

Affirmative Action: Not Just Selection



David A. Kravitz, Ph.D.

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Preview

- Will briefly review the history of affirmative action, with a focus on the rise and fall of preferential selection.
- Will emphasize the importance of affirmative actions unrelated to preferential selection.

Are we in a post-affirmative-action world?

■ No.

- Most opposition is directed at race- and sex-based AA, required by EO 11246, but even Presidents Reagan and Bush did not rescind it.
 - There is less opposition to AA for individuals with disabilities and for veterans, which is also required.
- ## ■ Voluntary affirmative action plans continue to exist.

Early Days of Affirmative Action

- Focus today on affirmative action required by Executive Order 11246, signed by President Johnson in 1965.
- Early affirmative action regulations had no teeth – and minimal effects.
- President Nixon (1970), added the requirement for goals and timetables, which increased pressure on organizations to show progress.

The Rise of Preferential Selection

- Some organizations have used preferential selection to meet their goals.
- This has resulted in conflict, opposition, and referenda designed to limit or eliminate affirmative action.



The Coming Decline of Preferential Selection

- Preferences will play an ever-smaller role in the future.
 - Sackett and colleagues (p. 303) referred to “a growing trend toward bans on **preference-based forms of affirmative action.**”
 - The OFCCP states: “The regulations ... specifically prohibit quota and preferential hiring and promotions under the guise of affirmative action numerical goals.”

Creative Selection Procedures

- More attention will be paid to crafting selection procedures that maximize performance while causing as little adverse impact as possible.
 - This was the focus of the article by Sackett and colleagues that stimulated the present forum.
 - This issue will be addressed by Rob Ployhart in the next presentation.



A Broader View is Needed

- The goals of affirmative action are to eliminate discrimination, ensure equal opportunity and, in the long run, help all groups attain full representation.
- Organizational entry is essential, but is only the first step.
- Many actions other than selection can and should contribute to attaining the goals of affirmative action.

Recruitment

- Treat human resources like other resources – make an extra effort to attain those in short supply.
- Target members of underrepresented groups, with a special focus on those with high qualifications.
- Washington DC police provide a good example in their recent recruitment of Hispanic officers.



Emphasize Actions Open to All

- Establish policies, procedures, and programs that are open to all organization members but that are especially helpful to members of underrepresented groups.

Forbid All Types of Harassment

- Will be especially valuable for women and minorities.
- Civility contributes to a pleasant work environment that is appreciated by everyone, with likely effects on morale, performance, turnover, etc.



On-site Day Care

- Will be especially valuable for women, who often have primary responsibility for child care.
- If low cost, will be especially valuable for employees with low incomes (often, minorities), who cannot afford other child-care services.

English Language Skills Training

- Will be especially valuable for ethnic minorities for whom English is a second language.
- May also be especially valuable for racial/ethnic minority employees who are disproportionately likely to have been consigned to inferior low-income school systems.



Formal Mentoring Programs

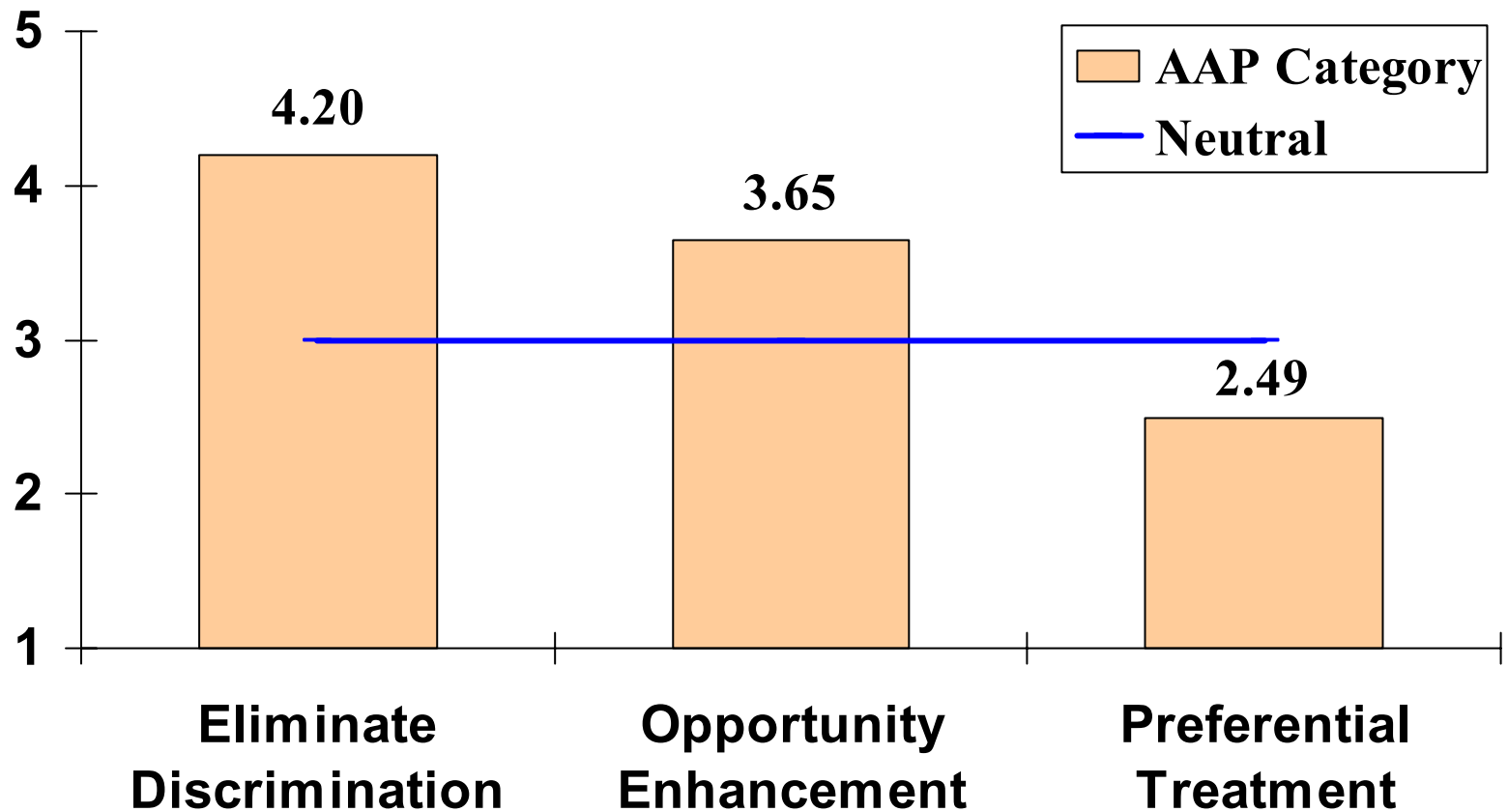
- With informal mentoring, mentors are most likely to select protégées like themselves (i.e., White males).
- Thus, a formal program that involves everyone will be especially valuable for female and racial/ethnic minority employees.



Research on Public Attitudes

- How does the public view such actions?
- There is almost no work on most of the specific approaches I mentioned.
- However, we do know that White opposition to affirmative action increases as the weight given to demographic status increases.

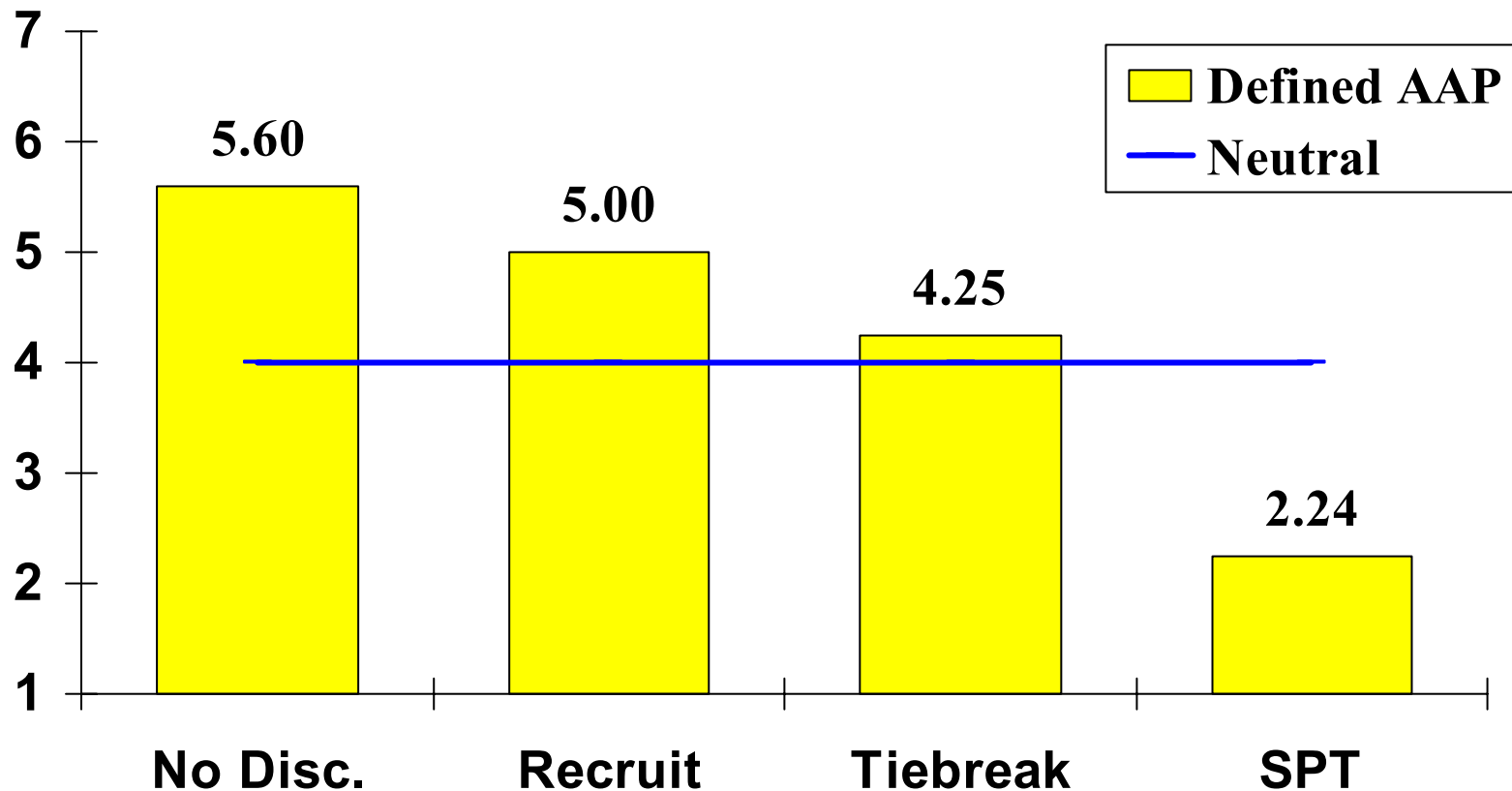
Miami Non-Blacks' Attitudes Toward Three AAP Categories



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Houston Whites' Attitudes Toward Four Defined AAPs

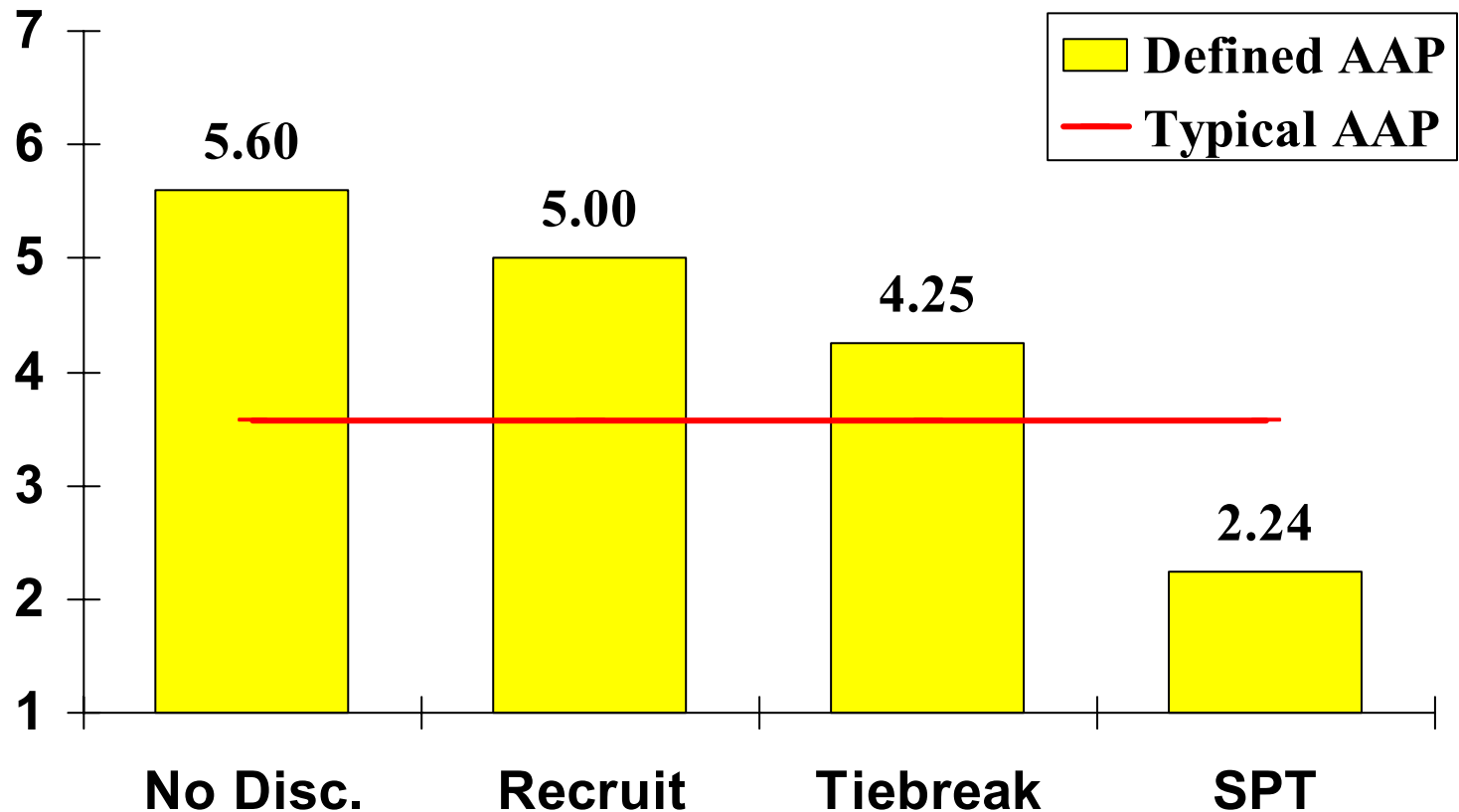




Importance of Beliefs About Affirmative Action

- We see that attitudes depend on details of the affirmative action plan.
- More generally, attitudes depend on beliefs about what affirmative action entails, regardless of the reality.
- Most people know little about the law of affirmative action or how it is implemented.

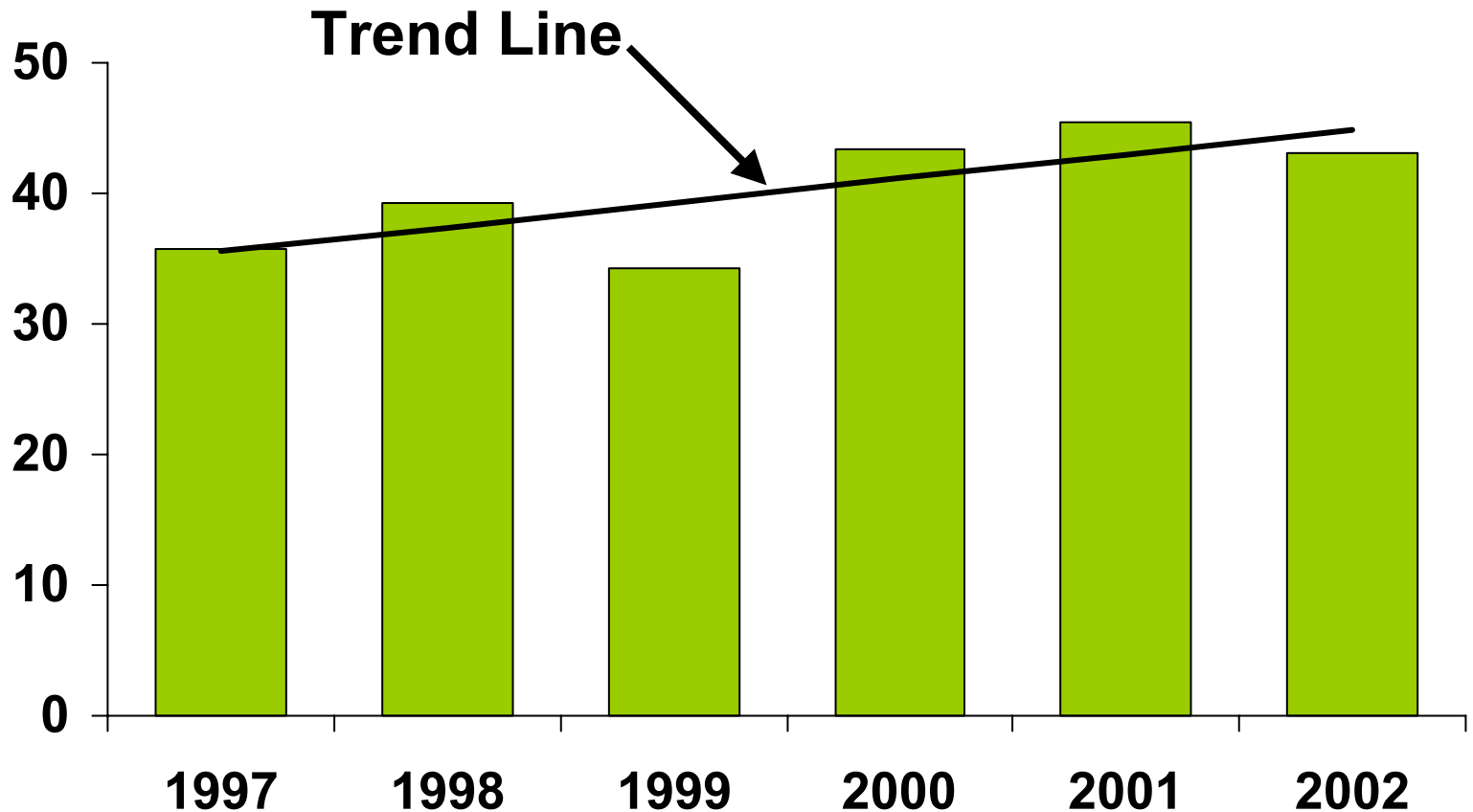
Houston Whites' Attitudes Toward "Typical" and Four Defined AAPs



Revise and Inform

- Obtain information about reactions to the affirmative action plan, revise it appropriately to decrease opposition, and communicate its details.
- An example is provided by Houston's Affirmative Action and Contract Compliance program.

Percent of Whites' Who Support Houston's Contractor Program



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Summary

- The goals of affirmative action are to eliminate discrimination, ensure equal opportunity and, in the long run, help all groups attain full representation.
- Attainment of this goal can be facilitated by many actions unrelated to selection.



A Final Word

- Do not get boxed into thinking about (and talking about) affirmative action as preferences. This needlessly stimulates opposition and limits the ability to find creative ways to provide equal employment opportunities to individuals of all types.