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An Examination of Support or Non-Support for Affirmative Action, Race-Targeted and Income-Targeted Policies

Edward L. Kick
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ABSTRACT. Many quantitative studies attempt to identify the causes of public support in America for race-targeted, income-targeted, and affirmative action programs. But results are mixed and the theorized predictors of income-targeting support in particular are rather anemic in their predictive power. We identify several possible conceptual and methodological shortcomings in the literature, and provide an alternative examination based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of data drawn from a convenience sample. The results are revealing and suggest directions for future research. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <http://www.haworthpressinc.com>]*

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INTRODUCTION

Research has blossomed on the causes of people's attitudes toward race ("race-targeting") and income ("income-targeting") policies, as

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well as more generic (e.g., gender) affirmative action programs in the United States. Quantitative studies have set out to identify the predictors of public support for race-targeted policies, or occasionally affirmative action policies, as those predictors are articulated by three main causal perspectives-“self-interest”; “racial attitudes”; and “stratification beliefs” (Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Bobo and Kluegel, 1993; Tuch and Hughes, 1996a; Stech and Krysan, 1996). Yet, the collective explanatory power of the three central perspectives is marginal at best, and we attribute such concerns to unresolved methodological issues related to: the use of national versus locally homogeneous samples (Lee et al., 1990); sole reliance upon quantitative analyses; the use of technically redundant independent variables in regression models; and the construction of conventional empirical indicators of policy predictors, such as “stratification beliefs” (Sears and Jessore, 1996; Jackman, 1996; Stoker, 1996).

We note as well that the role of gender in policy support is under-examined, despite plausible theoretical connections that may aid model specification (Shaw, 1992; Huddy and Sears, 1990). Also, empirical treatments often have adopted a rather restrictive focus on selected dependent variables, such as support for race-targeted programs only.

These concerns prompt us to address a range of proposed determinants of support for several race, income, and generic affirmative action policies, while employing variations on common methodological strategies used in contemporary quantitative studies (e.g., Tuch and Hughes, 1996a). We use a relatively homogeneous convenience sample in our treatment. Our tractable sample permits the gathering of both quantitative and parallel qualitative data that are central to conceptualization and theorization in this research area. Despite ample warrant (Inniss and Sittig, 1996) qualitative data analysis performed on homogenous samples rarely is employed in prior studies.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Self-Interest, Racial Attitudes, and Stratification Beliefs

The “self-interest” approach emphasizes the threat race-targeted policies in particular represent to whites. Whites view racial equality programs as restricting their own access to valued social resources, while imposing costs such as support for non-white educational and

employment opportunities (Wilson, 1987; Bobo and Kluegel, 1993). These dynamics explain their resistance to race-targeted policies and affirmative action programs.

“Racial attitudes” themes, by contrast, describe the ways racial prejudice affects white support for race-targeting programs. “Traditional racism” refers to beliefs about the inherent inferiority of blacks and correspondingly prejudicial treatment of them. Statements of such beliefs comprise a relatively restricted part of the racial inventory in America today as compared with the more subtle discourse of “symbolic racism” (McConahay, 1986). In fact a substantial literature has emerged which expressly treats virtually all antecedents to negative policy views as a manifestation of a “new” racism (Jackman, 1996).

“Stratification beliefs” represent explanatory themes based on economic individualism (Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Huber and Form, 1973) which emphasize that personal effort and individual responsibility are keys to individual economic success, while lack of motivation or ability leads to individual economic failure. Similarly, opportunities are viewed as unlimited, competition is seen as open and free, and the operation of the stratification system is thought to be equitable (Bobo and Kluegel, 1993; Tuch and Hughes, 1996a).

Prior Results

Themes from the contending approaches to targeting policies appear to be readily distinguishable, permitting critical tests of their explanatory power. However, research results are mixed. Kluegel and Smith use General Social Survey (GSS) data and a multivariate regression design to demonstrate that it is stratification beliefs which are the central predictor of whites’ support for targeting policies. They conclude that social policy is more likely to be supported by Americans when it is consistent with the dominant stratification ideology. Thus, white support is significantly higher for skills programs necessary for persons to operate successfully in the American stratification system, than for equal outcome policies.¹

Bobo and Kluegel (1993) use General Social Survey data with a regression design to show that race-targeting sharply reduces white support for a range of social policies. Further, group self-interest is a potent predictor of opposition towards race-targeted policies (Gilliam and Whitby, 1989; Hunt, 1996), although white racial attitudes and

stratification beliefs also impact support for race as opposed to income-targeted policies.²

Tuch and Hughes (1996a) apply multivariate regression techniques in analyzing two national survey data sets, the 1986 American National Election Study and the 1990 GSS. Their results support a multi-causal interpretation of white non-support for race-related social policies (racial inequality, discriminatory attitudes, and group/self-interests). They have been roundly criticized for apparent model specification errors (Davis, 1996), their failure to bridge overlapping perspectives, e.g., “symbolic racism” (Sears and Jessore, 1996; Stoker, 1996), and their neglect of stratification “beliefs” as epiphenomenal manifestations of self-interest (Jackman, 1996). However, the Tuch and Hughes treatment is but one of a series of studies that, based on assessments of model fit (i.e., “variance explained”), offer rather marginal empirical relationships.

Why is the explanatory power of competing theorizations apparently so uncertain, and why is the overall “fit” of regression models in this research area so modest? It is possible that heterogenous samples such as those in national data sets (i.e., the GSS) are comprised of mutually canceling causal tendencies, resulting in the poor performance of policy predictors. Predictors of race vs. income policy support also may differ across a broad range of policies, including affirmative action, although such distinctions are overlooked in many prior efforts. Gender may additionally play an important but underexamined role in policy advocacy. It is plausible that relevant theoretical distinctions drawn in the literature further mask an important empirical overlap among predictors drawn from the contending perspectives on program support. Moreover, the use in regression analyses of a multiplicity of essentially redundant regressors may lead to Type I and Type II errors as well as poor model fit. And finally, we think it is likely that qualitatively derived constructions of subjects about policy support will provide a critical degree of analytical leverage that informs the quantitative analyses which dominate the literature.³ We address these issues below.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

We collected primary data on multiple measures of the central constructs articulated in prior efforts. Closed-ended and open-ended

questions were administered in a questionnaire format to a relatively homogeneous sample of 270 white respondents who were students at a large, urban, and predominantly white university. The students were enrolled in an Introductory Sociology class. For the most part they were born and raised in the geographical area of the University and, due to the common racial, ethnic and religious heritage (Latter-Day Saints, or “Mormons”) of the population, they essentially are members of a “monoculture.”

The questions employed were partly drawn from the General Social Survey (GSS), but they also included a range of items tailored to our convenience sample. The methodology we employ permits parallel qualitative and quantitative examinations of policy support levels and causal antecedents using GSS and non-GSS questions, offering a richness of detail and hypothesis confirmation opportunities not otherwise available.

Nevertheless, the socio-demographics of our sample are circumscribed on some indicators of self and/or group interest, e.g., income, education (Tuch and Hughes, 1996a), and we cannot claim our findings generalize to a national population. To be sure, some parallels with prior national sample findings emerge, supporting the wider applicability of the conclusions we derive. However, we raise the possibility that results that address “causal” relationships for the nation as a whole may obscure the very different relationships that would otherwise emerge if more homogeneous samples were separately analyzed (Hunt, 1996; Lee, Jones and Lewis, 1990).

Dependent Variables

Tuch and Hughes (1996a) criticize prior studies for their neglect of multivariate models of a broad range of race-targeted policies. Consequently, the present study is based on multiple dependent policy variables, including: (a) degree of support for race-targeted and income-targeted policies; (b) support for policies in occupational and educational settings; as well as (c) support for affirmative action policies.

We initially gained answers to many Likert-type and open-ended questions tapping the degree of respondent agreement with a variety of policy-related scenarios. Parallel questions that tapped support for minority versus income-related items were used (Appendix I, EPMT and EPIT; WPMT and WPIT). Factor analysis identified appropriate clusters for the dependent variables as reported in Appendix I. Mea-

asures were in a common metric and composite variables were created for regression analysis (alpha \geq .70). These procedures help identify clusters of similarly situated variables, reducing the number of regression equations which must be estimated, visually displayed, and interpreted.

Minority-targeted and income-targeted policy support for educational issues (respectively, EPMT and EPIT in Appendix I) reflect respondent support for special funding for: elementary schools in minority areas; elementary schools in low-income areas; and special funding for the college education of minorities or the poor. Minority-targeted and income-targeted policy support for work issues (WPMT, WPIT) reflect the degree of support for: the provision of tax breaks as incentives for businesses to locate in minority or poor neighborhoods; and company preference for minority member hiring. Two measures of the degree of support for more generic affirmative action policies also were examined. These indicators respectively cover support for the statements: "affirmative action policies do more harm than good"; and, "affirmative action programs help compensate for past injustice." Precise questions used in indicator construction are, again, shown in Appendix I.⁴

Independent Variables

Independent variables are grouped into three blocks (Appendix I) that partly reflect causal linkages made in the literature (Bobo and Kluegel, 1993). Traditional constructions of "stratification beliefs" and "racial attitudes" are empirical composites, based on common metrics from factor-analyses of the body of indicators. Thus, instead of regressor blocks based on highly controversial conceptualizations (Jackman, 1996), we use technical means for sorting most regressors into two distinct clusters of indicators, each of which "hangs together" internally (alpha $>$.70). We subsequently show how these results parallel findings from our qualitative analyses. In addition to other benefits, composites improve model fit by combating multicollinearity, springing from technically redundant regressors in model estimations.

The independent variables are:

1. *Self-Interest*. These are the respondent's gender and subjective social class ranking, based on nine categories ranging from "lower-lower" to "upper-upper." We avoid disaggregated measures of class

ranking (e.g., education, occupation, income) due to high statistical inter-correlations among them, causing multicollinearity. We note our usage of these socio-demographics, as compared with Tuch and Hughes' (1996a:273) use of attitudinal measures.⁵

2. *Stratification Beliefs*. This composite reflects the quantitative items shown in Appendix I, measuring the traditional "beliefs" dimension articulated in the literature. It relatedly includes attitudes toward self-help as the vehicle for improvement for the poor and minority groups, attitudes toward "double standards," attitudes toward the (under) representation of women and minorities at higher levels in organizations, and attitudes toward the sensitivity of women and minorities to prejudice and discrimination. The composite parallels our qualitative results.

3. *Racial Attitudes*. This composite includes the belief that groups are differently suited for certain jobs, and the belief that people of diverse groups are treated differently because they act differently. In this last empirically derived category, as Appendix I shows, our questions deviated somewhat from conceptualizations that focus on "traditional racism," including views about racial inferiority or segregation. Some might view the third regressor block as a measure of "modern racism," or "symbolic racism," which has to an important degree supplanted traditional racial parlance in public settings. Others might see both of our regressor blocks as outright measures of racism (Jackman, 1996). As a general point, there is a great deal of conceptual controversy in this research area, and we apply empirical strategies to address those controversies. We use conventional labels for the variables we construct, as a point of reference for readers.

Descriptive statistics in the Appendix are for the reader's information and provide evidence that parallels our more refined analyses. We report the bivariate relationships between the independent and dependent variables first, and then the results from our regression analyses. Later we address evidence based on our qualitative data gathering. Information from the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations is quite consistent with conclusions from the regression results, as are the qualitative data which offer analytical richness which cannot be gleaned from analyses of national data sets, such as the GSS.

RESULTS

Quantitative Results: Correlations

Table 1 presents bivariate associations among variables representing “self (or group) interests,” “stratification beliefs,” “attitudes toward minorities,” and consequent support levels for targeting policies. These associations are informative in their own right, but when compared with the regression results they permit judgements about spuriousness in the relationships identified.

Immediately noteworthy is the virtual absence of “interests” or social class relationships. When we substituted other disaggregated and “objective” proxies for class interests, such as real income and education, comparable results emerged. This is surprising given the positive results reported by Bobo and Kluegel (1993), but we raise the possibility that homogeneity in our sample may lead to some results that differ from those in heterogeneous samples, such as the GSS. Lack of variation in our sociodemographic regressors may foster null findings. If comparable results emerged for similarly homogenous samples, inferences from heterogeneous samples must be made with caution.

Unfortunately, direct comparison of our results with findings from many prior studies is prevented because correlational patterns rarely are given in earlier treatments. Undetected technical overlap among regressors (e.g., multicollinearity) may have confounded findings, leading to premature confirmation or disconfirmation of central hypotheses. Further, correlational information may reveal plausible indirect mechanisms that link regressors to outcome variables. An example of this is presented next.

The research literature pays little attention to the gender and policy support. We, too, find that gender is virtually unrelated, directly, to any policy outcome. However, it is significantly associated with stratification beliefs and racial attitudes (see also item SB in Appendix I); that is, men are more supportive of the current American social structure and they are somewhat more likely to hold racial attitudes. Our examination of correlations between gender and each of the components of the two composites shows the same parallels. This further supports our usage of the composite measures here, since a plethora of technically redundant regressors confounds hypothesis testing by producing

TABLE 1. Bivariate Associations Among the Independent and Dependent Variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
(1) Social Class		.047	.028	.004	.021	.110	.131	.031	.028	.056	.125*	.000	.008
(2) Gender			.174**	.244**	.086	.107	.052	.030	.155*	.103	.054	.084	.068
(3) Stratification Beliefs [SB1-5]				.000	.350**	.498**	.710**	.309**	.274**	.482**	.488**	.662**	.424**
(4) Racial Attitudes [RA 1-2]					.186**	.155**	.128	.136*	.199**	.154*	.107	.261**	.062
(5) Fund Poor Elementary Schools [EPIT 1,2]					.632**	.483**	.483**	.303**	.462**	.331**	.363**	.266**	.259**
(6) Fund Minority Elementary Schools [EPMT 1,2]					.723**	.723**	.312**	.309**	.309**	.519**	.502**	.345**	.236**
(7) Fund the Poor for College [EPIT 3]					.395**	.395**	.395**	.420**	.420**	.595**	.708**	.486**	.369**
(8) Fund Minorities for College [EPMT 3-7]					.303**	.303**	.303**	.223**	.303**	.223**	.248**	.222**	.180**
(9) Tax Breaks for Business in Poor Areas [WPIT 1-3]					.649**	.649**	.649**	.649**	.649**	.649**	.321**	.201**	.205**
(10) Tax Breaks for Business in Minority Areas [WPMT 1-5]					.443**	.443**	.443**	.443**	.443**	.443**	.443**	.342**	.482**
(11) Prefer Minority Applicants [WPMT 6-7]													.402**
(12) AA HARMS [AA 1]													.441**
(13) AA COMPENSATES [AA 2]													

* p < .05

** p < .01

*** p < .001

statistically trivial coefficients among like regressors and models with weak explanatory power.⁶

The associations between gender and stratification beliefs as well as racial attitudes are important, insofar as the latter are related to the dependent variables. Our “stratification beliefs” composite is not associated with racial attitudes per se, but it is associated with all racial and income targeting policy attitudes, as well as attitudes towards affirmative action. Those who have firmly integrated an “American stratification ethos” as measured are considerably less likely to support income or racial targeting in education or in work spheres. They are comparably strong in their opposition to affirmative action policies. Correlational findings such as these highlight a cognitive packaging of beliefs that is transituational in its application.

Racial attitudes provide a relatively consistent portrait of policy supporters and non-supporters too, as racial attitudes correspond with stratification beliefs in their relationships to policy outcomes. However, the magnitudes of coefficients for racial attitudes are not nearly so large as those for stratification beliefs.

Finally, the interdependencies among the policy support measures themselves warrant attention. There is a moderate to strong relationship among all policy measures, and an expected negative correlation emerges between the beliefs that affirmative action compensates versus harms in its social functions. Further, both of the affirmative action dependent variables are related to the other more concretely-worded policy measures in consistent and interpretable ways. Associations among the concrete policy measures are strong, and the convergence in support for race-targeted and income-targeted programs, as well as for work and education-targeted programs, is noteworthy.

Quantitative Results: Regression Analysis

Table 2 results identify net associations between policy-support outcomes and regressors blocked in the manner described above. These relationships provide a more robust test of competing perspectives on policy support, but comparability in findings characterizes the regression and correlational (as well as the forthcoming descriptive) results. This increases our confidence in the causal patterns detected.

“Class interests” again are largely unrelated to policy support in the regression findings. Yet, while abstract affirmative action policies (panels 8,9) and concrete income-targeted policies (2,4,5) are for the

TABLE 2. Regression Results (Unstandardized Coefficients in Parentheses) for Effects of Self/Group Interest, Stratification Beliefs and Racial Attitudes Variables on Support for Policy Outcomes

	(1) FUND MINORITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	(2) FUND POOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	(3) FUND MINORITY/MINORITIES FOR COLLEGE	(4) FUND THE POOR FOR COLLEGE	(5) TAX BREAKS: POOR AREAS	(6) TAX BREAKS: MINORITY AREAS	(7) PREFER MINORITY APPLICANTS	(8) AA HARMS	(9) AA COMPENSATES
CLASS	.106* (-.131)	.034 (.004)	.135 (.396)	.061 (.004)	.022 (.040)	.051 (.157)	.130* (.169)	.036 (.020)	.007 (.000)
GENDER	.032 (.116)	.048 (.184)	.084 (.707)	.086 (.170)	.079 (.491)	.014 (.127)	.076 (.284)	.083 (.162)	.142* (.297)
STRATIFICATION BELIEFS	.503*** (.917)	.362*** (.693)	.680*** (2.736)	.331*** (.327)	.259*** (.803)	.477*** (2.163)	.509*** (.947)	.677*** (.662)	.452*** (.475)
RACIAL ATTITUDES	.169** (.307)	.199*** (.381)	.105* (.439)	.153 (.151)	.170** (.523)	.152** (.684)	.116* (.216)	.278*** (.272)	.096 (.100)
R ² (ADJUSTED)	.272	.152	.473	.115	.106	.245	.246	.510	.194

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

most part unrelated to class, class interests are marginally related to two of the concrete, race-targeted policies (1,7). Coefficient magnitudes are far from large and compelling, but the dampening effect of class on support for funding minority schools and selecting minority job applicants is consistent with Bobo and Kluegel's findings (1993) regarding preference for income-targeting as opposed to race-targeting programs.

Net of stratification beliefs and racial attitudes, females are just as likely as males to view affirmative action as harmful. They are just as unsupportive of all other income-targeting or race-targeting, educational-targeting or work-related targeting policies. A notable difference is that, net of other factors, females do feel affirmative action compensates for past injustices, although it is uncertain whether their support for this abstract statement stems from their consideration of discrimination against women, minorities, or both groups. Our later qualitative findings provide insight that clarifies this uncertainty. What is important is that although gender may not directly affect the level of public policy support for programs, it in all probability exerts indirect effects through stratification beliefs and racial attitudes.

"Stratification beliefs" uniformly relate to the policy support variables, and the magnitude of many coefficients is noteworthy in light of prior negligible findings. The complex of measures that comprise "stratification beliefs" predict to: (1) an absence of faith in the compensatory value of affirmative action; (2) conviction that affirmative action is indeed harmful; and (3) lack of support for race-targeting or income-targeting policies in the work environment, and race-targeting or income-targeting policies in the educational environment. Correlational results showed that white men are more likely than white women to hold these beliefs, but the uniformly strong net association of "beliefs" casts some doubt on explanations which sharply distinguish racial-targeting versus income-targeting policies based on their causal antecedents (for discussion, see Bobo and Kluegel, 1993). When taken together the evidence shows that while the average level of white support may vary across policy types, and favor income over race-targeting (Tuch and Hughes, 1996a:734), support for all types hinges on common predictive elements.

Findings are somewhat less consistent for racial attitudes. They are unrelated to non-support for the position that affirmative action compensates for past injustices. In contrast, attitudes predict to the view

that affirmative action is harmful, and they modestly relate in uniform and predictable ways to the remaining targeting policy outcomes. Not only are the effects of attitudes uniform across these policies, coefficient signs match those for “stratification beliefs.”

When taken together the quantitative data provide important preliminary information. The factor analyses show overlap between common articulations of “stratification beliefs” and “racial attitudes.” Items related to “over sensitivity” and “under-representation,” which might otherwise be classified as racial attitudes, instead congeal with other measures of stratification beliefs. The relatively modest explanatory power of competing theorizations may be attributed partly to conventional means of partitioning causal variables from the three competing perspectives. The blending of components across perspectives suggests theoretical and empirical directions which we develop in our concluding remarks.

Stronger findings with respect to several dependent variables (e.g., panels 3 and 8) may spring from our usage of composites. As well, the relatively strong performance of our stratification beliefs regressor probably results from sample composition. Our sample is drawn from a Latter-Day Saints’ monoculture with a theology that places great emphasis on “rugged individualism” in everyday affairs and “free-agency” with regard to human behavior. Our respondents are a great deal more likely than samples drawn from more heterogenous environments to support individual achievement instead of structural blockage interpretations of attainments in America. They are less likely than others to support targeting programs of any type.

There are similarities in those variables that predict policy support for both race-targeting and income-targeting programs; nonetheless, income-targeting programs enjoy higher support levels. We do a much better job at explaining support for race-targeting, especially with the “stratification beliefs” (panels 1,3,6,7,8,9).

Finally, the same predictors matter for men and women alike, although women are in general more likely to adopt these stratification beliefs and racial attitudes that enhance their support of targeting programs. Gender does provide analytical leverage in explaining policy support, but its impacts are indirect and commonly missed.

We turn next to our qualitative results. They provide an analytical leverage unavailable in this, or prior, quantitative efforts, and they

permit broader understandings of the causal forces that determine policy support.

Qualitative Results: Cultural Repertoires

Prior studies have pointed to “traditional racism” (Balkanic, 1995) or far-reaching “modern racism” (McConahay, 1986) as critical factors in American society, but our quantitative findings do not unambiguously support these themes. The quantitative findings show that lack of support for targeting policies hinges mainly on what is termed “stratification beliefs.” Our composite measure of these beliefs includes some components that are squarely in line with “individual responsibility” articulations of such beliefs (e.g., Huber and Form, 1973). But, the composite also is based on beliefs that “there should be no double standards,” minorities and women are “overly sensitive” to prejudice and discrimination, and that minorities (or women) “could improve their situation if they tried.” Implicitly, these latter items correspond to McConahay’s (1986) articulation of modern racism, insofar as (women) minorities are viewed by whites as: complaining too often, being overly demanding, and acting against cherished American values. Through technical means we consequently find a conceptual overlap among measures that usually are treated as discrete. This distinguishes the present treatment from the bulk of the empirical literature, but parallels Jackman’s (1996) emphasis on such connections.

The qualitative results are consistent with the quantitative results, but they provide an important level of detail. We asked our respondents the following question on our questionnaires:

Two applicants are applying for a position at the same company, which has an under-representation of minority employees. They both have the same qualifications. One applicant is white, the other is a minority group member. Should the company hire the minority group applicant? Please explain.

With virtual unanimity answers were of the following order:

The company should hire the applicant that would fill the position best. Granted they may have the same qualifications, but there will always be some factor, determination, creativity, etcet-

era, that might be measured to tip the scales. No two human beings will have identical qualifications, abilities, experience, intellect, and creativity. You are always able to make a rational decision. (White-Male Respondent #68)

It depends on which one gave the better interview. If they have the same qualifications and experience then they should decide on other factors than race such as who was on time? Was their appearance neat? Did they have good communication/interpersonal skills? (White-Female Respondent #118)

Answers to the same question, replacing the race differences of the job applicants with gender as the difference were commonly of the following type:

They should hire the one that can best help them. (White-Male Respondent #69)

Not unless she is more qualified. These decisions should not be based on race, sex, etcetera. (White-Female Respondent #105)

We also asked:

Some people think that minority group members have been discriminated against for so long in the American workplace that the government should monitor the hiring practices of organizations. Should the government monitor the hiring practices of organizations?

Virtually all contributing respondents answered with a variant of:

People should not receive special benefits due to discrimination that others received. They should, however, receive protection from discrimination that could occur to them. (White-Male Respondent #160)

The past is the past. The government shouldn't try to fix the past. The future and now is what counts. Let's not continue to discriminate in the reverse now. I favor no discrimination. The most qualified should get the job regardless of sex, race, etcetera. (White-Female Respondent #173)

When taken together the bulk of answers to these questions point to “stratification beliefs” that emphasize the need to reward those who are “most qualified.” But there are additional nuances in the qualitative data that speak to this issue.

Consider the following extracts in response to our query about qualified candidates:

It would be discrimination against the white applicant if they were equally qualified then maybe the company should flip a coin to see. Do not make a decision on race or gender! (White-Male Respondent #20)

Flip a coin. Equal opportunity means equal opportunity. (White-Female Respondent #194)

What happened to equal rights? We all work just as hard as the other person does. Forget the past. Concentrate on the future people who show academic excellence. . . . (White-Female Respondent #312)

These responses were frequent among the answers to our open-ended questions and illustrate the “double standards” component of the stratification beliefs composite used in the quantitative analysis. However, the questions we asked did not elicit discourse that paralleled our stratification beliefs composite with respect to two items: the (under) representation of women and minorities at higher levels in organizations; and attitudes toward the sensitivity of women and minorities to prejudice and discrimination. The absence of responses was a straightforward consequence of the themes of our questions and the fact that, based on the literature, we did not anticipate the need to examine the discourse of the respondents on these issues.

To address this gap in our data, the concerns that guide this study, and to further verify the integrity and explanatory power of our composite variable, we sampled a comparable group of students, and asked them questions relevant to these issues.

In particular we asked:

Some say minorities and women are discriminated against in the workforce.

1. *Are minorities discriminated against?*
2. *Are women discriminated against?*

Some say minorities and women complain too much about discrimination.

1. *Do minorities complain too much about discrimination?*
2. *Do women complain too much about discrimination?*

Some say minorities and women are overly sensitive about discrimination.

1. *Are minorities sensitive about discrimination?*
2. *Are women overly sensitive about discrimination?*

Our qualitative findings, based on data from 129 respondents, complemented our factor analytic results and other qualitative findings. Thirty percent of the males and 31 percent of the females in our relatively homogeneous sample also drawn from the “monoculture” reported there is no workforce discrimination against minorities in contemporary America. Twenty-six percent of the males and 19 percent of the females felt there was occasional discrimination against minorities, or reported they were simply unsure whether there was discrimination or not. Further, 40 percent of the males and 19 percent of the females felt there is no discrimination against women. Twenty-two percent of the men were uncertain about whether such discrimination exists or felt there might be “some” or “little” discrimination. The comparable figure for the female responses was 30 percent.

Our white males and white females offered the following types of interpretive statements when they denied contemporary discrimination with respect to minorities.

- S “Absolutely not/not since the 1960’s.” (White-Male Respondent #28)
- S “Yes, I think at one time they were. Now I think they have the advantage.” (White-Female Respondent #107)
- S “No, they just like to think that to get more attention. When they are in management positions they abuse their power and boss people around in a way to get back what they think has been done to them.” (White-Male Respondent #42)
- S “No. With things like affirmative action in place I would even go as far as to say that people in the majority are discriminated against.” (White-Male Respondent #60)

With respect to women they said:

- S “Absolutely not/women can now join the military and hold the same jobs men do.” (White-Male Respondent #28)
- S “No. I think women are gaining lots of respect lately and hopefully it will continue.” (White-Male Respondent #66)
- S “Not in any job I’ve had, although if there is it is decreasing fast.” (White-Female Respondent #102)
- S “No, some labor just is not suited for some types of women.” (White-Male Respondent #44)

With respect to complaints raised about discrimination, respectively 64 percent and 65 percent of our male respondents felt that minorities complain too much and women complain too much about discrimination. The comparable figures for our female respondents was 62 and 60 percent. Respondents’ views are represented in statements such as:

With respect to minorities:

- S “Yes, they make it appear that more discrimination is present than what really is. They also bring discrimination upon themselves by complaining.” (White-Male Respondent #13)
- S “Yes, but they could try harder and bitch less.” (White-Female Respondent #95)
- S “Sometime I think, it’s like they don’t want to be just equal they want to be superior.” (White-Female Respondent #17)
- S “Yes, whenever something goes wrong they believe they’re being discriminated against.” (White-Male Respondent #36)

With respect to women:

- S “Yes, most women accuse certain actions as discrimination automatically when they aren’t discriminated.” (White-Male Respondent #13)
- S “. . . the sad thing about our society is that people are too willing to blow things out of proportion and say they’re being discriminated against when they really aren’t.” (White-Male Respondent #60)
- S “Yes!!! The ones who complain too much are called Feminazies.” (White-Female Respondent #98)
- S “Yes, a lot of them over exaggerate and manipulate to get what they want.” (White-Female Respondent #109)

And in response to our query about sensitivity to discrimination, 67 percent of the male respondents and 67 percent of the female respondents felt minorities are overly sensitive, or somewhat overly sensitive, to discrimination. Sixty-three percent of the men and 59 percent of the women felt females were sometimes or frequently too sensitive. Some illustrative responses about minorities are:

- S “Yes, they have a past of discrimination towards them-but quit complaining and blaming-they have open doors.” (White-Male Respondent #11)
- S “Yes, minorities are more racist than whites. But they get away with it.” (White-Male Respondent #18)
- S “Yes, definitely-they can make an issue over anything just to sue someone’s butt off.” (White-Female Respondent #92)
- S “Yes, they always think they didn’t get hired cause their race but it’s probably because they didn’t qualify.” (White-Female Respondent #95)

Responses about women include:

- S “Yes, they blame everything that goes wrong on discrimination.” (White-Male Respondent #86)
- S “Yes, I think they often read into it too much, they look for problems.” (White-Male Respondent #82)
- S “Women tend to be overly sensitive over all.” (White-Female Respondent #91)
- S “Yes, even if they are under qualified for the job they complain and blame it on [gender] if they don’t get the job.” (White-Female Respondent #111)

These qualitative findings support our usage of the two remaining measures in our composite “stratification beliefs” variable, which relate to “under representation” and “sensitivity.” When taken together the qualitative findings identify an organized set of beliefs which in all likelihood reflects the monoculture in which the respondents were raised. The apparent organization of their race and gender repertoires is:

1. Racial and gender discriminations do not exist in contemporary America.

2. Past discrimination carries no legacy into the present.
3. The current social structure offers equal opportunity for everyone.
4. If an individual is unsuccessful in the structure, it is due to lack of individual effort or talent (merit), not race or gender.
5. Targeting programs may even give women and minorities greater opportunity than others.
6. This is unfair, so targeting programs are untenable within the American meritocracy.
7. Further, complaints and sensitivity about the operation of the social structure are illegitimate.

Thus, our qualitative results show many of the white Americans sampled essentially are unaware of, or deny, the historicity of race relations in their accounts. They compartmentalize past discrimination as not affecting the present situation of either themselves, women, or minority groups in America.

We emphasize that it is a broad interpretive gap, indeed, to treat such attitudes as illustrative of either traditional or modern "racism." We hasten to add, however, that among these respondents the nearly uniform denial of a need to address past injustices in current policies is tantamount to an "institutionalized disadvantaging," which is firmly integrated into American stratification beliefs.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Our aim has been to advance the literature by applying to an homogeneous sample quantitative techniques and a qualitative methodology to address key research issues raised by the targeting policy literature. Our specific goals have been to: examine the explanatory power of competing theoretical approaches to support for targeting policies; consider the possible role of data from homogenous samples instead of aggregated national data in producing results in this research area; address issues of conceptual clarity and empirical overlap among "stratification beliefs" and "racial attitudes" measures; treat the role of gender in policy support; examine the predictive power of composite measures of key variables; and compare effects for a range of policy outcomes.

With respect to the last issue, we note immediately that each bundle

of casual agents exerts relatively consistent impacts in coefficient sign, whether the outcome variables are education or work-related, race- or income-related or affirmative action policies. For our sample at least we are reluctant to adopt the strong position that the type of policy presentation greatly affects levels of public support (Balkanic, 1995; Rokeach and Loges, 1994; Bobo and Kluegel, 1993). However, the fit of our models of income-targeting support is very modest; in fact it is comparable to most other quantitative efforts in this research area. The fit of our models of minority-targeting support and the “potentially harmful nature of affirmative action” is, by contrast, very good relative to earlier studies. It would be useful for academic and policy issues if subsequent studies detect sizeable differences across homogeneous samples in support for affirmative action and race-targeting.

Another implication is that while the theoretical and empirical literature on race-targeting becomes ever richer (Peffley et al., 1997) greater attention must be paid to issues related to class and poverty (Hunt, 1996).

We find that the most important predictor of non-support for targeting policies for our sample is, unequivocally, “stratification beliefs.” We attribute its explanatory power in part to our usage of composite indicators. Composites often are more effective than a battery of highly correlated measures in explaining variations in dependent variables. When we first used multiple measures of “stratification beliefs” as our independent variables, our results were frail by comparison with those presented. Multicollinearity among regressors should be examined thoroughly in future quantitative studies.

We believe as well that our relatively homogeneous sample from a monoculture produced results that would surface in many cultural arenas in America, although they may not emerge in many others. Heterogenetic forces bring race relations in general, and discrimination in particular, to light in a meaningful way that often is not experienced by people living and working in monocultures such as the one studied in this treatment. It is much easier to deny discrimination and its legacy, and therefore to challenge the viability of targeting policies, in the latter sort of environment.

We argue for the more careful identification and examination of cultural pockets throughout the United States, where heterogenetic forces are less prevalent and where the dominant ideology fosters repertoires such as those revealed in this study. For example, this sort

of nexus might emerge in non-diverse areas where a fundamentalist Protestant ethic emphasizing "individualism" and "free will" runs strong. Quantitative analyses of highly aggregated data co-mingle such cultural pockets and empirical relationships specific to them with others that are substantially different. Differences in repertoires and resultant policy support levels will only weakly be reflected in the battery of individual regressors (e.g., geographical "region" commonly used in this research area).

The consistency in effects across policy indicators leads us to agree with Hunt's (1996) assertion that whites are more likely to attribute the limited attainments of all individuals to personal deficiencies rather than to structural causes. But we note that white women are somewhat less likely than white men to hold these individualistic accounts of causation. We hasten to add, however, that the qualitative data do show that the repertoires of stratification beliefs are quite consonant between the genders, even if they are more often expressed by men.

Thus, our regression results depict women as no more directly supportive of race- or income-targeted policies than men net of other causal factors, but policy support for males and females probably is mediated by both stratification beliefs and racial attitudes. We urge that future studies such as ours consider gender similarities and differences more seriously in their efforts to explain support of targeting policies. A related implication is that the modeling of direct and indirect effects probably would aid cumulative knowledge in this research area.

The impacts of racial attitudes run parallel to those of stratification beliefs in this study. Negatively sided racial sentiment motivates lack of support for race- and income-targeted policies, although negative racial sentiment is a significant predictor of only one of the two abstract affirmative action policy statements, that affirmative action is "harmful."

Jackman (1996) claims that belief in the current American stratification system is itself a racialized and self (group)-interested factor. We concede the potential validity of Jackman's claim, but urge that subsequent investigations expressly treat the matter empirically. Our findings point to technical and conceptual overlap in the perspectives that often are treated as contending with one another. Quantitative analyses may inform this issue. However, we feel qualitative efforts also are required to uncover the packaging of beliefs and attitudes, and

variations in attitude constellations, across the country. Such repertoires motivate support for targeting policies and legitimate social actions to address them.

We are reminded that much of the generic discourse on affirmative action and targeting programs in America was set over three decades ago in public arenas. Steinberg (1995) amply documents the contours of this discourse in his analysis of the “stratification beliefs” propounded by political leaders such as President Lyndon Johnson and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, as well as sociologists, including Nathan Glazer. We emphasize that the generic discourse is broad, indeed, and that the discourse may be differentially applied across the social structure. The analysis of U.S. social structure, its legitimation, and its daily articulation at national and local levels provides a profitable future direction for quantitative and qualitative analyses in this research area (see also Martinez, 1997).

Finally, the findings of our study are sample-specific and of unknown generalizability to the larger population. We know that for our sample it is clear that faculty recruitment and curriculum presentation which explores in a compelling way the historicity of race in the United States is required for the sake of both knowledge and related policy changes. Unless students and faculty are able to connect the racial (gender) present with the past, and see contemporary dynamics as a natural outgrowth of the past, we hold little hope they will seek appropriate interventions in the present and future. With respect to the present, we find our sample’s devotion to the social structure and accompanying cultural legitimations of it so strong, that it appears at present most optimal to work within that structure to enact policy change.

Put another way, it is unlikely that any significant (i.e., revolutionary) social movement will arise to make traditional race-targeting, and in some cases income-targeting, palatable to people who are against such targeting policies. Indeed, the original intent of race-targeting as put forth in affirmative action legislation was to hold organizations accountable for discriminatory practices in hiring as well as educating minority group members. When all studies on race-targeting are taken together they show that white Americans believe such policies are discriminatory themselves. Further, some studies have shown that significant groups of minority group members feel that such policies have not been effective in their implementation or outcomes.

Social group-targeting policies that aim to assist disadvantaged groups may be more persuasive when proposed in the context of bringing people to the point of moving to a place of self-reliance. Some examples of programs that have garnered widespread support are current "welfare-to-work" programs in public housing. We contend that if a social policy explicitly speaks to the outcome of assisting people in preparing to enter the workforce successfully regardless of race and gender, then such policies will receive higher levels of support.

NOTES

1. Also of importance is the belief that while equal opportunity is an important feature of the American stratification system equal outcomes are not (Tuch and Hughes, 1996a, p. 727). This view incorporates the assumption that inequitable discrimination to a significant extent has been overcome in contemporary America.

2. Bobo and Kluegel's results show whites are more likely to support income-targeted policies, arguably because they cut across racial lines.

3. There is one other fundamental axis of public non-support for targeting policies that warrants attention. People's attitudes towards race may appear to be contradictory, when support for racial integration and equity are examined (Ball-Rokeach and Loges, 1994). Thus, "framing" of race-targeted policies may be an important factor in the perceptions of fairness and equity.

4. We highlight the fact that although many of our questions virtually duplicate the essence of GSS questions, we employ less elaborate question stems.

5. Tuch and Hughes' attitudinal measure more properly might be used as an indicator of beliefs about affirmative action and targeting policy than as a predictor of them.

6. The marginal "variance explained" in many quantitative studies using national samples likely is a conjoint result of this model estimation difficulty coupled with the use of heterogeneous samples containing mutually canceling tendencies.

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APPENDIX I. Race-targeted and income-targeted policy support: Means and standard deviations for key variables analyzed, grouped for men (M) and women (W) (Likert-type scale, with 1 = “strongly agree” and 5 = “strongly disagree”; *designates $p \leq .05$).

PART I. DEPENDENT VARIABLES AND QUESTIONS				
<i>Education Policy: Minority-Targeted (EPMT)</i>	$M\bar{X}$	s.d.	$F\bar{X}$	s.d.
1. School funds should be concentrated towards <i>minority</i> areas, especially for preschool and early education programs.	3.47*	1.07	3.23	1.10
2. A new school is being built in your town. Two areas are equally in need of new elementary school facilities; one is a largely white area, the other a largely minority group area. The money should be allocated to building an elementary school in the largely minority group area.	3.16	1.01	2.96	.94
3. Special college scholarships should be provided for minority students who maintain good grades.	2.82	1.29	2.73	1.28
4. Two students are applying for admission to the same college, which has very few minority students. They both have the same qualifications. One student is white, the other student is a minority group member. The college can only accept one student. The college should accept the minority student.	1.42	.49	1.42	.59
5. Universities should employ strategies targeting minority group member recruitment.	3.11	1.11	2.79	1.04
6. Universities should employ strategies targeting minority group member recruitment, even if qualified white students might be denied admission.	3.88	1.04	3.75	1.04
7. Two students are applying for admission to the same college, which has very few minority students. One student is white, the other student is a minority group member. Both students meet the qualifications, however, the minority student is slightly more qualified. The college can only accept one student. The college should give preference to the minority group student.	2.97	1.33	2.80	1.25
<i>Educational Policy: Income-Targeted (EPIT)</i>				
1. School funds should be concentrated toward <i>poor</i> neighborhoods, especially for preschool and early education programs.	2.78	1.17	2.53	1.06
2. A new school is being built in your town. Two areas are equally in need of new elementary school facilities; one is a middle class neighborhood, the other a poor neighborhood. The money should be allocated to building an elementary school in the poor neighborhood.	2.66	.99	2.55	.87
3. Special college scholarships should be provided for children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who maintain good grades.	2.01	1.2	1.93	.93
<i>Work Policy: Minority Targeted (WPMT)</i>				
1. A new company is relocating to your city. The company will be providing 3,000 <i>blue collar</i> jobs in the city. The company should be given a tax break incentive to locate in the area largely comprised of minority group members.	3.31	1.12	3.21	1.02
2. Company A is looking to locate its operations in your city. They have found two locations that are appropriate; one is in a largely minority group member area, the other is in a largely white area. Company A should be given a tax break incentive to locate in the area composed of minority group members.	3.39	1.09	3.25	1.00
3. A new company is relocating to your city. The company will be providing 3,000 <i>unskilled</i> jobs in the city. The company should be given a tax break incentive to locate in the area largely composed of minority group members.	3.34	1.11	3.25	1.05
4. Company B is relocating to your city. The company will be providing 3,000 jobs in the city. Company B should be given a tax break incentive to locate in the area largely composed of minority group members.	3.43	1.07	3.258	1.01

PART I. DEPENDENT VARIABLES AND QUESTIONS		$M\bar{X}$	s.d.	$F\bar{X}$	s.d.
<i>Work Policy: Minority Targeted (WPMT)</i>					
5.	A new university is being built in your city and will provide 1,500 faculty positions. The university should be given a tax break incentive to locate in the area largely composed of minority group members.	3.61*	.99	3.39	1.05
6.	Two applicants are applying for a position with the same company, which has very few minority employees. One applicant is white, the other is a minority group member. Both meet the qualifications, however the minority applicant is slightly more qualified. There is only one position available. The company should give preference to the minority group applicant.	1.58*	.58	1.44	.54
7.	A company with very few minority employees has one position available; one applicant is white, the other is a minority group member. Both meet the qualifications, however, the white applicant is slightly more qualified. The company should give preference to the minority group applicant.	4.33	.78	4.19	.83
<i>Work Policy: Income-Targeted (WPIT)</i>					
1.	Business and industry should be given special tax breaks for locating in poor and high unemployment areas.	2.99*	1.17	2.71	.97
2.	Company L is relocating to your city. The company will be providing 3,000 jobs in the city. Company L should be given a tax break incentive to locate in a poor area with high unemployment.	2.89*	1.13	2.65	.99
3.	Company Z is looking to locate its operations in your city. They have found two locations that are appropriate; one is in a poor area with high unemployment, the other is in a middle class area. Company Z should be given a tax break incentive to locate in the poor area with high unemployment.	3.04*	1.22	2.81	1.04
<i>Affirmative Action (AA)</i>					
1.	Affirmative action plans do more harm than good.	2.88*	1.01	3.11	.92
2.	Affirmative action programs help compensate for past injustice.	3.24	1.04	3.31	1.08
PART II. INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND QUESTIONS					
<i>Stratification Beliefs (SB)</i>					
1.	Minorities could improve their situation if they tried.	2.52*	.92	3.13	.97
2.	Poor people could improve their situation if they tried.	2.50*	.83	2.99	1.05
3.	There should be no double standards.	1.67*	1.01	1.95	1.13
4.	Women and minorities are oversensitive to prejudice and discrimination.	2.90*	1.08	3.24	1.14
5.	Women and people of color are under represented at higher level positions or organizations.	2.78*	1.07	2.41	1.01
<i>Racial Attitudes (RA)</i>					
1.	Some groups are more suited for or talented at certain jobs.	2.98	1.21	3.17	1.17
2.	People of diverse groups are treated differently because they act differently.	2.86	.87	3.03	.99