their worth as people than those who have supposedly benefited from the policy. This question would best be answered by more extensive research that asks respondents for their impressions regarding individuals differentiated by the status characteristic. Similar research has led to race, sex, and physical attractiveness being conclusively identified as diffuse status characteristics (Berger et al. 1980).

The issue of diffuseness is problematic, when attempting to define "affirmative action assistance" as a diffuse status characteristic. It would appear that, unlike race and sex, this characteristic does not have the potential to influence the power and prestige order in every task situation. Instead, its use as a piece of information to structure performance expectations may be limited to situations where actors recognize an affirmative action policy specific to their circumstance to be at work. This is inconsistent with other diffuse status characteristics, which are capable of differentiating members of the general population, regardless of the task environment. In order for "affirmative action assistance" to be defined as a diffuse status characteristic, then, the policy would have to be so pervasive that it is uniformly applied across an entire society.

Despite the difficulties in classification, the significance of "affirmative action assistance" as a status characteristic is undeniable. Specifically, its relationship to the variables of race and sex signal the possibility that performance expectations based on

these characteristics will be altered in some fashion by the introduction of “affirmative action assistance” as a piece of information. According to the attenuation principle outlined in status characteristics theory, individuals will “add” similarly evaluated pieces of information together to form an aggregated performance expectation (Berger et al. 1980; Knottnerus, 1994). When given information that group members are differentiated on the basis of race and sex, and on the perceived benefit afforded to some by affirmative action, the result should be the emergence of strengthened performance expectations.

In order to make the analysis of the data that will be collected for this project easier, the researcher has developed an original typology that should adequately reflect all of the dynamics of the process where performance expectations are formulated. This typology distinguishes group members, in this case graduate students, according to their level of involvement in a process where performance expectations are defined.

The categorization of individuals in this typology differs from the focus of expectation states and status characteristics theory, which are concerned with the effect of structural conditions on the relations among multiple actors. Nonetheless, the general logic of expectation states and status characteristics theory played a key role as the researcher sought to develop a basis for organizing the data that would be collected in the project. While the individual is given more power in this typology to interpret the meanings associated with various status characteristics, one theme that is directly attributable to the original theories is evident here. The availability of different pieces of information, and the relevance assigned to the information by the structure in place, are the determining factors in the emergence of a particular performance expectation (Berger et al. 1989, p. 104)

1. The outsider. Performance expectations are undefined. This category represents those individuals who, for whatever reason, do not participate

significantly in graduate student task groups or activities. They have not been introduced to any information about status characteristics that could distinguish themselves from others in the department. This lack of information, or even awareness of others in the department, prevents persons who fall into this category from establishing clearly defined performance expectations.

2. The innocent bystander. Both self and other are considered to have either high performance potential or low performance potential. The term "innocent bystander" was chosen because it helps to convey the idea that these individuals are completely disassociated from the process of judging performance potentials differently. For the most part, those in this category have not learned or have refused to accept any of the expectations that accompany the diffuse status characteristics, including "affirmative action assistance". Questions that ask the respondents to consider whether others in the department are at a different level of ability, as well as inquiries about general attitudes of the respondent toward affirmative action, should prove helpful in determining who is to be included in this category. Unlike the outsider, performance expectations are clearly defined for the innocent bystander, but in this case the information used by these individuals leads to undifferentiated performance expectations.

3. The Bystander. Expectations for performances are based on perceived differences in specific status characteristics only. This category comprises those individuals who do distinguish themselves from others in task situations. However the information used in the interactions includes only characteristics perceived by the group members to be specifically pertinent for that task. The individuals in this category are not considered "innocent", since they do help develop differentiated performance expectations. Still, they are labeled "bystanders" for the purpose of this study because they are not involved in the process where diffuse status characteristics are utilized. Since this research aims to focus on how race, sex, and especially "affirmative action assistance" become indicators of performance potential for graduate students, and since research into the significance of specific status characteristics has already been done extensively, this category will be a secondary concern for the remainder of this project.

4. The old-timer. "Old-timers are those individuals who make use only of the traditional diffuse status characteristics of race and/or sex in their evaluations. Perceptions of old-timers regarding the potential of others are probably based on long-standing notions about the differences among racial minorities, women, and white males. An important distinction about old-timers is that they do not incorporate the presence of an affirmative action policy as a piece of information into their evaluations. For those in this category, affirmative action is either a policy they discern not to be at work in their department, or it is a piece of information with a meaning to which they have not been exposed.

5. The policy-conscious. Affirmative action is used to strengthen an already

established performance expectation. For the policy-conscious, there is a definite awareness about affirmative action and what it might mean in terms of individuals who benefit from it. While race and sex are initially incorporated as diffuse status characteristics for the development of performance expectations, the issue of affirmative action presents itself as an added piece of information to strengthen the expectations. One possible viewpoint that these respondents might hold is that affirmative action serves to help categories of people who lack the ability to do it for themselves. Because the role of affirmative action is to reinforce expectations that already exist, its influence will probably not be as easily exposed in the interview and will therefore require some strong probing.

6. The new breed. Affirmative action is the main factor in the development of the performance expectation. For the new breed, "affirmative action assistance" carries such significant meaning that it alone results in the development of differentiated performance expectations. These are people who are not prone to using race and/or sex as factors in evaluating others or themselves. Nonetheless, their exposure to a particular definition of affirmative action, specifically that it is a quota system, leads them to view negatively those who supposedly benefit from the policy. It is possible to delineate those in this category by their practice of speaking only of the influence of the policy itself when discussing those persons who are less qualified or contribute less to the group's mission. A noticeable omission from the new breed's responses should be any reference to the more traditional negative beliefs about racial minorities and women.

Should a new category present itself during the course of the interviews, it will be introduced into the typology. For now, the existing scheme should serve adequately as a framework for organizing the data and dealing with the process undertaken by the respondents of creating a differentiated group structure. Some of the key factors that will help to distinguish the various categories include:

1. knowledge of others in the group (i.e. graduate department).
2. knowledge of expectations associated with specific and, more significantly, diffuse status characteristics of race and sex.
3. knowledge of the policy of affirmative action and the definition imputed to it by society.
4. the significance of race and sex for the respondent in assessing the potential and contribution of various members of the group.
5. significance for the respondent of the perceived influence of affirmative action as a policy in assessing the potential and contribution of various members of the group.

Chapter Four

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter describes the method chosen to collect data for this research, including the sampling issues involved as well as the attempt to construct a reliable and valid instrument. The methodological approach taken in this thesis is unique, especially considering the type of research commonly associated with expectation states. Thus, attention is also paid in this chapter to the potential problems that had to be resolved before the interviews could begin.

In-depth, relatively unstructured interviews were chosen as the primary data gathering method for this research. Because very little survey research has been done on the social psychological aspects of affirmative action, a need presents itself for an initial field study that can begin to reveal some of the significant variables involved. If this thesis succeeds in meeting this need, then future quantitative work on the issue will be more complete.

Another benefit of choosing open-ended questions for this project is the opportunity it provides for a more complete exploration of a social process. In the traditional experimental work done by expectation states theory, clear causal relationships were suggested to exist between variables. While this has been viewed as rigorous science, the main criticism levied against experiments is that they are artificial and thus do not truly mirror the situation as it would unfold outside of the laboratory. A second goal of this thesis, then, is to address as completely as possible all of the dynamics of that process in which individuals attempt to assess the qualifications of others and themselves in a task situation. This research is not meant as an end, however, but as a means of introducing

new questions that might be tackled by a survey or other quantitative design at a later date.

Because this study is exploratory in its aim, it could be assumed that the researcher has adopted an inductive approach. While there are inductive components within the methodology for this study, it would ignore the complexity of the research design to state that it is unequivocally induction. Rather, it is important to briefly describe induction and its counterpart, deduction, and point out why the methodology employed in this study is actually a combination of the two.

An inductive approach is one in which “more general statements are built up slowly after immersion in specific observations of social life” (Neuman 1991, p. 53). Rather than starting from a hypothesis to be tested, the researcher utilizing induction develops propositions after analyzing the data gathered. In contrast, deduction starts with the general theoretical principle and assigns it to a specific social setting. In deduction, “the path is from the abstract and general to the concrete and specific” (p.48).

The research design for this study has elements of both induction and deduction. However, for purposes of classification, it will be considered quasi-deductive, since it incorporates principles from a theory to establish a typology prior to the collection of any data. Had the typology emerged from an analysis of the data, then the methodology would be labeled inductive (Smith 1982, p. 312).

Still, this research is not pure deduction. Because the goal is to describe rather than explain a process, there is not a testable hypothesis used as a starting point. Also, the typology developed for this project, while guided by theoretical principles, is not inflexible to new patterns found in subjects’ responses. The look of the categories at the conclusion

of the study will be a result of what social process is uncovered during the course of the interviews. The addition, subtraction, or adjustment of categories based on the data analysis is consistent with the inductive approach to developing generalizations from analysis of specific processes.

The initial sampling design for this study was to be a convenience sample of graduate students currently enrolled at a public university in the midwest. Time and budget constraints prevented a more expanded search for potential respondents outside this university from taking place. Still, a concerted effort was undertaken to make sure that males, females and various racial groups were represented. Therefore, although such a limited sample does not allow for any generalizations about the total graduate student population, the choice to be inclusive in whom to interview indicates that this project's methodology is at least systematic and objective.

Because of some problems that were fortunately detected in advance, the convenience sample proved to be insufficient in recruiting enough respondents. The original plan called for using personal contacts the researcher had established while living in graduate student housing on campus. The role of these contacts was to provide names of colleagues who might be willing to participate in the research, thus making the researcher's job of finding cooperative respondents easier. Also, these contacts could help in making the sample representative by identifying others in their department who were female and/or a racial minority. A letter that solicited the needed information was sent to ten of the researcher's acquaintances (Appendix A). All ten of the contacts chosen were from different academic areas and were considered to be the most likely to respond to the request for information. The dialogue with these respondents was to cease once the names were provided, and they

were told nothing regarding the specifics of the research. This was necessary in order to prevent them from using the ideas of the project to formulate their own opinions on the qualifications of their peers. Finally, the contacts were aware from the time that they received their letters that any assistance on their part would remain confidential.

Before sending the letters, there was considerable doubt as to how much cooperation the contacts would provide. The researcher recognized that the contacts might have questions about the nature of the endeavor, or they might simply be too busy to provide help. Therefore, another secondary plan was developed. This called for a stratified random sample of graduate students to be taken from the university's student directory. Although it was possible to guarantee a selection of males and females, as well as some international students, in a sample gained by this method, it did pose a significant problem. Because the directory does not provide information on an individual's race, there was a danger that categories such as African American could be overlooked in the sample. To compensate for this, it was decided that, if necessary, the researcher would ask respondents to provide the names of other people who were graduate students and who were of different racial classifications. Another tactic available to the researcher would be to use personal acquaintances who were minorities, as long as these individuals had no prior knowledge of the ideas of the project. Any or all of these plans would come into play only if the initial convenience sample did not yield a sufficient number of minorities.

As predicted, there was a significantly low number of responses from the researcher's contacts. Three of the original ten contacts provided a total of only twelve names. Furthermore, after sending letters to the individuals suggested by the contacts (Appendix B), only one agreed to an interview. The failure of this sampling design meant that the

stratified random sample would have to be implemented.

The process of obtaining a sample from the student directory was quite involved. The target number for respondents was set at thirty, with ten being white male, ten white female, five native-born racial minorities, and five international students. These criteria were key in determining how to proceed in selecting names.

First, a sample of graduate students was obtained by selecting two columns of names for each letter of the alphabet in the directory and recording those names which had the abbreviation Gr, denoting graduate student, beside them. The decision not to take a sample from the entire graduate student listing in the directory was made simply on the basis that to do so would require too much time, since the graduate student names first had to be separated from the rest of the listings. The researcher did recognize the need to be as random as possible in the selection process, so the total number of columns for each letter was determined and the columns to be used were then picked by chance. The number of names of graduate students resulting from this method was one hundred sixty three.

The next step was to categorize these names by sex and by whether or not the individual could be classified, according to the appearance of the name, as an international student. In those instances where the name sufficiently confused the researcher as to the sex or possible national origin of the person, then the opinions of colleagues were used to help determine on which list the individual should be included. If, after contacting individuals, it was found that mistakes were made, then the other plans could be implemented to help reach the desired number of each group in the final sample. After all of the names were placed on one of the newly constructed lists, it was found that the

original sample of one hundred sixty-three contained what appeared to be fifty-seven non-international males, forty-seven non-international females, thirty-three international males, and twenty-six international females.

For each of the four lists, systematic sampling was then done by dividing the number of names on the list by the desired number of respondents for that category in the final sample. The individuals selected through this sampling were then telephoned and asked to participate in the research. The script for the telephone call is provided in Appendix C.

There was a very positive response overall from the individuals who were asked to participate in an interview. As several told the researcher over the phone, this willingness to cooperate was largely due to the fact that the project was being done by a graduate student for a master's thesis. They related that they could empathize, since they too were working on advanced degrees and in some cases were trying to complete a thesis or dissertation. There were some refusals, but the main problem was actually trying to get in touch with all of the individuals selected through the sample. As it turned out, a few had already graduated and moved away. Also, since the project was being conducted during the summer, there were some individuals who had gone home or were on vacation. After several attempts to achieve a sample of thirty, twenty-two interviews were set up. While this number falls short of the original goal, it seems to be quite adequate for exploring the issues of this thesis.

There are weaknesses to any sampling design and the method chosen to contact respondents. As already mentioned, the fact that the research was being done over the summer biases the sample toward those students who are accessible during the summer term. Also, the use of the telephone presents problems, since contacting individuals by

this method may exclude potential respondents who do not have a phone or who are not listed in the graduate directory. Phone contacts may also eliminate those respondents who view this type of solicitation as an unwelcome intrusion. Finally, the inclusiveness of the sample may be affected if potential respondents were contacted by phone during a particularly difficult time and therefore were unable to accept the request to participate.

These biases could be minimized by a research design that mandates the research to be conducted over the course of the entire school year. Also, the use of an official university listing of graduate students would ensure more inclusiveness in the final sample. Finally, respondents who initially decline a phone request might be given the opportunity to respond by phone or letter at a more convenient time. These approaches are suggested for future research. However, for the purposes of this study, which relate more to exploring a social process and not making claims regarding generalizability, the limitations in representativeness are acceptable.

The majority of the interviews were scheduled to take place in the researcher's office during the afternoon (although two interviews were conducted in the respondent's office and one occurred in the respondent's home). The time and location were convenient for everyone, since most of the respondents were on campus during the day and the office was easily accessible. There was great care taken in making the respondents feel comfortable from the moment they arrived for the interview, since settings such as an office can be intimidating and, in this case, can evoke the idea that the project is linked with some university mandated program. However, none of the respondents exhibited what the researcher would interpret as anxiety or reservations about discussing openly their attitudes. Guarantees of confidentiality and the purely academic aims of the project

seemed to put the respondent, as well as the researcher, at ease from the outset.

The interviews began with a brief explanation of some of the mechanics of the research. Any description of the ideas behind the project would not take place until the conclusion of the interviews, to avoid biasing the respondent in any way. Prior to the first question, respondents were informed once again that the interview would be tape recorded but that their identity would not be revealed anywhere on the recording. Still, there was a need to keep up with which tape belonged to which individual, in case there was a problem with the tape clarity or in case a follow-up interview was desirable. Therefore, respondents were shown a folder where their tape number and their name would be placed, and they were promised that the folder and tapes would be stored separately. Also, since many of the conditions of the project were initially explained over the phone and there was a chance for misunderstanding, the respondents were asked to read and then sign a consent letter that detailed again what would be taking place (Appendix D). A second folder that would contain the signed consent letter was pointed out, and it was again made clear that this folder would be kept separately from the other materials. The researcher explained that at the conclusion of the project, which would be a successful defense of the thesis, all of the material that could potentially identify a participant would be destroyed and disposed. Finally, after providing the respondents a chance to ask their own questions about the project, the interview began.

Since this topic has not been dealt with much by in-depth interviewing, there was very little to work with when it came time to develop the interview instrument. Except for some ideas gained by looking at the work of Lynch (1986), most of the questions were developed by the researcher. A total of thirty-five questions appear on the interview

question script (Appendix E). However, depending on variables such as different levels of experience for the respondents and the amount of probing that was possible for each person's answers, the interviews would deviate from the original set of questions. It was rare when the researcher asked every one of the original questions, but new questions presented themselves and led to significant information. Still, a large portion of the script came into play at some point in many of the interviews.

The questions for the interview can be divided into five sections, with each section designed to build on the information obtained from the previous one. Section one (questions one through seven) ask for the respondents to describe themselves and their background in their department. These questions also ask them to relate any perception they have of the department's various policies, with specific attention paid to selection processes for new graduate students and such positions as teaching assistantships. Respondents are also asked in this section what they consider to be the main consideration in these selection processes.

Section two (questions nine through fifteen) first delves into the issue of qualifications and how these might be connected by the respondents to a particular policy. Respondents are asked for the first time to assess the quality of people selected by the various policies discussed in the first set of questions. Also, the possibility that respondents or others in the department have singled out someone who they felt received some special consideration through a policy is considered in this section.

The impact of a respondent's understanding about the department's policies on evaluations of others and self is the focus of section three (questions sixteen through twenty-one). The aim of these questions is to get the respondents to discuss any

experiences in group task settings, such as class projects or committee work, where those involved assessed each other's performances. The factors that the respondents felt were important considerations in the assessments should surface in these answers. Of particular interest would be any mention of the perceived influence of a policy such as affirmative action.

Section four (questions twenty-two through thirty) seeks general information from the respondents about criticisms that they or others may have of their department's policies. There is also an opportunity here for the respondents to discuss their present status and to give an impression of the policies that they see as affecting them in the future. The final set of questions (thirty-one through thirty-five) deal directly with affirmative action, especially with the part that respondents see it as having in their evaluations of others and themselves in their department.

Reliability and validity are important considerations for this research. Among the criticisms levied against qualitative methodology is the assertion that reliability of the measures is inferior to that possible with a quantitative design (Babbie 1989, p. 286). A successfully used open-ended interview instrument is one that allows for flexibility and interpretation. These attributes are beneficial in allowing the researcher to develop a more complete and empathetic understanding of the responses and the reasons behind them. However, they also prevent verification of the results, at least in a conventional sense (Emerson 1983, p. 100).

Still, as Katz (1983) points out, qualitative methodology can be reliable. Assuming that the researcher recognizes his place in a social system of colleagues, supporters, critics, and subjects, he/she will feel constrained to incorporate all of the relevant data into a careful

analysis that will hold up to scrutiny by others. The acknowledgment of shared interpretations by professionals, along with the acceptance by the subjects themselves of the researcher's understanding of the meanings they bring to their lives, results in a meshing of reliability and validity (p. 148). Conventional reliability checks, such as a test-retest or interrater verification, are possible even for this type of qualitative research, provided that clear, complete instructions for completing each step of the research are provided (Katz 1983, Kvale 1996). However, there must be special consideration paid to issues germane to qualitative methodology, including the effect of different styles brought to the research by multiple interviewers (Manning 1982, p. 15).

The other concern over research quality has to do with validity, and it is in this area that methodologies like that undertaken in this project are thought to excel. Validity refers to the "extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration (Babbie 1989, p. 124). Because the interview instrument is open-ended, the possibility of including all of the dimensions of the process by which individuals assess performance potential increases. Consequently, this research can claim to be a valid measure of how people use the perceived presence of a diversity policy to structure an ambiguous situation.

While several different types of validity exist, this research is most likely to raise issues of face validity, or how well the measures mesh with common sense understandings of what a particular concept constitutes (p. 124). Face validity is often threatened if questions are worded awkwardly or unfamiliar terms are used. For example, to ask one of the respondents in this project if he/she thinks that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 has some negative consequences would probably result in stares of confusion and

answers that are based on misinterpretation of what Title VII actually is. To protect against this type of mistake in the development of the instrument, the researcher could conduct the interview first with someone who is not part of the respondent sample but has a comparable level of knowledge of the subject matter. This person could alert the researcher to ambiguous questions, omitted questions that need to be included, or questions that unnecessarily cloud the issue and therefore should be omitted. The inclusion of additional questions to adequately cover a concept would lead to an increase in the instrument's content validity, or how well a measure addresses all of the content of a theoretical concept (Neuman 1991, p. 129). Resources such as the instrument developed by Lynch (1989) aided the researcher in obtaining criterion validity, meaning that the interview questions for this research are based to some extent on accepted measures of attitudes towards affirmative action (p. 130). A fourth type of validity, construct validity, is present if multiple indicators for a measure operate in a consistent manner with each other (p. 130). Several questions are used in this research to obtain a measure of a person's perception of affirmative action. If the responses are consistent, then this measure can claim to have construct validity.

Chapter Five

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1
SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

<u>Racial, Gender characteristics</u>	<u># of Respondents</u>
Caucasian, male	7
Caucasian, female	11
Black, male	1
Black, female	1
Hispanic, female	1
Asian, male	<u>1</u>
	N=22

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the final sample of twenty-two respondents. While some minority groups are underrepresented, the hope is that the experiences of those who did participate can be shown, with future research, to be indicative of what is happening to others. Also, all of the respondents were asked if colleagues had spoken with them on the issues of this project. This could potentially bring in the perspective of a larger number of minorities, even though they did not actively take a part in the research. At no time, however, does the researcher claim that the findings of this study can be generalized to a population.

An important discovery made early in the interview process was that very few of the respondents were able, without any probing, to discuss their feelings about the selection processes in their departments. The first set of questions, dealing with this subject, were worded in a very general, unbiased manner. Rather than being led by the questions, then, the individuals had the opportunity to introduce into the discussion the factors that they deemed important in departmental policies. However, perhaps because this was not a

pressing issue for them in light of other departmental concerns, many of the respondents needed some additional clarification from the researcher before they could articulate a position. This is not to say that opinions on the matter were absent in these cases, but they were more hidden than originally anticipated.

To illustrate these early difficulties, one of the first questions posed was “In your time in this department, what perception do you have regarding its selection process for new graduate students.” The idea behind this question was to get the respondents talking about the fairness of the process and the quality of people being admitted as a result of it. This question alone proved to be too ambiguous, however. Therefore, a second question was often necessary. Consequently, the respondents were asked what factors they thought were important considerations for the department when deciding whom to admit. There was some success with incorporating this question into the interview. Although the researcher did not specifically mention any factors as examples, some of the respondents were better able to grasp now what was being looked for in terms of their opinion of the selection process. The two factors cited most often by the respondents were past academic performance and the overall background of the applicant.

In order to check the respondents’ awareness about the need for diversity as a possible factor, they were asked this question. “One of the issues that is discussed today with regard to admittance into colleges and universities is the need to attract more diversity. Do you feel that this is an issue or need in your department, and if so, do you think the department is actively working to meet the need?” Those who did not see diversity as a need usually expressed the idea that their departments were already diverse. This was especially true when the respondent’s field was in the natural sciences, because many felt

that this academic area attracted a large number of international students.

There were several respondents who did view diversity as an important consideration in their department. In fact, one person, a white male working on his master's degree, served on an admissions committee and was very open about the central role that the diversity issue played in his department's selection practices:

...You're probably not real familiar with the [xxx] department, but we have the [xxx] Diversified Student Program, the DSP office, and their role is to make sure that the diversity is kept up... this year they had 6 slots open in the clinical program, and two of those went to the DSP office, and those are all minority students that come in through that office. So, yea, there is quite a commitment to keeping the minority population within that program up.

Although this answer, and the other responses to the same question, were generally absent of personal opinion on whether or not diversity is a justifiable goal, they served a very important function in this research. Exposing the perceived importance of diversity policies for each of the respondents in their departments would allow the researcher to determine which individuals might potentially distinguish themselves from others based on the attribute of "affirmative action assistance". The strength of the belief about a diversity policy's influence in a graduate program is reflected in the statement by a Ph.D candidate in a social science field that "there is a definite grab for students other than anglo male". Identifying those individuals in the study who share this attitude will help to focus attention on the process where "affirmative action assistance" is the piece of information being used to establish performance expectations.

The remainder of the interview questions deal more directly with all of the possible variables that go into the process of performance expectation development and maintenance. A general description of that process, the main goal of this project, requires

that the answers given by the respondents to these questions be considered collectively. The similarities that emerge from these answers will provide the clues to discerning what environment is most conducive to the development of a particular performance expectation. Therefore, the typology presented in chapter two is the best framework from which to proceed, so that what the respondents share in terms of attitudes and experiences can be more clearly analyzed in the context of a general social process. A final point to make is that whatever processes are described in these findings are meant to pertain only to this group of respondents. The limitations in sampling do not permit the researcher to claim that these processes exist elsewhere. That determination will be up to future research endeavors that go beyond the scope of this study.

THE OUTSIDER

Whether by choice or because of other demands, some graduate students may not take part in the activities of their respective departments. This lack of involvement makes it difficult for these people to meet and learn about their colleagues. Therefore, they do not possess the information that is necessary for making evaluations concerning the performance potential of themselves in relation to the others in their department. This fact, coupled with minimal interaction in group task settings, such as class projects, means that these “outsiders” are removed from the environment where performance expectations are being developed.

The criteria for being classified as an outsider include, then, a tendency by the individual to remain distant from the daily interactions in his/her department, to the point that he/she is not exposed to any information about the background or specific attributes

of the other graduate students. The outsider would also have to be someone who does not have much exposure to group settings, such as a group working on a class project. Whether it is because of a lack of opportunity to participate in such an endeavor or a simple choice not to do so, the implication of not being a part of the group is that the outsider would be denied the information needed to evaluate performance potentials and therefore could not act on those evaluations (Meeker 1981, p. 297). Since it is very likely that others close to the outsider are engaged in a group process where performance expectations are being defined, it is important to look at the conditions that might prevent someone from participating in that process.

No respondent in this study's sample could, by definition, be classified as a "pure" outsider. However, there was one individual who met most of the requirements and therefore deserves some mention. The person referred to was an older female who was pursuing her graduate degree in environmental sciences while also holding a job and raising a family. In talking to her, it became clear that these other responsibilities were just as important to her. She did not, in fact, consider her primary status that of a graduate student, and therefore she did not devote much extra time to familiarizing herself with the department or its people. She was also different from the other respondents in that she was in an interdisciplinary program that placed little or no emphasis on group projects. In such an individualized setting, she had very little contact with the other graduate students. She could not even be sure of the specific guidelines under which others were working. This made it even more difficult for her to arrive at any sort of comparative evaluations.

Everyone else in the sample could, at the very least, identify the performance potential

of their department's graduate students based on the strictness of the admission guidelines. This meant that they had some information that they could use to develop performance expectations. She, on the other hand, was deprived of such information. This individual's situation provides a picture of someone very far removed from the group dynamics that are typically associated with the establishment of performance expectations.

The most profound effect of the outsider's separation from her department was an ignorance regarding policy positions. She expressed uncertainty as to what criteria were used to judge potential candidates for admission to her graduate program. Besides being unable to discern how important a person's objective qualifications were in the selection process, she also could not state with any confidence what role she thought that diversity might have played. When she was asked to discuss this particular issue, she was only able to state that "there are quite a few foreign students in environmental sciences, as well as several women". However, she was not sure if this was due to some deliberate strategy by the department in its recruitment efforts or if it was merely coincidental. Furthermore, she did not make any connections between a person's race or gender and any special abilities, something that was done by others in the sample (especially those in the "hard sciences"). Therefore, although she had some knowledge of the composition of her department's graduate student population, she still exhibited one very important characteristic that distinguished her from the other respondents. Her limited exposure to the department, including little or no interaction with the other graduate students, prevented her from acquiring the needed information to develop performance expectations for the others and herself. In responding to the question, "Is there a perception by others or yourself about the effect of departmental policies on the quality of people being

admitted to your program?”, this individual could only talk of attitudes that possibly existed in other departments with some of her acquaintances.

...I haven't spent a lot of time socializing with people in my classes. And, let's see, the only, well I had one night class last fall where I did do some projects with other people and had an opportunity to talk to them, but one was out of agricultural engineering and one was out of chemistry. You know, they were all associated or affiliated with other departments, and so they had different perceptions of what their own departments were like.

Despite some knowledge of the heterogeneity that existed in her department with regard to certain diffuse status characteristics, this individual did not avail herself of this information to formulate differentiated performance evaluations. In her case, the expectations remained undefined, mainly because the general expectations associated with characteristics such as race and sex, were also unclear. Without experiences in task situations where differences in individual talents would surface, this person would remain unexposed to any information that she could use to determine her potential relative to those around her.

For the most part, there was no such participation in task settings for this individual. Regarding her own department, she repeatedly made the point that everyone was working on different plans which encompassed courses from several academic areas. This meant there was less chance that she would encounter her departmental colleagues in a situation where a group project was required. Therefore, a secondary goal of the interview with this person was to see if the experiences in group interactions in any of her coursework included the establishment of differentiated performance expectations.

Because this individual often had to take courses from a diverse range of academic departments, she did enter into situations where there were significant differences among

the students regarding ability level for that one class. She discussed one experience from an engineering class, where the professor's practice of assigning students from different departments to work together caused some initial difficulties:

...and, because of where people came from, you know, there was people who couldn't maybe contribute as much as you would like them to the project. But most of the groups functioned fairly well, you know, dividing it up and giving people areas to work on that were their strong suits.

The strategy of distributing the work among the group members according to individual specialties is consistent with expectation states theory and its ideas about the behavioral manifestations of particular expectation states. Specifically, the people in the respondent's group gave those for whom they held a higher performance expectation more of an opportunity to complete the task. The fact that the individual described the group project as one that "worked out well" suggests the possible veracity of another of expectation states theory's propositions. Given the chance to evaluate the contributions of the group members, and recognizing that each was working within his/her own area of specialty, this person judged the actual performances in a manner that meshed well with the initial expectations (Meeker 1989, p. 299)

This group would be a more true representation of expectation states processes if the opinions of the other members regarding the group's success had been solicited. Also, each member in this group was able to choose a particular aspect of the task that fit well with their particular talents. If, however, everyone was required to perform the same duties, then different expectation states, with self having a negative expectation and other having a positive expectation, might be at work. Still, the behavior of these group members, as described by the respondent, do indicate that some sort of mental process,

probably the development and maintenance of performance expectations, is taking place.

Given that she had little first-hand experience in group interactions with those in her department, it is unlikely that she had encountered situations where race and sex were used in some manner to determine the potential of a group's members. Also, as mentioned earlier, she did not appear to connect a person's race and/or sex with different expectations for performance of a task. Therefore, even if she had more contact with her colleagues, these variables would probably have not been used by her to distinguish the group members with regard to potential and actual contribution to the task at hand.

The role of affirmative action in the selection process and the positive or negative connotations attached to it by other graduate students and/or faculty is another piece of information that could have been used by this respondent in determining performance expectations. However, two facts prevented the label of "affirmative action assistance" from playing a role in this person's evaluations. First, her definition of the general goals of the policy of affirmative action was that "it gives everyone with the same qualifications the same opportunities". This particular understanding of the policy prevented her from making a distinction between the qualifications of those who benefit from it from those who do not. Second, even if she did have a different understanding of the policy, her limited exposure to her department caused her to be unsure as to affirmative action's influence in the selection of its graduate students. Consequently, unless some other information about a group's members was learned, the expectations for performance would remain undefined for this respondent and she could be classified as an "outsider".

Future research that is more inclusive of this category is required before assuming that this individual's case is representative. However, it is possible to identify certain

differences in the experiences of this person compared to those of others in the sample. The description of this individual's situation included an emphasis on her ignorance regarding the internal dynamics of her department (especially certain policy decisions). Also, there were repeated references made by her to the fact that she had limited contact with others in her department, particularly in task group settings. Finally, the definition of affirmative action provided by this individual is important because of its benign language. All of these factors, taken together, reflect a process where graduate students are unable to set definite expectations for their performances relative to others. Without inferring any causal relationship, the significance of these factors will now be ascertained in the dynamics encountered by the remaining respondents.

THE INNOCENT BYSTANDER

This category includes those graduate students for whom expectations for the performance of self and other are defined and at the same time undifferentiated. The level of involvement in their programs for these individuals is clearly different from that of the "outsider". This results in more information being available to these respondents and thus a greater ability to evaluate the potential and actual contributions of group members in a task setting. However, each group member is perceived by these respondents to be either equally high or low in ability. The situational factors that contribute to these individuals viewing everyone as equally qualified, even when they are aware of heterogeneity in terms of race, sex, and possible benefit afforded by affirmative action, are considered in this section.

One of the first contacts that a graduate student has with his/her program centers

around the department's criteria for admission and the student's own attempts to meet those criteria. In talking with several of the respondents, it became evident that the more stringent the department's criteria were believed to be, the more positively these individuals viewed their own performance potential and that of their colleagues. Conversely, if the department's criteria were considered to be lax, evaluations of abilities were usually more negative. Thus, admission standards became a primary source of information for reducing the ambiguity that was associated with a group of graduate students working in a task setting. For the innocent bystander, there was a strong belief in the idea that the department's criteria applied to all candidates. Therefore, those who "made it" were presumably on the same level in terms of individual abilities.

One male student was quick to defend his department's standards. When he was asked about the criteria that seemed to be emphasized in the selection process for new graduate students, he responded that "they're so selective over there". He then described some of the requirements for admission, pointing out that they had not changed since he had arrived, nor had he heard any of his colleagues discuss any significant changes. The foundation was thus laid for the development of undifferentiated performance expectations in this department, since the information provided to its graduate students was that everyone was qualified to be there.

Another respondent who expressed very favorable opinions about the quality of graduate students in his department was a doctoral candidate in the "hard sciences". This individual's case was unique. He repeatedly made the point during the course of the interview that he had "been around" for quite a while and was taking longer than usual to finish his degree. However, this did not appear to affect his sense of his own abilities. He

described his experience as a teaching assistant in the department responsible for several upper-division courses, and he concluded from this responsibility given to him that he was a qualified person. The lengthy time spent by this individual in his department enabled him to talk first-hand about changes in the quality of people being brought in. He thought of himself as the last remaining graduate student from a time when the standards were less strict:

...The department has undergone a change, roughly in the time that I've been here. We got a hot shot department head, for instance, who tried to improve the quality of people in the department overall. And I think the quality of the graduate students has increased.

When he was asked whether the changes he had been discussing were also perceived by the other graduate students, he said that past conversations indicated to him others had the same opinion. Generally speaking, then, the individuals in this program have information that should lead to positive evaluations of performance in group tasks.

The "innocent bystander" category also consists of some of the sample's female respondents, including one who had some experience working on her department's admissions committee. This position gave her the opportunity to view the process closely, and her conclusion was that it was stringent and fair. According to her, the influence of high standards had meant that less qualified students had been "weeded out".

Departments where expectations for performance are low due to what are perceived to be relaxed admission standards also likely exist. However, none of the people in the study talked about their department in these terms. Consequently, this analysis of the "innocent bystander" is somewhat limited.

Performance expectations for the "innocent bystander" could remain undifferentiated,

even when variables of race and gender were introduced, as long as the beliefs associated with these characteristics were neutralized or set aside. For some of the respondents, this was accomplished by way of contact with a particular office in their program. One department, for instance, had established a diversified student program charged with the task of recruiting minority graduate students. Instead of creating the attitude among the others that these minorities were less qualified, the way that this office conducted business had the opposite effect. This office conducted sessions designed to inform the graduate students, both minority and non-minority, on the need for its specific programs. Part of these sessions consist of putting forth information that minorities are subject to the same standards as everyone else. Consequently, there was a heightened level of awareness in this department regarding the similar qualifications of all graduate students, and the positive intent of certain selection policies designed to attract minorities:

I believe I understand affirmative action. I don't believe that it's quotas or anything like that, but to recruit minorities and to make sure that interviews and stuff are not biased...it's an avenue to get these people into positions that have not been open to them before.

Even the classification levels of "master's" and doctoral" were not used to differentiate ability, according to the department's students who were interviewed. As one respondent put it, the fact that there was a rigorous course load required of everyone in the department helped to foster an attitude of "we don't think of it in terms of different levels or abilities." The existence of these attitudes was supported by the answers given by the "innocent bystanders" to a question dealing with the judgment of performances in a group setting. The question was posed in a way that asked them to consider if situations arose where certain individuals were thought to be contributing at a different level to the group.

For the "innocent bystander" this type of situation did not take place. A common response to this question was that "everyone pulled their weight".

For the students in this department, a concerted effort had been made to ensure that they had more information, other than race and sex, on which to base their performance expectations. The availability of information suggesting equal ability levels for all graduate students made it more likely for positive expectations for self and other to emerge, despite the potential influence of race and sex as variables. The results in this department are indicative of what can happen when attempts are made to neutralize the influence of stereotypes associated with certain status characteristics. A change of beliefs regarding the status characteristics of race, sex, and affirmative action assistance can occur if there is sufficient information that points to the positive contribution of minorities to tasks. This could eventually mean the alleviation of many inequalities that exist in group settings (Knottnerus 1986).

THE BYSTANDER

The "bystander" and "innocent bystander" share the attribute that neither establishes performance expectations on the basis of diffuse status characteristics, particularly race, sex, and affirmative action assistance. Unlike the "innocent bystander", however, the "bystander" has information that the graduate students in his/her department may have different levels of the specific abilities relevant to that particular discipline. This information is used to form differentiated expectations for self and other. In a graduate program, where everyone is thought to be at a high level, any perceived changes in the standards of the selection process can be used to distinguish students:

...I think since I've been here, and I've been here a little longer than most...well,

the first project I came in on, it was a matter of, I think, need. They needed somebody. I think I was certainly qualified for the position, but they needed somebody in a hurry, so in terms of things like G.R.E. scores, they didn't pay much attention to that sort of thing. I think now the requirements have gotten considerably tougher, in terms of they really want G.R.E. scores, grade point averages...So, I think its gotten much more difficult to get in.

Although this individual avoided a negative self-evaluation by believing that he possessed the qualifications anyway, bystanders in general were influenced in their evaluations of an individual by information on the selection criteria in place at the time of that person's admission. One respondent described the attitude as one of resentment toward those admitted under more relaxed standards, who he stated were constantly trying to compensate for their deficiencies by "getting in good" with the faculty. This resentment carried over into this respondent's interactions in group settings, where his beliefs about a person's potential and quality of performance took shape:

You know, you can just tell in the discussions in the class. And I don't want to single anyone out, but there are a couple of individuals who everyone is pretty much agreed on. But you can just tell in the discussions...who is making insightful comments and who is saying something just to be heard by the professor.

The reciprocity of the performance expectation, that those identified by this respondent as having less ability have the same belief for themselves, is evident when he discusses the dynamic that emerges in his task groups. Pointing to what he called his ability to "work faster" than some of the others, this respondent accepted a more active role in completing projects. He noted that his abilities became a reputation that followed him to each interaction. This suggests that his performances did receive more positive evaluations by group members.

The "bystander" is not immune from the influence of beliefs associated with a person's

race, sex, or status as “affirmative action assistance”. However, the availability of information that the individuals in the department were distinguishable in terms of relevant, specific abilities was the crucial factor in the development of performance expectations. Furthermore, for the “bystander”, the two groups who were admitted under different criteria cut across racial and gender lines. Consequently, diffuse status characteristics did not stand on their own as important considerations for those in this category. When asked if people in his department thought that a diversity policy was responsible for less qualified people being admitted, one person replied, “not really, since many of the village idiots are Anglo”.

Bystanders structured their interactions with their colleagues using information that suggested that specific abilities relevant to the task at hand were held in differing degrees by group members. With this type of information available, beliefs about the general abilities of those of a particular race and/or sex were neutralized. Even when the potential to differentiate ability according to a diffuse status characteristic is there, the beliefs about the characteristic can only be activated in a setting where individuals are distinguished by it. One female respondent, for example, was in a program comprised totally of females and, except for one colleague from India, Caucasians. She held beliefs that were consistent with various stereotypes about race and gender. These beliefs are evident in two experiences that she discussed. First, she described with amazement encountering a professor who was a black female, and then she provided an assessment of how males behaved in a class outside of her program.

I will be honest, all through my undergraduate and graduate studies...this semester I was shocked, not surprised, but something along those lines, in one of my classes my professor was a black lady, and I have never had a black teacher, and she had her doctorate![exclamation added to show the tone with which the respondent

made statement]

I've noticed in some of my other classes that I've taken, that guys verbalize more. I think that's just characteristic of the guys. Girls are a lot shyer. Men want to express their opinions more, and they don't care what you think.

The presence of males or racial minorities in this individual's graduate program would apparently result in performance expectations based on diffuse status characteristics. However, the homogeneity of the department currently means that this individual, and her colleagues, rely on other information to structure their group process. This respondent is able to distinguish herself from the others in her program because of what she views as special circumstances related to her admission.

I took the entrance exams for the program, and I didn't make the score, which was frustrating, because I felt like you should be able to prove yourself in another manner. I asked about it, and they told me there were special circumstances, which I was glad of...you could take 9 hours of provisional work, add on that a letter from the professor and you could get in.

Provided that others share the information that this respondent was admitted under different criteria, the result would likely be a lower performance expectation for this individual in comparison to her colleagues. This respondent would probably be included as an "old-timer" if only she was exposed to diversity in terms of race and gender in her own program. There are other factors that contribute to the activation of these diffuse status characteristics, as well as "affirmative action assistance." Those factors will be outlined in the descriptions of the "old timer", policy conscious", and "new breed".

THE OLD TIMER

The "old timer" makes judgments based on beliefs about race and sex without incorporating attitudes surrounding the policy of affirmative action. The reasons that

affirmative action is not utilized in the process will be expounded on later. The important distinction about the “old-timer” is that traditional stereotypes about minorities serve as sufficient information in establishing differentiated performance expectations for self and other.

There are abundant examples in the data collected of distinctions made by students based on race and sex. However, a third attribute, age, surfaced in the course of interviews with several respondents. The impact of this diffuse status characteristic will also be considered in this section.

Race proved to be more of a dominant factor for the “old-timer” than gender. One explanation that can be deduced from the interviews is the strong presence of international students in some of the graduate programs. For some, the assumed difficulties accompanying language differences resulted in some group members receiving more opportunities to contribute to the task. One respondent discussed an Asian student who was allowed by the others to do less work on the project because of the fear that she would not be able to provide a valuable contribution, especially in the oral presentation. Although the initial concern of the other group members centered on her status of “international student”, the beliefs about her abilities were consistent with those expressed for someone of a different race. The fact that the respondent kept referring to her as the “Asian woman” suggests that the same dynamics would emerge if this person had been born and raised in this country.

Unfounded attitudes that define certain races as better suited or more naturally gifted at certain academic pursuits also impacted group interactions for some of the respondents. In science and mathematics, for example, Asian students ranked higher in the power and

prestige order since these academic areas were thought to be their expertise. The respect afforded the Asian population, and more generally international students, seems tenuous, however. Even apparent compliments given to them by others are sometimes shrouded in comments on attributes that they lack:

There are some international students who it is felt that their background is not what it should be, and some of them have trouble with their English skills. But overall they usually excel as graduate students in quantitative skills.

We have two or three Asian students...in their own country they're incredibly prepared, but certainly here the overall participation isn't the same because of the language barrier...I mean they work very hard. They usually help the other people out when it comes to the statistical part, so it averages out.

The power of a diffuse status characteristic to negatively influence a person's self-evaluation was most apparent when the discussions turned to the issue of gender. While the males tended to discount this as a factor in their interactions in group settings, some of the females stated that they had developed the opinion that their own potential was less than that of their male counterparts. For a couple of these women, the faculty in their department, by its actions, acted as a catalyst for the development of the differential performance expectations for men and women. The fact that college faculty is predominantly male was not lost on these respondents, as one of them pointed out that she encountered an "old boy network" which repeatedly solicited the opinion of male students more in class discussions and consequently made her doubt the validity of her own position on the topic.

A female faculty member in the education department, a field long considered the domain of women, helped to create a sense among the female students that they should actually perform better at the required tasks than men. The female respondent from this

department told of the faculty member's verbal insistence in a class setting that the female students' potential was greater precisely because of their gender. However, this was the exception to the pattern that emerged in the departments of the other respondents. There were more experiences related where the female students judged their own potential and work in group tasks more harshly than the contributions of the male members. Once again, the role played by faculty members is worth noting:

A colleague of mine...when she gave her defense, she said that her advisor, who is mine now, was very, very picky. The rest of them (committee members) weren't so bad, but he was very picky. And it makes me wonder if he is just that way with women. Because I do everything that he asks me to, and he still makes it seem like it's not good enough.

One of the ways to counteract the development of a differentiated performance expectation based on gender is to introduce information portraying the qualifications of all group members as equal (Berger et al. 1980, Chacko 1987; Knottnerus, 1986). In a graduate program, this could best be done by the faculty, whose opinions on the abilities of the students are more valued because of their position. Conversely, by sending a message that males and females bring different levels of ability to the group, faculty members can be partly responsible for perpetuating the feelings of inferiority and self-doubt that were described by some female respondents.

A characteristic that was not originally considered in the development of the typology used in this study was age. Nonetheless, this variable was used as a piece of information by some respondents in their attempts to bring structure to their group interactions. Older students were subject to both higher and lower expectations for performance, depending on the department. The opinion that those returning to graduate school late in life are less academically gifted was expounded by one respondent but rejected by another. The latter,

a female student working on a master's degree in gerontology, identified certain positive attributes that she felt were possessed in greater quantity by older students. The characteristics she mentioned included a sharper focus on what is important, a more serious approach to the task, and a higher level of practical or "real life" experience. Although this respondent had not yet been involved in a group project assignment, she did acknowledge that these beliefs were part of the general climate in her department. A stratified structure, in fact, existed, where the older students enjoyed a certain amount of prestige. This respondent referred to several occasions where she had been solicited for advice or to serve as a mentor for a younger student. Thus, one attitude being nurtured was the idea that older students have more valuable points to make. This was evident in class discussions, where the respondent acknowledged that older students usually offered their opinions more freely. A follow-up interview with this respondent in the future might show that the group projects of which she will be a member will also be influenced by the same set of beliefs associated with age. If the older students are given more opportunity to contribute to large class discussions by their younger cohorts, then it stands to reason that they will be awarded the same differentiated opportunity and positive evaluations in a small group task situation.

In the absence of more relevant information about specific abilities of individuals, the "old timers" relied on other characteristics to place their group members into distinct categories. Race, sex, and age, because they are usually easily identifiable for a person, became the important factors for these respondents. If other information was available that supported the expectations for performance derived from using these characteristics, that information would have been "added" to the evaluation (Knottnerus and Greenstein

1981). One status characteristic that could be incorporated to create a strengthened differential performance expectation is “affirmative action assistance”. In the next section, the discussion will center on those respondents who made use of the beliefs associated with this characteristic to augment already existing expectations that they had developed.

It is necessary first to determine what prevented the “old timers” in this study from expanding beyond the traditional characteristics as they sought information to reduce the ambiguity in group interaction. One reason that “affirmative action assistance” was not a focus for those in this category was that there was little or no knowledge about the policy’s role in their departments. The respondent from gerontology was hesitant to link the presence of people in her department to the influence of a diversity policy because, as she said, her department was relatively new and the students were still unclear as to the criteria that comprised the selection process. Even in looking to the future, this respondent was unable to think of affirmative action as a part of the decision making process in her department. Instead, she believed that, coinciding with the department’s expansion, there would be a “natural diversity of race and gender”. Therefore, this individual will likely continue to dismiss the significance of “affirmative action assistance” unless others confront her with information that outlines its prevalence in her program.

The “old timers” did have definite opinions on the policy of affirmative action. A white male respondent from agricultural economics stated that, even if affirmative action was necessary, those who implemented it “are usually overzealous in their attempts to recruit minorities.” This student, though, did not believe that affirmative action applied directly to the admission practices in his own program. This was typical for all of the “old timers” interviewed. While none of them exhibited complete ignorance regarding affirmative

action, they all shared the perspective that it was not a factor in their own departments. One individual even refused to link affirmative action to the recruitment policies of the university as a whole. Instead, she discussed hypothetically the impact that would be felt were the policy to be embraced:

To do affirmative action on this campus would be like putting the cart ahead of the horse. It should really not be the hottest issue on this campus. You know, they have many other issues they need to address.

Some of the 'old-timers' saw those who were supposedly aided by affirmative action as being generally less capable, but they were not able to attach their beliefs to minority students in their department. Another white male respondent, a graduate student in engineering, had used diffuse status characteristics, including affirmative action assistance" in his judgments of others in an academic setting. However, even in this instance the targets of these judgments were not fellow graduate students but rather other students in classes he took while an undergraduate:

The biggest thing that we run into are some of the minority problems. Are you interested more in the foreign students? Those are the minorities that always seem to sort of be complaining about things, where if you were a white male you would be kicked out. So, I mean, certain suspect groups were definitely given extra consideration, because they do complain, and they have a lot of firepower behind them to complain.

The respondent quickly qualified his comment by stating that he tried to keep an open mind. This was difficult to do, he said, because he had "been burnt" in situations where less qualified minorities were still getting preferential treatment. As a teacher, his overall evaluation of the performances of his students was evidently impacted by his previous experiences:

I'm talking about minorities born in this country, who should be more capable [than international students]. No one wants to take responsibility for...I mean, the material is there. It is your responsibility to learn it and to be up and, you

know, current on it. They seem to find a lot of excuses, and overall they seem to perform poorly, and always because its someone else's fault or whatever.

The judgments of this respondent toward his students and toward minorities outside his graduate program were based in part on a belief about the qualifications of people who benefit from affirmative action. Within his graduate program, the respondent did not feel that the department put forth a concerted effort to attract minorities. Instead, he held a favorable opinion of the selection processes, stating that there was a push to get "the top-end students" in engineering. Whereas his expectations of minorities outside the program were based on pieces of information that were consistent with each other, some processing and ultimately balancing of inconsistent information would have to take place before the potential of his colleagues who are minorities is determined (Berger et al. 1992). Taking his responses as a whole, it is probable that this respondent assigns more weight to the beliefs associated with the diffuse status characteristics. Since these beliefs do not mesh with his understanding of the quality of people in his department, the averaging of the two pieces of information would likely result in the contributions of minorities to the task being discounted.

While he viewed the climate in his own department as "anti-affirmative action", he still had sufficient information to develop differentiated performance expectations. The presence of minorities in his program activated beliefs about the comparative abilities of these individuals.

As far as the graduate students, most of the minorities are pretty capable. There are a few people who are not, but until you work with them its hard to tell.

The qualification of capabilities by use of the term "pretty" suggests that minorities' qualifications, even when they may be substantial, are not as highly ranked as

qualifications of non-minorities. This respondent did not relate any experiences he had in group task situations, where the effects of these differentiated expectations could be seen. However, his work as a teaching assistant gave him the opportunity to evaluate the output of minority students.

If minority students taught by this respondent performed in a manner consistent with his expectation for them, then there can be validation for his belief about their potential (Knottnerus and Greenstein 1981). The effect of this could be an increased likelihood that the diffuse status characteristic would be used in interactions among graduate students in his department. With the introduction of other minority graduate students in future group task situations, the expectations formulated in the first interaction are transferred to the new task and actors, and hence, as the respondent claims, it can be "easy to determine who's going to do what." (Berger et al. 1989).

This respondent can not be included with the "policy conscious" because of his dismissal of affirmative action as a factor in the selection process in his program. For now, the expectations for performance that he defines for his minority colleagues depends upon a synthesis of two variables, the department's strict standards and his opinion on the general potential of minorities. If he were at some time to perceive affirmative action as having a more direct influence in his department, his viewpoint on the policy would likely create an even stronger performance expectation:

I should clarify...I don't fully understand affirmative action, I don't even fully understand the law. But I do tend to see, or perceive, what its effects are, and its general thinking pattern. At least I think I understand that, and that is what I have a problem with, as far as a little less will still get you there. I mean that's not what they intended to do, I don't think. It's these people are suspect, they have a harder time, so we need to give them something else to make them equal. The only problem is that something else tends to be "we can do a little less".

When respondents adopt the attitude that affirmative action does affect the selection process in their department, they can be classified as either "policy conscious" or the "new breed".

THE POLICY CONSCIOUS

The "policy conscious", compared to the other categories, are the most actively involved in the establishment and maintenance of a power and prestige structure within their department. They build upon the performance expectation that is characteristic of the "old timer" by incorporating information that supplements this expectation. This new information is the perceived influence of affirmative action in a department, and the beliefs that coincide with one's status as a beneficiary of the policy. Thus, the actions of the "policy conscious" in group interactions will be described in this section, and they will be looked at within the context of these respondents' attitudes not only toward the attributes of race and sex but also toward "affirmative action assistance".

A relatively low number of respondents in the sample saw diversity as a goal in their department and subsequently used this information to establish performance expectations. Particularly noteworthy is that none of the white males apparently incorporated beliefs about several diffuse status characteristics, such as race and "affirmative action assistance" into their evaluations within a graduate program.

The "policy conscious" is comprised more of minority respondents, particularly women and African Americans. Interviews with some of the minorities reveal how powerful the beliefs associated with various diffuse status characteristics can be for a person as he/she formulates a self-evaluation. The significance of the minorities in this category is that they

access two or more pieces of information to help them define their performance potential relative to others. The negative assessment of their abilities, compared to colleagues, result not only from attitudes about race and sex but also from the perception that affirmative action is one of the reasons for their admittance into the program.

One respondent described with emotion the effects of a negative expectation for self on her interactions with her colleagues. This individual was a black female working toward a doctorate in a medical science. She had been exposed to and had accepted the notion that her race and gender were valid indicators of general competence. Her difficulties were compounded by the fact that she had to prove herself in a field traditionally dominated by white males. She was witness to similar problems encountered by other minorities in the program, including an African-American female working in a demanding internship:

I don't think anybody really thought she knew what she was doing...And just talking to her, she felt like she really had to prove herself.

Even though the respondent would state that this intern turned out to be very qualified, she made this judgment about the intern only after having her as an instructor and viewing closely the actual performance. Thus, external status characteristics initially were the primary piece of information used by others, including the respondent, to define the potential of the intern. These characteristics would continue to be influential for this intern as she analyzed her own performance. The question that was posed to the respondent was if she thought that this individual evaluated her own performance more negatively.

You know, she never remarked anything like that to me. But, you know, she didn't have to say. I mean, for me, listening to her talk...I got that impression.

Awareness of the tendency of other minorities to discount their abilities had the effect

of validating the negative self-evaluation already adopted by this respondent. From her first day in the program, she acknowledged that the division along gender and racial lines was clear. In many of her encounters with cohorts, she had felt unsure about her potential to perform. Consequently, in most instances she opted not to draw attention to herself. Her low expectation for self manifested itself most often in class discussion, where she stated that the white males made more comments both during and after class. In a group project assignment, her high expectation for others was called into question by a white male who failed to take part in some of the activities. Rather than criticize his contribution, she attempted to excuse his behavior in a way that would be consistent with her original expectation for him. Her conclusion was that he was "very smart and maybe he had already proved himself on this kind of simple task". This definition of the situation also meant that she could discredit her own work on the project, regardless of the quantity or quality of effort she had given.

For some of the other respondents, the actions of professors had been an important ingredient in the development and particularly the maintenance of a power and prestige order. In the case of this individual, her professors influenced the beliefs of the graduate students not by their actions but by their attitudes. She argued that there was no observable difference in how minorities and non minorities were evaluated by a teacher for their work on various assignments. However, learning of a teacher's beliefs about categories of people did affect the confidence that students in this department had to contribute to a group task, and it also helped to change how the performances of group members were judged internally. The respondent had encountered a teaching assistant who she felt had different expectations for blacks and whites. Although this attitude was

never stated verbally, the respondent interpreted the teaching assistant's insistence on being especially nice to her as simply an effort to patronize a black student. This conclusion made it easier for this respondent to question her qualifications, and at the same time she could infer an even stronger link between her status as minority and her place in the department. Her statement that the professor acted nice to her "because she probably felt like she had to" signifies that this respondent recognizes the possibility of a diversity policy like affirmative action at work in her department. Also, her statement alludes to a possibly negative definition of the policy, thus leaving her more susceptible to negative expectations for self.

The low number of minorities in the department was considered a problem by the respondent. She thought that there was a need to attract more diversity, although she conceded that the minorities accepted into the program, including herself, owed their presence in part to an active diversity policy. When asked to define affirmative action, this respondent spoke in favorable terms:

It's about giving minorities the opportunities that you wouldn't otherwise get. I mean you just can't go in there and say, 'I'm black, and I wanna get into med school'. I mean, you have to meet qualifications.

This answer would seem to preclude this respondent from the "policy conscious", who use the characteristic of "affirmative action assistance" to strengthen differentiated performance expectations. However, the very next statement given by this respondent shows that she too makes distinctions based on this diffuse status characteristic:

...And so maybe my grade point wasn't quite a 3.0. Maybe it was more like a 2.7. Why does that make me any less to not be able to get in there when I know I can do the work.

While she felt that she had the necessary skills for the program, she still understood two

separate standards for minorities and non-minorities to be at work. It was not that she perceived minorities as unqualified for the program, but compared to non-minorities she expected less from them. Another respondent, a Hispanic female, expressed a similar viewpoint about the qualifications of the policy's target group, as she attempted to give a justification for affirmative action.

I think affirmative action is very important... I see it as a transition phase. If you're all male, or all white, or whatever, and they tell you that you have to hire the outside group to work beside you, and the argument has been that there are no qualified outside group people, and you're going to have to hire them, then more than likely they're going to assist them and make sure these people become qualified. If there is no outside pressure, they will never have to make sure that these people become qualified.

The self doubts expressed by these respondents are based on a combination of beliefs about race and sex and perceived status as an "affirmative action beneficiary". It is unclear which factor is dominant, but it is assumed that all of the characteristics were incorporated into the performance expectation. For the majority of the interview with the black female, responses included references to "this white student" or "this black girl in the department" without any significant mention of particular policies. Nonetheless, when asked about the issue, she did talk of reservations she had about those individuals who comprise the target group for affirmative action. Regardless of which piece of information was more important for them, the behavior of these respondents in their programs denotes a negative expectation for self and positive expectation for other. Even though they knew they had to prove themselves in the department, they rarely grasped the opportunities to do this.

...I just sit there, I don't talk much. I don't say much to people. There are a couple of girls who sit next to me that I talk to. And, I don't know if its just because they don't know me, but especially the guys...they may think that I'm the stupidest person on Earth. I don't think they give me credit for even

knowing a lot of the stuff.

When the first respondent did take an active role in a group setting, her performance was judged in a manner consistent with the original expectation. In summarizing the intellectual debates she had with colleagues, for example, she remarked that it was almost always decided that her points were wrong. For the second respondent, the experience was somewhat better. As she progressed through her program, she felt that her initial unwillingness to participate and her lack of confidence were lessened to some extent as it became clear that her abilities were similar to those of others in her program.

THE NEW BREED

The typology developed for this thesis includes the category of the “new breed”. These are individuals who it was thought would make use of the characteristic of “affirmative action assistance”, without incorporating beliefs associated with race or sex, in their performance expectations. An analysis of the data reveals that none of the respondents in this study could be considered part of this group. The idea that “affirmative action assistance” would stand on its own as a status characteristic is original to this study. It is now appropriate to question the veracity of this idea. Using the salience principle of status characteristics theory, one could conclude that the activation of “affirmative action assistance” will always depend on the presence of differences in race and/or sex of group members (Knottnerus 1994, p. 53). The fact that differences in these characteristics exist in the group means that beliefs associated with them are likely to be incorporated into the performance expectations first. This is not meant to discount the theoretical possibility of the existence of the “new breed”. However, discovery of members of this category may

require a research methodology that is more traditionally linked to expectation states and status characteristics theory.

Rather than focusing on the type of individual who might be defined as the “new breed”, future projects that employ research methodology consistent with expectation states and status characteristics theory would benefit from analyzing the social process itself. This project differs significantly from the expectation states model by focusing on the characteristics that distinguish individuals in the process. According to Berger et al. (1980, p. 481), “expectation states are properties of relations, not actors as persons.” This study, which does not test expectation states’ validity, serves the purpose of identifying possible factors for actors as they attempt to bring structure to their group processes. If more were done to include “others” in relation to “self”, then it might be possible to identify a social structure where “affirmative action assistance” is the sole basis of differentiated performance expectations.

Chapter Six

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has attempted to explore some of the dynamics of that process where individuals, in this case graduate students, clarify their understanding of what each group member in a task situation is capable of contributing. The central theme of this study is that diversity policies, specifically affirmative action, can be used to augment already established performance expectations. The proposition was also put forward that affirmative action can be used as the primary piece of information in the formulation of performance expectations, but the data did not support this idea.

A typology was established that distinguished individuals on the basis of how closely they were involved in the establishment of performance expectations in their program. The "outsider" is completely removed from the process, mainly because an overall lack of involvement in the department prevents him/her from acquiring information necessary to formulate an opinion on who could contribute what to a task. Because of the small sample size in this research, there were no "pure" outsiders interviewed. However, there was one respondent who did seem very unsure of her place in the department relative to her colleagues. In her limited group encounters, her lack of attachment to the program and her inability to describe its policies meant that the performance expectations would be undefined.

In contrast to the "outsider", the "innocent bystander" has a definite understanding of the selection process within his/her program. Ascertaining whether or not admission standards were stringent or fair became the one determining factor used by these

individuals to evaluate group members. Because they recognized the standards to be universal in application, the performance expectations established by these individuals were undifferentiated. Especially in departments with supposedly high standards for admission, beliefs about race and sex lost much of their significance, since there was strong evidence that people were in the program due to their abilities. This is not to say that some “innocent bystanders” did not also discuss the role of affirmative action in their department. However, the individual or departmental definition of the policy as a means to attract equally qualified minorities precluded it from being used to set up differentiated performance expectations.

“The bystander” believes that group members possess differing amounts of the specific abilities needed for success in the program. The respondents in this category turn mostly to perceived changes in the toughness of the admission standards to distinguish themselves from their colleagues. When confronted with information that the application of different standards is independent of a person’s race and sex, the “bystander” places more emphasis on this relevant information over the beliefs he/she may hold about the external characteristics.

The “old timer” interacts in a stratified structure where rewards are distributed in accordance with where one ranks in association with diffuse status characteristics of race and sex. Most in this category are able to expound on the general policy of affirmative action and its consequences. However, their understanding of their own department’s selection criteria does not include the influence of affirmative action. Consequently, general attitudes about the policy are set aside when evaluating the potential of their group members.

In the case of the “policy conscious”, a complex set of variables contributes to the development of differentiated performance expectations. First, differences in ability and potential are linked with external status characteristics. Second, the particular definition of affirmative action held by those in this category is that it aids those less qualified. Third, this definition is activated because the respondent interprets the general climate in his/her program as “pro- affirmative action”. The power of these characteristics to affect a person’s self concept is illustrated well in this category.

Finally, the “new breed” remains a category in theory only. In the scope of this study, no respondent was apparently part of a structure where “affirmative action assistance” was the primary characteristic used to define performance potential. The limitations and weaknesses of this study, which will be discussed later in this chapter, may be responsible for the omission of those individuals who represent this category.

This study can provide some validation for theoretical principles that comprise expectation states and status characteristics theory. An explanation for why some of the respondents possessed undifferentiated performance expectations, even when they were exposed to racial and gender diversity, is given in the theoretical assumptions about the dominance of information related to specific status characteristics (Berger et al. 1980). The weakness of affirmative action in affecting performance expectations, even when actors possessed definite general perceptions of the policy, supports the condition of salience outlined in status characteristics theory. The salience principle states that group members must be distinguishable in terms of the status characteristic for it to be incorporated into the establishment of expectations (Berger et al. 1989, p. 104). In the case of affirmative action, the characteristic is not a visible distinguishing marker, so it

relies on the perception of actors regarding its role in the situation before it is activated.

Some parts of the expectation states program are inconsistent with findings of this research. Expectation states assumes an actor who does not interpret meanings of status characteristics but reacts to their presence in a task situation. In contrast, the respondents in this sample were more involved in deciding whether a variable, such as race and sex, would be used to distinguish the abilities of group members. Some respondents claimed a belief that intelligence and ability were, for them, unrelated to gender and racial classification. This claim may be a false proclamation made under pressures of the interview situation. If it is a true representation of the respondent's feelings, then there is a basis for questioning the applicability of expectation states theory to the process described in this research. Until the respondents' attitudes are tested in a controlled, experimental setting, however, there is no grounds for questioning the overall validity of expectation states theory.

Affirmative action impacted very few of the respondents in this sample, as they sought to establish performance expectations. This suggests an interesting conclusion to be drawn about perceptions of affirmative action. There may be some misunderstanding regarding the influence of the policy in some arenas, including graduate programs. The idea of "quotas" and the assumption that affirmative action recruits less qualified minorities may have prevented some of the respondents in the sample from realizing that affirmative action was in place in their department. Their insistence that strict standards applied to everyone entering the program led them to the belief that minorities were there solely on the basis of those standards. However, it is possible, assuming that affirmative action diversifies the search for qualified candidates, that the presence of minorities in this

program can be explained by their high level of capabilities and the influence of a diversity policy. This is especially likely given the academic environment, where there is usually visible evidence, such as recruitment posters, that affirmative action is at some level a part of the selection process. Affirmative action's role will continue to be diminished, though, unless there is an open acknowledgment of it as a consideration. If that takes place, the definition of the policy might change to better fit the reality that there are qualified minorities in place. This could result in a more accurate perception of affirmative action's influence in other settings. It could also mean a reevaluation of the potential and contributions made by larger number of minorities.

This research was an initial endeavor to provide an illustration of some of the principles outlined in expectation states theory. The goal was to identify possible factors that lead to certain characteristics being used in the establishment of performance expectations, and to do so outside of the laboratory setting. Still, the unique approach taken in this research presented problems that might be addressed in the future.

There might be benefit in incorporating some observational work into similar research, so that the expectations alluded to by the respondents could be verified through behavioral consequences. The instrument itself proves inadequate in dealing with the actual manifestations of differentiated expectations. Another weakness of the interview script has to do with its handling of the issues of race and sex. More work needs to be done so that general attitudes about these characteristics, separate from any mention of a diversity policy, surface.

If in-depth interviews is the method of choice for other research, then certain inadequacies of this researcher should be noted and avoided. The interview tapes reveal

several instances where the questions were too drawn out, or there were pauses between questions that probably made the environment uncomfortable for both parties. Also, there were a couple of times when the respondent was not given complete freedom in his/her response. An example had to do with a question asking if anyone in a department expressed any criticisms about the selection process for new students. In a couple of the interviews, the researcher added to the original question a reference to a diversity policy. This was an unintended attempt to lead the respondent, and it should not be repeated. However, it did not discredit the overall findings of this project.

The mechanics of the study were generally sound, although some changes will be necessary if it is to be replicated. To ensure adequate representation across racial categories, a stratified random sample will need to be done from a listing that divides individuals into these classifications. There should also be multiple respondents from the various academic departments, so that patterns within the department indicative of a social structure can emerge in the interview process. This could be achieved if the researcher had access to graduate student listings for each of the departments.

The practice of conducting some of the interviews in the researcher's office, and tape recording them, present some problems. It is logical to assume that some of the respondents felt uncomfortable in this environment. When possible, a more neutral setting should be chosen for the interview.

Ethical considerations should also occupy a central role in this type of research. There was a keen awareness about the volatile nature of this topic and the need to approach it carefully. The researcher believes that he met his ethical requirements. Respondents were not influenced to believe in their own inferiority or superiority because of the interviews

themselves. Also, at no time did the researcher judge the respondent because of his/her position on any of the issues. Finally, confidentiality was never compromised. This researcher takes his responsibility to keep his subjects' identities to himself very seriously.

The applications of this research are promising. Especially in a time when affirmative action is receiving extensive attention, most of it negative, findings which suggest that its public definition might serve to devalue its beneficiaries' true contributions and make them doubt their own self-worth are significant. Furthermore, one might conclude from this research that a possible remedy for this problem is an active effort to divert people's attention away from the negative connotations attached to the policy and reinforce the idea that, in most cases, minorities possess in as great a degree the relevant attributes as others in the population.

The effects of irrelevant status characteristics, such as "affirmative action assistance" can be lessened with the use of various intervention techniques (Berger et al. 1980, p. 500). The most powerful of these techniques involves introducing information that actors who rank low on a diffuse status characteristic actually possess highly valued levels of the specific characteristic relevant to the task. Some of the respondents alluded to this type of intervention in their program, where some entity was established to educate the graduate students on the need for affirmative action in order to include minorities who were equally qualified. The more it can be shown that those who benefit from affirmative action have qualifications that compare favorably to the qualifications of those not targeted by the policy, the more likely it is that this information will transfer to new actors and new task situations, resulting in a reduction in overall social inequality (Knottnerus 1986).

The future of affirmative action is unclear. By design, it is intended to make itself

obsolete, as it gives minorities access to positions of power in higher education and the job sector. However, significant breakthroughs for minorities are unlikely if the public definition of affirmative action as a quota system giving unfair advantages to them persists. In this environment, there will not be a genuine effort to increase the opportunities available to the minority population.

Graduate programs are a logical place for programs designed to preserve the search for diversity in society, since students pursuing advanced degrees will likely receive more influential positions after graduation. The findings of this research call for a multi-faceted program. First, there must be an admission by the program that affirmative action is a viable part of its selection process. Second, the department must actively disseminate a definition of the policy that emphasizes its intent to ensure equality of opportunity for minorities. Third, students should have access to information about the performances of their colleagues, both minority and non-minority, on various assignments. This information should lead all students to the conclusion that minorities are equally capable of meeting a high standard in their academic endeavors. Enacting a program similar to that outlined here could potentially benefit society. Non-minorities who have encountered such an intervention will be more likely to champion the need for diversity in their own professional endeavors. The program could also give minorities a more positive self concept and more confidence to pursue their own goals.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: LETTER SOLICITING ASSISTANCE FROM CONTACTS

Dear [Name]

Hello, how are you? I hope that everything is going well with you. As for myself, I am trying to complete my thesis this semester. I am contacting you to see if you would lend a hand. I need to conduct some informal interviews with O.S.U. graduate students about general attitudes on some social issues, but I want to make sure that the people I interview represent a certain amount of diversity. Therefore, I was wondering if you could provide me with the names of some of your colleagues who might be potential respondents for me. Try and include at least one individual who is not Caucasian and one who is female. I would appreciate as many names as possible, but 5 would be helpful.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Your assistance is greatly appreciated and will remain confidential. Upon receiving your list of names, I will make contact with these individuals by means of a letter. At no time will they be aware that you provided me with any information. The final choice to participate in the study will be the person's, so don't feel as though you are volunteering a colleague without his/her permission.

If any of these individuals can not be contacted by letter through your department's mailing address, please note this. Return your list in the envelope provided. If you choose not to assist me, that is perfectly fine. In any case, thanks for your time. Take care!

Sincerely,

Scott Simpson

APPENDIX B: CONTACT/CONSENT LETTER FOR PROSPECTIVE
RESPONDENTS
(Modified from IRB recommendations)

To: [Name]
[Campus Address]

Dear: [Name]

My name is Scott Simpson, and I am currently working on my master's thesis in sociology. I am seeking individuals who would be willing to serve as respondents for an informal interview about general perceptions of graduate programs. Therefore, this letter is being sent to you to ask for your participation in the research. Complete confidentiality is guaranteed, and your selection as a potential respondent is simply an attempt to include a diverse representation of the graduate student population at O.S.U.

The interviews usually last approximately one hour. In order to make sure that all relevant data is gathered, they will be tape recorded. However, your name will not be revealed on the tape itself but will be kept on a separate sheet of paper along with the corresponding number of the interview tape. After this project has been completed, the sheet of paper with names and tape numbers will be destroyed. For the duration of the study itself (approximately 3 months), all material will be kept in a locked file in my office, and only I will have access to them.

Please inform me of your decision by checking the appropriate line below and then signing your name. After you have done this, return this letter in the envelope provided. Your participation would help me immensely so I hope we can work together. Keep in mind that you will be free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty. Even if you choose not to participate, I appreciate your consideration in this matter. Feel free to contact me or Dr. David Knottnerus at 744-6105 should you have any questions or concerns.

- Yes, I agree to participate in this research
(For those who choose to participate, I will contact you in
a couple of days to set up an interview)
- No, I do not wish to participate in this research.

Signature

Sincerely,

Scott Simpson

APPENDIX C: TELEPHONE CALL SCRIPT

Hello, my name is Scott Simpson, and I am currently working on my master's thesis in sociology. I am seeking individuals who would be willing to serve as respondents for an informal interview about general perceptions of graduate programs. I obtained your name from the student directory, and I am calling to see if you would be willing to participate in the research.

The interviews usually last approximately one hour. In order to make sure that all relevant data is gathered, they will be tape recorded. Complete confidentiality is guaranteed. Your name will not be revealed on the tape itself but will be kept on a separate sheet of paper along with the corresponding number of the interview tape. After this project has been completed, the sheet of names and tape numbers will be destroyed. For the duration of the study itself, all material will be kept in a locked file in my office, and only I will have access to them.

You will be free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty. Would you be willing to participate in this research?

(If Yes): Would you be available to meet with me at (time and place)? Feel free to contact me or Dr. David Knottnerus at 744-6105 if you have any questions

(If No): Thank you for your time.

Good-bye.

APPENDIX D: CONSENT LETTER (AT TIME OF INTERVIEW)

I, _____, understand that by signing this letter, I am agreeing to participate in an interview to be conducted by Scott Simpson for his master's thesis. I have been made aware that the interview will last approximately one hour and will cover my general perceptions of my graduate department. I also understand that I am not to be reimbursed in any manner for my participation, that it is voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Finally, I am aware that the interview will be tape recorded, but that my identity will remain confidential. I agree to all of these conditions and am willing to participate in this research.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX E. INTERVIEW SCRIPT

- 1) What is your background in your department (length of time as a student, any past positions, present status, etc.)?
- 2) In your time in this department, what is your perception regarding its selection process for new graduate students? What characteristics of the applicant are most important in making the decision on whom to admit? (Probe).
- 3) In your time in this department, what is your perception regarding its selection process for teaching and research assistantships? What characteristics of the applicant are most important in making the decision on who should receive an assistantship? (Probe).
- 4) In your time in this department, what is your perception regarding its selection process for committee assignments for graduate students? What characteristics of the applicant are most important in making the decision on who should be appointed to a committee? (Probe).
- 5) In your time in this department, what is your perception regarding its selection process for recipients of departmental awards? What characteristics of the applicant are most important in making the decision on who should receive the awards? (Probe).
- 6) Are there other departmental policies that impact graduate students that you would like to comment on? If so, what characteristics of the applicant are most relevant in the enforcement of these policies? (Probe)
- 7) Overall, do you feel as if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the various policies in your department? (Probe)
- 8) What effect, in your opinion, does the department's policy on selecting graduate students have on the quality of people admitted and retained? (Probe)
- 9) What effect, in your opinion, does the department's policy on selecting teaching and research assistants have on the quality of people awarded these assistantships? (Probe)
- 10) What effect, in your opinion, does the department's policy on selecting committee members have on the quality of people appointed to the committees? (Probe)
- 11) What effect, in your opinion, does the department's policy on selecting award recipients have on the quality of people who receive these awards? (Probe)
- 12) In your time in this department, have you singled out specific individuals who you feel were given special consideration by the department? If so, what were circumstances? (Probe)

13) Have you been aware of other individuals in your department who felt as though a colleague was being given some sort of special consideration? If so, what were circumstances? (Probe)

14) If you or someone else has singled out individuals, what, in your opinion, was the basis for the special consideration that they received? Which appeared to be a more relevant factor, qualifications or departmental policy, or did the two coexist? Why do you say this? (Probe) **[If yes, proceed to #15]**

15) In your opinion, what, if any, factors prevent these individuals from acquiring the needed qualifications? (Probe)

16) During your time in this department, have you had occasion to work with individuals who you feel were given special consideration? (Examples are on class projects, committees, etc.) (Probe) **[If no, proceed to #19]**

17) How would you evaluate the contributions by these individuals to the tasks you mentioned? What factors do you consider in this evaluation? (Probe)

18) How would you evaluate the contribution made by you to the tasks you mentioned? What factors do you consider in this evaluation? (Probe)

19) Have you spoken with others who have worked on a task with individuals who they considered to be receiving special consideration (Examples of tasks are class projects, committees, etc.) (Probe). **[If yes, proceed to question 20].**

20) To the best of your knowledge, how did these individuals evaluate the contributions to the tasks made by those they felt had special consideration? What factors did they consider in the evaluation? (Probe)


21) To the best of your knowledge, how did these individuals who you feel singled someone else out evaluate their own performance? What factors did they consider in the evaluation? (Probe)

22) Do you have any criticisms of the department's policies? If yes, then what evidence, if any, could you present to support these criticisms? (Probe)

23) Are you aware of any criticisms levied by others in your department about its policies? If so, what are the criticisms and what evidence has been cited to support them? (Probe)

24) With regard to any criticisms that you have, do you see any justification for the department's policy? If so, what might they be? (Probe)

25) With regard to any criticisms that you believe others in your department have, do they, in your opinion, see any justification for the department's policy? If so, what might those justifications be? (Probe)

- 
- 26) In your opinion, have the department's policies benefited or harmed it? Explain. (Probe)
- 27) In the opinion of others in your department, have the department's policies benefited or harmed it? Explain (Probe)
- 28) In your own judgment, are your opinions unique to you or are they shared by others? Explain. (Probe)
- 29) Are you currently seeking employment or admittance into another graduate program? If so, what is your perception of the policies involved? Are they similar to this department's? Are the policies fair? (Probe)
- 30) Are others with whom you have spoken seeking employment or admittance into another graduate program? If so, what is their perception of the policies involved? Are they similar to your department's? Do others feel like the policies are fair? (Probe)
- 31) Are you personally aware of the policy of affirmative action? How would you define the policy, its intent and its goals? (Probe)
- 32) Have you heard others speak of the policy of affirmative action? If so, how have they spoken of it, its intent and its goals? (Probe)
- 33) If you are aware of affirmative action, what is your candid assessment of it? (Probe)
- 34) In your opinion, what is the assessment of affirmative action made by others in your department? (Probe)
- 35) Is affirmative action a policy practiced by your department, in your opinion? If so, is this knowledge part of your consideration in evaluating others who are admitted into the department, given assistantships, committee appointments, awards, etc.? Explain. (Probe)

APPENDIX F IRB APPROVAL FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

Date: 03-19-93

IRB#: AS-93-052

Proposal Title: STRENGTHENING EXPECTATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE BY
MEANS OF SOCIAL POLICY: THE CASE OF
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Principal Investigator(s): David Knottnerus, Scott Simpson,
Richard Dodder

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved with
Provisions

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW
BOARD AT NEXT MEETING.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A
CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR
BOARD APPROVAL. ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO
BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for
Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Modifications:

1. The consent letter should inform prospective participants that the interviews will be tape recorded, how the tapes will be stored and for how long, who will access to them, and when they will be destroyed.
2. The following statement must be added to the consent letter, "you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty.
3. Please add a contact name and phone number for questions.

4. Since there is some deception of the subjects recording the true purpose of the research, a debriefing statement must be prepared that will be read or handed to each participant at the end of the interview.

Signature:

Maria S. Tilley

Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: March 23, 1993



VITA

Scott Simpson

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: STRENGTHENING EXPECTATIONS FOR PERFORMANCE BY MEANS
OF SOCIAL POLICY: THE CASE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Major Field: Sociology

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Blytheville, Arkansas on June 6, 1968, the son of Ray and Ann Simpson.

Education: Graduated from Blytheville High School, Blytheville, Arkansas in May 1986; received Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology from Hendrix College, Conway, Arkansas in May 1990. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree with a major in sociology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in April, 1998.

Experience: Employed by Oklahoma State University, Department of Sociology as a graduate research assistant 1991 to 1992, 1993 to 1994. Employed by Oklahoma State University, Department of Sociology as a graduate teaching assistant 1992- 1993. Employed as a program coordinator, Gateway Foundation, Tulsa, Oklahoma; 1995 to present

Professional Memberships: National Association of QMRP's, Alpha Kappa Delta