

Annotated Bibliography of Social Science Research on Affirmative Action

The following is a list of publications of social science research regarding public opinion about affirmative action. The bibliography is meant to provide a base but is certainly not exhaustive of all the work on this subject.

Bobo, L. (2000). Race and Beliefs about Affirmative Action: Assessing the Effects of Interests, Group Threat, Ideology, and Racism. In D.O. Sears, J. Sidanius, & L. Bobo (Eds.), *Racialized Politics: The Debate about Racism in America* (pp. 137-164). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Beliefs about the effects of affirmative action are very closely associated with actual policy preferences. Much of why “race matters” reflects group-based interests. Affirmative action is situated in a powerfully racialized economic and political context where there is a meaningful and indisputable short-term difference in group interests. A rhetoric centered around a mutual recognition and accommodation of legitimate interests is a more promising basis for racial progress than one centered around competing claims to moral virtue.

Bobo, L., & Hutchings, V.L. (1996). Perceptions of Racial Group Competition: Extending Blumer’s Theory of Group Position to a Multiracial Social Context. *American Sociological Review*, 61, 951-972.

People who think their racial group is treated unfairly in the larger social order are more likely to view people from other racial groups as competitive threats.

Bobo, L., & Kluegel, J.R. (1993). Opposition to Race-Targeting: Self-Interest, Stratification Ideology, or Racial Attitudes? *American Sociological Review*, 58, 443-464.

Whites are more supportive of income-targeted programs than race-targeted programs. Whites are more supportive of opportunity enhancing race-based policies than they are of equal outcome race-based policies.

Branton, R.P., & Jones B.S. (2005). Reexamining Racial Attitudes: The Conditional Relationship Between Diversity and Socioeconomic Environment. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49, 359-372.

Race-based programs receive more support from groups where high socioeconomic status is combined with racially diverse environments than when low socioeconomic status is combined with similar diversity.

Cantor, N. (2004). Higher Education Policy-Making in the Melting Pot of Shareholder Voices: The Michigan Affirmative Action Initiatives. *Policy Forum: Institute of Government & Public Affairs University of Illinois*, 17(2), 1-5.

Five “stakeholder voices/positions” surrounded *Grutter* and *Gratz*: “Voice of Individual Rights,” “Social Justice Voice of Emerging Minority Populations,” “Voice of Societal Productivity, Security, and Legitimacy,” “Voice of Educational Institutions and Admissions Policies,” and “Voice of the Disciplines in the Cases.” In the *Grutter* opinion, the Court shifted the ground of the argument from individual rights to social health, revitalizing racial harmony as a compelling national interest.

Cantor, N. (2004). Introduction. In Gurin, P, Lehman, J.S., Lewis, E., Dey, E.L., Hurtado, S., & Gurin, G. *Defending Diversity: Affirmative Action at the University of Michigan* (pp. 1-16). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Educational diversity stimulates critical thinking by exposing students to perspectives that vary from or challenge their own; undermines stereotypes which, among other things, hamper productivity; and distributes more power to disenfranchised segments of society.

Cho, S. (2002). Understanding White Women’s Ambivalence towards Affirmative Action: Theorizing Political Accountability. *University of Missouri-Kansas City Law Review*, 71, 399-418.

Many white women who vote against affirmative action may make their decisions based on what they perceive as the program’s negative effect on their husbands and sons.

Crosby, F.J., & Franco, J. (2003). Connections between the Ivory Tower and the Multicolored World: Linking Abstract Theories of Social Justice to the Rough and Tumble of Affirmative Action. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 7, 362-373.

Even in competitive situations, those with the upper hand will accept rule change if they can be convinced that the old rules created situations that were unfair or ran counter to their own cherished values.

Crosby, F.J., Iyer, A., Clayton, S., & Downing, R. (2003). Affirmative Action: Psychological data and the policy debates. *American Psychologist*, 58, 93-115.

All measures of merit include an element of subjectivity and thus can be influenced by historical and current prejudice. Psychological factors such as stereotype threat influence how minority group members perform, causing some evaluation techniques (tests) to underestimate their actual merit. Studies show that it is difficult to detect unfairness in evaluation techniques in the absence of aggregate data. Affirmative action programs, which rely on analysis of systematic aggregate data, are needed to fairly reward merit.

DiTomaso, N., Parks-Yancy, R., & Post, C. (2003). White Views of Civil Rights: Color Blindness and Equal Opportunity. In Doane, A.W., & Bonilla-Silva, E. (Eds.), *White Out: The Continued Significance of Racism* (pp. 189-198). New York: Routledge.

Colorblind ideology allows whites to overlook their racial privilege (e.g. social networks, economic resources available to them) and explain their own achievements and status by individual merit and effort.

Elizondo, E., & Crosby, F. (2004). Attitudes toward Affirmative Action as a Function of the Strength of Ethnic Identity among Latino College Students. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 24*, 1773-1796.

Overall Latino students generally endorse affirmative action and do not feel undermined by it. The more the Latino student identified with his or her ethnic group, the more strongly the student supported affirmative action.

Esses, V.M., & Dovidio J. (2002). The Role of Emotions in Determining Willingness to Engage in Intergroup Contact. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28*, 1202-1214.

While focus on emotions brought about greater willingness by Whites to engage in contact with Blacks, it did not affect Whites' social policy endorsements and cognitions about Blacks.

Federico, C.M., & Sidanius, J. (2002). Racism, Ideology, and Affirmative Action Revisited: The Antecedents and Consequences of "Principled Objections" to Affirmative Action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*, 488-502.

Results from this study indicated that principled-objection endorsement was driven not merely by race-neutral values but also by dominance-related concerns like racism, and that education strengthened—rather than attenuated—the relationship between dominance-related concerns and principled objections.

Gaertner, S.L., & Dovidio, J.F. (2005). Understanding and Addressing Contemporary Racism: From Aversive Racism to the Common Ingroup Identity Model. *Journal of Social Issues, 61*, 615-639.

Research suggests that the development of a common ingroup identity can change feelings in interracial situations from negative to positive.

Gilliam, Jr., F.D., Frameworks Institute (2006). *The Architecture of New Racial Discourse*. Retrieved October 12, 2008 from http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/PDF/gilliam_memo1106.pdf

A frame that emphasizes opportunity, future prosperity, and interconnectedness of communities that leads to a shared fate, is a promising frame used to build public opinion

in favor of race-related policies. Emphasizing possible solutions to racial problems is another frame that builds public support.

Golden, H., Hinkle, S. & Crosby, F. (2001). Reactions to affirmative action: Substance and semantics. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 31*, 73-88.

Among both White and Black citizens, support for affirmative action is greater when the policy is understood as a monitoring system than a quota system.

Haley, H., & Sidanius, J. (2006). The Positive and Negative Framing of Affirmative Action: A Group Dominance Perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 32*, 656-668.

This study found that though people evaluate affirmative action differently depending on how it is framed, they seize and deploy those frames that best complement their dominance-related motives.

Harrison, D.A., Kravitz, D.A., Mayer, D.M., Leslie, L.M., & Lev-Arey, D. (2006). Understanding Attitudes toward Affirmative Action Programs in Employment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 91*, 1013-1036.

Affirmative action programs will receive more support if the operation of the program is described in detail, to counter the mistaken public belief that affirmative action necessarily involves preferences.

Iyer, A., Leach, C.W., & Crosby, F.J. (2003). White guilt and racial compensation: The benefits and limits of self focus. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*, 117-129.

Encouraging group-based sympathy for minority groups – by focusing on the suffering of the disadvantaged rather than the wrongdoing of the advantaged – will provide greater support for equal opportunity policies.

Kang, J., & Benaji, M. (2006). Fair Measures: A Behavioral Realist Revision of “Affirmative Action.” *California Law Review, 94*, 1063-1118.

The pervasive implicit bias revealed by social science research provides a basis for viewing affirmative action programs as responses to discrimination in the here and now. This is an independent and compelling case for action, which does not encounter many of the political and legal obstacles that backward-looking frames of corrective justice (e.g., compensation for slavery) and forward-looking frames of utilitarian engineering (e.g., potential pedagogical benefit) are faced with.

Kinder, D.R. & Winter, N. (2001). Exploring the Racial Divide: Blacks, Whites, and Opinion on National Policy. *American Journal of Political Science, 45*, 439-456.

Differences between whites and blacks on racial policies (like school integration and affirmative action) are due in large part to political principles and social identity. Those

who valued equality tended to support AA; those who valued small government tended not to. Feelings of resentment had the strongest effect on support – those who resented blacks did not support AA.

Kravitz, D.A., & Klineberg, S.L. (2000). Reactions to Two Versions of Affirmative Action among Whites, Blacks, & Hispanics. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85, 597-611.

Two versions of affirmative action were evaluated: a self-defined “typical” affirmative action plan (AAP) and a tiebreak AAP that applies under conditions of equal qualifications and underrepresentation. Whites preferred the tiebreak AAP, while Blacks and Hispanics preferred the typical AAP.

Nelson, T.E., & Kinder, D.R. (1996). Issue Frames and Group-Centrism in American Public Opinion. *The Journal of Politics*, 58, 1055-1078.

Public opinion on government policy is group-centric: that is, strongly influenced by the attitudes citizens possess toward the social groups perceived as the beneficiaries of the policy. Group-centrism hinges in part on how issues are framed in public debate. When issues are framed in ways that draw attention to a policy's beneficiaries, group-centrism increases; when issues are framed in ways that deflect attention away from the beneficiaries, group-centrism declines.

Richardson, J.D. (2005). Switching Social Identities: The Influence of Editorial Framing on Reader Attitudes toward Affirmative Action and African Americans. *Communication Research*, 32, 503-528.

This study hypothesized that the diversity frame would make readers more supportive of affirmative action because it appeals to the superordinate group (diversity is good for everyone), while the remedial action frame would make readers less supportive of AA because that frame heightens the salience of racial differences. The study found no significant differences in support for AA after exposure to either the diversity or the remedial frames.

Sidanius, J., Singh, P., Hetts, J.J., & Federico, C. (2000). It's Not Affirmative Action, It's the Blacks: The Continuing Relevance of Race in American Politics. In Sears, D.O., Sidanius, J. & Bobo, L. (Eds.), *Racialized Politics: The Debate About Racism in America* (pp. 191-235). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Though some believe that opposition to race-targeted policies is due to principled political stances, this chapter argues that the desire for group dominance is the most important motive underlying opposition to race-specific policies.

Smith, H.J., & Tyler, T.R. (1996). Justice and power: When will justice encourage the advantaged to support policies which redistribute economic resources and encourage the disadvantaged to willingly obey the law? *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 26, 171-200.

If people identified with their particular advantaged or disadvantaged group, they were more concerned about the costs and benefits to their group, but if people identified with a superordinate category that included both potential outgroup members and relevant superordinate authorities, they were more concerned with how the superordinate authorities treated citizens. Political policies are much more likely to be successful if those for whom the policy is not clearly beneficial are more interested in how the superordinate authorities treat citizens.

Son Hing, L.S., Bobocel, D.R., & Zanna, M.P. (2002). Meritocracy and Opposition to Affirmative Action: Making Concessions in the Face of Discrimination. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 493-509.

Those who strongly value merit will be more supportive of affirmative action programs if they are made aware of the existence of discrimination against beneficiaries, because the programs are then more likely to be seen as designed to restore merit-based decisions.

Steeh, C., & Krysan, M. (1996). Affirmative Action and the Public, 1970-1995. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 60, 128-158.

Whites support programs that improve the social and economic position of Blacks and other minorities more than those programs for Blacks alone.

Tyler, T.R. (2004). Affirmative action in an institutional context: The antecedents of policy preferences and political support. *Social Justice Research*, 17, 5-24.

People were more supportive of policies intervening in markets when they believed that markets represented unfair social allocation procedures. Those politicians who supported such policies received greater electoral support when people viewed market procedures as being unfair and when they felt that government decision-making procedures were fair.

Westen, D. (2007). *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*. New York: Public Affairs.

People base decisions on political issues on emotion, not on reason, as evidenced by the fact that the most politically-aware voters are the most partisan. This is because political issues generally are about values. On racial issues, Westen suggests that without strategically framed messages that appeal to the conscious mental process, unconscious attitudes will prevail. This is problematic because racial bias tends to rest more deeply in the unconscious than in the conscious mind.