A Matter of Principle or Self-Interest? Examining Support for Affirmative Action

by

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Abstract

Recent polls have found that support for affirmative action in the United States is divided largely along political lines, with liberals generally supporting it, and conservatives generally opposing it. However, with conservatives being overwhelmingly White, and affirmative action policies generally designed to benefit racial and ethnic minorities, it is unknown how much of peoples' support is motivated by political principle, or group-level self-interest. I attempted to empirically test this question by subjecting participants to one of four affirmative action policies, differing only on the proposed beneficiary (*viz.* liberal, conservative, Black, White), and measuring the influence of both principle (via political affiliation) and self-interest (via group congruence). I hypothesized that people would reveal themselves to be motivated by self-interest, with potential moderators (*viz.* threat and strength of group identification). I found that both principle and self-interest predict support for affirmative action. Implications for affirmative action policies are discussed.

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Introduction

For decades, affirmative action policies have played a role in college and university admissions in the United States – and for just as long, they have been the subject of fierce controversy. In April 2014, the Supreme Court upheld a Michigan ban on race- and ethnicity-based affirmative action for admissions into its public universities (*Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action*, 2014). This was despite the fact that a Pew Research poll taken at the time found that roughly two-thirds of Americans support such programs (Pew Research Center, 2014). Perhaps unsurprisingly, closer inspection of the Pew data revealed that support for these programs is divided along political lines – far more liberals are in favour of them (78%) than conservatives (50%; Pew Research Center, 2014).

While this disparity may be due to core ideological differences between liberals and conservatives (Haidt, 2012), it remains possible that other factors may play a role in people's support of (or opposition to) affirmative action. Though people believe they understand the reasons for their decisions (Carruthers, 2011), evidence suggests otherwise. Not only do a number of cognitive biases affect decision-making (Baron, 2008), but these biases are often so opaque that when people are asked to justify their decisions, they will often generate false reasons, fully believing them to be true (Scaife, 2014).

Historically, the focus of affirmative action policies in colleges and universities has been confined to increasing enrolment of racial and ethnic minorities (Holzer & Neumark, 2006). Because access to these institutions is limited, increasing the enrolment of minority students means decreasing enrolment for White students – one group's gain is

another group's loss. If this competitive dynamic is salient to people, support for affirmative action policies might be equally (or better) predicted by whether they stand to gain (or lose) from them. When looking at the racial breakdown of responses to the affirmative action question (Pew Research Center, 2014), the numbers are strikingly similar to the political one – 84% of Black people support the policy, while only 56% of White people do. With an earlier Pew Research poll (Pew Research Center, 2005) finding that 91% of social conservatives are White, it is difficult to determine what is driving people's position on affirmative action – politically based principle, or racially based self-interest.

The purpose of my study is to tease principle (via political affiliation) and self-interest (via race) apart, by pitting these two motivators against each other. Participants are asked to indicate their support for one of four affirmative action policies, differing only in the beneficiary (*viz.* liberals, conservatives, White people, or Black people). Should liberals continue to support affirmative action (and conservatives continue to oppose it) regardless of the beneficiary, it would suggest that people are ignoring their self-interest, and basing their position on principle. If, however, attitudes towards affirmative action vary by condition in a manner that is consistent with their self-interest, it would suggest that the relation between political affiliation and attitudes towards affirmative action are more coincidental than causal.

Fairness is the cornerstone of the justice system. Norman Finkel (1995) emphasizes this when he draws a distinction between the “law of the books” (what the laws are) and “commonsense justice” (what the laws ought to be). To Finkel (1995), the further the laws of the books stray from our intuitive sense of fairness, the less willing people are to

enforce them, undermining their legitimacy and effectiveness. With the degree of subjectivity currently built into affirmative action policies (Doverspike, Taylor, & Arthur, 2006), ample room exists to allow self-serving biases to influence their implementation, compromising their fairness. To make progress on affirmative action – to create laws that are fair and enforceable – it is instructive to understand if and to what extent self-serving biases influence our stance on affirmative action, in order to minimize them.

Affirmative Action in the United States

Affirmative action is a policy in which one or more distinguishing characteristics of an individual (*viz.* race, ethnicity, sex, religion, *etc.*) are taken into account by a school, business, or government in order to increase the opportunities provided to an underrepresented part of society.

The first appearance of the term “affirmative action” in the United States occurred in an executive order by President John F. Kennedy, in which he mandated that projects financed with federal funds “take affirmative action” to ensure that hiring and employment practices are free of racial bias (Executive Order No. 10925, 1961). In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson gave a speech to the graduating class of Howard University, in which he acknowledged the idea that those who have been compromised by systematic, historical discrimination are not operating on an even playing field with their peers. He subsequently extended President Kennedy’s executive order, to prevent organizations that received federal contracts from discriminating based upon race, colour, national origin, religion, and sex (Executive Order No. 11246, 1965/1967).

Supreme Court rulings. In 1978, the University of California reserved 16 seats of its medical school admission allotment for minority applicants (*Regents of the*

University of California v. Bakke, 1978). Allan Bakke, a White applicant who had previously been rejected by the school, sued the university on the grounds that their strict quota was unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, which forbids exclusion from federally funded programs on the basis of race.

In the landmark case that followed (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 1978), the United States Supreme Court ruled that imposing strict quotas for racial minorities was unconstitutional. However, it was further ruled that supporting diversity in post-secondary institutions was a matter of compelling state interest, as it served the educationally beneficial purpose of promoting a plurality of viewpoints (thus protecting against bias). While the ruling considered diversity in its multitude of forms, in the post-secondary setting it has generally been applied uniquely in the service of racial and gender diversity (Holzer & Neumark, 2006).

The Bakke ruling, while influential, was not the final word on the matter. Subsequent cases followed, finding that in some instances, administering quotas based upon minority status was constitutional (*Fullilove v. Klutznick*, 1980; *United States v. Paradise*, 1987) – but later rulings specified that “strict scrutiny”¹ was required, to ensure that affirmative action was “narrowly tailored” to specific cases of discrimination (*City of Richmond v. Croson*, 1989; *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña*, 1995).

Meanwhile, in the employment sector, a 1986 ruling (*Wygant v. Jackson Board of Education*) found that while *hiring* based on affirmative action policies was acceptable,

¹ “strict scrutiny” is a form of judicial review that courts use to determine the constitutionality of certain laws. The law must further a “compelling governmental interest,” and must be narrowly tailored to achieve that interest.

firing was not. *Ricci v. DeStefano* (2009), however, ruled that when the New Haven fire department invalidated the results of advancement exams when too few minority employees qualified, they were violating Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prevents preferential hiring on the basis of race.

In the university setting, *Hopwood v. University of Texas Law School* (1996) directly contravened the *Bakke* ruling, deciding in favor of three White Texas law student applicants who were denied admission in favor of less-qualified applications belonging to racial minorities. This ruling was made on the grounds that "educational diversity is not recognized as a compelling state interest", and that "Texas public universities [should] employ race-neutral criteria." Four years later, the state of Florida banned the use of race as a factor in university admissions altogether. A 2001 case out of the University of Michigan (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2001) followed suit, ruling that "intellectual diversity bears no obvious or necessary relationship to racial diversity." A case that occurred just months prior, however (*Gratz v. Bollinger*, 2000), reached the opposite conclusion, stating not only that diversity *was* a compelling state interest but further, that giving preference on the basis of racial affiliation is comparable to giving preference to other groups, such as children of alumni, scholarship athletes, and other groups for reasons deemed beneficial to the university. Ultimately, the *Grutter v. Bollinger* ruling was overturned on appeal, concluding that the "individualized consideration" provided by the University of Michigan law school did not unduly compromise nonminority applicants (they did, however, rule that their undergraduate admissions, which used a point system, needed to be modified). In *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2013), the Supreme Court ruled that universities are allowed to apply affirmative action policies, but only if it can be

proven that “available, workable race-neutral alternatives do not suffice.” Finally, in the most recent ruling (*Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action*, 2014), the Supreme Court upheld a state constitutional amendment banning public universities and colleges in Michigan from implementing a race-sensitive admissions policy.

Arguments For and Against Affirmative Action

Consistent with arguments presented in rulings that have come out in favour of affirmative action, proponents have cited historical, systematic discrimination as a major argument in favor of affirmative action. Immediately, opponents objected to the preferential consideration given on the basis of race and gender, arguing that success should be based on merit, and that the solution to discrimination was not “reverse discrimination.”

Over time, the tone of criticisms of affirmative action has centred on whether or not affirmative action was still required (in other words, whether racial discrimination was still an issue in schools and in the workplace). In a 1995 speech, President Bill Clinton argued that affirmative action was still required, but later stipulated in a White House memorandum that care had to be taken to eliminate any program that either creates a quota, creates preferences for unqualified individuals, creates reverse discrimination, or continues even after its equal opportunity purposes have been achieved (Richter, 1995). Later that decade, when both California and Washington State enacted a blanket ban on all affirmative action policies (Proposition 209 and Initiative 200, respectively; NCSL, 2014), California Governor Pete Wilson (R) championed the ban, saying that state law should be “colorblind” (Leshner & Stall, 1995). Governor Wilson’s statement seemed to suggest that he believed that the systemic discrimination that was responsible for the need

of affirmative action had been satisfactorily resolved. Agreement with this sentiment was mixed; while a June 1997 Gallup Poll (The Gallup Organization) found that 79% of White people believed that African-Americans have an equal chance of getting a job as Whites, only 46% of Blacks concurred. Regardless, the trend to ban affirmative action continued with bans in Nebraska (2008), Arizona (2010), and Oklahoma (2012) (NCSL, 2014).

In response to questions about whether systematic discrimination is still a factor in today's workforce and education system, and whether it may be more beneficial to employ a "race-neutral" strategy to hiring and admissions, Ezorsky (1991) argues that past dominance of Whites in the workplace and universities are themselves a barrier to representativeness in both spheres. In the workplace, layoffs favor those with the most seniority, and since Whites make up the most senior staff, it is non-Whites who will be most affected by layoffs. In universities, where legacy admissions (priority to offspring of alumni) persist, a similar effect holds. Even when ignoring legacy admissions, findings from the United States Department of Education (2001) show that students whose parents did not attend some kind of post-secondary education, or are from lower socioeconomic status families, have less access to post-secondary education, and fare worse. As it is in the workforce, this situation favors Whites. A "colour blind" approach, according to Ezorsky (1991), would not only fail to ensure representativeness, it would actively uphold the systematic discrimination.

Other criticisms levelled against affirmative action argue that not only is it not successfully closing the racial gap in post-secondary education, it may actually be having a counterproductive effect. In a study of American law schools (Sander, 2004), the

existence of a “mismatching effect” was proposed, where otherwise underqualified minority students being admitted to upper-tiered schools were finding it too difficult, and subsequently not graduating. Further, Sander concluded that there were 7.9% *fewer* black attorneys than there would have been in the absence of affirmative action (assuming that those who were “mismatched” into higher-tiered schools would have instead been admitted to more appropriate lower-tiered schools and would have thus graduated). However, other studies (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Murrell & Jones, 1996) have shown that affirmative action has indeed yielded important gains in racial equality. Bowen and Bok (1998) find that a colour blind approaches result in fewer Black students, and that those attending colleges that take race into account are both more likely to graduate (contrary to the Sander finding) and also that they are more likely to attend and complete graduate study, earning more than those who attended elsewhere. Murrell and Jones (1996), for their part, provide evidence that affirmative action policies are successful, improving employment, education, and business opportunities for Black people (and other minorities).

Fairness, Political Ideology, and Moral Foundations Theory

Whichever side of the debate one finds one’s self on, the primary issue cited in the rhetoric surrounding affirmative action is fairness (a recent book on the subject is titled “The Pursuit of Fairness: A History of Affirmative Action”; Anderson, 2004). Supporters of affirmative action contend that affirmative action is necessary to achieve fairness by counteracting systemic societal inequities, while its critics claim that affirmative action (or any special consideration given based upon race) is replacing one

unfairness with another, undermining the meritocratic system of people succeeding based exclusively on their efforts (or “legalized racism”, as it is sometimes called).

Jonathan Haidt’s Moral Foundations Theory (MFT; 2012) frames the differing views on affirmative action as a philosophical split between social liberals and social conservatives. MFT contends that there are at least five² moral “foundations” (Haidt, 2007) that trigger our moral intuitions, and that liberals and conservatives differ on which ones they utilize when making moral judgments. According to Haidt, liberals only consider the constructs of care and fairness to be moral, while conservatives include and emphasize the constructs of loyalty, authority and sanctity within their moral sphere³.

In addition to disagreements about which constructs are moral, there are also differences in terms of how liberals and conservatives interpret individual constructs. In the case of fairness, Haidt (2012) claims that liberals and conservatives view fairness differently. He asserts that liberals construe fairness as equality, and conservatives emphasize fairness as proportionality. To Haidt, this distinction between conceptions of fairness is responsible for the differing rhetoric that appears on both sides of the affirmative action debate, with each equally concerned about fairness, but fairness of different kinds.

Cognitive Biases and Decision-Making

While people claim that fairness motivates their stance on affirmative action (Anderson, 2004), there are a number of other factors that may contribute. Various

² Haidt allows for additional possible categories, including liberty.

³ Recent research challenges these claims, suggesting that preference for particular foundations is overstated, and may depend more on context than political affiliation (Frimer, Biesanz, Walker, & MacKinlay, 2013; Merrells, 2014; Tell, 2014)

heuristics and cognitive biases have been suggested as influences over decision-making (Baron, 2008).

Ingroup bias. The separation of people into groups, even by the most superficial of criteria (Tajfel, Flament, Billig, & Bundy, 1971), can lead people to give preferential consideration to their ingroup, creating intergroup conflict. The Social Identity Approach (Turner & Oakes, 1986; Haslam, 2004) and Intergroup Threat Theory (Renfro & Stephan, 2002) describe the manner by which people identify with particular groups, and how conflict arises between them.

The social identity approach – Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization

Theory. Though conservatives are predominantly White (Pew Research Center, 2005), there are nonetheless non-White conservatives and conversely, White liberals.

Consequently, there will be instances where the interests of one group will be incongruent with the other. Self-categorization theory (Turner & Oakes, 1986; Haslam, 2004) examines the factors that influence people's self-identification to one ingroup over another, positing that self-categorization is fluid and context-specific, dependent upon which group is more salient. If it is to be concluded that intergroup competition is responsible for peoples' attitudes towards affirmative action, the extent to which one self-identifies as a member of one group relative to another other needs to be established, to determine if peoples' attitudes are consistent with their salient ingroup.

Social identity theory (SIT). The social identity approach was first developed in the 1970s to examine the psychological basis of discrimination (Haslam, 2004). In their minimal group paradigm, Tajfel, Flament, Billig, and Bundy (1971) establish the minimum conditions in which people will engage in intergroup discrimination.

Experiments reveal that arbitrary and meaningless distinctions (i.e., random assignment via coin flip) will lead to ingroup favouritism (Brewer, 1979), where individuals will give preferential treatment to some people over others, providing they are perceived to belong to their designated ingroup. Interestingly, ingroup favouritism does not necessarily motivate one to act in a way that maximizes one's benefit in an absolute manner, but specifically in relation to the outgroup (Tajfel et. al, 1971). In other words, what matters most is not the total gain relative to the ingroup's own initial situation, but rather the total difference between the ingroup and the outgroup's final outcome (even if it comes at an overall absolute loss for the ingroup).

SIT describes people's social behaviour in terms of orientation along a continuum between interpersonal and intergroup behaviour (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), with the former occurring on the level of the dynamics that exist between individual traits and identities, and the latter occurring on the level of the dynamics that exist between the traits and characteristics of the social groups or categories to which they belong.

While debate continues as to the specific cause (Turner, 1999), SIT rests on the assumption that once people identify with a given social group, they are motivated to establish and maintain a sense of *positive distinctiveness* for their group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In other words, they are motivated to see themselves and their ingroup in a positive light, particularly in comparison to other groups. As with all aspects of social identity, the degree to which people will engage in these kind of construals will depend on to what extent their given social identity is psychologically salient (Turner & Reynolds, 2010), an issue further explored by self-categorization theory (Turner & Oakes, 1986).

Self-categorization theory. Given how easily people situate themselves into social groups in experimental settings, it becomes a matter of interest as to what mechanisms unify individuals into a psychologically salient group. Self-categorization operates within the previously described interpersonal-intergroup continuum framework. It describes a process of *depersonalization*, which determines one's positioning along the continuum, at various levels of self-abstraction. In addition to one's individual identity, one can self-identify as a member of: a family, a community, a political group, an ethnic group, a nation, a human, an earthling, and anything in between. As we self-identify with a particular group, we engage in *self-stereotyping*, which is when we de-emphasize any traits that individualize us from that group, and take on the stereotypical traits of that group. For example, if we identify as social liberals, we assume the stereotypical traits of social liberals, such as thinking of ourselves as progressive, open to new experiences, and supportive of social assistance. If we move to a greater level of abstraction, however, and think of ourselves as Canadian, we gloss over the political differences within our country, and focus on stereotypical Canadian traits, such as being polite and loving Tim Hortons coffee and hockey.

With all of these possible groups with which we can (and do) identify, what makes it so that we identify with one over another in a given situation – what makes one group more salient than another? Self-identification theory frames this issue in terms of *fit*, based largely on the work of Jerome Bruner (1957), and *perceiver readiness* (Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994; Turner, Oakes, Haslam & McGarty, 1994). Fit is further split into two categories - *comparative fit* and *normative fit*. Comparative fit involves a context-dependent contrast between one's self and others, based on available comparison

cognitions. As an illustrative example, imagine two researchers sharing a lab; at one moment in the day, they discuss their taste in music, on which they differ. In this context, differences are emphasized, and as a result they are likely to self-identify at a more individual level, making them less likely to identify as members of a single ingroup. At another moment in the day, they are discussing research going on in their lab, and comparing it to research going on in a neighbouring lab. In this context, they are emphasizing similarities among them, and are more likely to self-identify as members of the same ingroup (namely, lab mates). Whether or not they will identify as ingroup members depends on the ratio of available cognitions that emphasize similarities over those that emphasize their differences.

While comparative fit focuses more on relative number of similarities and differences, normative fit is more concerned with the nature of the similarities and differences (Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991). It more typically involves a value judgment on the given characteristics being compared. If one's stance on abortion or marriage equality was of particular importance, then significant differences on these issues could be of more importance than opinions on the relative merits of musicians or bands.

Related to these considerations is what is called *perceiver readiness*, or *accessibility* (Oakes et al, 1994; Turner et al, 1994). This consists of a set of prior experiences and expectations that shape and colour an individual's perspective on the world, as well as the various groups with which they could potentially identify. For example, someone who already self-identifies as an environmentalist is going to bring with them their experiences and cognitions related to that self-identity when making a decision about with which political group they identify. One might predict that this person has greater

readiness to self-identify as politically liberal (or that liberalism is more accessible), due to the liberal pro-environment stance. This readiness would be independent of whether or not there were other individuals available with which to determine comparative or normative fit. This illustrates how prior group self-categorization can affect future self-categorizations.

Group commitment. In the establishment of one's identity, as important as the group with which one aligns one's self is the magnitude of one's commitment to the group (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002). According to Ellemers et al. (2002), group commitment contributes to how people will think, feel and behave in response to challenges faced by their social groups. Those with weak levels of commitment will simply distance themselves from the group and individuate their ingroup, while those with strong levels of commitment will perceive the ingroup as homogeneous, and invest considerable effort to gain or maintain acceptance (Jetten, Branscombe, Spears, & McKimmie, 2003), especially if they perceive their membership to be peripheral.

Intergroup Threat Theory. To argue that group membership is affecting attitudes towards affirmative action due to intergroup competition, one must establish that competition with an outgroup is salient; in other words, one must perceive that the outgroup is posing a legitimate threat. Such a link has already been explored, as Bobo (1983) found that White peoples' opposition to integration of school bussing in the 1970s was linked to the perceived threat that African Americans posed to Whites, rather than socialized prejudicial attitudes. Intergroup Threat Theory (ITT; Renfro & Stephan, 2002) considers circumstances that may lead to perceptions of threat from outgroups, and how they affect their attitudes and behaviour towards those groups.

Types of threat. Intergroup threat theory defines two kinds of perceived threat experienced by a member of an ingroup. The threat can be experienced at the level of the individual, or at the group level.

Realistic threat. At the individual level, realistic threat concerns physical or material harm, such as any incurred pain or death, as well as loss of money, status, or security (Stephan, Ybarra, & Rios Morrison, 2011). Group level realistic threat is essentially a direct generalization of individual level realistic threat, concerning the health, safety, power and wealth of the group at large (Stephan, Ybarra, & Rios Morrison, 2011).

Opposition of White people to affirmative action can be construed in terms of the realistic threat posed by Black people and other racial minorities, in terms of direct competition for wealth, status, and opportunity, both at the individual and group level (Riek et al., 2006).

Symbolic threat. At the individual level, symbolic threat concerns the undermining of self-esteem and self-identity, as well as situations causing a loss of honour or respect (Stephan, Ybarra, & Rios Morrison, 2011).

At the group level, symbolic threat involves the perception that an ingroup's values, morals and attitudes are at risk from an outgroup (Oskamp, 2000). Political platforms (and disagreements) typically occur at the symbolic level. According to Riek et al. (2006), symbolic threat accounts for modern racial bias towards Black people. Where once, racial bias was based upon the false notion that Black people were biologically inferior to White people, it is argued that it is now more rooted in perceived violations to White peoples' values. In the context of affirmative action, Riek and colleagues (2006) propose that while White peoples' opposition was once rooted exclusively in the realistic

threat of competition for resources, modern opposition to affirmative action is based more in how such policies are perceived to undermine the dominant (White) cultural value of fairness as reciprocity.

Intergroup anxiety and negative stereotyping. Once considered separate types of threat, intergroup anxiety and negative stereotyping remain important aspects of ITT (Stephan, Ybarra, & Rios Morrison, 2011).

Intergroup anxiety. Now considered a subtype of threat (Stephan, Ybarra, & Rios Morrison, 2011), intergroup anxiety is focussed on feelings of awkwardness, uneasiness or general anxiety in the presence of outgroup members (Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006). This anxiety stems from the perceived conflict of values and ideals, and the perceived negative reaction from the outgroup (realized or not) amplifies the sense of conflict between group, increasing prejudice and bias between groups.

Negative stereotyping. Rather than a threat unto itself, negative stereotyping is now considered a precursor to threat (Stephan, Ybarra, & Rios Morrison, 2011), and in fact is a significant predictor of realistic and symbolic threat (Stephan, Boniecki, Ybarra, Bettencourt, Ervin, Jackson, McNatt, & Renfro, 2002). It consists of any stereotypes groups have about other groups, based on attributes believed to belong to, or define outgroups (Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006), and are amplified by negative experiences between groups.

Threat and political affiliation. A recent study (Nail & McGregor, 2009) suggested that a threatening event (*viz.* the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center) could cause a shift towards conservatism, consistent with a motivated social

cognition model of conservatism (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003), where conservative attitudes are a means of coping with threat.

If affirmative action policies provoke a threat response, respondents may report themselves as more conservative.

Present Research

The justice system is founded on the principles of fairness and impartiality. If we are to maintain that standard, it is imperative that we ensure that the laws we enact follow suit, that they are rational rather than rationalized, and that they are free from bias and discrimination.

This study tested whether the American public's stance on affirmative action is based on moral principle or biased self-interest. Participants of differing political affiliation and racial identity were subjected to one of four proposed affirmed action policies, differing only in its intended beneficiary – one in favour of White students, one in favour of Black students, one in favour of liberal students, and one in favour of conservative students. If people's positions on affirmative action are based solely on principle, support for affirmative action across all conditions should be predicted by political affiliation only – race should not be a unique predictor of support when controlling for political affiliation. If, however, support for affirmative action is better predicted by whether or not the proposed beneficiary is consistent with the participant ingroup's self-interest (in favour when it benefits their ingroup, against it when it is not), then this would provide evidence for biased judgment.

Hypotheses

Two competing hypotheses were tested for their ability to predict support for affirmative action (*viz.* principle or self-interest).

Hypothesis 1. I predicted that principle (via political affiliation) would predict support for affirmative action policies, where liberals would show more support regardless of beneficiary.

Hypothesis 1a. Further, the association between principle and support for affirmative action would depend upon the degree to which people identify with their political affiliation.

Hypothesis 2. I predicted that self-interest (via group congruence) would predict support for affirmative action policies, where incongruence between self-identified group membership and beneficiary group membership will result in less support than congruence.

Hypothesis 2a. The association between self-interest and support for affirmative action would depend upon the level of perceived threat that people experience, where higher levels of perceived threat would result in lower support for affirmative action policies in group-incongruent conditions.

Hypothesis 2b. The threat-moderated association between self-interest and support for affirmative action would depend upon the level of group identification people experience, where higher group identification (racial or political, consistent with the vignette presented) would result in higher perceptions of threat, and thus lower support for affirmative action policies in group-incongruent conditions.

Methods

Data screening. From the original sample ($N=1210$), participants were screened out who: did not provide informed consent (51 cases), did not consent to allow us to retain the data (3 additional cases), or otherwise did not complete the survey (577 additional cases), failed one of the two manipulation checks (21 additional cases), or inconsistently reported their race between the pre- and post-test questionnaires (2 additional cases). As a result of the data screening process, $N=595$ cases remained.

Participants. Participants were Americans, recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk website. The sample ($N = 595$) was 51% male, and aged 18 to 76 ($M = 35$; $SD = 12$ years). There were 4 levels of participant type (*viz.* White conservatives ($N = 142$), White liberals ($N = 221$), Black conservatives ($N = 88$), and Black liberals ($N = 160$), with 4 levels of affirmative action policy (*viz.* White, Black, liberal, and conservative), for a total of 16 conditions (see Table 1.)

Table 1

Summary of Cell Sizes by Affirmative Action Beneficiary, Participant Race and Political Affiliation

Condition	White	White	Black Liberals	Black
	Liberals	Conservatives		Conservatives
White Beneficiary	57	34	41	22
Black Beneficiary	55	33	46	23
Conservative Beneficiary	55	44	36	21
Liberal Beneficiary	54	31	37	22

Materials and procedure. After a pretest screening survey, participants completed an experiment in which they were asked to read a vignette describing a proposed affirmative action policy, and reported their support (or lack thereof) of the policy with closed- and open-ended responses. Participants then completed several self-report measures.

Pretest screening survey. Participants answered two pretest screening questions (see Appendix A), one wherein participants reported their racial self-identity (*viz.* White, Black, or other), and one wherein participants categorically reported their political self-identity (*viz.* liberal, conservative, or other). Participants answering “other” for either of the questions were disqualified from the experimental survey. All respondents to the pretest screening survey received \$0.05 USD.

Experimental survey. Qualifying participants were randomly assigned to read and provide support ratings for one of four affirmative action policies, and completed several self-report measures, including participant demographics. Two attention checks were interspersed within the self-report measures. The first was an item inserted within the integrated threat theory measure, and asked each participant to respond “completely disagree” to the item, and the second attention check was a separate item within the demographics section, asking each participant to identify if the proposed beneficiary of the affirmative action policy was White, Black, liberal or conservative. Each participant completing this survey received \$0.45 USD.

Racial diversity condition. Participants first read a vignette describing the rationale behind affirmative action, as well as a fictional university’s affirmative action policy favoring the inclusion of either White or Black students. The vignette read as follows: “In 1978, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that there is a “compelling state interest” in

promoting diversity in universities, ruling that affirmative action policies were therefore constitutional. As a result, due to the underrepresentation of (Black/White) students at Crestview University, Crestview has implemented new policies designed to increase the enrolment of (Black/White) students.” They then rated their support of this policy on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly oppose) to 7 (strongly support). Participants then were given an opportunity to justify or elaborate upon their support rating in an open-ended response to the following prompt: “Please provide, in as much detail as possible, your reasoning for your support/opposition to this policy.”

Political diversity condition. The instructions were identical to those in the racial diversity condition, with the following exception: after reading the rationale behind affirmative action, participants instead read a vignette favoring the inclusion of either liberals, or conservatives, which were identical, except where I replaced “Black/White” with “liberal/conservative” in both instances where they appeared. Participants were then given an opportunity to justify or elaborate upon their support rating in an open-ended response to the following prompt: “Please provide, in as much detail as possible, your reasoning for your support/opposition to this policy.”

Self-report measures. All participants provided responses on the following self-report measures.

Integrated threat theory. Realistic threat and symbolic threat were measured with a scale adapted from Stephan, Boniecki, Ybarra, Bettencourt, Ervin, Jackson, McNatt and Renfro (2002; see Appendix B). Both are 12-item measures, using a 10-point Likert scale that ranges from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. For realistic threat, Cronbach’s alpha for my sample was .97. Two sample items include:

“Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives have too many positions of power and responsibility in this country” and “Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives have more economic power than they deserve in this country.” For symbolic threat, Cronbach’s alpha for my sample was .93. Sample items include

“Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives have different family values” and “The values of Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives regarding work are different from those of non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives.”

Group identification. Group identification was measured by a modified version of the Overlap of Self, Ingroup, and Outgroup Scale (Schubert & Otten, 2002; see Appendix C), a single item, 7-point Likert scale measure. Participants select from seven Venn-like diagrams, each with two circles of increasing closeness or overlap. Participants choose which diagram best represents their relationship to the indicated group. Each participant responded to two versions of this measure, one for their political affiliation, and one for their racial affiliation.

Group commitment. Group commitment was measured with a 4-item, 7-point Likert-type scale adapted version of the Identity Commitment subscale from the Identity Salience Scale (Kira, Alawneh, Aboumediane, Mohanesh, Ozkan & Alamia, 2011; see Appendix D), with additional probing questions adapted from the original measure. Items forming the identity commitment subscale include: “I feel personally threatened by hate crimes committed against members of my racial/political group”, and “I think a lot about the destiny of my racial/political group”. Cronbach’s alpha for the identity commitment subscale for my sample was .84.

Social dominance orientation. Social dominance orientation was measured with a 16-item, 7-point Likert scale from Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth & Malle (1994; see Appendix E). Participants were asked to what extent they felt positively or negatively towards items including: “It’s OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others,” and “We would have fewer problems if groups were treated more equally” (reverse scored). Cronbach’s alpha for my sample was .93.

Belief in a just world. Belief in a just world was measured on the Global Belief in a Just World Scale (Lipkus, 1991; see Appendix F), a 7-item, 6-point Likert-type scale measure. Items include: “I feel that people get what they are entitled to have,” and “I basically feel that the world is a fair place”. Cronbach’s alpha form my sample was .89.

System justification. System justification was measured on the System Justification Scale (Kay & Jost, 2003; see Appendix G), an 8-item, 9-point Likert scale measure, where participants reported their level of agreement with items including: “Everyone has a fair shot at wealth and happiness” and, “Our society is getting worse every year” (reverse scored). Cronbach’s alpha for my sample was .83.⁴

Demographics. All participants reported age, gender, race, political affiliation, level of education, religious affiliation, state of residence, and community environment (*viz.* suburban/urban/rural) (See Appendix H).

Results

⁴ Initially, the Social Dominance, Global Belief in a Just World and System Justification scales were included to test their potential role as mediators; however, as one of the primary predictors (self-interest) was an experimentally manipulated variable, it could not be expected to have any intrinsic relation to them, and thus would not be appropriate mediators. As a result, these variables were excluded from analyses.

Diagnostics. The sample dataset was tested for assumptions of regression, including normality, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity. No violations of assumptions were found. The sample dataset was also screened for potential outliers, and all data were retained.

Analyses. Hypotheses 1, 2, and 2a were tested using the full data set. However, since the group identification measure was specific to political and racial group identification, respectively, Hypothesis 1a was tested only with participants from the Political Diversity conditions, and Hypothesis 2b was tested only with participants from the Racial Diversity conditions. Results for Hypotheses 1, 2, and 2a appear first, followed in turn by the results for Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 2b. Tables 2-4 provide a summary of the mean levels of support, by individual condition (Table 2), by participant political affiliation (Table 3) and by participant race (Table 4).

Table 2

Summary of Affirmative Action Support by Condition

	White Liberals	White Conservatives	Black Liberals	Black Conservatives
Condition	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
White Beneficiary	4.80 (1.77)	3.50 (1.99)	3.95 (1.95)	4.36 (1.53)
Black Beneficiary	5.38 (1.47)	3.64 (1.87)	6.07 (1.51)	5.22 (1.68)
Conservative Beneficiary	3.53 (1.60)	3.71 (1.86)	4.31 (1.86)	4.76 (1.76)
Liberal Beneficiary	4.31 (1.88)	1.90 (1.22)	4.87 (2.07)	4.05 (1.70)

Table 3

Affirmative Action Support by Participant Political Affiliation

Participant Political Affiliation	<i>M (SD)</i>
Liberal	4.65 (1.90)
Conservative	3.89 (1.94)

Table 4

Affirmative Action Support by Participant Race

Participant Race	<i>M (SD)</i>
White	3.85 (1.94)
Black	4.70 (1.91)

Main effects. A multiple linear regression analysis was used to predict participants' support of affirmative action. Model 1 included participant race (*viz.* White or Black, dummy-coded; 0 = White, 1 = Black), participant political affiliation (*viz.* liberal or conservative, dummy-coded; 0 = liberal, 1 = conservative), group congruence (*viz.* congruent or incongruent, dummy coded; 0 = congruent, 1 = incongruent), and group congruence type (*viz.* political or racial, dummy coded; 0 = political, 1 = racial). The results of this main effects analysis indicated that the set of predictors explained 15.1% of the variance ($R^2 = .151$, $F(4,590) = 26.14$, $p < .001$). The analysis shows that the main

effects of participant race, political affiliation, perceived threat and group congruence type and group congruence all significantly predicted participant support for affirmative action (see Model 1, Table 5). As expected, support for affirmative action was significantly greater from Black Americans than White Americans, and – consistent with Hypothesis 1 – was significantly greater from liberals than conservatives. Support for affirmative action was greater for racial reasons than for political reasons. Finally, consistent with Hypothesis 2, participants were more supportive of affirmative action was greater when the proposed policy benefitted members of their own group. In Model 2, perceived group threat (10-point Likert scale; mean-centered) was added. Model 2 indicated that this expanded set of predictors explained 23.9% of the variance ($R^2 = .238$, $F(5,589) = 36.91$, $p < .001$). Consistent with expectations, people showed less support for affirmative action when experiencing greater threat (see Model 2, Table 5). With threat added to the model, group congruence was no longer significant.

Interaction effects. I next explored interactions pursuant to Hypothesis 2a. The results are summarized in Model 3 of Table 5. While in Model 2 there was a significant main effect of threat, there was neither a two-way interaction of congruence and threat (Cong. x threat; Hypothesis 2a), nor was there an interaction effect of political affiliation and threat (Pol. Aff. x threat).

Table 5

Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses for Predicting Support of Affirmative Action, Complete Data Set

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
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Model 1

Race	.70	.15	.18***
Political Affiliation	-.85	.16	-.21***
Group Congruence Type	.76	.15	.19***
Group Congruence	-.31	.15	-.08*

Model 2

Race	.85	.14	.21***
Political Affiliation	-.80	.15	-.20***
Group Congruence Type	.51	.14	.13***
Group Congruence	.04	.15	.01
Perceived Threat	-.30	.03	-.36***

Model 3

Race	.87	.16	.22***
Political Affiliation	-.82	.17	-.20***
Group Congruence Type	.51	.14	.13***
Group Congruence	.02	.17	.01

Perceived Threat	-.29	.06	-.34***
Cong. x threat	-.02	.08	-.02
Pol. Aff. x threat	-.01	.07	-.004

Note. Perceived Threat and Political Identification were centred at the means.

* $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$

Hypothesis 1a was tested by selecting only the cases where participants viewed affirmative action policies that addressed political diversity.

Main effects. As before, a multiple linear regression was conducted to predict participants' support of affirmative action. Model 1 (see Table XX) included participant race, participant political affiliation and group congruence. As these analyses were restricted to political diversity conditions, congruency type was dropped. Consistent with the full data analyses, race, political affiliation, and group congruence were all significant. In Model 2, threat was again significant, but political identification was not. Once again, with threat in the model, group congruence was no longer significant.

Interaction effects. Though in the full data analyses there was no interaction effect of group congruence and threat, here this interaction is significant (see Model 3, Table 6). Contrary to expectations, simple slopes analyses (see Figure 1) revealed that under higher threat, participants were less supportive of affirmative action policies that benefited members of their own political affiliation. No other interaction terms were significant.

Table 6

Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses for Predicting Support of Affirmative Action, Political Diversity Conditions Only

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Model 1			
Race	1.00	.20	.25***
Political Affiliation	-.72	.22	-.18**
Group Congruence	-.94	.21	-.24***
Model 2			
Race	1.06	.21	.27***
Political Affiliation	-.67	.21	-.17**
Group Congruence	.02	.32	.004
Perceived Threat	-.28	.07	-.32***
Political Identification	.01	.06	.01
Model 3			
Race	1.06	.21	.27***
Political Affiliation	-.74	.22	-.19***
Group Congruence	.17	.34	.05
Perceived Threat	-.40	.11	-.46***

Political Identification	.06	.10	.05
Cong. x threat	.34	.15	.22*
Pol. Aff. x threat	-.11	.10	-.08
Pol. Aff. x ident.	.04	.13	.02
Cong. x ident.	-.18	.13	-.11

Note. Perceived Threat and Political Identification were centred at the means. “ident” refers to political identity in the Pol. Aff. x ident. and Cog. x ident. interaction terms.

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Figure 1. Simple Slopes Analyses of Group Congruence by Threat Interaction, Political Diversity Conditions Only

Hypothesis 2b was tested by selecting only the cases where participants viewed affirmative action policies that addressed racial diversity.

Main effects. Once again, a multiple linear regression was conducted to predict participants' support of affirmative action. Model 1 (see Table 7) included participant race, participant political affiliation, and group congruence. As these analyses were restricted to racial diversity conditions, congruency type was again dropped. Race, political affiliation, and group congruence were once again all significant. In Model 2, threat was again significant, but racial identification was not. As before, group congruence was no longer significant with threat included in the model.

Interaction effects. Here again, the interaction term of group congruence and threat is significant (see Model 3, Table 7). However, contrary to analyses of the political diversity conditions, the simple slopes analyses (see Figure 2) found that, consistent with expectations, participants experiencing higher threat showed more support for affirmative action policies that benefitted members of their own race. No other interaction terms were significant, including the congruence by threat by racial identity three-way interaction testing Hypothesis 2b.

Table 7

Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses for Predicting Support of Affirmative Action, Racial Diversity Conditions Only

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Model 1			
Race	.41	.21	.11
Political Affiliation	-1.01	.22	-.26***

Group Congruence	-.49	.21	-.13*
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Model 2

Race	.57	.20	.17**
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Political Affiliation	-.97	.21	-.24***
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Group Congruence	-.25	.20	-.07
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Perceived Threat	-.31	.04	-.37***
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Racial Identification	.08	.05	.08
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Model 3

Race	.92	.24	.24***
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Political Affiliation	-.90	.24	-.23***
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Group Congruence	-.59	.27	-.15*
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Perceived Threat	-.12	.08	-.14
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Racial Identification	.18	.08	.17*
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Cong. x threat	-.30	.11	-.29*
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Pol. Aff. x threat	.07	.10	.05
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Cong. x ident.	-.15	.12	-.10
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Cong. x ident. x threat	-.04	.03	-.08
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Note. Perceived Threat and Racial Identification were centered at the means. “ident”

refers to racial identity in the Cong. Aff. x ident. and the Con. x ident. x threat interaction terms.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Figure 2. Simple Slopes Analyses of Group Congruence by Threat Interaction, Racial Diversity Conditions Only

Discussion

Fairness is the cornerstone of affirmative action. Its purpose is to serve as a corrective to perceived systemic injustice against a given population. As such, it is imperative to its proponents that it is carried out in the spirit of fairness in which it was intended. Given that strict quotas for racial minorities in university admissions are forbidden in the United States due to their having been ruled unconstitutional (*Regents of*

the University of California v. Bakke, 1978), it is imperative that the discretionary power employed when applying affirmative action policies is administered without bias.

The potential link between political affiliation and affirmative action in America is already established (Pew Research Center, 2014). While liberals perceive social inequities between populations as being the result of systemic bias and are therefore largely supportive of affirmative action initiatives, conservatives interpret any such inequities as being the necessary (if unfortunate) result of a meritocratic system. The conclusion that affirmative action is merely a matter of political principle is limited by the confound that many affirmative action policies are for the benefit of racial minorities, and the overwhelming majority of conservatives – those who typically oppose affirmative action – are White. Thus, it remains an open question as to whether support of (or opposition to) affirmative action is motivated purely by principle, or if self-interest also plays a role. This study provides evidence that when taking race and political affiliation together, political affiliation, but not group congruence, successfully predicts support for affirmative action.

In the present study, American participants who identified as either Black, White, liberal or conservative were asked to provide ratings of support to one of four affirmative action policies, which were either about race (*viz.* White or Black) or political affiliation (*viz.* liberal or conservative). My study found support for Hypothesis 1, that principle (via political affiliation) predicted support for affirmative action policies; liberals were indeed more supportive of affirmative action than conservatives, regardless of beneficiary. However, contrary to Hypothesis 1a, there was no evidence that the association between principle and support for affirmative action depended upon the degree to which people

identified with their political affiliation. The lack of an effect of group identification may be due to the increasing political polarization in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2014), which may have motivated participants to provide their ratings of support consistent with their political affiliation regardless of the strength of their identification (and despite the fact that group identification was evenly distributed among participants).

The data also demonstrate support for Hypothesis 2. My study provides evidence that self-interest (via group congruence) does predict support for affirmative action policies. However, whether (and how) this effect depends on the level of perceived threat (Hypothesis 2a) remains unclear. In the full data model, there was no moderating effect. However, when examining the political and racial diversity conditions separately, a curious pattern emerged. While the interaction between group congruence and threat were significant within both conditions, the effects were somewhat contradictory. In the racial diversity conditions, participants who reported higher levels of perceived threat were more supportive of affirmative action policies that benefitted members of their own (racial) group, consistent with Hypothesis 2a. In the political diversity conditions, however, participants reporting higher threat were *less* supportive of policies benefitting members of their own (political) group. While the reason for this unexpected finding is unknown, it could be that participants find that political diversity is an inappropriate target for affirmative action interventions. Consequently, those who experience higher threat may be reacting in a manner consistent with Terror Management Theory (TMT; Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986; Greenberg, Pyszczynski, Solomon, Rosenblatt, Veeder, Kirkland, & Lyon, 1990). TMT is the idea that humans, aware of their own inevitable death, attempt to “manage” the “terror” associated with this

awareness with various cultural systems that are meant to provide a person with a sense of immortality – either literally, via some form of afterlife (Jonas & Fischer, 2006), or symbolically, via an allegiance to some greater sense of values or purpose (Greenberg et. al, 1990; Greenberg, Solomon, & Arndt, 2008). Empirical evidence in support of TMT is extensive (for a review, see e.g., Hayes, Schimer, Ardnt, & Faucher, 2010), demonstrating both that challenging one's cultural worldviews has the effect of increasing one's mortality salience (e.g., Schimel, Hayes, Williams, & Jahrig, 2007), and that mortality salience evokes in people a preference for (and defence of) their cultural worldviews (Greenberg et. al, 2008). Thus, it is speculated that in the political diversity conditions, participants who are experiencing higher levels of threat are also experiencing greater challenges to their cultural worldview. As a result, participants are responding by more strongly adhering to the principles of their political affiliation (regardless of group congruence) and producing the observed interaction. This possibility would need to be borne out in future studies.

With respect to Hypothesis 2b, analysis of the racial diversity conditions found no evidence supporting a three-way interaction between congruence, threat, and strength of racial identity. It may be that the effect of race was sufficiently prominent that any potential effect of group identification was negligible.

Principle or Self-Interest?

The primary strength of my thesis was to directly test the effects of political principle and self-interest, both individually and together, to measure their unique effects when accounting for the other. This study provides empirical evidence that not only is political principle driving peoples' support of affirmative action, but that self-interested

bias is also a factor. Another strength of this project was that by including affirmative action policies that addressed political diversity, I was able to directly challenge generally pro-affirmative action liberal, and anti-affirmative action conservative attitudes. That political affiliation and group congruence were generally predictive of support in both racial and political diversity conditions suggests a robustness of the effects. While only a preliminary study, the evidence of my thesis suggests that both principle *and* self-interest drive Americans' support of affirmative action.

Limitations

While race and political affiliation were specifically chosen for investigation for the benefit of placing them in opposition, it came at the expense of excluding (for the sake of focus) another important issue relevant to discussions of affirmative action – gender. Examinations of the effects of affirmative action policies suggest that women (particularly white women) have been the greatest beneficiaries of affirmative action in the United States (Kohn, 2013). While the effect of political affiliation did hold in the political diversity conditions, the effect was stronger in the racial diversity condition. It may be informative, then, to examine affirmative action in the context of gender, an issue more salient and relevant to Americans, and perhaps more ecologically valid than the issue of political diversity. Further, examining support for affirmative action in the context of gender diversity may shed some additional light on the interaction between congruence and threat, which in the racial diversity conditions were consistent with expectations, but contrary to expectations in the political diversity conditions.

Another potential limitation to my study is that both of my primary hypothesized predictors – principle and self-interest – were measured using proxy variables (*viz.*

political affiliation and group congruence, respectively). In the case of principle, while attitudes toward affirmative action have been shown to be a highly politicized issue (Pew Research Center, 2014), they are not perfectly matched, and people do occasionally deviate from their political parties' official positions on matters, even though this is becoming increasingly rare (Pew Research Center, 2014). With regards to self-interest, while group congruence appears to be a more direct proxy, there remains the issue of each participant having two identities – a racial and a political one. While the strength of identification on the level of both groups were taken, my analyses were not sufficiently sensitive to the measuring and analyzing the relative strength of each identity within a participant, and how that might affect their decisions – as a Black liberal, for example, it remains uncertain as to whether their identity as a Black person or a liberal is more important to them. The lack of an effect of group identification suggests that this might not be an issue, but it is a question that remains available for further inquiry.

The validity of using Amazon's Mechanical Turk as a participant recruitment tool has drawn considerable attention (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012; Chandler, Mueller, & Paolacci 2014; Levay, Freese, & Druckman, 2016), with concerns about how its subject pool differs from the general American population on a number of demographic variables, including age, race, political affiliation, and religious affiliation (Berinsky et. al, 2012; Krupnikov & Levine, 2014). However, these same studies find that when controlling for these variables, the MTurk sample pool is more representative of the American public than typical convenience samples (*viz.* college undergraduates) used for psychological research (Berinsky et. al, 2012; Clifford, Jewell, & Waggoner, 2014; Levay, et. al, 2016). By directly recruiting participants based on the two potentially

problematic demographic variables relevant to my research (*viz.* race and political affiliation), I have, to the best of my ability, mitigated concerns relating to the representativeness of my sample. With 21 participants eliminated from my sample due to failure of either of the two attention checks, there may also be concern regarding participant inattention. However, between the attention checks I included, as well as the system that Amazon has in place to penalize inattentive workers, I am confident that the risk of inattention in my online sample is no greater than that found in typical, in-lab surveys.

Finally, it is worth noting that the present research is a single study, of a largely exploratory nature. My findings, while generally well-powered, would benefit from attempts at replication and refinement, so as to draw increasingly stronger conclusions on the matters at hand.

Conclusion

As evidenced by the emergence of the “alt-right” during the election of Donald Trump (Harkinson, 2017), racism, misogyny, and xenophobia are alive and well in the United States. This study’s finding of evidence of racial bias reinforces the need for diligence in mitigating its effects in hiring practices and university admissions. Affirmative action policies, prohibited from using strict quotas, are only as effective as the people who wield the discretionary power in applying them.

While the Supreme Court ultimately found in favour of the University of Texas in the case with Abigail Fisher, the cultural climate in the United States is such that the battle over affirmative action is likely far from over. Should the trend of normalization of the alt-right continue, and issues of race become increasingly salient, my research

suggests that the challenges facing diversity initiatives will only become greater, as they will have to combat both political opposition, and self-serving biases.

Appendices

Appendix A

Prescreening Questionnaire

Please indicate your race:

☐ White

☐ Black

☐ Other

Please indicate your political affiliation:

☐ Liberal

☐ Conservative

☐ Other

Use one of the following numbers to indicate your political views in the accompanying categories, where 1 is “extremely liberal” and 11 is “extremely conservative”.

Foreign Policy Issues:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Economic Issues:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Social Issues:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Appendix B

Realistic/Symbolic Threat Scales

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives hold too many positions of power and responsibility in this country.
2. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives dominate American politics more than they should.
3. When Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives are in positions of authority, they discriminate against non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives when making hiring decisions.
4. Too much money is spent on educational programs that benefit Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives.
5. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives have more economic power than they deserve in this country.
6. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives receive too much of the money spent on healthcare and childcare.
7. Too much money per student is spent on education for Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives.
8. The tax system favors Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives.
9. Many companies hire less qualified Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives over more qualified non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives.
10. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives have more political power than they deserve in this country.

11. Public service agencies favor Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives over non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives.
12. The legal system is more lenient on Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives than on non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives.
13. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives have very different values.
14. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives have no right to think they have better values than non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives.
15. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives want their rights to be put ahead of the rights of non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives.
16. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives don't understand the way non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives view the world.
17. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives do not value the rights granted by the Constitution (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) as much as non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives do.
18. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives have different family values.
19. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives don't value the traditions of their group as much as non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives do.
20. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives regard themselves as morally superior to non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives.
21. The values of Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives regarding work are different from those of non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives.
22. Most Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives will never understand what non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives are like.

23. Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives should not try to impose their values on non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives.

24. Non-Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives do not get as much respect from Whites/Blacks/Liberals/Conservatives as they deserve.

1-12 = Realistic Threat Subscale

13-24 = Symbolic Threat Subscale

Appendix C

Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (Modified)

From the following seven images, please choose the one that best describes the closeness of you and your political affiliation (race) (where you are the small circle, and your race is the large circle):

Appendix D

Group Commitment

Identity Commitment Sub-Scale

Mark each statement according to how much you agree or disagree, according to the following scale.

1. I feel personally threatened by hate crimes committed against members of my racial/political group.
2. When my racial/political group is threatened, its importance comes before me or my family.
3. The idea of not being able to help my racial/political group bothers me a lot.
4. I think a lot about the destiny of my racial/political group.

Additional Probing Questions

5. My most important group is my religion.
6. My most important group is my nationality.
7. My most important group is my race.
8. My most important group is my gender.
9. My most important group is my political affiliation.

Appendix E

Social Dominance Orientation

Which of the following objects or statements do you have a positive or negative feeling towards? Beside each object or statement, place a number from "1" to "7" which represents the degree of your positive or negative feeling.

7 = extremely positive 6 = somewhat positive 5 = slightly positive 4 = neutral

3 = slightly negative 2 = somewhat negative 1 = extremely negative

1. We should strive to make incomes as equal as possible.*
2. Group equality should be our ideal.*
3. It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.
4. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.
5. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups.*
6. It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and others are at the bottom.
7. Inferior groups should stay in their place.
8. We would have fewer problems if groups were treated more equally.*
9. It would be good if groups could be equal.*
10. In getting what you want, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups.
11. All groups should be given an equal chance in life.*
12. If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.
13. We should strive for increased social equality.*
14. Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place.

15. Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.

16. No one group should dominate in society.*

*reverse-scored

Appendix F

Global Belief in a Just World Scale

Please indicate your level of agreement on the following scale with respect to how well each statement applies to others and yourself.

1 = strong disagreement 6 = strong agreement

1. I feel that people get what they are entitled to have.
2. I feel that a person's efforts are noticed and rewarded.
3. I feel that people earn the rewards and punishments they get.
4. I feel that people who meet with misfortune have brought it on themselves.
5. I feel that people get what they deserve.
6. I feel that rewards and punishments are fairly given.
7. I basically feel that the world is a fair place.

Appendix G

System Justification Scale

1. In general, you find society to be fair.
2. In general, the American political system operates as it should.
3. American society needs to be radically restructured. (reverse-scored)
4. The United States is the best country in the world to live in.
5. Most policies serve the greater good.
6. Everyone has a fair shot at wealth and happiness.
7. Our society is getting worse every year. (reverse-scored)
8. Society is set up so that people usually get what they deserve.

Note. Participants initially indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement with each item on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 9 (strongly disagree), but the scores were recoded prior to analyses so that higher scores would indicate increased levels of system justification.

Appendix H

Demographics

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Trans ☐ Other (please specify):

3. What is your racial/ethnic background?

☐ Black/African American ☐ White/Caucasian ☐ Other (please specify):

4. Use one of the following numbers to indicate your political views in the accompanying categories, where 1 is “extremely liberal” and 11 is “extremely conservative”.

Foreign Policy Issues:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Economic Issues:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Social Issues:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

5. What is the highest level of education that you have obtained?

☐ Doctoral or professional degree ☐ Master’s degree ☐ Bachelor’s degree

☐ Associate’s degree ☐ Postsecondary non-degree award ☐ Some college, no degree

☐ High school diploma or equivalent ☐ Less than high school

6. What (if applicable) is your religious affiliation?

7. In which state do you reside?

8. In what community environment do you reside?

☐ Rural ☐ Urban ☐ Suburban

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