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Affirmative Reaction: The Influence of Type of Justification on Nonbeneficiary Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action Plans in Higher Education

by

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ABSTRACT

Affirmative Reaction: The Influence of Type of Justification on Nonbeneficiary Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action Plans in Higher Education

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It is popularly believed that justifying an affirmative action plan (AAP) through emphasizing the advantages that diverse students can bring to a college campus will increase nonbeneficiary support for the program. However, there has been little empirical support for this proposition, perhaps because previous research has not directly articulated to participants the value of a diverse student body. As such, a 4 (Type of justification: Compensation, Instrumental, Combination, or No Justification) x 3 (Type of AAP: Increased recruitment, Proportional Selection Quotas, or Weak Preferential Treatment) between-subjects design was used to determine how the explicit framing of an AAP influences subsequent reactions. Both quantitative and qualitative data from 216 White undergraduate participants revealed that the combination justification, which highlighted the benefits of the AAP to minority and majority students, was the most effective means of increasing support for the plan, regardless both of the type of AAP and numerous participant characteristics.
Acknowledgments

As is fitting to the topic of this thesis, completion of this project would not have been possible without the ideas and dedication of a diversity of people. Primarily, I would like to thank my committee members, Bob Dipboye and Mickey Quinones. They were instrumental in the design and revision processes of this study, and their insights and suggestions have clearly strengthened the conceptual and theoretical foundations of this project. A special thanks is due to my committee chair and mentor, Mikki Hebl. It is rare to find a field that one feels truly passionate towards, and it is rarer still to find a person who is willing to take the time and energy to foster that passion. As such, I have been quite fortunate to work with Mikki for the past two years, and I look forward to continue learning from her during the rest of my time in graduate school and beyond.

Thanks also should go to David Kravitz for so kindly sharing his materials and insights with me, to David Schneider for his enlightening discussions on modern racism, to Traci Giuliani for starting me down this path four years ago, and to my fellow graduate students for so many laughs while at work and at play. Furthermore, this study could not have been completed so promptly without the dedication of my fearless research assistants. Kristin Stecher and Laura VanWagoner have been remarkable in their commitment to the quality of this project, and I am overwhelmingly appreciative to them for that. Lastly, I would like to thank my family, as they have always encouraged me to dream big and have unselfishly given me the tools and the support to do so.
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Affirmative Reaction: The Influence of Type of Justification on Nonbeneficiary Attitudes

Toward Affirmative Action Plans in Higher Education

“Long before Einstein told us that matter is energy, Machiavelli and Hobbes and other modern political philosophers defined man as a lump of matter whose most politically relevant attribute is a form of energy called ‘self-interestedness.’ This was not a portrait of man ‘warts and all.’ It was all wart” (Will, 1983, p.30).

For centuries, scholars such as Niccolo Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Bernard Mandeville, Thomas Aquinas, and Ayn Rand have argued that humans are, at base, egoists who are motivated to maximize their own advantages while remaining indifferent to the needs of others. Although these views historically received much support, philosopher Adam Smith instead posited that self-interest is not necessarily “all wart” and often can benefit the common good (Smith, 1776). Smith’s idea is the basis of modern market economics, and his notion of conditional egoism implied that that egoism and altruism are not necessarily two ends of a continuum, but can exist simultaneously. As he noted in his seminal book The Wealth of Nations (1776), “We address ourselves, not to [others’] humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages” (vol. 1, bk. 1, chap. 2).

Now, more than two hundred and twenty-five years later, Smith’s ideas continue to influence modern debates over public policy. For instance, one of the most contentious topics of the past several decades has been over the perceived benefits and impairments
of affirmative action on different demographic groups. Generally speaking, nonbeneficiaries of affirmative action are unsupportive of affirmative action plans (AAPs) because they feel it is against their self-interest to do so (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993). However, a more recent line of empirical research has shown that a diverse student body can directly benefit all students through increasing their creativity, flexibility, interpersonal skills, leadership abilities, pro-social behavior, and ability and desire to interact with diverse others (e.g., Bowen & Bok, 1998; Gurin, 1999; Hebert, 2001; Milem, 2002; Perloff & Bryant, 2000). In effect, a diverse student body can be a crucial tool in helping students prepare for an increasingly global and heterogeneous society (Johnston & Packer, 1987).

Synthesizing this new research with Smith’s historical idea of conditional egoism results in the following question: If nonbeneficiaries of affirmative action can be made to see how having a diverse student body is in their own self-interest, will they be more supportive of different affirmative action plans? It is a proposition that has generally been supported by the popular press (e.g., Arredondo, 1996), but the idea has yet to be thoroughly and empirically tested. Although some research has attempted to answer to question, it has either confounded the type of AAP with the justification (Murrell, Dietz-Uhler, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Drout, 1994) or has assumed that people already recognize the value of diversity—an invalid assumption according to many researchers (e.g., Griggs & Louw, 1995). As such, the purpose of the present study is to determine if and to what
extent informing nonbeneficiaries of the benefits they could receive from an AAP
positively influences their attitudes toward the plan.

Overview of Affirmative Action in Higher Education

Although presidents dating back to Franklin D. Roosevelt have been involved
with legislation intended to end discrimination, the term “affirmative action” was not
fully introduced into the American vernacular until Lyndon B. Johnson signed Executive
Order 11246 in 1965 (Taylor, 1989). This order was mandated in the same spirit as the
Civil Rights Act of 1964, but it was intended to take nondiscrimination legislation a step
further by requiring results-oriented action to ensure equal opportunity for all (Kravitz et
al., 1997). As such, EO 11246 required all federal contractors to “take affirmative action”
to treat all applicants without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

The concept of affirmative action was later extended to educational settings in
1978 with the seminal Board of Regents at the University of California at Davis v. Bakke
Supreme Court decision (Ball, 2000). In this precedent-setting and controversial case, it
was determined that rigid racial quotas were unconstitutional under the Equal Protection
Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. However, the Court did maintain that race could
be used as “a” but not “the” factor in university admission policies. This decision stood
for almost two decades until the University of Texas at Austin Law School v. Hopwood
ruling in 1996. In this case, the Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that the Bakke
decision was invalid, that race could not be used as a factor in admissions decisions, and
that educational diversity was not a compelling reason to employ race-based policies (Lowe, 1999).

However, the Bakke verdict was upheld in the 2000 Gratz v. Bollinger federal case in which the presiding judge ruled that race could be used as a factor in university admissions procedures. He argued that, as universities often allow for certain preferences (e.g., athletic ability, legacy status) in selection decisions because these traits are seen as benefiting the university, race should also be given certain consideration because a racially diverse student body is a “compelling interest” in higher education (Brunner, 2002). This decision was reached, in part, because of the persuasive research presented by expert witness and University of Michigan psychologist Patricia Gurin who summarized previous empirical evidence concerning the short- and long-term value of racial diversity within a student body (Gurin, 1999).

Negative Reactions Toward AAPs

Since its inception over twenty years ago, affirmative action in higher education has been a highly volatile public issue, as norbeneficiaries often claim that affirmative action leads to the admission of unqualified applicants, and thus, violates principles of fairness. Opponents often posit that affirmative action is unfair because it violates norms of both distributive and procedural justice (Clayton & Tangri, 1989). Distributive justice refers to perceptions of the fairness of outcome decisions (Deutsch, 1985; Hegtvedt &
Cook, 2001), whereas procedural justice refers to perceptions of the fairness of the procedures used to determine outcomes (Thibaut & Walker, 1975).

With regard to affirmative action, some people argue that AAPs violate procedural justice’s equality principle because different groups are not treated consistently: that is, group membership is a positive attribute for some groups but a negative one for others. Opponents also argue that AAPs violate distributive justice’s equity principle in that beneficiaries receive outcomes that they do not deserve: that is, their inputs do not equal their outputs (Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley, & Zanna, 1998). People are particularly inclined to believe that unequal allocations given to an out-group member are more unfair than similar allocations given to a similar in-group member (Dickmann, Samuels, & Bazerman, 1997). However, if nonbeneficiaries believe that disenfranchised group members are treated differently in the selection process because they can bring certain unique inputs to an educational environment simply by being a member of that group, then procedural and distributive fairness requirements will have been met (Belliveau, 1996).

Although resistance to affirmative action is usually on the part of nonbeneficiaries, even some beneficiaries have decried the use of affirmative action (Carter, 1991). Although many beneficiaries of the policy believe that it has resulted in positive gains for disenfranchised groups, others have also argued that it has stigmatized them (Barnes-Nacoste, 1990). Heilman and her colleagues (Heilman, Block, & Lucas,
1992; Heilman, Simon, & Pepper, 1987) have found that many nonbeneficiaries question the competence of students accepted by affirmative action, and many beneficiaries actually question their own aptitude when they are preferentially selected. Other research has found that affirmative action subtly undermines the self-confidence of beneficiaries (Brown, Charnsangavej, Keough, Newman, & Rentfrow, 2000; Nacoste, 1989; Turner, Pratkanis, & Hardaway, 1991). When the merits and the qualifications of the beneficiary are highlighted, however, this stigmatization is tempered and self-efficacy is enhanced (Heilman, Battle, Keller, & Lee, 1998).

Changing Affirmative Action Attitudes

Because affirmative action is often perceived as a necessary means to achieve true equality and equal opportunity (Nacoste, 1987a), a central question is how to make nonbeneficiaries' generally negative attitudes towards affirmative action and its beneficiaries (Kravitz & Klineberg, 2001) more positive. For instance, improving people's sense of procedural fairness and explicitly informing them of a preferentially selected applicant's qualifications are two viable solutions, as noted previously.

Providing Information About the AAP

Another possibility is to make employees aware of the details surrounding the organization's AAP (Kravitz & Platania, 1993; Kravitz & Klineberg, 2001). If information about the details of an AAP is not provided, then people often assume that the beneficiary received strong preferential treatment in the selection process and
subsequently is unqualified (Heilman & Blader, 2001). Despite the widespread
misperceptions about what AAPs entail, it seems that these erroneous convictions and
negative affirmative action schemas are more powerful than the actual reality of
affirmative action (Barnes-Nacoste, 1994). Because the public holds many inaccurate
beliefs about affirmative action, it is believed that educating people about the actual
details of AAPs will ameliorate negative attitudes towards them (Doverspike, Taylor, &
Arthur, 2000; Eberhardt & Fiske, 1994).

For example, although hard “quotas” are illegal (except in cases of extremely
egregious past discrimination; Guttman, 1993), many people inaccurately believe that
quotas to select a prespecified number of (typically unqualified) women and minorities
are the main component of a “typical” AAP (Kravitz & Klineberg, 2000). In actuality,
there are many types of AAP that are more frequently used. All programs vary along a
continuum with one end placing emphasis exclusively on universalistic characteristics
(i.e., "achieved" traits such as merit) in selection decisions and the other end taking only
particularistic traits (i.e., "ascribed" traits such as race, gender, or physical disability) into
account in the decision process (Nacoste, 1987b).

The most commonly used types of AAPs are compensatory procedures (e.g.,
increased recruiting, training, mentoring, and career guidance for targeted groups). In this
program, provisions are made to help protected groups, but no weight is ultimately given
to particularistic traits in selection decisions (Kravitz et al., 1997). Another type of AAP
involves proportional selection quotas, with target groups being selected in direct proportion to that particular group's number of qualified applicants in the pool. It is important to note that although this plan involves quotas per se, it involves selecting qualified applicants and not unqualified ones, in contrast to the popular notion of "affirmative action quotas" generally assumed by the public (Kravitz, 1995). Proportional selection quotas equally involve both particularistic and universalistic traits in the decision making process. A final type of AAP is known as weak preferential treatment. In this "tiebreak" system, protected groups are given preferential treatment only when they are as qualified as a majority group member. More so than in any of the other AAPs, particularistic characteristics are given a significant amount of weight in weak preferential treatment programs.¹

Previous research has shown that people's acceptance of an affirmative action plan is a direct function of the amount of emphasis placed on particularistic factors such as race and gender (Nacoste, 1985, 1987b). Specifically, the more weight given to these characteristics in admission decisions, the more people have negative reactions to the AAP (Kravitz, 1995). There are a number of possible explanations for this pattern, most notably that people believe affirmative action violates norms of procedural and distributive fairness, and that it works against their self-interest, as discussed above (Kravitz et al., 1997). Therefore, based on previous research, I predict that there will be a main effect of type of AAP such that participants will have positive reactions to increased
recruiting of minority applicants, neutral reactions to proportional selections quotas, and very negative reactions to weak preferential treatment (Hypothesis I).

The Influence of Justifications

Another way to increase acceptance of affirmative action plans is through the use of framing and justification (Gamson & Lasch, 1983; Gamson & Modigliani; Goldstein & Weber, 1997; Parker, Baltes, & Christiansen, 1997; Shafir, Simonson, & Tversky, 1997). Generally defined, a frame is "a psychological device that offers a perspective and manipulates salience in order to influence subsequent judgment" (Cialdini & Rhoads, 1997). If individuals were truly rational thinkers, then framing wouldn’t have the power it does have to change their preferences between and among options; however, because people are influenced by changes in perspective, their perception of the desirability of options changes depending on the frame (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981, 1986).

Within the realm of racial attitudes, the framing of a question used to assess opinions about affirmative action can dramatically influence people’s answers, even though people typically have very strong opinions about racial issues (Fletcher & Chalmers, 1991). For instance, Whites support the idea of affirmative action when it is framed as providing equal opportunity and as helping minorities get ahead (Kluegel & Smith, 1983), yet they are opposed to affirmative action when framed as having negative consequences for Whites and men (Bell et al., 2000). Other research has found that Whites oppose affirmative action more when it is framed as “discriminating against
Whites” than when it is framed as “giving Blacks advantages they haven’t earned,” as the first frame highlights their potential losses (Fine, 1992). Other research has shown that pro- and anti-affirmative action frames can also influence acceptance and resistance to AAPs (Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin. 2000; Taylor-Carter, Doverspike, & Alexander, 1995).

After universities have developed and implemented AAPs, an important final step is often communicating, framing, and justifying the purpose and details of the plan to the campus community (Kravitz et al., 1997; Marino, 1980). Consequently, many studies have shown that giving a rationale for an AAP can help increase acceptance of the program (Doverspike et al., 2000; Heilman, McCullough, Gilbert, 1996; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Murrell, et al., 1994; Tyler & Bies, 1990). When framing the AAP, a compensation justification is typically used when a rationale is provided for the plan. This frame emphasizes the proverbial glass ceiling that minorities face in admissions procedures, the need to redress past discrimination, and the benefits that protected groups will receive from the AAP (e.g., increased satisfaction, networks, and career opportunities). Although giving a compensation frame is typically more effective than no justification in improving White’s attitudes toward affirmative action, it only outlines how the program will positively affect the beneficiaries. However, in order for an AAP to be successful, universities clearly must have the support of nonbeneficiaries who might initially have negative attitudes toward the policy (Bobocel & Farrell, 1996). To this extent, a
compensation justification may not be effective enough to change White students' preexisting attitudes. As Dooverspike et al. (2000, p. 182) explains:

"Emphasizing the benefits of the policy rather than focusing on its potentially negative impact on majority group members may aid acceptance of affirmative action. It is probably the case that seeking acceptance for affirmative action through an appeal based on minority group needs alone will not successfully eradicate resistance especially when...justice rules have been violated."

A more recent type of AAP framing that focuses on majority group interests is an instrumental justification (Kravitz et al., 1997). This frame justifies affirmative action by emphasizing the advantage that "affirmative diversity" (Jones, 1994) can have on the entire student body. As described earlier, a recent line of empirical research has explored the varied benefits that diverse students can bring to a college campus. For instance, universities with a heterogeneous composition have students who are more creative, have better interpersonal skills and leadership abilities, perform more volunteer work, and are better prepared and more motivated to interact with diverse others in the future (e.g., e.g., Bowen & Bok, 1998; Gurin, 1999; Hebert, 2001; Milem, 2002; Perloff & Bryant, 2000). Because people are more accepting of affirmative action if they believe it is associated with enhanced performance (Kravitz et al., 2000), an instrumental justification might be effective in gaining support for affirmative action.
Highlighting the value of a diverse student body might be particularly effective in changing nonbeneficiaries’ attitudes because it shows Whites how a racially diverse campus is in their own self-interest. Consequently, even students who might initially be opposed to affirmative action might support it if they believe they will benefit from its implementation (Arredondo, 1996; Doverspike et al., 2000; Spears, 1996; Tyler & Dawes, 1993). Because making a message self-relevant is one powerful way to stimulate attitude change (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), an instrumental justification may be the most influential method of encouraging nonbeneficiary support for an organization’s AAP.

An instrumental justification might also increase nonbeneficiary support if it changes their perception of equity norms. Conventional wisdom tells us that diverse students “bring with them…not merely different amounts of the same things, but also different kinds of things that make them valuable” (Clayton & Tangri, 1989, p. 180). By showing Whites that interactions with minorities can enrich their educational experience (Combs, 1986), these nonbeneficiaries should react more favorably to AAPs. Therefore, if Whites reconceptualize race as a valid “input,” then their procedural justice requirements for fairness in selections procedures should be satisfied. Consequently, if nonbeneficiaries believe that procedural fairness judgments are met, then they should be more willing to accept affirmative action (Belliveau, 1996; Dovidio, Mann, & Gaertner, 1989; Lind & Tyler, 1988).
Although many researchers have speculated that framing affirmative action as enhancing diversity will increase nonbeneficiary support for its policies (e.g., Arredondo, 1996; Doverspike et al., 2000; Thomas, 1990), few researchers have directly tested this theory. Those studies that have examined the effects of compensation and instrumental justifications have generally found that there is no difference between the justifications on subsequent measures of acceptance of or resistance to AAPs (Bobocel & Farrell, 1996; Matheson, Echenberg, Taylor, Rivers, & Chow, 1994; Murrell et al., 1994). However, none of these studies explicitly described how a diverse student body is beneficial and how it can be in the self-interest of nonbeneficiaries. That is, they assumed that participants already understood the value of diversity, which is an assumption that is most likely false (Griggs & Louw, 1995). However, by thoroughly explaining the benefits of affirmative action to nonbeneficiaries, this should make the message more concrete, personal, and meaningful (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; Pratkanis & Aaronson, 2000). As such, it is also predicted that an instrumental justification or a justification that combines instrumental and compensation elements will result in more favorable attitudes towards AAPs than a compensation justification or no justification (Hypothesis 2).

The Current Study

The present study should fill a void in the current literature by experimentally determining the effect of different justifications and different types of AAP on
nonbeneficiary reactions to affirmative action. Specifically, it will examine Whites' reactions to AAPs designed to benefit minority applicants.

Based on previous research (e.g., Kravitz, 1995; Murrell et al., 1994), I propose that there will be an interaction between the type of AAP and the type of justification (Hypothesis 3) on reactions to the plan. Although all participants are expected to have favorable reactions to the increased recruitment AAP, attitudes should be particularly favorable towards increased recruitment when a justification is also given. It is further expected that when the type of AAP is based on proportional selection quotas, the instrumental justification will still positively influence attitudes toward the AAP, but that the compensation justification will not be strong enough to override nonbeneficiaries' negative reactions to the AAP. Therefore, AAPs framed by a compensation justification or no justification should be perceived slightly negatively. Finally, in the weak preferential treatment AAP, the instrumental and combination conditions should have a positive effect on support for the plan (although not as strong as in the previous two conditions); unlike the first two conditions, however, it is predicted that there will actually be a "backlash" effect when a compensation justification is used, as previous research finds that negative reactions to affirmative action are strongest when "its benefits to groups associated with negative feelings and beliefs (e.g., Blacks) are emphasized and the procedures...can be perceived of as unfair (e.g., preferential treatment)" (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1996, p. 63).
**Respondent Characteristics**

Based on previous research, I also anticipate that certain characteristics of the respondents will affect their reactions to affirmative action. Specifically, I predict that women will have more favorable attitudes toward AAPs than will men (Hypothesis 4) based on a sense of cooperative self-interest (i.e., the idea that they may indirectly benefit from programs intended to help other disenfranchised groups; Kluegel & Smith, 1983). This pattern may also occur because women may also favor equality and procedural justice in selection decisions, whereas men prefer equity and distributive justice (Doverspike et al., 2000). These differential approaches to fairness in the selection process would consequently result in women being more concerned with macrojustice (i.e., equality for groups) and men being focused on microjustice (i.e., the rights of individuals; Clayton & Tangri, 1989).

Furthermore, a three-way interaction between type of AAP, type of justification, and participant gender is expected (Hypothesis 5). Specifically, based on macrojustice and communal gender stereotypes of women as concerned with others (Eagly & Steffen, 1984), female participants should react positively to all three types of AAPs, especially when exposed to a compensation or combination frame; conversely, based on microjustice and agentic stereotypes of men as concerned with self-promotion (Eagly & Steffen, 1984), male participants should react negatively toward proportional selection
quotas and the weak preferential treatment but this effect should be attenuated by an instrumental or combination frame.

Additionally, participant age and year in school should influence reactions to affirmative action. Previous research has found that among young adults, those who are older and more educated are more accepting of AAPs than those who are younger and less educated (Jacobson, 1984). It is possible that the former group is more aware of and educated about societal discrimination against minority applicants and subsequently has more favorable attitudes towards AAPs. It also might be that the same group has had more positive experiences with diverse peers and so perceives a need for affirmative action. As such, I anticipate an effect of participant year in school such that participants who have been in school longer will have more favorable attitudes towards the AAP than participants who have not been in school as long (Hypothesis 6).

Finally, past research also has shown that participants who possess high levels of modern racism are more resistant to affirmative action than those who have lower levels (Bobocel et al., 1998). Although affirmative action is meant to provide protection for a number of disenfranchised groups (e.g., women, minorities, veterans, older workers, and the handicapped), AAPs targeted at benefiting minorities are perceived more negatively than affirmative action which targets these other groups (Clayton, 1992; Eberhardt & Fiske, 1994; Murrell et al., 1994). Consequently, some have argued that this pattern indicates that attitudes toward AAPs and other racially based policies are related to
modern racism (McConahay, 1986), aversive racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1996; Dovidio, Mann, & Gaertner, 1989), and symbolic racism (Kinder & Sears, 1981; Sears & Funk, 1990; Sears, Hensler, Speer, 1979; Sears, Lau, Tyler, & Allen, 1980).

Although the conceptualizations of these types of racism vary slightly, all three generally posit that racism today is less overt than in the past, it is manifested only when it can be justified (e.g., opposition to affirmative action being justified as breaking equity norms), and it is most clearly discerned in symbolic racial issues such as affirmative action and school busing. As such, it is predicted that nonbeneficiaries who score higher on measures of modern racism will be more opposed to AAPs than those who are low in modern racism (Hypothesis 7).4

It is also expected that perceived fairness of the AAP will mediate reactions to the plan (Hypothesis 8). A robust finding in the affirmative action literature is that people’s support for or resistance to affirmative action is strongly related to the perceived fairness of the plan (Doverspike et al., 2000; Taylor-Carter et al., 1995), and several studies have found that the perceived fairness of an AAP completely mediates attitudes towards the plan (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Murrell, 1994; Kravitz, 1995). In line with this research, it is expected that the perceived fairness of the program will mediate nonbeneficiaries’ attitudes toward AAPs.
Method

Participants

A total of 216 White undergraduate students (110 men, 106 women) at a small, private southern university volunteered to participate in this study, in exchange for partial course credit. Participants were a mean age of 19.5 years (S.D. = 1.23) and ranged from 17- to 24-years-old.

Design and Procedure

A 4 (Justification: Compensation, Instrumental, Combined, or No Explanation) x 3 (Type of AAP: Weak Preferential Treatment, Proportional Selection, Increased Recruiting) x 2 (Participant Gender: Male or Female) between-subjects design was used to explore the effect of justification and type of AAP on nonbeneficiaries’ reactions to affirmative action. After agreeing to complete the questionnaire, which was introduced as an investigation of selection procedures in higher education, participants were told to "imagine that the following university-wide memorandum has been distributed to all Rice students." Participants then read a memorandum purportedly distributed at their university by the school’s affirmative action committee and made judgments in response to the memo. Upon completing the questionnaire, participants received a debriefing sheet reminding them that the memo was hypothetical. Then, the experimenter thanked them for their participation and dismissed them.
Materials

Each participant read one of 12 different hypothetical memoranda describing their university’s new AAP and the justification for the program. The descriptions of the three AAPs (shown in Appendix A) were consistent with definitions used in previous studies (e.g., Kravitz, 1995). Additionally, the no explanation justification condition began with the sentence, “Although there has been a lengthy debate over the merits of affirmative action, our university has decided to develop and implement an affirmative action plan (AAP) because we feel it will ultimately be beneficial.” The compensation justification condition used the same sentence but ended with “for minorities,” the instrumental condition ended with “for you,” and the combined condition ended with “for you and for minorities.”

To minimize error variance, a pilot test was conducted to match the compensation, instrumental, and combined justifications on five critical dimensions (congruent with the procedure used by Taylor-Carter et al., 1995). Specifically, 15 participants read ten compensation and ten instrumental justifications and then rated each sentence on six 7-point Likert-type scales: complexity (easy to understand—hard to understand), familiarity (familiar—unfamiliar), subjectivity (factual—subjective), persuasiveness (convincing—unconvincing), polarity (positive—negative), and beneficiary (benefits only minorities—benefits me). After analyzing the pilot data, six compensation justifications and six instrumental justifications were matched on these
dimensions (except for the beneficiary dimension) and compiled to form their respective conditions (see Table 1 for the pilot test data and Appendix B for the 12 justifications). The combination condition was formed by matching three of the instrumental justifications with three of the compensation justifications and then compiling the chosen six justifications. All of the justifications were obtained from empirical and popular articles and books that document the benefits of affirmative action to beneficiaries and nonbeneficiaries (e.g., Bowen & Bok, 1998; Gurin, 1999; Hebert, 2001; Milem, 2002; Perloff & Bryant, 2000).

Questionnaire

Each memo was followed by 22 questions designed to assess participants' reactions to the AAP. These 22 items were all found to be important in previous research that studied attitudes toward affirmative action (e.g., Bell, 1996; Belliveau, 1996; Kravitz, 1995; Kravitz et al., 2000; Taylor-Carter et al., 1995). Because it might be argued that frame research merely reflects participants' reactions to demand cues and not true attitude change, measures of intention to support or resist the AAP were included as well (as intention is often a highly significant predictor of behavior; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein, & Ajzen, 1975).

Specifically, participants were asked to rate on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much): the fairness of the AAP (Eigenvalue = 9.66; Variance accounted...
### Table 1

**Summary of Pilot Test Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Compensate</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>M = 5.19; S.D. = .95</td>
<td>M = 5.61; S.D. = .89</td>
<td>M = 5.61; S.D. = .87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarity</td>
<td>M = 4.46; S.D. = .97</td>
<td>M = 4.88; S.D. = .92</td>
<td>M = 4.53; S.D. = .92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasiveness</td>
<td>M = 3.94; S.D. = .80</td>
<td>M = 4.57; S.D. = 1.20</td>
<td>M = 4.62; S.D. = .75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polarity</td>
<td>M = 4.80; S.D. = .74</td>
<td>M = 5.37; S.D. = .91</td>
<td>M = 5.24; S.D. = .70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjectivity</td>
<td>M = 3.49; S.D. = .80</td>
<td>M = 3.54; S.D. = 1.13</td>
<td>M = 3.70; S.D. = .92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiary</td>
<td>M = 3.73; S.D. = 1.23</td>
<td>M = 5.80; S.D. = .98</td>
<td>M = 4.79; S.D. = 1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for = 43.89%; Cronbach’s alpha = .90), perceived beneficial outcomes of the AAP (Eigenvalue = 1.70, Variance accounted for = 7.71%; Cronbach’s alpha = .86), anticipated resistance to the AAP (Eigenvalue = 1.43; Variance accounted for = 6.48%; Cronbach’s alpha = .82), and affect toward beneficiaries (Eigenvalue = 1.20; Variance accounted for = 5.47%; Cronbach’s alpha = .48). For factor loadings of each item in the composite variables, see Table 2. Because of the low reliability of the last factor, it was excluded from subsequent analyses.

Additionally, to utilize a behavioral measure of reactions to AAPs, participants had the opportunity to record their attitudes and opinions about affirmative action and informed that their responses would be given to university officials. In actuality, the open-ended responses were recorded and compiled, and a summary report was sent to the university.

After completing the response sheet, participants recorded their answers to demographic questions (e.g., race, gender, age, year in school) and completed items intended to measure their level of modern racism (McConahay, 1982). Specifically, participants rated on a 5-point Likert scale the extent to which they agreed with four statements (i.e., “Over the past few years, minorities have gotten more economically than they deserve,” “Minorities are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights,” “It is easy to understand the anger of minorities in America,” and “Minorities miss out on jobs
Table 2

Perceived Fairness of the AAP (Item and Factor Loading)
- Does this affirmative action plan treat all concerned parties fairly? (.72)
- Do you think that the procedures used to select applicants are fair? (.71)
- Will this AAP have a negative effect on qualified Whites getting selected? (.69)
- In general, is this AAP fair? (.69)
- How do you think white students will feel toward the AAP? (.63)
- Do you think that the outcomes that will result from this AAP are fair? (.60)
- Would you want to attend a university with this affirmative action plan? (.49)

Beneficial Outcomes of the AAP (Item and Loading)
- Will the AAP benefit you indirectly? (.78)
- Will this AAP benefit Rice? (.65)
- Do you think this AAP (Affirmative Action Plan) will be effective at Rice? (.64)
- Is Rice’s justification of why they are implementing AAP adequate? (.59)
- Are the goals of this affirmative action plan good? (.59)
- How likely are you to say positive things about the AAP to friends/family? (.55)
- How do you feel towards Rice after learning about the AAP? (.53)
- How do you feel towards this AAP? (.52)
- Will the AAP benefit you directly? (.47)

Intended Resistance of the AAP (Item and Loading)
- How likely are you to resist the AAP? (-.80)
- How likely are you to try to convince others that the AAP is unfair? (-.77)
- How likely are you to complain to fellow students about the AAP? (-.71)
- Will this AAP result in unqualified students being accepted at Rice? (-.61)

Affect Toward AAP Beneficiaries (Item and loading)
- How do you think you will feel toward the students selected by the AAP? (.74)
- How do you think minority students will feel toward the AAP? (.64)
and promotions because of racial discrimination;” Cronbach’s alpha = .72)².

Finally, participants engaged in an “open-ended recall test” (which actually served as a manipulation check). To assess the salience of the type of AAP, participants received definitions of three types of AAP (i.e., the three levels used in the current study), plus “all of the above” and “none of the above” options, and circled the answer that most closely corresponded to the AAP that their university was (hypothetically) planning to implement. Then, in order to confirm the salience of the framing, participants circled the answer corresponding to whom they believed would primarily benefit from the AAP as stated in the memo: “minority applicants,” yourself,” “all of the above,” or “none of the above.” For an example of the entire packet (in which a weak preferential treatment AAP and a combination justification are used), see Appendix C.

Results

The data were analyzed using a 4 (Justification: Compensation, Instrumental, Combined, or No Explanation) x 3 (Type of AAP: Weak Preferential Treatment, Proportional Selection, Increased Recruiting) x 2 (Participant Gender: Male or Female) between-subjects Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). As predicted, there were main effects of type of AAP ($F(2, 192) = 6.49, p = .0001; \eta^2 = .093$), justification ($F(3, 192) = 2.03, p = .034; \eta^2 = .031$), and gender ($F(1, 192) = 6.35, p = .0001; \eta^2 = .091$). However, contrary to Hypotheses 3 and 5, there was not a two-way interaction between
type of AAP and justification ($F(6, 192) = .58, p = .80; \eta^2 = .022$), nor was there a three-way interaction between type of AAP, justification, and gender, $F(6, 192) = 1.01, p = .44; \eta^2 = .031$. To further examine the main effects, the data were analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests.

**Type of AAP**

As predicted in Hypothesis 1, there was a main effect of type of AAP on perceived fairness of the AAP, $F(2, 192) = 15.92, p = .0001, \eta^2 = .14$. A planned linear contrast revealed that the more weight given to race in the selection process, the less participants believed that the AAP was fair ($p = .0001$). That is, participants felt that increased recruiting of minority applicants ($M = 4.26, S.D. = 1.37$) was more fair than proportional selection quotas ($M = 3.63, S.D. = 1.20$) which was more fair than weak preferential treatment ($M = 3.03, S.D. = 1.09$). A similar main effect of type of AAP for the perceived beneficial outcomes of the AAP, $F(2, 192) = 4.35, p = .014, \eta^2 = .043$. There was a linear trend in the data ($p = .005$), as participants felt that increased recruiting of minority applicants ($M = 3.80, S.D. = 1.05$) would be more beneficial than proportional selection quotas ($M = 3.64, S.D. = 1.05$), which, in turn, would be more beneficial than weak preferential treatment ($M = 3.43, S.D. = 1.00$). A final main effect of type of AAP emerged for participants' intended resistance of the AAP, $F(2, 192) = 3.82, p = .024, \eta^2 = .038$. As before, a linear pattern in the data ($p = .012$) indicated that
participants believed they would resist proportional selection quotas ($M = 3.16$, $S.D. = 1.31$) and weak preferential treatment ($M = 3.16$, $S.D. = 1.37$) plans more than they would resist the increased recruiting of minority applicants ($M = 2.63$, $S.D. = 1.44$). The effect of the type of AAP on each of the three composite variables is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Type of Justification**

As expected by Hypothesis 2, there was a main effect of justification on the perceived beneficial outcomes of affirmative action, $F(3, 192) = 3.39$, $p = .019$, $\eta^2 = .050$. A planned simple contrast revealed that participants who read either a combination justification ($M = 3.75$, $S.D. = 1.02$; $p = .038$) or a compensation justification ($M = 3.95$, $S.D. = 1.18$; $p = .002$) felt that the AAP would be more beneficial than did participants who were given no justification ($M = 3.33$, $S.D. = .87$). However, participants given an instrumental justification ($M = 3.65$, $S.D. = 1.07$) for the AAP did not believe that the AAP would be more beneficial than did participants who received no justification, $p = .10$. Contrary to expectations, however, the type of justification did not influence participants' perceptions of the fairness of the AAP, $F(3, 192) = 1.66$, $p = .18$, $\eta^2 = .025$. That is, there were no differences in perceived fairness of the AAP among participants given a compensation justification ($M = 4.01$, $S.D. = 1.42$), an instrumental justification ($M = 3.54$, $S.D. = 1.33$), a combination justification ($M = 3.52$, $S.D. = 1.28$), or no justification ($M = 3.58$, $S.D. = 1.23$).
Figure 1

- Increased Recruiting
- Proportional Selection Quotas
- Weak Preferential Treatment

Composite Variables

- Perceived Fairness
- Beneficial Outcomes
- Intended Resistance
Additionally, the type of justification did not influence participants' intended resistance of the AAP \( (\text{F}(3, 192) = 3.1, \ p = .82, \ \eta^2 = .005) \), as there were no differences in affect among participants who received a compensation justification \( (\text{M} = 2.78, \ \text{S.D.} = 1.53) \), an instrumental justification \( (\text{M} = 3.02, \ \text{S.D.} = 1.44) \), a combination justification \( (\text{M} = 2.98, \ \text{S.D.} = 1.29) \), or no justification \( (\text{M} = 3.01, \ \text{S.D.} = 1.33) \). Figure 2 shows the influence of the type of justification on each of the three composite variables.

In order to use a more precise measure of the extent to which participants' believed the AAP would have beneficial outcomes, a separate theoretical composite variable (Cronbach’s alpha = .65) was formed using the three items that were originally intended to measure this construct (i.e., "Will the AAP benefit you directly?, "Will the AAP benefit you indirectly?," and "Will this AAP benefit Rice?"). As with the empirical composite variable, there was an effect of the type of justification on the perceived beneficial outcomes theoretical variable, \( \text{F}(3, 192) = 3.56, \ p = .015 \). That is, participants who were exposed to a combination justification \( (\text{M} = 3.44, \ \text{S.D.} = 3.39, \ p = .016) \) or a compensation justification \( (\text{M} = 3.56, \ \text{S.D.} = 1.28, \ p = .003) \) were more likely to believe that the AAP would result in beneficial outcomes than participants given no justification \( (\text{M} = 2.84, \ \text{S.D.} = 1.10) \). However, as before, participants exposed to an instrumental justification \( (\text{M} = 3.15, \ \text{S.D.} = 1.20, \ p = .19) \) did not believe that there would be more beneficial outcomes than participants given no justification.
Participant Gender

Consistent with Hypothesis 4, there was a main effect of gender on participants' perceptions of the beneficial outcomes of the AAP, $F(1, 192) = 12.25, p = .001, \eta^2 = .060$. As expected, female participants ($M = 3.80, S.D. = 1.08$) believed that the AAP would result in more beneficial outcomes than did male participants ($M = 3.43, S.D. = .97$). There was also a marginally significant trend in male and female participants' intended resistance of the AAP, $F(1, 192) = 7.31, p = .055, \eta^2 = .019$. Similar to the previously described pattern, female participants ($M = 2.75, S.D. = 1.29$) were somewhat less likely than male participants ($M = 3.14, S.D. = 1.47$) to indicate an intention to resist the AAP. Contrary to predictions, however, participant gender did not influence perceptions of AAP fairness, as male ($M = 3.63, S.D. = 1.31$) and female ($M = 3.59, S.D. = 1.32$) participants felt that the AAP was equally fair, $F(1, 192) = .66, p = .42, \eta^2 = .003$. The effect of participant gender on the composite variables can be seen in Figure 3.

Individual Differences

A series of regressions tested the potential impact of individual differences on reactions to affirmative action programs.\(^5\)

Year in School. Contrary to Hypothesis 6, year in school (grand $M = 2.29, S.D. = 1.08$) was not a reliable predictor of reactions toward AAPs. Participants who had been in school longer were somewhat more likely than participants who had not been in school as
Figure 3
long to believe that the AAP was fair ($\beta = .12; p = .054$). However, the participant’s year in school was not a significant predictor of the perceived beneficial outcomes of the AAP ($\beta = .05; p = .43$) or of intended resistance of the AAP ($\beta = -.11; p = .10$). The beta weights and significance levels for all of the predictors on the composite variables can be seen in Tables 3-5.

**Modern racism.** Consistent with Hypothesis 7, modern racism (grand $M = 2.43$, S.D. = .81) was a highly significant predictor of attitudes toward AAPs. Participants who scored higher on measures of modern racism believed that the AAP was less fair than those who were low in modern racism ($\beta = -.30; p = .0001$). Furthermore, participants high in modern racism were less likely to believe that the AAP would result in beneficial outcomes ($\beta = -.47; p = .0001$) and were more likely to anticipate resisting the AAP than those scoring low ($\beta = .28; p = .0001$). As in the previous section, the beta weights and significance levels for each of the predictors on the composite variables can be found in Tables 3-5.

**Tests of Mediation**

To determine if the perceived fairness of the AAP was mediating the effects of the type of AAP, type of justification, and participant characteristics on the two remaining composite variables (Hypothesis 8), a three-step test of mediation was performed (Baron & Kenny, 1986).
Table 3
The influence of the five predictor variables on the perceived fairness of an AAP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Justification</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of AAP</td>
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<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Gender</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Modern Racism</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>-4.82</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Year in School</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>.054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

The influence of the five predictor variables on the perceived beneficial outcomes of an AAP.

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>p value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Justification</td>
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<td>2.14</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of AAP</td>
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<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.13</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Modern Racism</td>
<td>-.47</td>
<td>-7.76</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Year in School</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

The influence of the five predictor variables on intended resistance to the AAP.

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$ value</th>
<th>$p$ value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Justification</td>
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<td>.25</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of AAP</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Gender</td>
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<td>-1.09</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Modern Racism</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>-4.18</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Year in School</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-1.65</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First, the four predictor variables were significantly related to the first dependent variable, perceived beneficial outcomes of the AAP ($F(4, 211) = 23.74, \ p = .0001$). The second step was also confirmed, as the four independent variables were found to be significantly related to the fairness mediator, $F(4, 211) = 17.56, \ p = .0001$). However, after controlling for the four predictor variables in the third step of the mediation test, fairness continued to influence the perceived beneficial outcomes of the AAP ($R^2$ change = .13; $F(1, 214) = 17.57, \ p = .0001$). Thus, contrary to Hypothesis 8, it appears that the perceived fairness of the AAP only partially mediates the perceived beneficial outcomes of the AAP.

A second test of mediation also ascertained whether fairness mediated the effects of the type of AAP, justification, gender, and modern racism on the second composite variable, intention to resist the AAP. The first step revealed that the predictor variables also related to the participants' intended resistance of the AAP ($F(4, 211) = 8.53, \ p = .0001$). The second step was not repeated in the second test of mediation because it is identical to the first step in the first test. Finally, perceived fairness significantly predicted participants' anticipated resistance of the AAP even after controlling for the four predictor variables ($R^2$ change = .029; $F(4, 210) = 3.14, \ p = .015$. Therefore, perceived fairness also partially mediates participants' intended resistance of the AAP. A summary of the amount of support for all eight hypotheses can be found in Table 6.
Table 6

Summary of Hypotheses

1. **Confirmed**--Support for an AAP will be inversely related to the amount of weight placed on race in the selection procedure.

2. **Partially Confirmed**--Nonbeneficiaries who are exposed to an instrumental or a combined justification for an AAP will be more supportive of the plan than participants who are exposed to a compensation justification or (especially) to no justification.

3. **Not confirmed**--There will be a two-way interaction between the type of affirmative action program and the type of justification.

4. **Confirmed**--Female participants will have more favorable attitudes toward AAPs than will male participants.

5. **Not confirmed**--There will be a three-way interaction between the type of AAP, justification, and participant gender.

6. **Not confirmed**--Participants with who have been in school longer will be more supportive of AAPs than those who are have been in school a shorter amount of time.

7. **Confirmed**--Participants who score higher on measures of modern racism will be more opposed to AAPs than those who are low in modern racism.

8. **Partially confirmed**--Perceived fairness will fully mediate the effects of type of AAP, justification, and participant characteristics on affirmative action attitudes.
Qualitative Data

Using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word count program (LIWC; Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2001), participants' open-ended responses were analyzed for length and affective responses. The program was used in order to explore participants' emotional and cognitive processes as revealed through their writing. As with the quantitative data, the qualitative data were analyzed using a 4 (Type of Justification: Compensation, Instrumental, Combined, or No Explanation) x 3 (Type of AAP: Weak Preferential Treatment, Proportional Selection, Increased Recruiting) x 2 (Participant Gender: Male or Female) between-subjects design. Because there were no a priori hypotheses about specific patterns within the open-ended responses, conservative Tukey post-hoc tests (α = .05) were used to examine differences among cell means (and not planned contrasts, which were used on the quantitative data).

**Type of AAP.** The type of AAP had a small amount of influence on participants' responses, as there was a marginal main effect of the variable on the percentage of positive feeling words (e.g., "happy," "joy," "love") used in participants' open-ended data, $F(2, 77) = 2.96, Mse = 3.98, p = .058, \eta^2 = .071$. However, a Tukey post-hoc test (all ps > .05) revealed no significant difference in participants' use of positive feeling words when discussing proportional selection quotas ($M = 1.43, S.D. = 3.85$) than when discussing increased recruitment of minority applicants ($M = .40, S.D. = 1.02$) or weak preferential treatment ($M = .22, S.D. = .57$).
Type of Justification. There was an effect of type of justification on the percentage of affective or emotional process words revealed in the open-ended statements, $F(3, 77) = 2.82$, $M_{se} = 9.56$, $p = .044$, $\eta^2 = .099$. Participants were marginally more likely to use a higher percentage of affective words (e.g., "happy," "ugly," "bitter") in their sentences when given a combination justification ($M = 5.48$, $S.D. = 4.12$) than when given a compensation justification ($M = 2.77$, $S.D. = 2.15$, $p = .052$), but not an instrumental justification ($M = 4.88$, $S.D. = 2.93$, $p = .80$) or no justification ($M = 3.85$, $S.D. = 2.81$, $p = .23$).

Moreover, the type of justification influenced the percentage of positive affective words (e.g., "happy," "pretty," "good") that participants used in their open-ended responses, $F(3, 77) = 2.97$, $M_{se} = 8.12$, $p = .037$, $\eta^2 = .10$. Similar to the previous pattern, participants used a higher percentage of positive emotion words in their sentences when given a combination justification ($M = 4.42$, $S.D. = 4.04$) than when given a compensation justification ($M = 1.83$, $S.D. = 1.69$, $p = .04$), but not an instrumental justification ($M = 3.87$, $S.D. = 3.09$, $p = .80$) or no justification ($M = 3.03$, $S.D. = 2.29$, $p = .31$).

The type of justification also influenced the percentage of cognitive mechanism words (e.g., "cause," "know," "ought") used by participants, $F(3, 77) = 2.81$, $M_{se} = 31.96$, $p = .045$, $\eta^2 = .099$. Participants used a somewhat higher percentage of cognitive
words in their sentences when given an instrumental justification ($M = 12.32, S.D. = 8.59$) than when given a compensation justification ($M = 7.89, S.D. = 3.22, p = .054$), a combination justification ($M = 8.71, S.D. = 5.06, p = .055$), or no justification ($M = 8.20, S.D. = 3.98, p = .056$).

There was a final main effect of type of justification on the percentage of discrepancy words (e.g., “should,” “would,” “could”) used in participants’ open-ended responses. Similar to the last pattern, participants used a higher percentage of discrepancy words when given an instrumental justification ($M = 5.92, S.D. = 4.80$) than when given a combination justification ($M = 3.03, S.D. = 2.44, p = .033$) or no justification ($M = 3.39, S.D. = 2.86, p = .061$), but not a compensation justification ($M = 3.57, S.D. = 3.06, p = .13$). All four of these main effects are illustrated in Figure 4.

**Participant Gender.** There was a marginal effect of gender on participants’ use of sad words (e.g., “grief,” “cry,” “sad”), $F(1, 77) = 3.89, Mse = .79, p = .052, \eta^2 = .048$. Interestingly, male participants ($M = .44, S.D. = .11$) were more likely than female participants ($M = .052, S.D. = .21$) to use a higher percentage of sad words in their open-ended passages, $t(99) = 2.50, p = .015$. Furthermore, gender also marginally affected the percentage of negations (e.g., “no,” “never,” “naught”) in participants’ responses, $F(1, 77) = 3.66, Mse = 14.45, p = .059, \eta^2 = .045$. Similar to the previously described main effect, male participants ($M = 3.97, S.D. = 3.91$) were somewhat more likely than female
participants (M = 2.38, S.D. =2.15) to use a higher percentage of negations in their sentences, t(99) = 1.87, p = .064. These two main effects can be seen in Figure 5.

Discussion

The results of the present study have replicated and extended previous research by confirming that people’s reactions to affirmative action plans are indeed influenced by the type of plan, the type of justification given for it, their gender, and their level of modern racism.

Type of AAP

As predicted by Hypothesis 1, and consistent with a host of previous research (e.g., Kravitz, 1995, 1997; Nacoste, 1985, 1987b), participants’ reactions to AAPs were a direct function of the amount of weight placed on race in the admissions procedure. That is, the more that a particularistic factor such as race was used as a factor in selection, the less participants felt the AAP was fair, the less they believed that it would have beneficial outcomes, and the more they anticipated acting negatively toward it. Specifically, participants felt somewhat positively toward the increased recruiting of minority applicants, less positively toward proportional selection quotas, and negatively toward weak preferential treatment.

The type of AAP also seemed to influence some participants' open-ended responses. For example, students seemed to have positive attitudes toward the increased recruitment
plan, as one participant noted, "I support the extra recruitment because it encourages minorities but does not exclude others." Support for the proportional selection quotas was more ambivalent, as on participant commented. "I feel that creating a proportional quota will force Rice to accept some students who may not be qualified," whereas another participant remarked. "In this affirmative action program presented here, who could argue against admitting minorities proportionally to their numbers of qualified applicants? There is nothing unfair about this at all." However, almost all participants felt negatively toward the weak preferential treatment system, exemplified by one student's comment that "affirmative action programs that use a 'tie-break' system like the one described here are not eliminating racial discrimination, they are simply reversing it."

Type of Justification

Hypothesis 2, which predicted that participants exposed to an instrumental or combination justification for an AAP would have more favorable reactions to it than participants exposed to a compensation justification or no justification, was partially supported. Contrary to expectations, participants given a compensation or combination justification were the most likely to believe that the AAP would result in beneficial outcomes. However, an analysis of the open-ended data revealed that participants had the most positive affect towards the combination and instrumental justifications. Given both the quantitative and qualitative data, then, it seems that the most effective rationale for an AAP in this context is the combination justification. Interestingly, it is both telling and
fitting that a justification which used a diversity of rationales was the most successful means of persuading students to accept diversity as a factor in the admissions process. Moreover, this effect was found even as the number of items within each of the justification conditions was held constant, so the effect can not be attributed solely to the combination justification utilizing more items and information than the compensation and instrumental justifications.

In examining participant reactions to the other two types of justification, it is important to remember that the context of the study involved AAPs in higher education and not in organizations. Previous research has found that people are generally more supportive of affirmative action in education than in industry (e.g., Kluegel & Smith, 1983), perhaps because educational opportunities are seen as a right granted to all American citizens, whereas employment is perceived as a reward in a meritocratic society (Doverspike et al., 2000). Indeed, former Princeton and Harvard presidents William Bowen and Derek Bok argue that the duty of universities extends beyond conferring benefits on the most gifted individuals to having immutable and effective public policy components (1998). If this truly is a pervasive belief in our culture, than this provides an explanation as to why the compensation justification was more effective than the instrumental justification in changing attitudes toward AAPs in higher education. Conversely, an instrumental justification might be more convincing in an industrial
setting where a utility analysis can demonstrate to what extent a diverse workforce positively affects a company’s profitability and organizational effectiveness.

Contrary to expectations, the justifications only influenced participants’ perceptions of how beneficial the AAP would be, but not their perceptions of how fair the AAP was or how likely they were to oppose the AAP. This result, taken with the finding that fairness only partially mediated participants’ attitudes towards affirmative action (Hypothesis 8), seems to indicate that participants might view fairness and usefulness as two separate ideals. That is, it is possible that people might believe that an AAP is unfair, but that it is still a necessary and beneficial program. Many of the open-ended response seemed to corroborate this view. For example, one participant stated that "affirmative action plans aren’t fair, but they are the right thing to do (fairness and correctness are not the same)." Similarly, another student commented that "affirmative action is an unfair system with a fair goal." Likewise, a different participant said, "I think affirmative action in higher education is inherently unjust and unjustifiable. However, I wish my university had more minority students, and I suppose affirmative action would accomplish this." A final participant argued, "Even though affirmative action plans may not be strictly ‘fair’ (judging strictly by merit), they promote diversity, which is very important in academic settings and in the workplace. This benefits everyone."
Participant Characteristics

Consistent with Hypothesis 4, both the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that female participants had more positive attitudes than male participants towards the AAPs. Male participants were somewhat more likely to anticipate acting negatively toward the AAP and were less likely to perceive any beneficial outcomes from the AAP than were female participants. Male participants also were more likely than female participants to use sad and negative words in their open-ended responses. This pattern is consistent with previous research, which also indicates that women are more supportive of affirmative action than men, even when the AAP is race-based and not gender-based (e.g., Kravitz & Platania, 1992). Perhaps women believe that such a program is in their cooperative self-interest (Kluegel & Smith, 1983) and so think that attention to race in the selection process also would indirectly help increase the salience and importance of gender in university admissions. Additionally, women might be potentially more sensitive to and aware of discrimination that minorities face in society and consequently are more concerned with equality than equity in admittance procedures (Doverspike et al., 2000).

Hypothesis 6, the prediction that participant with more schooling would be more supportive of affirmative action than participants with less schooling, was not fully confirmed. Although the latter group was somewhat more likely than the former group to believe that AAPs were unfair, year in school was not a reliable predictor of affirmative
action attitudes. This finding is consistent with Kravitz et al.'s (1997) conclusion that, while age (and other participant variables such as education, income, region of the country, personal exposure to unequal treatment) is sometimes related to AAP reactions, it often contributes little to an overall model of prediction.

As predicted by Hypothesis 7, participants' level of modern racism did influence their attitudes towards affirmative action, consistent with previous research (e.g., Jacobson, 1985; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1996; Dovidio, Mann, & Gaertner, 1989). Specifically, those participants who reported high levels of modern racism were less likely than those reporting low levels to think that the AAP was fair, less likely to believe that there would be beneficial outcomes resulting from the AAP, and more likely to anticipate acting negatively toward the AAP. It seems, then, that people's negative racial attitudes are quite likely to manifest themselves in symbolic racial issues such as affirmative action.

Contrary to Hypotheses 3 and 5, there were no interactions between the type of justification, type of AAP, participant gender, or any other participant characteristics. Perhaps this indicates that the influence of the justification transcends any potential moderating variables related to the type of program or the type of student body. If so, this has important practical implications in that university officials do not need to tailor their justifications to specific groups but instead should focus on developing a universal and
encompassing information campaign about the AAP aimed at the entire campus (or at least nonbeneficiaries of the program).

Limitations

There were several limitations of the present study, most notably that the affirmative action plan was only hypothetically implemented. However, because the context of this study involved affirmative action in higher education, participants’ self-interest was more involved than it is in many studies that have used an undergraduate sample to generalize about employee reactions to AAPs in organizations (c.f., Kravitz, 1997). As such, the current study has extended previous research by exploring reactions to affirmative action using a more appropriate sample. Had participants not felt personally engaged by the memo, it is likely that their reported attitudes to the AAP would have been positively skewed and not normally distributed, as they were found to be in this study.

Another potential limitation is that participants were simply reacting to demand characteristics in the justifications and true attitude change toward AAPs was not measured (Bell, 1996). However, this limitation is tempered by the behavioral measure (i.e., recording feelings about the AAP in a provided space) included in the study. Because the qualitative data revealed many of the same patterns found in the quantitative data, it seems that the justifications actually did impact attitudes toward AAP. Moreover, the fact that modest effects were gained through using a few simple statements in a
hypothetical memorandum implies that even greater effects would be obtained if more involved measures (e.g., a marketing campaign, workshops, speakers, distribution of relevant research to the campus community) were used. In this instance, it is possible that more robust and enduring attitude change would occur.

Finally, the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1982) that was used in this study has been criticized for not being a sound measure of racism (Sniderman & Tetlock, 1986). Furthermore, there is some evidence to suggest that social dominance orientation (SDO; Sidanius, Devereux, & Pratto, 1992) is a more valid predictor of affirmative action attitudes than the modern racism scale. The SDO scale measures people's anti-egalitarian values and their desire to maintain their social and economic dominance over disenfranchised groups, which is a concept that is in direct contrast to the redistribution of power that results from affirmative action policies. Indeed, research has shown that the positive correlation between conservatism and racism can be entirely accounted for by their joint association with SDO (Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996). As such, having a measure of SDO in the present study would have been informative to see how robust this finding is.

Future research

Given the paucity of literature on the effects of framing and rationales on attitudes toward affirmative action, there is still much profitable research to be conducted within the area. Certainly, given the findings of the current study, future researchers should not
treat instrumental and compensation justifications as mutually exclusive frames; instead they should continue to explore how combination justifications affect participants in different contexts. Furthermore, an important next step is to use an organizational setting to determine if the findings from this study generalize to public and private industry. As with educational diversity, there is an emergent body of literature documenting the positive effects of workforce diversity on organizational outcomes (e.g., Cox & Blake, 1991; De Vries & Pettigrew, 1994; Fernandez, 1991, 1993; Herriot & Pemberton, 1995; Hollister, Day, & Jesaitis, 1993; Perloff & Bryant, 2000). In a business context, an instrumental justification might be most effective in the latter case because organizations are interested in “the bottom line” and gaining a competitive advantage through diversity. It would also be beneficial to explore how justifications influence reactions to different kinds of AAPs, such as gender-based and age-based programs.

Within the instrumental framework, there are several ways in which the construct could be manipulated. For example, the justification for an AAP could be framed as either directly benefiting individual employees (e.g., through improving their leadership skills and making them more culturally aware) or as benefiting the entire organization (through making the company better able to attract and serve diverse clients/customers). In this more macro frame, it might be the case that employees with a more collectivist view or with higher organizational identification would develop more favorable attitudes than individualistic employees.
Additionally, prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979, 1982, 1984) could be used to explore how framing a risky behavior (e.g., implementing a new affirmative action program or diversity initiative) could influence attitudes. Meyerowitz and Chaiken (1987) found that people develop more positive attitudes towards a behavior when they are led to believe that they will suffer loses because of inaction rather than when they are led to believe that they will receive gains through performing the behavior. Likewise, a frame that utilizes fear (e.g., losing a competitive advantage through not developing a diverse workforce or student body) might be more effective than one that focuses on positive benefits (e.g., creating a more creative, innovative, and effective work or educational environment).

To date, there is no research on how different justifications for AAPs influence participants of different races and ethnicities. It may be that minorities will be more affected than Whites by a compensation frame because it directly appeals to their self-interest and how they will benefit. Conversely, they may respond negatively to a compensation justification if they feel it will stigmatize them in the eyes of nonbeneficiaries (Barnes-Nacoste, 1990). An alternate explanation is that, like the White participants in the current study, they will be the most influenced by the combination rationale because it highlights the benefits that all parties receive. Furthermore, it could be the case that different racial groups (and even subgroups within these categories) are more receptive to certain justifications than
others. Clearly, there is a need for more research using minority participants to clarify this issue.

Finally, it is also important for universities and organizations to learn how to successfully implement AAPs in order to achieve the desired benefits outlined in the justifications. Administrators and management often do not follow through with diversity initiatives and then claim that the programs were inherently flawed. This lack of follow-up seems to have been the case in one participant’s response, as the student noted, “The problem with this sort of affirmative action is that it rests on the assumption that, once recruited and admitted, minority students would tend to associate to a large extent with members outside their predominantly minority groups. While benefits listed might accrue if this actually happened, experience has shown that, at [this university] in particular, minorities (and other specialized students like athletes) tend to maintain a segregated lifestyle. Thus any supposed advantages gained from the affirmative action will most likely fail to materialize.” As such, it is vital to teach students and employees to how to value their own heritage and culture while simultaneously sharing it with their peers.

Conclusion

The current study sought to confirm and extend previous research by exploring how the justification given for different affirmative action programs affected nonbeneficiaries’ acceptance of or resistance to the plan. Across all different types of AAPs and across all different types of participant characteristics, it seems that a
combination justification that emphasized benefits to minority and majority groups was the most successful in inducing positive attitude change. Hopefully, this study as well as future research will help determine the mechanisms and parameters for how, to what extent, and under what conditions a rationale can successfully influence responses to AAPs. Through exploring how different justifications can influence attitudes towards AAPs, perhaps science can help society realize the value of diversity initiatives and consequently develop an affirmative reaction to affirmative action.
Footnotes

1 Although there are other types of AAPs that have been explored in the literature (e.g., strong preferential treatment with exclusive focus on particularistic traits), these programs have little mundane realism (Kravitz, 1995) and will not be discussed further.

2 One item typically used in the Modern Racism Scale is intended to measure participants' attitudes toward affirmative action. Because this item, by definition, would be correlated with attitudes towards AAPs and would increase common content variance, it was not included in the current study's measure of modern racism.

3 Having the memo being written by the university's Affirmative Action Committee should have enhanced both the credibility of the message and the perceived administrative support of AAP. In turn, these two factors should have increased the persuasiveness of the message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986; Doverspike et al., 2000).

4 Because modern racism has been conceptualized as a combination of both conservatism and racism (McConahay, 1986) and because the two variables are often highly correlated (Sidanius, et al., 1996), the modern racism scale was included in analyses but not political orientation.

5 There were no statistically significant interactions between the individual difference variables and the manipulated independent variables (all ps > .05). As such, they will not be discussed further.

6 Because the participants' year in school was not a reliable predictor of attitudes towards AAPs, it was not included as a predictor along with type of AAP, type of justification, gender, and modern racism in the tests of mediation.
References


Appendix A
Descriptions of Type of AAP Manipulations

**Increased Recruitment Description:** The goal of the affirmative action plan used by Rice is to reverse past discrimination suffered by minorities in academia. Our affirmative action plan involves the complete elimination of racial discrimination against minorities and the recruitment of minority applicants. Selection decisions are to be based entirely on the applicant's past record. In addition, an effort will be made to recruit minority applicants. Rice advertisements will be published in minority publications, and university representatives will recruit at schools with large proportions of minority students. Selection decisions will be made without regard to the applicant's race.

**Proportional Quotas Description:** The goal of the affirmative action plan used by Rice is to reverse past discrimination suffered by minorities in academia. Our affirmative action plan involves the complete elimination of racial discrimination against minorities, and the operation of a proportional selection quota system. Selection decisions are to be based entirely on the applicant's past record. In addition, the proportional selection quota system will require that the proportion of minorities accepted must equal the proportion of qualified minorities who applied at Rice, as will be true if no discrimination exists. Selection decisions will be made without regard to the applicant's race.

**Weak Preferential Treatment Description:** The goal of the affirmative action plan used by Rice is to reverse past discrimination suffered by minorities in academia. Our affirmative action plan involves the complete elimination of racial discrimination against minorities, and attention to the proportion of qualified minorities who apply and are selected. Selection decisions are to be based entirely on the applicant's past record. However, if a minority and a white applicant are equally qualified, the minority applicant is to be selected.
Appendix B
Descriptions of Type of Justification Manipulations

Compensation Justifications
- Creating a diverse student body through affirmative action helps minority students develop strong career networks and contacts which will aid them in the future.
- Through being seen as an institution devoted to diversity, affirmative action will help the university to be successful in recruiting other qualified minority students.
- Having an affirmative action plan now will lead to more role models and mentors for other minority applicants, which will help reduce possible future retention problems.
- The use of affirmative action will help to make the selection procedure more fair and just for minority applicants, thus increasing the number of qualified minority applications.
- Affirmative action decreases the effects of race stereotyping in the selection decision process, which allows unbiased decisions to be made.
- Because affirmative action helps to increase the college satisfaction of minority students, universities are better able to attract and retain top minority students.

Instrumental Justifications
- Affirmative action leads to a broader array of perspectives in the classroom, which enhances the range of discussion and the level of intellectual challenge for all students.
- Through learning how to effectively interact with diverse peers, students are better able to relate to diverse clients/coworkers in the future because of affirmative action.
- Because of affirmative action, students can have the opportunity to socialize with diverse peers, which results in students’ improved interpersonal/leadership skills.
- Students learn more and think in deeper, more complex ways in a diverse educational environment created by affirmative action.
- Students educated in diverse settings created by affirmative action are more motivated and better able to participate in an increasingly heterogeneous and complex world.
- Studying in a diverse environment formed by affirmative action allows students to obtain the skills necessary to successfully live and work in a diverse society.

Note: The first three justifications in each condition were pooled to form the justifications for the combination justification.
Appendix C
Experimental Materials Example

Directions: Please imagine that the following university-wide memorandum has been distributed to all Rice students. After reading the memo, you will be asked several questions about your attitudes and feelings towards it, so please read carefully.

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 10, 1996
From: Rice University’s Affirmative Action committee
To: The Rice University student body
Re: New affirmative action plan

Every year thousands of colleges and universities accept millions of students. Selection decisions are critically important for both the applicants and the universities. The importance for applicants is obvious: a college education is essential for competing in today’s market. The decisions also are important for universities, as the school’s reputation depends on the quality of the students.

Although there has been a lengthy debate over the merits of affirmative action, Rice has decided to develop and implement an affirmative action plan (AAP) because we feel it will ultimately be beneficial to minority applicants and to you for the following six reasons:

- Creating a diverse student body through affirmative action helps minority students develop strong career networks and contacts which will aid them in the future.
- Through learning how to effectively interact with diverse peers selected through affirmative action, all students will be able to relate to diverse coworkers in the future.
- Having an affirmative action plan now will lead to more role models and mentors for other minority applicants, which will help reduce retention problems in the future.
- Affirmative action leads to a broader array of perspectives in the classroom, which enhances the range of discussion and the level of intellectual challenge for all students.
- Through being seen as an institution devoted to diversity, affirmative action will help the university to be successful in recruiting other qualified minority students.
- Because of affirmative action, students can have the opportunity to socialize with diverse peers, which results in students’ improved interpersonal and leadership skills.

Our affirmative action plan will have many important elements, but the most significant component will be our use of a tiebreak system in acceptance procedures. The goal of the affirmative action plan used by Rice is to reverse past discrimination suffered by minorities in academia. Our affirmative action plan involves the complete elimination of racial discrimination against minorities, and attention to the proportion of qualified minorities who apply and are selected. Selection decisions are to be based entirely on the applicant’s past record. However, if a minority and a white applicant are equally qualified, the minority applicant is to be selected.
Directions: Using the following scale, please write the number that best represents your position. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. ALL THAT MATTERS IS YOUR OPINION.

1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7
Not at all Somewhat Very much so

1)_______ Do you think this AAP (Affirmative Action Plan) will be effective at Rice?
2)_______ Do you think that the procedures used to select applicants are fair?
3)_______ Is Rice's justification of why they are implementing AAP adequate?
4)_______ Will the AAP benefit you directly?
5)_______ Do you think that the outcomes that will result from this AAP are fair?
6)_______ Will the AAP benefit you indirectly?
7)_______ Will this AAP have a negative effect on White applicants getting selected?
8)_______ Will this AAP benefit Rice?
9)_______ In general, is this AAP fair?
10)______ Would you want to attend a university with this affirmative action plan?
11)______ Are the goals of this affirmative action plan good?
12)______ Does this affirmative action plan treat all concerned parties fairly?
13)______ How likely are you to complain to fellow students about the AAP?
14)______ How likely are you to say positive things about the AAP to friends and family?
15)______ How likely are you to resist the AAP?
16)______ How likely are you to try to convince others that the AAP is unfair?
17)______ Will this AAP result in unqualified students being accepted at Rice?

Directions: Using the following scale, please write the number that best represents your attitude. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

1-----------2-----------3-----------4-----------5-----------6-----------7
Very negatively Neutral Very positively

18)______ How do you feel towards this AAP?
19)______ How do you feel towards Rice after learning about the AAP?
20)______ How do you think you will feel toward the students hired through the AAP?
21)______ How do you think minority students will feel toward the AAP?
22)______ How do you think white students will feel toward the AAP?
Directions: Using the following scale please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

1)________ Over the past few years, minorities have gotten more economically than they deserve.
2)________ Minorities are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.
3)________ It is easy to understand the anger of minorities in America.
4)________ Minorities miss out on jobs and promotions because of racial discrimination.

Demographic Information

Gender (please circle one): Male or Female
Race: White Black Asian-American Hispanic Other: ____________
Age: ____________ Year in School: ____________

Political Orientation (please circle one):

1)________ Liberal 2)_______ Moderate 3)_______ Conservative

How familiar are you with Rice University’s actual stance on affirmative action?

1)________ Not at all 2)_______ Somewhat 3)_______ Very much
familiar familiar familiar

In general, how familiar are you with laws pertaining to affirmative action in education?

1)________ Not at all 2)_______ Somewhat 3)_______ Very much
familiar familiar familiar

Recall Test

Directions: For the next 2 questions, please do not refer to the first page.

1)_______ The memo indicated that Rice University’s AAP will primarily involve:
a. increased recruitment of minority applicants
d. none of the above
b. a proportional selection quota system
e. all of the above
c. a preferential “tiebreak” system

2)_______ The memo indicated that this AAP will primarily benefit:
a. minority applicants
d. none of the above
b. current Rice students
e. all of the above
c. the memo did not indicate that either of
d. none of the above
these two groups would specifically benefit
Opportunity to Express Your Opinions about Affirmative Action

If you would like your views about affirmative action included in research to be provided to your Congressional representative, please express your opinions in the box below. Your opinions will be given to the Rice University Center for Organizational Effectiveness Studies and will then be forwarded to appropriate government officials.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!