Beyond Black and White: General Support for Race-Conscious Policies Among African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and Whites

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The study of racial attitudes in the U.S. has largely focused on white attitudes toward African Americans and policies designed to assist African Americans. We go beyond this black-white dichotomy by comparing African American, Latino, Asian American, and white attitudes toward opportunity-enhancing and outcome-directed policies. Data from the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, 1992-1994 are used to test the effects class and ethnic/racial identities play in shaping respondent’s policy preferences. Because both of these programs are designed to apply equally to African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans, we model general support for these policies. In other words respondents who supported each program for all three groups were coded as favoring the particular policy. Our coding method more accurately captures the real world application of these programs. We find that even when we control for class status, measures of racial prejudice, as well as a host of other factors, ethnic and racial differences persist. African Americans strongly support both policies, while whites were the least supportive. Latinos and Asian Americans in varying degrees took intermediate positions on these issues. The research considers the reasons for the persistence of ethnic and racial differences on race-conscious policies and suggests future avenues for research.

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ffirmative action programs and policies are under assault in America. The term affirmative action first appeared in President Kennedy’s Executive Order 10925 and later in Title VII of the 1964 Rights Act, both dealing with discrimination in employment. Over time, through judicial interpretations and administrative guidelines, the term has come to mean and include “goals,” “timetables,” and “quotas” to remedy discrimination in the workplace, education, and other related public spheres. President Johnson first articulated the rationale for affirmative action in a well-known speech given at Howard University in 1965 where he stated that, “You don’t take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him to the starting line of a race and then say, ‘You are free to compete with all others’ and still justly believe you have been completely fair.” Thus, from its inception, affirmative action was rooted in the belief that by “leveling the playing field” through some form of governmental assistance, racial socio-economic inequalities and discrimination would come to pass in America.

At the core of contemporary debates over race-conscious programs are concerns by proponents who argue that past and present discriminatory practices warrant such corrective policies whereas opponents argue that these policies simply amount to reverse discrimination. The schism between proponents and opponents has also fallen along racial lines. Researchers have found that racial preferences are widely favored by African Americans but largely opposed by a majority of whites (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo and Krysan 1997; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Smith 1981; Taylor, Sheatsley and Greeley 1978). This racial divide was most recently highlighted with the passage of the 1996 California’s Civil Rights Initiative (Proposition 209), designed to end affirmative action programs. While 63 percent of whites voted in favor of the proposition, African Americans opposed it by 74 percent, and Latinos by 76 percent (Fraga and Ramirez 2001).

What accounts for this opinion polarization? Despite the plethora of studies investigating the sources underlying white opposition to race-conscious policies, few studies include the perspective of racial minorities (e.g., Bobo 2000, 1998; Hughes and Tuch 2000; Bobo and Hutchings 1996). The purpose of this study is to go beyond the black-white dichotomy by comparing African American, Latino, Asian American, and white support for job training and educational assistance programs (an opportunity-enhancing policy) and racial preferences in the workplace (an outcome-directed policy). We begin with the premise that theoretical models used to explain white opinions on racial policies are not neatly applicable to African Americans and to emerging racial groups in the U.S.-Latinos and Asians (Bobo 1998). Instead, we examine the effects of class and race in shaping minority opinions toward policies designed to level the playing field in the workplace and schools.
Data from the Multi City Study of Urban Inequality, 1992-1994, are used to evaluate attitudinal differences among all four groups. The data were drawn from Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, and Los Angeles. However, the analysis is limited to Los Angeles because it is the only city out of the four that includes a statistically representative sample of whites (n = 835), African Americans (n = 1103), Latinos (n = 1020), and Asian Americans (n = 1055). Although our study is limited to the city of Los Angeles, the findings may be suggestive of minority attitudes elsewhere.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Social scientists studying white attitudes toward racial groups or policies suggest an increase in support for the principles of equal treatment, greater acceptance of a multicultural/multiracial America, and a decline in blatant racist attitudes (Shuman et al. 1997; Kinder and Sanders 1996). However, the same data also point to limited support among whites when the policy is related to affirmative action or preferential treatment policies (Schuman et al. 1997; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sniderman and Piazza 1993), prompting Kinder and Sanders (1996: 6) to write that, “. . . white Americans express considerably more enthusiasm for the principle of racial equality than they do for policies that are designed to bring the principle to life. . . .” Why do whites oppose race-conscious policies despite their strong support for the principle of racial equality? Researchers have proposed four broad theories, which we briefly review.

According to the first theory, racial and ethnic group competition for scarce resources underlie white opposition to policies designed to improve racial inequality (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Bobo and Klugel 1993; Bobo 1983; Giles and Evans 1986; Smith 1981; Wilson 1973; Blalock 1967; Blumer 1958). Racial conflict is driven by feelings of entitlement to social resources, status, and privilege, and to perceived threats members of out-groups pose to those entitlements. Competitions over scarce resources become zero-sum conflicts. In other words, gains made by ethnic/racial minorities necessarily come at the expense of whites. This theory has been extended to account for minority opposition to programs aimed at assisting out-groups (Bobo and Hutchings 1996). For example, recent studies on racial attitudes in multiracial contexts show evidence of growing hostility and distrust among African Americans, Asians, and Latinos in Los Angeles largely due to the perception of competition that varying out-groups pose to political, social, and economic resources (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Johnson and Oliver 1989; Oliver and Johnson 1984).

The second theory posits that white opposition to racial preferences is the result of a rise in a new covert racism. This new racism or “symbolic racism” results from a blending of prejudice attitudes with traditional American values. Questions capturing symbolic racism typically measure the degree to which respondents believe the political and social failings of African Americans is the result of not trying hard enough to succeed, violating the ethos of hard work or discipline. Symbolic racism theorists point out that “early learned fears and stereotypes” factor prominently in their definition and operationalization of this concept (Kinder and Sears 1981: 416). However, because blatant racist remarks are no longer acceptable, expressions of anti-black sentiments and opposition to programs designed to assist them are usually expressed through the use of racial codewords designed to elicit anti-black sentiment and opposition to race-conscious policies (Kinder and Sanders 1996). Symbolic racism theorists reject the notion that old-fashioned racism and group competition underlies white opposition to racialized policies, resulting in an ongoing debate between these theorists (e.g., Bobo and Klugel 1993; Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sears 1988; Kinder 1986; Bobo 1983; Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears, Lau, Tyler and Allen 1980; Sears, Hensler, and Speer 1979).

The third theory is largely viewed as a critique of the symbolic racism approach. These researchers argue that white opposition to race-conscious policies is not the result of a new form of racism, but rather by beliefs about the role of government in society (Kuklinski and Parent 1981; Sniderman, Brody, and Kuklinski 1984). Thus, political ideology matters. Not surprisingly, self-identified conservatives tend to oppose racial preferences while liberals generally favor them (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). Sniderman and Tetlock (1986b: 183) believe that labeling opponents of preferential treatment policies as racists simply because they oppose them “raises the risk of branding people as racists who are not in fact racist but merely conservative.”

A second criticism levied against symbolic racism theory is that it ignores the role that blatant prejudice plays in the formation of racial attitudes. Sniderman and Tetlock (1986a: 130) write:

. . . we suggest that symbolic racism theory, by defining racism as a blend of anti-black affect and traditional American values, invites two opposing mistakes. On the one side, it encourages a tendency to label peoples as racist when they are not. On the other, it encourages a tendency to write off traditional racism as a spent force when it is not.

Contrary to symbolic racist researchers, Sniderman and Piazza (1993) show that whites are likely to express anti-black attitudes in surveys. For instance, whites did not avoid expressing stereotypical attitudes towards blacks on items related to responsibility, aggressiveness, and their work ethic. Finally, Sniderman and Piazza argue that contrary to the symbolic racism approach, opposition to race-conscious policies is not driven by support for core American values, such as individualism, hard work, and discipline, but by authoritarian values. Respondents advocating a strong military, respect for law and order, and the teaching of uniform values, also opposed race-conscious policies and held negative stereotypes of blacks. In short, the principled objection theory’s critique of the previous approach can be best summarized by Sniderman and Tetlock’s (1986a, 148) statement that “insofar as symbolic
racism is new it is not racism; and insofar as it is racism, far from being new, it is very old indeed.”

Whether they are explicit or implicit in the theories previously discussed, there is consensus that racial prejudice is important in shaping opinions on race-conscious programs. The relative salience of prejudiced beliefs continues to be the subject of debate in the aforementioned theories. Nonetheless, no study on racial attitudes in America would be complete without discussion of classical racism. The core idea behind classical racism is that physical differences are intrinsically tied to intelligence and behavior (Allport 1954; Apostle et al. 1983). Some researchers have found that racial animus is the single most important determinant of white opposition to race-conscious policies (Kluegel and Smith 1986; Sears, Van Larr, Carillo, and Kosterman, 1997).

**Class or Race?**

The theoretical paradigms reviewed underscore the importance of values, ideology, prejudice, and self-interest in shaping white attitudes toward race-conscious programs. However, because these theories are based on unique historical relations and power asymmetry existing between whites and African Americans, it is unclear whether they can be extended to minority populations who are likely to be the beneficiaries of these programs. For example, it makes little sense to argue that African Americans, Latinos, or Asian Americans might dislike affirmative action programs because they are prejudiced (blatantly or symbolically) toward a particular racial minority group or perceive themselves to be locked in a zero-sum competition with some out-group. This observation leads us to a second concern about the previous research.

Past studies are largely built around analyzing questions that make reference to a single beneficiary group—African Americans (Biernat and Crandall 1999). Thus, even when the attitudes of racial minorities are considered, the research is limited toward exploring their support or opposition for affirmative action programs aimed at assisting African Americans or some other minority group (Bobo 2000, 1998; Hughes and Tuch 2000). Yet, affirmative action programs never single out a particular minority group to be the sole beneficiary (Skrentny 1996). In fact, President Johnson who helped establish many of these programs frequently noted in private conversations and public speeches that civil rights legislation extended to groups other than African American (Pycior 1997). Because of these limitations we believe it is necessary to go beyond the traditional black-white theoretical frameworks and incorporate one that can capture minority opinion toward race-conscious policies generally across minority groups.

The Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, 1992-1994, asks respondents whether they favor or oppose two race-conscious programs toward each of following racial groups: African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. The first question can be labeled as an opportunity-enhancing policy. It asks:

**Opportunity-enhancing policy.** Now I have some questions about what you think about the fairness of certain policies. Some people feel that because of past disadvantage there are some groups in society that should receive special job training and educational assistance. Others say that it is unfair to give these groups special job training and educational assistance. What about you? Do you strongly favor, favor, neither favor nor oppose, oppose, or strongly oppose special job training and educational assistance for [group]?

Opportunity-enhancing programs are often treated as more benign forms of government assistance since they merely create a situation to enhance a group’s opportunities for socio-economic advancement. In other words, these programs are simply “helping people help themselves” (Bobo and Kluegel 1993: 446). Consequently, researchers find stronger support among whites for opportunity-enhancing programs than for outcome-directed programs (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Lipset and Schneider 1978).

The second question can be considered as an outcome-directed policy. In contrast to the previous policy, outcome-directed programs usually elicit stronger opposition among whites since they go beyond simply providing a condition for success, but attempt to guarantee benefits based on an individuals group status. Preferential policies or quotas typically fall under this category. To assess support for outcome directed policies, respondents were asked the following question:

**Outcome-directed policy.** Some people feel that because of past disadvantages, there are some groups in society that should be given preferences in hiring and promotion. Others say that it is unfair to give these groups special preferences. What about you? Do you strongly favor, favor, neither favor nor oppose, oppose, or strongly oppose special preferences in hiring and promotion to [group]?

Table 1 shows the level support for each of these policies generally, regardless of whether the beneficiaries are African Americans, Latinos, or Asian Americans. In other words respondents who supported the program for all three groups were coded as favoring the policy. This coding method more accurately captures the real world application of these policies since both programs were designed to apply equally to African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans.

Table 1 shows variation in attitudes based on an individual’s racial/ethnic status and is consistent with prior research to the extent that opportunity-enhancing policy measures receive greater support than the outcome-directed policies (Bobo 1998). African Americans display the strongest support for both policies while whites displayed the lowest support. Support among Latinos and Asian Americans with varying degrees fell between these two populations. ANOVA statistics show that in the opportunity-enhancing policy, the difference between African Americans (57.8 percent), Latinos (57.5 percent) and Asian Americans (53.6 percent) are not statistically significant. However, the difference between each of the minority populations and whites was statistically

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**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Opportunity-enhancing policy</th>
<th>Outcome-directed policy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos</td>
<td>57.5%</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Americans</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Notes:**

significant. Support for the outcome-directed policy drops among all groups and in this case, the difference across each of the groups is also statistically significant.

In an effort to begin to understand minority attitudes toward these policies, we next turn to consider some factors that may structure these opinions. Some researchers argue that in the last two decades class rather than racial identities are more relevant for understanding minority policy attitudes (Jackman and Jackman 1983; Wilson 1980). Prior to the enactment and enforcement of civil rights legislation, race was the predominant factor determining the opportunities available to many racial and ethnic groups in America. However, in modern times, some posit that racial prejudice is no longer a significant obstacle for minority socio-economic advancement and note the rise of middle class minority populations as proof of their thesis (Chavez 1991; Steele 1991; Wilson 1980). Moreover, its is believed that as racial minorities enter the middle class they will come to share policy preferences with middle class whites rather than with members of their own race occupying a lower socio-economic status - economic heterogeneity gives rise to political heterogeneity (Tuch and Sigelman 1997). While some find differences in policy positions among African Americans along class lines (Gilliam and Whitby 1989; Welch and Foster 1987; Sowell 1984). While some find differences in policy positions among African Americans along class lines (Gilliam and Whitby 1989; Welch and Foster 1987), others note that on race-targeted policies, racial identities tend to transcend class identities (Dawson 1994; Jackman and Jackman 1983; Tuch and Sigelman 1997).

The question of whether racial or class identities are more important in shaping the policy preferences of African Americans is hotly contested. We consider the effects of class in structuring attitudes among whites, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. Are the attitudes of upper-class minorities similar to those of upper-class whites, or do the racial differences persist regardless of their class status? To answer this, we divide each of the four groups into two categories, lower class and upper class. Respondents are categorized into a lower-class status group if their annual family incomes are below $20,000. Respondents are classified as upper class if their income is $50,000 or greater.

The results in Table 2 reveal that race and class matter in shaping respondents attitudes toward these policies (Tuch and Sigelman 1997). On the opportunity-enhancing policy, class appears to trump race among lower-class respondents. While support among whites drops from 59.6 percent to 30 percent, there is little change in support among minority respondents suggesting that racial identities are not weakened as minorities enter a higher class status. On the outcome-directed policy, race and class are more intermixed in their influence. First, there is a decline in support for this policy among the upper class across the groups, with the exception of Latinos. ANOVAs reveal that differences across class for whites, African Americans and Asian Americans are statistically significant. Yet, the lack of response clustering among the lower and upper-class respondents is testament to the prominence of race in shaping attitudes. For example among lower-class respondents, African Americans (42.2 percent) were the most supportive of the outcome-directed policy although lower-class whites (28.7 percent), Latinos (29.2 percent), and Asians Americans (30.7 percent) displayed similar levels of support. Among the upper class, each of the groups displays dissimilar attitudes and those differences were statistically significant.

These tables provide a sketch of the influence of race and class in shaping the policy preferences of ethnic/racial groups. Overall, the findings underscore the conclusions reached by previous studies that class identities on race-conscious policies, do not necessarily transcend racial identities (Tuch and Sigelman 1997). One of the main reasons for the persistence of racial identities despite the rise of class heterogeneity is that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Job Training and Educational Assistance (Opportunity-enhancing)</th>
<th>Preferences in Hiring and Promotion (Outcome-directed)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Favor (%)</td>
<td>Favor (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>46.3% (n = 835)</td>
<td>15.4% (n = 387)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>57.8% (n = 1103)</td>
<td>39.8% (n = 638)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos</td>
<td>57.5% (n = 1020)</td>
<td>30.7% (n = 586)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Americans</td>
<td>53.6% (n = 1055)</td>
<td>25.8% (n = 566)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ethnic and racial minorities continue to experience discrimination (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Feagin 1991). Discrimination is often a product of increased intergroup contact with members of dominant racial or ethnic groups (Feagin and Sikes 1994). Despite the belief that middle-class minorities are largely immune to discriminatory actions, their status often situates them in environments where contact with out-groups is common (Feagin 1991). Consequently, middle-class African Americans find themselves in environments and institutional structures where the likelihood of discrimination is higher. Sigelman and Tuch’s (1997) study reveals that African Americans across socioeconomic strata perceive whites as holding negative stereotypes of blacks. Qualitative studies of middle-class African Americans suggest that many continue to experience racial prejudice and discrimination in the workplace and other public spheres (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Feagin 1991).

Survey data show that a majority of blacks continue to point to discrimination as the main reason for the socioeconomic disadvantage (Schuman et al., 1997). Among whites, a belief that blacks continue to experience discrimination correlates positively with support for affirmative action programs (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). Recent work by Hughes and Tuch (2000) show that structural explanations for poverty, which include a measure of discrimination, shapes minority attitudes toward racial policies. Given that African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans share a common history of exclusion we believe it is critical to consider, not only personal experiences with discrimination but also perceptions of general discrimination toward ethnic and racial minorities. There is currently little written on the effects perceptions of discrimination have on minority political attitudes, in particular Asian Americans and Latinos, much less, work differentiating between experiences with personal discrimination and perceptions of general discrimination.

In an effort to identify the factors that predict minority and white attitudes toward race-conscious policies we model general support for opportunity-enhancing and outcome-directed policies as a function of class status, perceptions of discrimination, ideological orientations, and sociodemographic characteristics. Are certain factors more salient depending on the program, or do the predictors perform similarly across both? To isolate the independent effects of class, perceptions of individual and general discrimination, and other predictors have in structuring racial attitudes we employ multivariate logistic analysis. We run two general-determinants models, one for each of the two policies.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TABLE 2</th>
<th>GENERAL SUPPORT BY CLASS STATUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Training and Educational Assistance (Opportunity-enhancing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Favor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Class $0-$19,999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>59.6% (112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 835)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>55.8% (309)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 1103)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos</td>
<td>57.3% (294)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 1020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Americans</td>
<td>52.8% (141)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 1055)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our first key predictor, class status is divided into two categories, lower class for respondents whose annual family incomes is below $20,000, and higher class for respondents whose annual incomes is $50,000 or above. Our second predictor, personal discrimination, is based on an index which is made up of three questions: (1) “Have you every felt at any time in the past that you were refused a job because of your race or ethnicity?” (2) “During the (past year/last year you worked) were you discriminated against at your work because of your race/ethnicity?” and (3) “Have you ever felt at any time in the past that others at your place of employment got promotions or pay raises faster than your did because of your race or ethnicity?” For each the “yes” response was coded 1 and “no” coded 0. The three questions were summed to create a personal discrimination scale ranging from 0 to 3, with an alpha of .506. Our third predictor, general discrimination is based on the following question: “In general, how much discrimination is there that hurts the chances of [African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans] to get a good paying job?” Each response ranges from 0 “none at all” to 3 “a lot.” The responses are summed
to create a general discrimination scale ranging from 0 to 9 with an alpha of .669.

Finally, the models include several control variables. The political ideology variable captures a respondent’s political ideological orientation. The variable is based on a 7-point scale ranging from extremely liberal (0) to extremely conservative (6). Although African Americans and to a lesser degree Latinos are perceived to be politically liberal, each of the populations studied here are not as ideologically homogenous as commonly believed (Uhlaner and Garcia 2002; Lien 2001; Tate 1994). We are largely confined to analyzing political ideology among whites, here we examine if politically conservative minorities display higher levels of political conservatism (McDermott 1994; Gilliam and Whitby 1989; Welch and Foster 1987). The principled objection perspective has well established that self-identified conservatives oppose race-conscious policies on the grounds that they object to extensive government involvement in remedying racial inequalities (Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Kuklinski and Parent 1981; Sniderman, Brody, and Kuklinski, 1984). While this approach has largely been confined to analyzing political ideology among whites, here we examine if politically conservative minorities display greater opposition to race-conscious programs.

Additional controls include the usual suspects; gender, coded as a dummy, 1 for female and 0 for male, education, age and dummies for each of the minority groups. The variables gender and foreign-born are treated as theoretically ambiguous. The variable education ranges from 0 to 17 years. There is a long held assumption that education has a politically liberalizing effect and the well-educated display a deeper commitment to democratic principles (Protho and Grigg 1960; Stouffer 1955). Subsequently, it was believed that the more educated were less likely to display prejudiced attitudes and more likely to be supportive of race-conscious programs. Research by Jackman (1973; 1981a; 1981b) and Jackman and Muha (1984) challenges this assumption. Jackman’s research findings suggest that the well educated were more familiar with the principles of racial integration and equality, yet their commitment to seeing these principles come to life did not run very deep. Extending these findings, we too argue that the effects of education should be modest if any on support for racial hiring and promotion preferences. Age is a continuous variable, ranging from 21 years to 99 years. Despite the popular belief that older individuals are less racially tolerant than younger people, age is generally found to be weakly or insignificantly related to support for race-conscious programs (Bobo 2000), while others find younger cohorts display more liberal racial attitudes (Schuman et al. 1997).

As noted earlier each of the ethnic/racial groups is isolated with dummy variables, with whites being the unexpressed category. If the coefficients for the variables African American, Latino, and Asian American are insignificant after the inclusion of these predictors, then we have confidence in arguing that these predictors can explain away the differences in support for race targeted programs between minorities and whites. If the coefficients remain significant and positive then we have reason to believe that other additional factors must be considered when analyzing why certain minority groups remain more supportive of these programs.

Table 3 reports the results of the logistic models. Since logistic coefficients are not directly interpretable we use CLARIFY (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2001) to estimate the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. CLARIFY estimates the change in the expected value of the dependent variable for a specified change in the independent variable, holding all others constant. In this case, we set all other predictors to their means and estimate the change in the expected values of the dependent variable when we vary the individual predictor from its minimum to its maximum value.

The results in Table 3 reveal that even after controlling for socioeconomic status, demographic factors, political ideology, and perceptions of discrimination, the racial/ethnic group dummies are all significant, suggesting that the predictors alone cannot account for ethnic/racial group differences. Since whites are the unexpressed category, comparisons between the groups must be made with reference to the constant. A consistent finding across the two policy areas is that whites remain the least supportive of these policies while in Model I, Latinos were the most supportive, followed by African Americans, and Asian Americans. While the attitudes of minorities were indistinguishable in Table 1, the results here show that after the introduction of controls, notable differences among the groups emerge. In Model II, African Americans were the most supportive followed by Latinos, Asian Americans, and whites.

One of the strongest predictors of support for the opportunity-enhancing policy (Model I) is the general discrimination variable. This is not surprising since we anticipated that individuals who believed discrimination was still a problem facing African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans would display greater support for race-conscious policies. Interpreting this estimate, moving from the lowest to the highest value on the general discrimination measure increases the probability of offering a favorable response to the opportunity-enhancing policy by .247. None of the demographic variables are significant, however respondents in the higher-class category resulted in a .087 decline in support for the opportunity-enhancing policy. Holding all other variables constant respondents who experienced individual discrimination are no more likely to support this policy. An interesting finding in Model I and II, is that the variable political ideology had no discernable impact in structuring attitudes toward either policy. Although the principled objection hypothesis provers that self-identified as conservatives oppose race-conscious policies on the basis of favoring less government involvement in remedying racial inequalities, the findings here are consistent with others who note the negligible effects of political ideology in structuring racial attitudes (Kinder and Sanders 1996). Model I as a whole is significant and correctly predicts 72.96 percent of the cases with a proportional reduction of error (PRE tau-c) of .317.
Turning to Model II, we find that the variable general discrimination continues to exert a powerful influence on predicting support for racialized policies. Moving from its lowest to highest value increases support for the outcome-directed policy by .122. While the variable personal discrimination, which was insignificant in the first model, becomes significant in the second model and is negatively associated with support for racial/ethnic preferences. The negative finding is not entirely unexpected and may be a reflection of the operationalization of this measure. The personal discrimination scale is based on questions capturing discrimination in the workplace such as being passed-up for a promotion or refused a job because of a person's race or ethnicity. Since many consider outcome-directed policies as inherently discriminatory, and it is likely that personal experiences with discrimination in the workplace will result in opposition to programs that use race or ethnicity as the basis of hiring and promotion. In short, the adage that “two wrongs don’t make it right” seems to apply in Model II.

### Table 3

**Determinants of Attitudes Toward Opportunity-Enhancing and Outcome-Directed Policies among African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MODEL I</th>
<th>MODEL II</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Job Training and Educational Assistance</td>
<td>CLARIFY, First Difference in Predicted Probabilities (Min &gt; Max)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>.321** (.129)</td>
<td>.078 (.159)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinos</td>
<td>.454*** (.139)</td>
<td>.111 (.171)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>.300* (.131)</td>
<td>.074 (.170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Class</td>
<td>.071 (.098)</td>
<td>.016 (.107)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Class</td>
<td>−.354*** (.119)</td>
<td>−.087 (.147)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Discrimination</td>
<td>−.044 (.056)</td>
<td>−.034 (.027)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Discrimination</td>
<td>.112*** (.021)</td>
<td>.247 (.247)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>−.013 (.024)</td>
<td>−.019 (.247)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.074 (.085)</td>
<td>.018 (.096)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>.015 (.015)</td>
<td>.063 (.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.006 (.003)</td>
<td>.116 (.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>−1.117*** (.316)</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-square</td>
<td>65.39</td>
<td>123.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>72.96</td>
<td>57.48</td>
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<td>.144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>2371</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two tailed probabilities: † p < .075, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001
While the class variables are significant in Model II, higher-class respondents being less supportive, and lower-class respondents being favorably disposed, the magnitude of variables is not as large as the discrimination variables or the ethnic/racial dummies, suggesting that racial differences continue to trump class differences on this issue. The demographic variables education and age have a strong influence on predicting support for hiring and promotion preferences. Higher rates of education are negatively associated while older individuals were more likely to favor the policy. The former finding challenges the assumption that education has a liberalizing effect on racial attitudes while the latter might be capturing a cohort effect, suggesting that the civil rights generation are more supportive of these policies than subsequent generations. This latter finding challenges Schuman et al. (1997), who observe younger generations socialized during the 1980s, a time when there was conservative backlash toward civil rights, displayed more liberal racial attitudes than older cohorts.

Conclusion

Previous research on racial attitudes has been largely confined to studying white attitudes toward African Americans or policies designed to assist them. Only recently has the study of minority attitudes toward race-conscious policies been undertaken, as is evidenced by the body of literature reviewed in this article. Our study contributes a new perspective by comparing minority attitudes along job training and educational assistance programs (an opportunity-enhancing policy) and racial preferences in the workplace (an outcome-directed policy). The topic is timely given that affirmative action policies are being dismantled at a time when racial inequality appears to be widening. Because both to these programs were designed to apply equally to African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans, we analyze general support for these policies rather than consider support for these programs toward a particular beneficiary group. This coding method, we argue, better captures the real-world application of these programs.

We find that across each of the four groups studied, there is greater support for special job training and educational assistance programs than for preferences in hiring and promotion. Generally, African Americans strongly support both policies, while whites appear to be the least supportive. Latino and Asian American attitudes diverge from these positions by proffering more moderate responses. In an effort to begin to understand the factors structuring minority attitudes toward these policies, we considered the effects of class, ethnic/racial identities, as well as a host of demographic controls. Bivariate and multivariate analyses show that class identities figure prominently in shaping attitudes toward these policies, yet the persistence of ethnic/racial identities remains the most significant determinants in structuring minority attitudes on these particular racial policies. Ethnic and racial differences remain significant even when measures of discrimination are included in the analysis. The prominence of ethnicity and race, particularly on the outcome-directed policy, may suggest that group interests largely drive attitudes on racial policies. At least this is the most common argument given by researchers who note similar findings. However, we take issue with this popular explanation. Given our coding method, it is not clear to us why African Americans would be the strongest supporters for policies designed to assist out-groups as well, or why Latinos and Asian Americans would not be as supportive given that they too are beneficiaries of these programs.

Yet, self- or group-interested explanations may explain some of the differences found between blacks and whites. According to the rational-choice framework, individuals will oppose policies which do not advance their personal or group's self interest (Citrin and Green 1990), thus, whites oppose racialized programs because they perceive deriving little benefits from them (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Wilson 1987). In contrast, among the minority groups studied, only African Americans have experienced chattel slavery and endured its legacies (Shklar 1998). Moreover, there is evidence showing that blacks differentially experience higher levels of discrimination than other ethnic/racial groups (McClain and Stewart 1999; Uhlman 1991). Consequently, for self-interested reasons, certain race-conscious policies, even when they apply to others, are likely to receive the greatest support from African Americans. Because Latinos and Asian Americans have sizable foreign-born populations, their political outlooks reflect the optimism of immigrant populations who have limited experience with American society (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 1996). Migrants generally come to new locations with extravagant hopes. This was true of black migrants entering northern cities at the turn of the century and foreign migrants entering the U.S. (Takaki 1993). Over time, this optimism is dashed as ethnic/racial immigrants are confronted with and learn about prejudice and discrimination. Research on immigrant populations reveals that among the second generation, an increased familiarity and participation in American society leads them to report higher levels of personal and structural discrimination as well as reflect a more pessimistic outlook toward occupational opportunities available to them (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 1996; Portes and Bach 1985). Yet, even among immigrant groups there is a hierarchy in levels of personal and structural discrimination with, black immigrants (e.g., Haitians, Jamaicans and West Indies) reporting lower levels, followed by Latino and Asian immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, 1996; Portes and Bach 1985). Clearly, not all individuals experience or perceive the existence of discrimination equally or define self- or group-interest equally and this in turn can shape their differential support for certain race-conscious programs.

Other alternative explanations can be derived from perceptions that these programs are in practice applied differentially. Despite rhetorical and written statements that affirmative action policies cover each of these groups, in practice some groups may be perceived to reap greater benefits from these programs. Beyond these perceptions there may be
some who believe their own group is less deserving of these programs. Of course, this is all speculation. Future surveys should include questions measuring the degree to which respondents believe affirmative action policies have benefited certain groups over others and whether certain groups are more deserving of these policies given their historical experience. Affirmative action questions continually make references to “past disadvantages.” To our knowledge no one has explored how respondents across different ethnicities and races conceptualize the term “past disadvantages.”

This discussion does not imply that we favor the use of questions which reference particular groups as beneficiaries of a particular racialized policy. We believe this approach is disconnected with the real world application of these policies since they offer little insight into how individuals actually feel about these policies. For example, if a respondent favors affirmative action policies for his/her group but not for others, what can we say about how this individual will vote on an initiative such as California’s proposition 209 which ended these programs for all minorities? We believe a better strategy would be first to explore, through qualitative methods, minority conceptualizations of race-conscious policies. Once this is undertaken, survey researchers can begin constructing new questions, which better capture their attitudes and beliefs toward these policies rather than continue the practice of extending old questions to these new populations.

The significance of the racial/ethnic variables, after the introduction of several controls, if nothing else, demonstrates that we have yet to identify all the factors that underlie these group differences and thus more research should be undertaken analyzing minority attitudes toward racialized policies. We have identified several areas deserving exploration.

Emerging ethnic and racial groups are increasingly challenging the black-white dichotomy that has historically characterized race relations in the United States. Debates on race will no longer be characterized as asymmetric conflicts fought between two warring camps but will involve more players forming complex alliances. As a consequence researchers must begin to reevaluate old theories and paradigms, and formulate new ones that better capture racial attitudes in a multiracial society. Given the diversity of ethnic/racial groups it might be impossible to formulate a single conceptual framework that can explain their political attitudes and behaviors. Nevertheless, the continuance of racial unrest throughout the U.S. is a reminder to policymakers and social scientists that these emerging voices can no longer be ignored.

**References**


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